

Conservation Success

02/24/2023

More people will be able to safely access the Lower Yahara River thanks to Groundswell's purchase of 1.64 acres south of the Dunkirk Dam. This special place is adjacent to property owned by the Dunkirk Dam Lake District and to the Town's Charlie H. Lyon Memorial Park. Immediately after the acquisition, Groundswell transferred the parcel to the Town of Dunkirk.

The Town plans to work with the Lake District to construct amenities on the property. Current plans include an ADA-accessible path, an accessible canoe & kayak put-in/take-out, and an accessible fishing pier.

There is currently no safe public access for boaters to portage the Dunkirk Dam due to turbulent water immediately below the dam. This acquisition is further south and will allow the public to use canoes and kayaks on this segment of the Yahara Chain Water Trail. An existing parking lot at the Charlie H. Lyon Memorial Park would connect with the riverside improvements by the planned footpath.

The property had been in the Hansen family since 1945, when Otto Hansen purchased it. His son, Rollin, fished from the property and cleared about an acre of the land for a vegetable garden. The current landowners are third and fourth generations. Although they were approached by a developer, the family chose to preserve the property. **"We want the public to be able to enjoy this land next to the Yahara River for years to come,"** said Otto's granddaughter Judy Adler. "Public access will enhance the Town's park lands."

River usage in this area is expected to increase with the City of Stoughton's new River Park for kayaks and canoes. The River Park will be upstream from the Hansen acquisition, and some boaters will no doubt continue downstream to the Dunkirk dam. "This purchase makes possible safer and accessible access to the Yahara River, while protecting the fragile shoreline," said Laura Davis, Chair of the Dunkirk Dam Lake District. "Right now people who want to fish must access the water on brushy, steep, and sometimes muddy trails. Our plans are to construct a safe, accessible trail that leads to an accessible fishing pier and an accessible boat launch."

Norm Monsen, Chair of the Town of Dunkirk, termed the acquisition "...a landmark day for our Township. We look forward to working with Groundswell Conservancy on other land preservation projects through our new Rural Preservation Program."

This acquisition was possible because of the generosity of the landowners, our partnership with the Town and the Lake District, and funding provided by the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and the Dane County Conservation Fund.

Groundswell Conservancy is a tax-exempt 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization (tax identification number 39-1452825). Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.