

Sustainable Driftless, Inc. is dedicated to inspiring resource conservation, vibrant communities, and sustainable growth in the Driftless Region.



NEWS

Summer 2024

Photo by Tim Jacobson



New Film Progress Report

In September 2022, Sustainable Driftless, Inc. announced that it would embark upon the production of a new film. It will follow up on the success of *Decoding the Driftless*, which has been broadcast across most of the country on PBS, and has won numerous film festival awards and a regional Emmy Award. SDI renewed its collaborative relationship with Rob Nelson of Untamed Science for this project. Filming began and was completed in 2023, for a documentary given various working titles, including “Driftless Escapes” and “Driftless Explorations.” Editing of the new film is underway.

“I’m involved with the editing in progress,” said SDI’s president Tim Jacobson, “and I believe our audience will be blown away again.”

In contrast with the organization’s previous film, *Decoding the Driftless*, with its interviews of scientists explaining unique natural features of the Driftless, the new film is more a journey of the heart, showcasing the tremendous scenic beauty of the landscape with a bird’s eye view. The new movie will be in a half-hour format with stunning 4k video.



In Memoriam

We mourn the passing of George Howe, who died unexpectedly on February 14, 2024. He had boundless enthusiasm for the precious Driftless landscape.

In 2015, George, along with Tim Jacobson, founded the organization that, in 2016, became Sustainable Driftless, Inc. George worked tirelessly as part of the production team to help create the nature documentary, *Decoding the Driftless*. He showed the film at countless community and educational screenings and dozens of film festivals. He also worked with Jonas Stenstrom and Rob Nelson at Untamed Science, Inc., to edit the film for television broadcast.

George also worked with Jan Wee and Lisa Jacobson at SDI to create lesson plans for schools throughout the Driftless Region to incorporate the film and its concepts into the classroom, and he led outdoor field trips for students.

In late 2022, SDI embarked upon a new film project, which George was leading in collaboration with Untamed Science. Shooting took place on and off during 2023, and editing is ongoing.

George's family graciously designated Sustainable Driftless, Inc. for memorial contributions to help SDI carry on George's legacy and to complete the new film. You can mail contributions to SDI at P.O. Box 1231, La Crosse, WI 54602 or make online memorial gifts at www.sustainabledriftless.org/support/

DECODING the DRIFTLESS

A FILM OF SCIENCE EXPLORATION AND ADVENTURE

Impact of the Film Far Beyond Expectations

When Sustainable Driftless, Inc. was preparing to release the film festival version of *Decoding the Driftless* in 2018, the crew knew they had created something very special, in part based upon the warm reception for *Mysteries of the Driftless* (2013).

Even though the team assumed that *Decoding* would be popular in the Upper Midwest, they never could have guessed at how far and powerful its reach would become.

The film festival version became an “Official Selection” as far away as Florence, Italy, and earned “Best Documentary” for August 2019 at the Gold Movie Awards in London, England. The movie has been honored as either “Best Picture” or “Best Documentary” by a number of film festivals, including the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival Awards in Hollywood.

When SDI released the TV version in 2020, more surprises awaited. The film seems to have become a breakout hit on PBS stations across much of the U.S. potentially reaching close to 100 million people. PBS stations also began using the film for their annual pledge drives, not only in Wisconsin and Minnesota, but also in non-driftless places like New York. SDI was told that PBS stations set all-time fundraising records while featuring the film. Accolades for the film culminated in a regional Emmy Award in the fall of 2021.

But awards for the film are not the reason SDI created it.

A key purpose is to inspire deeper appreciation for our precious Driftless landscape. Aldo Leopold wrote of a land ethic wherein land is not merely a commodity to be bought and sold, but is a community to which we belong, such that we treat the land with love and respect. SDI’s hope is for *Decoding the Driftless* to continue to touch the hearts of many and to encourage people to get outdoors and savor the Driftless landscape.

Students (elementary through college) have reported changing their educational and career plans as a result of being awed by *Decoding the Driftless’* exploration of this unique and beautiful landscape. Even adults have reached out to SDI to say they have changed their careers or started new businesses inspired by the film.

No amount of film awards can match the joy and satisfaction created when our documentary inspires a person to fall more deeply in love with the Driftless landscape that supports and nourishes us.

