

Local man Facing 100 years for horrific pileup

A 52-year-old Soldiers Grove man accused of causing a multi-car pileup in La Crosse June 28 faces criminal charges that could keep him in prison the rest of his life.

Jonathan Full was charged Thursday in La Crosse County Circuit Court with five counts of first-degree recklessly endangering safety; single felony counts of fleeing an officer/ causing great bodily harm, injury by intoxicated use of a vehicle, injury by use of a controlled substance, drunken driving causing injury, operating with a controlled substance/ causing injury and first-degree reckless injury; and misdemeanor counts of hit-and-run, third-offense drunken driving and third-offense driving with a restricted substance.

If convicted on all 14 counts, Full could be sentenced to more than 100 years in prison. He was also issued seven traffic citations.



Jonathan Full

According to the criminal complaint, police observed a vehicle operated by Full pass in the turn lane and continue southbound on 3rd Street while disregarding a red light. A police officer who attempted to make a traffic stop reported on a police radio, "I got a car blowing stop lights and taking off at a high rate of speed and could not get a plate."

See CRASH Page 12 Col 5

Seneca Schools Board approves 5.5% staff raise

The Seneca School Board made a definitive decision on staff wage increases at their regular monthly meeting Monday night.

Wisconsin school districts usually consider the Consumer Price Index announced annually as a guideline for establishing wages and creating raises. In 2023, the CPI showed a more than eight percent increase in prices. In the past, the Seneca School Board has considered the CPI and often chose to exceed it by one percent or more.

However, the eight percent increase based on inflation over the past year is seen as beyond the district's ability to match. It was noted at the meeting, that school districts in CESA #3 were averaging wage increases of between four and six percent.

The board initially discussed adopting a five percent increase in wages for the academic staff, the support staff and the administrative staff.

Finance manager Sarah Sime presented projections based on five percent. The averaged annual raise for the instructional staff at five percent was \$2,858.

The five percent raise would produce an average raise of 93 cents per hour for the support staff. The raise for supervisory staff of five percent would vary based on the salaries, according to Sime.

See SENECA Page 8 Col 1



Quilts for those in need of one

A quilt open house was held Sunday at Luther Memorial Church in Gays Mills. Members and friends of the church have spent the past few months finishing over 100 quilts to be donated to shut-ins and others who need them. The quilts were blessed during Sunday's church service and about 15 of them were given out during the open house. Shown with some of the quilts are (from left) Pastor Carrie Anderson, Jody Ames, Sandy Bertram, Sharon Chellevoid, Janet Teach, Marjie Jurgensen and Linda George. Others not pictured who helped complete the quilts include Jane Jones and LaVonne Clark. The late Clarabelle Horner sewed many of the quilt tops.

Bad Axe Watershed Council hosts

Joint watershed council meeting

By AMBROSIA WOJAHN
It was a real 'who's who' of local watershed council members at Vernon County's Esofea Park last Thursday evening.

The Bad Axe Watershed Council played host to a joint meeting with the Coon Creek and Tainter Creek watershed groups. The meeting took a loose, casual structure to facilitate intermingling and conversation between landowners, with each council discussing upcoming events and projects at the end.

"It's very refreshing to see all these watershed groups gathered in one place," observed Tainter Creek's Chuck Bolstad.

Around 40 people from the three watersheds gathered around the park shelter for a meal organized by Amy Oliver. The first hour was spent

dining and talking around picnic tables about the cattle market, seed, prairie strips, and other relevant topics.

After dinner, Travis Klinkner welcomed everybody to the meeting and introduced Dani Heisler, Agricultural Outreach Specialist for Valley Stewardship Network (VSN).

Heisler informed the group of an upcoming event to be held through a partnership between VSN and the Sand County Foundation on July 26. The event will take place on Dave Van Dyke's farm and is set to focus on prairie strips and education.

