

Near Ontario

Man drowns in Kickapoo

Vernon County Sheriff Roy Torgerson reported that a drowning occurred on Thursday afternoon June 1, at approximately 1:15 p.m., in rural Ontario, in the Town of Whitestown.

Aundra Keaton Jr., 19, of Middleton, was tubing on the Kickapoo River with a small group of people. The group stopped to swim. Aundra Keaton experienced a deep drop off, and went under. Aundra Keaton was not wearing a life preserver. A female in his group attempted to rescue him, but was unsuccessful.

At approximately 2:51 p.m., Aundra Keaton's body was recovered from the river, and was pronounced dead at the scene by Vernon County Coroner Betty Nigh.

Assisting the sheriff's department at the scene were the Ontario Fire Department, Ontario Ambulance Service, LaFarge Fire Department, LaFarge Ambulance Service, Wisconsin State Patrol, Vernon County Emergency Management, a ranger from Wildcat Mountain State Park, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The incident remains under investigation by the Vernon County Sheriff's Department and the Vernon County Coroner.

In Gays Mills

Letter spoof is called out

By CHARLEY PREUSSER

Village resident and former village president Craig Anderson made some comments on two subjects during the public input portion of the regular monthly Gays Mills Village Board meeting.

Anderson began with a warning about what might be called a 'scam' involving a mail solicitation intending to appear as an official communication from the Village of Gays Mills about deed warranties.

From the envelope used and the content of the letter, it appears in every way to make the people believe the village is communicating to residents there is a need to the warranty on their deeds. This is not the case. The letter asks people to send money and/or call a phone number given in the letter.

The letter is not from the village and that is not a message from the village. One other village resident has reported receiving such a letter to the village clerk Dawn McCann.

Anderson observed the letter may be legal, but it is certainly not ethical.

Board member Emily Swigum noted the letter senders had definitely put money into the packaging to make it look official.

"Well forewarned is forearmed," Anderson said in ending this portion of his public input.

Board appointment

Anderson's other point, brought up under the agenda item listed as 'Citizens and Delegations,' concerned the appointment of a board member at the meeting last month. The board approved appointing Kevin Murray to the empty seat on the board after he lost his seat in the spring election.

Anderson questioned why the seat, formerly held by Seamus Murray was allowed to go unfilled for 10 months, but then filled after the election by an appointment of the board.

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FATHER JACQUES MARQUETTE, best known for an expedition with Louis Jolliet, lived an interesting but relatively short life as a missionary priest working among native people in an area that would become the states of Wisconsin and Illinois.

An historical recollection

Father Jacques Marquette S.J. 1637-1675: His Life and Labors

This is part one of a three-part story to be printed in the June 8, 15 and 22 issues of the Independent-Scout.

By Dr. Patrick J. Jung

Milwaukee School of Engineering
The stories Father Jacques Marquette heard fired his imagination. They gave him hope that he might partake in the kind of missionary enterprise he dreamt of as a youth in Laon, France, where he was born in 1637. Marquette's narrator was a young Native boy, a slave he had received from another Native, an Odawa (Ottawa), in gratitude for the care Marquette provided him while ill. Two decades earlier, the Odawas fled as refugees to Madeline Island, one of the Apostle Islands around Chequamegon Bay of Lake Superior. The missionary priests of the Society of Jesus, or the Jesuits, had established a Roman Catholic mission station, the Mission of Saint-Esprit (Holy Spirit), at La Pointe on Madeline Island in 1665 to minister to the Odawas as well as the Wendats (Hurons), who also fled the warfare that engulfed their homelands around Lake Huron in the 1640s and 1650s. Marquette arrived at the Mission of Saint-Esprit in September 1669.

Work was difficult

His work there was difficult. The Jesuits had ministered to the Wendats two decades earlier when they lived at Lake Huron, and many of them had embraced the new religion. Even after two decades as refugees, they welcomed Marquette and sought to renew their Christian faith, but this sentiment was not universal. Before their western diaspora, some Wendats had expressed indifference, even hostility to the new faith. Most of the Odawas at the Mission of Saint-Esprit rejected Christianity, although Marquette, through his patience, brought some of them to the faith during his two years there. Nevertheless, Marquette labored alone; the winters were long and cold. Most worrying were

the Dakotas (Eastern or Santee Sioux), who lived in present-day northern Minnesota. The Dakotas became embroiled in conflicts with the Odawas at Chequamegon Bay, conflicts that threatened to erupt into warfare.

