How’s the water? Did you ever stop to wonder how we get our information on the condition of our rivers, streams, lakes, aquifers and wetlands? On whether these waters are safe enough to swim in, fish from, or use for drinking or irrigation purposes? Monitoring provides this basic information.

According to Education Coordinator, Sue Millin “the LCD is revamping its’ current monitoring program. In order to better assess the impacts land use activity and non-point source pollution are having on water quality in Washington County we are expanding the Citizen Monitoring Program.”

“This program will be used not only as an educational opportunity.... but as a way to gather much needed water quality information throughout Washington County,” shares County Conservationist, Troy Kuphal.

Partnering with the Department of Natural Resources and local volunteers we will gather biological, chemical and physical habitat assessment data. This data will

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Did You Know?

George Washington Was The Father of Composting

Did you know that the father of our county, George Washington practiced composting?

Being the innovator that he was, George was always trying new methods to improve his crop yields at Mt. Vernon where the topsoil was thin and full of clay.

Washington undertook several experiments to find the best form of fertilizer. He started composting in 1760. He used cow manure, fish heads and creek mud to start the compost, according to Dennis Pogue, director of restoration of Mt. Vernon.

Some 240 years later, composting is still around, and still a good way to improve the soil fertility and curb erosion.

It improves the soil structure and so that it holds more water with less runoff. More microorganisms allow for greater availability of nutrients in the form the plants need. Composting is also a great way to handle yard waste. Keeping it out of the storm sewers and even the local landfill is important because the nutrients can leach off into surface waters, where they could contribute to an algae problem.

For more information on handling yard waste, including alternatives to composting call the LCD for an informational packet.

Looking for Volunteer Monitors

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then be analyzed and compiled so that management decisions can be made in order to improve the water quality of Washington County.

Volunteers of various ages and educational backgrounds have already signed up to participate. If you are a concerned landowner, school teacher, area sportsman, or area student this is good opportunity for you to learn about your area water resources.

A volunteer training workshop will be held on Saturday April 27 @ Riverside Park in West Bend.

For more information on the Adopt-A-WATERWAY Monitoring Program or to sign up for the workshop contact Sue Millin at (262) 335-4807 or send e-mail to lcsue@co.washington.wi.us.
As the snow recedes many homeowners are anxiously waiting to haul out the fertilizer spreaders and start up their lawn mowers. But if the sound of mowers make your brow sweat and your back ache... here are some tips to make this lawn-care season easy on yourself, the environment and your pocketbook.

**Test Your Soil**

To help ensure a healthy lawn, test the soil before seeding or applying fertilizers. The soil test results will tell you how much fertilizer your lawn needs. Call our office for your free soil test kit. All you pay for is the comprehensive certified soil analysis. It is easy to do and no special tools are required.

**Time Your Application**

Your first fertilizer application should be done mid to late May...after the lawn has been dethatched and aerated. You should apply 1 lb. Nitrogen for every 1000 sq. ft. of lawn. Plan the next application for late June. Cut your fertilizer rate in half. Grass should be well established by now and if lawn clippings are kept on the surface, the nitrogen needs will be minimal due to their decomposition. Your last fertilizer application should be made in early to mid October at 1 lb. Nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. of lawn.

**Fertilize Carefully-Cement Never Greens**

Be sure to avoid spreading fertilizer on your driveway and sidewalk. If granules land on paved areas, sweep them back on to your lawn. On the strip of grass between the street and sidewalk reduce your fertilizer amount to half or to none. Always avoid spreading fertilizers in your ditch. More fertilizer is not better! Excessive fertilization will pollute our surface waters through runoff and will pollute our groundwater through leaching. Follow the instructions on the fertilizer bag. Most lawns will require one 20 lb. bag or less.

**Use Natures' Free Fertilizers**

Good lawn management uses nature’s “free” fertilizers. Keep your clippings on the ground. This can reduce your fertilizer bill by 50%. Remember how green the lawn gets after a rain; summer precipitation provides up to 20 lbs. of Nitrogen to your lawn a year. Apply a light amount of garden compost to the lawn in spring. This will build up organic matter. Seed the lawn with a mix of grasses and low-growing legumes such as white clover. Clovers take nitrogen from the air and add it to the soil.

Lawn care doesn’t have to be hard work. By following these tips your courtyard will be fit for kings and queens, protect the environment and save you money!
A nine acre, permanent riparian buffer will soon be established on this land.

Owners will receive over $20,000.00 to retire the cropland along the Milwaukee River.

If you own property that abuts a waterway... you could be eligible too!

Buffer Initiative Off To A Good Start

A new Washington County Conservation Initiative is off to a great start with over 15 acres of riparian buffers being prepared for permanent easement.

This exciting buffer initiative taps into funding from the state and federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and will reimburse Washington County landowners for retiring cropland near waterways.

County Conservationist, Troy Kuphal believes that the buffer initiative has the potential to reduce sediment delivered to county streams by 5,000 tons.....and possibly up to 7,000 tons.

With over 4,000 acres and 1,275 landowners targeted the project will help install conservation buffers that will improve soil, air and water quality; enhance wildlife habitat and restore biodiversity.

If you own land that comes within 150 feet of a stream, lake or river; and it has been cropped 2 out of the last 5 years you may be eligible. The program is currently being offered to all Washington County landowners except those in Germantown.