"Sand County came to VSN to look at how they can facilitate training for FSA and NRCS employees. Essentially, they want to ramp up education so both agencies can more effectively work in

their critical conservation areas, supporting prairie and native planting. This will help members of both FSA and NRCS be better equipped to participate in those conversations and translate this into a functional program."

Dave Van Dyke has been working with prairies in several areas of his farm for some time.

"It will be useful to see the prairie strips at various levels of maturity, so Dave Van Dyke's farm is a great place to hold this event," Heisler explained.

The event will begin with classroom-style lectures in the morning for FSA and NRCS folks. Much of the technical information will be presented by representatives from Iowa State.

See WSHEDS Page 8 Col 2

At committee meeting

Roth Feeder Pig II permit questioned

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

The meeting of the Crawford County Land Conservation Committee (LCC) left open the question of whether the Livestock Facility Siting Permit for the Roth Feeder Pigs II (RFPII) hog CAFO is finally approved or not.

In August of 2022, the committee approved the permit contingent upon Wisconsin DNR (WDNR) approval of an updated nutrient management plan (NMP) for the operation.

"The motion made by County Board Chairman Tom Cornford was to approve the county livestock facility siting permit contingent upon the approval by WDNR of the updated NMP," County Conservation Director Dave Troester pointed out. "Based on his motion, if the NMP is approved by WDNR, then no further action would be required of the committee."

At the time, the NMP included hundreds of acres supposedly available for manure spreading from the facility that were not, in fact, available. This included an almost 300-acre parcel in the Plum Creek Watershed that had been purchased by Mycelium, Inc., and placed in a conservation trust agreement with the Mississippi Valley Conservancy.

RFPII's updated nutrient management plan was due to WDNR by March of 2023, and was submitted in a timely manner. The problem? No new acres were included in the

plan to replace the hundreds that had proven unwilling to accept manure from the facility, and the only change was to remove the almost 300 acres owned by Mycelium, Inc. The plan still includes 106 acres that were questionable in the original plan.

NMP approved?

Prior to the meeting, Forest Jahnke of Crawford Stewardship Project (CSP) had shared a screen shot from WDNR's website for the CAFO indicating that the NMP was "pending approval."

"I spoke to WDNR's Tabatha Davis about the updated NMP," Troester told the committee. "She said the NMP had been reviewed by Erin O'Rourke, who determined that the land base cited in the NMP was sufficient for the facility, but that it was technically not fully approved."

Troester said that after leaving work on Friday, July 7, he'd received a voicemail message from Davis communicating that the NMP had been "officially approved." Jahnke told the committee that as of Monday, July 10 (the day before the committee met) it was still listed as "pending approval" on WDNR's website.

According to Gina Holtz, a communication from WDNR's Tyler Dix at 2:23 p.m. on Monday, July 10, indicated that the NMP does not yet have final approval.

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Citizens express outrage over DNR's approach to PFAS rules

By GILLIAN POMPLUN

Citizens from across the State of Wisconsin expressed absolute disgust with Wisconsin DNR's (WDNR) approach to rule making for PFAS contamination in groundwater. The comments were offered at a WDNR stakeholder input meeting on Friday, July 14.

The disgust expressed concerned the proposed standard of 20 parts-per-trillion (ppt), limiting the rule making only to PFOA and PFOS, and also about the slow timeline for the rule development process.

In March of 2023, the Biden-Harris Administration announced it is proposing the first-ever national drinking water standard for six per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). In that standard the limit for those compounds in groundwater would be four ppt.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recommendation of a 20 ppt standard was released in June of 2019, before the federal government had released their proposed standard.

What are PFAS?

Perfluorooctanoic Acid (PFOA) and Perfluorooctane Sulfonate (PFOS) are two of the most widely used and studied chemicals in the PFAS group.

According to the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, PFAS are a group of manufactured chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s because of their useful properties. There are thousands of different PFAS, some of which have been more widely used and studied than others.

