



# SPRINGS

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Newsletter

## Pheasant Branch Conservancy-“A Great Place in Wisconsin”

By Lloyd Eagan, FOPBC President

The Pheasant Branch Conservancy has been designated a “Great Place in Wisconsin” by the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association. The Friends contributed a letter of support and photos for the nomination, which cited the Conservancy’s rich ecology; cultural, hydrologic and geologic history; well-managed natural resources; and accessibility to all age groups. At their annual awards ceremony in Milwaukee on October 27, they recognized the City of Middleton for its work to preserve, protect and enhance the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. City Planning Director Eileen Kelley accepted the award on behalf of the City. Here is a link to a short video produced by APA-

Wisconsin staff about the Pheasant Branch Conservancy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2NiIfDehffM&feature=youtu.be>

Here are a few excerpts from the



application:

### What makes the Place Great?

What makes Pheasant Branch Conservancy so great is the location within the City, the size of the conservancy, the accessibility, the shared use trail networks (which accommodates walkers, runners, bicyclists, wheelchairs and strollers), the wildlife habitat (and management) and the vegetation and restoration efforts that have occurred through the years.

The Conservancy is also great because of the efforts of the **Friends of Pheasant Branch**, a non-profit group whose mission is to “to restore, preserve and promote

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## Annual Meeting to Focus on Health Benefits of Nature

By John Daly, FOPBC Vice-President

We encourage you to join us at the annual meeting of the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy on Saturday, January 20 from 8:30-11:00 a.m. Come celebrate our collective efforts to protect, restore and promote the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and watershed.

This year’s theme is the “Health Benefits of Nature.” Most of us sense that taking

a walk in a conservancy, a forest, a large green space, a park or just being outside is good for you no matter your age. Now, research is showing that visiting these places has real, quantifiable health benefits, both mental and physical. Think of it as a prescription with no negative side effects and it is also... free!

Scientific studies have shown that natural

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Protect. Restore. Promote.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT...

Dear Friends,

Thanks to all new and continuing members for your generous support of our mission! 2017 has been a great year in many ways and especially with the honor of the Conservancy being designated as a "Great Place in Wisconsin" by the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Planning Association. The Friends assisted with the nomination by supplying photos and a letter of support (see article page 1.)

To celebrate the accomplishments of this year, please join us for the Friends Annual Meeting on Saturday, January 20 at Asbury Church Fellowship Hall, 610 University Avenue. The theme this year is the "Health Benefits of Nature," and the speaker is Dr. Susan McFadden, a nationally known expert in the fields of cognition, memory, aging and the benefits of nature. A hot catered breakfast will be served starting at 8:45. See article and sign-up information on page 1.

Out in the Conservancy, a transformation is taking place on the northwest side of Frederick's Hill. This 2.5-acre area had not been cleared since Dane County Parks acquired the property 25 years ago. An Operation Fresh Start crew, working with Dane County and the FOPBC Restoration and Management Committee

(R & M), has worked through the fall to remove huge amounts of invasive species, revealing oaks and other desirable woody species that will in time will become an oak savanna. In the Bock Forest, land managers and R & M volunteers are working through the winter to prepare firebreaks for spring burns, remove invasive brush, collect and clean seed. A plant survey in June revealed a 50% increase in native grasses and forbs in the Bock Forest in the past 7 years.

As 2017 winds down, I want to thank retiring board members Dagny Myrah and Margaret Lewis for their dedication to the Friends. Dagny served as FOPBC President for 2015 and 2016 and worked with Governance and Executive Committees. Margaret has worked with several committees and this year chaired the Development and Marketing Committee, guiding fund raising campaigns, media issues and web site redesign. Both will continue to serve on FOPBC committees. In November the board approved the slate of new board members for 2018 to include Mark Warshauer, Janet Staker Woerner, and Ann Schwartz.

*Lloyd I. Eagan*

## OUR BOARD

President *Lloyd Eagan* Vice President *John Daly*

Treasurer *Holly Sledge* Secretary *Pam Shannon*

Board Members  
*Jim Bachhuber, Ron Biendseil, Herb Garn, Lyman Wible, Forrest Weesner, Lloyd Eagan, Pam Shannon, Holly Sledge, Lois Sater, Margaret Lewis, Stefanie Brouwer, Dagny Myrah, Deb Weitzel, John Daly*

Editors  
*Stefanie Brouwer and Joleen Stinson*

Illustrations/Photos  
*Susan Gruber, Mike Healy, courtesy of Kromrey Middle School, courtesy of Mark Warshauer, Colleen Robinson, courtesy of Susan McFadden, courtesy of Janet Staker Woerner*

Send Newsletter Ideas to  
[office@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:office@pheasantbranch.org)

Is your Membership Current?  
*The mailing name block on this newsletter includes your membership expiration date*

Please Visit our Website  
[www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org)

## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP, ANNUAL MEETING RSVP, PHENOLOGY CALENDAR ORDERS

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Memberships, Annual Meeting RSVPs and calendars can also be ordered securely online at [www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org)*

**Membership Level:**  
*memberships purchased after 9/1 apply to following calendar year*

- \$10 Student
- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family

**Additional Giving Opportunities:**

- \$100 Friend
- \$250 Benefactor
- \$500 Steward
- \$1,000 Hero

**Annual Meeting** \*includes a full breakfast

Number of attendees: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: (\$20 per person) \_\_\_\_\_

**Phenology Calendars** \*makes a great gift

Number of calendars: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed: (\$15 each) \_\_\_\_\_

*Calendars will be mailed to you upon receipt of form and payment*

**Total Amount Enclosed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please send to:  
**FOPBC**  
P.O. Box 628242  
Middleton, WI 53562

# KMS Students Take on Rain Gardens

By Anne Boucher, FOPBC Education Coordinator

Kromrey Middle School (KMS) sixth grade teachers Kathy Hiteman and Sherry Jacobsen met with a FOPBC team to discuss meaningful outdoor education for their students in August, 2017. A plan was devised to have the students learn about the rain gardens on the KMS campus. The rain gardens were installed in 2014 as a best management practice for handling storm water runoff from the parking lots. They serve to protect Pheasant Branch Creek located in the Conservancy corridor behind the school.

Naturalists from FOPBC assisted students in their lessons. Groups of students made observations in the rain gardens to discover their design and function. Students explored the native

plants and invading species found in the gardens. Reed Canary Grass and thistles were two species that had gained considerable ground since the school opened just a few short years ago. The students researched the non-native plants and decided which species to remove as the last part of the curriculum.



*KMS sixth graders with bags of invasive species*

The study of the rain gardens led to a service opportunity. All sixth graders were able to help the school by removing unwanted plants from among the natives in the rain gardens. Over 50 trash bags full of invasive weeds were collected and delivered to Purple Cow Organics to be turned into compost. The students' efforts helped to preserve the biodiversity, reduce the need for herbicides, and improve the function of the rain gardens.

This wonderful opportunity was supported by all of the sixth grade science teachers and the administrators at KMS. It enabled approximately 275 students to get outside and learn about their environment on three separate but related occasions. And they were able to help their school and help to protect Pheasant Branch Creek as well.

## A Great Place in Wisconsin...

*Continued from page 1*

the value of conservancy lands and other habitats in the Pheasant Branch watershed for today and tomorrow". The Friends' work has included fundraising, writing applications for and receiving various grant funding, education, restoration and other wonderful programs that help to enhance the Conservancy and resident's enjoyment of the area.

**How has the Conservancy adapted to growth and change?** Through the collective efforts of various City entities (the Parks Commission, the Conservancy Lands Commission, the Public Lands Department, the Water Resources Management Commission, the Plan Commission and the Common Council) and the **Friends of Pheasant Branch**, the Conservancy has adapted wonderfully to Middleton's population growth and development. As the City has grown (from approximately 10,000 people in 1980 up to approximately 19,500 today an increasing number of

people are able to enjoy the Conservancy, and many support the protection and restoration efforts. The City has adopted stringent storm water management ordinances, in part in recognition of the value the Conservancy has in water quality efforts for the area. As stated in the 2011 Conservancy Lands Plan "With the extensive planning and protection work of the 1960's and continuing today, the Pheasant Branch Conservancy Area and Middleton's other conservancy lands have been preserved for the benefit of all people, wildlife and the natural environment.

**How does the Pheasant Branch Conservancy add value to the community?** The Conservancy adds incredible value to the City of Middleton. The City has a tax base of over \$3 billion dollars, of which over 40% is non - residential. The Conservancy offers a place for quiet reflection, exercise, commuting or recreating on

the extensive trail network, or simply enjoying and appreciating nature, for the residents and employees who spend time in the City and for visitors from far and wide throughout the day and evening hours, weekends, and through all the seasons. The Conservancy acts as an outdoor classroom for the elementary, middle school and high school students in the District and beyond. **Friends of Pheasant Branch** volunteers of all ages enjoy helping out with habitat maintenance on restoration workdays, in governance and on special event activities, giving young and old alike the opportunity to participate fully in their community and to gather together with old friends, make new friends and preserve and protect habitat right in their community. The community gardens and forest provide food and experiences that bring the community together in work and in celebration of nature.



# NATURALIST NOTEBOOK: News of Nature in the Conservancy

By Dale Klubertanz,

## Winter Silence in the Conservancy

Winter blew in under December's gibbous waning super moon, softly illuminating sleepy Conservancy lands. Heralding winds, which were growing cold and rumbly by the hour, signaled the approach of the coming season spilling out of the dark-ominous blue of northwestern skies. Its arrival was met with a fit of fierce thunder and rain as it took up residence in a mild, maverick, warm day. This previously good-natured, breezy Sunday had been part of a blending of summer and fall, marked only by hints of yielding to the occasional whims of wintertime. Crickets had chirped into the last of October and the wetland still bustled with a cacophony of migratory stopovers well into December.

