

WINGRA WATERSHED NEWS

Promoting a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community.

SUMMER 2021 • VOLUME 18 • ISSUE 2

This summer brings all the feels! After a long winter, the warm air and bright sunshine feels like the shedding of a skin that's built up over the last year. Getting on the lake and grounding in nature feels therapeutic. While we appreciated the respite of Lake Wingra in the height of the pandemic, as many return to the hustle and bustle of life, we caution for remembrance to avoid taking Lake Wingra for granted. While it might always be there for us, we can never predict in what fashion. History has an uncanny way of reminding us that one decision can gift us what we cherish today and also shape our future experiences. With that concept in mind, we build the theme of this summer's biannual newsletter. You'll find articles that reflect on key events over the past few decades that heavily influenced how we experience Lake Wingra today. So many have occurred that we can't fit it all in one edition and we invite you to request any future topics for future newsletters. We hope you find the time to celebrate both how much work the Wingra community has accomplished and where we continue to aim for the stars. It is in these aspirations we continue to keep Lake Wingra as the crowned jewel of the Madison community.

A Heartfelt Thanks to Casey Hanson

By David H. Thompson, Vice Chair

Hiring staff to help FoLW in 2013 was a big step for us. Before then, Board Members organized programs, but it was hard for them to find sufficient time. Since hiring staff, FoLW has maintained more consistent contact with our partner organizations, including the DNR, Dane County Office of Lakes & Watersheds, the UW Arboretum, WI Salt Wise, and City Engineering. It also creates ease in applying for and administering grants. Our current Executive Director, Casey Hanson, now administers five grants. Casey came aboard as Program Manager in April 2017 and transitioned to Executive Director a year ago. She and her family plan to move over-

seas this fall, so she will be stepping down from her role as ED.

"Casey elevated FoLW to a new level, in a very short amount of time," said former Chair Ben Yahr. "Her creativity, organizational skills, and efficiency were really impressive. While she was the 'face' of the lake, much of the value of her work happened behind the scenes. She has set FoLW on a great path for the future."

Casey said: "I feel proud of enhancing a framework to help move the needle a bit towards our goals in the watershed. By keeping in touch with partner organizations, I've found ways to insert FoLW views, volunteers, or expertise into

their programs as opportunities arise. For example, when the City resurfaces or reconstructs a street, we can dovetail outreach and efforts to encourage more eligible homeowners to sign up for rain gardens. I will miss the connections I've formed in the community so much. Investing time to bond and engage with our donors, volunteers, and partners is a favorite part of my job and I believe is crucial to building a sense of community. Yes, that's really me choosing the words behind those letters with my name on it, clicking send or applying the stamp on the envelope!"

(continued on pg 9)

