

## Driftless Trail grows 2.6 miles

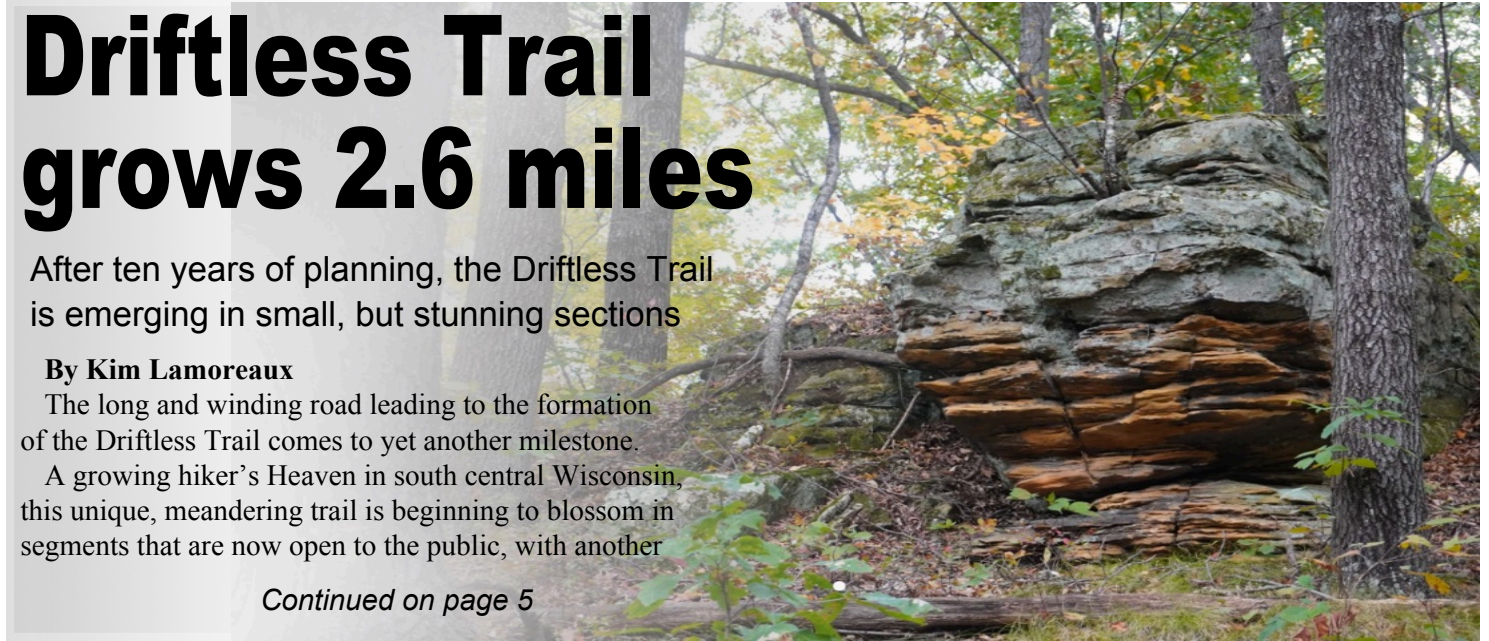
After ten years of planning, the Driftless Trail is emerging in small, but stunning sections

By **Kim Lamoreaux**

The long and winding road leading to the formation of the Driftless Trail comes to yet another milestone.

A growing hiker’s Heaven in south central Wisconsin, this unique, meandering trail is beginning to blossom in segments that are now open to the public, with another

*Continued on page 5*



The one and a half-mile Driftless Trail segment on Weaver Road north of Governor Dodge State Park in Iowa County offers gorgeous views for hikers and is now open to the public. *Photo courtesy of the Driftless Area Land Conservancy*



Chuck Bauer accepts the Bur Oak award from BMAP Board President Greg Jones for prairie restoration work with partner Chuck Beckwith on their property near New Glarus. (Not pictured: Chuck Beckwith) *Photo by Kim Lamoreaux*

## Honoring 25 years of prairie restoration and protection

Long time partners in life and prairie restoration, Bauer and Beckwith receive BMAP's 2025 Bur Oak Award

*“We find ample reward for the costs in time and energy necessary to protect what is native against what feels like a thunderous riot of aggression outside the gates.”*

Chuck Bauer wrote that in May of 2010 when he and his partner Chuck Beckwith had already become symbolic storm troopers against the green aggression they saw taking over much of their 82 acres near Blanchardville.

