



The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Creating a Conservation Future for the Badger Lands



Behind the Fence

Rockets and Motorcycles at Badger?

These are still planned for the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area

As this newsletter was going to the printer, DNR released to the public its final Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area (SPSRA) in anticipation of it being approved at the December 14 Natural Resources Board Meeting in Madison. **DNR has broken its commitment to the people of Wisconsin by keeping “high impact” recreation activities in their final Plan.**

“Uses and activities at the Badger property contribute to the reconciliation and resolution of past conflicts involving the loss and contamination of the natural environment, the displacement of Native Americans and Euro-American farmers, and the effects of war.”

[Value 4, Final Report of the Badger Reuse Committee, 2001]

In 2001, three representatives of Wisconsin state government from two agencies (DNR, Department of Administration,) and the Governor’s office signed the Final Report of the Badger Reuse Committee (“Badger Reuse Plan”) agreeing to the many values and criteria established by the 21 stakeholders (including federal agencies, Ho-Chunk Nation, local government, area stakeholders). The Reuse Plan further informed the DNR’s application to National Park Service for acquiring 3,400 acres of Badger land, in which DNR explicitly stated that only “**low impact recreation**” would be planned at the new state property.

Fast forward 15 years, and what we are experiencing from DNR is a blatant breach of its several signed agreements, a breach of the public trust, and a flagrant abuse of its authority to introduce unacceptable recreation activities into its Master Plan for the site.

Despite massive public outcry at the inclusion of high impact recreation activities (e.g., rocketry and off-road motorcycles) during the public comment period for the Draft Master Plan 15 months ago, DNR has completely ignored public comment and retains in its Plan those activities most opposed by the great majority of area citizens, including high power rocketry and dual sport (off road) motorcycles. Furthermore, the Recreation Area would better be classified as a State Wildlife Area, as hunting is a predominant recreation activity on the property; all-season hunting and year-round dog training (that entails discharge of firearms) will severely impact the “quiet” recreation users at Badger.

After we review and analyze the final Master Plan for the SPSRA, we will provide Alliance members and area citizens with a thorough analysis and suggestions for getting involved.

Continued on next page.



Volunteer Spotlight: Michael Coutts

in his own words...



I was unemployed in 2010 when I stumbled on an REI post for a workday inside the Badger Ammunition Plant. I had no experience with restoration, ecology, or group leadership. I was curious about what was behind the fence and I wanted to build my resume.

My first work day was rainy and muddy in the thick brush of the oak savanna where I was removing burdock gone to seed. Instead of misery, I renewed my faith in humanity with kindred spirits of such selfless determination to restore nature of a time past.

I grew up wondering about the appearance of the landscape hundreds of years before we covered it with concrete. I see hints to this vision when I visit the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. I feel hope when I work with new and returning volunteers. Mimi Wuest speaks about healing the land; the land has been healing me in return.

After six years of dedicated volunteer labor and leadership training, I astound myself in the role I now play to heal this broken land. Now I also volunteer with the "Lower Sugar River Watershed Association" and "Dane County Friends of Ferals," but leading work days with the SPCA is my first love.

My advice to those reading this: Embrace the challenge to be out of your comfort zone; you may discover yourself to be capable of greatness. ♦

Rockets and Motorcycles at Badger?



(Continued from previous page)

Please check our website for updates. In the meantime, contemplate what Badger will be like with up to 100 off-road "dual sport" motorcycles a day racing around on biking and horse trails, or the potential fire danger of high-power rockets. Are rockets and off-road motorcycles what we want for the tranquil Badger prairie landscape? For those seeking a bit of solitude and quiet on the prairie, DEFINITELY NOT. ♦



Charlie's Corner

by Charlie Luthin, Executive Director.



The 2016 volunteer field season is officially over. Many dozens of our great volunteers participated in a total of 14 work days at Badger, with a focus on removing invasive species from the Hillside Prairie and Savanna. Thank you to these amazing volunteers! We hosted a day-long coach excursion to two large grassland preserves in Illinois (Nachusa and Nygren), and we offered two half-day tours at Badger in October. Our monthly fall-winter program series, "We Are Sauk Prairie" is underway, and we have three more fine presentations planned between December and February. Join us! You'll see updates on recent grants we have received and current events elsewhere in this newsletter. Thanks for keeping in touch.

REI and Alliance co-sponsor Badger Stewardship Day

A September 24 gathering of almost 40 volunteers at Badger was planned and coordinated by the Alliance, together with its outdoor partner REI, to celebrate National Public Lands Day. REI has sponsored a stewardship day with the Alliance at Badger for several years; as in past years, our colleague Kathleen Witman from the Madison REI store recruited volunteers through her extensive e-mail list-serve and generously provided water bottles, snacks, volunteer t-shirts and REI lip balm to our hard-working volunteers. Kathleen also took the opportunity to present Charlie Luthin, the Alliance director, with a “big check” that reflects the \$5,000 grant provided by REI to develop a “Visitor Guide” to the Badger Lands. Following our hard work, REI hosted a pizza party for the volunteers at the Woodshed Ale House in Sauk City. A huge thanks to Kathleen and REI for their support and help!