How Lake Wingra Became A No-Wake Lake

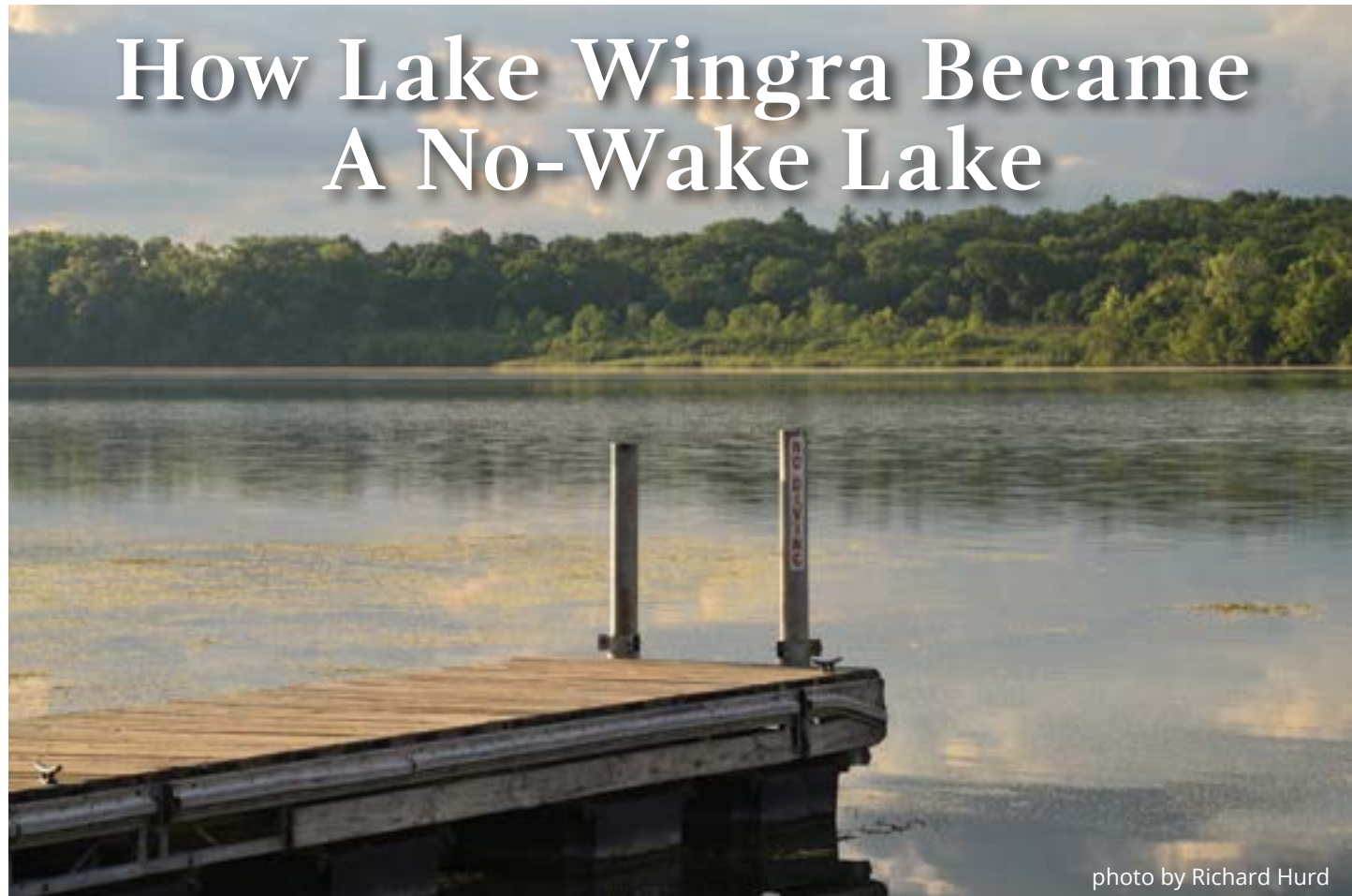


photo by Richard Hurd

By Casey Hanson

Believe it or not, in the 1960s teens enjoyed water skiing at Lake Wingra. The issue of making our now tranquil Lake Wingra really took heat in 1968 thanks to William R. Jordan III. While some tolerated the disruption of nature, he strongly felt Lake Wingra should have no outboard motors. It's as if he took the words right out of our mouths, Lake Wingra is "exceptionally small, wild; yet near us all." Quite eloquently, he even said, "our spiritual survival depends on this just as our physical survival depends on our learning to handle chemical pollution...I want Wingra so quiet I can go there and hear the mosquitoes coming after me, hear the flap of a sail, the echo of an oar dropped. Some people find speed and sound enough in a mallard's flight." Wow, can you top William's

way with words and imagery? The passion on this topic burned so bright for William, he created a petition to bring to the Alders. Over 2,000 people signed the petition. District 13 Alder James T Devine and District 10 Alder Alicia Ashman brought the proposal to ban all use of motorboats on the lake to the Council in July. Plain and simple, the ban would have only allowed canoes and rowboats to use the lake. Lake Wingra accounted for less than 2% of all the water around Madison (345 of 18,042 acres). He utilized this as one argument; having this small piece of land set aside for solitude allows nature to stay as nature. A little bit of drama completes every good story! Not everyone supported this idea of a ban. A

different petition, in opposition to the ban, gathered about 400-500 signatures. According to the DMNA History Booklet, 15-20 youth claimed the ban would put "kids off the lake and on the street." Despite the pushback, everything seemed like it was going well. In August 1968 the Council voted in favor of the complete ban with an 11-8 vote. However, they needed one more vote to pass the ordinance, it did not pass. It makes you wonder what history might look like today if one of the few alders who could not attend, did actually attend and vote in favor. Ultimately, the City Council passed a compromise ordinance to restrict the use of motor boats on Lake Wingra. The ordinance restricted motorboats to six miles per hour



photo by Richard Hurd

on weekdays and banned use on weekends and holidays. During the discussion, some alders asked for permitting motorboats on Saturdays since many fishermen worked during the week, others asked for a recreational study of all Madison lakes so residents could be treated fairly. The ordinance went into effect Jan 1, 1969 and William Jordan's long-fought efforts resulted in a little piece of heaven for us all. It's easy to take for granted the

work of past generations of stewards that cared so deeply for our lake. Think about it for a moment, it was work that occurred before the first Earth Day and advocacy that couldn't rely on our fingertips ferociously tapping away at the keyboard. Next time you're at the lake, take a moment to express gratitude for everything our past stewards accomplished. In essence, Gaylord Nelson put it beautifully, "the ultimate test of man's con-

science may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard."