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Aldo Leopold Association and by the Natural Resources Conservation Service



Greg Jones

Even as the rains fall in March and April, we are in the midst of fire season —prescribed burns.

Fire on the landscape is vital in the development of a healthy prairie on an array of levels.

There are several volunteer opportunities to help with this fun, yet important task of land management and ecological restoration.

If you are interested, I encourage you to attend a class on the subject. It will be more helpful to your burn boss if you come with some idea of fire behavior and how to work with it. An excellent place to start is with the Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council (WPFC). Visit their web site at [prescribedfire.org](http://prescribedfire.org). I especially encourage you to click on the tab labeled "Safety Equipment."

If you are looking for some training there is a "News and Events" tab. Click on that, then click on "Event." You will find training opportunities there. I have been to burn classes sponsored by the

(NRCS). I don't know if they are still offering those classes, but if you look around, you may find more.

I have some bad news and some good news to report. Our newsletter editor, Grace Vosen, has decided to move on from us as her schedule has become overloaded. We thank Grace for the excellent work she has done and wish her well in her other endeavors.

The good news is that we have found a replacement. Kim Lamoreaux will take on the job of newsletter editor. We are confident that she will do a fine job.

One more "bad news" item. Sam Anderson, our staff ecologist, will be starting full time employment at the UW Arboretum by the end of summer.

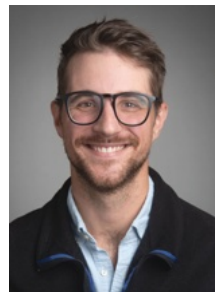
Sam has done exemplary work for us. Folks rave about his site visit and site visit reports. The E-bulletins he puts out for us are spot on fantastic as are his messages in the newsletter. He will be missed and will be hard to replace. The search has started.

I am into my fifth year of serving as president of BMAP. I think any organization can benefit from new folks coming into leadership roles. Fresh ideas and new energy come with new people. We don't have anyone ready to step into this role. Typically, any president would spend a year or two on the board of directors. I hate to beat this tired old drum, but I sure would like to see some new folks joining the board of directors.

Everybody has something they can offer and bring to the table. When I became BMAP board president, I felt maybe I wasn't qualified or was a bit inadequate. I am a retired land surveyor. I have no degree in botany, ecology or any other related field. I do have the experience of 20 years of my own land restoration project. I also have served on boards of other organizations. Maybe you have some unsung skills or enthusiasm to help our BMAP team moving forward. It takes a village with people having different skill sets.



# ECOLOGIST'S REPORT



Sam Anderson

Despite our latest round of snow, spring is once again here in southern Wisconsin. Wisps of smoke from prescribed fire dot the horizon when conditions are right, and birds are

flocking north in anticipation.

While many of these patterns are comfortingly familiar, there are always new, exciting happenings in the Driftless. The Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council, Southern Driftless Grasslands, and The Prairie Enthusiasts are leading the way in prescribed fire training throughout the state, helping bring fire to acreage that hasn't burned in decades. Dane County and the UW Arboretum continue to offer native seed collecting and native plant sales, providing excellent resources to improve the diversity of our

native plant communities. For landowners who are planning for the long-term management of their properties, organizations like Driftless Area Land Conservancy, Groundswell Conservancy, and Mississippi Valley Conservancy also offer excellent resources on easements, endowments and other forms of stewardship. More than ever, there are resources available to support landowners on their restoration journeys.

There is also renewed motivation for land restoration in our region. Recent

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## ECOLOGIST'S REPORT

*continued*

national bird populations show consistent declines, especially for grassland birds including Grasshopper Sparrows, Dickcissels, Bobolinks, and Upland Sandpipers. While sobering, these data highlight the importance of groups like Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance and Southern Driftless Grasslands that support public and private land management for grassland birds.

Southern Wisconsin is a unique, ecologically diverse region of the country worth protecting. The vast majority of southern Wisconsin is also in private hands. This puts

private landowners and groups like the Blue Mounds Area Project front and center in the fight to restore native plant communities, foster biodiverse habitats, and foster the next generation of land managers. Thank you all for your countless hours working on your lands and your commitment to supporting other landowners in their restoration endeavors. You can help BMAP continue our mission by continuing your support and inviting other landowners to join our community. Whether you have one acre or 100, every bit helps keep Wisconsin verdant. I'm happy to come visit your property and support you with whatever land management you are practicing.



## Knowles-Nelson conservation land fund languishes from legislative inaction

By Kim Lamoreaux

Only days away from the 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, of which the late Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson was one of the founders, a beloved state program that bears his name may have reached the end of its legacy.

The Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson Stewardship Fund, which supports the acquisition of conservation and park land in Wisconsin, has not been funded in this state legislative session.

If legislators reconvene yet this spring, lawmakers could reach an agreement on funding the program. However, as of this newsletter printing, there have been no plans for reconvening announced. If the legislature fails to act, the Knowles-Nelson Fund will end.

Charlie Carlin, director of strategic initiatives with Gathering Waters, Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts, said the lack of action on the program has angered many Wisconsinites.

"Voters want legislators to be taking care of our land and water, yet here we are at the end of the legislative session with no solution," Carlin said. "I've been hearing from folks across the state sort of in disbelief and pretty angry."

Since its establishment in 1989, the fund has preserved over 750,000 acres

of public park land in Wisconsin and provided over 1,500 grants to land trusts and conservation nonprofit organizations, state park friends groups, and local governments.

Typically, it provides matching grants for the purchase of conservation lands. Among the most recent projects the Knowles-Nelson Fund has helped to purchase are the Driftless Trail's Wintergreen property in Spring Green,

(see related story on page 1), and 100 acres for Devil's Lake State Park and the Ice Age Trail that boasts scenic vistas that include the second-highest point in Sauk County.

Carlin framed the impact of the loss of that funding for Spectrum News 1 in Milwaukee:

"Our politicians have chosen not to invest in our state parks or our public lands, so we are facing a billion-dollar maintenance backlog just on state properties alone," he said. "Now, to turn around and say we are going to spend zero dollars? You're just digging that hole that much deeper."

For nearly 40 years, the fund survived bi-partisan legislative disagreements on how much to budget for it. Last month, lawmakers couldn't reach an agreement, even after Sen. Jody Habush Sinykin offered an amendment to reauthorize the fund for one additional year, but was blocked by Republican leadership.

If there is no legislative action taken before June 30, the funding will end.



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# FROM the EDITOR/S

## Goodbye and 'prairie on,' Grace!



**By Grace Vosen**

The connections between people in our conservation world are numerous. You might show up

to a local music event and see someone with whom you just pulled garlic

mustard performing on stage. The person working next to you on a burn crew might have taught your kids' biology class. Your neighbor "one hill over" might have the exact tool or field guide you've been searching for.

It's these connections that keep us grounded, in the best possible sense. When we feel powerless to do anything else, there's still a real difference to be made by helping one another on the ground, face-to-face. BMAP's community stems from small but mighty connections like these. The BMAP organization was founded to make more connections and make the existing ones stronger.

I have relied on community connections in my work as editor of this newsletter, and I hope I've helped forge

new ones. This will be my last contribution to BMAP News as I shift my focus to other work and creative pursuits. But I am grateful to be part of this exceptional community.

Kim Lamoreaux is your new Editor and layout designer. The newsletter you're reading now is Kim's handiwork. Her connections to our region also run deep, and I was thrilled to be able to connect her passion with the needs of BMAP. You can "meet" Kim through her work, but you may also see her out and about as she works to spread our message of community conservation.

Thank you again for this opportunity, and prairie on!



## From Earth Day to BMAP



**By Kim Lamoreaux**

They say you can't go home again. But you can get close.

It was by way of my former, long time newspaper editor

—my first real job when I moved to Wisconsin 26 years ago—that I found this lovely organization of really cool, smart folks who care deeply about our earth and the imperative we all share to care for it.

Enter the board of directors at BMAP who hired me to edit their newsletter.

In this first issue, I had the joyful opportunity to talk to Barb Barzen with the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC) again, a friendly, reliable and knowledgeable source I called upon as a newspaper reporter several times. I met Chuck Bauer, one of the former owners of the Soap Opera, my favorite place on State Street when visiting my sister Candy Wood, (who moved to Madison when I was 12), only to find out he became a champion of land conservation and

preservation not far from where I live now in Spring Green.

On my trips here with my parents, Taliesen was always on the agenda, and I learned the Frank Lloyd Wright in Simon and Garfunkel's song was a real person and built incredible buildings with natural woodwork, stone and celebrated nature. I was hooked. Never did I dream that I would live right down the road from it when I got older.

I majored in journalism in college and my first article published in Bowling Green State University's student newspaper, The BG News, was about Earth Day 1979.

My story made the bottom of the fold on the front page. I had to call my mom that day from the phone in the newspaper office because, well, I made the front page. There would be 100s of front page stories to come after.