According to DHS, people can be exposed to PFOA and PFOS by drinking water, eating food, and breathing in or accidentally swallowing soil or dust containing PFAS. The chemicals can be found in stain repellants in carpet and fabric, food and other packaging, and fire-fighting foam.

Process announced

The 30-month process for rule development outlined by WDNR's Bruce Rheineck presented the following timeline:

- 2022: scope statement approved by the Governor, preliminary public hearings, and approval by the Natural Resources Board (the NRB voted down setting a standard for groundwater at their February 2022 meeting)
- 2023: rule drafting and stakeholder meetings (this is where the process is at now), draft of an Economic Impact Analysis, and more stakeholder meetings
- 2024: public hearings on the proposed rule in the summer; approval by the Natural Resources Board and the Governor in the winter
- 2025: legislative review and rule signed by DNR Secretary in the spring; and rule becomes effective in the summer

Public input

"This call and the discussion I've heard today is so discouraging to me," Laura Olah said. "It disgusts me that political reasons higher up the food chain are driving this process when we have had recommendations from Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) since June of 2019."

Olah pointed out that the federal government and many other states are way out in front of Wisconsin in grappling with remediation of PFAS contamination of groundwater.

"It's just wrong for WDNR to not hear the science," Olah said. "This meeting highlights just how bad things really are."

Doug Otzinger, member of the Marinette City Council where extensive PFAS contamination has been found, was quick to agree with Olah.

"This is very discouraging," Otzinger said. "I want all 107 participants on this call to know that we've had to drag DNR into re-starting this rule making process - this is bureaucratic B.S. - there are two million people in the State of Wisconsin that get their drinking water from private wells - this is totally unacceptable."

Otzinger wanted to know why, if the DNR was going to use the old standard of 20 ppt, it would take WDNR until 2025 to move this rule toward approval.

See PFAS Page 8 Col 3



JANE PECK, leader of the French Town Jig dance troupe of Minneapolis plays the spoons during a lively tune. Peck narrated the performance, and explained the historic context in which the troupe would have lived and performed in Prairie du Chien. She portrayed a French Canadian woman, and the striped and dotted fabrics were popular with women of the period.

Committee ponders what more county can do to protect its water quality

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“Tyler Dix told me via e-mail that WDNR is aware of the problems with RFPII’s NMP, and is working through them,” Holtz told the committee.

Verification of acres

CSP’s Joe Childs said that the solution to discrepancies in the NMP would be for WDNR to require written leases for the manure spreading acres. “It’s a low bar to set for CAFO owners.”

“Frankly, I’m shocked that WDNR is not requiring written verification of spreading acres,” Troester said. “Our ordinance doesn’t have any language requiring written verification.”

Dave Olson, committee chair, commented that “they don’t seem to have really looked into this updated NMP. He asked the committee “do we want to request more information from them?”

Troester said that his impression, though he is not a legal expert, is that asking for more information or requiring written verification of spreading acres would have to be a completely different process.

“I’m afraid if we renege now on the motion we passed last August, there could be problems,” Troester said.

“For WDNR to be so concerned about water quality, it certainly seems strange that they didn’t look into this at all,” Olson said.

Marietta Township farmer Bob Mitchell, who owns a large number of row crop acres included in RFPII’s NMP stated that he has had permission from Adams, the former owner of the 106 acres in question, for spreading manure for 18 years.

“Since he passed, I haven’t been able to talk yet with his son,” Mitchell said. “However, the acres where we spread manure is proprietary producer information.”

Jahnke pointed out that the acres to be used for spreading manure included in an NMP for a CAFO are a matter of public record, and the document is publicly available on WDNR’s website.

Possible action

Committee member Gary Koch, who was the lone ‘nay’ vote on the motion to approve the permit in August of 2022 asked the committee, “do we think that 1,400 acres is enough for the size of operation that AV Roth is proposing?”

“Is it reasonable for the county to ask WDNR for further verification of the spreading acres, given that we hear that the acres listed in the updated NMP are not accurate?” Koch asked.

