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The Cherokee Marsh News

Feb / Mar 2024



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Annual meeting held, directors elected

Thanks to all who attended our annual member meeting on January 27.

Our guest presenter, Associate Professor Jessica Hua from the UW–Madison Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology, shared with us recent research relating to amphibian disease and frog diversity. Graduate student Mary Campbell assisted with the presentation.



Paul Quinlan from Madison Parks shared recent and upcoming restoration projects and progress on management plans under development for Cherokee Marsh - Mendota Unit and Meadow Ridge Conservation Park. Paul was pleased to report that Madison Parks currently has their largest conservation staff ever.



Claire Lamberg from Dane County Parks shared information about the county's amazing seed collection program and reminded us of the upcoming volunteer summit (see information under Events in this newsletter). County Parks will be launching a new interface for volunteers to sign up and track their hours.

Claire also described an Agricultural Wetland Mitigation Bank restoration project in the Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area. For this project, Dane County

Land & Water Resources Department is partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to restore ~31 acres of wetland and prairie adjacent to the Yahara River at the Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area at Cty HWY 19. [More about the project.](#)

We gave a special thanks to Shirley Mand, who has been doing a fabulous job as our member coordinator for the last three years. Her attention to detail means our member records are always in good shape. And no worries, she is continuing in her role for the coming year!

The members present elected directors Mary Binkley, Sheila Leary, Linda Malkin, Jim Mand, and Paul Noeldner for 2-year terms and Jan Axelson for a 1-year term. Directors Timothy Baker, Lesleigh Luttrell, and Wendy Murkve are in the middle of their 2-year terms and weren't up for re-election.

If you are interested in joining our board, we invite you to attend a board meeting. Our bylaws permit adding interim board members at any time.





Changes in the works for Friends' funding of restoration activities

Since 2020, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh have sponsored a group of five Prairie Partner interns to work on city and county lands at Cherokee Marsh. We shared the interns with other nonprofit groups, with each group having the interns one day a week for 12 weeks in the summer.

Late last year, we learned that two of the sponsoring nonprofits were dropping out of the program. With limited time to recruit new sponsors, the remaining groups agreed to suspend the program for 2024.

We were disappointed that we wouldn't have interns and wanted to continue to support restoration work in some way. After conversations with Parks staff, we have committed to donating \$5,000 each to Madison Parks and Dane County Parks to support restoration activities. The money will pay for limited-term employee (LTE) time in the field, doing much of the same work performed by the interns. An advantage is that the LTEs won't be limited to a 12-week window in the summer. For example, they can help manage early spring invasives or cut brush in winter.

The remaining Prairie Partner sponsors will meet later this year to discuss whether to restart the program in 2025. If the program does restart, we'll decide later this year whether to fund interns or provide funding for LTEs.

We are excited to provide this new funding source for restoration work. As with the Prairie Partners, funding the LTEs is a stretch for our budget, but we believe it's important work and that you, our members, will agree and will support it with donations. We will also look into grant funding. Any outstanding donations we have received for the interns will go toward funding the LTEs.

[Donate to support restoration work.](#) (Use the Prairie Partner option until we get the wording updated.)



State Natural Area crew reports on use of grant funding

Each year, our [Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund](#) provides funding to help maintain the [Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area](#) (SNA), designated an SNA because of its high quality wetland plant communities. Here is a report on how the SNA crew used the funding in the past year:

The funding provided by the friends of Cherokee Marsh allowed the Southwest State Natural Areas crew to continue removal of both herbaceous and woody invasive species over ~20 acres of calcareous fen found within Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area.

In the summer months, the crew spent a day focused on continuing to knock

back a large cattail patch that threatens to encroach on one of the highest quality tracts of wetland found on the site. This was done through the "wick-bar" technique, a form of foliar herbicide application that allows the applicators to efficiently cover ground while also nearly eliminating the potential for treatment of non-target plants and seepage into groundwater.

In the winter, the crew focused on removing brush that had begun to crowd out native vegetation in the same tract of wetland that borders the cattails.

The crew focused on removing invasive species such as buckthorn and honeysuckle, with the knowledge that native species of brush such as red-osier dogwood can be naturally kept in check through prescribed burning. On the same day the brush work was completed, another member of the crew was simultaneously able to mow burn breaks in anticipation of a prescribed burn, which will hopefully be able to be conducted in the Spring of 2024.

