

Friends of Cherokee Marsh Newsletter June / July 2018

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## The Cherokee Marsh News June / July 2018



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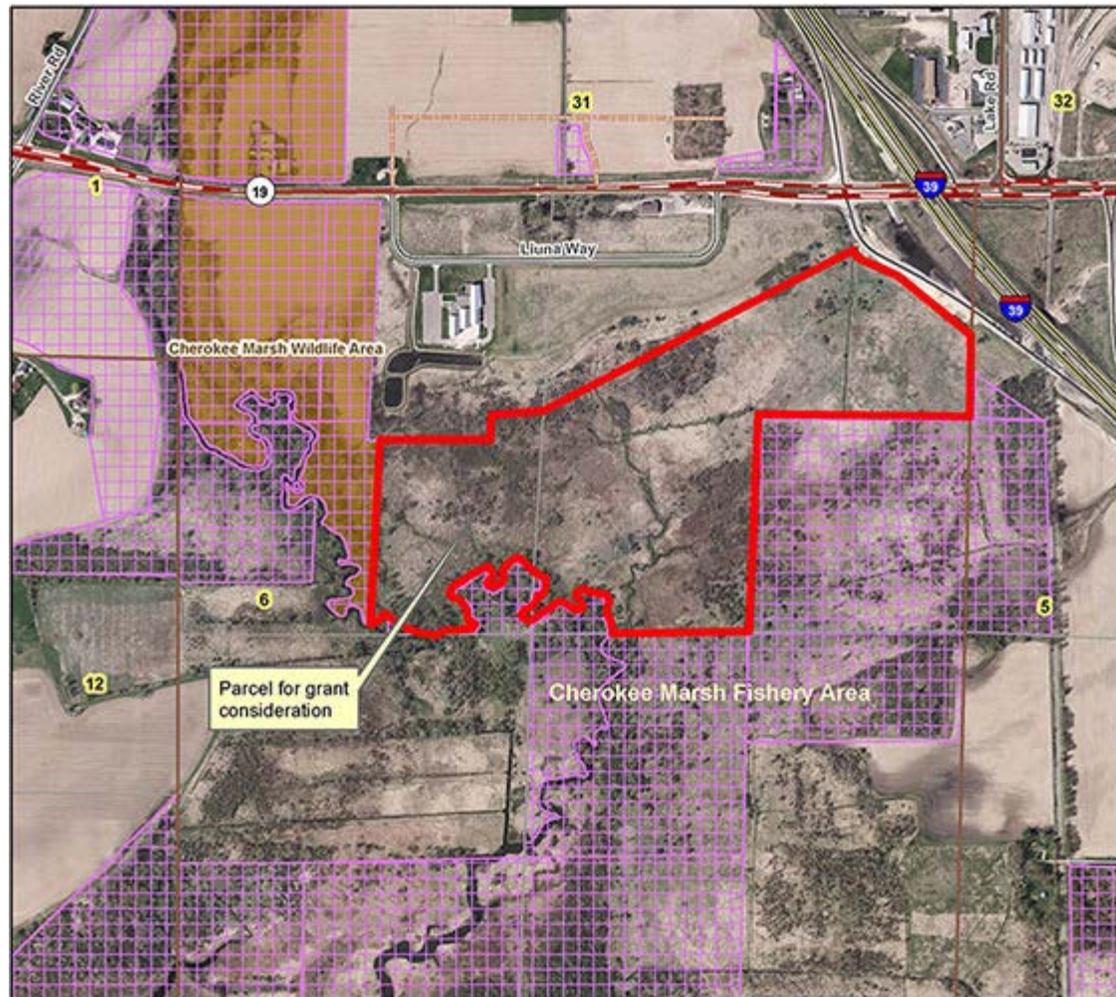
### Nearly 200 acres to be protected

Dane County Executive Joe Parisi recently announced news about two

properties that will be protected in our watershed. Over 100 acres in two parcels will be acquired by Groundswell Conservancy (formerly Natural Heritage Land Trust), with an additional 90 acres protected by a conservation easement. Each of the properties provides a valuable connection between existing parcels of publicly owned land. Closings on both properties are expected to occur this summer.

## Yahara River frontage and wetlands

A 95.5-acre wetland property will connect Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land in the Cherokee Marsh Fishery Area with recently acquired County land to the west. The land lies just south of HWY 19 and west of I-39. The southern boundary has 2750 ft of frontage on the upper Yahara River.



