

LWSRB Adopts bimonthly meeting schedule

By GILLIAN POMPLUN
The Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board voted unanimously at their January 12 meeting to move to a six-meeting-per-year format for 2023. The decision came after a serious discussion of board member's needs, ability to provide timely review of permit requests, and virtual options at meeting facilities.

"The options in front of us are to continue with monthly in-person meetings, hold monthly in-person meetings with a virtual option, go to bi-monthly in-person meetings, bi-monthly in-person meetings with a virtual option, or bi-monthly meetings with board field trips on the months where a meeting isn't held," LWSRB Executive Director Mark Cupp told the board. "We also need to decide if we will continue to 'take our show on the road,' holding meetings in different venues up and down the Riverway."

Board member Randy Poelma asked Cupp if the board would be able to conduct operations committee site visits if the meetings moved to bi-monthly with a virtual option?

"I think we could incorporate in-person operations committee site visits as-needed, depending on the permit applications," Cupp responded. "It's still to-be-determined, but I envision the board field trips as occurring under the auspices of the operations committee, in a public meeting format that would be noticed and open to the public."

Board member Lara Czajkowski-Higgins told Cupp that her sense was that he was recommending bi-monthly meetings because monthly meetings are not needed. She asked if all the board field trips would be scheduled during the day, Monday through Friday, or if some could be scheduled for weekends?

Cupp suggests less meetings
"I suggest bi-monthly meetings in order to be respectful of board member's time," Cupp said. "As far as holding some field trips on weekends, that would be a possibility."

Board member Meredith Beckman stated that she supported continuing to hold meetings up and down the Riverway.

"I think there's a value in holding our meetings in different locations in the Riverway as it gives board members a chance to see different places and interact with the public," Beckman said. "I think bi-monthly meetings would be fine."

Board member Lara Czajkowski-Higgins moved to move to a bi-monthly meeting schedule in the odd months, with a virtual option, scheduled in locations up and down the Riverway as much as possible. Board member Randy Poelma seconded the motion.

In addition, board member Dan Hilberry moved, and board member Kim Cates seconded a motion to hold four-to-six board field trips, in even months, on the second Thursdays of the month and on weekends from time to time. The board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Climate resilient forests
The featured speaker at the meeting was former Riverway forester Brad Hutnik. Hutnik currently serves as a Wisconsin DNR (WDNR) Forest Ecologist/Silviculturist.

Hutnik delivered an address entitled 'Driftless Area Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change.' The talk discussed a multi-state project researching how best to respond to current and future impacts of climate change on forest resources. The project is led by Miranda Curzon of Iowa State University, with Iowa, Minnesota and



Catching a nice large mouth

The fish were already biting as of noon on Saturday, Jan. 14, at the Driftless Area Ice Fisheriee for Suicide Prevention & Awareness. and Aaron Marx of Prairie du Chien had reeled in this 6.5-pound large mouth bass as his first contest entry. A total of 130 ice fishers turned out to support the cause of suicide prevention and awareness.

Crawford and Vernon counties

DAWS well water results released

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

The most recent round of Driftless Area Water Study (DAWS) well water quality testing results were released on Tuesday, Jan. 10. Kevin Masarik, watershed educator with the Center for Watershed Science and Education (CWSE) at UW-Stevens Point made the presentation.

The results are from 29 tests in Crawford County, 25 tests

in the Tainter Creek Watershed, and 53 tests in Vernon County. Richland County, a historic partner in the DAWS Study, did not participate in this round of testing due to budget constraints.

The Tainter Creek Watershed starts in Franklin Township in Vernon County, and runs through Utica Township in Crawford County, with the creek's confluence at the

Kickapoo River occurring just north of the Village of Gays Mills.

Of the total 107 wells tested, approximately 11 tested in the 10.1-20 milligrams-per-liter (mg/L) of nitrate range. The health standard for nitrate in drinking water is 10 mg/L. Above this level, water is not considered safe for drinking.

Twenty-one of the 107 wells tested in the 5.1-10 mg/L range for nitrate. While still considered safe to drink, this is considered to be the 'danger zone' where well owners should investigate why nitrate levels in their water are elevated, and consider repeated testing to determine if levels are increasing.

Vernon County Public Health Department (VCPH) in Viroqua offers well water nitrate testing for a cost of \$30 per test. Bottles can be picked up at the VCPH Department offices at 318 Fairlane Drive in Viroqua between the hours of Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Return samples are accepted Monday-Thursday, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., and results will be available in one-to-two weeks.

