



# Friends of Lake Wingra



Promoting a healthy Lake Wingra  
through an active watershed community

## Wingra Watershed News

Winter 2014 volume 11, number 1

### What it means to be a “Friend”

– Paul Dearlove, Chair

**A**s I reflect on 2013 and contemplate the path ahead, I’m reminded of many things for which I am profoundly grateful.

Top on my mind is the devoted and impassioned leadership shown by my recent predecessor, Steve Arnold, who invested so much of himself into furthering our collective mission and goals.

He leaves behind an organization made stronger by his contributions, and we trust that his optimistic and enthusiastic nature will continue to be put to good use.

The rest of my list is quite long, but can be distilled into a single, powerful word: Friend.

All that we do and achieve often starts with a single individual willing to act. But it eventually takes a village, or a community of Friends, with shared purpose to affect the broader change we expect to see.

Thankfully, that change is already happening as our capacity grows and new partnerships are formed.

We see it in a more informed and engaged watershed citizenry, the beginnings of stronger private-public collaborations, and a renewed focus on involving our youth through greater school participation.

So, who are our Friends? They are those of you who believe in our cause and



*Paul Dearlove teaching local students about their watershed.*

lend a helping hand when needed.

They are past and current board members, partners, advisors, citizen volunteers, donors, service-learning collaborators, and public meeting and event participants.

More generally, they are those of you who care about Lake Wingra’s future, and demonstrate a willingness to take personal action to support your fellow Friends.

Wishing all of you a happy and healthy 2014! I look forward to seeing you out on the lake this year!

***All that we do and achieve often starts with a single individual willing to act.***

***But it eventually takes a village, or a community of Friends, with shared purpose to affect the broader change we expect to see.***



## *Friends of Lake Wingra, Inc.*

### **Mission**

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

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### **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.**

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### **Wingra Watershed News**

Winter 2014, Vol. 11, No. 1

Wingra Watershed News is published twice each year by Friends of Lake Wingra.

## *FoLW Welcomes Jeanne Scherer*

### **Programs and Volunteer Coordinator**



**T**he Friends of Lake Wingra Board of Directors is pleased to introduce Jeanne Scherer. Jeanne has joined FoLW as paid staff, acting as our new Programs and Volunteers Coordinator.

She will adroitly show off her juggling skills as she assists committee chairs by bringing together volunteers as well as helping to publicize programs, coordinate the writing and publication of the newsletter, and more as needed.

For Jeanne, life has recently come full circle. She grew up camping, scouting, exploring and photographing the natural world, especially in Wisconsin and Montana.

As an adult, life's adventures took her on a crisscrossing path from California to Washington to Japan to Virginia, and finally, back to Wisconsin.

Along the way, she raised two boys and with them explored both the

natural and historic wonders of their many homes. She also added an Elementary Teacher Certification to her original B.A. in Liberal Arts.

When the economy soured, she joined many others in losing their jobs but chose to look at it as an opportunity, not a crisis.

In 2012, she graduated from UW-Whitewater with a B.S. in Physical/Environmental Geography, minor in Biology. Now she gets paid for what she loves to do!

She's worked for the Lake Ripley Management District in Cambridge for three years, creating educational materials, conducting aquatic plant and water quality surveys, making maps, writing for a variety of reports and newsletter articles, and working with volunteers.

She led a yearlong grant project for the Rock River Coalition to conduct post-restoration surveys of plants and animals at Zeloski Marsh near Lake Mills with citizen-science volunteers. She also works for the WDNR, focused on aquatic invasive species.

Volunteering is also a big part of her life. She is Vice President of the Rock Lake Improvement Association Board. She enjoys helping to control invasive plants and collect seeds at Madison Audubon's Faville Grove Sanctuary.

In 2011, she was named the Lake Mills Main Street Program Volunteer of the Year for her work at their Farmers' Market. Recently, she joined the Board for the Friends of the Glacial Heritage Area.

Jeanne is looking forward to getting to know the Lake Wingra Watershed: the people, the natural life and habitats, and the water that ties them together.





Jim Baumann shares Lake Wingra information with the public during the Monroe Street Festival.

