



Waukesha County Environmental Action League
Protecting Waukesha County's Natural Resources since 1978
E-Newsletter October 2023

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you.”
Jane Goodall

**WDNR permit approving City of Delafield's plan
to place 6-slip transient pier in Nagawicka Lake appealed**

Fay Amerson

WEAL continues to monitor and assist the residents of the City of Delafield to prevent the construction and use of a transient pier within St. John's Bay, a State-designated sensitive area on Nagawicka Lake. St. John's Bay is a shallow bay on Nagawicka Lake. DNR experts have recorded and published the presence of a diverse native aquatic plant and fish community within the Bay. This sensitive plant community provides food, cover, and refuge for a diverse fish and wildlife population. Currently, the bay is used by paddlers and lacks conflicting, excessive, motorized boat traffic. The proposed transient pier is intended to lure motorized boat traffic into the Bay's sensitive area. The use of motorized boats in shallow waterbodies churns up bottom sediment that impairs water clarity and the ability of fish to find food and habitat. Motorized boats also sever aquatic plants and have the potential to move invasive plants within a lake and from lake-to-lake.

WEAL finds the pier location, size, construction materials and use to have a negative impact to the Bay's sensitive aquatic community and placement and use of the pier without restrictions would be a violation of the WDNR's responsibility to protect the public interests.

The residents of the City of Delafield have established a formal organization to prevent the pier in St. John's Bay. Check out their website:

<https://stjohnsbaydefenders.com>

Unfortunately, after receiving substantial objections to the City of Delafield's permit application and pier plans from WEAL and the residents, WDNR approved the permit for the 6-slip transient pier in the St. John's Bay sensitive area. The Defenders and WEAL appealed the WDNR permit decision and requested a contested case hearing. WEAL objected to the WDNR's failure to consider reasonable specific permit conditions necessary to protect fish and wildlife habitat, natural scenic beauty and prevent recreational use conflicts in this shallow sensitive bay. WEAL stated that the City of Delafield and the WDNR failed to consider measures to prevent or monitor the introduction of invasive species to the bay resulting from the increased boat traffic lured to the transient pier in the St. John's Bay sensitive area.

The Administrative Hearing to hear objections to WDNR permit decision will be conducted by an Administrative Law Judge. Following the hearing proceedings, the Administrative Law Judge will decide to approve the WDNR permit as issued, deny the permit or modify the permit. The Administrative

Hearing has not been scheduled but may be conducted in November or December of this year. The Defenders of the Bay have retained legal counsel to assist in their appeal. WEAL will request the Administrative Law Judge provide the public an opportunity to present testimony at this hearing, when scheduled.

The City of Delafield is relying on a state-funding through the Recreational Boating Facilities Grant Program to construct the pier. The City has withdrawn their grant.



WEAL finds the pier location, size, construction materials and use to have a negative impact to the St. John's Bay sensitive aquatic community and placement and use of the pier without restrictions would be a violation of the WDNR's responsibility to protect the public interests.

Public weighs in on Waukesha Co. Park and Open Space Plan

Nancy Gloe

Tuesday Aug. 16, the Waukesha Co. Parks Dept. hosted an open house to showcase their recent Park and Open Space Plan (POSP) update. According to the county's website: "The Waukesha County Park & Open Space Plan guides the development, acquisition, preservation, and management of park, recreation, and open space lands in the County."

Here is a link to the plan: [Waukesha County - Park And Open Space plan 2023draft](#)

We've long believed that the County Parks Dept. has done an excellent job in providing recreational opportunities to residents through county parks, greenways and trails. The issues in the POSP are too numerous to list in this article, so I'll focus on what is, perhaps, most important: preserving what is left of our most environmentally valuable land, the primary, environmental corridors and wetlands. Recognizing the importance of undeveloped open space, particularly along rivers and streams, the POSP states "all remaining non-

urban lands within the designated primary environmental corridors (PEC) should be preserved in natural open uses." While we give the county kudos for pointing out the importance of these lands, actually saving them from development is an ambitious goal, to say the least.

A small portion of these lands are slated for county acquisition. Unless it is in a county project area, though, these lands are left to the local municipalities to protect. In actual practice, many municipalities limit the *density* of developments in these areas with plat restrictions limiting or prohibiting the destruction of the environmental corridor/wetlands/floodplain. Some high-quality PECs are recommended for local or non-profit ownership or maintenance, which are evaluated if the surrounding land is proposed for development. So how can we help?

Staff from the Parks Dept. suggests that citizens "watch agendas for discussion of proposed subdivisions and attending the meetings." Most plan commission agendas are posted online. Concerned citizens can also look into what protective language municipalities have in their land use plans, platting ordinances and/or zoning ordinances.

The vulnerability of our most environmentally important lands in Waukesha County, particularly our remaining wetlands, is always a concern. This vulnerability is highlighted by last May's disastrous ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in Sackett v. EPA, which removed most U.S. wetlands from protection. Fortunately, according to the Wisconsin DNR, the decision does not alter Wisconsin's wetland regulations under state law. But this situation can change at any time. There is no substitute for vigilant citizen oversight and advocacy so please get out there and "keep your ears to the ground"

WEAL exhibits at Sustainability Fair

Rose Reinders

On a mild, summer day, August 26, from 9am-3pm, WEAL exhibited at the Retzer Nature Center in Waukesha. The Fair was an event for the gathering of organizations and businesses to inform, educate and engage individuals and families in the important task of preserving the environment for a sustainable future. There were 60 exhibitors, presenters, and activities with a steady stream of viewers who were interested in discovering and connecting to the environmental groups.

WEAL's ZERO WASTE interactivational exhibit included a sign-on to "Take the Pledge" against plastic in the environment and there were "Skip the Straw" cards with alternate types of straws available. The WEAL exhibit emphasized the importance of removing plastic in our lives, especially single-use plastic.