Sandage, Dennis, "Motorboat Curb Voted for Wingra," The Capital Times (September 1968): 10
 "Wingra-Lake of Solitude," The Capital Times (Aug 1968): 6
 "Hello, Wisconsin!," The Capital Times (July 1968): 3



Years of Fishing for Water Clarity



Photo by Mike Kakuska

By Casey Hanson, Richard Lathrop, and David Liebl

Carp through their bottom-feeding activities are renown for causing fertile shallow lakes like Lake Wingra to become turbid with dense algal blooms. The resultant poor water clarity reduces sunlight penetration into the water column and restricts the growth of aquatic plants with loss of habitat needed for desirable sight-feeding fish. Because carp are long-lived, such conditions often persist in shallow lakes.

Carp were intentionally stocked in Wisconsin waters during 1881-1896. As early as 1913 carp were

observed to “abound” in Lake Wingra and were thought to contribute to its poor water clarity. Early attempts to control Lake Wingra’s carp densities were not extensive except in the mid-1950s when the Wisconsin Conservation Department conducted a 3-year effort to remove carp using large seines (nets). However, easy access to Wingra from Lake Monona via the old dam spillway allowed carp densities to eventually rebound, and in the early 1960s the lake also was invaded by Eurasian watermilfoil.

The modern-day attempt to understand what would happen if Lake Wingra did not have carp occurred in 2005-2008. With funding from a DNR Lake Management Protection Grant awarded to Dane County and Friends of Lake Wingra, a 2.5-acre exclusion was installed on the north shore of Lake Wingra and the carp were removed from it. Compared to the turbidity in the rest of the lake, water clarity greatly improved! (see Photo 1) Within two years aquatic plants (mostly milfoil) were growing luxuriously in deeper water. Additionally, the



Photo 1 (by Mike DeVries)

slower-growing native macrophytes showed improved plant habitat.

Coincident with the exclusion experiment, a 2-year carp radio telemetry tracking study was conducted by the DNR and UW Center for Limnology. This study determined that while carp were dispersed around the perimeter of the lake throughout much of the year, they congregated in the deeper middle of the lake from late fall throughout the winter when the lake was ice-covered. With this knowledge in hand, the collaborative group used funds from the DNR lake protection grant, coupled with contributions from Friends of Lake Wingra, to contract with a commercial fishing crew to remove carp by deploying a large seine beneath the surface of the frozen lake in March 2008. Submersibles, ATVs, airboats, and lift buckets helped remove about half the carp (~6,000) out of the lake. (see Photo 2) Harvested carp were shipped to fish markets in Brooklyn, NY, and Fulton, IL. Additionally, construction of the new Lake

Wingra dam in 2009 provided a barrier to carp moving into the lake from downstream.

If you visited Lake Wingra starting in the summer of 2008, you might remember Lake Wingra water clarity like you would not believe. However, with increased water

clarity also came explosive growth of aquatic plants that by 2012 covered most of the lake except for the very deepest spot. Lower turbidity means the sun can penetrate deeper into the water column allowing for more plant growth. This is great! When combined with fewer carp to disturb bottom sediments, the sediments begin to consolidate, producing clearer water. This allows aquatic plants to grow in deeper water. The expansion of aquatic vegetation in turn dampens wind-driven water currents where sediment resuspension is further suppressed. The end result is a feedback loop of clearer water, further expansion of aquatic plants, reduced water currents, more sediment consolidation, and so on as the lake converts from a turbid algal state to a clear water aquatic plant state that is stable as long as carp densities remain low. The increased plant growth also



Photo 2 (by David Liebl)



Photo by Richard Lathrop

offers additional cover for aquatic life and more habitat for sight-feeding fish. The County has implemented an aquatic plant management plan to keep the invasive aquatic plants like Eurasian Milfoil in check. It also allows people to still fish, boat and swim on Lake Wingra.