## Volunteers!

— Jeanne Scherer

Many of you received an email early in January asking you to complete a survey that asks about your contact preferences as well as your interest in volunteering with FoLW in a wide variety of ways.

If you haven't already completed the survey, please do. Note that if you're not interested in volunteering, we'd like to

know that, too. This is also an opportunity to update your contact information.

If you did not receive an email of the survey, please use this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NZ872DT>. You can also find the link on our Facebook page and the FoLW webpage: <http://lakewingra.org/>

Thank you for participating!

## Other thanks for the fall and winter of 2013

**Odana Rain Garden Fall Clean-up:** Thanks to Jim Baumann, Rich Rydecki, Karen Ecklund, Rex Merrill, Paul Dearlove, and the fox that supervised.

## Watershed Improvement Grants for Schools Committee:

Thanks to Board members Ben Yahr and David Thompson, and Stephanie Robinson, citizen member of the committee.

Stephanie brings her experience creating the first Thoreau School rain garden to working with David to develop FoLW's grant program which will help other schools and community organizations start their own projects to control runoff.

## Monroe Street Festival:

For the second year in a row, Friends of Lake Wingra staffed a lake education booth at the Monroe Street Festival.

Topics included construction site erosion, winter salting practices, and an Eagle Scout's rain garden success story at Thoreau School—paid for by a FoLW grant award.

"Love Your Lakes, Don't Leaf Them" lawn signs were also handed out. Thanks to those who staffed the display: Jim Baumann, David Thompson, Karen Ecklund, Rex Merrill and Roger Bannerman.

## Reduce Salt Use to Help Lake Wingra

— Jim Baumann

Urban lakes, ponds and streams are clearly impacted by winter salt use. Increasing levels of chlorides from salts used as de-icers have been found in Lake Wingra.

Odana Pond, located in the western end of the Lake Wingra watershed, is listed as an impaired water due to very high chloride concentrations.

Most of the salt is from highway, street and parking lot applications, but residential use also contributes.

Consider these ways to reduce its use around your home or business:

Shovel walks and driveways early and often. In most cases, no salt is needed.

Limit use to no more than one pound of salt per 200 square feet of ice. A heaping 12 ounce cup should be enough for a 60 foot icy sidewalk. A hand-held spreader helps you spread the ice evenly.

More salt does not mean more melting.

Salt will not work when the temperature is 15° F or lower; use sand at lower temperatures to reduce slipping.

If salt is visible on dry pavement, sweep up the extra salt for future use. Keep in mind that salt can also damage concrete.



*What mysteries might you uncover on the ice this winter?*

## Walking on Ice

*David Thompson; photos by David Thompson*

**T**he ice on Madison's lakes provides a fascinating landscape to explore with snowshoes, skis, iceboats, or even as a daredevil on skates pulled by a parasail. While some folks huddle over their ice fishing holes, others enjoy flying kites without worrying about trees.

One of my favorite activities is tracking animals the morning after a light snowfall. Otters sprint a few steps, and then slide on their bellies, leaving a distinctive trail.

Beavers may also leave slide-like troughs from dragging their broad tails. Check the print—a beaver's hind foot print is larger than an average human's hand.

Coyotes use our waterways as their highways year round. In winter, they leave loping tracks along the shore or heading arrow straight across the lake. You can often see where geese have taken wing or landed, sometimes skidding to a stop.

Nature reveals seldom-seen phenomena during winter, like dust that continually falls from the atmosphere. A winter rain can create pools of water that include the dust released by the melting snow and top layer of ice.

Last winter on Lake Mendota, the dusty scum was blown into long, dark lines over the ice surface. The surprising amount of dust had accumulated since the ice formed, just three weeks earlier! The dust carries nutrients and other pollutants to the lakes from construction sites and other sources.

Like other liquids, water contracts as it cools, but at about 39° F it expands, becoming less dense. Once it reaches its

freezing temperature, ice is lighter than unfrozen water and floats. If it didn't, lakes would freeze from the bottom up to the surface, killing aquatic life.

When ice first forms, the crystals are small. Throughout winter, some crystals grow at the expense of neighboring crystals. In late winter, you can easily see the etched outlines of these large crystals.

Look closely for bubbles trapped in the ice. Some are filled with methane produced by decomposing organic matter. Mudminnows sip oxygen from bubbles trapped on the ice bottom.

