



Yahara WINS News



June 2018

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President's message



Partnerships define Yahara WINS because partnerships are necessary to implement solutions.

Partnerships allow for allocation of pooled resources across the watershed. The results are driven by practices that are often much less expensive per pound of phosphorus reduced than individual actions. This is the fundamental premise of the Yahara WINS partnership.

So far, Yahara WINS has been a success in that we have been able to get diverse partners to work together and implement a variety of cost-effective phosphorus reducing practices. These practices have ranged from aerial seeding of cover crops and advanced manure injection technology to improved stormwater management and urban leaf collection practices. But we are not done yet and we have a long way to go. It is a marathon, not a sprint.

As we move into the second half of 2018 and into 2019, the name of the game is engagement. Our 20 year project is a long game that requires patience and participation to drive progress. So far in 2018, we have added new partners while continuing to receive financial commitments from others.

Securing a steady source of funding will support innovation for the next 20 years and beyond. In fact, the Yahara WINS grant program recently received seven applications totaling more than \$100,000 in funding requests. It is very exciting to see so many great ideas and projects aimed at reducing phosphorus in the watershed!

So let us continue to engage each other with the goal of working together for the health of our watershed. There is no doubt that this will lead to more success down the road. Thank you for all you do to protect water quality.

We want to hear from you. Questions, comments, concerns? Please contact Martin Griffin, Yahara WINS executive committee president, at marting@madsewer.org.

Starkweather Creek project moves ahead

Yahara WINS' success requires implementing a variety of cost-effective, successful, phosphorus reduction practices. The City of Madison continues to evaluate and test innovative approaches to capture phosphorus and suspended sediment from stormwater.



One promising option being evaluated on Starkweather Creek involves efforts by the city and its consultants to bind and settle phosphorus to the bottom of a stormwater pond so the phosphorus does not reach Lake Monona. The project is testing a variety of coagulants and dosing rates. While these practices are new to our region, the work leverages experts and research findings from throughout the country.

Pilot projects have been underway since 2014 and construction is expected to begin in 2018. The project will be near the intersection of Fair Oaks and Milwaukee avenues. When completed, the Starkweather Creek project is expected to remove about 1,600 pounds of phosphorus per year. This amounts to about 10 percent of the city's required phosphorus reductions to comply with Rock River Total Maximum Daily Load limits and will cost approximately \$5.5 million to construct. Dane County is contributing \$1 million toward the project.

For additional details, visit the city's project webpage: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/projects/starkweather-treatment>. Project manager Lauren Striegl, of the City of Madison engineering department, can be reached at (608) 266-4094 or LStriegl@cityofmadison.com.

Rock River Coalition hard at work



The Rock River Coalition's volunteer stream monitoring season is underway. In March, the coalition held its annual gathering at the [City of Fitchburg Community Center](#).

Close to 50 volunteers and coalition partners representing Friends of Pheasant Branch, Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Friends of Lake Kegonsa, Friends of Starkweather Creek and Friends of the Upper Yahara River attended this gathering to hear presentations by U.S. Geological Survey, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and coalition staff. Volunteers also shared information about their own monitoring experiences, collected stream monitoring equipment and reaffirmed their commitment to this critical citizen science project.

In May, Rock River Coalition partnered with [Waunakee Village Center](#) staff to hold a training workshop. Sixteen new recruits braved the cold, high water to master monitoring techniques on Six Mile Creek.

As of today, the coalition is working with **100** volunteers who are monitoring stream health at **51** stations. Volunteers test the waters monthly by measuring dissolved oxygen, water temperature and water clarity as well as assessing biological health. On a monthly basis, volunteers collect water samples at **35** stations. Volunteers deliver these samples to the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District lab for analysis of total suspended solids, ortho-phosphorus, ammonia, nitrate-nitrite and Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen. Rock River Coalition has also teamed up with two volunteer teams to seek outside funding for total phosphorus sampling. In 2018, the coalition received funding from DNR to add total phosphorus sampling at two additional sites within the Yahara River watershed.

The coalition continues to work with a team of volunteers to develop methods to assess water velocity that will augment the data collected by volunteers using [Water Action Volunteer](#) methodologies. The coalition is committed to making our volunteer collected data accessible to multiple users. Toward this end, the coalition will continue to work with a small cohort of volunteers to update our Rock River Basin Report Card. (Check out the 2005-2015 Report Card here: <https://rockrivercoalition.org/projects-2/citizen-stream-monitoring/your-stream-monitoring-data/>) In addition, the coalition expects to collaborate with the Madison Tableau User Group to streamline data visualizations now available on the coalition's [website](#).

Volunteers hope that our growing database will lead to a better understanding of water quality changes throughout the Yahara River watershed and ultimately within the Rock River Basin. Volunteer stream monitoring opportunities are still available on Badfish Creek, Rutland Branch and Wingra Creek. Please contact Nancy Sheehan: nancy@rockrivercoalition.org.