Fortunately, carp densities have not increased greatly in recent years, and the early proliferation of Eurasian water milfoil has died back some leaving the middle of the lake plant free for recreation. Water clarity still remains good so

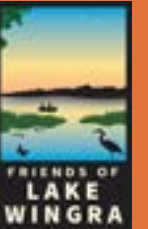
right now the balance of reduced carp, clearer water, and moderate growth of aquatic plant seems to be holding.

As we celebrate all the accomplishments at the turn of the century, we acknowledge that it is unlikely Lake Wingra will ever be carp-free. One natural way to maintain low carp densities is by bluegills. They are known to devour carp eggs so that carp are unable to successfully rebuild their population. Luckily, bluegills are abundant in Lake Wingra. Regular sampling in late

summer by the UW-CFL indicates that the population of young carp so far has not been significant. In addition to natural processes, our community partners keep working to make it difficult for carp to have the last laugh (if only fish could laugh). We realize the future might require another carp removal. When that time comes partners will take time to estimate the current carp population, develop a strategy, and engage the public. Until then, take time to celebrate and savor Lake Wingra's water clarity.

Take a look at fishes in Lake Wingra and discover what species are more prevalent than others! Our Fall 2020 Badger Volunteer Madeleine Piccard created this infographic using data from a 2018-2019 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fishery survey of Lake Wingra. Removing carp from Lake Wingra (see article on the previous pages) has resulted in numerous benefits for Lake Wingra's fishes. Largemouth bass and bluegill populations feed more efficiently and have more successful spawning with the increased water clarity. Now with the high bluegill abundances and clearer water state, bluegill help manage carp by preying on carp eggs. Other sight predators like bass, pike, and musky also feed more efficiently in clear waters.

LAKE WINGRA FISH SURVEY



DID YOU KNOW?

4.8" AVERAGE LENGTH OF A BLUEGILL

5-7 years TIME IT TAKES FOR A BLUEGILL TO REACH LENGTH OF 7"

LOW CARP POPULATIONS ARE GREAT!
HERE'S WHY:

high water quality,
increased water clarity,
& a diverse fish and aquatic plant community

Illustrations by Virgil Beck
Survey Data: <https://widnr.widener.net/s/x7cnmsq3ad>

Lake Wingra Heritage Plan

By District 13 Alder Tag Evers

A few months ago, I began conversations regarding the formulation of a Lake Wingra Heritage Plan working group that would advance goals to protect the integrity of the jewel that is Lake Wingra. As befitting this jewel, we are taking a multi-faceted approach: 1) addressing watershed concerns due to stormwater infiltration and non-point sources of phosphorous (leaves) and chloride (road salt); 2) view shed concerns due to buildings visible from the Wingra shoreline, particularly those that are inappropriately illuminated at night, and, 3) identifying an official Heritage Recreational Trail around the Lake.

For years, the Friends of Lake Wingra has been the lead advocate for the watershed. A review of past efforts include the **Lake Wingra Watershed Management Plan (2003)** (https://www.lakewingra.org/download/management_plans_and_reports/storm-water%20plan.pdf) and the **Lake Wingra: A Vision for the Future (2009)** (<https://www.lakewingra.org/lake-wingra-a-vision-for-the-future#:~:text=Friends%20of%20Lake%20Wingra%20is,sent%20to%20our%20mailing%20list>). These efforts spurred the City of Madison to come up with its own **Lake Wingra Watershed Management Plan (2015)**, which is summarized on the FOLW website: <https://www.lakewingra.org/projects/wingra-watershed-management-plan>.

It's my opinion that the City's Wingra Watershed Management Plan is strong on engineering in that it correctly analyzes the

problem. Where it's weak is in its articulation of clear policy goals and a next level strategy to implement changes necessary to protect Lake Wingra.

However, there is hope that the City's response to the 2018 flooding, including the recently-completed West Wingra Watershed Study, which will be followed by a study of the rest of the Wingra Watershed, can advance the goals of the previous studies and move us forward to enhanced protection.

Dark Sky Ordinance

Madison is a growing city, and it's unavoidable that buildings will get taller, some of which will be visible from the shoreline around Lake Wingra. For that reason, it's time we take a look at the City's lighting ordinance so that we might minimize light pollution and preserve what we can of the night sky.