In late winter, holes in the ice appear, surrounded by twisted tentacles formed by tiny rivulets that develop complete with branching tributaries as meltwater drains to the central hole.

Warm weather and cold snaps cause ice expansion-contraction cycles. The constant adjustments cause many loud cracks and bangs. Ice is an ideal sound channel, so the noises can come from far away.

When the ice contracts, it opens a thin strip of water along the shore. The strip refreezes. The next time the ice expands, there's "extra" ice, causing a pressure ridge to form. Blowing wind also helps build pressure ridges. Expanding ice bulldozes the shoreline, pushing up bank ridges.

A heavy snowfall will weigh down the ice, causing water to well up through cracks and turning snow to slush. If you step onto the slush before it's fully frozen, you may break through and drop an inch or two to the solid ice below as your heart seems to stop! Hope you're wearing wool socks, because your feet will get wet.



*Bands of dust, dirt and debris across Lake Mendota last winter.*

Even in deepest winter, you can see a few areas of open water on Lake Wingra near shore. These are caused by springs. The flowing water comes from underground at a temperature of about 54° F. In springtime, ice melts first along the warming shoreline and where mud in shallows absorbs heat and radiates it to the ice.

Be safe, but don't miss thrills and chills on the ice!





Judi Dilks and Rex Merrill enjoying a paddle on Wingra Creek while helping with the annual clean-up.

## Wingra Creek Parkway Phase III

—Judi Dilks

During the construction of Vilas Park from 1905-06, Wingra Creek was dredged to create a parkway and boating access between Lake Monona and Lake Wingra. In 1994, the City of Madison adopted a Master Plan for the Wingra Creek Parkway with provisions to provide public access for land- and water-based recreation and to stabilize the severely eroded stream banks of Wingra Creek. With only minimal funding available, the bike path was constructed, but stream bank stabilization had to wait.

In 2003, the Friends of Lake Wingra, the South Metropolitan Planning Council, and City of Madison Engineering held a public workshop for citizens to learn about and discuss improvements to Wingra Creek and its shoreline. Participant input focused on environmental quality, recreation, and community building/education. Their ideas helped the City establish an updated Master Plan focused on the needs and desires of the neighborhood.

With a well-used bike trail following Wingra Creek and several major roads crossing over it, the creek is a highly visible feature within the City of Madison. It is popular among paddlers in spite of the challenges caused by frequent low flows, poor water quality, a lack of access points and shallow areas with excessive sedimentation. The public clearly perceives Wingra Creek as a community resource that deserves to be enhanced and maintained.

The 2003 Master Plan divided the Wingra Creek Parkway Project into four Phases. The first two Phases, South Park St. to Baird St. and Fish Hatchery Rd. to South Park St., are complete. Phase III construction is scheduled for Fall 2014. Work will occur along the creek from the railroad bridge at the west end of Goodman & Quann Parks to Olin Ave. On October 17, 2013, City of Madison Engineering hosted a public meeting to present various options for creek channel modification and to receive public input.

The meeting was well attended by local residents, as well as members of the FoLW board, UW Arboretum staff, and the Wisconsin River Alliance. During the lively discussion that followed the presentation, much of the focus was on “re-meandering” the channel to restore the natural appearance of the creek.

Several local residents want as much of the existing tree and shoreline vegetation maintained as possible. Other comments revolved around improving access to the creek for dogs and dog owners from the off-leash dog park on the south side of the creek. Varying opinions on the benefits of a proposed weir structure near Lake Monona to address low, slow-moving water were expressed.

At a follow-up meeting in late January or early February, City Engineering will present a preliminary design incorporating several of the discussed options and public input received in October.

The design in progress includes meandering the channel within the existing banks in conjunction with dredging the channel to deepen it. The channel would be narrowed primarily through the construction of littoral (near shore) shelves that sit just below the water line and support specially selected plants with roots that are permanently submerged. Floating wetlands may also be used.

City Engineering will also present their analysis of the effects of new channel geometry, with and without a weir. Tentative designs for canoe access, dog access, and fishing access locations will be offered.

