Clean Water Action Council

OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN

~ Celebrating 41 years of working to protect public health and the environment in Northeast Wisconsin ~

SUMMER 2026

Urban Agriculture: Growing Solutions to Climate and Water Challenges

Monarch Butterfly Caterpillar on Milkweed. The resilience and transformation of this being can inspire our own action as we look at creative solutions for climate change and water protection. Photo credit: Jane Benson

Introduction

By Crystal Brown

"There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery, and the other that heat comes from the furnace."

- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

I've had my hands in the dirt since I was a child, helping my grandmother tend to her garden. I recall one summer when my father, who had recently purchased a home in a rural woodland setting that bordered on a consolidated paper mill's land and wetlands, wanted to have a garden. We watered the garden from our well, which was also the source of our drinking and household water. My biggest concern at that time was not caring for the heavy taste of iron and trying to figure out how to remove the orange residue from the bathtub when it was my turn to clean it.

A few summers later we had a drought, and it sticks out clearly in my memory that that was the year we had to stop watering our vegetable garden due to the risk of running the well dry. My father became discouraged and stopped vegetable gardening entirely. It's interesting as I reflect on this now in June of 2026.

I read a WXPR Radio report out of Rhinelander, WI, that featured a map of all of the biosolid spreading locations in the Northwoods that had PFAS contamination. The map highlighted an area that was not far from my father's home. That home is no longer in our family, but beyond wondering if that well will run dry in the coming years as we experience climate change, I ponder if it would also test positive for PFAS contamination.

I'm sharing this story as one may wonder why we would focus an issue on the topic of urban sustainable agriculture, and how this connects to water and our work. The majority of people living in urban settings are removed from the direct connection between our food and the land and waters which nourish it. I firmly believe that connection is one of the quickest and most potent ways of connecting to our responsibilities towards protecting water, and understanding our dependency upon it. How are we to protect something if we do not have an intimate relationship to it? And how much more intimate can we get than through the food we eat?

A communal meal prepared by Chef Zac Martin pulls together urban grown produce, food forest volunteers, city employees and leaders, and non-profit organizers to celebrate communal sustainable practices in a historically under-resourced urban setting. Gathering over food builds the networks to open conversations on how to promote this through policy. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

As an organization, CWAC is concerned with the impact on water quality from agricultural operations. Whether it is monitoring cultivation setbacks or manure spreading, speaking at public hearings about CAFO permits, or even becoming aware of the increased threat of PFAS which has also affected our groundwater through the spreading of biosolids. We continue to bring awareness to these issues even at times when permits continue to be issued and contaminants persist.

I wanted to take this time to offer reflection and consideration of some hands-on, immediate actions that we can take on the land that we are responsible for, whether it is a home garden or community space. Those actions matter too, and their visible effects are sometimes the spirit food that we need to keep going and fuel our persistence with policy actions.

Besides, getting out in the garden, especially in an urban setting, provides ample opportunity for community and grassroots organizing. What better way to spread the word about clean water when we are elbow deep in dirt or carrying shovels side by side. These intimate conversations are the type that build resilient communities who are able to reclaim their power to resist unjust policy changes and misinformation.

We strengthen our internal locus of control, knowing that we've reduced our carbon footprint by shortening the distance of food between dirt to table. We can control the chemicals applied and we can reduce (even in small increments) the amount of runoff that threatens our water. In this issue we hope to sow the seeds of ideas and resources towards this end. We will share reasons for regenerative agricultural practices and encourage integrating local/native pollinators species into your garden and landscapes, as well as offer plant recommendations. We will highlight programs that are working, such as the Community Garden Program and Oneida Garden Smarts Program. We will hear perspectives on composting and connecting with nature, as well as being wary of "greenwashing." An update about the El Na Manure Runoff incident is presented, as well as information about Baseline Stream Monitoring and how you can get involved. This edition's "Mark Your Calendar" will focus on community events to bolster your knowledge and skills in urban agriculture.

