The Yahara watershed, like many others, is threatened by excessive phosphorus from sources such as agricultural runoff, urban stormwater and wastewater treatment plant discharges. The elevated phosphorus levels are a threat to water quality and aquatic life throughout the area.

The Yahara Watershed Improvement Network (Yahara WINS) began in 2012 as a four-year pilot project to reduce phosphorus loads and meet more stringent water quality standards established by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This groundbreaking program employs the strategy of watershed adaptive management in which all sources of phosphorus pollution work together to meet water quality goals. This strategy is more effective and less expensive than the sources working independently on solutions. Partners in Yahara WINS include cities, villages, towns, wastewater treatment plants, agricultural producers, environmental groups, among others.

This unprecedented level of collaboration from this diverse group of partners included significant financial contributions to fund a mix of rural and urban phosphorus reduction projects. Projects range from traditional solutions, such as stormwater retention ponds, harvestable stream buffers, and strip tillage, to innovative new solutions like low-disturbance manure injection.

The pilot project is completed and Yahara WINS is embarking on its next phase, a 20-year effort encompassing the full-watershed. Local governments have entered into an intergovernmental agreement which commits them to provide financial support for the project throughout this phase.

For more information visit madsewer.org/Programs-Initiatives/Yahara-WINS
Impaired Waters
Yahara River Watershed

Pollutant
- Orange line: Sediment/Total Suspended Solids
- Red line: Sediment/Total Suspended Solids and Total Phosphorus

Pollutant data from WDNR 303(d) list (2010, proposed 2012).
Watershed boundaries from 1:24,000-scale data (WDNR).

Map created January 4, 2012 by Dane County LWR

Yahara WINS Partners

CITIES*
- Fitchburg
- Madison
- Middleton
- Monona
- Stoughton
- Sun Prairie

VILLAGES*
- Cottage Grove
- DeForest
- Maple Bluff
- McFarland
- Shorewood Hills
- Waunakee
- Windsor

TOWNS*
- Blooming Grove
- Burke
- Cottage Grove
- Dunn
- Middleton
- Pleasant Springs
- Westport

OTHERS
- MMSD
- Oregon-WWTP
- Stoughton Utilities
- UW-Madison*
- WDNR
- Clean Lakes Alliance
- DATCP
- USDA/NRCS
- Dane County
- USGS
- Madison Gas & Electric

* Indicates entities that own a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4)