Earlier in September and October, the native plant communities had long grown pale and leafless, with little regard for the quirkiness of what concerns the weather. The timing of a prairie's winter preparations has always come from dictums deep within the native

community's character. These ancient seasonal cycles are much more reliable than the weather can sometimes be and are worthy bellwethers to attune one's senses to the rhythms of nature.

*"Silence is not the absence of something but the presence of everything."  
~ Gordon Hempton*

At year's end, Bock Community Forest prairie is already busy resting. Most of the creatures that had lived here to raise their young and feed from its bounty are gone. The echo of bird songs and buzzing of insects have long faded into the silence of winter.

Listen! Hear the whistle of the wind and the rustle of ten thousand stems and leaflets quivering in a burst of brisk air. Look! See the golden tall prairie grasses, with big blue stem and Indian grass among them. They sway in the gusty breeze, their bending inflorescence pointing which way the wind blows. Against the blue-steel sky, the grasses glow in the splendor of the sun's rays. Feel the stillness summon a quiet place within your own wild nature and the

stirring of what it is to be alive and renewed in a recovering wilderness.

Again, Gordon Hempton:

*"(Silence) is the presence of time, undisturbed. It can be felt within the chest. Silence nurtures our nature, our human nature, and lets us know who we are. Left with a more receptive mind and*

*a more attuned ear, we become better listeners not only to nature but to each other. Silence can be carried like embers from a fire. Silence can be found, and silence can find you. Silence can be lost and also recovered. But silence cannot be imagined, although most people think so. To experience the soul-swelling wonder of silence, you must hear it."*

As the busyness of human communities become unnaturally louder and more distracting, we are blessed in this winter season to know and find refuge in the native plant communities of Pheasant Branch Conservancy. The quiet and enlivening presence that is found there will stir the silence of a disquieted soul, one that is retreating from where silence is no longer a spoken language.

## New Board Members for 2018

By Lyman Wible, FOPBC  
Governance Committee Co-Chair

### Mark Warshauer

Mark Warshauer is a supporter of the Friends, and enthusiastic about the mission. After taking our Master Naturalist course this spring, he focused his "Capstone" project on establishing safety (friction) strips for the boardwalks. During college he worked with the US Forest Service on trail building



Mark Warshauer

and maintenance, and has been helping with the erosion project on Frederick's Hill.

Mark and his wife, Marilyn have two adult children and two grand children. Mark lives in Middleton, and enjoys Arizona in the winter: he has already taken on a technology project to

help all traveling board members share in conference calls of Board meetings. Mark is retired from CUNA Mutual. His career there and in banking included marketing and communications, finance, investments, asset management, sales, and client services.

### Janet Staker Woerner

Janet Staker-Woerner lives in downtown Middleton, and is a frequent visitor to

*continued on page 6...*

# Kudos to FOPBC Master Naturalist Training

By Barbara Mathis, Master Naturalist Class of 2017

This past summer, I participated in the Master Naturalist Training program hosted by the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy in cooperation with UW Extension. I loved this course! Your Conservancy is beautiful and a great teaching ground, and our instructors were just the best teachers. This course was the highlight of my summer and I certainly look forward to giving back my time by helping out at the Conservancy.

This course offered environmental education that taught me so much. Classes were hands-on and taught with great insight by Colleen Robinson, Deb Weitzel, Janet Kane, Tom Bernthal and others. Our group of 14 enthusiastic volunteers frequently broke down into small groups for discussions and experiments, and we enjoyed being outside in nature while receiving some great lessons.

We learned about geologic history, ecology, and water resources. Who knew a visit to the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District would be so informative? Hiking in Devils Lake State Park and visiting the

International Crane Foundation were just a few of our classroom settings.

The Master Naturalist program promotes awareness, understanding and stewardship of the



*Lake Monona tour with DNR staff*



*Getting close and personal with Lake Mendota fish*

state's natural resources by developing a corps of well-informed volunteers dedicated to education and service

within their communities. The Wisconsin program began in 2013 and is supported by University of Wisconsin Extension. In order to become a Master Naturalist, you must actively participate in 40 hours of coursework (natural history, interpretation and conservation stewardship), which combines both classroom instruction as well as field experiences (hands-on learning). Topics include: geology, ecology, plants, wildlife, education/interpretation, water, aquatic life and human influences. Professional natural resource educators and scientists teach all content.

Since the program's inception, there are now 522 Master Naturalists residing in 53 counties throughout the state of Wisconsin. This network of well-informed citizens volunteers 40 hours of service per year as well as participates in 8 hours of annual advanced training.