Fort Howard Green Bay Neighborhood Association member Will Peters engages in a barter/trade of wild rice and honey he harvested for beautiful plants grown from seed by herbalist and Oneida Nation Garden Mentor Melody Linsmeyer. The carbon foot print of this exchange decreases significantly, with every act of food sovereignty that exponentially grows resilient community. Photo caption: Crystal Brown

Through these direct experiences, we will be able to see how our food and agricultural practices are directly impacted and dependent upon the quality of the waters that our organization seeks to protect.

Citation:

[1]https://www.wxpr.org/energy-environment/2024-01-22/biosolids-in-oneida-county-what-we-know-and-what-were-still-learning

Grassroots in the Garden program provides free education to build community around sustainable urban practices that families can integrate into their homes and neighborhoods. Garden mentors Dillion Weist, Josh Kufahl, and Crystal Brown prepare for planting in the Seymour Park Food Forest in Green Bay, home to much of the educational programming. Check "Mark Your Calendar" for summer events. Photo credit: Andy DiMezza

Why Choose Local, Regenerative Farms Over Big "Farm-A"

By Lauren Felder

The agriculture industry is one of the largest polluters of water worldwide, and one of the largest users of water. In Wisconsin, the average yearly freshwater withdrawal is 1.91 trillion gallons, about 4% of which is used for agriculture (76.4 billion gallons).[1] The proliferation of large monoculture farms has certainly made conditions worse, but any kind of agricultural operation, no matter the scale, will affect the environment.

The most common form of water pollution from agricultural operations is sedimentation, which results from the erosion of the top layer of soil. Rainwater or excess irrigation water carries the top layer of soil into nearby water bodies and causes cloudy water, which reduces the amount of sunlight that reaches aquatic plants, clogs fish gills, and smothers fish and insect young. The next most common pollutant from agricultural operations is excess nutrients from synthetic fertilizers, manure, and pesticides. Nutrients and heavy metals are also included in runoff into our waters. The excessive amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus from pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers cause eutrophication and dead zones in area water bodies.[2]

Large-scale farming operations are more likely to employ a monoculture system, which means they cultivate only one type of crop or livestock. Having excessive amounts of livestock creates the problem of manure storage, leading to overspreading of manure on fields and/or leaking manure lagoons. Mismanaged manure lagoons contaminate surface water through runoff or by leaching into the groundwater.[3]

The farming practices of any particular farm are more important than the size of the farm when you're weighing where to source your meat and produce. Small-scale farms are *not necessarily* more environmentally friendly. Anecdotally, the carbon footprint of produce grown on small-scale farms is higher than that of produce grown on large-scale farms on a per-pound basis.[4] Large-scale farms contribute to greenhouse gas emissions through utilizing electricity for irrigation, fuel use, and soil amendments (anything added to the soil to enhance plant growth[5]). Small-scale farms contribute to emissions through fuel use, utilizing greenhouse facilities, and net soil emissions (soil naturally releases some greenhouse gases, but this release has been accelerated by agricultural practices[6]). As far as water pollution goes, it is impossible to tell the origin of nutrients and sediment once they reach nearby water bodies. Any agricultural operation is going to have runoff, regardless of size.[7]

One possible answer to this conundrum is regenerative farming. Regenerative farming practices include cover cropping, no-till farming, composting, crop rotation, alternative pest management, and reduction/elimination of chemical input, prairie stripping, rotational grazing, conservation buffers, animal integration, and several other farming techniques that focus on the relationship farming has to the ecosystem and prioritize soil health.[8] Prioritizing soil health allows the farm to flourish without excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Prairie stripping intermingles local pollinators into a regenerative farm, such as this Prairie Blazing Star feeding a monarch at Valentine Gardens in Green Bay. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