[View detailed map](#)

From Dane County's media release about the acquisition:

*The property will provide migration and nesting habitat for waterfowl and other migratory birds while also providing river bank protection for spawning northern pike and water quality protection of Lake Mendota. The connection will also provide continuity for public recreation.*

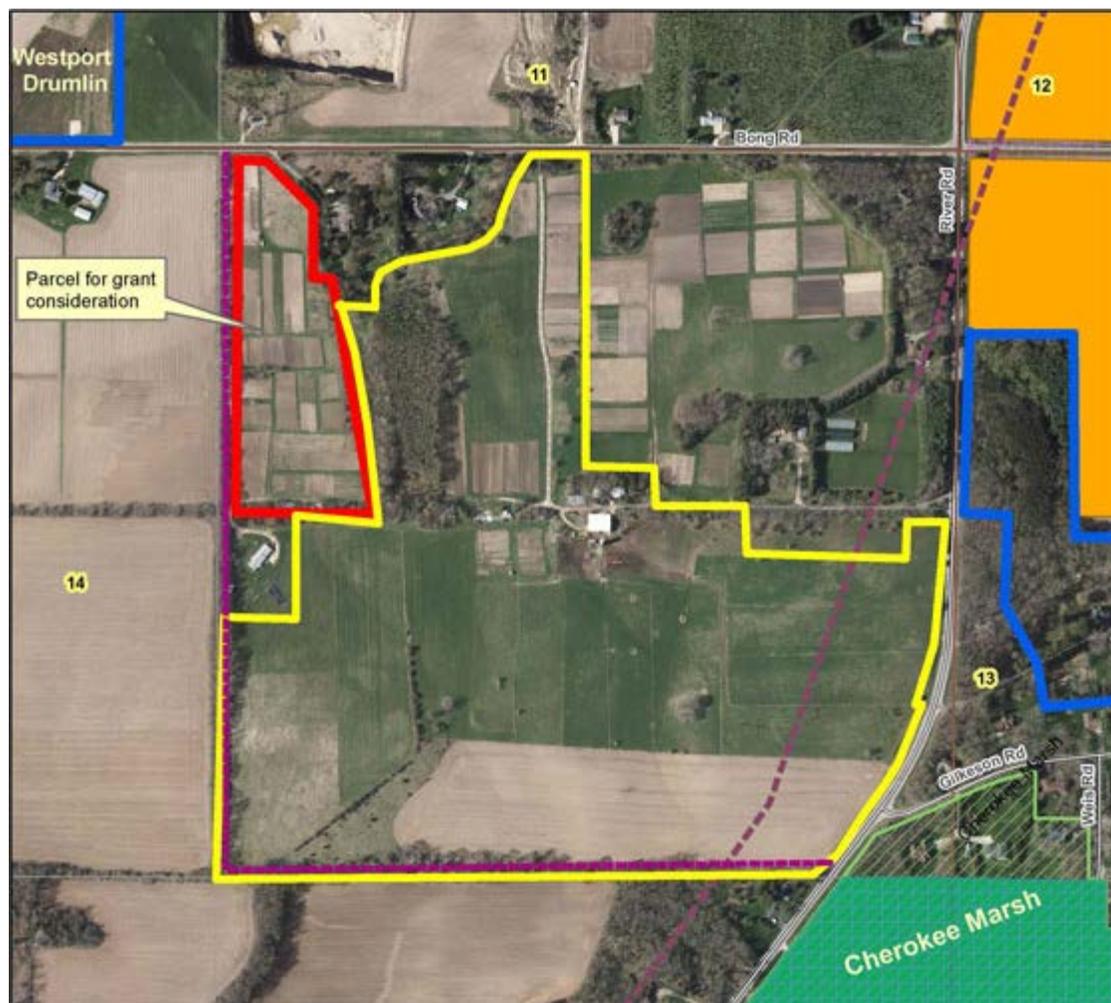
*Groundswell Conservancy will partner with the County, Department of Natural Resources and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh to restore the wetland and manage habitat. Acquisition of this parcel will protect additional wetland within the Cherokee Marsh wetland complex, provide wetland habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for the public.*

The current owner of the parcel is the Wisconsin Laborers Apprenticeship & Training Fund, which will continue to own adjacent land to the north.

The acquisition cost of \$214,640 will be provided by funds from Dane County, the Department of Natural Resources' Knowles Nelson Stewardship Grant Program, a North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant, and funds from Groundswell Conservancy. The Friends of Cherokee Marsh contributed funding for the required land survey.