“The main point is, is it what WDNR requires,” committee member Mary Kuhn stated.

Supervisor Dave Olson pointed out that just because acres are listed in the NMP doesn’t mean that all those acres will actually be available for spreading.

“I think we should at least ask the WDNR if they can further verify the acres,” Koch said.

“Don’t we have to follow our ordinance?” Kuhn asked.

“How are we not following our ordinance?” Koch responded. “We are just asking questions – we aren’t taking any action to approve or deny the permit.”

Koch explained that he feels that asking if the spreading acres have been verified is a fair question.

“My concern is about the water resources in our area, especially with our karst geology,” Koch said. “The geology requires extra due diligence on our part.”

Troester asked the committee if what they wanted was for him to compose a letter to WDNR from the county asking them if they are comfortable with the verification of spreading acres listed in the NMP.

“Will we be holding AV up on building his facility?” Kuhn asked. “We have to operate within the constraints of state law.”

“If WDNR says he can build, then he can,” Olson responded.

The committee agreed that they should take no action on the permit at the meeting, and that Troester should send a letter to WDNR asking them if they think the acres listed in the updated NMP have been sufficiently verified.

Other options

Gary Koch pointed out that, within the constraints of state law, there are things that the county could include in their ordinance that would do more to protect the county’s water.

“Have we updated our water protections for livestock producers in general?” committee member Chad Sime asked.

“We have two ordinances that pertain to livestock producers and manure,” Troester responded. “Those are our manure storage ordinance and our livestock facility siting ordinance.”

Troester pointed out that neither ordinance has been updated in some time. In addition, he reminded the committee that the county had had a CAFO moratorium in place for a year, during which time a CAFO Study Group

empannelled by the County Board had met multiple times and generated a 125-page report with eight possible actions for the county to consider.

“There have been no ordinance updates since the moratorium ended,” Troester said.

Kuhn said that any proposed changes to ordinances will take time, and can’t be done overnight. Koch agreed with her.

“There are likely some things that we could do that would affect future permits that would help to protect our water,” Koch said.

Landfill update

In the Land Use portion of the committee meeting, Real Property Lister Gionne Collins updated the committee about WDNR’s questioning their ownership of the property on which the former Bell

Center Landfill was located.

“After talking about this with WDNR, I’ve realized that this situation is over my head,” Collins told the committee. “I’ve referred the matter to county corporate counsel Mark Peterson, and he hasn’t gotten back to me.”

Collins said that she had received lots of e-mails about the need to clean up the former landfill site, but that “that is not the issue right now.” She said that she had found an old file in her office containing a letter that stated that WDNR owns the 6.97-acre property.

“It’s been this way on the assessment rolls for a long time now,” Kate Krachey said.

In other business

In other business, the committee:

- heard from Becky Nagel

that the Wisconsin Fund, providing financial assistance for income-eligible septic system owners, has been reapproved for another two years

- heard a report from Troester that it is time to update the county’s telecommunications tower ordinance, and that this will be an agenda item for a future committee meeting

- heard from Troester about a permit issue that has been in the courts for a home project in the Ambro, discussed the precedent approving such projects might present, and discussed what kind of ordinance changes could clarify the county’s requirements

- heard that the department is plugging along with cases in the courts for septic system owners who have not responded to county efforts to have their systems inspected, and agreed that the commit-

tee should consider a change to their ordinance that would allow more than three citations

- heard from Forest Jahnke that he had contacted the 3M Company a year ago about possible PFAS contamination in the Bell Center and Bridgeport landfills, and that the company had expressed a willingness to pay for water testing

- agreed that this year’s Conservation Awards Ceremony would take place on Thursday, August 24, at 6 p.m., on the County Fairgrounds

- heard from Travis Bunting that he had talked with the contractor and engineer for repairs to the Blackhawk-Kickapoo PL-566 flood control dam on Johnstown Road, and they had agreed to use a heavier pipe in the project, which will increase project costs by \$4,000.

