



STEWARDSHIP NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2017

crawfordstewardship.org

A Decade of Stewardship

Forest Jahnke

Program Coordinator

Since our inception a decade ago, struggling with the growth of industrial animal agriculture on our beautiful yet sensitive landscape, we have expanded our project to cover many other challenges, but the core pillars of our mission have remained and continue to guide us as we strive to empower the community and protect our land and waters.

Environmental justice, local control, and sustainable land use all sound very noble, but why those? What do they mean to us, and how do we embody those values? Read on for insights into the history and purpose of your faithful Driftless environmental watchdog, Crawford Stewardship Project.

Environmental justice

"Environmental justice," as practiced by CSP, means respecting and standing in solidarity with those most affected by the destructive parts of our economy and society, and encouraging participation in the solution. We provide a voice to the voiceless and the light of public attention to issues that would otherwise be swept under the rug (and into the watershed).

"Without bodies working, nothing gets done," notes Fred Hausler, a farmer and active supporter who lives next to

the Wauzeka hog CAFO. "At the start of Crawford Stewardship Project, I saw the need for people in the county to be aware of things that were taking place that we didn't know about and weren't talked about.

CSP has helped uncover what is really going on by coming out and doing water quality monitoring. That is a project I want to see continue. We have found things in my creek that the lab had never seen here before! It is awfully hard to believe how the state doesn't seem to give a darn about what goes into the Wisconsin River, which my stream flows into. The state is not being realistic about what is taking place."

Fred's story is mirrored by people we have helped all across the region dealing with various industrial operations encroaching on their lives and livelihoods. The high capacity well proposal in Copper Creek, the frack sand mine in Bridgeport, the frack sand loading site in Prairie du Chien, even Viroqua where a large hog slaughter plant is being pushed... the same dynamics play out and CSP is there to empower those impacted to tell their story and connect with decision makers to find just solutions. With a decade of experience under our belt, we are becoming the go-to organization in the area

"Decade" continued page 3

More important than ever: Karst Campaign progresses

Forest Jahnke,

Program Coordinator

It seems that "karst" has finally entered into the public discourse and is getting media attention on a regular basis! This took years of education and a terrible drinking water crisis in Kewaunee County to achieve, but we'll chalk that up as progress. There still is a long way to go before we can protect our sensitive geology, but Crawford Stewardship Project is busy spreading the word, gathering together the science, and leaning on our agencies and elected representatives to take action!

Our Karst Landscapes and Groundwater Susceptibility Survey of Crawford County is taking shape, with most of the maps completed and the beginnings of our online platform up and running. Some of our preliminary results got their first public showing at our July Karst Exploration in Prairie du Chien, which went beautifully thanks to all our volunteers and the knowledge of Dr. Kelvin Rodolfo and Phil Burgess, our presenters.

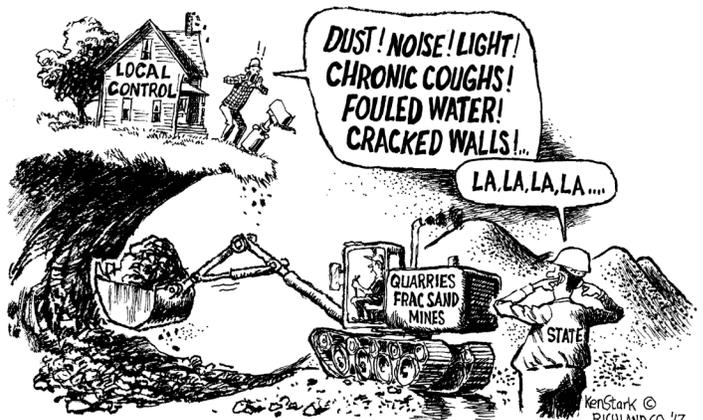
On November 3, at 7 p.m. in the Prairie du Chien City Hall, we will have our next Karst Citizen Science event where we will gather to complete our mapping of sinkholes in Crawford County. Please consider participating in this fun, educational, and critically important project!

While we are certainly moving forward on this front, the urgency to gather this data and

*Please consider participating
Friday, November 3, 7 pm
Prairie du Chien City Hall
Karst Citizen Science Event
mapping of sinkholes in
Crawford County*

raise public awareness has never been higher. The state legislature just attempted, though they again failed, to strip away local control of mining operations, is moving to eliminate our state "prove-you-won't-pollute" mining moratorium, and there is even a lawsuit by the Dairy Busi-

"Karst" continued page 2



Wisconsin Women Leading the Agricultural Revolution

Meg Wise,
Community Outreach

Four women who we see leading great shifts in agriculture through their lives and works were interviewed. This story is meant to inspire all to reach out within and outside of our communities to understand what is happening around us.