Twenty-four well tests of the 107 tested came back in the 2.1-5 mg/L range. This water is safe to drink, but again, the cause of nitrate contamination should be investigated, and well owners are encouraged to re-test their well water.

Thirty-two wells of the 107 tested came back at the 2.0 mg/L level, which is considered to be the naturally occurring level of nitrate in groundwater without human influence. Two wells of the 107 tested came back with a result of no nitrate present.

Hard water

Generally, in an area like the Driftless Region in Southwest Wisconsin, the karst geology bedrock composed of sandstone and dolomites will deliver very hard water. This water will be high in minerals like calcium and magnesium, which in normal levels are not considered to be harmful and may have health benefits.

In Gays Mills

Driftless Development opens office

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

Opening day for the new Gays Mills office of Driftless Development, Inc., was Friday, Jan. 6. Carol Roth was in her office in the Showen Building, and reported having had a "steady stream" of visitors throughout the day.

"The Gays Mills office will be open on Tuesdays and Fridays," Roth said. "Your best bet, before stopping in, is to call and make an appointment - otherwise I may be meeting with another client or holding a meeting offsite."

Carol Roth can be reached



CAROL ROTH

at 608-279-2293 or by e-mail at driftlessdevelopment.carol@gmail.com.

"Driftless Development receives funding both from the City of Prairie du Chien as well as from Crawford County," Roth explained. "So it is an important part of our man-

date to ensure that the whole county is benefiting from what we have to offer. That's why we decided to open this office in the northern part of the county."

Roth said that Driftless Development has a strong connection with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), and also lots of connections to other partners like Couleecap and Wisconsin Business Initiative. She said that WEDC has taken a strong interest in Crawford County, and a representative visits Driftless Development about once per month.

"We can help with writing and evaluating a business plan, as well as with connection to resources that can help to make your plan a reality," Roth said.

Roth shared that plans are already in the works for business development and promotion projects that will benefit the northern part of Crawford County. She specifically cited projects involving the Gays Mills apple orchards, housing development and projects related to medical services.

Roth also touts the work of Driftless Development in Prairie du Chien with the Blackhawk Junction project.

"The workforce housing portion of the Blackhawk Junction project will be completed soon," Roth said. "The second half of that development will involve creation of five-to-six retail spaces, and we anticipate breaking ground on that phase of the project in late 2023 or early 2024."

Year in Review-2022

Busy holiday season ends with a Christmas Day fire

PART FOUR

OCTOBER: A presentation on roller crimping and its benefits to farmers was made at the meeting of the Bad Axe Watershed Council on Thursday, Sept. 22. Vernon County Conservationist Ben Wojahn gave the presentation during the meeting at Steve Oliver's farm. A group of around 30 people from multiple watersheds attended the event. Among those in attendance were local landowners, USDA NRCS (Natural Resource Conservation Service) workers, the Mayor of Bud, and a representative from Congressman Ron Kind's office... It was a beautiful fall evening behind the Gays Mills Community Center last Thursday. The outdoor setting uphill from the Cut-off Slough seemed an almost ideal place for presenting an award to well-known local environmental activist Edie Ehlert. Representatives from Midwest Environmental Advocates had traveled from the Madison area to make a local presentation of the award. A larger award ceremony, including some other award recipients, is planned for the future. This, then, was the local version of the Bill Iwen Environmental Justice Award presented to the Crawford Stewardship Project's Edie Ehlert... With funding from a Wisconsin Department of Health Services (WDHS) 'Environmental Health Capacity Grant,' Vernon County has now marked the entrances to all of the Watersheds/Waterways in the county with signs. Acquisition of the signs was a joint project of Vernon County Emergency Management, Land and Water Conservation, Public Health, and Flood Mitigation Alliance... The Soldiers Grove Village Board moved to approve picnic licenses for two upcoming fundraising events in the village at their October 6 meeting. Those two events are for the North Crawford FFA Fall UTV Ride fundraising event, scheduled for Saturday, October 15, and the Big Buck Rod-n-Gun Club fundraising event that took place on Saturday, Oct. 8... On Monday, Oct. 17, the bridge on Highway 61, just south of Readstown over Reads Creek, was closed for repairs. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation estimates the bridge will be reopened to traffic by November 17. "In the course of a routine bridge inspection, the DOT discovered that a hole had developed, due to flooding, that had exposed the outside pilings of the bridge," Vernon County Highway Commissioner Phil Hewitt said. "When the pilings were inspected, DOT staff discovered that there had been deterioration in need of repair..."