When asked, Sally Swenson of City Engineering said she “feels pretty confident about providing some kind of all-species (human, dog, etc.) water access near the dog park.” The design will provide a realistic starting point for discussion at the upcoming meeting.

If you have questions regarding this project, you may contact Sally at 266-4862 or [sswenson@cityofmadison.com](mailto:sswenson@cityofmadison.com).



Aerial map of the section of Wingra Creek focused on during Phase III of the Wingra Creek Parkway project.

image source: City of Madison Engineering website

**Advice from Recreation Safety  
Chief Todd Schaller, Wisconsin  
Department of Natural Resource**

- Always remember that ice is never completely safe under any conditions.
- Fish or walk with a friend. It's safer and more fun.
- Contact local sport shops to ask about ice conditions on the lake or river you want to fish.
- Carry a cell phone, and let people know where you are going and when you'll return home.
- Wear proper clothing and equipment, including a life jacket or a float coat to help you stay afloat and to help slow body heat loss.
- Wear creepers (cleats) attached to boots to prevent slipping on clear ice.
- Carry a spud bar (ski pole) to check the ice while walking to new areas.
- Carry a couple of spikes and a length of light rope in an easily accessible pocket to help pull yourself – or others – out of the ice.
- Do not travel in unfamiliar areas -- or at night.
- Know if the lake has inlets, outlets or narrows that have currents that can thin the ice.
- Look for clear ice. Clear ice is generally stronger than ice with air bubbles in it or with snow on it.
- Watch out for pressure ridges or ice heaves. These can be dangerous due to thin ice and open water.
- Take extra mittens or gloves so you always have a dry pair.
- Driving on ice is always a risk. Use good judgment and consider alternatives.

## Wingra Creek – Open for Paddling?

–David S. Liebl

Wingra Creek connects the outflow of Lake Wingra to Lake Monona. Dredged by the Madison Parks and Pleasure Drive Association in 1905-06 to:

*... connect, for all time, Lake Wingra with our chain of lakes. It will, more than any one thing, result in reclaiming Lake Wingra, in clearing up and beautifying and making accessible its shores, and Lake Wingra, though small, is one of the most picturesque of our lakes. It will at once put the people in the southwestern portion of the city in direct communication with Lakes Monona and Mendota, along a route that can be made most beautiful at slight additional expense.*

(Report of the officers of the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association for the year ending April 11, 1905 with report of the annual meeting held April 18, 1905.)

In the early 1970s the USGS installed a concrete weir beneath the Beld Street Bridge to accurately measure flows out of Lake Wingra and the surrounding wetlands (fig 1).

A weir is a low dam used to manage water levels. The structure blocked the passage of canoes and kayaks, limiting paddling access between lakes Monona and Wingra. In 1999, volunteers from Capitol Water Trails Ltd. and the Friends of Lake Wingra jack hammered an opening through the weir (fig 2) opening a passage to paddlers.

Since then, Wingra Creek, has been a recreational resource to paddlers, anglers and school children. The Friends

of Lake Wingra, Mad-City Paddlers, Capitol Water Trails Ltd., STRAND Assoc., the Bay Creek and Bram's Addition neighborhoods and UW students have worked to keep Wingra Creek clean and open for paddling, with annual clean-ups in conjunction with Dane County's Take A Stake in the Lakes.

Recently, a proposal has been made to construct a new weir below John Nolan Drive to provide more constant water level in Wingra Creek. The weir is controversial because it would once again create an obstruction to paddling, requiring a portage to move from Lake Monona to Wingra Creek during half the paddling season.

An alternative proposal has been made to remove accumulated sediment from the creek bed, creating a meandering channel with wetland borders downstream of the stone railway trestle, creating a more natural look, providing constant access for paddling and improving fish habitat.

For more information on the Wingra Creek Parkway project, contact Sally Swenson at City of Madison Engineering, 266-4862 or [sswenson@cityof-madison.com](mailto:sswenson@cityof-madison.com).

