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The Cherokee Marsh News

June / July 2021



In this edition

- [DNR requests more information for Cherokee Golf Course permit](#)
- [Prairie Partner interns off to a productive start](#)
- [Purple martins nesting in new houses](#)
- [Volunteers find new invasive species](#)
- [Be a bat roost monitor](#)
- [Use the Tick app to report ticks](#)
- [Share your Cherokee Marsh memories and favorite things](#)
- [Upcoming events](#)



DNR requests more information for Cherokee Golf Course permit

Jan Axelson

As we reported in the [April / May newsletter](#), Cherokee Park, Inc. (CPI) has announced plans to modernize the Cherokee Golf Course.

CPI has filed a DNR Wetland Individual Permit and dredging permit application with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR responded with a **26-page notice of incompleteness** detailing additional information the DNR will need before considering the application. The application materials and the DNR's response are [online](#).

The Cherokee Economic Report included in the application states that in 2019, **Cherokee Country Club membership had fallen to almost half the membership in 2007** and is less than 40% of the threshold for economic stability as identified by the National Golf Foundation.

DNR response

The DNR's response to the application stated a number of concerns.

Converting wetlands to upland

The submitted materials state that 1.33 acres of shallow open water (below the ordinary high-water mark of the waterway) will be filled and converted to upland. The DNR will determine if the proposed structure or deposit will be detrimental to the public interest. Public interest components such as navigation, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, and natural scenic beauty will be fully assessed. **The full conversion of open water to upland is strongly discouraged as it is likely to be detrimental to the public interests of navigable waterways.**

For each of the areas proposing permanent wetland impact (wetland to upland), the DNR is requesting a **review of practicable alternatives for each impact**, including descriptions of how features were sized and why features (spectator viewing areas, tee boxes, greens, fairways, playing surface) need to be sized in the manner proposed.

The waterways

The DNR has asked for detailed information showing that filling 1.33 acres of waterways won't be detrimental to the public interest of the stream. This **additional data should include fish surveys, stream flow data, and quantitative stream habitat surveys** to fully assess the associated waterway impact.

The DNR has asked for **detailed information on shoreline erosion control measures** along existing and new stream banks.

The tributary to Cherokee Marsh in the proposed project likely serves as nursery areas and spawning areas for northern pike. Northern pike use shallow, inundated wetlands and seasonally flooded riparian areas to spawn in and their offspring use the nearby deeper marshes to grow and develop before migrating into adult habitats in Cherokee Marsh and Lake Mendota. Northern Pike will migrate several miles inland up streams and rivers in search of suitable spawning habitat. **The DNR has concerns with proposed modifications of existing shallow, ephemerally flooded marshes and wetlands into deeper ponds with more open and deeper water which could negatively impact spawning and nursery areas northern pike.**

The creation of enlargements connected to navigable waterways will require a pond-individual permit. **There is a requirement for public access of navigable portions of the artificial water body if the connecting portion is navigable.**

One component of a complete application for stream realignment is a **hydrologic and hydraulic analysis** for the existing and proposed channel that looks at 2-year and 100-year events. An erosion control plan must be provided and include what temporary and permanent erosion control measures will be used for the stream realignment.

Anyone seeking to remove material from the beds of waterways is required to **provide preliminary information including the volume to be dredged, method and equipment to be used, and disposal method and location.**

Culverts and ponds that contain control structures might be governed as dams and require a separate permit application. The DNR is requesting additional information about seawalls, bridges, and culverts in the project area.