Large-scale farming focuses on increasing output in a fast and cheap manner, not on the environment around the farm. Thus, large-scale farmers often raise only one species of plant or animal. This monocropping led to a rise in antibiotic-resistant bacteria among animals and harmful algae blooms in nearby water. Reintroducing animals to crop systems and other techniques to reduce reliance on pesticides and herbicides vastly decreases the amount of chemical runoff that makes it into the water, thus reducing harmful eutrophication and algae blooms. Regenerative farming can include re-combining animals and cropping systems. Allowing animals and plants to coexist on farms again can increase water retention on farms, help the health of the soil by naturally cycling nutrients instead of requiring additives, and cut down on weed and pest issues without the use of pesticides. Cover cropping, crop rotation, no-till farming, conservation buffers, rotational grazing, etc., decrease the amount of topsoil that is exposed to the weather, which in turn reduces runoff and cloudy water. Healthy soil absorbs more water, further lessening runoff and the need for irrigation.[9]

Regenerative farms use rotational grazing practices for animals, such as for "Nancy" the goat and all the kids at Valentine Gardens. These goats help aerate the soil, reduce the spread of non-local/invasive species, and offer milk and meat. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

Regenerative agriculture does more than protect our water. One study showed that converting only 1,000 acres of a conventional corn and soy form to a grass-based grazing system could potentially save the farmer $28,000 in fertilizer and $1,500 in fuel (in 2017 gas prices), reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 400 tons of carbon dioxide, reduce the amount of water used by 280 million gallons, and generate about $98,000 in profit.[10] Healthy soil also sequesters carbon, rather than continuing to release additional greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.[11]

Notably, then, the size of the farm does not dictate whether the produce or meat raised on the farm was raised more sustainably. However, it is easier for small farms to employ conservation practices and regenerative farming techniques. The best choice you can make for our water and the environment is to buy from a local farmer using regenerative farming practices.

Citations:

[1]https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/WaterUse/WithdrawalSummary.html
[2]https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-09/documents/ag_runoff_fact_sheet.pdf
[3]https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2015-09/documents/ag_runoff_fact_sheet.pdf
[4]https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0959652619313447
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[10]https://forainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/FORA-Brief_Water_2022.pdf
[11]https://www.nrdc.org/sites/default/files/regenerative-agriculture-farm-policy-21st-century-report.pdf

Integrating Native Plants Into Edible Landscapes

By Jane Benson

As homeowners, community gardeners, and urban planners rethink how we grow food, blending native plants into edible landscapes — orchards, vegetable beds, food forests, and backyard gardens — is becoming a smart, science-backed strategy. Native plants co-evolved with local insects, birds, soil microbes, and climate conditions; so including them alongside fruits, vegetables, and culinary herbs yields ecological and practical benefits: stronger pollinator populations, improved water quality and soil health, and measurable contributions to climate resilience and carbon storage.

Why Native Plants Matter in Edible Landscapes

Native plants provide complementary ecosystem services that cultivated food plants alone often do not. They can offer season-long blooms and diverse flower shapes that match the needs of local pollinators, host plants for caterpillars and other beneficial insects, deep or fibrous root systems that stabilize soils and filter rainwater, and plant chemistries that support soil microbial communities. These traits reduce the need for irrigation, synthetic fertilizers, and pesticides, creating a lower-input, more resilient edible landscape.

Northern Crescent Butterfly on Black-eyed Susan. Photo credit: Jane Benson

Pollinators: Stronger, Healthier Populations

Pollinators — bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, and some birds and bats — are essential for many fruits and vegetables. Native plants typically provide nectar and pollen at the times local pollinators need them, and many native insects depend on specific native host plants for larval development.

Excellent pollinator plants to interplant with edible crops in Wisconsin include native perennials like Bee Balm, Anise Hyssop, Purple Coneflower, and Black-eyed Susan, Swamp Milkweed, Asters, Lupine, and Goldenrod, which support bees and butterflies. For companion planting, mix in annual herbs and flowers such as Dill, Basil, Marigolds, Borage, Nasturtiums, and Zinnias to attract beneficial insects that prey on garden pests.

The season in which flowers bloom, whether they like sun or shade, and the natural width and height of plants will affect which plants you choose and where you plant them.

