

WINGRA WATERSHED NEWS

Promoting a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community.

SPRING 2017 • VOLUME 14 • ISSUE 1

Challenges and Opportunities

by Ben Yahr

Happy New Year! As Friends of Lake Wingra transitioned from 2016 to 2017, we looked ahead to the coming year, and saw immense opportunity, often balanced by immense challenges. Opportunities and their associated challenges lead to change, and we embrace a year of coming change with optimism.

Some changes will be obvious, such as our new newsletter format. For many years, our newsletters were organized and published by Pat Brown. Pat has decided to retire, and we are thankful for the help of Heather Hasenstein. Heather is an experienced graphic designer, who we recently worked with on a grant funded by the Dane County Environmental Council to develop a new logo, and a new brochure. We believe that the new logo embodies the character of the Lake and our mission to protect and enhance it. Be on the lookout for our brochures around the watershed later this spring.

Other changes to the Friends of Lake Wingra may not be as obvious to the community. After supporting us for nearly 20 years, Edgewood

College has determined that it is no longer in their best interest to function as the Fiscal Sponsor for the Friends. We are extremely grateful for all that Edgewood has done for us and for the Lake. We



Photo by Richard Hurd

plan to transition away from Edgewood and become an independent 501c(3) organization later this year. This is a huge challenge for us as a small volunteer organization, but the opportunity to serve our watershed community more efficiently and effectively will be well worth the effort.

The Lake Wingra Watershed Management Plan has been approved by City Council! We are especially thankful to Alder

Eskrich for her support and leadership in moving the plan to completion, and to Phil Gaebler of the City of Madison Engineering Department, who also helped move the plan through the approval process. Phil also hosted the initial “Catalyst Team” meeting to discuss implementing infiltration components of the plan in December. Countless hours have been dedicated to developing the plan, and now countless more will be necessary to step up to the challenge of implementing the plan over the coming years and decades.

Salt continues to be an extremely large challenge for Lake Wingra. Friends of Lake Wingra sees many opportunities to reduce chloride levels in the Lake, and is continuing our Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District grant from last year to work with a private snow removal contractor to demonstrate the benefits of using brine as an anti-icing solution before snowfalls. Preliminary results show large potential reductions in salt use overall, stay tuned for more later this spring.

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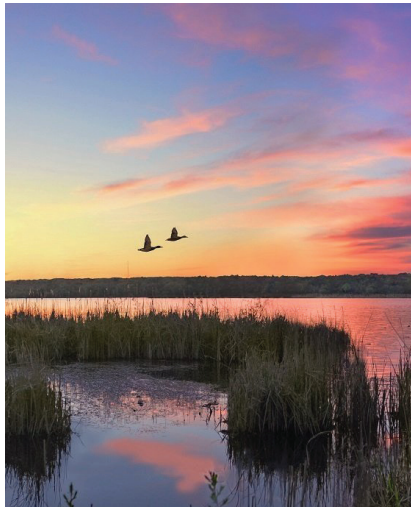


Photo by Richard Hurd

(Challenges and Opportunities continued from page 1)

We appreciate the leadership of some neighborhood residents in reducing their salt usage on sidewalks-thanks! However, a substantially larger percentage of the chloride runoff entering the lake can be attributed to commercial and institutional land areas such as parking lots and sidewalks adjacent to businesses. Please continue to discuss appropriate winter salt use with those you interact with in our community and thank businesses who use less.

Throughout this coming year of opportunity and challenge, the support of our Friends is more important than ever. We need your help. Please consider assisting us in whatever way you can, whether that be financially; or through attending one of our events, joining our Board of Directors, sharing our newsletter with a friend, chatting with a neighbor about appropriate salt use, or simply smiling at others who are out enjoying our special lake and watershed with you!

Education, Awareness, and Beauty: A Happy Note to Brighten Your Day



Photo by Lauren Brown

by Adrienne Marvin

Rain gardens are a beautiful way of making our watershed a happier and healthier place. This year, Friends of Lake Wingra received a grant from the Natural Resources Foundation to spread the appreciation for all our dedicated rain garden care takers. Some of you may have noticed the bright orange butterfly signs popping up in rain gardens near you (or in your own!). These signs were our way of thanking our neighbors for providing clean water to Lake Wingra. They also let everyone in the area know that the garden is intentional and it resides in the Lake Wingra watershed.

As many of you know, a watershed is a complicated concept to those not actively involved in environmental issues. It can be difficult to visualize how rain falling in your driveway can deliver pollutants to a lake miles away. That's why we at Friends of Lake Wingra prefer the word community to watershed. The watershed is really a group of plants, animals and people that share an intricately related space. What happens in one part of the community has impacts throughout – even if they're not immediately visible.

Which brings us back to the rain garden signs. We felt it was so important to thank all of you for participating in our watershed community. While walking around to hand out the signs, we were inspired by the enthusiasm of everyone we spoke with. Neighbors were happy to invite us into their homes and share stories of their own environmental efforts. It was good to hear directly from so many of you about the local environmental issues that concern you the most. We hope that in the future you'll continue to share your thoughts with us and help us make our community a better, healthier place.