The continued effort against cattail and brush encroachment is critical in maintaining vegetative diversity within the high-quality fen in our project area. With wetlands declining globally at a staggering rate, the opportunity to have work funded that preserves and improves a wetland of such quality is a great honor for the SNA crew.

Cattails and overloading of brush present two of the biggest threats to wetland diversity, as new hybrid species of cattails tend to quickly outcompete native plants and dense brush shades out the ground layer beneath it. With that being said, the most efficient and effective way to maintain the ecological integrity of the site is through prescribed burning, making the burn breaks that were able to be installed due to the grant critically important as well.

Returning fire to the landscape will naturally thin brush, knock back invasive herbaceous species, and encourage increased seed production by native plants over the 385 acres covered in our prescribed burn unit.

We were pleased to be able to utilize the full funding provided by this year's grant, and it undoubtedly helped the SNA team work towards reaching project goals for the site.

Grant amount: \$1848.23

of people who participated in the project: 6

of acres of land maintained/restored: 20, with burn breaks installed that will be used in a 385-acre prescribed burn

Thanks to all who have donated to the Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund, which provides a continual source of funding for Cherokee Marsh State Natural Area activities.



Pollution observed in Bonner Pond

In the fourth week of last January, we noticed pollution and a strong odor of decay at the stormwater pond just north of Wheeler Rd at Bonner Ln. The pond receives stormwater from nearby neighborhoods and drains into the upper Yahara River and the downstream lakes.

Parks staff reported that Engineering staff checked the area and found no problem in nearby sewer lines. There had been recent a water line break in the residential area uphill from the pond, and perhaps that contributed to the large amount of sand and other debris and pollution that entered the pond.



Have you renewed your membership?

If you've renewed your membership for 2024, thank you! If you aren't yet a member, please consider joining.

Your member dues help fund our activities, including our popular naturalist-led bird and nature adventures, funding restoration work on City and County land, and much more.

[Join, renew, or donate](#)

Renewing now helps us by saving time, resources, and postage to send reminder letters.

Is my membership up for renewal?

All memberships expire on December 31. If you joined the Friends after June 30, 2023, your membership is paid through December 31, 2024. For everyone else, it's time to renew. If you're not sure when you joined, contact us at janaxelson@gmail.com or (608) 215-0426.

As a member, you'll receive our newsletter six times a year, and you'll know that you're helping to protect and preserve a healthy Cherokee Marsh.

How to join or renew

To pay online or download a member form, visit:

[Join, renew, or donate](#)

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Our Tax Identification Number is 77-0689194.

Thank you to our members for the following donations in honor and memory of

Sean Barry in honor of Dr. Stanley Barry and family.

Julie Melton in memory of Sanny Oberhauser

Meg McCormick in memory of Mary Margaret Mortell

David Lewke in memory of Clara Lewke

Treasurer's report

Lesleigh Luttrell

With thanks to the more than 150 generous donors who renewed memberships, gave additional funds to support the Prairie Partners project, environmental education, and our Cherokee Marsh Conservation Fund, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh received more than \$21,000 in 2023. In fact we took in more than we spent so we were able for the first time to put some in a short term CD, and we will have a bit of interest to use this year.

We have budgeted \$10,000 to continue supporting work in city and county parks even though the Prairie Partners interns won't be with us this year. We will continue to support programs in the marsh, fulfill requests for help providing transportation to get children to the marsh for environmental education, and hope to grow the endowment fund again in 2024.

We appreciate your financial support (and we do accept RMDs from retirement funds if you want to send one our way).