Marquette's young slave hailed from the Illiniwek people. Commonly called the Illinois Confederacy, the Illiniwek nations (from which the state of Illinois takes its name) was a loose alliance of at least fourteen different groups that spoke the same language or mutually comprehensible dialects and included the Peorias, Kaskaskias, Tamaroas, Coiracoentanons, Chinkos, Cahokias, Chepoussas, Amenaokas, Ooukas, Acansas, Moingwenas, Tapuaros, Maroas, and Ispeminkias. They lived in sixty villages that stretched from central Illinois into present-day Iowa. Their homeland was bisected by a great river about which Marquette and his fellow French in North America had heard only scattered bits of information—the Mississippi.

Slavery common

Slavery was common among the Native peoples with whom the French had contact. Marquette's young slave had likely been traded several times between several Native nations as a chattel for items of European manufacture such as metal knives and firearms. From the boy, Marquette not only learned about the homeland of the Illiniweks; he learned about the Mississippi. Marquette was not the first Jesuit to learn of the great river or the Illiniweks. Fr. Claude Allouez had spent two years between 1665 and 1667 ministering to the Native peoples of Lake Superior and mapping the contours of this great inland sea. In the course of that extended journey (during which he founded the Mission of Saint-Esprit), Allouez learned from the Dakotas of "the great river named Mesippi." Allouez also met Illiniwek trading parties that visited Chequamegon Bay.

Later, after establishing the Mission of Saint-François-Xavier (Saint Francis Xavier) at present-day De Pere, Wisconsin in 1669, Allouez met another Illiniwek party that told him about the Illinois River and how it flowed into the Mississippi. The Illiniweks journeyed as far as 500 miles from their homeland to trade at places such as Chequamegon Bay and De Pere. Much of the distance was covered on foot when rivers were not available for transportation.

Languages learned

Marquette's young slave also taught him the Illiniwek language, and Marquette's earlier experiences in the colony of New France had prepared him for this task. He arrived at Quebec in September 1666. The great French explorer Samuel de Champlain founded Quebec in 1608, only a year after the founding of the first permanent English settlement, Jamestown in Virginia. Quebec in Marquette's time had grown from a small trading post into a bustling settlement on the St. Lawrence River. In October 1666, the Jesuit superior in New France sent Marquette to Trois-Rivieres (Three Rivers) eighty miles upstream from Quebec on the St. Lawrence. The Native peoples at Trois-Rivieres included the Innus (Montagnais) and the Omamiwininiwaks (Algonquins). Both spoke languages within the Algonquian language family. The language of the Omamiwininiwaks was one of the most widely spoken tongues within this great family of Native languages, and mastering it allowed one to travel as far west as Lakes Superior and Michigan. It also provided a foundation to learn related Algonquian languages such as Ojibwe (Chippewa), Odawa, and Illiniwek. Marquette demonstrated a marked proficiency with languages. Within a year and a half, he spoke fluent Omamiwininiwak and Innu. He ultimately achieved fluency in six Native languages.

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Coon Creek

Citizens discuss life without the dams

By AMBROSIA WOJAHN

"Make the water walk, not run" was the phrase of the evening on June 1, when the third and fourth meetings about learning to live without dams in the Coon Creek and West Fork Kickapoo watersheds were held. The two meetings, located at Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, concluded a series sponsored by the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council (CCCWC).

The intention of the meetings was to educate community members about their watersheds, and facilitate discussion of land management, the impacts of flooding, and ways in which the community can come together to combat the challenges citizens and businesses are facing.

The meeting series was inspired by a proposal introduced by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) involving the decommissioning of 23 PL-566 flood control dams in the Coon Creek and West Fork Kickapoo watersheds. A 45-day online public comment period is proposed to take place during July and August, which would precede the decommissioning of dams in the two watersheds during summer and fall of 2024.

"Although the decision to decommission has not been finalized, we need to think about our watershed-wide community and how we can address the impacts such a change could have," CCCWC

president Nancy Wedwick explained.

Wedwick emphasized that the meetings were not about debating whether the dams should be removed, but rather to prepare the community to live without them.

Wedwick drew back to the history of the area and the ways citizens have adapted to past watershed challenges.

"My ancestors were Norwegian, so when they first came to America, they brought their own agricultural practices with them. The Norwegian practices didn't translate well in this climate, so over time my family had to adapt to the landscape," Wedwick said.

Flashing ahead to the 1930s, Wedwick cited the foundational work of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

"That was a time when the community really came together to address the damage caused by flooding," Wedwick said. "Groups implemented strip farming and crop rotation. As we're finding ourselves falling away from those practices with increasingly intense floods, we need to get together and face things once again."

Matt Albright, current Vernon County Zoning and Sanitation Director and former Conservation Technician, presented about the ways people from all parts of the watershed community can do their part.