If you would like to gain a deeper understanding of Wisconsin's natural resources and the processes that affect them, this program is for you! It's a great opportunity for you to connect with nature, learn more about the natural world and meet new friends who also care about our environment. Please visit the web site to learn more: [www.wimasternaturalist.org](http://www.wimasternaturalist.org)

## FOPBC Board Opposes Proposed Wetlands Deregulation

By Stefanie Brouwer, FOPBC Watershed Committee Chair

FOPBC President Lloyd Eagan sent letters to state legislators in November conveying the board's strong opposition to AB547/SB600, two companion bills that have been introduced and referred to committee. If enacted, these bills would exempt nonfederal and artificial wetlands from a number of current DNR permitting requirements and, with federal approval, would allow the DNR to administer its own permit program for discharge of dredged or fill materials into navigable waters. The board is concerned that the loss of wetland protection will adversely affect not only the wetlands in the Pheasant Branch Watershed but also wetlands throughout the state. Wetlands are essential for flood storage capacity, replenishment of groundwater aquifers, filtering pollutants out of surface water, providing habitat for fish and wildlife, supporting tourism and enhancing property values. A copy of the letter has been posted to our website.

# Leashed Dogs Help the Conservancy Thrive!

By Janet Kane, FOPBC Restoration and Management Co-Chair

Dogs are welcome in Pheasant Branch Conservancy as long as they are leashed and on the trail. In recent years, the number of off-leash dogs has increased. Some people regularly have their dogs off-leash, even though we have talked to them and asked them to follow the rule. There's a dog park nearby on County Highway Q for those who want their dogs to run free.

I generally follow rules, and am always surprised by those who feel they are exempt from them. Maybe it's out of ignorance – they may be unaware of the rule, or they don't understand the rule's importance. The UW Arboretum, Pope Farm Conservancy, Owen Conservation Park and Holy Wisdom Monastery are just some of the places that do not allow dogs. The stewards of these properties realize that dogs can threaten fragile habitats.

I often write about activities to restore native plant communities at Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Healthy, diverse native plant communities provide habitat for many species – bees, butterflies, spiders, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals. Many research reports attribute population declines to habitat loss. The restored prairies provide a refuge for threatened species. Dogs running loose through the prairies undermine the refuge. When reminded of the policy, some people say, "My dog wouldn't hurt anything." But the animals that inhabit the Conservancy don't discriminate. For them, survival requires relocating rather than waiting to see if a dog is friendly.



Over the last decade, birding expert Mike McDowell has recorded his observations of individual bird species

at Pheasant Branch Conservancy. He's noticed declines in ground nesting birds like Eastern Meadowlarks, Sedge Wrens, and Clay Colored Sparrows. He asks, "For habitat that, from a restoration perspective, seems only to have improved over the years, why are these species disappearing or declining at the Conservancy?" He hasn't observed these declines at the nearby Pope Farm Conservancy.

This next year we will be meeting with City of Middleton and Dane County officials to address the problem of dog owners who do not leash their dogs. If you have recommendations or suggestions, please send them to [restoration@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:restoration@pheasantbranch.org) or post them to the Friends' Facebook page. You can help by telling friends and neighbors about the rule, so people know that dogs should be leashed in the Conservancy.

If you'd like more information about the variety of Conservancy residents, check

*continued on page 7...*

## Board Members

the Conservancy. Her outside interests include a passion for reading, adventure travel, and love of history. She has been active on the Board of the Friends of Middleton Dog Parks. Janet enjoys adventure travel, cross country skiing, hiking, and reading non-fiction. She has three grown daughters, one new grandbaby, and a Brittany Spaniel named Abby. Janet is a frequent visitor to the Pheasant Branch with Abby (on leash). They love the trails and the unique features of the Conservancy. She grew up on a corn and soybean farm, so her love of the outdoors started at a very young age.



*Janet Staker-Woerner*

Janet has career experience in marketing and communications. She is a faculty

associate at UW-Madison Continuing Studies. Her current research stream is social media and the connection to social capital in higher education. She has taught in online and

remote teaching methods, and holds a Ph.D in Education, a master's degree in Marketing/E-Commerce with an emphasis in the digital environment, and an undergraduate degree in Political Science Education.

### **Ann Schwartz**

Ann Schwartz lives in Northlake and grew up near Mt. Horeb. Growing up



*Ann Schwartz*

on a farm taught her love of the land. She has helped out with administrative tasks for the Conservancy over the past year and has been a member for several years. She enjoys being in the Conservancy several times a week taking hikes.

Ann attended UW-Whitewater and Madison Area College and studied accounting and information technology. She recently retired after working in the IT field for 33 years, the last 25 of those in management and leadership roles. She had the opportunity to work in the insurance, health care and state government sectors. Her career included positions with State of Wisconsin, CUNA Mutual, Aurora Health Care.