In 2000, I came to visit my sister, but got a job for a newspaper in northwest Dane County and stayed. My headlines included the ecology of the Black Earth Creek trout stream, the management of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway and blue green algae, to name a few memorable environmentally-related topics I covered in that time. In 2012, I went to work for Capital Newspapers in Sauk County and continued to write about topics like the riverway, land preservation around

Devil's Lake and, (ick), more blue green algae.

Now, here I am, editing the newsletter for BMAP, a group of folks whose work with landowners and others on land restoration is outstanding and enduring. Just a few days from Earth Day 2026, I hope this first issue generates the same excitement I have about their work and the work of others like them in south central Wisconsin. I am so grateful to tell a few of their stories.



**BMAPNEWS**



The Blue Mounds Area Project Newsletter is published three times yearly with Spring, Winter and Fall issues.

We welcome your comments, submissions and advertisements.

### **BMAP Board of Directors**

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Sam Anderson, Ecologist

ecologist@bluemounds.org

Kim Lamoreaux, Newsletter Editor

newsletter@bluemounds.org

## Driftless Trail

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one officially opening on April 18 in the ridge section of the Welsh Hills. The 2.6-mile path is on Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin estate, owned by the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation and Taliesin Preservation.

The new ridge trail gives hikers nearly five miles of trail to enjoy, with ample parking at the Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center on CTH C, just across the Wisconsin River STR 23 bridge from Spring Green.

Only ten years ago, the Driftless Trail was merely a plan brewing with the members of the Driftless Area Land

Conservation (DALC), for a 100-mile looped trail traversing the woods, prairies, rolling farms fields, bluffs, rivers and streams in northeastern Iowa County. Since then, DALC has worked with private landowners hosting the sections of trail, creating easements to protect those portions of land in perpetuity.

### The future of the Wintergreen Property

DALC Community Conservation Specialist Barb Barzen has been on that planning team since day one. In March, she gave a presentation as part of the Blue Mounds Area Project's (BMAP) Winter Lecture Series, in which she told stories of how landowners have gotten involved in the project and described how this trail is creating an entire corridor of protected land.

Barzen said "the star" of the Driftless Trail may be the property of the former

## Welsh Hills Ridge Section Grand Opening of the Driftless Trail

April 18, 2026

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Frank Lloyd Wright Visitor Center  
5607 CRT C, Spring Green



Wintergreen Ski resort, destined to be the main trailhead. It's a 245-acre landmark with a Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired event center overlooking the Wisconsin River that offers outrageously stunning views.

DALC's recent purchase of the land

driver," said Filipiak. "It's super important conservation land and a building that can be a huge economic benefit."

Barzen said the Wintergreen land purchase is another example of privately owned property now protected forever

for ecological management and public access.

"We'll have kiosks to set the stage for the whole project," Barzen said. "There will be more amenities and interpretive space inside the building. It will be the welcome center with educational and visitor resources, a community gathering place and space for offices and events."



The view from the top at Wintergreen *Courtesy of Driftless Area Land Conservancy*

and building provides permanent protection and was paid for, in part, with a grant from the state's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund (See related story, page 4), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ducks Unlimited.

DALC Executive Director Jen Filipiak said the Wintergreen property cost just under \$3 million, funded by a \$1.2 million matching grant from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund, \$250,000 from Ducks Unlimited and \$1.7 million in private donations. She said a federal grant was also approved but has lingered without being awarded.

"Wintergreen will be a huge economic

It joins the 10,000 acres DALC has protected via 68 conservation easements and acquisitions. Nine miles of the Driftless Trail will be open as of mid-April and 15 more miles of trail are now routed through the Lowery Creek watershed and beyond, with construction planned over the next three years.

"The grand vision is to connect the Lower Wisconsin Riverway with Governor Dodge and Blue Mounds state parks," Barzen said, "and to allow people to get down into the nooks and crannies of the Driftless Area and really get to know it."



# BMAP's 30 years of helping landowners restore their property

**By Carroll Schaal**

*Part one of this retrospective was published in last fall's issue of BMAP News as part of the celebration of its 30th anniversary. This "look back" was written in 2017 by past president Carroll Schaal, one of its founding members. The following article ends with 2017, but BMAP's story is far from over.*

The early 2000s were pivotal years for the establishment of the Blue Mounds Area Project (BMAP). Our new strategic plan was ambitious and gave us good direction for several years.

