Why Save Washington County Farmland?

You’ve probably heard the saying “They’re not making any new farmland.” In fact, farmland is disappearing at a rapid rate. Conserving our farmland, however, is essential to food production. Farms support rural communities and help to keep real estate taxes low. Open, undeveloped spaces, like farmland, are critical to replenishing groundwater supplies and protecting the environment.

With the fast growing urbanization of Washington County we must look at how we use our dwindling land resources. We are losing over 1 sq. mile of farmland each year to development.

Continued on Page 2
Man - despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication and his many accomplishments - owes his existence to a six inch layer of topsoil and the fact that it rains.

Continued from Page 1

Farming in Washington County

The competition for land, especially productive agricultural land, will...intensify as our population grows and technology makes it easier for us to live and work in widely disbursed communities. The irreplaceable land that produces our food and provides us with scenic open space, wildlife habitat and clean water is increasingly at risk from urban sprawl and rural subdivisions. To assure a prosperous future, we must save our farmland.

It's true that technology, through genetics and use of pesticides and fertilizers, has continued to increase crop yields and overall farm productivity. But at the same time, there has been a decline in the number of farmers on the land.

Increased production has something to do with this shift, as do volatile commodity markets, an aging farm population and many other complex socio-economic factors. What does this development mean for us in present day Washington County? In terms of food supply, probably not much, although with the events of September 11th, food security should be a top concern of our leaders.

In a broader sense, however, the steady erosion at the local level of our agricultural base, farmers and productive farmlands, is a disturbing trend. Economically and socially, agriculture is a large and intricate part of Washington County.

The 1997 Census of Agriculture reported the market value of Washington County's farm products at more than $60 million. Viewed in a proper context, the county's 400+ farms constitute a large group of small and medium sized businesses that generate tens of millions of dollars. Additionally, a fair number of our County's employers rely on agriculture for all or part of their business, such as food processors, implement manufacturers and dealers.

Preserving agriculture for all the reasons cited above must be a high priority in Washington County. One need only look to the Milwaukee and Chicago suburbs to see what the decline of agriculture has meant economically, culturally and ecologically.

WHY SAVE FARMLAND?

It saves you money.

It protects your quality of life.

It assures a safe, reliable and affordable food supply.
America The Beautiful

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!

Katharine Lee Bates wrote the original version of this song in 1893. She explained:

“One day some of the other teachers and I decided to go on a trip to 14,000 foot Pikes Peak. We hired a prairie wagon. Near the top we had to leave the wagon and go the rest of the way on mules. I was very tired. But when I saw the view, I felt great joy. All the wonder of America seemed displayed there, with the sea-like expanse.”

Note the words do not say:

O beautiful for spacious skies—which we can barely appreciate for the haze that hangs heavy over our view, and for the light pollution which obscure the stars in most settled areas of our country;

For amber waves of grain—in fields which are rapidly being converted to strip malls and suburban development;

For purple mountain majesties—which suddenly look like a pin cushion stuck with hundreds and thousands of cellular towers;

Above the fruited plain—whose endless vistas are blocked by countless billboards, which have become the yellow pages of the American Landscape.

America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea!

Wake up America! It is our responsibility to protect the natural resources. Think about what actions you can take to ensure that Katharine Bates’ song continues to have meaning for our children and grandchildren.
Conservation Program to Give Farmers $240 Million

MADISON- A new agricultural conservation program that is unprecedented in Wisconsin’s history is set to begin, announced Jim Harsdorf, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) will provide up to $240 million state and federal funding to landowners to assist them with reducing soil erosion and improving water quality statewide; up to 100,000 acres across the state may be enrolled in the program.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman authorized $200 million in federal funds for Wisconsin. Gov. Scott McCallum is expected to sign the contract that officially accepts the CREP program and commits the state to an additional $40 million.

“This has been a long - and at times difficult - road, requiring a great deal of coordination between local, state and federal agencies. Any program of this magnitude has endless details,” said Harsdorf. “I commend all those who have made CREP a reality for Wisconsin.”

Landowners will be able to enroll their land either for 15 years or permanently to install practices such as riparian buffers and filter strips on their land. These practices will keep soil in place, protect water quality, and provide wildlife habitat. In turn, landowners will receive state and federal funds to help install those practices and keep the land in permanent cover.

What Does This Mean For Washington County Landowners?

- More money than ever before... $400,000.00 allotted to our county!
- Payments of $80.00 per acre (on average) per year
- Average 15 year contract receives one time payment of $235.00/acre OR $835.00 per acre for perpetual easements.

Note: Actual payment amounts are based on soil types

Do you have property along a stream, river or lake?

Read this article.

“Our nation’s economic foundation is built on the backs of America’s small farmers. Their survival and success is not only important to their families, but to consumers, rural communities, the environment, and the global economy.”