# Bock Forest Update

By Mike Healy, Restoration Ecologist, Adaptive Restoration LLC

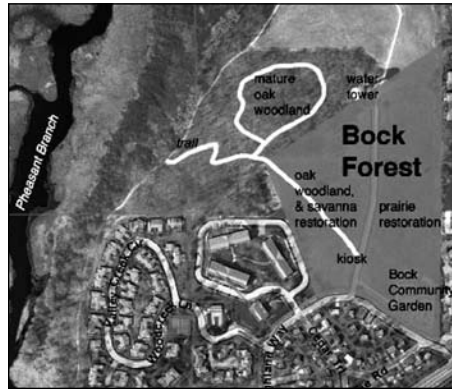
Now that winter is settling in, land managers are working through to-do lists of projects done best outside of the growing season. At Bock Community Forest, this means preparing firebreaks for prescribed burns of the prairie, savanna and oak woodland, removing invasive brush, and acquiring and cleaning native seed. Over the next few months, City of Middleton crews and/or contractors will be implementing this work.

If you haven't had an opportunity to visit Bock Forest, please stop by! The main gravel trail offers wonderful views of Frederick's Hill and the north half of the Conservancy, and a natural surface trail starting near the kiosk winds northwest through upland savanna and oak woodland to link with a downhill segment that meets the main Conservancy trail. If you'd like to help with the restoration effort at Bock Forest, we will be holding volunteer work sessions throughout the spring and summer.

Thanks to a John C. Bock Foundation grant secured by the Friends, over 600 hours of volunteer effort, and matching funds from the City of Middleton, we've been able to advance the ecological restoration activities at the forest. As we transition into spring we're planning the following:

1. Prescribed burn of restored prairie, oak woodland and oak savanna (likely sometime February - April)
2. Prescribed burn of mature oak woodland adjacent to Bock Forest (likely

3. Forest and weed management on entire site to promote prairie, oak woodland and oak savanna establishment (April - October)



Above: Map of Bock Forest Trails  
Below: Ball and burlap shrubs ready for planting



4. Shrub, prairie plug and tree transplanting, and overseeding of prairie, oak woodland and oak savanna (March-May)
5. Preliminary planning for an interpretative shelter/center (year round)
6. Developing education materials specific to the Bock Forest (year round)

7. Updating interpretive signage (year round)
8. Partnering with neighbors to limit spread of invasive species into the Conservancy

As we've restored fire to the landscape and removed invasive trees and brush, we've observed increased cover and diversity of native prairie, savanna and oak woodland vegetation. A plant survey last June noted 84 native species in the restoration area. This is an underrepresentation of native species present, since over the past few years we've observed over 100 of the species planted as part of the restoration. Prior to the restoration, only 57 native grasses and forbs were present, and in many parts of the property the vegetative cover was 100 percent non-native. Consistent weed management, prescribed fire and overseeding have allowed us to shift the vegetation to mostly native prairie, savanna and oak woodland plants.

We'll likely continue burning every 1-3 years to promote establishment of native plants and to set back invasive brush. As the restoration matures, we will leave some areas intentionally unburned to serve as refugia (overwintering habitat) for insects and other wildlife. Restoration challenges ahead include keeping invasive species from encroaching into the Conservancy from adjacent properties, eliminating aggressive invasive plants within the restoration (e.g. crown vetch, reed canarygrass, leafy spurge), and managing aggressive native species (e.g. Canada goldenrod) to help maximize diversity of the site.

## Leashed Dogs

out these DNR Pamphlets: *Birds of Pheasant Branch Conservancy*, *Mammals of Pheasant Branch Conservancy*, and *Butterflies of Pheasant Branch Conservancy*. They're available at the Friends' website, [www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org).

Click on the tab "Newsletters and Reports" and scroll all the way to the bottom to the section labeled Wisconsin DNR Pamphlets. Let's all join together to sustain these

species and perhaps attract new Conservancy residents. And thanks to all those responsible members of the community who leash their dogs in the Conservancy.

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# City Seeks Input for Conservancy Lands Plan Update

By Stacey Marion, Adaptive Restoration LLC

The City of Middleton is developing a five-year update to its 2011-2016 Conservancy Lands Plan. This plan guides management of over 820 acres of conservancy land, 322 acres of which are in the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

In November 2017 the City's Conservancy Lands Committee selected Adaptive Restoration LLC to complete the five-year plan update. The first step of the process is to receive input from Conservancy visitors and stakeholders. The Friends are instrumental in maintaining the well being of Pheasant Branch Conservancy, and we want your voices heard!

The plan is an update to previous versions done in 2011-2016 and 2005-2010 and reflects changes in Middleton's land use, demographics and citizen interests over the last decade. City staff envision

this plan as, "guiding future restoration activities, fostering new working relationships between user groups, and reaffirming the city's commitment to preserving and enhancing the overall conservancy lands system," according to Mark Wegner, Assistant Director of Forestry and Public Lands.