The plan states the intention to de-water all or portions of the work area, including navigable public waterways. The DNR has requested additional details regarding the dewatering plan, including a **detailed description of the intended means and methods of dewatering, how existing fish and other aquatic resources will be protected during this stage of construction, and whether the activity will impact additional wetlands.**

The golf course

The application suggests that the proposed design is necessary to achieve the desired Tournament Player Club (TPC) designation. The DNR has asked for **details about the TPC design standards, a description of an alternative of using drain tiles, pumps, or a combination to reduce wetland disturbance, information on any planned temporary roads through wetlands and areas of planned tree and woody vegetation removal in wetlands.**

The DNR is requesting **documentation of why the playing surfaces need to be 3 ft above the groundwater table and how CPI determined groundwater elevations.** Will high water levels require course modification in the future, and will these modifications impact waterways or wetlands?

Environmental impact

The DNR will determine if the proposed project will result in significant adverse impact to wetland functional values, significant adverse impact to water quality, or other significant adverse environmental consequences. The DNR will require **details pertaining to the design and goals for the proposed wetland conversion areas.**

The DNR strongly recommends a **5-year monitoring program** to ensure the site is meeting planned performance standards and environmental benefit goals.

The DNR will need to perform a series of **site visits** on the property to conduct a Wetland Rapid Assessment, time meander surveys, and waterway evaluations.

An **Endangered Resource Review** identified two species potentially present within proximity to the project area with required actions to comply with federal/state endangered species laws. Several other special concern, species

of concern, and threatened species were identified as potentially being present, and recommended actions were presented to avoid impacts to these species. This section was excluded from the permit application to comply with endangered species laws regarding confidentiality.

The DNR will determine if the proposed project will result in a net positive or negative environmental impact, and in doing so, they can take into consideration portions of the proposed project such as wetland enhancement and wetland creation areas. The DNR suggests providing **information and details pertaining to the design and goals for the proposed wetland enhancement and creation areas.**

An item not covered in the notice of incompleteness is CPI's stated desire to eventually become certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. In 2012, the Sierra Club reported that **becoming certified as an Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary requires only the payment of a fee and self-certifying, with no independent on-site inspection required.** The program has no relation to the Audubon Society. [Greenwashing Golf](#) (Sierra Magazine, July/Aug 2012).

We'll continue to monitor the status of this project and will report any updates or opportunities for public input.

More

Chris Hubbuch wrote about the project for the May 29 Wisconsin State Journal:

[Madison's Cherokee Country Club eyes PGA branding, seeks to fill wetlands for overhaul](#) (may require login)

[Watch the Zoom public meeting](#) about the plan presented by the Cherokee Country Club on March 2.



Prairie Partner interns off to a productive start

On May 25, our five Prairie Partner interns put in their first full day pulling garlic mustard at Yahara Heights Park and the Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area.

The interns work outdoors, rain or shine. Much of their work involves pulling, cutting, or digging invasive plants. Other activities include collecting and scattering seeds and working on trail improvements. Five interns putting in a full day each week can make a significant, positive difference in Cherokee Marsh's natural areas.

This is the second year the Friends have sponsored interns, who are typically college students majoring in environmental sciences. The interns work every Tuesday for 12 weeks, alternating between Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park and Yahara Heights Park / Cherokee Marsh Conservation Areas.

On the other days of the work week, the interns work for Groundswell Conservancy, Madison Audubon Society, Friends of UW Lakeshore Preserve, and the Friends of Pheasant Branch. By sharing interns among multiple groups, each group receives much needed help at a reasonable cost. The interns benefit by obtaining experience working in diverse natural areas with a variety of land managers.

Supporting the interns requires a large commitment of both time and money. The cost to hire the interns for a summer is \$7500. We keep the cost down by using volunteers to supervise the interns. Of the participating non-profits, we are the only one that doesn't rely on hired help for supervising.

Big thanks to our experienced volunteers who have agreed to help out with supervising and to those who have generously contributed to the cost of hiring the interns.

How to donate

We are near our fundraising goal, but there is still time to make a donation to support the interns.

If you **mail a check**, please write "Prairie Partners" in the memo line and send to PO Box 14536, Madison WI 53708.

To **donate online**, go to cherokeemarsh.org/join-renew-or-donate, select *Join / Donate* and select the *Donate* button. In the *Use this donation for* box, select *Funding for Prairie Partner interns*.