It was a period focused on developing the organization. We created policies and procedures, purchased liability insurance and formed eight committees. The board had nine directors and a few regular volunteers. Our annual budget hovered around \$20,000 and membership came close to 200.

To improve communications, new board member Peter Weil set up our first website and email list to facilitate discussions among members and announce workshops and events. John Raasch volunteered to be the moderator and helped Mike Anderson, who agreed to be newsletter editor, with outreach efforts. Julie Raasch laid out a brochure explaining BMAP, and we did direct mailings to recruit new members. We formalized our winter and summer event schedule.

BMAP sponsored a "library" in a corner of the Prairie Bookstore, (no longer in business), in Mount Horeb, where we provided newsletters and field guides. The store's shelves had other books for sale with topics like restoration and natural resources.

## **The BMAP scope widens**

We set lofty budget goals and pursued grants and funding, mostly from the Wisconsin Department of Natural

Resources (DNR), the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Fish and Wildlife programs. These helped broaden our scope and introduced us to many new landowners and partners. We completed a DNR forest stewardship grant that funded ecologist Bob Wernerehl to write management plans for six landowners restoring oak savanna.

With a contract from the DNR Fisheries program, we waded into the water and Bob started doing site visits along Gordon Creek. That effort helped spur a large project by Dane County Land Conservation that eventually restored almost five miles of trout stream. Later, we landed a DNR River Protection Grant to promote the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and the connection between healthy streams and permanent grasslands. Consequently, the area had some of the highest rates of CREP participation in the state.

At about this same time, other conservation groups were focusing in on the Driftless Area. We signed onto a Memo Of Understanding with a dozen other conservation entities to support the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area sponsored by The Nature Conservancy. We attended meetings of the Southwest Land Trust, now the Driftless Area Land Conservancy, helping that organization get its start.

Our work was getting recognition from others, too. Alice in Dairyland presented us with the Wildlife Habitat Club Award from the Iowa County Land Conservation Department at the county fair. The Aldo Leopold

Foundation and Friends of the Arboretum gave us their Virginia Kline Award for Excellence in Community Based Restoration, which came along with a nice check that helped our budget.

In an effort aimed at stable and sustainable funding, we enacted a policy of charging \$100 for a site visit from the ecologist. This service had previously been covered by grants or offered as a membership benefit. We also considered charging for lectures, field trips and workshops and buying equipment to loan to members for management. The latter idea proved too risky for the board and our insurance company.

## **Focus on serving landowners**

We conducted a survey of our membership and found that BMAP's unique niche, especially our education and landowner outreach, was overwhelmingly valued and we were encouraged to keep it up. A "Member Helping Member" directory was launched that listed people's skills, equipment and interest for participation in mutual restoration efforts.

We moved into a shared office space with the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association on Main Street in Mount Horeb in 2004. Paul Kaarakka joined the board and became director of membership. He took over the website

*Continued on page 7*

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## BMAP history

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and helped us get our records and data into one database. John and Julie Raasch took over the newsletter.

However, things began to wane. After seven years in the ecologist role, Bob was accepted into graduate school. Funding decreased and board membership dropped. No one had requested a \$100 site visit since the policy had been enacted, and the directory project never caught on. We began questioning the future again. It would be two lean years before we had a new ecologist, but the spirit of BMAP was not suppressed.

Overall, site visits took a back seat while we experimented with other education and outreach efforts. In 2005, a new board conducted a series of benchmarking and capacity-building sessions with the assistance of the River Alliance of Wisconsin, a benefit of our foray into stream and water work. We had just wrapped up a DNR funded project called the “Headwaters Initiative” that recommended, among other things, a watershed association for the upper Pecatonica River.

The organizational benchmarking told us to focus on our core strength: the site visits. We repealed the site visit fee and set out to “reload.” Replacing Bob was difficult. Conservation professionals needed to earn money and advance a career, but we could only support someone part-time.

Accepting that the model was a transient summer position, we aimed for recruiting another graduate student. We also explored the idea of an ecologist intern program with the UW.

Chelsea Baggot revived the site visit

program in 2007. When she left the next year for full-time work, we hired Cindy Becker, who would serve as ecologist and as a board member on and off for the next six years. When she took a hiatus in 2009 to pursue other opportunities, we hired Andrew Norman as our fifth ecologist.



Former BMAP president Carroll Schaal at an educational exhibit in 2009.

While the board sometimes dwindled to two or three active members, we had established a low maintenance routine of winter talks, site visits and summer tours. We continued to publish the newsletter. We upgraded our website with links and tools and held workshops on how to use them. We participated in partnership efforts establishing the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area. Our profile in the community steadily rose. The site visit tally was the highest since 1999.