Expected stagnant staffing and budget levels, however, are a challenge to managing the city's conservancy lands. Wegner explains, "The plan intends to help focus resources - money, labor, and material - on areas identified as

priorities".

Tell us what *your* priorities are. Share your ideas, comments and concerns about conservancy lands:

*Please take our online questionnaire. Follow the link at [adaptiverestoration.com/clplan](http://adaptiverestoration.com/clplan)*

*Attend the Conservancy Lands Plan Five-year Update Public Meeting on Saturday January 20, 2018 2-4 pm at the Middleton Public Library: Central Library*

*Call, email, or write.*

*608-515-8566*

*[clplan@adaptiverestoration.com](mailto:clplan@adaptiverestoration.com)*

*Adaptive Restoration LLC*

*8864 Offerdahl Rd,*

*Mt Horeb, WI 53572*

Please do not hesitate to contact us! We are presenting the plan to the City's Conservancy Lands Committee in February 2018, and to the Common Council in early March 2018.

## Operation Fresh Start Transforms Hill

By Janet Kane, FOPBC Restoration and Management Co-Chair

There's a whole new look at the northwest side of Frederick's Hill! The 2.5-acre area had not been cleared since Dane County Parks acquired the property about 25 years ago. The steep slope and dense brush made the work especially challenging. With Rob Schubert's leadership and Dane County's partnership, an energetic and dedicated Operation Fresh Start crew worked in the area for 3 weeks, one each in October, November and December. They cut, piled, and burned the brush. At one point there were more than 30 piles! They carefully applied herbicide to minimize resprouts.

Removing the buckthorn, honeysuckle and sumac uncovered many small oaks and other desirable woody natives.

You'll see an array of pink and orange flags on the hillside, each marking a tree that now will get the full benefit of the sun and the rain. It's a self-sustaining oak savanna. We're looking forward to what will emerge in spring!

David Schlueter is the Conservation



*OFS crew removing invasives*

Crew Supervisor working with us. He grew up in Middleton, not far from the Conservancy, and graduated from Middleton High School. We're grateful for his dedication to conservancy stewardship and Dane County youth. The crew works from Monday through Thursday from 9-3:30, with the crew size varying from 2-8 depending on the participants' schedules. Most days, Rob and Susan Gruber work with the crew too.

Operation Fresh Start (OFS) provides a path forward for disconnected youth in Dane County, ages 16-24. The core Pathways program helps young people (who have previously dropped out of high school), obtain their high school diploma and gain the skills to be successful in life.

*continued on page 9...*



# Operation Fresh Start

*Continued from page 8*

OFS' chief training approach is to renovate or construct single-family houses for sale to low and very-low income first-time homebuyers. In addition, OFS does extensive conservation work improving Dane County parks and lands. The housing and conservation sites are the vehicles for employment training and are at the center of a comprehensive program of educational and support services. Instruction in basic skills and attainment of a high school diploma, instruction in independent living skills, leadership development, counseling, pre-employment skills training, placement in a job or post-secondary education, and supportive follow-up are vital components of the program.

Annually, Operation Fresh Start has served 200 youth since 1970. Now it is



*Transforming the back side of Frederick's Hill*

doubling its capacity. Operation Fresh Start youth, partners, and volunteers are renovating the former home of Holy Cross Church and School at 2670 Milwaukee Street in Madison. With the new space, they will be able to serve

twice as many young adults. For more information, see their website, [www.operationfreshstart.org](http://www.operationfreshstart.org).

The Operation Fresh Start crew will be back at the Conservancy in January, February and March, working in the wetlands to restore prairie areas, remove woody shrubs, and prepare for the spring burn. Their work is funded by Dane County and Rhea Stangel-Maier, Dane County Parks Volunteer Coordinator, coordinates their assignments. This skilled and energetic crew plays a vital role in complementing the work of volunteers and contracted professionals. Heartfelt thanks to them for all they do to restore and manage these conservancy lands.

## Annual Meeting...

*Continued from page 1*

environments can have remarkable benefits for human health and well-being including:

- Boosting immune system
- Lowering blood pressure
- Reducing stress
- Improving mood
- Increasing ability to focus, even in children with ADHD
- Accelerating recovery from surgery or illness
- Increasing energy level
- Improving sleep

The program on January 20 includes a keynote speaker on the benefits of nature, a new video that summarizes activities supported this past year by our Bader Philanthropies grant, and a "State of the Friends" presentation by current Board President Lloyd Eagan.

The keynote speaker is Dr. Susan McFadden, Ph.D. Professor Emerita at UW-Oshkosh and co-founder of the Fox



*Dr. Susan McFadden, Ph.D.*

Valley Memory Project. Dr. McFadden is well known for her work with people who are experiencing memory loss. She is the author of 7 books, 10 book chapters and two dozen journal articles. She and her husband John co-wrote the book "Aging Together - Dementia, Friendship and

Flourishing Communities," published in 2011 by The John Hopkins University Press. She advocates (for all ages) the importance of remaining active and engaged in meaningful tasks. Her presentation, "Awe and Wonder in Natural Settings: An Intergenerational Perspective" will address the ways nature contributes to our health.