To the east is Nancy Utesch, who farms and lives in Kewaunee County. Nancy and her husband Lynn have a grass-fed beef operation on 150 acres in the Town of Pierce. A defining moment for Nancy was in 2004 when contaminated groundwater led to an entire family in the county being poisoned. The contamination was linked to a nearby Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO). Back then, questioning CAFOs was unpopular, however, inspired by her mother's advocacy for health issues and having two young sons, Nancy took up the cause. Since then the state of groundwater in the county has worsened with one third of the wells tested being contaminated. As a credit to Nancy's work, conversations in Kewaunee County now focus on how clean water can be assured for all.

Although Nancy may be known for her advocacy on water quality issues, she is first and foremost a farmer. Through pasture walks, she has inspired others by putting forth an alternative to the factory farm. When Nancy was growing up, her neighbors who farmed taught her to care for the animals and land.

"I loved that farm and the farmers made an impression on me as a child about values that were really important on how I



Lynn and Nancy Utesch -
(Photo by Mike Peters)



Mary Dougherty speaking
at the 2016 Factory Farm
Summit



Harriet Behar talking about
the benefits of cover crops

wanted to live," Nancy reflects.

Nancy's story has shown the importance of planting the seed with children so they are inspired to stand up for the health and wellness of all life. Nancy says, "There is an emotional and physical response to being out on the land, having your hands in the soil, to being out in nature... for myself, I think there is definitely a connection to health and well being, so it makes me sad to think of this generation coming to not have that connection."

An important way we can make connections within our communities is to support sustainable agricultural systems through the food we eat.

In the north is Mary Dougherty from Bayfield, WI. She is a chef, a consultant for the national organization Socially Responsible Agricultural Project (SRAP) and she recently published her first cookbook called "Life in a Northern Town."

Mary gives a very human and

ethical story to the meaning of eating local and supporting sustainable farmers. "I was in Tonopah, Arizona looking at a huge chicken egg facility. They stored poultry litter outside and it was super windy so there was manure everywhere, the air was kind of brown. A school bus stopped in front of us and two kids get off the bus... I remember what the little girl was wearing... she had brand new tennies and her new backpack, and she was running down the street through air that was full of manure to her mom. That's when I thought, 'all food comes from some place and that place is always someone's home.' And so, going back to local food, it's not about buying local eggs because I want to stick it on social media. It is that the food I am buying and that I am offering on my table and to my family and friends came from someone's home. I love where I live. I want to make choices to sup-

"Women Leaders" cont. page 4

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ness Association seeking to dismantle the permitting process for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations.

The Wisconsin DNR has finally agreed to enhanced groundwater protections... but only for fifteen counties in eastern Wisconsin, despite the many comments that flooded in from across the state requesting inclusion in these protections in other counties with karst geology.

This April at the County Conservation Congress, CSP spearheaded an effort that led to nine counties overwhelmingly passing resolutions to include all karstic

areas of the state in these protections. It is probable that this resolution will be on the statewide ballot next year and we are actively working to make that so.

We will not wait until we see the contamination levels seen in Kewaunee County before we take action. We will not wait until clean water is available only to those with enough money to purchase expensive filtration systems, as is the case in many areas already. This is a matter of our basic rights, and through scientific understanding and community action we will defend them.

Published by: Crawford Stewardship Project • PO Box 284, Gays Mills WI 54631
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We deal with serious issues, but we don't forget to have fun and enjoy the beauty of the place we protect!

for those who feel ignored and powerless in the face of great changes in our communities.

Edie Ehlert, CSP co-founder and Board President, notes how our mission and values also keep us cohesive and rooted as an organization. “Crawford Stewardship Project’s cooperative and supportive values are the key underpinnings of our success in bringing forward environmental justice issues and working with others. We encourage one another, using consensus decision making to figure out best actions. It is this respectful way of working together that has kept us together, has kept us enjoying one another’s uniqueness and abilities. Our group strength is reflected in our work in our communities.”

Local control

While the mere mention of “local control” in our early years brought eye-rolling from many, in recent years it has become a widely appreciated value statement, recognized by those from all political stripes. At its heart, it means trusting that local people know best how to make decisions for ourselves, and that we have an inherent authority to self-govern and decide the fate of our communities. We believe that this is possible if there is a transparent and democratic process. We have always advocated our local governments to embrace their full authority and responsibilities.

Ellen Brooks, CSP Board Vice

President and co-founding member reflects, “Since CSP was originated in 2007, we have attended hearings and committee meetings in Crawford County to influence and inform local policy decisions. Generally, we found local municipalities, the county Land Conservation Department staff and committee whom we report to monthly, as well as the County Board, open to our positions regarding a variety of conservation issues.

