

In Seneca

Board discusses future trap team

By CHARLEY PREUSSER
Trap shooting, more specifically trap shooting teams, was a topic of discussion at the Seneca School Board meeting Monday night.

Dave Benzing, local trap shooter and former coach of the Seneca High School Trap Shooting Team, spoke first under the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Benzing, who owns a trap shooting range in Seneca, said that he felt there were efforts underway to undermine the resurrection of the Seneca Trap Team.

The trap team is a club sport at Seneca and as such is not under the direct control of the district or the school board.

Benzing was the Seneca Trap Team coach until ag teacher Callie Koch took over the team. The team always shot at Benzing's range on Zintz Road. The North Crawford Trap Team formed and also shot at the range.

Benzing told the board that he was a certified DNR & NRA shooting instructor and range safety officer. He also noted that he has been clay target shooting for the last 30 years.

The plan that Benzing laid out for the board was to concentrate on middle school students and build a Seneca Trap Team from there going forward.

Building a team

"If I don't have the kids I can't do it," the trap shooter told the board. "The question is will Seneca have a program or not have program. I can't build a team if I don't have kids to work with."

Benzing told the board that when ag teacher Callie Koch left to take another job, two ladies became the trap advisors. Ultimately, Seneca students who were interested in trap shooting were directed toward a program in Wauzeka.

Seneca District Administrator Dave Boland said he was reluctant to strong-arm parents into any decision on a trap shooting team.

"It's a club thing not a school sport," Boland said. "I think we need to see where parents are at on this."

Seneca School Board President Shawn Lenzendorf said he felt like he had two different stories. One from James "Jimmer" Chellebold, a North Crawford Trap Team Coach, and one from Benzing.

Benzing described the demise of the Seneca Trap Team, while Callie Koch was still at the school.

There were eight team members at the start of the season, Benzing recalled. One was dropped off the team because of bad grades. Another dropped off the team to trophy hunt a deer seen on a trail cam. Two others got jobs to support maintenance of the vehicles they had just bought.

Five shooter make a team

"There just wasn't five shooters to make a team," Benzing said. "We had practiced with North Crawford. Callie decided we should combine the teams."

Benzing noted the goal was for each school to have its own team.

"The trap team is a club event. I think we should let the parents make the decision," said Seneca School Board President Shawn Lenzendorf. "I'm sick of it. I'm being told five different stories."

There was some talk at the meeting of getting a trap shooting team together for the spring trapshooting season. The fall season is five weeks long and the spring season is eight weeks long. Shooters can begin registering for a spring team in February, and shooting begins in April, Benzing told the board.

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IT'S APPLE SEASON IN GAYS MILLS and that means lots of local folks are hard at work picking apples or working in the sheds and salesrooms. At the Fleming Orchard last Sunday, Hunter Hatlan and Stephanie Prescott took a quick break to pose with some of the fine looking apples. There are six orchards in the Gays Mills area and each and every one of them is worth visiting, because they're all unique. We hope you enjoy Apple Fest and Gays Mills.

Let's visit the orchards

It's time for some apples

By CHARLEY PREUSSER, & GILLIAN POMPLUN

"Great crop!" are the two words you hear at every Gays Mills orchard this year.

After some struggles with early and late frost affecting the crop for the previous two or three seasons, it's a welcome relief to everyone involved that it's a 'great crop.'

All the orchards are reporting these huge, beautiful crops in almost every variety and that includes some highly sought after varieties like Honey Crisp.

The largest of the six local orchards is no exception. Sunrise Orchard also has a great crop, according to Allen Teach, the person in charge at the orchard.

When we finally caught up with Allen early in the morning before the sorting lines started, he was very enthusiastic about this year's harvest.

Teach cited several factors that made the crop so great. He pointed out there was no frost damage this year. He also noted that the trees took a breather last year with lower yields.

"With no storm damage and no frost damage, we have an excellent crop this year," Teach said. "It's the natural ebb and flow of growing."

Like almost everywhere in country, some of the orchards are struggling to find employees.

Sunrise feels good about the employment situation. They're using a combination of local help, some South African H2A workers and a Spanish-speaking crew that has picked at the orchard for many years.

Although shipping can be another trouble spot these days, Sunrise is doing pretty good in that regard, given its strong relationship with some

local grocery stores and two distributors.

And, the Washington crop seems slightly down this year, according to Teach.

There's also a good Ever Crisp crop this year. This long-lasting, tasty apple was rolled out at Sunrise last year. The apples are harvested really late and won't be available in the salesroom until early November. Ever Crisp will continue to be available until the salesroom closes in December.

One snag with the apple is its great benefit, it is picked late and keeps very well. So, it misses a prime fall apple-buying market. However, Sunrise is trying something different this year with the Ever Crisp. The orchard is offering an 'Ever Crisp subscription,' and will send a box of 30 apples to the customer in each month of January, February and March. The idea is an apple a day for three months. Hmmm!

However, it's not just Honey Crisp and Ever Crisp at Sunrise Orchard, despite the popularity of both.

