



Behind the Fence

A Newsletter of The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Summer 2009

The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance supports conservation activities involving the Badger Army Ammunition Plant lands and the surrounding Sauk Prairie landscape, through education, research, ecological restoration, and community participation.

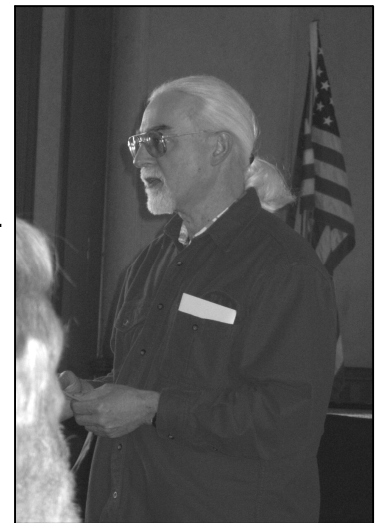
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www.saukprairievision.org

Annual Meeting Celebrates Vision of a Restored Prairie!

On March 19th, 2009, Alliance President David Serafy-Cox (*pictured*) welcomed a small group of prairie stewards to the Free Thinkers' Hall in Sauk City for the Alliance's Annual Meeting & Program.



Mike Degen, Agricultural Run-Off Management Specialist for the Wisconsin DNR, was elected Vice President, replacing Karl Hakanson whose dedicated leadership and service to the Board was honored.

Several additional Alliance members and friends were also acknowledged for their efforts: Bill Wenzel for his hard work and advocacy for a rail easement through Badger more consistent with the Badger Reuse Plan; Brian Potts for his volunteer legal work for the Alliance; and Heidi Royal for surviving her first year as Alliance Coordinator.

Alison Duff and Gary Williams entertained the group with an acoustic guitar rendition of a very animated prairie song and challenged the audience by testing their knowledge of several prairie plants.

In celebrating the vision of a restored prairie, the Annual Meeting came on the heels of a February strategic planning session during which the Alliance began the task of examining its long term mission and goals. We will continue to identify and discuss services that we can offer to our members and local communities, seeking out project specific funding that will help us to both sustain our education and restoration programs and grow new ones. Our ultimate goal is to establish long term sustainability in pursuit of our mission and in service to our members! 🌻

Growing Prairie Stewards

It takes vision to see beneath the pavement and beyond the smokestacks at Badger! This vision has been the driving force behind the Alliance's restoration programs and helps fuel our efforts to grow a prairie at Badger. But our vision does not end there! In addition to growing a prairie, we are growing a generation of prairie stewards, students who will one day enter the greater Sauk Prairie community as adults and be charged with making decisions about the prairie's future.

As our *Education Through Restoration* program continues to grow, we hope to see even more students out at Badger this fall tending to the Prairie Nursery, weeding, nurturing, and renewing those fledging plants so that folks can come and appreciate the beauty of each prairie species. We also hope to develop a guide book about the plants, bugs, birds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals that call the Badger habitat home!

Assisting us again with our efforts is the Ho Chunk Nation, who generously donated \$3,500 to aid with bussing students to Badger during the 2009-10 school year, and for the enhancement of our outreach materials. Culver's has also donated sundae coupons to help reward the students' efforts in restoring the prairie, one blossom at a time! If you would like to assist with



these efforts, or arrange for a student work day on the prairie, please contact Education Coordinator Gary Williams at garyw@rucls.net or Alliance Coordinator Heidi Royal at heidi@saukprairievision.org. 🌻

Volunteer at Badger!

Already in 2009, Alliance volunteers have set the stage for a progressive, engaging, and successful restoration effort! Throughout the spring months, they helped complete prescribed burns in an effort to control invasive species (*please see related article on page 3*), and tackled the removal of both garlic mustard and old barbed wire fencing. As the restoration season continues, volunteers will be spending time at the prairie hillside, removing reed canary grass, sweet clover, and dame's rocket, as well as continuing with invasive shrub control on other prairie remnants.

While hands-on prairie restoration is a vital component to the Alliance's efforts, we are also interested in telling the story of the Sauk Prairie at Badger by documenting its changing future! We are on the lookout for a few folks who enjoy sorting through old news clippings and photographs of the Alliance's ten year journey, and putting them into a recognizable order! 🌻

Volunteer Calendar

Don your sunhat and work boots, and join us for a day on the prairie as we continue to remove invasive species from remnant prairie and savanna! Join us for the remainder of the season!

