



Badger Report

APRIL 2012

Southwest Badger Expands Forest Stewardship Efforts Welcome Zak!

Southwest Badger RC&D has expanded our forest stewardship program by joining partners in the Driftless Forest Network (DFN) My Wisconsin Woods project. The Project is a partnership of public and non-profit organizations working together to help woodland owners in southwest Wisconsin. To learn more about the project visit the website at mywisconsinwoods.org.

Funding for the project comes from the U.S. Forest Service through the American Forest Foundation. Southwest Badger RC&D has contracted with the American Forest Foundation to hire Zak Neitzel as the Driftless Forest Network Field Forester. Zak started on April 23rd and is based in Richland Center, Wis. He can be reached at zak@mywisconsinwoods.org.

Welcome Zak!

Zak grew up on a family woodlot outside of Tomah, Wisconsin. After graduating high school he attended Vermilion Community College in Ely, Minnesota where he was awarded an Associate's Degree in Natural Resources

Technology. He then transferred to the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point where he obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Forest Management. During college he worked as a logger and as a wildlife technician on Fort McCoy. After college Zak worked for the US Forest Service in the Southern Black Hills before going to work on private and industrial forestry operation in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. For the last year he has been working as a consulting forester with



private landowners throughout west central Wisconsin.

During his free time Zak enjoys spending time outdoors with his wife and new puppy.

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Cheese Country Trail Final Report Available

The final report of the year-long study of the Cheese Country Trail is complete. This collaborative effort of local groups and UW Extension was designed to assess how many people are using the trail, the user characteristics and the user perceptions of trail conditions. The final report is an overall evaluation of local economic impacts of this important recreational asset. It is available online at the Green County UW Extension website <http://green.uwex.edu/>.

During the 12 month study period, seventy four local volunteers spent more than 1,400 hours collecting the data summarized in the report. They conducted 683 randomly allocated two hour trail observations and a

total of 730 face-to-face interviews. Results of their work highlight several important implications for outdoor recreation planning and local economic development.

The Tri-County Trails Commission plans to use the results of the study to improve trail experiences for future users. Short fact sheets will be developed to summarize the report. Presentations and fact sheets will be available for local communities, businesses and counties to help create economic development related to the trail and its users.

For more information, please contact Cara Carper at the Green County UW Extension Office at (608) 328-9440 or cara.carper@ces.uwex.edu.

Southwest Wisconsin AIS Planning Initiative

Don Barrette, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator

In February Don was successful in setting up a Japanese Knotweed eradication project in Richland County. He coordinated the effort and organized county partners, Trout Unlimited chapters, and private citizens in an effort to eliminate Japanese Knotweed on Willow Creek. In the first phase of the project Don and project partners worked on mapping the infestation to determine if it would be eligible for Rapid Response action or if it required a longer term management plan.

During this time Don was also engaged in many outreach activities throughout

the nine county region. In late January He attended the Highland Lions Club Blackhawk Lake Fisheree where he distributed AIS materials and discussed AIS issues with area fishermen. In February Don attended many Working Group meetings hosted by River Alliance of Wisconsin in an effort to increase awareness of AIS issues in the region. Also in February Don organized and staffed a booth at the Madison Fishing Expo where he and other AIS coordinators had a major audience to discuss AIS issues. In March Don presented AIS regional

goals and concerns to a large audience at the Driftless Area Symposium held in La Crosse. He was also an active participant at local Trout Unlimited Chapter meetings and discussions.

Lastly, the AIS project secured additional funding from the Wisconsin DNR Aquatic Invasive Species grant program. The added funding will allow us to hire a student intern for the next two summers to assist with additional sampling and outreach and keep the project going through June 2014.

Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

Katie Abbott, Project Coordinator

A Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) general sign-up occurred this spring from March 12 to April 6. I worked with the area Farm Bill Biologist, Erin Holmes, and the Iowa County Farm Services Agency (FSA) to plan and implement a workshop about the sign-up. About 30 landowners attended two separate sessions to learn about how the sign-up works and about their options. I helped seven landowners with their program questions while they were applying at FSA, and once we know who was accepted I will help NRCS with site visits and conservation planning. I also provided ten landowners with technical assistance with cost-share applications, burn plans, seed mixes, site visits, easement information, mapping, and general planning advice.