Coon Creek Watershed Council aims to influence the influencers at 90th

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Around 11:45 to noon, the group will head to Van Dyke’s farm for lunch and a tour of prairie strips in action.

“We have enough bandwidth to invite some farmers and landowners along on the tour portion,” Heisler added.

Heisler handed out a sign-up sheet for those interested, emphasizing that there was room for 13 additional people to attend.

“If anybody is considering putting some prairie strips in and wants to get analytical about it, this is the tour to be on,” Heisler said.

Heisler introduced another event that participants would be eligible to attend. The Savannah Institute will be holding a tour on Thursday, July 20. A group will meet in the morning at the Western Technical College parking lot in Viroqua and head by bus to the Spring Green campus.

The group will meet with the Savannah Institute and see the North Farm campus. The tour will last around two hours and the group will depart in the afternoon.

“At the Savannah Institute, they practice what they preach. They’ll be showcasing their various agroforestry techniques at the tour,” Dani added.

Coon Creek’s Tucker Gretebeck has spent time with the Savannah Institute on his own property.

“They’re super easy to work with, and they fill a niche that we couldn’t fill,” Gretebeck explained.

Nitrate study

After a second sign-up sheet for that event was passed around, Travis Klinkner introduced Sam Bibby, the regional crops educator for UW-Extension.

Bibby explained that he and some colleagues were interested in conducting on-farm research on nitrate leaching in the area.

“It’s probably not as big of a concern here as it is in other places, but we know nitrogen moves through the soil profile and once it gets out of the rooting zone, we can’t do anything about it.”

Bibby and his group are hoping to find a few interested farmers who are currently planting cover crops to take part in the study. Specifically, Bibby said, the group plans to test rye and camelina.

“Camelina is kind of new as a brassica, and it has low biomass. It works mainly as groundcover.” One added bonus of the study would be to gain information on the camelina.

“Long story short, we’re looking for someone willing to plant rye, camelina, and one strip without cover crops,” Bibby said.

The group will then dig a hole and put in a small PBC device.

“The device is like a canister. Water flows through it, and there’s resin and mesh inside which will catch any nitrates passing through. Afterward, we can take it to the lab and pretty affordably pull the nitrogen out. Then, we can run the math and calculate how much nitrogen is flowing through,” Bibby described.

With this information, the group hopes for the ability to better recommend which cover crops to plant.

Watershed updates

Moving on, each watershed group gave an update on recent events and activity.

For Bad Axe, Travis Klinkner spoke of an event taking place on his farm August 18 and 19. The focus of the event will be infiltration. Tools such as a rainfall simulator and infiltration rings will be on display as visuals.

Additionally, Klinkner mentioned posing a comparison between areas with different types of cover such as woodland, cornfields, and prairie.

While both days will include infiltration demonstrations, Klinkner emphasized that Saturday, August 19 would place more focus on bringing members of the public to participate.

Kevin Parr is also planning a Bad Axe demonstration when he digs out his pond. A date for the dig is yet to be determined.

Tainter Creek has already held most of their summer events, and the group gave an update on a recent sinkhole educational day. The event highlighted the dangers and formation of sinkholes, as well as preventative and re-active measures to take.

Coon Creek 90th

For the Coon Creek Council, a celebration of the group’s 90th Anniversary will be held on September 9.

Maggie Traastad and Tucker Gretebeck said that flyers for the event were set to come out soon.

Planning is still underway, but the group has already recruited some big names to attend the event. In fact, the first donation for the celebration came from Jonathan Carson, who was Secretary of Environment under the Obama administration.

“We’ve got commitments from over a dozen federal and state workers,” Gretebeck said. “This is a networking party, and it’s important that we work to get our concerns across.”

The event will showcase what’s being done in the watershed. The celebration will likely stretch across two days, as some people will be flying in.