Great Spangled Fritillary butterfly on Purple Coneflower. Photo credit: Jane Benson

Participate in local efforts like these:

Seed Library[1]

In Brown County, a collaboration of organizations has formed a "Seed Library." You can contribute seeds from your plants, volunteer to help to package the seeds, and take free seed packets that you might need. Here is their definition of the project: "The Brown County Seed Library is a curated collection of seeds – primarily edible plants – that are suited for success in our Northeastern Wisconsin growing region. These seeds are available free of charge to anyone interested in planting vegetables, fruits and pollinator-friendly plants. We welcome you to check out our selection anytime the Brown County Central Library is open."

Northeast Wisconsin Pollinator Corridor[2]

This is another exciting project which is supported by several different organizations, including the Green Bay Botanical Gardens and the City of Green Bay Conservation Corps. They are creating a Pollinator Corridor across the Green Bay's parks, building a network of habitat and food sources for pollinators in our area.

Pollinator Pocket Kit[3]

You can participate personally by getting a Pollinator Pocket Kit from the Green Bay Botanical Garden with plugs of native plants to plant in your own property to extend the reach of the corridor.

Example of home with Water Lilies for fish cover, Cattails for blackbird nests and shoreline health, and mixture of native and annual plantings near house. Photo credit: Jane Benson

Water Quality and Soil Health Benefits

Native plants commonly have deeper, more extensive root

systems than many introduced ornamentals and shallow-rooted turfgrasses. These roots increase soil porosity, improve infiltration, and reduce surface runoff during storms. Less runoff means fewer sediments and agricultural chemicals reaching waterways, which directly protects water quality in nearby streams, rivers, and wetlands.

Moreover, native plant communities promote healthier soils. Their roots cycle nutrients, support diverse soil microbial communities, and contribute organic matter that improves water-holding capacity. When native groundcovers or perennial understory plants are used as mulch alternatives around fruit trees and in vegetable borders, they help suppress weeds, reduce erosion, and maintain moisture, decreasing the need for irrigation and synthetic inputs that can leach into groundwater.

Crabapple tree with Indigo Bunting. Birds eat not only the crabapples, but also lichen on branches. Photo credit: Jane Benson

Climate Mitigation and Resilience

Edible landscapes with native plants contribute to both climate mitigation and adaptation. On the mitigation side, native trees, shrubs, and perennial plants sequester carbon in woody biomass and, importantly, in soils. Perennial root systems deposit carbon belowground in more stable forms than the annual turnover typical of many food crops. Incorporating native trees and shrubs as windbreaks, shade elements, or understory layers within food forests increases overall carbon storage compared to annual-only systems.

On the adaptation side, native species are adapted to local climate variability and extremes (temperature, rainfall patterns), making edible landscapes more resilient to heat waves, droughts, and intense storms. Their deeper roots and drought-tolerance reduce irrigation demand and buffer crops against short-term water stress. Native plant diversity also spreads risk: if one species suffers from disease or pests, others may continue providing food or ecological services.

Conclusion

Integrating native plants into edible landscapes is a practical, evidence-based way to enhance pollination, protect water quality, and bolster climate mitigation and resilience. By selecting local natives and designing for structural and seasonal diversity, gardeners and planners can produce food while fostering healthier ecosystems and reducing long-term maintenance and input costs. The result: more productive, resilient, and wildlife-friendly food systems that benefit people and nature alike.

Citations:

[1] browncountylibrary.org/seed-library/
[2] gbbg.org/pollinator-corridor-green-bay/
[3] gbbg.org/explore/events-exhibits/pollinator-pocket-kits/

Trees Are Not Only for Wildlife, But for You Too!

By Devin Hessler, 2026 Spring Intern and TRAQ Certified Arborist (WI-1540a)

Serviceberry or Juneberry serves as an ornamental shrub providing delicious fruit that ripen in late June/early July for both wildlife and humans. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

The biggest trend in landscaping and gardening is native, native, native. Planting native is better for the environment and it's better for wildlife. Why can't we plant for us as well? In a community where they ask us to give up so much for the betterment of the collective, why can't we be a little selfish? So, I have compiled a list of native fruit bearing tree species that will go well in hardiness zone 5b. A hardiness zone is a geographic area with a certain average annual minimum temperature, and zone 5b covers most of Brown and Door County. I think some will absolutely surprise you.