The spring has also kept me busy writing grants for outreach and salary expenses, including National Fish and Wildlife

Foundation and NRCS's Conservation Partners Grant, Audubon and Toyota's Together Green Innovation Grant, Unity Avenue Foundation, and Irwin Andrew Porter Foundation.

Outreach and education efforts kept me busiest in late winter. With the help



Participants in the Land Management Workshop held March 3, 2012.

of several partners, I organized a Land Management Workshop that was held on March 3. Fifty-seven landowners came out

to learn about grassland birds, prescribed fire, beginning management planning, advanced land management, biomass opportunities, and invasive species. Each participant also received a binder full of resources and contact information, and had the opportunity to learn more from several partners' informational displays. To encourage participants to turn in evaluation forms, we raffled off three books donated by partners. The evaluations were very positive, indicating landowners increased their awareness, knowledge, and motivation to manage their properties. Overall average rating for the workshop was 6.2 out of 7.

We have more fun outreach activities planned for this year, including a frog field trip, community reading and discussions, presentations, film screenings, and a prairie festival, which will take place on September 8 at Folklore Village.

Upcoming Events

June 1, 2012 - 10 am - noon
Quarterly Council Meeting
Botham Vineyards & Winery
Barneveld, WI

June 1, 2012 - 1 pm - 3 pm
Tour of Military Ridge Prairie
Heritage Area
Leaving from Botham Vineyards

September 7, 2012 - 10 am - noon
Quarterly Council Meeting
Richland Center, WI

Forest Stewardship

Patrick Dayton, Forester/Project Coordinator

So far this year in the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) project I have worked with 29 landowners, wrote 146 acres of forest management plans, marked 110 acres of timber, and 20 acres of Timber Stand Improvement (TSI). I am ready to dodge the poison ivy that is greening up already.

This year was my second year working with UW-Extension on their Learn about the Land series and it was nice to continue where we left off last year.

Whenever I get a chance to continue building relationships with partners of Southwest Badger RC&D it makes me realize the strengths of our sustained and lasting efforts. Although projects come and go, our forest stewardship program continues forward concerned with all

forest issues of Southwest Wisconsin. For example, I had the opportunity to visit St. Paul Energy District's wood yard this spring to see how they process their wood supply and ensure that downtown St. Paul has enough energy. I did this because the



Timber stand improvement work done after a timber harvest to help preferred trees regenerate. Small stumps are trees that were removed.

University of Iowa was planning a visit to St. Paul after they had called me asking about our True Costs of Harvesting Woody Biomass project. A group from Northwest Illinois also called me this spring inquiring about some of the data from our report. The True Costs of Harvesting Woody Biomass report is available on the Southwest Badger website. So, although our biomass project is finished we at Southwest Badger RC&D continue to care about and stay involved with past projects that remain current concern. I also attended a meeting of a working group this last winter that discussed neo-tropical migratory bird habitat. Our persistence is one of the things that makes me proud to be part of the Southwest Badger forestry stewardship program.

Southwest Wisconsin Grazing Initiative

Dennis Rooney, Grazing Specialist

I'm happy to be back on staff as of January 1, 2012 after being off work from July 1 through December 31, 2011 because of funding issues. The first few days of the year were spent setting up my office, since then I have been contacting Environment Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) applicants that are applying for funding assistance for rotational grazing practices. My job is to consult with applicants on their resource concerns and needs, collect information for the grazing plan, and measure and map their practices for NRCS. To date, I've contacted 10 applicants. I have completed

5 grazing plans and measured and mapped for the rest.

I attended a variety of workshops and conferences, including the GrassWorks Grazing Conference in Wausau in mid-January, the Dollars and Sense of Grazing workshop at the Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference in Stockton, Illinois, a workshop on multi-species pasture and patch burn grazing, and the Tri-State Beef Days where Rhonda Gildersleeve presented on Rotational Grazing to Maximize Production per Acre. I also facilitated the

Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy Farmers.

In addition, I've been working with the Great Rivers Grazing group to plan pasture walks for the 2012 grazing season. I contacted approximately 16 potential pasture walk hosts and 11 agreed to host pasture walks. I was responsible for organizing the dates, times, and topics for the walks as well as writing up directions to each site. Go to the website to view the 2012 Pasture Walk schedule (<http://www.swbadger.org/projects.html>).

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