NEWSLETTER

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Ideas for Protecting Our Lakes and Watershed

Spring Focus: How Wetlands Help Water Quality

14 Mile Watershed Friends and Supporters . . .

Our partners at the DNR have shared data with us on two local projects that are having (or will have in the future) a positive effect on water quality in the watershed. Here are some details:

- **Water testing** was conducted on water flowing through the reservoirs of a local cranberry operation that is located upstream from the Tri-Lakes. Both nitrogen and phosphorus (nutrients that in excess amounts can create algae in our lakes) were measured at different locations along the flow of the water. The results showed that both of these nutrient levels were lowered as they traveled through the reservoirs. This testing demonstrated how wetland marshes launder out nitrogen and phosphorus
  levels.
- **Owen's Rock Denitrification Project:** This is an ongoing project with several objectives, but the denitrification aspect is of most interest to us. Denitrification is a natural process where bacteria in the soil convert nitrogen in the water to harmless nitrogen gas. What is being tested on land owned by the DNR is whether or not restoration of this land parcel to its original state as a wetland would work to denitrify or reduce nutrient levels of groundwater before it flows into our lakes. Early indications suggest that this may be possible.

Both of these projects involve wetlands in our watershed. Many of us are unaware of wetlands, their function and the benefits that they provide to our environment. So, this newsletter article is kind of a 'Wetlands 101' to help us all understand their value to us. Wetlands are found between places that are always wet (like lakes and rivers) and always dry (like uplands). Wetlands come in a variety of types and are found all across Wisconsin, representing approximately 15% of our state's land area. In general, wetlands share three characteristics:

1. **Water**: wetlands have water above or below ground for at least part of the year
2. **Special Soil**: wetlands have special soils that formed under wet conditions. This soil often appears darker than upland soils. While many wetlands have muck or peat soils, wetland soils can also be comprised of silt, clay and sand.

3. **Water-loving plants**: wetlands have plants that are adapted to growing in water or wet soil

Wetlands are described by some as **"nature's kidneys"** because they filter sediment and pollutants (phosphorous, nitrogen and bacteria) that would otherwise get into rivers, lakes and streams. They slow flooding during large rain events by storing excess water and can help in droughts by gradually releasing that stored water back into the water table. Protecting and restoring wetlands can maintain and improve our drinking water supply as well as the water quality of our lakes, rivers and streams.

How do we benefit from the presence of wetlands?

- Flooding is reduced by the wetlands holding floodwater. Wetlands soak up the water, just like a sponge rather than allowing excess water to flow downstream and possibly lead to flooding.
- ***Water quality can be improved through the filtering properties of wetlands***. They act as filters, soaking up contaminants and converting them into less harmful substances. By reducing nitrogen and phosphorus, algae blooms may be positively affected and reduced.
- Wetlands can help to recharge groundwater and refill aquifers. This natural process is essential for providing drinking water to wells.
- Wetlands also provide ***recreational opportunities*** for us. They are a key spot for kayaks and canoes and offer a diverse variety of wildlife for us to observe.

As you can see, wetlands serve a very important role in our environment. Let's continue to respect and protect them.

(Much of the information for this article was derived from websites of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association as well as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.)

Rome Annual 'State of Our Lakes' Lunch

All property owners in the Town of Rome are invited to attend a forum on Saturday, June 7th at the Rome Town Hall sponsored by the 14 Mile Watershed Alliance, the Town of Rome and the Tri-Lakes Management District to discuss lake and stream

water quality issues in our watershed.

The June 7th forum will have exhibitors throughout the town hall and will feature presentations addressing the water quality in our lakes and watershed, followed by lunch and a question & answer period. At the end of the event, door prize, raffle and silent auction winners will be announced.

Please add June 7th 11:00-2:00 to your calendars. See you there!

Donate

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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