The annual meeting will take place once again at Asbury Church Fellowship Hall, 6101 University Ave. Madison (just east of the junction of University and Century Avenues) with registration starting at 8:30 A.M. A catered hot breakfast will be served between 8:45 – 9:30 and includes scrambled eggs, bacon, cast iron skillet potatoes, sliced fruit, assorted pastries and coffee.

The registration fee is \$20.00 and you may register either on the FOPBC website or by mailing in the form on page 2.



# EDUCATION CORNER:

## Kids for the Earth Program News

By Anne Boucher, FOPBC Education Coordinator

Members, donors and volunteers make our efforts possible. The Friends, this community, and our students thank you.

### Conservancy Day Programs

On the third Thursday of each month we invite all members of the community to free programs. Topics on all aspects of the Conservancy and its surrounding environment and our human interaction with nature are explored. We have had some terrific programs this fall.

### Small Mammals of the Conservancy

was presented by Dreux Watermolen of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in November. He discussed the furry carnivores, like mink and otter, found in the Conservancy. Their habits, habitats, and prevalence were discussed in a fun presentation about these lively critters.

**Ticks** was presented by UW graduate student Ryan Larson. He provided an overview of tick-borne diseases throughout the State of Wisconsin. He updated the audience on new tick species, the status of lyme disease in the state, emerging tick-borne diseases, current research efforts and strategies to prevent becoming a meal for a tick.

**SPARK** was presented by Angela Johnson, an artist and the director of the SPARK program directed toward people living with dementia. She held an interactive presentation with the residents of Brookdale Madison West and members of the public. Participants completed an art project with an environmental theme.

**Restoration Achievements** were described by members of the Friends Restoration and Management Committee. They hosted a walking tour through the prairie to the Springs while

discussing the work done and work planned for the continued restoration of the prairies, oak savannas, and wetlands in the Conservancy.

Topics for 2018 include urban canids, owls, citizen science and lore and geology of the Conservancy. Stay tuned at [www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org). You can sign up to receive once-per-month email reminders of Conservancy Days by sending a message to [office@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:office@pheasantbranch.org) with the subject line: "CD Program subscribe." Programs are held in the Conservancy or in Room 510 at Kromrey Middle School.

### K-12 School Field Trips and Service-Learning

Have you ordered your 2018 phenology calendar yet? The photos are from Middleton High School students in our photography service-learning program. Get your calendar (and other gifts, too) from [www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org).



For the fifth year in a row, more than 550 Middleton High School freshman biology students visited our outdoor classroom twice this autumn. The biology service-learning project continues to be an active, ongoing partnership between the Middleton-Cross Plains Area School District, the MHS biology team, the Friends, Dane County, Holy Wisdom Monastery and Governor Nelson State Park. Each year the program becomes more sustainable.

Students in first through fifth grades visited the Conservancy this year for outdoor field trips. Some took a "Magic School Bus" ride into soil. Other students learned about the complexity of food webs in the Bock Forest while more students participated in seed collecting.

### Tunes on Tuesday

Did you stroll through the Conservancy during "Tunes On Tuesdays" this summer? Local musicians from middle school age to adults added beauty to the Conservancy with their acoustic music. Hundreds of people enjoyed these two hours each Tuesday evening in June. Tunes on Tuesdays will continue in 2018. *Stay tuned!*

### New Projects

A new rain garden curriculum was initiated with the 6th grade science teachers at Kromrey Middle School and our naturalists. (See article page 3).

### Naturalists, volunteers, and committee members

All this incredible work is accomplished through the talents of people in our community. In 2018 we will need volunteers for the education committee, field trips and project development. We will seek a small number of contract naturalists to support our efforts, as well. Together, we create innovative, one-of-a-kind programs that make a real difference in the lives of our citizens.

If you want to work with children, we train you to feel comfortable with the material and ready to teach. We also welcome creative thinking at education committee meetings so join us as a naturalist, committee member, or specific project lead (contact Anne at [education@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:education@pheasantbranch.org)).



## GET OUT THERE: Restoration Volunteer Opportunities

By Janet Kane, FOPBC Restoration and Management Co-Chair

It's been a busy year for the Friends' Restoration and Management volunteers! So far we've tallied over 3,000 volunteer hours.

We're hoping to schedule some special workdays in the new year. It's a great time to go after the honeysuckle! If you'd like to get announcements of the special workdays, e-mail [restoration@pheasantbranch.org](mailto:restoration@pheasantbranch.org). It's great to get out in crisp weather!