		Balance 12/31/22		Balance 12/31/23
		\$44,760.43		\$55,024.21
Income	Budget	Current Month	Total	
Dues	\$3,500.00	\$1,218.87	\$3,351.66	150 memberships
Contributions	\$3,000.00	\$2,359.66	\$6,047.47	88 donations above membership
Memorial/Honor	\$250.00	\$35.00	\$45.00	2 memorial donors
Prairie Partners	\$5,000.00	\$170.00	\$5,977.10	26 donors (\$12.90 Paypal fees)
Environmental Education	\$750.00	\$59.31	\$892.78	28 donations
Endowment	\$1,000.00	\$361.03	\$1,107.61	16 donations
Unbudgeted Donations		\$3,500.00	\$4,300.00	IRA disburs(3 donors) where needed 1 donor
Draw from Saved Funds	\$3,000.00			
Total	\$16,500.00	\$7,703.87	\$21,721.62	
Expenses				
Brochure/other materials	\$300.00			
Display	\$100.00			
Donations to other orgs	\$1,000.00		\$475.00	Groundswell, Clean Lakes, Audubon **
Endowment	\$1,000.00		\$1,000.00	monies collected thru Feb 23
Environmental Education	\$700.00			
Events	\$1,500.00		\$1,323.95	annual meeting honoraria, walks, H&H
Field Work	\$250.00			
Insurance	\$500.00		\$516.00	
PO Box rental	\$190.00	\$194.00	\$194.00	though Dec 2024
Postage/Envelopes/Supplies	\$300.00		\$189.00	
Prairie Partners	\$8,000.00		\$7,212.40	5/22-8/25/23
Printing	\$350.00		\$257.94	trail maps (printed in 20222)
Special Projects /Drone	\$2,000.00			
Website/Software/Domain	\$300.00	\$34.96	\$264.55	
WI Dept Financial Inst	\$10.00		\$25.00	
Transfer to CD		\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	
Total	\$16,500.00	\$20,228.96	\$31,457.84	Regular Expenses \$11,457.84
				** River Alliance Rock River Coalition
Paypal fees			\$123.88	collected before funds deposited
Checking Account	\$35,024.21			
Certificate Special	\$20,000.00			matures 7/21/24
Conservation Fund Balance	\$42,444.04			as of Dec 2022



Events and volunteering

Join us for any or all of these upcoming events and volunteer

opportunities. *Unless otherwise indicated, events are free with no registration required.*

[Sign up](#) to receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities including announcements for last-minute events and volunteer opportunities that don't make it into the newsletter.

[See the full calendar](#) for latest information.

Bird and Nature Adventures

Sunday, Feb 4, 1:30 - 3 pm, Pushups Dreys & Cavities with naturalist Alex Singer

AND

Sunday, Mar 3, 1:30 - 3 pm, Let it Be an Oak with naturalist Kathlean Wolf

AND

The first Sunday of EVERY month, year-round, ALWAYS 1:30 pm – 3 pm

Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park - North Unit, 6098 N Sherman Ave.
Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking area at the end of the gravel road.

Contact: Paul Noeldner, paul_noeldner@hotmail.com, 608-698-0104

[Madison Parks bird and nature adventure page](#)

Brush cutting work party

Thurs, Feb 8, 9 am - 12 noon

Meet at Westport Meadows Park, 4338 Beilfuss Drive. Park on street. This park is west of HWY 113 and adjacent to Cherokee Marsh - Mendota Unit.

Help clear honeysuckle and buckthorn from Cherokee Marsh - Mendota Unit.
No experience needed. Loppers provided, but you're welcome to bring your

own. Certified chainsaw operators are welcome - bring your own saw and PPE.

Signup recommended so you can be notified of any changes or cancellations. To sign up, contact janaxelson@gmail.com or text 608-215-0426.

With no snow cover, we won't be burning, just cutting and piling.

Land & Water Volunteer Summit

Sat, March 2, 9 am - 2:30 pm

Lussier Family Heritage Center, 3101 Lake Farm Rd

During this networking gathering we will celebrate the Dane County Parks Friends groups, volunteers, and watershed groups that help protect and improve our land and water resources and spend some time networking and learning from each other. Sponsored by Dane County Land & Water Resources.

[Learn more and sign up](#). Registration closes Feb 22.

Board meetings

Friends of Cherokee Marsh board meeting. Public welcome. Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr. In the summer, you will likely find us outdoors at the Rainbow Shelter. Third Wednesdays. To confirm time and place, contact janaxelson@gmail.com.

Wednesday, Feb 21, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

Wednesday, Mar 20, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

Self-guided nature adventures

Get ideas for your own self-guided nature adventures at Cherokee Marsh and other locations.

tinyurl.com/selfguided-adventures

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