After a few years of COVID lockdowns, the Old Oak Inn in Soldiers Grove has come roaring back with the 'Freakers Ball,' planned for Friday, Oct. 28, with doors opening at 6 p.m. Music will be provided by local musical talent Dylan Harris, followed by the Freaks of Nature. Cash prizes will be offered for the 'Best,' 'Creepiest,' and 'Most Comical' Halloween costumes, as well as a photo booth to have your Halloween creations captured for history. A \$15 entry fee includes: first drink, 'CharGhoulerie,' hors d'oeuvres and a door prize entry... Sara Strassman, Trout Unlimited Driftless Area Restoration Effort (TUDARE) program manager made a presentation to members of the Coulee Region Trout Unlimited chapter in LaCrosse on Wednesday, Oct. 19. Strassman took over the job in July from 16-year veteran Jeff Hastings. Strassman detailed for the group what her priorities will be for Driftless Area trout fisheries in her new role. She said that some of the key opportunities she hopes to develop include working with municipalities on water quality trading projects, supporting development of managed grazing and regenerative agriculture, developing new partnerships in other recreation groups, and work with new techniques in the headwaters of streams.

NOVEMBER: It was a bright, crisp morning last Wednesday, when the big yellow school bus pulled up to the entrance of the Frank's Hill effigy mounds site. The doors opened, and a curious, lively and energetic passel of four-year-olds poured out of the bus, full of questions and chatter, and eager to begin their adventure. Gently shepherded by 4K teacher Sharon Jeardeau and several other school staff, the bouncing group began their darting march up the hill, with a pause below the 'three eagles' display. The cultural and historic site is overseen and administered by the Three Eagles Foundation. All three members of the Three Eagles Board - Dave Martin, Brian McGraw and Mark Cupp were present to help conduct the tour... The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) re-started the process of developing a standard for PFAS (per- and polyfluorinated substances) in groundwater on Friday, Nov. 4. On that date, a public hearing was held to allow citizens to provide input. It was attended by about 20 members of the public, and of the 20 who testified, all spoke in support of WDNR developing the standard...

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DAVID OLDENBURG of Viroqua was one of the 'Players' that provided theatrical entertainment at the Freaker's Ball held Friday, October 28 at the Old Oak Inn. His performance was entitled, 'The Tennessee Kid.'

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Anyone who wants to hand on forest resource to the future should care

BOARD from Page 1

Wisconsin DNRs, Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS), United States Forest Service (USFS), and Colorado State University as partners.

“Part of this long-term research project will take place in the Riverway, looking at ways to make our forest resources more resilient to the impacts of climate change,” Hutnik explained. “Our goal is to determine best practices to respond to change, tweaking management while still providing ecological, economic and cultural benefits.”

Hutnik pointed out that the teams from Iowa and Minnesota are predominantly DNR staff. He said that Wisconsin had taken a different tack, pulling in partners from a broader spectrum within the state. Wisconsin research team members include the Kickapoo Valley Reserve Executive Director; Ann Calhoun of The Nature Conservancy; Brandon Bleuer, Ho-Chunk Nation Forestry Manager; John Withers, a procurement forester; as well as three additional WDNR staff.

Why should we care?

Why should we care about climate change impacts on

our forest resource in the Driftless?

Hutnik answered that question, detailing the benefits provided to Driftless Region citizens from healthy forests.

“Degradation of our forest resources has potential to negatively impact recreational opportunities, economic opportunities, and our natural communities could also suffer,” Hutnik explained. “Driftless Area forests help to deliver cold, clean water to our cold-water fisheries, and warming waters could threaten brook trout survival. Anyone who wants to pass the resource on to future generations should be concerned about climate change.”

Projected climate change impacts on Wisconsin’s forests include longer growing seasons, carbon dioxide fertilization, increased droughts and extreme weather, less frozen ground, increased fire risk, species range shifts and generally, increased stressors.

Adaptation options

Hutnik said the framework for management solutions to the impacts of climate change on the forest resource can be broken down into three options – Resistance, Resilience and Transition.

“Resistance involves tweaking current management to promote forest persistence. Resilience will involve incorporating observations and the science to begin to use what we have learned to make the resource more resilient in the midst of unpredictability and increasing changes,” Hutnik said. “Transition will involve taking steps to stabilize the resource according to the new ‘normal’ conditions.”