Rob Schubert, the Dane County Park Coordinator, organized the work for the year, working with Lars Higdon, County Naturalist, and providing direction, leadership and support to R&M volunteers. We're happy to announce he's continuing in this role for 2018.

Here's a brief summary of what's been done this year - - and with more volunteers we can do even more. If you've been thinking of getting involved, join us in the new year.

**Volunteer workdays:** Sixty-eight individuals participated in volunteer workdays this year, and 150 were part of the R&M e-mail list. Eight regular workdays were held on the third Saturday of each month from April through October, and 10 special workdays addressed time-sensitive issues.

**Dane County Parks:** Volunteers attended training on herbicide use, invasive species monitoring and management, and chain saws. Three county seed collecting sessions were held at Pheasant Branch Conservancy, providing seeds for new prairies throughout the county. We received 7 new hand clippers through a grant received by Dane County Parks. Thanks to Rhea Stangel-Maier, Dane County Parks Volunteer Coordinator!

**Bock Community Forest:** R&M supported Adaptive Restoration LLC with volunteer activities, working with Bock Community Gardeners, youth from Westside Christian School, staff from Madison College, and Kromrey 5th graders' service day.

**Master Naturalist Course:** Partnered with the Education Committee to complete Master Naturalist Instructor training and host a 40-hour Master Naturalist Course. Fourteen people completed the course and sharpened their skills in restoration, education and citizen science. Welcome to those graduates who are enriching our community!

**Spring Burns:** Contracted with Quercus and worked with Dane County Parks and the City of Middleton to conduct the first burn in the wetland. The hill was not burned this spring to evaluate the effect of fire on sweet clover and sumac

**Prairie Partners:** We hosted 5 summer interns every Wednesday for 12 weeks. Rob Schubert supervised the intern program, and FOPBC members provided educational programs. Madison Audubon administers the program

**Erosion control task force:** Dedicated volunteers installed metal mesh on steep, eroded areas of the trail up the hill, maintained previously installed water bars, and constructed new water bars in eroded areas. They also maintained stairs to the springs and the homestead deck and reconstructed the creek crossing near the small spring complex.

**Conservancy Day:** R&M volunteers hosted a walking tour in the Conservancy, highlighting past, present, and future restoration and management activities.

**Operation Fresh Start:** See article page 8.

**Clean Lakes Alliance:** The CLA

worked with area non-profits in the Yahara watershed to publicize volunteer opportunities every Thursday from Earth Day through October. Then they recruited volunteers from area businesses and organizations and matched them with the volunteer opportunities. We had 3 workdays scheduled, working on the southeast side of the hill to clear sumac and other brush.

**School groups:** Upper elementary students from Madison Community Montessori School regularly helped with service projects through the year. Westside Christian 7th and 8th graders collected seeds in the fall. About 125 Middleton High School students participated in service learning at the Conservancy, and R&M volunteers worked with Kromrey classes on pulling garlic mustard in the creek corridor and caring for the school's rain gardens this fall.

**Tools:** Acquired and outfitted a new trailer to provide on-site storage of equipment from early spring through late fall.

**Aquatic Invasive Species Grant:** We received \$3,000 worth of seeds to establish native wetland species in areas where reed canary grass and bushes were or will be removed. Over the summer, Craig Annen, Integrated Restorations, has focused on suppression of reed canary grass, non-native/hybrid cattails, Phragmites, and purple loosestrife. The goal is to provide continuous prairies from the marsh to the top of the hill. The grant will be completed in June, 2018.

**Dane County Environmental Council Grant:** The grant provided funds to purchase a job box for storing herbicides used by volunteers and interns. The box provided a great gathering place to talk over the projects of the day.

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**RSPV for the annual meeting or order a phenology calendar...  
order form on page 2!**

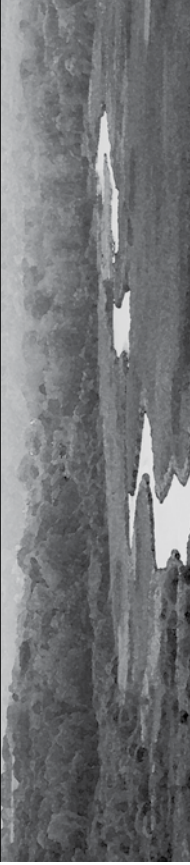


**Resolution #1: Renew Friends Membership**  
(Finally – A New Year's resolution I can keep!)

As we celebrate the New Year,

we are thankful for so many good Friends!

# PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY WINTER 2017-2018 EVENTS



## CONNECT WITH NATURE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

### JANUARY

18th - Conservancy Day Program (TBA)  
20th - Annual Meeting (page 1)

### FEBRUARY

15th - Conservancy Day Program (TBA)

### MARCH

15th - Conservancy Day Program (TBA)

### APRIL

19th - Conservancy Day Program (TBA)

**PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE**

[www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org)

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