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NANCY WEDWICK, the Coon Creek Community Watershed Council President, reads from the Independent-Scout at a recent meeting of the council.

Some think it does

Does the river have rights?

By JUANPABLO & RAMIREZ-FRANCO

A growing legal movement to grant natural entities like rivers and forests legal rights is gaining traction in the U.S., and environmentalists are now setting their sights on the Mississippi River.

The Mississippi River flowed lazily under the Centennial Bridge, which connects Illinois and Iowa in the Quad Cities. Cars cruised past on a Saturday afternoon in early May, waving and occasionally honking at a long line of environmentalists who say the river is alive.

Glenda Guster was among the roughly 80 people to join the Great Plains Action Society's Walk for River Rights — the centerpiece of a three-day summit earlier this month for Black and Indigenous organizers from across the Mississippi River basin, who, among other things, want to grant the river legal standing.

Like many making the march across the river, Guster, who held a sign saying 'water is life' over her head, said the river needs more protection.

"The river has rights, just like human rights," said

Guster. "Nature has rights, and it's up to us to preserve these rights."

According to Sikowis Nobis, the founder of the Indigenous rights organization, the goal of the summit was to build a river-wide coalition to rethink the legal framework they believe imperils life on and in the Mississippi River. The way she sees it, the existing legal system cannot confront the types of environmental disasters that are increasingly imminent — but 'Rights of Nature' might.

The idea is that natural entities like rivers, trees and wildlife have the same rights as humans and thus have legal standing in a court of law. Natural entities, the legal principle holds, constitute living beings with legally enforceable rights to exist that transcend the category of property.

"The earth is really suffering, and rights of nature would basically give personhood to the river," said Nobis. "It would allow us to have more power to keep it safe."

Advocates marched over the Centennial Bridge, which connects Illinois and Iowa in

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Everyone makes a difference in flooding

DAMS from Page 1

“Everybody can be part of the solution,” Albright stated. Albright displayed maps depicting watershed boundaries, many of which align with highways that run along the ridges. He spelled out the layers included in the Vernon County GIS mapping system, which is a resource accessible to citizens depicting floodplains, watersheds, floodplain and shoreland zoning, and a myriad of other land elements within Vernon County. The GIS map is available on the Vernon County website.

“Our main challenges here in the Driftless surround our topography combined with heavy rains, so it’s important for landowners to address those issues in every way possible,” Albright urged.

Albright highlighted three categories of watershed members: homeowners, landowners, and farmers.

“There are ways that each one of us can do our part,” Albright said.

Homeowners can implement sustainable ways of storing water and reducing runoff through the use of rain barrels, rain gardens, green infrastructure, and other methods.

For landowners, Albright emphasized the importance of timber management and control of invasive species.

“Preventing invasive trees from shading out native species will decrease the amount of bare soil, which allows for more rain to be soaked up,” Albright explained.

Well-designed riparian buffers along bodies of water using native plants is another way to reduce erosion.

For farmers, working with the contour and establishing good field infrastructure through prairie buffers, contour strips, or terraces is very important. Practicing no-till agriculture and planting cover crops are other effective ways of making the water walk, not run.

Everybody helps

“Everybody plays an important role, and it’s going to take the help of everyone in the watershed to make a big improvement,” Albright said.

One citizen from Viroqua inquired about the incentives for farmers to implement new practices on their land. Participants discussed finding ways to make these practices profitable by branching into emerging markets and appealing to a health-conscious consumer base.

“It’s also important to inform and help farmers along the way throughout the transition,” Albright added. “Joint watershed groups like this are important, especially because there are many in the area who own land in multiple watersheds,” Albright pointed out.

Social scientist John Strauser added that there is a large social factor in making the transition.

“Factors are not just inclusive of yield and profit; there are massive social impediments as well. Longtime farmers are often tied to the idea of ‘we’ve always done it this way,’” Strauser observed.

Randy Jackson of Collaborative Landscape Design at Grassland 2.0 and Paige Stork from UW-Madison took the floor to discuss the contributing factors surrounding flooding in local watersheds, and potential solutions to those challenges.

Social challenges hard

“It is true that the social aspect of innovating land management plays a huge role in the decisions of farmers,” Jackson affirmed. “That’s why a big part of Grassland 2.0 is creating a safe space for people to come together and have discussions.”

Paige Stork went over the output of the Coon Creek watershed upstream of Coon Valley over the twentieth century. She discussed factors such as woodlands, fractured bedrock, and perennial vegetation.

“In terms of perennials, I see it as a spectrum... many practices such as no till or cover crops can assist,” Stork said.

Stork and Jackson introduced a project their teams have been working on using a tool called ‘Floodscape.’ Floodscape assesses and displays the impacts of various land management methods to show farmers what can best reduce the amount of

stormwater runoff and severe flooding within their watersheds.