What we end up running into, often, are limits on our local control and authority. The Wisconsin Livestock Siting Law in large-scale agriculture, the Interstate Commerce Clause in rail transport, and a state cell phone tower siting law all prevent our county and municipalities from taking basic steps to protect our community’s environment, health, and welfare,” Ellen laments.

Whenever such preemption of local control rears its ugly head, CSP jumps into action, mobilizing our networks. In the last few years we have weathered and won no less than three attempts by the state to strip our municipalities of decision-making power over frack sand and other non-metallic mines. Ellen reminds us that this is important because, “as citizens, our supporters can influence our local government in a real way that may not be possible when dealing with state or federal officials.

We are happy for this avenue of protecting the environment and want to encourage the county to take the authority that it has and use it for the best outcome for all citizens.”

This philosophy of local control and self-determination extends beyond our relationship with local governments into every relationship with allies, partners, and many new groups we have helped form. We operate using the late Rob Horwich’s Community Conservation model of catalyzing independent groups whose successful actions then stimulate the formation of more groups. By helping organize those most affected into effective grassroots groups and decentralized networks, we allow them the freedom they need, and CSP can stay small and efficient, while accomplishing more and growing our network of allies.

Sustainable land use

The word “sustainable” has become such a buzzword these days that it has been diluted, but we hold to the term and its basic meaning. Sustainable use of the natural resources that we are so blessed with in this area means not depleting or compromising them. If we hope to be sustained by our land, water, and air, we must not exhaust or contaminate them. We must respect the Earth, her cycles, and all life.

This is a simple concept, but to understand what is sustainable (and what is not) on a landscape as complex as ours takes hard science and data.

And for our scientific and educational campaigns to be sustainable, they should be rooted in the community, which means educating decision makers of the available science, and using citizen science to fill in the gaps with important data.

Kathy Byrne, CSP Board Secretary and former Coordinator of our Citizen Water Quality Monitoring project, describes how, “our water quality monitoring volunteers are essential to our gathering data on the health of surface waters, which are especially threatened by

contamination. Not having the resources or the volunteers needed to monitor every stream in Crawford County, our focus has been on larger operations that are a cause for special concern. However, what each of us does individually on our own land also plays a role in the health of our water.”

“Our Karst Landscapes and Groundwater Susceptibility Survey of Crawford County has broadened our scope and impact,” explains Lamar Janes, CSP Board Treasurer. “We are creating a tool to help landowners, local government and agricultural agencies identify appropriate land use practices to protect the groundwater. The strength of the tool will be that rather than generic information, this data will be specific down to the level of individual fields. The valued assistance of volunteer citizen scientists in data collection makes creating this tool possible and affordable.”

Beyond gathering important information, if we are to shift our systems to a resilient and sustainable future, we must take on the hard issues. “Speaking out with neighbors for the land and water can be unpopular, especially with powerful corporate backed proposals. I gain the strength from those I work with to speak anyway, to use science, to encourage involvement of others.” reflects Edie Ehlert.

CSP will continue to tackle controversial local and regional sustainability issues. From large-scale industrial agriculture and frack sand mining to high capacity wells and government regulatory failures, we go beyond simply trying to improve practices of unsustainable operations. We fundamentally question the industrialization of our rural lands and support truly sustainable and just practices. Edie characterizes our passion in the immortal words of Mahatma Gandhi: “A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.”



"This grey tree frog is a result of living on a wetland and employing organic, light-on-the-land practices. But individual efforts alone can't save habitat or create opportunities for nature to heal itself enough to support frogs. This little indicator species is why I farm sustainably, but also why I am a member of the Wisconsin Farmer's Union, serve on the county board, write letters to the editor, attend conservation field days, maintain relationships with my elected officials and work hard at my relationships with other farmers and landowners in the community." - Kriss Marion

port other's ability to love where they live and to be safe."

Mary says, "My advocacy for good food isn't so much that I have a burning desire to fight CAFOs but that I have a burning desire to bring food back into where it belongs, which is supporting and building good, healthy communities and families and infrastructure that supports those things. That's when you can have balance."

This balance of sustainable food systems is exactly what Harriet Behar advocates for. Harriet is known nationally and internationally as a leader in organic agriculture and runs her own organic farm, Sweet Springs, near Rolling Ground right here in Crawford County.

"I do this work because I really care about the natural world. All the time that I've spent in organics has really shown me that you could have a highly productive farm of any type while at the same time improving your ecosystem, which is the law for organic agriculture. Agriculture does not have to be a negative thing, though in many ways it can negatively impact nature. Through organic farming, natural resources must be

maintained or improved and so there's a holistic way of looking at agriculture. It's not just, 'how much yield do I get?' but more, 'how do I improve my soil, and how do I sustain the ecological services by having lots of biodiversity on my farm for beneficial insects and keeping things in balance?' So when I see the use of herbicide, which is not allowed in organics, I don't see it necessarily negatively, I see it as really unnecessary. There's no need for herbicides because I know there is another way and it does work. The more I see that, the more passionate I get."