Working with former Zoning Administrator Matt Tucker and several staff members in the Building Inspection unit Matt now leads, a working group has been formed to review the City's dark sky ordinance. It has been over 15 years since our rules around exterior lighting were updated. I have two concerns in particular — the use of illuminated signage and the extent to which commercial properties keep their exterior and interior lights on when buildings are unoccupied, neither of which makes sense as we deal with climate change.

Bay Creek resident Andy Meessmann is also part of the working group. Andy is a landscape architect and understands the technical

issues and policy challenges we face with respect to rules around dark sky. He's also a very talented photographer who has traveled extensively in pursuit of dark sky vistas. Here is a stunning photo he took up north in Vilas County of the northern lights.



Find out more about protecting the night sky by checking out the International Dark-Sky Association website: <https://www.darksky.org/>

Heritage Recreation Trail

Due to the wetlands surrounding large portions of Lake Wingra, it's not possible to have a recreational trail that completely circumnavigates the Lake from a shoreline perspective. Moreover, there are segments of private property on the Lake that prevent us from closing the Loop. Nonetheless, it's important to do what we can with what we have, including advocacy for a bike lane on the portion of Monroe Street in between Woodrow Street and the entrance to Wingra Park.

The Lake Wingra Heritage Plan working group has been meeting every two weeks. If you're interested in finding out more, please email me at district13@cityofmadison.com.



This June Blessed Sacrament Troop 16 scouts converted blue gallon drums into rain barrels for Friends of Lake Wingra. We found homes for those rain barrels with 17 people. Thank you to the scouts for their help and also to Dane County / Ripple Effects for helping provide us with the blue gallon drums.



Continued from pg 1, Casey

Casey's idea — the "Wingra Opine Water line"— encourages participation in watershed planning and action. "We ask for your opinion on Wingra issues or FoLW programming. Sometimes it includes a time-sensitive action you can take. The Water Line supplements our monthly e-news, biannual newsletters and websites. It's a constructive space where people can take part in an active watershed network through dialogue or calls to action."

We plan to have Casey in the ED role until September. FoLW is now looking for a replacement. We're also losing our co-Chairs, Hannah Buscemi and Ian Krauss. So if you are one of our partner organizations, a grantor, or just a Friend looking for news, please be patient during the next few months of transition. We haven't forgotten you, and soon will be back working to make the lake a more beautiful and healthy place for all to enjoy! We're going to miss Casey's firm and creative hand, and wish her well in her new digs.

This means we're looking for our next Executive Director! Please see our hiring announcement in the box immediately below.

Volunteer with Friends of Lake Wingra

We could really use volunteers to:

- Grow our board of directors
- Plan fundraising events
- Maintain/install rain gardens or native prairies
- Help with web design and redesign old and new posters
- Assist in marketing and social media strategies

Let's chat! info@lakewingra.org

Friends of Lake Wingra Board Meetings

When we see a new face at a board meeting, it makes our day! Anyone is welcome to attend at any time. Have something you want to talk about? Email us at least a week in advance so it can get on the agenda.

When: First Thursday of the month from 6:30 – 8:00 (check website)

Where: Virtual indefinitely, email info@lakewingra.org if you want to attend

We're Hiring!

We're looking for a 10 hr/week Executive Director to help manage the day-to-day operations of our 501(c)(3) organization. We will do the first-round review of applications on August 11. Please share the ED position opening with anyone who you think might be a good fit!

<https://www.lakewingra.org/download/FoLW-ED-Position-Description.pdf>

An Invitation to Stormwater Education and Engagement Activities

By Jake Blasczyk: Project Implementation and Management Team Member

Many of you value the Lake Wingra watershed and are concerned about the future of Lake Wingra and the effects of runoff on this treasured resource. The Southwest Path Committee of the Dudgeon -Monroe Neighborhood Association (DMNA) has undertaken a multi-neighborhood project that promotes stormwater community engagement and education targeted at the neighborhoods within and near the watershed. The Water Action to Encourage Responsibility (WATER) project is one of five under an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Assistance Agreement awarded to the UW-Madison Arboretum. DMNA's partners include the City's Engineering Division, Parks Division, Wingra School, Wisconsin Environmental Initiative, and the Catholic Multi-Cultural Center. Here's a preview of project activities and an invite for you to be involved.

Rain Gardens at Wingra School: toward a healthier Lake Wingra

The Lake Wingra Watershed Management plan calls for more

rain gardens so rainwater is filtered and remains at the site rather than finding its way, along with pollutants, into Lake Wingra. Likewise, a key component of DMNA's project is installing two Wingra School rain gardens, totaling 813 square feet. The 800 prairie plants will replace some asphalt surfaces of the School's playground which is also in the Dudgeon city park.