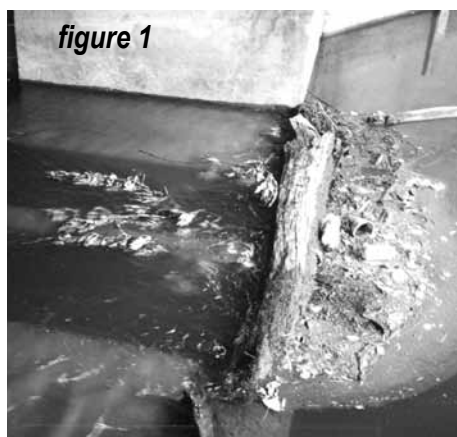


figure 1



figure 2





A FoLW Watershed Improvement Grant will help Akira Toki Middle School replace "Lake Toki" with a rain garden.

## 2014 Watershed Improvement Grants Awarded

- David Thompson

In 2013, FoLW funded our first Watershed Improvement project focused on school grounds: an Eagle Scout project by Jack Nolan, who was given \$1,500 to build a rain garden at Thoreau Elementary School.

FoLW then created a \$4,000 fund for schools, churches, and community centers in the watershed to improve the infiltration of stormwater.

Projects encouraged include rain gardens, growing prairie plants in drainage swales in playgrounds, modifying parking lots for better rain infiltration, and other measures to reduce, clean or utilize storm runoff.

With great pleasure, we announce our 2014 grant recipients.

### Congratulations!!!

- ◆ Akira Toki Middle School—\$1,500 for a rain garden to dry up "Lake Toki," in the staff parking area
- ◆ The Catholic Multicultural Center—\$1,250 for a series of workshops on water issues and construction of a rain garden along Park Street
- ◆ Van Hise Elementary PTO, The Outdoor Classroom Project—\$1,100 for educational materials, an interpretive sign, and a bridge to enhance a previously-constructed garden

All projects will have an educational component. Construction is expected in May of 2014. The application process for 2015 grants will begin in August. To get an early start on planning for your own project, contact David Thompson at davidthompson20@aol.com or 608-692-5467 for more information and application materials.

## Aquatic Plant Management Plan Updates for Lake Wingra and Vilas Lagoon

- Sue Jones, Dane County Watershed Management Coordinator

Dane County staff hopes to complete the aquatic plant management (APM) plan updates for Vilas Lagoon and Lake Wingra in early February 2014. The purpose is to guide effective management of aquatic plants in water bodies and to balance recreational opportunities with healthy aquatic plant communities.

Dane County staff appreciates the high level of Lake Wingra watershed citizen engagement and have enjoyed several conversations with watershed residents about the plans and harvesting operations, including a well-attended public meeting on these topics late in 2012.

Before staff presents a final draft to the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for approval, they want to ensure that remaining Friends of Lake Wingra (FoLW) questions and concerns about the harvesting program are addressed. FoLW has

raised concerns about protection of white water lilies in Vilas Lagoon and is interested in the details of county harvesting operations, including training and supervision of harvester operators.

FoLW leaders will be meeting with Dane County staff and others in January about these topics.

Dane County staff is relying on field surveys completed from 2010 through 2012 for the plan updates. The field surveys completed by Wisconsin DNR scientists continue to show a diverse aquatic plant community in Lake Wingra, with 27 total species documented in 2010, and 22 total species sampled in 2011 and 2012.

Only three of the 22 species sampled in 2012 were non-native, documenting that Lake Wingra has one of the richest native plant communities in Dane County lakes. Four of the five aquatic plant species sampled by Dane County

staff from Vilas Lagoon in 2011 were also natives.

Lake Wingra's aquatic plant growth in 2013 was much reduced from 2012. The 2013 harvesting total from Lake Wingra was 31 loads (approximately 143 tons wet weight) while in 2012 the total was 146.5 loads (approximately 674 tons wet weight).

At the request of City of Madison Parks to facilitate ice skating, Dane County harvested 49 loads (approximately 225 tons wet weight) of aquatic plants from Vilas Lagoon late in 2013 as plants were dying back. The 2012 harvested total from the lagoons was 88 loads (405 tons wet weight).

Visit the Dane County Office of Lakes and Watersheds website for more information about aquatic plants, the harvesting program, and plan updates: <http://danewaters.com/management/AquaticPlantManagement.aspx>.

## Wingra Watershed Plan Update

- Genesis Steinhorst, Water Resource Specialist, City of Madison-Engineering

The Friends of Lake Wingra and the City of Madison have teamed up with consulting firm Strand Associates, Inc. to create a comprehensive watershed plan.