## **Westport Drumlin connector**

A combined donation, purchase, and conservation easement will protect a property on a plateau just north of Cherokee Marsh and south of Bong Rd.



[View detailed map.](#)

The landowner is donating half the value of a 10.9-acre parcel to be purchased by Groundswell Conservancy. The land is currently leased to local immigrant farmers for subsistence and market growing. Groundswell will continue the leases, providing land-tenure security to the farmers. Community GroundWorks at Troy Gardens has committed to partnering with Groundswell to manage the leases and infrastructure.

The remainder of the farm, about 90 acres, will be protected by a conservation easement.

The purchase and easement together will allow for a future pedestrian trail that links the Westport Drumlin Preserve north of Bong Rd with County-owned land east of River Rd.

The acquisition cost is \$107,590 with Dane County providing \$26,897.00 in

matching funds.



## Volunteers participate in prescribed burn at Yahara Heights

*Kathlean Wolf with Jan Axelson*

*A version of this article appeared in the June/July [Northside News](#).*

Our crew leaders were tense as three crews headed in three different directions across the fields. Following a map of the “burn unit,” we walked through an open oak savanna to the point where our part of the burn would begin.

In the distance, we watched the most difficult part of the burn begin; flames thirty feet high rose above the waters of Cherokee Marsh, dark smoke carried high aloft by the fierce heat. It was easy to imagine the adrenaline of the other two teams as they herded the fire using a combination of terrain, mowed fire-breaks, and wind to ensure that the flames never escaped their control.

In April, Jan Axelson, myself, and 11 other volunteers joined with a Dane County Parks crew to perform a prescribed burn on 95 acres at Yahara Heights Park, just east of the dog exercise area off HWY M. Periodic burning helps to knock back aggressive plants such as buckthorn and honeysuckle that can crowd out native flowers and grasses.

The burn presented many challenges. At 95 acres, the area was larger than most previous burns performed by county crews. The area encompassed three different landscapes, each requiring a different approach. The prairie was filled

with the stalks of previous years' growth and was tinder-dry due to low humidity, while a wooded area had only scattered leaf litter to fuel the fire. The shoreline wetlands were the wild card since they hadn't burned in as long as anyone could remember.

As the line of fire made its way along the edge of the marsh, it was time for us to begin. I lit my drip torch, a heavy metal canister that contained a kerosene fuel mix and had a long nozzle ending in a wick, and began walking along a ridge through the trees, dripping a line of fire beside me. Jan did the same along the path below.

The leaf duff burned with low intensity, while the high, hot flames to the west grew closer, roaring and crackling. Two hours after the burn began, we joined with one of the other teams and tackled the center of the park, the main prairie.



Shifting winds presented a constant challenge, as did the proximity of the prairie to homes, evergreen landscape trees, stacks of firewood and piles of brush, and an occasional dog walker who needed to be waved away from our potentially dangerous activity. At times, a patch of tall stems would burn with so much heat it pushed us thirty feet back until the line of fire had consumed the fuel and moved further into the center of the prairie.

At last, I dripped my last line of fire, met by the igniter from the other side of the

park, and we stood back to watch. As if it were the grand finale of a fireworks show, the burning center of the field generated fire devils, two swirling funnels that rose fifty feet into the air. A pair of rabbits raced out from the center, and within minutes, the last fire subsided.



Following the burn, members of the crew remained on site to douse any remaining “smokers” (still-burning logs).

[View more photos of the burn.](#)

[Join the burn team or other volunteer activities at Yahara Heights and other county parks.](#)



## **How do we measure success?** *Inquiring minds want to know*

*Carolyn Byers, education director, Madison Audubon*

*We loved this story from [Madison Audubon's](#) newsletter. Thanks to Carolyn for permitting us to share it with you.*

We're often asked how we measure the success of our education programming. Grant reports require us to include the number of people we reach or hours we teach. Foundations want stories about specific groups of kids and how their lives are impacted by our work. Sometimes we do quick before-and-after lesson surveys with kids to quantify information retention. This is all useful stuff, but I prefer to measure our success by the questions kids ask.

Questions reveal a lot about where a person is in their educational journey. A child who isn't asking anything may be bored or preoccupied. One who asks "what's that?" is interested and excited, but doesn't know much about the topic. The more detailed the question, the greater the knowledge of the asker.