Grazescape, Smartscape, and Heifer Compass are three other tools which focus more on predicting profitability for farmers.

Floodscape examined the peak flow levels at the location where the Coon Creek passes under the Highway 14 bridge. The tool played out multiple scenarios at this location, simulating the effects of managed grazing as opposed to ‘business as usual’ farming.

Results showed that managed grazing made the biggest dent in peak flow levels, peak water surface elevation, erosion, and phosphorus loss at the location in Coon Valley. Jackson added that the managed grazing scenario was an idealized model, as social scientists have noted, a linear rate of managed grazing adoption is not likely to occur.

Participants inquired about whether the forested land in the area was being taken into account.

Forested lands matter

“Floodscape unfortunately does not assess forested land at present, but I want to emphasize that woodlands are an important piece of the puzzle which should be taken into account,” Stork clarified. “In the tool’s current state, the woodland remains static throughout the simulation.”

“All forests are not created

equal,” Albright shared. “The canopy doesn’t always indicate the understory’s level of infiltration.”

Participants discussed the other varying factors to be considered, including climate change and what qualifies as true “no-till.”

Jim Munsch spoke about profitability for farmers and the way finances are often managed.

“The average farmer calculates cost by checkbook payments, without adding up the cost of expenses like owning land and operating machinery,” Munsch pointed out.

Landowners living near dams expressed concern regarding the removal of dams, flood insurance, and the high repair expenses already showing up with the dam in place.

Matt Albright discussed some of the efforts to protect citizens more by re-mapping floodplains, as well as the varying levels of modification to each dam.

“Not all dams are the same,” Albright said. “Some will have complete removal, others partial, and some may have repairs made. It all depends on the individual dam.”

“There’s still a lot of uncertainty, but the idea is that we want the community to come together so that when it does come out, we’re prepared and can try to reduce some of these issues,” Albright said.



MATT ALBRIGHT has a long history with Vernon County, including working as a Conservation Technician during the 2018 dam failures. He currently works as the Director of Sanitation & Zoning for Vernon County, helping Crawford County with the septic system compliance project during the transition between employees leading the initiative.

Carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere were measured at a record 424 parts per million (ppm) in May, typically the peak month in the northern hemisphere. That’s 3 ppm higher than a year ago, researches said, and 50 percent higher than before the industrial era.

Source: Scripps Institute of Oceanography

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- ACROSS**
- Mother Earth, to Ancient Greeks
 - Barrel, unit
 - Foot the bill
 - Quiet time
 - Nemo’s forgetful friend
 - Horace’s poem
 - One thing on a list
 - Ophthalmologist’s check-up, e.g.
 - Range of hills in England, pl.
 - *Ticket booth (2 words)
 - *“Odyssey,” e.g.
 - Biased perspective
 - Azog or Bolg in Tolkien’s *Moria*
 - *Siskel or Ebert
 - To the degree
 - Brick and mortar carrier
 - Governing authority
 - Key component of a loan
 - Highly skilled
 - E in CE or BCE
 - “_____ a high note”
 - End of the line
 - Like certain yellowish hair color
 - Compass bearing
 - Amble
 - Warhol or Samberg, formally
 - Churchill’s sign
 - Anna Wintour’s magazine
 - *“Heat of the Moment” band
 - *Like some seats
 - More slippery
 - Initial bet in poker
 - Popular dunking cookie
 - *“Little _____ fact”
 - Simon and Gurfunkel, e.g.
 - *Sentimental movie, or _____jerker
 - Literary “even”
 - *Shooting location
 - ESPN award

- Ralph Lauren’s inspiration
- Puts two and two together
- “Owner of a Lonely Heart” band
- Vandalize
- Pitchers
- *Tub contents
- Behave like a coquette
- Comes before first Mississippi
- Bracelet add-on
- Barrel racing meet
- Think tank output, pl.
- *Widescreen cinematography abbreviation
- Dimmer, e.g.
- Do penance
- Re-establish
- Neuter
- Investment option acronym
- *Movie ad
- Boredom
- *Upcharge for an online ticket purchase, e.g.
- Aerie baby
- Pine
- Indicate
- *Movie theater, e.g.
- Set of eight
- Teenager’s breakout
- Land of Israel
- X-ray units
- Wraths
- Type of tide
- *Like a bloody horror movie
- Short of Isaac



- DOWN**
- Not intellectually deep
 - _____pilot
 - Holly family
 - *Kate Hudson’s “_____ Famous” (2000)
 - Put someone in a bind (2 words)
 - Modified leaf
 - Tick-born disease

CROSSWORD

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