In the course of these management shifts, the resource is expected to move from an ecosystem that is still recognizable as being the same as is currently in place to an ecosystem that has fundamentally changed to something different.

“The list of anticipated climate change impacts shouldn’t be seen as ‘bad,’ but rather ‘different,’” Hutnik said. “Obviously, there are lots of unknowns and that is the reason to be proactive in trying to get out in front.”

Hutnik explained to the board that in coming years, they could expect to see permits for removals, and for treatments involving invasive species control, prescribed burns, underplanting and timber sales. He said there will be four research sites in

the Driftless, each 10-acre plots, for a total of 40-acres.

In other business

In other business, the LWSRB:

- learned that Prairie du Chien will celebrate the 350th anniversary of the Marquette and Joliet journey of discovery in 2023. Upcoming events include the ‘Fete du Voyageur’ fundraising event on February 18, and the larger event scheduled for June 16-18

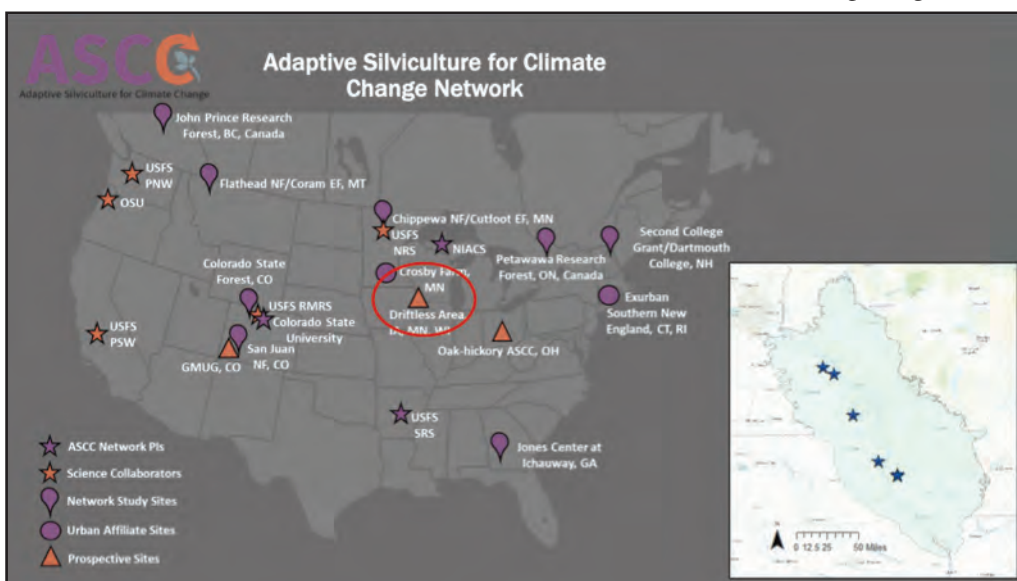
- learned that Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway (FLOW) would hold their annual meeting on Saturday, Jan. 21, from 4 to 6 p.m., at Grandma Mary’s Café in Arena

- learned that both Gigi LaBudde (Sauk County) and Lara Czajkowski-Higgins (Crawford County) seats expire in May of 2023, and that both have expressed interest in re-appointment to the board

- learned that LWSRB staff, working with their information technology support, was purchasing equipment to upgrade sound capabilities for virtual meetings

- learned that due to very cold conditions on the Winter Solstice, turnout was very light for the observance at Frank’s Hill

- learned that river flows are normal for this time of year, and that the Muscoda gauge is currently ‘iced up,’ and so not reporting.



THIS MAP shows locations of forest resource climate resilience research planned for the Driftless Region, and the partners in the research nationwide.

Driftless Area Water Study results once again show nitrate is a persistent problem

DAWS from Page 1

The main issue with hard water is scaling and scum. The water can require higher levels of soaps for cleaning and laundry, and it can decrease water heater efficiency.

Results for hardness above 200 mg/L are considered to be ‘hard water.’ In Crawford County, one well tested at 401 mg/L, and in Vernon County, four wells tested at this level. In the 301-400 mg/L level, 19 wells in Crawford County and 31 wells in Vernon County tested at this level. In Crawford County, 11 wells tested at the 201-300 mg/L level, and in Vernon County, 18 wells tested at this level.

In the 101-200 mg/L, no Crawford County wells tested at this level, and four Ver-

non County wells did. At the 51-100 mg/L level, no wells in either county tested at this level. One well in Vernon County tested at the 50 mg/L or less level in the far eastern part of the county.