The fair offered an opportunity for exposure to local and county environmental groups and businesses for a better understanding and appreciation of our environment, plus many ideas to move forward on changing lives for a more sustainable future.



WEAL seeks members to serve on Board

Fay Amerson

WEAL is seeking a few new members to serve on its Board of Directors. WEAL was formed in 1978 and undertakes advocacy and other actions to protect the natural and environmental resources in Waukesha County and beyond! The Board is currently working to shape WEAL's mission and environmental action for the next decade. The Board values your ideas, expertise, and passion for protecting Waukesha County's natural resources.

If you have the time to assist the Board and help WEAL membership chart its course for local environmental action, you are encouraged to step-up and sign-up to join WEAL's Board of Directors

If you are interested, please contact Fay Amerson, Assistant Secretary, WEAL Board of Directors: famerson@mac.com

Some global and statewide issues

Agency reports warmest above-average temps in September

September had the biggest anomaly because of persistent and unusual warmth in the world's oceans.

According to the European's Space Agency's Copernicus Climate Change service, temps in September were 0.93 degrees Celsius (1.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above the 1991-2020 average for September. That's the warmest margin above average for a month in 83 years of records kept by the Agency.

While July and August had hotter raw temperatures because they are warmer months on the calendar, September had what scientists call the biggest anomaly, or departure from normal. Temperature anomalies are crucial pieces of data in a warming world.

The hot temperatures stretched across the globe, but they were chiefly driven by persistent and unusual warmth in the world's oceans, which don't cool off as much in September as normal and have been recorded hot since spring. *Source: European Space Agency Copernicus Climate Change Service*

Wisconsin's clean energy future

To achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, Wisconsin must harness the power of clean energy. WI needs to build 31 gigawatts (GW) of solar and 21 GW of wind energy projects by the middle of the century to reach net-zero. Right now, we're less than 4% of the way to our target. Fortunately, we're seeing some significant movement in plans for wind and solar in Wisconsin:

VISTA SANDS SOLAR FARMS: This solar farm project is planned in the heart of the Central Sands region in Portage County. It's a 1.2 GW project which will be the largest solar development in Wisconsin, about four times the size of Koshkonong Solar Energy Center in Dane county. Vista Sands would be the biggest step yet on the path to net-zero in Wisconsin.

Solar projects transition our electricity from polluting fossil fuels to clean energy, mitigating climate change and reducing dangerous air pollution.

This project also has the potential to improve water quality---and quantity-- by shifting some land in and around the solar panels into perennial cover and pollinator habitat.

UPLANDS WIND: This project is 600-megawatt (MW) wind energy project in Lafayette and Iowa Counties in Southwestern Wisconsin. These locations have plenty of areas that have sufficient wind resources to develop homegrown, inexpensive wind energy.

Source: Clean Wisconsin Fall 20



PICTURE OVERVIEW OF 2023—Davis Nature Preserve wetland walk



On June 10, 2023, WEAL hosted a wetland walk on the 52-acre Davis Nature Preserve, a Waukesha County Land Conservancy parcel, west of the Town of Mukwonago. WCLC restored the property to a highly functioning wetland.



For over two hours, participants learned from ecology experts Joanne Kline, Aaron Feggestad and WI Wetlands Director, Tracy Hames as they highlighted specific plant species and their importance to the restored preserve. WCLC president Steve Schmuki welcomed participants.

ZERO WASTE--Retzer Nature Center



WEAL took its ZERO WASTE initiative to the Sustainability Fair at Retzer Nature Center August 26, from 9am-3pm. The scope and mission of the initiative is to make people aware of the harmful polluting effects of plastic, especially single-use plastic (SUP), while focusing on choices which don't pollute, are biodegradable and earth friendly.

SUP encompasses any plastic that is used once, discarded, trashed, and ultimately dumped into landfills where it produces CO₂ while taking up to 1,000 years to decompose: grocery bags, plastic wrap, clam shells, plastic straws, styrofoam, plastic water bottles, etc.

Viable earth-friendly choices are glass, stainless steel, reusable grocery totes, cardboard food containers, reduced purchase of plastic-wrapped products, etc.

To achieve ZW takes work, conscious effort, and the ability to break engrained (bad) habits because plastic is ubiquitous: on almost every grocery shelf, in every retail store, and in most vending machines. Avoiding the purchase of single-use-plastic-wrapped products whenever possible will advance the goal of achieving ZERO WASTE. It's all about smart choices.

WEAL has focused on this project for five years setting up at farmers markets, libraries, fairs, and public events.

SAVE the DATE November 9, 2023---7pm



JOIN WEAL FOR A WAUKESHA COUNTY WETLAND TALK

AT THE NEW BERLIN PUBLIC LIBRARY | COMMUNITY ROOM

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 9TH | 7:00 PM

Learn about the ecological benefits of wetlands from Professional Wetland Scientist, Aaron Feggstad. Aaron has over 20 years of experience studying, restoring, and managing wetland resources throughout the Midwest.



Waukesha County is home to a wide array of wetlands - areas of land that are covered with water or saturated with water for varying periods of time during the year – owing to its unique geographic and geologic setting. This talk will provide a review on some of the best examples of wetland natural communities occurring on publicly accessible lands within the county. Learn about the ancient bog relics that conjure stepping back in time, the calcareous fens maintained by constant seepage of mineral-rich groundwater, and the last vestiges of the formerly expansive wet prairie and sedge meadow complexes of the Scuppernong Marsh, and more. The discussion will highlight the importance of these and other wetlands on the landscape and the role of ecological stewardship and restoration for protecting our remaining wetland resources.

Registration not required, but appreciated. Scan the QR code to sign-up →