The prairie plants deep and complex root systems will keep more rainwater on the site which is across the street from the Monroe Street sections of the UW Arboretum and a short walk from Lake Wingra. Installation of the gardens means that another step is completed in Wingra School's on-going plan to greatly reduce potentially harmful runoff from the site. The plan includes replacing the playground surface with pervious pavement that allows water to seep into the ground and to divert water from the building's roof into more rain gardens.

The two gardens' prairie plants will also improve soil and habitat quality, support pollinators, birds, and benefit all of us, since they are dynamic and restorative. Equally

important these gardens will provide opportunities for Wingra students and neighborhood residents to learn about native plants, healthy water cycles, the link between caring for the earth and each other, and the true history of place.

On a rainy warm May day, Phil Gaebler, Resource Engineer, City of Madison Engineering Division, Wingra Staff and members of the project's Implementation and Management Team laid out the two gardens. Pictured below is Phil engaged with Vaunce Ashby, a member of the Implementation and Management Team and Vice President of the Wingra School Trustees, while I watch.



Photo by Stephen Glass

Other team members present were Sandy Stark, who Co-Chairs with me, the DMNA Southwest Path Committee; Debbie Million, Wingra's Head of School; Stephen Glass, Ecological Restoration Practitioner and President of the Society for Ecological Restoration Society, Midwest Great Lakes Chapter; Julie Loehrl, Wingra School Board Member and grounds representative; Dave Hinterberg, Wingra Building Director; and John Imes, Executive Director, Wisconsin Environmental Initiative.

Installation and planting takes place in early September, 2021. Volunteers will be needed. Contact me at jblasczyk13@gmail.com. You will be warmly welcomed while acting to help protect Lake Wingra.

Community Activities: the watershed that connects us

Education and outreach in Lake Wingra watershed neighborhoods is another major component. In Spring 2022, a community wide gathering that combines presentations and festival like activities will be held in Lake Wingra Park. A variety of water stewardship practices will be featured as well as ways to improve the water quality of Lake Wingra. A member of the Ho-Chunk nation will be invited to offer an Indigenous perspective on water with the intention of inspiring us to reframe stormwater management as water stewardship.

Also planned for Spring 2022 are three walking guided tours. These will focus on the hydrology of water movement, water stewardship, our relationship to the Lake Wingra Watershed, and practices at each site. One walk will be

co-sponsored with the Catholic Multi-Cultural Center.

To receive more information about these events, including dates which are still not set, please email me at jblasczyk13@gmail.com. Please provide contact information and the neighborhood you live in.

Fundamental Beliefs and the Need for Action

The sacredness of water and the necessity to practice stewardship are fundamental beliefs underlying all project activities. The need for action based on these beliefs is critical as the flooding of 2018 so dramatically illustrated. Many Madisonians held their breath and filled sandbags as record breaking rain fell, which flooded streets, businesses and basements.

The late Roger Bannerman, an urban water quality expert for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and champion of rain gardens, noted that if more homeowners had rain gardens the damaging impact of the 2018 flood would have been less. Roger and his wife had three rain gardens in their back yard. The Bannerman's basement, unlike their neighbors' basements, did not flood.

Roger's experience shows that our actions today are important and benefit us all. Protecting Lake Wingra is especially important if we want a healthy lake for our kids and for future generations to play in and enjoy.

WATER Project activities will help you understand issues affecting the health of Lake Wingra and its watershed and support you in practicing water stewardship. I invite and welcome your participation.

Mission

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

Friends of Lake Wingra Board

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Gail Epping Overholt,
Secretary

Timothy Kuhman
Sally Lehner

In memory of
Roger Bannerman

Advisors to the Board

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To become a Friend of Lake Wingra, send your tax-deductible contribution using our address below.

Please make checks to:
"Friends of Lake Wingra"

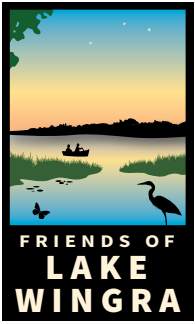
Or visit our website at:
www.lakewingra.org/donate

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Wingra Watershed News

Summer 2021, Vol. 18, No. 2
Wingra Watershed News is published twice yearly by Friends of Lake Wingra, Inc.



Friends of Lake Wingra
PO Box 45071
Madison, WI 53744

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