Clean Lakes Alliance sets clear path forward

The Clean Lakes Alliance continues to improve water quality in the Yahara Watershed through partnerships, direct action, education, volunteer support, water quality monitoring and providing grants.

In 2018, the Alliance released [Plan 2010: A Clear Path](#)



[Forward](#), a roadmap to achieving the [Yahara Clean Initiative](#)'s goal of reducing 50 percent of phosphorus loading to each lake. Efforts for this year include targeted efforts for farmland management, leaf management, construction erosion prevention, innovation, lake access, in-lake management, youth education and increasing access to and use of local shorelines and beaches.

In support of these phosphorus reduction and community engagement focus areas, the Alliance has distributed more than [\\$160,000 in grants for various lake improvement projects](#) this year. The biggest award, of \$100,000, was made to [Yahara WINS](#) for phosphorus reductions in the watershed of lakes Mendota and Monona. Other funded projects range from research studies and education/awareness campaigns to direct action, including projects to implement best management practices.

The recently released [2017 State of the Lakes Report](#) sums up the tremendous progress in the past year, while noting that much work remains given the increasing variability and uncertainty in weather patterns.

Yahara Pride Farms offers new ag programs



Thanks to the support of Yahara WINS, Dane County and other partners, Yahara Pride Farms is offering farmers in the watershed two new programs designed to minimize the risk of trying new management tools and develop practical, data-driven best management practices for long-term adoption.

The programs include low disturbance manure injection applicator rental and a composting partnership. Details follow:

Manure Tanker Rental

Surface applications of manure have been shown to increase nitrogen and phosphorus runoff to rivers and streams. Injection places manure below the surface where it doesn't interact with runoff water during storms. However, steep sloping hillsides pose challenges for farmers because manure injection can make the soil more susceptible to erosion.

Low disturbance manure injection offers one solution, by incorporating manure into the soil with minimal soil disturbance. The practice decreases the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus runoff as well as soil erosion. Low disturbance equipment also works well with no-till farming systems and allows farmers to experiment with new methods of preserving nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium to save on fertilizer costs.

In addition to providing a cost-share incentive of \$20 per acre for up to 50 acres to farmers who implement low disturbance manure injection on their farms, Yahara Pride Farms has a 5,300 gallon Houle manure tanker with a Bazoooka low disturbance toolbar available for farmers in the watershed to rent. The rental fee is \$250 per day.

Composting Partnership

Proper management is crucial for creating compost. Yahara Pride Farms is optimizing the management of compost throughout the watershed. Biological activity in compost maximizes for seven to 10 days following turning. Uniform compost heats more consistently and loses moisture and weight more easily. Highly managed compost piles can reduce manure leachate

and nutrient loss to surrounding area.

The best practices for composting include a minimum of four turns (45 days) in order for noticeable changes. In addition, compost sites closer to the farmstead are more consistently managed when compared to remote sites. In addition, compost applied after harvest results in increased alfalfa regrowth when compared to adjacent areas without compost.

Farmers who participate in the composting partnership will receive \$1,100 to build and haul a minimum composting pile of 220 cubic yards of bedded pack manure. Yahara Pride Farms will then provide compost turning service at no charge to the farmer. Yahara Pride Farms also will provide before and after nutrient analysis of the compost and assist in planning land application.

For more information on Yahara Pride Farms, visit <http://www.yaharapridefarms.org/> or email communications@yaharapridefarms.org.

Yahara WINS welcomes Columbia County

Columbia County has entered into a service agreement with Yahara WINS.

The county joins two dozen other partners that work together to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering streams, rivers and lakes in the Yahara Watershed. Columbia County lies at the northern edge of the watershed, which extends through Dane County to the northern part of Rock County.



The two-year commitment totals \$50,000 for 2018-2019 and \$55,000 for 2019-2020 for phosphorus reduction efforts. County officials are interested in promoting the use of buffer strips to reduce runoff from cultivated fields.

To learn more about Yahara WINS and related efforts, visit www.madsewer.org/yaharawins. Together, we are making a difference!

How does Yahara WINS work?

The Yahara Watershed Improvement Network, known as Yahara WINS, is a groundbreaking initiative to achieve clean water goals for the Yahara Watershed. In this effort, community partners led by Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District are collaborating on a strategy called watershed adaptive management in which all sources of phosphorus in a watershed work together to reduce phosphorus. The effort began in 2012 as a pilot project and in 2017 transitioned to a full scale effort.

To advance the adaptive management project, achieve permit requirements and regional Clean Water Act goals, the group facilitates partnerships, conducts outreach, pools resources to fund phosphorus reducing practices in the watershed, analyzes stream samples and works with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to address regulatory needs for the

Send us your stories

Help Yahara WINS spread the word about successes in the watershed. Send your ideas, comments, photos and stories to Jennifer.Sereno@madsewer.org or call 608-770-8084.

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