Conservation Corner

*Conservation Corner is a weekly article produced by the Forest County Land &Water Conservation Department. For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*

This week, I read a Blog from Bill Gates and his thoughts about the Coronavirus. I’ll try to summarize what he says in dealing with the ‘first modern pandemic.

Gates begins by stating that the coronavirus pandemic pits all of humanity against the virus. This is like a world war, except in this case, we’re all on the same side. He sees global innovation as the key to limiting the damage. This includes innovations in testing, treatments, vaccines, and policies to limit the spread while minimizing the damage to economies and well-being. The global collaboration on these issues is impressive and we should know a lot more by the summer.

**Is the disease seasonal or weather dependent?**Almost all respiratory viruses (a group that includes COVID-19) are seasonal. This would mean there are fewer infections in the summer, which might lull us into complacency when the fall comes. Because we see the novel coronavirus spreading in Australia and other places in the Southern hemisphere, where the seasons are the opposite of ours, we already know the virus is not as seasonal as influenza is.

**Which activities cause the most risk of infection?** Judgements will have to be made about different kinds of gatherings like classes or church going and whether some kind of spacing should be required. In places without good sanitation, there may be spread from fecal contamination since people who are infected shed the virus.

**Who is most susceptible to the disease?** We know that older people are at much greater risk of both severe illness and death. Understanding how gender, race, and co-morbidities affect this is a work in progress.

Vaccines have saved more lives than any other tool in history. Smallpox, which used to kill millions of people every year, was eradicated with a vaccine. New vaccines have played a key role in reducing childhood deaths from 10 million per year in 2000 to fewer than 5 million per year today.

Short of a miracle treatment, which we can't count on, the only way to return the world to where it was before COVID-19 showed up is a highly effective vaccine that prevents the disease.

If you’d like to read the full memo, it can be found by Googling ‘GatesNotes’.