DECODING the DRIFTLESS





*Audience for film premiere at
Viterbo University 2018*



*Rob, Tim, George & Jonas
Upper Midwest Regional Emmy Awards*



*Los Angeles Independent Film
Festival Awards 2019*



*Film Award Statuettes for
"Decoding" & "Mysteries"*



Sustainable Driftless, Inc.: Effectively Engaging with Students

Raising young people to become responsible, productive and caring adults with a good system of values comes with big challenges in any era of history. Today, one of the more formidable challenges is getting kids to peel their eyes away from smartphones, tablets and social media and to get them outdoors to interact with nature. Richard Louv, author of the bestselling book *Last Child in the Woods*, wrote of a condition he referred to as "nature-deficit disorder." Here at Sustainable Driftless, we're working on a cure!

While *Decoding the Driftless*, is great for inspiring kids to get outdoors and learn about nature, we never expected the film to stand entirely on its own as an educational piece. That's why, several years ago, we created educational lesson plans to be used by schools in conjunction with the film for learning about the Driftless Region and the many natural treasures it holds. Each lesson is correlated to specific film segments and aligned with national educational standards.

Did you know there are more than 800 schools in the Driftless Region? That's a lot of young people to connect with! Sustainable Driftless offers lesson plans to schools for free. We strive to connect with as many schools as possible to make sure they are aware of our film and lesson plans as resources for busy educators. If you have a child in school or if you know educators, please reach out and ask if they might be interested in our film and lesson plans.

For more information about Sustainable Driftless' environmental education work and to download school lesson plans:

visit www.SustainableDriftless.org/education/ or contact Outreach Coordinator, Jan Wee, at sustainabledriftless.outreach@gmail.com.

"I have found no better way of engaging students in a discussion of environmental responsibility than showing them the film *Decoding the Driftless*. We can only care for the things we know, and that is why a full length film about the Driftless Region is such a valuable teaching tool."

-Dr. Richard Kyte – Professor, Viterbo University



[Sources: Esri, USGS, NOAA, TUDARE]

What is the DRIFTLESS AREA?

Geological evidence tells us that around 2.6 million years ago, the earth became very cold, and massive continental glaciers, as much as a mile or two thick, formed and spread southward from the arctic and covered what is now Canada and a large swath of the northern United States. This is what is referred to as the Ice Age, which actually consisted of many ice ages, in which the ice ebbed and flowed as the climate changed.

The ice repeatedly surrounded the area of the Upper Mississippi River, but it never completely covered the region, leaving a large region unscathed.

Where the glaciers flowed, they dragged soil and rocks with them from other regions—something geologists call “drift.” The area missed by the glaciers has no glacial drift. Hence, it is “driftless.”

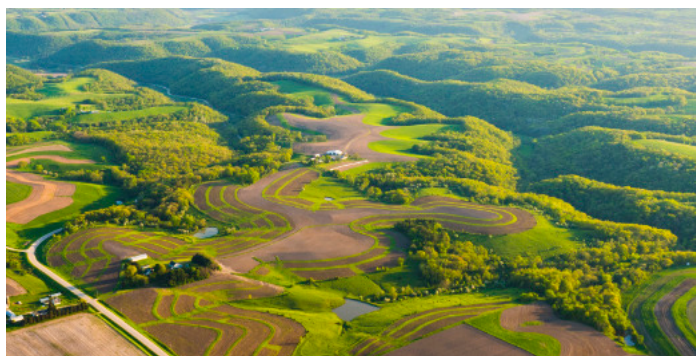


Photo by Tim Jacobson

Because the Driftless Area was not crushed, scoured and flattened by the mile-thick pack of ice, it is a beautifully rugged and ancient landscape. The region remains a home for arctic-type species of plants and animals, such as the northern monkshood and the Pleistocene snail.

Catch up on the latest through ...

SUSTAINABLE DRIFTLESS MAGAZINE

Did you know that Sustainable Driftless, Inc. has its own online magazine?

Our publication, overseen by SDI co-founder Julia Henley, highlights non-governmental organizations, leadership, founders, individuals, companies and communities and the initiatives and policies that are making a difference in sustainability. It covers economics, our built and wild spaces, transitions to sustainable agriculture, organics, health, creativity, children's environmental education, and inspiring highlights from inside and outside the Driftless Region.



Decoding the Driftless makes a great gift!

Even though *Decoding the Driftless* has been broadcast repeatedly on PBS, was shown for seven consecutive weeks at the Rivoli Theatre in La Crosse, and has been viewed at countless community and film festival screenings, a surprising number of people still have not watched the movie.

Don't know what to get Dad on Father's Day, Mom on her birthday, or kid sister at Christmas? Buy the movie! You can't go wrong—everyone loves it.

