NEWSLETTER

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14 Mile Watershed Friends and Supporters . . .

A Little History . . .

After Blue-Green Algae outbreaks in the Rome lakes in 2016, a citizen motion was introduced at the Tri-Lakes Management District Annual Meeting in September to address the issues. Upon approval, a citizen committee was formed under the direction of both Tri-Lakes and the Town of Rome and began researching causes of water quality issues and possible solutions. The group was aided by advisors from WDNR and Adams County Land and Water.

This committee instituted water testing programs throughout the 55,000 square mile watershed to establish baseline data about nutrient loads in our lakes as well as further upstream. Additionally, soil tests were performed on over 150 sites around our lakes and identified the levels of legacy phosphorus. Both phosphorus and nitrate are key components of Blue-Green Algae. The committee recognized the value of DNR's Healthy Lakes program and promoted it as a means to get funding for shoreline improvements that reduce nutrient runoff, soil erosion and improve fish habitat. A fertilizer ordinance was developed with the help of town officials and local

professional fertilizer applicators to adopt more stringent guidelines for lakefront properties which would lead to less nutrients running off into the lakes.

In April 2021, the IRS approved 501(c)(3) non-profit status for the group and it is now functioning as the **14 Mile Watershed Alliance**. This change in structure allowed us to appeal to all stakeholders throughout the watershed, to access outside funding and accept tax-deductible donations.

Our focus has continued to grow and has included the Annual State of Our Lakes event held each June which has allowed us to share our acquired knowledge of water quality issues as well as what each one of us can do to lead to improvements in the future. This event continues to grow and gather larger participation each year. Our Farmers Market booth each Friday has also garnered much interest and sharing of information with the public.

In 2024, we began the process of creating a Strategic Plan to provide direction and a focus for our activities in support of our goals for the next 3 to 5 years. We have just completed an evaluation of our efforts and updated the plan for 2025 and would like to share it with you.

We welcome your comments and input! Please consider joining us at a monthly meeting held on the second Monday of each month at 6 pm in the lower level of Sherwood Lodge.

If you are interested in helping to protect the waters of the 14 Mile Watershed please visit our website

14 Mile Watershed Alliance

2025 Strategic Plan

Goals (*for the next 3-5 years*)

"Focusing on the reduction of excess nutrients, achieve measurable improvement in the

quality, resilience, and sustainability of the surface and groundwater in the 14 Mile Creek Watershed for all of its stakeholders."

Objectives for 2025

Objective #1

Drive the **9 Key Elements Plan (9 KEP)** forward, its components, and value to the entire watershed.

Strategy – Support the positive evolution of the 9KEP Adams County support position

Tactics

1. Active participant to the development of this position
2. Potentially fund or source funding for some of this work

Strategy – Begin to connect 9KEP to BMP's in the watershed

Tactics

1. Work with producers and partners to determine the priority BMP's
2. Uncover any legacy projects and determine their viability
3. Review the 9KEP for content and this information, tie to producer area
4. Develop funding sources

Objective #2

Accelerate producer involvement in 14 Mile Watershed work

Strategy – Foster growth of the producer-led group; their involvement in the watershed

Tactics

1. Establish 14 MWA as a primary support arm for producer-led groups
2. Communicate support for producers/farmers with the entire watershed
3. Support Biochar research and information

Strategy – Explore partner relationships with remaining watershed counties

Tactics

1. Get involved in each County's water issues – County Conservation agents

Objective #3

Expand the resources of the 14 Mile Watershed Alliance, both human and financial, to include partners, producers, residents, and volunteer personnel, recruiting for specific desired expertise and funding sources.

Strategy – 14 Mile Watershed Alliance needs to add internal expertise and additional volunteer personnel, recruiting for specifically identified expertise

Tactics

1. *Focus on graphics, social media, data management, & project management*
2. Grant writer/administrator

Strategy – The Alliance needs to Identify funding sources to meet expanded needs and greater funding levels in new categories

Tactics

1. Develop a funding tree matching various types of funding to 9 KEP projects
2. Grant writer
3. Focus on a multi-year, base sponsor for 14 MWA for operations

Objective #4

Expand communication and education to all watershed stakeholders and partners to convey a deeper understanding of the cause and effect of nutrients in our watershed and the value of keeping them where they serve a useful purpose and removing them where they are excessive, causing negative impacts. Differentiate between the work of 14 MWA & TL.

Strategy – raise the frequency and level of current programs while adding better tools to communicate

Tactics

1. Education plan to differentiate between 14 MWA & Tri-Lakes
2. Set 2025 plan for high school education
3. State of Our Lakes, newsletters, Farmer's Market, and August Rome Concert
4. Increase the level of information to stakeholders, both lakes and producer

Objective #5

While 2024 saw an increase in data made available to 14 MWA, we need to continue to

prioritize our data needs, increase our reach, organize what we collect, and make information available to assist all stakeholders with efforts to protect our watershed.

Strategy – Focus data searches on upstream areas

Tactics

1. Pull information/data from Wood, Waushara, Portage Counties
2. Access EOR data and all remaining partner data
3. Continue testing; add monthly weed analysis for each lake
4. Support Biochar testing and data

Strategy – Increase use of data management to acquire, store, and parse watershed data/reports

Tactics

1. Evaluate storage and data management solutions

If you have questions or comments about this Strategic Plan please direct them to rick.mervine@14mile.org

The 14 Mile Watershed Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of surface and groundwater in the 14 Mile Creek Watershed in central Wisconsin. See us at 14milewatershed.org or https://www.facebook.com/14MileWatershed

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Our mailing address is:
1433 Rapids Trl, Nekoosa, WI 54457

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