Thank you to our contributors who have donated to support the Prairie Partner interns.

Corporate donor



In memory of Jim Hughes

Jan Axelson
Janet Battista
Richard Lampe & Nancy Schlimgen
Muriel Simms

Additional contributors

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Purple martins nesting in new houses

In 2016, we reported on the installation of purple martin houses on the shoreline at Burning Wood Way in the Cherokee Park neighborhood. While the housing had some early success, the martins were mostly unable to compete with house sparrows for the available space.

This spring, volunteer steward Ellen Barnard replaced the original "apartment-house" style with artificial gourd houses that are designed to favor martins and exclude house sparrows and other species. We are delighted to report that

martin pairs have nested in each of the four gourds.



Purple martins are the largest member of the swallow family in Wisconsin. Adult males are a solid, shiny blue/black. The females are paler in color. Watch for purple martins in the evening, swooping and chirping as they feed on insects. Contrary to popular belief, studies show that mosquitoes are only a small part of purple martins' typical diet.

The population of purple martins has declined due in part to competition for nest sites with non-native starlings and house sparrows. So martins can use some help from humans with their housing needs.

The birds nest in colonies and require clear flyways in and out of their nest holes. Because martins had been observed at Cherokee Lake, the shoreline at Cherokee Park was a natural choice to erect a house.

Thank you to house stewards Ellen Barnard and Myrtle Wilhite for checking and reporting on the martins, to Ellen Barnard and the Cherokee Park Neighborhood Association for helping fund the gourd houses' cost of \$471, to Mike Rewey for donating the pole and original houses, and to Steve Lang for suggesting the project.



Volunteers find new invasive species

In May, volunteers working off trail in Cherokee Marsh - North Unit came across a population of hundreds of Star of Bethlehem (*Ornithogalum umbellatum*) plants. The plant has grass-like leaves and showy, 6-petaled, white flowers that bloom in spring. Native to Eastern Europe and the Middle East, in our area the plant can invade natural areas and crowd out native plant communities.

The plant grows from clumps of small bulbs. Hand removal requires digging up and disposing of the bulbs, a time-consuming task.

The plant is more common to the south and east of Wisconsin but may be increasing here. This sighting was the first known occurrence in Madison Parks. If you come across this plant on public lands, please take a photo and report it to Madison Parks, Dane County Parks, or other land manager.



Be a bat roost monitor

If you know of a structure or other location that hosts bat populations, you can contribute to citizen science by roost monitoring.

From the Wisconsin Bat Program:

In general, bats are cryptic animals. However, two bat species in Wisconsin form large maternity colonies in summer and give a rare glimpse into the ecology of these bats. Both little brown bats and big brown bats are known to roost in bat houses, attics, barns and other buildings where it stays warm over the course of the day and through the night. Generally these maternity colonies are easily located and monitored because they are in or near human dwellings and the colonies can be quite large.

Little brown bats form maternity colonies of up to thousands of individuals. Big brown bats tend to form smaller colonies, but roosts of up to 200 big brown bats are often reported.

Knowing the locations and approximate sizes of these colonies has helped the Wisconsin Bat Program gather data about statewide distribution, population estimates and roost preferences before and after white-nose syndrome arrived in the state.

Bat roost monitoring is simple and can be an enjoyable experience. Monitors identify bat roosts and sit outside the roost entrance in the evening to count the bats as they emerge. Bats will start to exit the roost just after sunset, and will emerge one or two at a time making counting easy. The bats will continue to exit for about 40 minutes.

How often a roost gets counted is up to the volunteer, however the program appreciates at least two counts- one in early June and one in late July. These dates are chosen based on the volancy (flight) of the young born in June and can help us determine recruitment of the colony.