The Danger of Too Much Deicer

by Adrienne Marvin

As our loyal Friends, we know that you've heard from us before about the problem of road salt contaminating Lake Wingra. Environmentalists can easily visualize how road salt in the water supply is bad for biodiversity. The problem is, most people link deicers to winter safety and struggle to see how their overuse could negatively impact someone. Unfortunately for all of us, the negative repercussions are increasingly impacting our daily lives – and they can be quantified in dollars and lives.

While deicers are definitely bad for biodiversity, they also spell doom for our infrastructure. According to WI Salt Wise, a program supported by Dane County, every \$800 spent on deicers results in \$3,300 of infrastructure damage. Last year, WI spent over \$40 million on highway deicer, which would mean the taxpayer can expect over \$166 million in future damages. And this is aside from any personal property damages that occur – including corrosion on the bottom of your own car.

This problem is about more than personal finances. The 2007 bridge collapse in the Minneapolis was partially linked to corrosion caused by a deicer. That collapse cost 13 people their lives, and injured 145 others. This particular deicer had previously been used on runways until the FAA banned it because it was cracking the pavement. If it can crack pavement and corrode iron reinforcements in a bridge, imagine what it was doing to the underside of planes!



Photo by David Thompson



Photo by David Thompson

Of course, there are no easy solutions. We live in WI, so we know that it's impractical (not to mention dangerous) to do nothing about winter ice. What Friends of Lake Wingra is advocating for is prudent application and social awareness that this isn't strictly an

environmental problem. The more often we use the right deicer, at the right time, in the right quantity, the better for public health and safety in all realms. As with all things, it's about balance. For more information check out wisaltwise.com.

Climate Change: Citizens Must Lead

by David H. Thompson

A majority of Americans believe climate change is real and caused by human activity. Yet Donald Trump has said climate change is a hoax. Our current political climate is a challenge to all environmentalists. Even the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has recently removed references to climate change from their website.

Given this failure by national and state leaders, we as engaged citizens must do what we can to protect our children's future.

While most of us are aware of the concrete actions recommended to combat climate change, they often feel futile and we rarely commit to all of them. A New Year's resolution

to a new mindset could help us make the necessary shift toward meaningful action.

Make it a priority. While small actions may not provide a deep sense of success, they do add up. We often neglect them because our lives are busy and we feel spread thin. In those moments, it's crucial to remind ourselves that climate change affects everything. Combating it supports our top priorities – our health, our children, our wellness. For example, the lake is the priority for FoLW. But climate will profoundly affect the lake, so if we don't address climate, we're not doing our job.

Exercise leadership. These every day actions like taking the bus or

lowering the thermostat will set an example for our neighbors and officials. Leadership involves action. The best way to make your small actions more meaningful is to amplify them by encouraging others to join you.

Muster your moral courage. In 2011, each American produced more greenhouse gases than people in any other country except Canada. Our per capita production was nearly three times the world average. While it may be uncomfortable to voice your opinion at times, remember that you do not stand alone. The Paris Agreement that the US approved committed all nations to a common cause in fighting climate change. Americans don't run from a challenge this big!

Make conscientious choices. Try to consider the full life-cycle of the products you use – including how/where they were made, and what will happen to them once you dispose of them. For example, consider how we clear a snowy sidewalk. A snow blower produces greenhouse gases during its production, distribution, and operation. While shoveling is sometimes hard work – using a snow blower & salt merely transfers work today to future work cleaning up our lakes and atmosphere. If instead we use a shovel to remove packed snow and let the sun evaporate the rest, there would be few hidden costs.

Embrace change. Climate change



Photo by Richard Hurd

is like a car speeding towards a cliff--the later we apply the brakes, the harder it will be to stop. We must all begin changing our behaviors now. And, as Mom always said, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. For example, eating less meat is a major step for climate. While steak is delicious, consider the benefits for your health and budget. You can use the money to fund your next big adventure!

Involve the children. A warmer world is their future--they deserve to have the knowledge and tools to continue our efforts to combat climate change.

These shifts in mindset involve communication, slowing down, planning ahead, and doing everyday tasks with more skill and thought. It's tender loving care for our kids, neighbors, wild neighbors, and the environment.



Photo by Jamie Saul

Mission

We promote a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community.

Friends of Lake Wingra Board

Ben Yahr, Chair
David Thompson, Vice-chair
Vacant, Secretary
Jim Baumann, Treasurer
Roger Bannerman
Ian Krauss
Advisors to the Board
Denny Caneff
Anne Forbes
Tyler Leeper
David Liebl
Kevin Little
Jim Lorman
John Magnuson
John Nicol
Rebecca Power

Become a Friend

To become a Friend of Lake Wingra, send your tax-deductible contribution to:

Friends of Lake Wingra, Inc.
c/o Office of Advancement
Edgewood College
1000 Edgewood College Drive,
Madison, WI 53711-1977.

Please make checks to: "Edgewood College - FOLW."