I recently encountered my favorite question at [Vera Court Neighborhood Center](#). It was April 17, and several inches of snow were hiding the grass. I had prepared an indoor lesson, since kids often don't dress for winter weather when

they're expecting spring. As I explained the plan for the day, the kids began slouching, sighing, and eye-rolling. I was thinking of ways that I could alter the lesson to better fit their mood when one child asked, "**Can't we just go outside?!**" All of the other kids chorused their agreement, and I was happy to indulge them. **We ended up at Cherokee Marsh** scouting for places to look for amphibians when the weather warmed.

While on our walk, the quality questions kept on coming: "why is it that if a plant is growing up through snow, the snow right around the plant is melted?" and "why is that bush brown at the base and red near the tips of the branches?" and "how is that sandhill crane standing in the snow? Don't its feet get cold?"

Success.

Vera Court is the education department's closest community partner, and we've been working with them for about 5 years. These kids have come a long way since I first met them, and our successes at Vera keep me working hard with all the kids at our other partner organizations.



## Restrooms open at North Cherokee

The restrooms are open and the water fountain is operational at North Cherokee. In recent years, problems with water quality and the electric service have forced the restrooms to close for periods of time. A new well and replacement of underground electric lines should help ensure that that the facility remains open for the season.

In other good news, Parks is now planning to *keep the full restrooms open*

*through the winter months!* Big thanks to Parks staff for all of their work and attention to these issues.



## Photographers needed!

Your photos can help show folks in Madison and beyond how special Cherokee Marsh is. The Friends, Madison Parks, and the Northside News are all in need of good photos of Cherokee Marsh.

If you would like to see your photos in **this newsletter and in other publicity for the Friends**, we would love to hear from you. Send to [info@cherokeemarsh.org](mailto:info@cherokeemarsh.org).

If you would like to see your photos in **Madison Parks' third annual calendar**, the deadline to submit your photos is Aug 31. [Learn more](#).

An upcoming issue of the [Northside News](#), mailed to all Northside Madison households, will feature photos of Cherokee Marsh and other natural areas on the Northside. Send your photos to [submissions@northsidenews.org](mailto:submissions@northsidenews.org).

A good place to capture photos is at our monthly Bird and Nature Outings and other events; see the calendar below or [on our website](#). Especially needed are photos that show families and kids enjoying the outdoors in and around the marsh. Photos with recognizable children require verbal permission from a parent or guardian for public use.



## Upcoming events

[See full calendar](#)

### Bird and nature outings

**Sun, June 3, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm.** Urban Wildlife with School Naturalist Guide Emily Steinwehe.

**AND**

**Sun, July 1, 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm,** Lets Look For Frogs! with School Naturalist Guide Nelson Eisman.

**AND**

**first Sunday of EVERY month, year-round, ALWAYS 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit, 6098 N. Sherman Ave.**  
Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking lot at the end of the gravel road.  
([map](#))

Family-friendly bird and nature walks led by naturalist guides and other local

experts.

Sponsored by Madison Parks and the Friends of Cherokee Marsh. Questions? Contact Paul Noeldner at (608)-698-0104 or [paul\\_noeldner@hotmail.com](mailto:paul_noeldner@hotmail.com)

[Madison Parks Bird and Nature Outings page](#)

## Guided walk with Parks staff

**Wed, June 13, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit**, 6098 N. Sherman Ave. Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking lot at the end of the gravel road. ([map](#))

Free, guided tour of Madison's largest conservation park. Led by Jay Walters from Madison Parks. [More information](#).

## Butterflies of Cherokee Marsh

**Sat, June 23, 10 am – 12 noon**

**Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park, North Unit**, 6098 N. Sherman Ave. Follow N. Sherman Ave. north to the parking lot at the end of the gravel road. ([map](#))

Seek out and learn about butterflies, dragonflies, and other flying insects. Bring binoculars if you have them; we will have a few extras available. Long pants and a hat are recommended. This trip is sponsored by Madison Audubon, the Southern Wisconsin Butterfly Association, and Friends of Cherokee Marsh. Led by Karl and Dorothy Legler and Janet Battista.

[Madison Audubon field trip information](#)

## Board meetings

**Wed, June 20, 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm**

**Wed, July 18, 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm**

**Warner Park Community Recreation Center, 1625 Northport Dr**

Members and the public are welcome at our monthly board meetings. Occasionally we reschedule, so contact us to confirm: (608) 215-0426, [janaxelson@gmail.com](mailto:janaxelson@gmail.com)

## Receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities

Our newsletter comes out six times / year. You can also sign up to receive timely notices and reminders, including announcements for last-minute events and volunteer opportunities that don't make it into the newsletter.

[Sign up](#) to receive notices about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

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