### 2010 - A turning point

The period of 2010 to 2012 was a turning point that saw the board swell to seven active members as Paul Ohlrogge, Chuck Bauer, Michael Schmitz and Doug Norgord joined Cindy, Paul and me. Site visits had increased significantly under Cindy, and Paul Karrakka helped standardize site visit reports so they could be more easily analyzed. Cindy’s networking and grant writing made many connections and helped provide steady

funding for BMAP. For one summer, we had surplus funds to hire Michael Ulrich as a second ecologist.

Cindy worked on a long discussed project to develop a handbook for landowners that had basic information about the Driftless Area. The publication would complement our site visits by providing guidance on

developing simple management goals and plans. After a couple of years and seemingly endless edits, Reading the Driftless Landscape was published in 2013. (Visit [bluemounds.org/reading-the-driftless](http://bluemounds.org/reading-the-driftless) to learn more.)

Funding and grants were at all-time highs, but the inconsistency and limited benefits led Cindy to seek another career path. In 2014, we followed her recommendation and hired Corey Raimond. When Corey moved to

Washington State the next year, the board knew the drill well and was able to attract a highly qualified ecologist in Amy Alstad.

BMAP has found its success in sustaining the site visit program to reach and serve landowners in Dane, Green and Iowa Counties. We have impacted countless landowners with our technical programs and directly advised on the management of thousands of acres. We have sustained a community member base of 100-150 for almost two decades. Where do we go from here?

Whatever the outcome, I’m sure it will succeed with the continued time, energy and ideas of our supportive BMAP community. Stay tuned and stay involved.

### *A personal note*

It’s been fun and challenging to write this retrospective. In my attempts to be

*Continued on page 8*

## BMAP history

continued from page 7

succinct, many events and people were left out. The contributions of past board members Donn D'Allessio, Andrea Hoerr, Ruth Kellesvig, Kent Mayfield, Jim Elleson, Jim Zerwick, Merel Black, Wendy Alettha, Dave Marshall, Frank Fetter and Deb Joseph all deserve mention, as do all of our field trip hosts and event speakers. I apologize to the many others whose contributions I overlooked or was unable to acknowledge.

In part one, I noted that BMAP began as a project of Community Conservation, Inc. led by Robert Horwich. Without Rob's early support, BMAP would never have come to be. Tragically, Rob suddenly passed away in late February of 2017. He was a friend and mentor and is missed by many.

I think Brian Pruksa still lives in Madison. Bob Wernerehl retired as the State Botanist for Massachusetts. As for me, I have retired from the Wisconsin DNR. I'm glad to see BMAP's leadership and staff aiming to stay true to the values that matter to the membership—bringing community and conservation together.



## Bur Oak award

continued from page 7

But they didn't start out that way.

At the outset, it seemed like a near impossible task for two people who know nothing about ecological improvement. They bought the property together in 1977 when they were barely 30 years old. Not to mention, they were business owners together of the busy, popular Soap Opera shop on State Street in Madison.

"We thought nature would take care of itself if we didn't do anything," Bauer. "It started to dawn on us that we were wrong."

The first explosion they fought off was crown vetch—planted for erosion control—that had grown out of control. By 2000, they had set on a course to manage their land's invasive species and woodlands. They started attending workshops and other ecological presentations. They volunteered to gather seeds to help other people with their property and to observe and learn.

"It was all very exciting," Bauer said. "You felt like you were helping somebody."

It turns out they were. The two became known for it. They brought more "boots on the ground," in the form of undergraduate students from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Society for Ecological Restoration who volunteered either for a day and even as resident interns.

"They were learning right along with us," Bauer said. "They would help with burns and identify invasives and cut them."

Bauer went on to volunteer his time as BMAP vice president for a few years and became an evangelist for the protections of property easements and helped other property owners to obtain them. The property he and Beckwith own is in a conservation easement held by the Driftless Area Land Conservancy (DALC).

What took them 23 years of hard work, education, enlisting students and volunteers and subsequent paying it forward helping other land owners has gained the recognition of Blue Mounds Area Project (BMAP) leaders who awarded them the 2025 Bur Oak award on March 4.

"Chuck and Chuck have a strong sense of community, generously sharing their experiences and what they've learned," said BMAP board member Sarah Crittenden. "They also looked to the future care of their land by working with DALC to create a conservation easement. They have managed 82 acres of dry upland prairie remnants, oak savanna openings, oak woodlands, diverse restored prairie, moist bottomlands and several at risk

species."