Bacteria levels

In the combined Crawford and Vernon counties, and the Tainter Creek Watershed, of the total 105 wells sampled, 16 percent of the samples analyzed detected coliform bacteria. There was one sample (less than one percent of all samples) that detected E.coli. The results for coliform bacteria and E.coli are both on par with statewide averages.

Masarik pointed out that generally, coliform bacteria in well water do not cause illness. However, he pointed out that their presence in well water can indicate that a path-

way for potentially harmful microorganisms to enter your water supply exists.

Harmful bacteria, such as E.coli or viruses have the potential to cause gastrointestinal disease, cholera and hepatitis. Wisconsin’s well code stipulates that “a properly constructed well should be able to provide bacteria-free water continuously, without the need for treatment.”

“If your well tested positive for E.coli, a dangerous pathogen that comes from human or animal fecal matter, you would have been notified immediately. E.coli in water are often present with harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites that can cause serious gastrointestinal illnesses, and water should be consumed immediately if E.coli are found to be present,” Masarik said. “If your well tested positive for coliform bacteria, we recommend further testing to determine if bacteria are persistent in the well, and require further action.”

Masarik detailed that sources of coliform bacteria in well water include naturally occurring levels in soils and on vegetation, human or animal waste, or could show up in the test results due to a sampling error.

Investigations

Well owners whose wells test positive for coliform bacteria need to become ‘investigators,’ to determine what the possible sources or causes of bacteria in their well water might be. While public water systems are highly regulated, and required to test regularly, private well owners are essentially their own water utility managers.

are two upcoming court dates for individuals who received citations scheduled for February 6 and 20.

Soil and Water

In the ‘Soil and Water’ subcommittee portion of the meeting, Troester reported that his team will be judging the conservation posters received from the Wauzeka-Steuben and Seneca schools, and sending on the winners to the regional contest in Viroqua. He said they received three posters from Wauzeka-Steuben, and 75-100 posters from Seneca.

Troester also reported that he had wrapped up Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) documentation for the year, allowing enrolled property owners to be eligible for their tax credit. He estimated that as a result of implementation of FPP in the Town of Freeman, another 2,000 to 3,000 acres had been added to the number operating with a nutrient management plan.

Conservation Specialist Travis Bunting reported that he had been “learning a lot” from the new USDA-NRCS Hydraulic Engineer that is based in Prairie du Chien as of January 2023.

DNR Forester Christine Walroth said she was continuing to work with Crawford County landowners, and had helped them to submit three Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) applications for forestry work.

Committee member Chad Sime reported that Crawford County grazing consultant and farmer Dennis Rooney had been re-elected to the county FSA Committee.

Public comments

Ellen Brooks of Crawford Stewardship Project asked if Troester had heard anything more about the updated nutrient management plan for the Roth Feeder Pigs II hog CAFO planned for Marietta Township?

Troester responded that there had been no news, and that the updated plan is due to Wisconsin DNR by March 31.

Land Conservation

Committee takes up variety of issues

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

The Crawford County Land Conservation Committee (LCC) ‘Land Use’ subcommittee heard reports on property tax issues, an Assessor’s Plat in the Town of Clayton, and status of the county’s effort to bring all septic systems into compliance with state regulations.

Real Property Lister Gigi Collins reported that since the committee met in December, she had been fielding tax issues “like crazy.” She reported issues resulting from property splits on new sales as well as citizens being confused about how the school referendums passed in the county were impacting their property tax bill.

Collins also reported that affected Town of Clayton property owners would be invited to attend the committee’s March meeting to discuss the Assessor’s Plat process planned. That process will resolve certain unclarity in property boundaries, land ownership and responsibility for property taxes. The committee authorized Collins to send a letter she had prepared to the affected property owners.

Zoning and Sanitation Technician Jon Mayer reported that there were currently two septic tanks being installed in the Ambro area of Prairie du Chien, and that he had been conducting on-site determinations in the last month.

Land Conservation Director Dave Troester reported that of the about 50 citations sent out to septic system owners who failed to meet the deadline to have their system pumped or inspected, about 10 of those are being resolved. He said that three-to-five of the citations sent out by the Sheriff’s Department had come back as ‘undeliverable,’ which could possibly mean that the recipient had refused to sign for the certified mailing. Troester said he plans to discuss this issue with the county’s corporate counsel.