“We will be focussing our efforts on Quaas Creek, Polk Springs and Lehner Creek...they are our first priority.” states technician, Stephanie Egner.

“From there we will move into the Wayne and Kohlsville Creek area. We will be contacting eligible landowners soon.”

A quick site analysis and briefing on the dollars available may be all you need to get started. For more informations or to set up a site visit call Stephanie at 262-335-4804.
New Technician On Board

Matt Zoschke has recently joined the Land Conservation Department as a Conservation Technician. He replaces technician, Scott Petges who resigned in August to pursue a job in Illinois.

Matt’s primary responsibility will be to help landowners and farmers develop nutrient management plans. He also hopes to raise awareness about soil quality...through indicators such as compaction, organic matter, pH, micronutrients and green manure crops.

He will be active in the Washington County Buffer Initiative and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and will also assist in the administration of County Ordinances.

Matt graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point in 1997, and now resides in Fond du Lac with his wife, Amy. Together they operate a 20 acre mixed vegetable farm...providing residents with fresh produce and an invaluable opportunity to connect with the land. Matt also coordinates the Farmers’ Market in Fond du Lac.

Although free time is limited, he runs 4-6 miles daily. In the winter (the ones with snow, anyway) Matt likes to hike or cross-country ski in the Kettle Moraine Forest.

How does he do it all? “I like to be active. Community involvement is very important...we all walk on this fragile planet together and together is how we shall all make it last,” explains Zoschke.

We would like to offer a warm welcome to Matt!

You can reach him at:
262-335-4806
or email
lcddmmatt@co.washington.wi.us

Matt Zoschke
Conservation Technician
December Committee Meeting
Efforts to protect Quaas Creek continue to move forward with the nearly completed Protection Plan. At a December meeting the Quaas Creek Watershed Protection Committee (QCWPC) established recommendations designed to achieve their mission of preserving and protecting the natural resources in the watershed.

The recommendations, along with corresponding issues and goals are being enveloped into a document known as the Quaas Creek Watershed Protection Plan. It will go to the County Board for adoption and then municipalities will be responsible for implementation.

The Plan is being put together by a unique intergovernmental group including reps from the Town of Polk, West Bend, Trenton, the City of West Bend and Washington County. It focuses on preserving natural areas along streams and waterways. These areas, also known as corridors, buffer a stream from harmful land uses, and connect diverse ecosystems.

According to County Conservationist, Troy Kuphal, “Talk about preserving the land sparked some controversy at the meeting. While supportive of the cause, representatives from the building industry were concerned that these recommendations may effect property values and profitability.”

“Members of the QCWPC were sympathetic to their concerns, but felt that without a strong focus on preserving the most critical lands, the Plan would fall short of its’ intended mission” states Kuphal.

All agreed, however, that incentives and voluntary cooperative should be the primary means to achieve preservation of the remaining natural environment in Quaas Creek.

Why The Fuss?
Twenty years from now, it’s expected that a majority of the Quaas Creek Watershed will be converted to urban land uses. rooftops, roads and parking lots prevent the replenishment of groundwater that feeds the stream...and polluted runoff from these areas is impossible to completely purify. Irresponsible development will fragment and destroy ecosystems that wildlife need and that Washington County residents have come to enjoy.

ecosystem ...
an ecological community together with its environment, functioning together

Committee Goals

Land Conservation
Preserve/protect remaining wetlands, natural areas and corridors along waterways

Stormwater Management
Set standards for runoff infiltration and better filtration for new developments

Remediation
Install measures that clean up existing sources of pollution

Habitat Restoration
Restore environments where fish and wildlife can reproduce and thrive

Public Outreach
Educate local citizens and business about the critical role they play in watershed protection.
Champions of the Environment Competition Deadline - April 19
K-12 students are invited to participate in the fifth annual Champions Competition. This year’s theme is “Rivers: Ribbons of Life.” Medals and savings bonds will be awarded to the top three finalists in each age category. Submissions must be turned in by 4:30 PM on Friday, April 19.

Monitoring Workshop - April 27
We need the eyes, ears and hands of local residents to help us monitor Washington County waterways. Workshop will be held at Riverside Park Pavilion in West Bend. Call for reservation.

Stenciling Kickoff - May 4
Help educate Washington County citizens about stormwater pollution by stencilling “Dump No Waste, Drains to River” next to storm drains. All materials provided. Call ahead.

Milwaukee River Clean Up - May 15
You can help by volunteering a few hours of your time to collect garbage along the Milwaukee River and local streams. Mark you calendars for 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Call for informational posters. Join us!

Champions Reception ... May 29
Winners of the 2002 Champions Competition will be honored at a environmental reception to be held at the UW-Washington County at 7:00 PM.

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.

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Land Conservation/Natural Resources Staff
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Stephanie Egner, Scott Schmidt, Dan Knickelbein,
Orville Kurth, Mary Jo Crass

Education Coordinator and Editor
Sue Millin

We have been quick to assume rights to use water but slow to recognize obligations to preserve and protect it....
- Sandra Postel, Last Oasis: Facing Water Scarcity
Where in the County?

Congratulations to Margaret Johnson of Hubertus for her correct identification of the intriguing log barn that is located on Elmwood Road in Hubertus. Margaret is the lucky winner of a rustic blue bird house.

If there is magic on the planet, it is contained in the water.