*The Bur Oak award recognizes a member landowner who has undertaken or recently completed a project on their own land that makes outstanding progress in protecting or restoring native biodiversity. Excellence in private land stewardship is shown by the degree of leadership and innovation in the project's approach, sensitivity to the local landscape, and enhancement of the habitat of threatened, endangered or special concern species or rare plant communities.*

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# A ride from Madison to Blue Mounds

## 200 years ago

By **Bob Wernerehl**  
*Former BMAP ecologist*

Early 19th century accounts that described the landscape around Blue Mounds are few and far between.

After some thoughtful research, there were, however, some observers and writers whose descriptions are available for reading. Juliette Kinzie, for example, was the wife of the Indian Agent at Fort Winnebago (Portage). When traveling with a party to Madison, then to Blue Mounds in early March of 1831, she describes the land as almost entirely open prairie. When they left Madison she wrote: “Our road, after leaving the lake, lay over a ‘rolling prairie’ now bare and desolate enough... Sometimes the elevations were covered with a thicket or copse, in which our dogs would generally rouse up one or more deer.”

Kinzie writes of the land south as “a rolling prairie, unvaried by forest or stream—hillock rising after hillock, at every ascent of which we vainly hoped to see a distant fringe of ‘timber.’”

Englishmen George W. Featherstonhaugh was hired in 1834 by the U.S. Government as its first geologist. Traveling in 1837 from Madison to Blue Mounds, he reports seeing dominant prairie and oak savanna in the region and the scattered nature of oak forest.

He uses rich descriptive language to express his appreciation for the area and, at times, waxes patriotic.

“We got into one of the most exquisitely beautiful regions I have ever seen in any part of the world,” Featherstonhaugh writes. “The prairie that had hitherto been distinguished by a regular rolling surface here changed its character and took the form of ridges somewhat elevated, which frequently resolved themselves into masses of gracefully rounded hills, separated by gentle depressions, that occasionally became deepened valleys. In whatever direction our eyes were turned, the most pleasing irregularities of surface presented themselves.

“But that which crowned the perfection of the view, and imparted an indescribable charm to the whole scene from the knoll where we stood, to the most distant point, was the inimitable grace with which the picturesque clumps of trees, that sometimes enlarges themselves into woods, embellished this rural landscape from the hand of Nature. America will justly boast of this unrivaled spectacle when it becomes known, for certainly it is formed of elements that no magic could enable all Europe to bring together upon so great a



*Sugar Creek circa 1899 Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society*

scale.”

A common criticism of historical accounts is that they were written in order to sell books and thus cast an overly positive light on the landscape. This was probably not the case for Featherstonhaugh who was being paid regardless of any eventual sale of material.

Another writer of the time was William Rudolph Smith of Philadelphia, who spent a summer in Grant, Iowa, Lafayette and Dane Counties in 1837.

His impressions of the land as he traveled from Blue Mounds to Madison are similar to the descriptions of others “From the Blue Mounds, the road passes through alternate prairie and wood,” Smith writes, “crossing one of the head waters of the Sugar River, until within eight miles of the Four Lakes, where the traveler leaves the military road, which trends to the northeast, immediately after emerging from a considerable tract of oak openings, and again entering the prairie.”

He expresses his pleasure and surprise at the ease of traveling over the terrain.

“The prairies may be passed over in any direction in a wheel carriage with ease and safety,” he wrote. “The groves surrounding and interlacing and sprinkling and dotting the vast ocean of open field, can be threaded as easily with a carriage, as if you were driving through a plantation of fruit or forest trees, set or growing irregularly. The undergrowth is generally of small bushes readily passed over... the strawberry literally covers the prairies and the groves.”

*Find out what William Smith encounters on the rest of his journey in our next issue and the impact it has on our state in the next decades.*



## COMING EVENTS IN THE SUMMER OF '26

### Property Tours

**Pleasant Valley Conservancy**

**June 20, 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

**10747 Moyer Rd. Blue Mounds**

Stewarded by Ken Wade and Pat Trochlell, their collaborations with The Prairie Enthusiasts, Dane County, and other local organizations focus on restoring and protecting this diverse range of plant communities.

**Kurt Peters and Elizabeth Hopp-Peters Property**

**July 18 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

**N6405 County Hwy A, Argyle**

Restored prairie on this 75-acre property occupies a sandy former pasture. These stewards' recent work, supported by NRCS and local restoration contractors, has focused on restoring oak woodlands and oak savanna.