We are also grateful to Dr. David Olson from the UW-Baraboo/Sauk County campus for recruiting a handful of his biology students for the work day.

Our volunteer crew this fall was able to clear a huge patch of invasive shrubs (and paint the stumps with herbicide to stop re-sprouting) from the oak savanna adjoining the Hillside Prairie. With each successive work day at Badger we are seeing great gains in restoring the prairie and savanna remnants. Although small, the Hillside Prairie is the last remnant of the original 14,000-acre Sauk Prairie on the Badger Lands. ♦



ABOVE: The large volunteer work force of almost 40 individuals that we attracted for the REI-sponsored Stewardship Day at Badger allowed us to make great progress with clearing invasive shrubs from the understory of a remnant oak savanna.

BELOW LEFT: Kathleen Witman, our REI-Madison liaison, presents Charlie Luthin, SPCA executive director, with a “big check” for \$5,000 representing the grant the Alliance received earlier in the year from REI to support development of a Visitor Guide at Badger.

BELOW RIGHT: Alliance volunteers Paul Anthony and Bill Stehling clearing and stacking brush at the Hillside Prairie/Oak Savanna.



Alliance Tours & Illinois Grassland Excursion

BELOW: Mike Mossman, a retired DNR biologist and member of the Alliance board of directors, trapped some neonate salamanders (retaining permanent immature characteristics) at the Badger reservoirs to demonstrate during one of our October Badger tours.



Bill Kleiman, Project Director for the 4,000-acre Nature Conservancy Preserve, Nachusa Grasslands, in Illinois leads Alliance visitors on a tour of the property.



Randy Poelma (right), land manager for the Ho-Chunk Nation, demonstrates areas on Ho-Chunk land at Badger that were burned in 2016 in preparation for natural prairie restoration in several years.

PROGRAM & TOUR SERIES

WE ARE SAUK PRAIRIE

Three down, three to go. The Alliance's 8-part fall-winter program and tour series, sponsored with a grant from Alliant Energy Foundation, has been very popular. We have attracted an average of 35 people to each of our first three presentations on "Birds of Badger," "The Ecology of the Sauk Prairie" and "Conserving the Apple Trees of Badger" in September, October and November, respectively. In addition, 38 and 34 individuals, respectively, participated in our two half-day tours of the Badger Lands in October, "Inside the Fence" and "Geologic History of Badger." ♦



A SERIES OF PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS
& TOURS ABOUT THE SAUK PRAIRIE AREA

PRESENTED BY





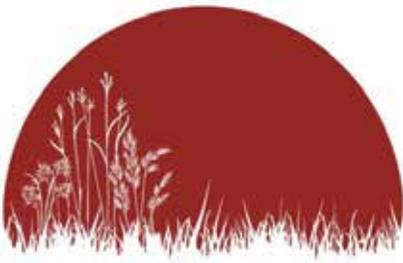
TOP: Natural Land Institute (NLI) staff lead the Alliance excursion group on a tour of their 720-acre property, Nygren Wetland Preserve, in northern Illinois.

BOTTOM: DNR Geologist Phil Fauble shares several billion years of geological history with a captive crowd during a late October geology tour on the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area at Badger.



Long-time Alliance volunteer coordinator, Dr. Alison Duff, has recently been hired by USDA Dairy Forage Research Center to serve as their first Ecologist for their Badger Lands. Congratulations to Alison. We look forward to a fruitful collaboration with her and DFRC long into the future.





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Consider Long-term Gift Options to the Alliance

In order to continue the good work we have undertaken over the past 19 years long into the future, we will need considerable financial wherewithal! Please consider providing the Alliance with an enduring gift. Here are a few suggestions:

- Include the Alliance in your will, estate plan and/or life insurance beneficiaries;
- If you are over 70 ½ years of age, make a tax-deductible contribution directly from your IRA;
- Contribute to our Education Endowment, a permanent fund to support outreach and education;
- Set up a sustaining monthly payment to the Alliance.

Please contact us if you have any questions or would like to consider a legacy gift. We will be happy to answer any questions. By e-mail: info@saukprairievision.org, or call: 608-358-7120. Gifts can be made directly to the Alliance using PayPal on our website: www.saukprairievision.org.



Membership expiring?
Not a member yet,
but like what you see?

Make a donation or
JOIN the ALLIANCE online at
saukprairievision.org

“We Are Sauk Prairie” Winter Programs

All programs will start at 6:45pm at the Ruth Culver Community Library at 540 Water Street in Prairie du Sac. Refreshments available at 6:30pm. Open to the public.

December 15: Author and historian Michael Goc, “The Badger Lands Revisited”

January 19: DNR fire ecologist Jed Meunier, “Understanding Fire History on the Sauk Prairie”

February 16: Bill Kleiman, project director at Nachusa Grasslands, “Lessons Learned While Planting Prairie at Nachusa”

More details can be found on our website: SaukPrairieVision.org