"We just try to grow a broad spectrum," Teach said. Macintosh is big as well, and coming soon another favorite, Golden Supreme. Empires are a late apple and good keeper with outstanding flavor. A great crop of Empires is expected this year.

A new and very popular apple is Ambrosia. It is sold heavily at Kwik Trip convenience stores.

Sunrise currently grows about 20 varieties. And, another five varieties are experimentally grown, yielding about 100 bushels per year.

Things are pretty much the same in the salesroom this year, but the bakery may be the exception.

"After a long hiatus, the apple turnover is back," Teach said.

Of course the boxes and boxes of apple cider donuts are still a favorite at the bakery. The rest of the salesroom including the cider and retail is doing well.

The Sunrise salesroom is open seven days per week 9
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Coon Creek Watershed council observes their one-year anniversary

By GILLIAN POMPLUN
The Coon Creek Community Watershed Council (CCCWC) recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of its founding. The celebration, attended by over 100 people, took place in the Coon Valley Park on Wednesday, Sept. 7.

The event drew participants from across the Driftless Region, gathered to celebrate the renaissance of the flood resilience and soil health movement in the cradle of its founding. In the 1930s, the Coon Creek Watershed was the location of the nation's first watershed demonstration project, and led by such soil health icons as Hugh Hammon Bennett and Aldo Leopold. That work eventually led to the formation of today's USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

Music for the event was provided by Soldiers Grove musician Jay Hoffman. Gays Mills resident and Wisconsin 96th District State Assembly Democratic candidate Jane Swiggum and her husband Ed attended the event, along with Wisconsin State Representative Loren Oldenburg and Wisconsin State Senator Brad Pfaff. Chuck and Karen Bolstad, along with Berent Froiland, were there to represent the Tainter Creek Watershed Council, and numerous members of the Bad Axe River Watershed Council were present as well.

CCCWC Vice President Tucker Gretebeck addressed the crowd, following a delicious beef tips supper, provided by Legacy Bar & Grill. CCCWC President Nancy Wedwick was unable to attend the celebration that she had worked so hard to plan due to a family emergency.

"One year ago, a group of citizens met right here in the park, on the banks of Coon Creek, and started this amazing community movement," Gretebeck said. "We couldn't have done it without the invaluable assistance of our partners, and from Dr. Monique Hassman in particular."

Gretebeck told the story of Coon Creek Watershed resident Ernest Haugen, who was a teenager in the 1930s. When asked by a teacher to describe the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) activities taking place on his family's farm on South Ridge, Haugen replied that the workers were "trying to make running water walk." Haugen passed about 10 years ago.

"I joined this effort because our community needs to come together to build resilience in the face of the increasingly large and intense rain events like the one in 2018 that breached five flood control dams and caused catastrophic flooding in the Driftless Region," Gretebeck said. "My

personal goal is to do everything I can to infiltrate storm water on my farm on the ridge, and keep it from running off into Coon Creek."

In their first year, the group has incorporated as a state and federal non-profit, secured a DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Council grant, conducted monthly meetings and education, distributed cover crop funding, launched a communications strategy, and formed partnerships to pursue their vision and mission.

The next meeting of the CCCWC will take place at the farm of Becky and Tucker Gretebeck on Wednesday, Oct. 5, starting at 6 p.m.. High-lights for that meeting will include the carbon sequestration 'savanna' project recently installed on the farm, and Becky and Tucker's famous woodfired pizzas. The farm is located at 7649 Oboe Ave, Cashton, WI 54619.

History and vision

The CCCWC began in 2021 as a response to the disastrous and continued flooding in the Coon Creek Watershed. People in the area came together to discuss what they could do to mitigate the impacts of flooding.

To find answers, the group looked to its roots, historically and literally. In its history, the Coon Creek Watershed had experienced massive soil erosion and flooding in the 1920s and 1930s. So severe had the erosion and flooding become that the government acted, and in 1933, the watershed became the site of the first large-scale conservation demonstration in the nation. As a result of the measures deployed on the landscape from the 1930s through the 1960s, erosion and flooding decreased dramatically, streams cleared, and wildlife returned.

The group's vision is for a watershed that is nurtured, cherished and flourishing. Their mission is to continue the historic legacy of conservation leadership through improving and restoring their soil, water, and air as stewards.

Their focus is on strategies and practices that individuals can implement. They hope to accomplish this through planning, education, outreach, demonstrations and actions on the ground to reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, and increase the water infiltration capacity of the soils.

These practices include increasing use of permeable surfaces for patios, walks and driveways, building rain gardens, using no-till cover crops, strip cropping, contour strips, crop rotation, grassed waterways, prairie plantings, buffer strips, terraces, managed grazing and grade stabilization structures.

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HARVESTING APPLES at Sunrise a few years back suited John Kiser just fine. Kiser returned to pick apples from his home in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He said the area reminded him of the town of 600 where he grew up in Iowa. Here, John is picking the coveted Honey Crisp. (File photo)



STATE SENATOR BRAD PFAFF, right, and State Representative Loren Oldenburg, center, are seen in conversation with LaCrosse County Conservation Director Matt Hanewall, left.