Native Tree, Shrub, and Perennial Plant Species for Zone 5b:

Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*)
Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)
Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)
Serviceberry (*Amerlancheir spp.*)
Black Walnut (*Juglans nirga*)
White Oak (*Quercus alba*)
American Hazelnut (*Corylus american*)
Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*)
Red Mulberry (*Morus rubra*)
Gooseberry (*Ribes missouriense*)
Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*)
American Plum (*Prunus americana*)
Northern Pecan (*Carya illioinensis*)
Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*)
Riverbank Grape (*Vitis riparia*)
Common Hackberry (*Celtic occindentalis*)
Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)
Nannyberry (*Viburnium lentago*)
Thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*)
New Jersey (*Ceanothus americus*)

Community Gardens: A Part of the Solution

By Brie Schuldt

It's only been around eight months since I've packed up from home and moved to Green Bay to start my college life. As a freshman, my biggest fear was not making connections and staying inside my little introvert bubble. Fortunately, my experience has been quite the opposite. Since making

the trip from my hometown, I've learned that Green Bay is a city that has a lot to give: experiences, opportunities, resources, relationships, etc. All of it has been rewarding, but my favorite part has been the ability to explore my passions, especially food security and sustainable agriculture.

I've also come to realize that there is a real food issue within our state. According to Feeding America, 1 in 8 adults in Wisconsin struggles with hunger, and 1 in 6 of those are *children*. The lack of food accessibility is staggering, with 12% of the state's population (roughly 705,400 residents) relying on SNAP benefits to feed their families. Our current food system is failing to meet the needs of its people, and as a result we see food deserts, reliance on government-funded programs, high obesity rates, and children going hungry. The environmental impacts are also vast, with industrial agriculture decimating habitats, poisoning our water, and depleting our soil of nutrients.

Food security and sustainable agriculture are multifaceted challenges, and there are many ways we can work towards more sustainable, resilient food systems. However, one of these I have personal experience with, and I believe is imperative to the future of urban agriculture — *community gardens*.

Neighbors discuss planting and garden planning at the Seymour Park Neighborhood Association Community Garden. Photo credit: Crystal Brown

Community gardens are not a new concept to Green Bay, or even Brown County. In fact, one of the wonderful relationships I've formed has been with the Urban Agriculture and Community Gardens Coordinator, Rachel Quintas. Although she recently departed from the role, Rachel was still willing to share her experience and knowledge of the UW-Extension Brown County Community Gardens Program.

"The community gardens have formed a sense of connectedness," she stated. She then discussed how the program allowed people from different backgrounds to become "empowered" to use resources and form relationships with other gardeners and organizations. She also touched upon food security, and how the community gardens increased people's access to fresh, healthy, and culturally diverse foods that previously might not have been available or affordable.

The program also works to incorporate sustainable gardening practices, such as no-tilling on specific plots. Rachel mentioned that one of the no-till plots on 5th Street, "performed extraordinarily well," when soil quality was tested, and that it's good to let the microbiome recover so it can work its magic. The microbiome, and the microorganisms that it's composed of, are crucial when

Community members of all ages learn sustainable, perennial gardening methods at Seymour Park Food Forest through the NEW Leaf Foods Grassroots in the Garden Program. Photo caption: Crystal Brown

it comes to preserving soil health. Tilling can disturb soil structure and harm the microbiome, which will lead to erosion and depletion of organic matter within the soil. It's also important to note that community gardens are inherently sustainable as they promote self-sufficiency, community resiliency, and food security. These are opposite of what we tend to see in traditional, large-scale agriculture, which prioritizes profit-over people, allows for mass overproduction, and pollutes our land and water.

Although Rachel is leaving the position to pursue other aspirations, she hopes to see the program grow in the years to come. She's looking forward to seeing more locations, volunteers, and community outreach from the community gardens. Something that has been particularly beneficial, and inspiring, has been local farms and community members allocating land to the community gardens.