Friends of Lake Wingra, Inc.

1000 Edgewood College Dr.
Madison, WI 53711
info@lakewingra.org
www.lakewingra.org

Wingra Watershed News

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Floating Plants Promise Phosphorus Reduction



Photo by David Thompson

by Ian Krauss

Phosphorus is natural and essential, but when present in excess it can cause algal blooms, fish deaths, and decreases in water clarity. Phosphorus is currently one of the biggest challenges facing Lake Wingra so it's time to get creative about finding solutions. Through my graduate studies at UW-Madison, I had the opportunity to design an experiment with a group of classmates. After talking with fellow board members, I decided to look at using plant islands to remove excess phosphorus from the lake system.

Current best management practices for phosphorus focus almost exclusively on prevention. Once it enters a system, there are few strategies to remove it. Phosphorus is crucial for plant growth – thus the reason it causes so much algae. Our study aimed to redirect that growth

toward other types of plants and divert the excess nutrient load out of the water. We hoped to increase the financial viability of plant islands at a large scale by focusing on food plants. Here in Madison, a farm to table restaurant may someday be pleased to sponsor their own plant island on Lake Wingra to both help the environment and make their salads.

In our study, we created islands that allowed plants, like leaf lettuce and peace lilies, to float at the water surface so only the roots were submerged. This set-up ensured that the plants' only source of nutrients came from the water below. Using water taken from Lake Wingra, we measured plant growth and decreases in phosphorus over a 5-week period. Our results were inconclusive due to the detection levels of our testing methods, but

we did see noticeable plant and root growth, indicating there was nutrient uptake.

This experiment can be used as the proof of concept to move forward with a larger project. One potential for this is to make a floating island with more plants and deploy it directly into Lake Wingra. While lettuce does provide an additional food source, it may be more prudent to select a hardier plant which could survive being more exposed in the lake. We do believe this project has a lot of potential, but there are some potential challenges. For instance, it would be important to select a plant that has minimal opportunity to spread off the island, so as not to create an entirely new problem! But, plant islands could be an innovative and economic new strategy for mitigating a significant threat to our lake.

Volunteer with Friends of Lake Wingra

Let us know if you want to get involved with us to help improve the health and quality of our beautiful Lake Wingra.

Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter by emailing info@lakewingra.org.

Opportunities include education programs, working with schools, rain garden installation/ planting/maintenance, graphic design, newsletter editing, event planning, marketing and grant writing and review.

Friends of Lake Wingra Board Meetings

Friends of Lake Wingra board meetings are usually held the first Thursday of the month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and are open to the public.

Check our event calendar on our website (www.lakewingra.org/events) for the location.

If you have an item to discuss with the board please email info@lakewingra.org a few days in advance of the meeting to be placed on the agenda.

Become a Friends of Lake Wingra Board Member

Do you want to help Lake Wingra on a deeper level? Consider becoming a board member! Start off by attending one or more of our board meetings (1st Thursday of the month 6:30-8:30 p.m.) or by emailing your interest to info@lakewingra.org.

We can arrange a personal meeting with a current board member or staff person to explore opportunities.

5 Tips for Do-It-Yourself Ecofriendly Spring Cleaning!

by Adrienne Marvin

Spring cleaning is just around the corner and we want to help your home feel fresh and safe, for your family and for the environment! Check out these cheap and easy DIY cleaning solutions that

1) All-purpose cleaner:
Cuts grease & de-odorizes

1 cup white vinegar
1 cup water
2 -3 Tbs of lemon juice

Just mix in a spritz bottle and wipe away for a lemony fresh scent and a grease free surface.

2) Got sink rings?

Dip half a lemon in a small bowl of baking soda. You can use the lemon itself as a scrubber!

You can also make a powerful bathroom cleaning paste by adding lemon juice to a few tablespoons of baking soda. Mix slowly until it becomes a paste. Add a small amount of dish fluid for a more powerful cleanse. Apply with a sponge and watch your bathroom sparkle.

3) Glass cleaner:

¼ - ½ tsp liquid detergent
3 Tbs vinegar
2 cups water

Mix in a spritz bottle and voila, enjoy spotless windows

4) Microwave gunk:

Pour some vinegar into a cup with a tablespoon or two of lemon juice. Microwave the cup for two full minutes. Don't open the door immediately – let it sit for 2 -3 more minutes after the microwave goes off. Then simply wipe away grime with a sponge. It's that easy!



Photo from Morguefile.com

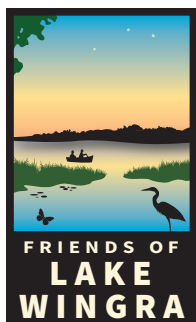
5) Garbage Disposal:

Out of sight, out of mind. Unfortunately, a dirty garbage disposal can be a stinky situation. It's an easy fix though. Pour 1 cup of vinegar into an ice cube tray and then top off with water. Pop the tray in the freezer until it's solid. Then just drop the cubes into the disposal and let it run. The ice chunks should remove any food that was stuck to the blades!

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