

Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway 2016 Annual Summary



Who we are

Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway (FLOW) is a non-profit organization that works to protect and preserve the wilderness-type experience of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. FLOW President, Timm Zumm, encourages everyone interested in our great resource to join FLOW, visit our website at <http://wisconsinriverfriends.org/> and “like” us on Facebook.

What we do

Our Strategic Plan includes three primary goals:

- 1) Information and education
- 2) Advocacy
- 3) A well-informed membership

Information and Education

Panel discussions on water quality

FLOW hosted two panel discussions on water quality this past summer. Citizen concerns continue about water quality along the Riverway, from the lack of oversight by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to the contamination of private wells to pollution in local waterways.



Panelists, L-R: Dee Hall, Stephen Carpenter, Jim VandenBrook, Kriss Marion

One of the goals of FLOW is to keep the public informed and educated about issues that are affecting our natural resources so we can all continue to fish, kayak and canoe in our favorite waterways. The events were held on July 26 and August 23, 2016. The panelists included Stephen Carpenter, Director of the Center of Limnology at UW-Madison, Journalists, Land and Water Conservation professionals, the Executive Director of Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA), and activists who focus on water quality issues. Members of the agricultural community attended and participated in the sessions.

The FLOW Board passed a resolution to sponsor a “State of the Riverway” symposium in fall 2017 and possibly 2018 as well. We applied for a River Planning Grant for funding.

Paddling Events and River Outings

FLOW President, Timm Zumm, and other board members organized several paddling and/or camping outings and assisted with other fun events along the Riverway.



“Kids Don’t Float” Water Safety Program

The Kids Don’t Float Life Jacket (Personal Flotation Device or PFD) Loaner program is a cooperative program between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and various partners. The purpose of the program is to install PFD loaner stations at boat landings around Wisconsin. The stations provide an opportunity for boaters who do not have the required PFDs to borrow them. In 2016, FLOW worked with WDNR, The Riverway Board, and area businesses to install four “Kids Don’t Float” kiosks on the Lower Wisconsin River bringing the total to 10.

Advocacy

Petition for Corrective Action

FLOW continues to collaborate with Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA) on the Petition for Corrective Action (PCA), which asks US EPA Region 5 to investigate deficiencies in the DNR’s administration and enforcement of the Federal Clean Water Act. FLOW Board members (and petitioners) attended a meeting and briefing with Region 5 staff in October. EPA staff were in Madison to review DNR files on water pollution permits. The fate of the petition is now uncertain following the November presidential election. But, MEA and its partners (i.e. FLOW) do not intend to abandon the effort.

DNR Master Plan Revision

FLOW was actively involved in the revision of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Master Plan.

The original plan was developed and approved circa 1988. Board members attended DNR scoping sessions and one or more Open House events hosted by the DNR. FLOW submitted several pages of comments on the Draft of the revised plan. Issues of concern in the Draft were as follows:

1. The need to place more emphasis on addressing water quality, and aquatic habitat degradation in backwater sloughs along the Riverway.
2. Acknowledging and re-invigorating land acquisition to protect and preserve habitat within the Riverway corridor.
3. The inclusion of new activities/facilities i.e. a shooting range(s) that will result in user conflicts. DNR did make some changes (additions) to the plan based on our comments but the user conflict issue has not been resolved.

In 2011 and 2012 numerous FLOW members attended Town of Spring Green public meetings to discuss and listen to concerns related to the ongoing pollution in the area. Large scale agricultural producers attended the meeting as well. Some of the producers mentioned that the river or flooding in 2008 was the nitrate pollution source. However, after three years of intensive data collection and two comprehensive research reports, scientific findings clearly demonstrated that the pollution is the result of nutrient management practices on the

river terrace. The river terrace is composed primarily of droughty sands that often require irrigation. When large amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus are used to grow corn and other crops on droughty soils, nutrients leach beyond the root zone and contaminate the ground water. The ongoing nutrient management is the primary reason for both well contamination and pollution of environmentally sensitive oxbow lakes. Exacerbating these problems is the import of liquid manure from sources located beyond the river terrace. Heavy semi trailer tanker trucks often haul liquid manure from industrial scale farms for waste disposal on the sand terrace.

DNR is currently evaluating a permit application to expand an existing industrial scale farm that is located close to the river and other waters with documented water quality impairments. If permitted, the facility will generate as much pollution as a city of about 60,000 people without wastewater treatment. Numerous FLOW members either attended the public meeting or submitted written comments to voice their concerns, partly in the context of the research study findings. DNR indicated that their decision on the permit will be announced by February 1.

The research on the pollution problem continues as FLOW is the sponsor of two small scale lake grants designed to assess the effectiveness of conservation buffers as one potential way to reduce levels of nitrates that are polluting the oxbows, Wisconsin River and other water resources.

Informed Membership



In May, FLOW Science Team member Dave Marshall demonstrated some of the techniques used to conduct research along the Riverway.

He had assistance from River Alliance of Wisconsin staff members, WDNR employees, FLOW board members, and a canoe livery owner.

FLOW uses its Website and Facebook page to keep members informed on changing conditions, new information, and policy changes that affect the Riverway and its uses.

Financial Report

INCOME/ASSETS	Amount (\$)
Balance from 2015	6,377
Membership dues\contributions	5,878
Reimbursed expenses	265
2016 Total Income	6,143
EXPENSES	
Charitable contributions	373
Dues and subscriptions	210
Bank service charge	22
Annual meeting costs	0
Postage and delivery	235
Printing and reproduction	223
Professional fees (accounting)	35
Utilities	2,481
Liability insurance	325
Office supplies	124
Outside services	1,981
Milage reimbursement	525
Miscellaneous	555
2016 Total Expenses	8,545
2016 Balance	-2,212
Treasury Balance into 2017	4,613