

Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway

2017 Annual Summary



Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway (FLOW) is a non-profit member 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 the other approximate 100 FLOW members and 3,000 social media followers. Please visit our website at <http://wisconsinriverfriends.org/> and “like” us on Facebook.

Our Strategic Plan includes three primary goals:
1) Information and education 2) Advocacy 3) A well-informed membership

Riverway Champion 2017



Mike Mossman

Each year, FLOW identifies one citizen to be awarded “River Champion”. This person demonstrates outstanding commitment to the protection and preservation of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. The 2017 winner is Mike Mossman, biologist and wildlife ecologist.

Information and Education

The First State of the Riverway Symposium (and Plans for 2018)

An overFLOW crowd of 175 people celebrated the river in September at FLOW’s first “State of the Riverway” symposium.

The two-day event was held at the Wisconsin Riverside Resort in Spring Green. According to the scientists and land managers who presented, the river’s water quality has vastly improved since the implementation of the Clean Water Act in the early 1970s. It is now home to 98 fish species, from the tiny, endangered crystal darter to the giant paddlefish and sturgeon that can live over a century. The river provides habitat for dozens of other critical plant and animal species, making it one of the most biologically diverse stretches of river in North America. Additionally, it is a popular destination for canoeists, boaters and anglers. New problems loom, though.

High nitrate levels in groundwater have contaminated wells, degraded oxbow lakes, and threaten the ecology of the river including populations of fish, mussels, and other aquatic life. Originating primarily from large-scale farming operations and liquid manure application on sandy soils on river terraces, these nitrates fuel

nuisance algae growths and are toxic to fish and other aquatic organisms. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) does not regulate nitrate contamination of groundwater therefore scientists and other attendees identified this as an important topic for discussion and for action.



In addition to informational sessions, the symposium got people out on the riverway by canoe and the river valley by bus. Led by groups of scientists, managers and residents, they explored archeological sites, backwater sloughs, forests, sand barrens and prairies, helped sample fish and mussels, and discussed ecological, cultural and economic issues.



“The Lower Wisconsin State

Riverway is one of the gems of North America in many ways, and it requires wise stewardship,” noted organizer Mike Mossman, a former DNR ecologist. “The DNR and private landowners cannot be expected to do it alone. The goal of this gathering was to help develop an informed and engaged public to ensure a healthy future for the riverway, and it was a great start”.

The symposium was made possible through a DNR river-planning grant and local sponsors including Lonesome Stone Milling, The Peoples Community Bank of Mazomanie, Powell Petroleum Inc., Wisconsin Canoe Racing Association, Margot Madsen of Spring Green and Doug and Sherryl Jones of Spring Green.

This year’s symposium will occur at the new Vintage Brewery in Sauk City on Friday, Oct 12, 2018 with field trips the following day. SAVE THE DATE!

Information & Education, cont. River Teaching and Safety

When available, FLOW volunteers assist groups who want to learn about the River and boater safety. This year some groups served were the Environmental Law and Policy Center, the River Management Society and Midwest Environmental Advocates.



In May, FLOW Science Team member Dave Marshall demonstrated techniques used to conduct research along the Riverway. He had assistance from River Alliance of Wisconsin members, WDNR employees, FLOW board members, and a canoe livery owner. This was part of the Prairie Enthusiasts Training Program.

This year also saw the return of the Lower Wisconsin River Canoe Races in July. FLOW provided support.

Advocacy

“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), FLOW and various partners. PFD loaner stations are installed at boat landings around Wisconsin. The stations provide an opportunity for boaters who do not have the required PFDs to borrow them. In 2017, FLOW worked with WDNR, The Riverway Board, and area businesses to maintain ten “Kids Don’t Float” kiosks on the Lower Wisconsin River. One additional kiosk will be installed by FLOW and our volunteers early in the 2018 boating season.

Mazomanie Riverway Alliance

The Mazomanie Riverway Alliance (MRA) committee of FLOW was formed in April of 2017 to advocate for the reopening of the Mazomanie unit of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway and to regain access to all islands of the Riverway. MRA’s goal is to represent the people’s desires for redevelopment of the land in the most environmentally friendly way possible.

The MRA hosted a garlic mustard pull at Ferry Bluff, met with other local organizations to gauge the people’s wishes, and spoke before the Natural Resources Board to represent the public. We continue to work toward raising awareness on this issue and are hopeful to regain access to the Mazomanie unit and Riverway islands in 2018-as the DNR stated, we will regain access to this land in 2018!

Science Committee

In 2016 and 2017, FLOW sponsored two WDNR small-scale lake planning grants to test the hypothesis that expanding conservation buffers between the expansive river terrace crop fields and the river floodplain can significantly reduce nitrate pollution. Reducing nitrate pollution is needed to restore the now degraded oxbow lakes. While research elsewhere had demonstrated that conservation buffers can effectively reduce nitrate levels in shallow aquifers and nitrogen in overland runoff, our Science Committee findings concluded that the sand terrace aquifer poses a more difficult challenge due to the long groundwater flow paths and contamination that occurs at much greater depths. Conservation buffers are beneficial for a variety of reasons including clean groundwater recharge, wildlife habitat and scenic beauty. But buffers alone cannot solve the

nitrate pollution problem without significantly reducing the amounts of nitrogen that are currently applied to crop fields.

Paddlefish Sighting!



In April 2017 a paddlefish was caught and released at Pecks Landing in Spring Green. Watch out Flo!

Informed Membership

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 2016	4,389
Membership dues\contributions	7,674
Income DNR Grant	4,875
Income Symposium Fees	5,213
2017 Total Income	17,762
EXPENSES	
Charitable contributions	240
Dues and subscriptions	525
Bank service charge	19
Postage and delivery	232
Printing and reproduction	254
Professional Fees	299
Professional fees (accounting)	35
Utilities	2,971
Liability insurance	325
Office supplies	109
Outside services	5,558
Equipment Repair	234
Equipment Rental	2,050
Facilities Rental	876
Gas Reimbursement	778
Miscellaneous	956
2017 Total Expenses	15,461
Net Income 2017	2,301
Treasury Balance into 2018	6,780