



SWWRPC Helps Keep Local Treescapes Healthy

SWWRPC has recently expanded its support services by tapping into Cory Ritterbusch's ecological experience to help our communities better manage community trees and forests, which have been severely depleted due to the Emerald Ash Borer. Trees and other green spaces help beautify our towns and villages, and they also help reduce noise, increase bird habitat, moderate traffic speed, reduce stress, and help keep us cool. But many cities, villages, and county parks struggle with proper tree care because they do not have enough staff with the expertise to manage their inventory of trees. Our new services include tree inventories, tree mapping, planting and maintenance plans, tree health and risk evaluations, training municipal staff, and urban forestry grant writing.

Local communities benefit from ongoing tree care by reducing impacts during storms, reducing liability in public places, and minimizing property damage risks. Proper planning can also reduce damage from future widespread tree epidemics. Urban forestry planning will be woven into upcoming Hazard Mitigation, Community Comprehensive, Outdoor Recreation, and Climate Resiliency Projects. If your community needs added tree management support, please contact Cory at c.ritterbusch@swwrpc.org. ■



Badger Park, Shullsburg, Wisconsin

New City Comprehensive Plans Roll Out

Shullsburg: In December 2022, the City of Shullsburg adopted its ten-year Comprehensive Plan. This plan was developed over 15 months and included meeting with community leaders, establishing a Comprehensive Plan Committee, and extensive public engagement including two public meetings and a survey that generated 154 responses. The process was focused on 1) Vision, Opportunities, Barriers, and Concerns; and 2) Economic Development, Land Use, Housing, and Recreation. Based on this input, the plan's Vision Statement was established. Issues identified included decreasing demographics, leadership, inclusion, and growth barriers and opportunities. The city has begun implementations with assistance from SWWRPC.

Darlington: The City of Darlington adopted their Community Comprehensive Plan in January 2023. SWWRPC created community surveys in both English and Spanish and received 600 completed surveys. The results of that survey guided engagement with outgoing high school seniors and established themes for three public open house meetings. The Core Values that were determined for Darlington include; Diversity of Housing Availability, Inclusivity, Intergovernmental Coordination, Outdoor Recreation, Small Projects, and The Power of Industry. The plan's recommendations were based on the needs expressed by the citizens. As a result, the city will focus on a list of actionable items to be implemented over a ten-year period ranging from simple to complex. SWWRPC will remain available to assist the community reach their goals. Shullsburg and Darlington plans can be found at <https://www.swwrpc.org/our-work/>. ■



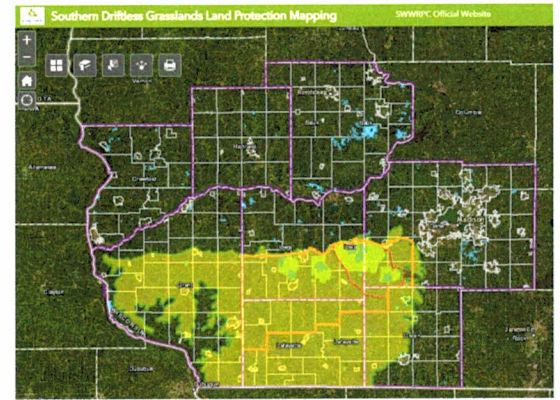
(From the left) SWWRPC staff Ellen Tyler and Jaclyn Essandoh engage with local Darlington community members.

The Restoration of Fancy Creek

SWWRPC has been working closely with The Wisconsin Wetlands Association on the Fancy Creek project, a waterway north of Richland Center that had been channelled into a straight ditch in the 1940s. SWWRPC facilitated the planning meetings that started in July 2021 to restore the original meander of a one-mile channelized section of the stream. The re-meander will assist in restoring groundwater recharge and habitat for trout and plant species. It is also important for reducing flood damage to the City of Richland Center by slowing down water and increasing water storage at flood stage. This will also increase water quality by reducing phosphorus.

Through SWWRPC facilitation, we were able to engage and involve dozens of individuals representing agencies, engineering teams, and land owners. As a result, the project will be able to utilize a multitude of funding sources. Currently, an engineering plan is being finalized. When ground work for implementation begins it will be important on a statewide scale and serve as a demonstration area for other stream projects. ■

Cory Ritterbusch, 4th from the left, and the Fancy Creek team including the Wisconsin Wetlands Association, Natural Resource Conservation Service and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.



Protecting Area Grasslands

SWWRPC provides and maintains online access to the Southern Driftless Grassland's interactive Land Protection Map. This decision support tool incorporates new and existing data on current land cover, at-risk habitats and species, climate change resilience, projected growth, and development pressures. It will allow for enhanced ability to identify and target priority areas for grassland habitat protection and conservation, and thus guide more strategic outreach to landowners in those priority areas. Outcomes of this project also include a better understanding of conservation needs in the region, increased capacity to protect natural resources, and more land protection in grassland priority areas. If your community needs assistance with mapping, please contact Jaclyn at j.essandoh@swwrpc.org. ■

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