-- Former US Congressman Harold Volkmer, Chairman, USDA National Commission on Small Farms
County Engineer Settles Into LCD Office

A warm welcome to Scott Schmidt, who has recently joined Washington County as a Civil Engineer. Scott replaces Bruce Zellner who took a job with the Dodge County Highway Department in July.

Scott, a Washington County native, has worked in the private sector for the past nine years...but is no stranger to the Land Conservation Department.

According to County Conservationist, Troy Kuphal, “Scott brings a wealth of knowledge directly relating to Washington County. We were looking for someone who had a good understanding of stormwater and erosion control measures. Scott had been preparing engineering plans and surveying maps for a variety of developments in the County.”

Right now, Scott is focusing on the Washington County Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Ordinance (Chapter 17). He is working with townships, landowners, engineers and developers to keep erosion from construction sites to a minimum.

He is also assisting the Planning & Parks Department with a survey for Yahr Park and the Highway Department with plans for a new County salt dome.

When asked about his new position Scott states “I’m glad to have the opportunity to work with the Land Conservation Department. The staff has made for a smooth adjustment. I enjoy coming to work knowing that I am helping to make Washington County a quality place to live.”

Scott earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from UW-Platteville. He currently resides in Germantown with his wife and son. You can reach him at (262)335-6881 or lcdscotts@co.washington.wi.us

We need beauty as well as bread.
- John Muir
Gypsy Moths in Your Backyard

Small caterpillars, having wintered in the egg mass, emerge in mid-May. As they grow they develop colored warts down the center of the back. The warts are red on the rear half and blue near the head. They are covered with bristly hairs, which can cause a rash in people who handle them. These caterpillars feed in May, June and early July. They don’t make nests. They do come down from the trees every afternoon to hide from birds and other predators and then return in the evening to feed.

The pupa is the metamorphic stage. Within the pupa shell, the caterpillar’s body is transforming itself into an adult moth. Pupa are similar to cocoons and are present from late July through August.

What do they look like?

First you need to know that you’ll find gypsy moths in four different life states, and they all look completely different.

The moth is the adult stage of the insect. The female is white and even though she has wings, can’t fly. The male is one inch long, brown and flies around looking for the female from late July to early August. The adult gypsy moths can not feed and only live long enough to mate and produce eggs.

The female gypsy moth lays all her eggs in one cluster called an egg mass. Each egg mass contains 600-1,000 eggs. She covers the eggs with hairs from her body, giving the mass a furry appearance.

What do I do if I find them?

If you suspect a gypsy moth infestation on your property please call the Washington County Gypsy Moth Hot Line at 262-335-4809.

We will send you a packet with detailed information about the gypsy moth, the damage it causes and what steps you can take as a homeowner to control them.

Please fill out the data form included in the packet and return to the Land Conservation Department.

Where do we go from here?

The County will be mapping infestations and will use data supplied by residents to determine how widespread the problem is. If warranted, we will establish a gypsy moth suppression program for Washington County which could include on-site inspections, and participation in the DNR aerial spraying efforts late in 2002.
Homeowners can directly reduce the number of Gypsy Moths on their trees by removing and destroying egg masses in the fall and winter. Every egg mass destroyed is 600-1,000 larvae that won't be hatching out next spring!

For more info call:

**GYPSY HOT LINE**
262-335-4809

Gypsy Moth artwork by J.A. Davidson University of Maryland, College Park

**LCD on Line**
www.co.washington.wi.us/lcd

CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEB SITE
Access important information when it is convenient for you! Some things included on the site are:

- Conservation Programs
- Ordinances (Chapter 16, 17 & 18)
- Meet the LCD Staff
- Upcoming Events
- Related Links
- Tree Program Information

**COMING SOON**
- Education Section offering info on stewardship activities, community monitoring, lesson plans for teachers, Champions of the Environment forms, etc.

**Conservation News** is a quarterly newsletter for Washington County residents. Its purpose is to increase awareness and promote action to protect our land and water resources. Viewpoints of authors do not necessarily reflect those of the Land Conservation Committee or the Washington County Board of Supervisors. The Committee and Land Conservation staff encourage responses from our readers.

**Land Conservation Committee**
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**Education Coordinator and Editor**
Sue Millin
WHERE IS THIS?
Write your answer on a 3x5 card along with your name, address & phone number.

MAIL TO:
Where in the County?
Washington County
Land Conservation Dept.,
333 E. Washington St,
Suite 3200, West Bend,
WI 53095.

WIN:
One correct entry will be drawn to win a blue bird house!!!

Where in the County?

Congratulations to Kenneth J. Weber of Hartford for his correct identification of an old farm foundation that was transformed into an interesting workshop. This unique structure can be found near Holy Hill on St. Augustine Road. Kenneth is the lucky winner of a rustic blue bird house!

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