Saturday, August 8th, 9am to noon

Saturday, September 12th, 9am to noon

Saturday, October 10th, 9am to noon

Please RSVP for all dates, as the schedule is subject to change: workdays@saukprairievision.org.

Prairie Burns...

By Alison Duff & David Serafy-Cox

The Alliance coordinated two prescribed burns in April at the Badger Plant, in collaboration with the U.S. Army, Spec-Pro Inc., the Wisconsin DNR, the Ho-Chunk Nation, and the International Crane Foundation. Controlled burning is a management tool used to control invasive species, restore native ecosystems, and improve habitat for declining wildlife species such as grassland birds.

The first burn involved a small remnant hillside prairie at the southern end of the property (below), which has now been burned several years in a row. This strategy has resulted in a noticeable reduction in the amount of invasive brush and the reemergence of a number of previously unnoticed plant species on the site.

The second burn involved a 315 acre parcel in the northeast part of the Plant which includes prairie, savanna, and oak woodland vegetation. As is standard for all prescribed burning undertaken by the Alliance, this ambitious burn was implemented by trained fire personnel, with careful planning meant to prevent any risk of fire escape and to keep potential smoke problems to a minimum.

While this large burn was conducted in a safe manner, and deemed a restoration management success, an unanticipated air inversion late in the burn caused significant ground-level smoke problems for several plant neighbors to the east. These folks were personally contacted and



apologies made; from their feedback and our own analysis of the incident, some important lessons have been learned about burning in that area of the plant, and about the need for better communication and engagement with folks living near the plant, all lessons of use to future Badger land owners who will themselves be using prescribed burning as a land management tool.

The Badger Plant has long been cited by wildlife biologists as an important haven for grassland birds and other species. Restoration activities have been coordinated by the Alliance for a number of years in an effort to preserve and restore critical habitat. Since access to the plant was reestablished in 2005 (after being severely limited post 9/11), the Alliance has again been hosting volunteer work days at Badger and coordinating annual prescribed burns on the property.

If you have questions about prescribed burn activities, or if you would like to volunteer for the restoration program at Badger, please visit www.saukprairievision.org. 🌻

Yes, I would like to support a sustainable future for the Badger Army Ammunition Plant lands and the greater Sauk Prairie landscape with my tax-deductible gift of \$_____.

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please send me a poster.

Members joining or renewing at the \$50 level or higher are eligible to receive a poster of Victor Bakhtin's painting, *Sauk Prairie Remembered: A Vision for the Future*.

WORKING FOR A NEW FUTURE FOR THE SAUK PRAIRIE ON THE BADGER LANDS



THE SAUK PRAIRIE CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

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NON-PROFIT

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*To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee,
One clover, and a bee,
And revery.
The revery alone will do,
If bees are few.*

~Emily Dickinson

Prairie Remnants...

On an early day in May 2009, Alliance volunteers discovered a new population of the relatively uncommon prairie plant, Fringed Puccoon (*Lithospermum incisum*), growing and thriving on the **Hillside Prairie Remnant** inside Badger! This new population was found in an area that was formerly a dense growth of solid honeysuckle--great evidence that restoration work parties are making progress toward a new future for Badger! Other species beginning to thrive on the Hillside: Pale-Spike Lobelia (*Lobelia spicata*); Lead Plant (*Amorpha canescens*); Purple Prairie Clover (*Dalea purpurea*); Gray Goldenrod (*Solidago nemoralis*).

Approximately 50 members of both the **Natural Resources Foundation** and the **University of Wisconsin Foundation** participated in a tour of the Badger lands on June 19. The tour was led by Joan Kenney of the U.S. Army, Craig Karr of

the DNR, and Alison Duff of TSPCA.

The Badger IOMC has appointed an Ad Hoc Cemetery Committee to develop a long term maintenance and preservation plan to care for the cemeteries located at Badger when federal funds run out. **The Badger Cemetery Committee** is reaching out to the community to identify descendants of those individuals buried at Badger, or citizens who are interested in working to help protect, maintain, and care for the cemeteries. A Badger Cemetery Fund has been started at the Sauk County Historical Society to meet these goals. Contact history@saukcountyhistory.org.

The U.S. Army continues **demolition** at Badger; as of March 31, 849 buildings have been demolished to slab and 70 more are funded for demolition.

For updates on Alliance events, please visit our website at www.saukprairievision.org! 🌻