**Debbie & Peter Manke Property**

**August 15 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

**5566 Pine Rd, Black Earth**

Debbie and Peter balance their time restoring their remnant oak woodland, promoting their restored tallgrass prairie and nurturing young oaks within an old pine plantation. We'll tour these habitats at varying stages of restoration.

### Walks with a Naturalist

**Pleasant Valley Conservancy**

**May 30 1 - 4 p.m.**

**4554 Pleasant Valley Rd. Black Earth**

Join geologist and BMAP member Ken Wade as he leads us through the fantastic landforms and landscapes of one of the oldest restoration projects in southern Wisconsin.

**Vermont Church Legacy Prairie and Woodland**

**August 1 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.**

**9886 Vermont Church Rd., Black Earth**

This 105-acre property contains 35 acres of prairie, woodland and 20 acres of wetland with hiking trails winding throughout. We'll see these diverse habitats and hear about their stewardship with Greg Herrling.

**The Prairie Enthusiasts**

**Blue Mounds Trek**

**Blue Mound State Park 4350 Mounds Park Rd.,**

**Blue Mounds**

September 19

12 - 3 p.m.

- Location to be announced -

This 5.5-mile hike starts at Blue Mounds State Park through Pleasant Valley Conservancy and ends at Parrish Savanna. Jointly hosted by BMAP and The Prairie Enthusiasts

## BMAP Welcomes New Members

Jon & Itzy Bishop

Michelle & Chris Livanos

Karen & Paul Cox

Lorna & Brad Brookins

Monty Schiro

Steve & Renee Bigler



# DRIFTLESS

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# BMAP ONLINE

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## eBULLETIN

BMAP's monthly eBulletin for announcements, habitat restoration tips and more:  
[bluemounds.org/connect](http://bluemounds.org/connect)



## JOIN THE DISCUSSION

- BMAP's Facebook page for events and environmental news:  
[facebook.com/BMAPcommunity](https://facebook.com/BMAPcommunity)
- BMAP's Facebook group for sharing photos, ideas and activities:  
[facebook.com/groups/BMAPcommunity](https://facebook.com/groups/BMAPcommunity)

## BMAP ONLINE STORE

Wear a conversation starter.



Scan to go directly to the Bonfire BMAP shop portal

### *The more you know...*

For a deeper dive into some of our stories, here is a list of relevant links that will be active in our digital version of this newsletter

**The Driftless Trail – Driftless Area Land Conservancy** <https://driftlessconservancy.org/>  
**Chuck Bauer's easement article in BMAP News Summer 2023 issue**

[https://www.bluemounds.org/files/ugd/dd0ba6\\_7a946dc00b7e4dfabc1bfb55fdbb1bbd.pdf](https://www.bluemounds.org/files/ugd/dd0ba6_7a946dc00b7e4dfabc1bfb55fdbb1bbd.pdf)

**Most recent BMAP e-bulletin**  
[https://www.bluemounds.org/files/ugd/dd0ba6\\_cbd1dd4d611d452a857bd82ba48f0b43.pdf](https://www.bluemounds.org/files/ugd/dd0ba6_cbd1dd4d611d452a857bd82ba48f0b43.pdf)

**The Knowles-Nelson Fund**  
<https://knowlesnelson.org/>

**Gathering Waters - Wisconsin's alliance for land trusts** <https://gatheringwaters.org/>

**Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council**  
<https://prescribedfire.org/>

## JOIN US at BMAP

### BLUE MOUNDS AREA PROJECT MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Status:

Renewal     New Member     Gift Membership for: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Level:

Basic \$40     Contributor \$70     Supporter \$100     Lifetime \$1000

*All memberships, except lifetime, follow the calendar year.*

Additional donation beyond your annual membership: \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL MEMBERSHIP / DONATION: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable and return to: Blue Mounds Area Project, PO Box 332, Mount Horeb, WI 53572  
or you can contribute online at <https://www.bluemounds.org/donor-form>

YES, I would like to receive information about site visits.     I'm interested in volunteer opportunities with BMAP.

*Thank you! Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*



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*Sneed Creek in the Town of Wyoming may be one of the best kept secrets in the Driftless region. This little beauty is best viewed in the spring as it babbles and twists its way along Sneed Creek Road via Lower Wyoming Road off State Route 23 going north out of Spring Green toward Dodgeville. Photo by Kim Lamoreaux*

visit us at [www. bluemounds.org](http://www.bluemounds.org)