Decoding the Driftless is sold on DVD, Blu-ray and flash drive at select retail locations and through SDI's website:

www.SustainableDriftless.org/store/

Get your copy today!



The People of Sustainable Driftless



SDI board at "Celebrating the Driftless" event Oct. 2022: Rev. Kent Johnson, Nancy Breed (Secretary), George Howe (VP) (deceased), Brian Rude (past bd member), Julia Henley (Tres.), Tim Jacobson (Pres.), Brian Murphy, and Prof. Thomas Johnson (past bd member).

Sustainable Driftless, Inc. has accomplished big things with a small group of committed and passionate individuals. Tim Jacobson and the late George Howe donated huge amounts of time to produce the film *Decoding the Driftless* and to do fundraising and administrative tasks. Julia Henley and the writers she recruits donate time to publish *Sustainable Driftless Magazine*. Jan Wee has performed much of her work as Outreach Coordinator on a volunteer basis. And none of the work of Sustainable Driftless would be possible without its volunteer board members. It's truly a labor of love by people who care deeply about the precious landscape of the Driftless Region.



Jan Wee, Nancy Breed, and Lisa Jacobson at the "Celebrating the Driftless" event in 2022, with Brian Rude at the far right.

The organization also has benefited beyond measure by its collaboration with Rob Nelson and Jonas Stenstrom of Untamed Science. Those guys truly impart magic on our documentary films!

Also, *Decoding the Driftless* would not have been a success without the super-smart and talented folks who appeared in the film: professors, conservation professionals, landowners, and other wise sages.

And then there are our countless supporters and fans: private foundations, corporate sponsors, individual donors, volunteers, and thousands of enthusiastic audience members. We want to thank you all for your love, support, and enthusiasm for the natural treasures of the unique and amazing Driftless landscape.

What's in a Name?

Have you noticed all the businesses and nonprofit organizations using "Driftless" as part of their name? We know of instances where a person was inspired by *Decoding the Driftless* to start a business with "driftless" in the name. We certainly like the trend. Here are a few examples of Driftless entities:



Driftless
Café VIROQUA



Display of these logos does not imply endorsement of, or by, these organizations vis-a-vis Sustainable Driftless, Inc.

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Sustainable Driftless needs volunteers

At Sustainable Driftless, Inc., we have big dreams and ambitious goals. But our group is small and our financial resources are limited. The untimely passing of George Howe this spring left us even more shorthanded.

Someday, we aspire to having *whole teams* of people carrying out our mission across the 24,000 square miles of the Driftless Region: more writers for our online magazine, a video intern in each larger community producing short videos of cool events (natural and cultural) happening around the Driftless, retired educators or conservation professionals leading film screenings and nature hikes for schools, a graphic designer helping us with marketing materials, administrative or clerical people, more economic development and tourism professionals using our films to promote the region, and local leaders interested in serving on our board of directors.

If you have great enthusiasm for our precious Driftless landscape and would like to share your love of this place with others, contact Tim Jacobson.

Sustainable DRIFTLESS Needs Your Support!

Following the tremendous success of *Decoding the Driftless*, including winning a regional Emmy Award, Sustainable Driftless, Inc. is in the midst of producing another film for television. You have the opportunity to help us complete the new film!

In addition to producing award-winning films, we have created school lesson plans (developed by certified science educators and aligned to national environmental and science standards), which provide lessons for each major topic in *Decoding the Driftless*. We have been working to distribute the film and lesson plans to hundreds of schools and libraries around the Driftless Area.

There are thousands of our youth yet to be reached. Please help us continue providing quality lesson plans and copies of the film to schools to inspire young people, to imbue them with a sense of place and regional pride, and to foster a land ethic within them. (We need to reach more adults with our captivating films, too!)

You have an opportunity to leave a splendid legacy for our region's children by providing Sustainable Driftless with your financial support. You have the power to make a real and substantial difference in the lives of countless young people and adults across the region. Please take a moment now to help us achieve our mission of "inspiring resource conservation, vibrant communities, and sustainable growth in the Driftless Region."

There are multiple ways for you to support SDI's educational mission:

1. Mail a check payable to "Sustainable Driftless, Inc." to P.O. Box 1231, La Crosse, WI 54602.
2. Contribute online at www.SustainableDriftless.org/support/ (yellow "Donate" button).
3. Buy copies of *Decoding the Driftless* at www.SustainableDriftless/store/ The film makes a great gift!
4. Serve as a volunteer. (See article above.)