Bret Shaw, an independent expert in the area of environmental social marketing, is also working with the group, as well as UW Arboretum staff and other stakeholders.

The group will focus on increasing stormwater infiltration while reducing nutrients, sediment, and chloride inputs to the lake.

As of December, we have discussed each of these issues to varying degrees. The next steps will be to start putting together a draft report with recommendations.

We will then discuss what possible pilot projects could address one or more of these issues, and select one to pursue in 2014.

A final report with recommendations is scheduled to be completed next summer, and the pilot project should wrap up by next November.

UW Engineering students, under the leadership of Professor Chin Wu, are completing a concurrent study in which wind/waves, carp, and ongoing stormwater discharges to the lake are calculated with regard to their relative effects on lake water quality.

Special thanks to Jim Lorman, Roger Bannerman, Rebecca Power and David Liebl for their continued participation on the Watershed Planning Steering Team.

Information on the Wingra Watershed planning effort is available on the city web site: <http://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/stormwater/wingra-plan.cfm>.



Look closely, and you may see the bees busily at work on the stamens.

## American Lotus: A New Member of the Community?

- Rex Merrill

Many of us who paddle Lake Wingra are familiar with the beds of water lilies (*Nymphaea odorata* - white water lily, and *Nuphar variegata* - yellow water lily) that choke the quiet shallows. While trying to push my canoe through the dense beds of floating lily leaves this summer, I was surprised to see the flowers, fruits, and leaves of American lotus (*Nelumbo lutea*), a plant that I have never seen during decades of paddling in Lake Wingra.

Like the water lilies, the lotus has large, showy flowers with many petals and pollen-bearing stamens. Unlike the lilies' floating blossoms, lotus flowers sit atop stalks emerging one to three feet above the water. In the center of the pale yellow petals and stamens, each flower has a receptacle shaped like a showerhead. Several pistils poke out of pockets in the top surface of the receptacle. After pollination, the petals and stamens are shed, and the pistils form nutlets that remain in the receptacle. Each nutlet contains a single large seed. The resulting fruit (receptacle and nutlets) hardens, and as the above-water parts of the lotus die back in the fall, it may float away.

Lotus leaves are as remarkable as their flowers. Like the flowers, many of the

leaf blades will emerge above the water on stalks, though some will float. Like two-foot green saucers, they balance on their stalks. The microstructure of the blade surface makes it super-hydrophobic (i.e. water repellent). Since water does not wet the blade surface, a perfect bead of water often accumulates in the bottom of the saucer. Splash water across the leaf and watch it dance over the surface like water on waxed metal.

Since coming to Madison in the '70s, I've become familiar with beds of American lotus in University Bay and in the Mississippi backwaters near La Crosse. This is the northwestern limit of its range, which extends east to Massachusetts and south to the Gulf of Mexico. Native Americans may have brought the edible seeds and tubers of the lotus into the more northern areas.

How did the lotus get to Lake Wingra? Once introduced, how did the population become established in the lake? Lotus seeds may remain viable for over a millennium and typically break dormancy only when the hard seed coat is broken mechanically. Have lotus seeds been in Lake Wingra since Native Americans lived along its shores over one hundred years ago? Questions to ponder while paddling.



# Thank You 2012-2013 Donors!

We wish to thank those who supported our work during our most recent fiscal year, July 1, 2012-June 30, 2013, through their financial contributions. The generosity of our donors supports our day to day work to protect and

improve the Lake Wingra Watershed, while also allowing FoLW to look confidently toward future goals. We took care to include all our donors below and apologize for any omissions.

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# *Friends of Lake Wingra, Inc.*

c/o Office of Advancement  
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David Thompson

**FOLW Board Meetings** are held the first Thursday of every month at the Sequoya Branch of the Madison Public Library. Meetings take place from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and are open to the public. You are invited to attend to learn what's going on in and around the Lake Wingra watershed, and to hear about the Friends' various project initiatives. In addition, we are always looking for enthusiastic individuals who may be interested in serving on the Board. Please consider joining us at one of our monthly meetings to learn more, or send us an email at [info@lakewingra.org](mailto:info@lakewingra.org).



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