NEWSLETTER

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14 Mile Watershed Friends and Supporters . . .

- Water Quality is Important to All of Us -
Highlighting Our Conservation Practices Planned for 2026

While 2025 was a busy year for the 14 Mile Watershed Alliance, we will be continuing our momentum throughout 2026 to address water quality improvements, not only in our 3 lakes, but also throughout the entire watershed.

Here are three of the conservation practices that we'll be working on this year.

Socks for Docks

One of our farm scientists who lives on Lower Lake Camelot led a 2025 test of biochar bags as a method to reduce the nutrients in our lakes. Biochar, a form of charcoal produced from organic materials, like wood chips or agricultural waste, can contribute to reducing the lake's algae problem.

When submerged in water, biochar acts as a sponge, effectively capturing and immobilizing phosphorus and nitrogen, preventing them from being available for algae growth. The results

of the 2025 trial were very positive and more testing will continue in 2026 to get longer term results.

We recently received grants from the Green Bay Packers Foundation, Incourage Community Foundation – Rome Area Fund, and Visit Rome to perform an expanded test of these biochar bags, something we are calling *'Socks For Docks,'* on all three lakes in 2026. We are working with the WDNR to finalize the lab testing protocol and expect to roll that out in early June.

The fabric bags containing biochar hang under your dock, similar to barley straw bags that have been used in the past. There is no cost to you and all testing is done during the summer by trained lab personnel in WDNR-approved labs. There is no harm to humans or wildlife, just to nutrients!

If you are on the lakefront and would like to be considered as a dock site for this project to reduce the nutrients that cause algae blooms, please go to this link to apply: socks-for-docks.

Socks for Docks

Healthy Lakes Project

Healthy Lakes Program

The 14 Mile Watershed Alliance has been involved in the DNR's Healthy Lakes grant program since 2017. These grants fund shoreline improvements that reduce nutrient runoff and soil erosion as well as improve habitat for fish. To date over 100 such projects have been completed or approved on our three lakes!

This is a great program that is subsidized by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This program provides applicants funds and expert guidance to beautify their shorelines with gorgeous native wildflowers or ornamental grasses. **This will allow you to do less lawn mowing, create a beautiful shoreline and humanely deter geese**. **The long roots of the plants will naturally filter the excess nutrients from entering our lake waters, which prevents overgrowth of algae and the more toxic blue-green algae.**

To learn more and/or sign up for a Healthy Lakes grant, email Dave Trudeau at: **dtrudeau@wctc.net** He can help you plan your project and will do all the paperwork for the grant submission.

Biochar Soil Amendment

We have just learned that our recent Biochar Grant Application has been approved by the Sand County Foundation! While Socks for Docks and Healthy Lake Projects are conservation initiatives for the lakes, this biochar soil amendment project will be implemented in the upper watershed.

Working with the Farmers of Fourteen Mile Creek, biochar will be applied to selected fields. This conservation practice will sequester carbon, reduce nitrogen losses and improve soil health in our sandy soils. Instead of nutrients flowing downstream, the biochar will work to keep these nutrients on the fields for the benefit of the crops.

This practice is not only beneficial to the health of our lakes, it also helps to reduce the amount of fertilizer required for crops and can reduce expenses for the farmer.

Biochar Sample

Biochar on field

Rome Annual 'State of Our Lakes' Lunch

All property owners in the Town of Rome are invited to attend a forum on Saturday, June 6th 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 6th 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 6th 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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