Gretebeck explained that there would be a dinnertime meet-and-greet the night before,

Consensus is Wisconsin lagging other states and feds on PFAS

PFAS from Page 1

“This is completely contrary to what we were told in a meeting with the DNR Secretary in March,” Otzinger pointed out.

Town of Peshtigo chair Cindy Boyle typed her input into the chat on the call – “this is totally unacceptable.”

Rob Lee wanted to know why only two PFAS compounds are being included in the current rule making process.

“We are paying close at-

tention to what is happening with the federal process to develop standards for six PFAS compounds in groundwater,” Rheineck responded. “The state standards for drinking water and groundwater would reference federal standards, so we’ll have to see what happens with that.”

Taras Obdal said that given the proposed federal standard of four ppt, which is expected to be released in early 2024, does the rulemaking process in Wisconsin allow sufficient flexibility to adopt federal

standards?

“That’s really a question for our legal staff,” Rheineck responded. “If the feds hold to their timeline, then there will definitely be reason to look at that with the current rule making process, or to reopen the rules after the federal standard is finalized.”

Lee Donahue, a supervisor from the Town of Campbell Board in LaCrosse County had some scathing remarks to offer.

“I want to know what upper management at DNR

made this decision – I want to know their names,” Donahue said. “I am absolutely disgusted with this process.”

Peter Burress, Government Affairs Manager with Wisconsin Conservation Voters echoed Donahue.

“I agree we need to know who in DNR upper management made this decision,” Burress said. “The legislature has a role in this, and from an advocacy perspective, we need to know what changes need to be made to move this process forward.”

Alert issued about misleading home warranty mail solicitations

- a fake check is included with the mailer.

The safest course of action to keep yourself protected is to not respond. Do not call the phone numbers listed on these mailers. The person on the other end is likely seeking your personal information.

“Do your research, utilize resources you know and trust, and be careful responding to calls, texts, letters, or email solicitations from people or companies you don’t recognize,” said Insurance Commissioner Nathan Houdek.

“Solicitations that use threatening language or unnecessary urgency are almost always a scam. If you receive any correspondence about your mortgage or home warranty that you aren’t sure about, don’t use the contact information in the message. Instead, call your lender directly to inquire about the matter,” said DFI Secretary-designee Cheryl Olson-Collins.

“Scammers try to pressure consumers into handing over their money or private information before they get a chance to question the request’s legitimacy,” said DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski. “No honest agency or business will demand immediate payment. If you have questions or suspect a scam, contact DATCP and our partners DFI and OCI.”

Contact the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance with questions or to report issues regarding disputes over an extended warranty plan or service contract at oci.wi.gov/complaints or 608-

266-0103.

Contact the Department of Financial Institution’s Corporations Division with questions regarding business registrations and filings via email at DFICorporations@dfi.wisconsin.gov or call 608-261-7577. For other extended warranty questions contact DFI’s Bureau of Consumer Affairs via email at ConsumerAct@dfi.wisconsin.gov or call (608) 264-7969.

For more information on current scams, consumer laws and publications, and how to file a complaint, contact the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection’s Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at (800) 422-7128 or by email at DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.

Climate change is a worldwide challenge, but it also offers the opportunity to boost farm income for those who adopt climate-smart practices, said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack at a food and agriculture conference on Wednesday. “I can guarantee you farmers will embrace this,” he said. “I am truly confident. I think agriculture gets to net-zero before most of the major industries.”

Source: Food & Environment Reporting Network

★ **COME AND MEET YOUR U.S. SENATOR** ★

★ **TAMMY** ★

★ **BALDWIN** ★

★ **MONDAY, JULY 24** ★

★ **12:00-1:00 pm at St. Feriole Island Prairie du Chien Riverfront Gazebo** ★

★ **Other Guests:** ★

★ **Lt. Governor Sara Rodriguez** ★

★ **State Senator Brad Pfaff** ★

★ *Authorized and paid for by the Crawford County Democratic Party* ★