Good crowd and perfect weather

Local artist Deb Conlon had a great exhibit of her art at the Driftless Area Art Festival last weekend. Much of it featured plein air painting like the Mississippi River scene to her left that was painted from a lookout point near De Soto. Plein air painting is about leaving the four walls of your studio behind and experiencing painting and drawing in the landscape. It's a favorite technique for Conlon and a group of like-minded local painters.

Watershed Council learns about soil health

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The groups partners include LaCrosse, Monroe and Vernon counties, Valley Stewardship Network, Coon Valley Business Association, Coon Valley Conservation Club, Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center, UW-Madison, UW-LaCrosse, Tainter Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council, and Bad Axe Farmer-Led Watershed Council.

Partnerships

Caroline Gottschalk-Druschke and Anna Andrzejewski from the UW-Madison group Greener Pastures attended the celebration. The two talked about their partnership with the watershed council, and the oral history project they are partnering in.

"After the 2018 flood, I led a group of my undergraduate students in the Department of English to capture stories of citizens that had been impacted by the flooding," Gottschalk-Druschke said. "Now, a new group of students will work in the Coon Creek Watershed to capture the oral history of residents in the watershed relating to flooding and efforts to mitigate its impacts."

Andrzejewski emphasized that the goal of their work is to facilitate telling the stories of flooding and the stories of a sense of place. She said the compilation of the oral narratives will be called 'Making Running Water Walk.'

Gottschalk-Druschke said that between Halloween and Thanksgiving, students from her program at UW-Madison would travel to the watershed

to meet with residents and transcribe the stories they have to tell.

Maggie Traastad, watershed council secretary, described the partnership with Norskedalen Nature & Heritage Center to develop an 'environmental humanities' curriculum for use with middle school students.

Soil health

The featured presentation at the anniversary celebration was provided by USDA-NRCS Assistant State Soil Scientist Andy Paolucci. Paolucci brought a device called a 'rainfall simulator' to the event. The device is used to demonstrate the health of the soil in different management systems as evidenced by its ability to infiltrate water and prevent erosion.

"Soil health is really a term that relates to the health of the biology of the soil," Paolucci explained. "One teaspoon of soil contains more living organisms than there are people in the world, and the exudates that come from the living roots in the soil are what provides the food for that soil microbiology."

Paolucci said that management practices which increase the soil organic matter increase the amount of water that the soil can infiltrate, and protect the soil from erosion. He said that a one percent increase in soil organic matter equals 300 gallons per acre of water storage.

In the rainfall simulator demonstration, Paolucci and watershed council member Kevin Traastad had gone out and obtained plots of soils

from five different management systems - rotationally grazed pasture, continuously grazed pasture, no-till corn/bean rotation with trash, no-till corn/bean rotation with trash and a cereal rye cover crop, and tilled continuous corn.

Not surprisingly, the rotationally grazed pasture and the no-till corn/bean rotation with cereal rye cover crop were the best at infiltrating water with the lowest amount of soil erosion. The tilled continuous corn plot had the lowest water infiltration and the highest soil erosion. The continuously grazed pasture, and the no-till corn/bean rotation were in the middle.

Some candidates on Nov. ballot will debate

Gov. Tony Evers and Republican challenger Tim Michels have agreed to debate only one time ahead of the Nov. 8 election. The debate will be Oct. 14, hosted by the Wisconsin Broadcasters Association, held in Madison and broadcast statewide.

The debate will include journalists from across the state, according to a joint statement.

"There are plenty of differences between the two candidates, but we agree that

voters deserve this opportunity to hear directly from each candidate," said Evers' campaign manager Cassi Fenili and Michels' campaign manager Patrick McNulty in the statement.

In 2018, Evers debated then-Gov. Scott Walker twice in October. Michels, co-owner of construction company Michels Corp., participated in two televised debates with his Republican challengers this summer.

In the 3rd Congressional District race, it's not clear if Republican Derrick Van Orden will accept an invitation from Democratic state Sen. Brad Pfaff to debate three times—in Stevens Point, La Crosse, and Eau Claire.

In a statement to WXOW-TV, Van Orden said he would "put his record" up against Pfaff's—but he referred to Pfaff's debate invitation as a "cheap political stunt."

Source: Up North News

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- Born and raised in PDC, parents, 2 brothers and friends are all still there and visit them often. (Can't get enough Pete's Hamburgers!)
- After high school, went to college in La Crosse and worked summers at 3M to help pay for college.
- Graduated college, came back to PDC in 1989 to live, worked and served my plumbing apprenticeship with Edwards Plumbing & Heating.
- Moved to La Crosse in 1994, opened our own plumbing business in 2004.
- Excited to bring our work ethic, customer service and family business touch to the PDC area. We take pride in being a family owned and operated business and treat our employees like family.
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