[Learn more](#)



Use the Tick app to report ticks

Researchers are seeking volunteers to use The Tick App to report any ticks found in a series of 15 daily reports. The data will help the researchers understand how people's practices and activities impact their exposure to ticks and will help in designing integrated control strategies to prevent diseases, such as Lyme disease, transmitted by ticks.

The researchers are from Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin – Madison, members of the CDC Regional Centers for Excellence in Vector-Borne diseases.

[Learn more and sign up](#)



Share your Cherokee Marsh memories and favorite things

We are still seeking memories and anecdotes and stories about your favorite things or best times at Cherokee Marsh.

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of Conservation Parks in the City of Madison. Following the city's acquiring land at Cherokee Marsh and anticipating the purchase of other conservation lands, the 1971 Parks and Open Space Plan for the first time listed Conservation Park as a category of park. In celebration of this milestone, the Friends of Cherokee Marsh are launching a project we're calling *Conserving Marsh Memories*. We need your help!

Do you have anecdotes and stories about your favorite things or best times spent at the marsh? Do you have photos, documents, or memories about the evolution of Cherokee Marsh public lands to share with us? We would love to include them in our project.

Text, photos, maps, and other images are welcome. You can also record and send a brief audio or video clip telling us why you love Cherokee Marsh or documenting an experience. With your help, we can introduce new audiences to this wetland treasure and conserve memories and history for future generations.

Email submissions to sheila.leary@icloud.com. Mail or drop off hard copy items to Marsh Memories, 1101 Burning Wood Way, Madison 53704. Please do so by Sept 1, 2021.

We plan to use the responses to document Cherokee Marsh history and favorite things on our website. Maybe make a video. And we'll share items in the Northside News, social media, future newsletters, and the like.

By submitting material for this project, you grant the Friends of Cherokee Marsh the non-exclusive rights to use the material in our educational communications, and you state that you have the consent of any identifiable people in the material for such use.



Over 50 volunteers put in over 200 hours removing invasive garlic mustard this spring.



Upcoming events

This newsletter comes out 6 times per 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.

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

Bird and nature adventures

Sun, June 6, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, Wildflower Wander with Master Naturalist

Sheila Leary

AND

Sun, July 4, 1:30 pm – 3 pm, Frog and bug hop with Naturalist Guide Mary

Binkley

AND

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](#)

Conservation Park Tour - Meadow Ridge & Cherokee Marsh - Mendota Unit

Wednesday, June 9, 6 pm - 7:30 pm

Walk with conservation staff and learn how volunteer efforts and deer population management are yielding a more sustainable plant community in Meadow Ridge and Cherokee Marsh - Mendota Unit conservation parks.

Meadow Ridge Park, 4002 Meadow Valley Drive

[More information](#)

Volunteer at Westport Prairie

Saturday, June 12, 9 am - noon

Hike around the newly restored oak woodlot next to the drumlin and search for invasive weeds. Then we'll cut brush along the drumlin and search for new

wildflowers in bloom.

[Location and sign up](#)

Paddling outdoor - discover Cherokee Marsh

Saturday, June 12, 10 am - noon

AND

Thursday, August 12, 4 - 6 pm

Sponsored by MSCR.

[Learn more and sign up](#)

Conservation Park Tour - Cherokee Marsh - South Unit

Wednesday, July 14, 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Come enjoy the scenic view of the 100-acre riverine marsh and hear about efforts to restore prairie and oak woodland on the adjacent uplands. Led by Madison Parks staff.

Cherokee Marsh – South Unit, 802 Wheeler Road

[More information](#)

Self-guided nature adventures

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

tinyurl.com/selfguided-adventures

Board meetings

Wednesday, June 16, 5:30 – 7 pm

Wednesday, July 21, 5:30 – 7 pm

Our board of directors is responsible for planning, coordinating, communicating, and managing our activities. Everyone is welcome to attend board meetings. We've resumed in-person meetings, possibly outdoors. Contact janaxelson@gmail.com for location.

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