Reaching beyond the edges of our own properties was a theme among those we interviewed. Blanchardville, to the south, is tucked into a hilly patchwork of neighboring small farms where Kriss Marion hosts guests at her B&B and runs a small organic farm called Circle M Market Farm amongst many other things.

"It takes so much time and energy to network, but it's so important because we all see various things we'd like changed and we'd like to protect, but if you can't have your voice bol-

"Women Leaders" cont. page 6

CAFOs can wait. Clean water cannot!

Forest Jahnke,
Program Coordinator

It is a rare month that we don't hear about another massive manure spill into our waterways, and the legal leakage of 500 gallons per acre per day from manure lagoons into the groundwater goes completely unrecorded and unreported.

Meanwhile, our Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, with its new "Chamber of Commerce" mentality, is busy permitting new operations and expansions, but is so underfunded and understaffed that, according to the state's own evaluation, they have failed to enforce their standards 94% of the time. A CAFO in Kewaunee County was just allowed to double its herd, despite multiple rounds of testing showing over one third of wells tested to be contaminated in the county.

It is time for a sober analysis of the consequences of the wholesale industrialization of our agriculture. We need a pause in further permits and expansions until we can get a grasp on the effects we are already seeing and our state environmental enforcement agency can get its regulatory act together.

This is why Crawford Stewardship Project has joined Sustain Rural Wisconsin Network, nearly 50 other organizations, and municipalities from across the state in proposing a statewide moratorium on new and expanding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) with over 1000 "animal units." To learn more about the statewide moratorium effort, visit sustainrural-wisconsin.org.

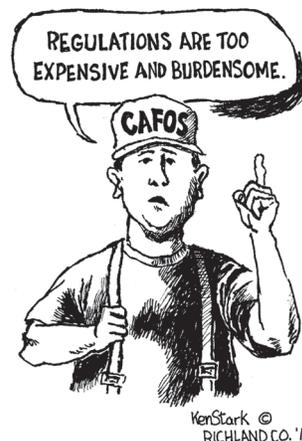
On the home-front, we are supporting neighbors in their struggles with several industrial agriculture projects. A CAFO in Harrison Township, Grant County, is pushing for expansion through a particularly suspicious process rife with conflicts of interest and red flags.

Just north of Viroqua, in an area riddled with sinkholes, karst towers, and springs, a large vertically integrated pork producer out of Iowa, Lynch Livestock Inc, bought out locally-owned

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources...is so underfunded and understaffed that, according to the state's own evaluation, they have failed to enforce their standards 94% of the time

Driftless Meats. They fired all the workers, have stated that they will no longer process local animals, and plan to expand operations 500-fold for their imported hogs.

All this is on top of our ongoing projects reviewing the annual Nutrient Management Plans for the largest factory farms in Crawford County and coordinating volunteer water quality monitoring at sites of particular concern. Yes, we've been more than busy, but this is only the tip of the iceberg if we can't get the state to renew its commitment to protecting our natural resources through adequate funding, review, and enforcement.



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air. Crawford Stewardship Project board and staff are accountable to you and the environment and we thank you for your support.

If you have not donated in the last year, either with your time or money, please consider joining the distinguished group of families, individuals, businesses, and organizations above in supporting Crawford Stewardship Project's mission!

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stered by other people, you’re not going to be heard.

I was very busy for a long time on my farm all by myself and it’s hard to feel like it is worthwhile to leave the farm or community to do some of this advocacy stuff. About 5 years ago, I was picking my raspberries and something landed on my arm. I looked down and it was a little

tree frog. I love tree frogs, and really value all the wildlife on my farm.

At this moment, I felt like God or nature was communicating with me, and what I learned was that, ‘hey, it’s great that you’re doing a good job on your farm, but if you don’t work with your whole neighborhood to do a good job on all the land, you

are not going to have the frog!” Kriss laughs.

“The thing is, we can each value our own little farm or own little community, but if we don’t work up and down stream (literally and figuratively) we are not going to be able to save our own ‘frogs’! We’re all in this together.”

Through stories and insights

from these women, we see a collaborative web forming, woven by those who take the time to learn, connect, and understand. This web will usher us into a new era of sustainable agriculture and it is inspiring to see women, those who discovered and nurtured agriculture to begin with, leading this shift.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!



featuring
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Music and Dance Benefit

Saturday, February 3, 2018

7pm-11pm

Gays Mills

Community Commerce Center

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