Troester reported that there

Issues that have potential to create pathways for bacteria into well water include land use in the neighborhood of the well, and well construction defects. Well construction defects can include damaged well caps, and lack of adequate casing. Bad well water can also result from old wells on the property that haven’t been capped, inadvisable land use around the well head, or failure to control backflow in hoses attached to the well.

“Well owners whose wells test positive for coliform bacteria should inspect their well head and the area around the well,” Masarik said. “First, see if the cap on your well head or casing is cracked, then determine if the cap is a vermin-proof cap.”

Masarik said that if there are old wells on the same property that have not been properly filled and capped, they could be functioning as direct conduits to groundwater, making a pathway for bacteria to enter your well water.

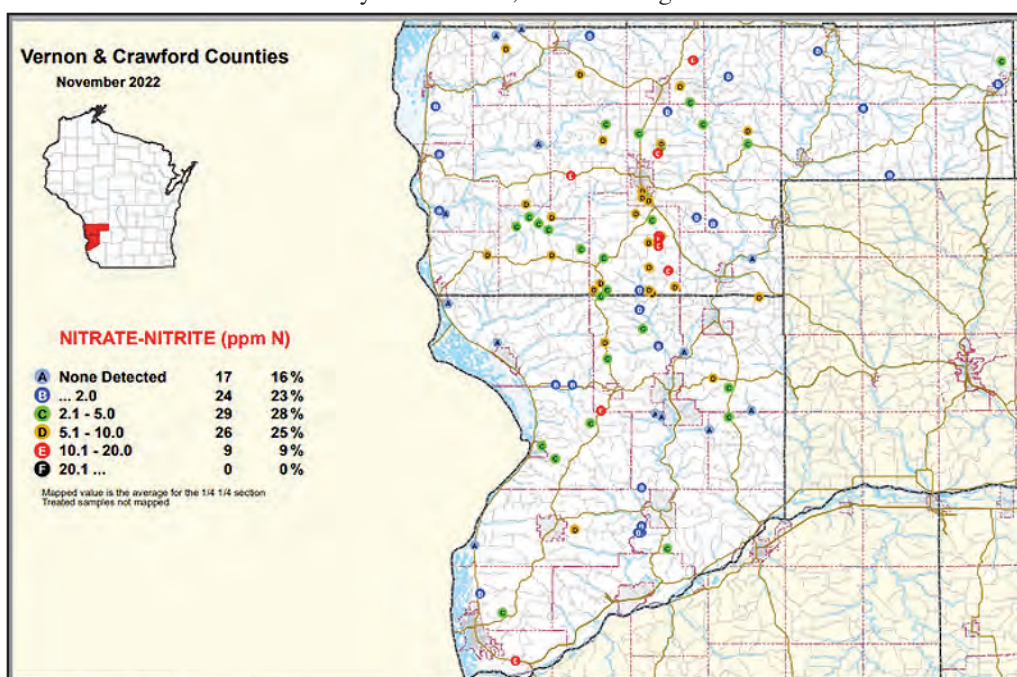
Wells that are not cased deeply enough could be allowing bacteria to enter your well from geologic features on the landscape, such as sink holes, that are prevalent in the Driftless Region’s karst geology. For this reason, drilling a deeper well may not be the only or best answer – investigating how deeply your well is cased is the first step.

Masarik says that if coliform bacteria were present in your well test, the following

steps are recommended:

1. use an alternative source of water for drinking
2. Re-test your well
3. Try to identify any sanitary defects such as a loose or non-existent well cap, well construction faults, a cross-connection, a nearby unused well or pit, and inadequate filtration by soil
4. Disinfect the well
5. Re-test to ensure the well is bacteria-free.

“For recurring bacteria problems, the best solution may be a new well, or if a new well is unlikely to remedy the problem because of the geology where your well is located, then you may need to seek approval for a water treatment system,” Masarik explained.



NITRATE RESULTS for wells sampled in Crawford and Vernon counties, and the Tainter Creek Watershed are shown on this map. The sampling was taken in November of 2022, and Richland County, historically a partner in the Driftless Area Water Study, chose not to participate due to budget constraints. Map provided by UW-Stevens Point

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Job Fair

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FROM 9AM-3PM

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2pm-10pm (Every Other Weekend & Holiday)

- **FULL-TIME NOC NURSE (RN/LPN)**
6pm-6am (Every Third Weekend & Holiday)
- **FULL-TIME/PART-TIME PM SHIFT CNA**
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