However, one thing that she'd like to see more of in the future is collaboration with other organizations. "It's like a web we have to weave," she mentioned. When multiple groups come together with the intention to help people in their community, it can have tremendously impactful effects. It also reminds us that we are not alone in this fight. It's important to note that community gardens are not a silver bullet solution. But they are *part* of achieving the goal. The goal being that one day *everyone* will have access to an affordable, sustainable, and nutritious food system.

Urban Composting: Prospect and Thoughts

By John Hermanson

Cory Groshek of Greener Bay Compost says in an interview on their website that he wants to help create a culture of composting in Northeastern Wisconsin.

Composting is simply the managed process of decomposition. Each household has a unique situation that is served better by particular composting methods. Some communities will have access to micro-haulers like Greener Bay Compost, that can pick up vegetable scraps to do the composting for you.

Some advantages over backyard scale composting are that micro-haulers can compost a larger variety of items such as meat, bones, solid cheese, compostable certified single use items (bags, bowl, cups, and cutlery) while producing better compost using higher temperatures that kill more pests such as plant diseases and weed seeds and do it more quickly than in a backyard. In Door County there

is the Door Community Compost Initiative with multiple drop off sites and their own rules for compostable materials.

In Northeast Wisconsin, most of us find it normal to recycle our cans, newspaper, mail, and food containers. A change of heart, new knowledge, and new habits can make composting feel like an essential activity. The activity of composting can bring a sense of feeling like we are doing our part as a responsible citizens. For others, it fosters the feeling that we are in relationship to the rest of the world… reciprocity.

I was able to take in the *Every Day is Earth Day Festival* this year in Egg Harbor, where Midsommar Apothecarys' Elizabeth Moriarity presented a workshop, *Nordic Wisdom for Living in Relationship with Nature*. She introduced the Nordic principle of belonging "friluftsliv," which roughly translates as "open-air living." It is maintaining and reclaiming our relationship with nature. At this presentation Dave LaLuzerne, herbal pharmacist who is a part of the Door Community Compost Initiative, mentioned he composts and considers it a part of his spiritual practice or friluftsliv.

I was recently in Chicago at an art museum gift shop and ran across a book, *You Are Compostable*, by Brett Bloom. Brett is a professional composter and runs a composting and recycling business called DIRT WAIN, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, similar to Greener Bay Compost.

The book was to help facilitate a sonic meditation connecting humans to the process of composting and relating this on a personal level since we humans are literally compostable as is all other carbon-based life.

There are numerous other reasons to do urban composting as it relates to growing food and reducing negative environmental impacts. The United States landfills are the third largest contribution of methane to the atmosphere, accounting for roughly 15% of a gas that has 80 times the heat-trapping power of carbon dioxide over the near term. But because of its short atmospheric life, cutting methane today is the most effective way to slow global warming in our lifetimes.

Compost adds nutrients, improves soil health, retains water-holding capacity, and improves drainage while helping reduce plant disease and weeds. Composting at the municipal scale generates as much as twice as many jobs as landfilling and four times as many jobs as incineration. Landfills are expensive to remediate and create, so conserving them and not filling them with organic matter is more economic.

Most municipal ordinances regarding composting state that composting should avoid odors and nuisance conditions such as pests and rodents. Common sense suggests keeping backyard composting mostly out of sight of neighbors.

Compost happens on its own when appropriate compostable materials have the basics of some moisture, materials with some nitrogen, such as greens (vegetable scraps which are moister), and a slightly larger quantity of browns that contain carbon, such as leaves or finely ground wood chips which are dryer. Ideally, occasionally turning or stirring compost helps aerate it and the process happens more quickly if it is three cubic feet or more in mass.

You can collect materials and make a batch, or what seems more often is that vegetable scraps are added to a composter as they accumulate in a bucket in your kitchen. **Please keep in mind that compost will just happen and that it is better to realize it is not a perfect process**, like the rest of our lives. I use wood stove pellets or coconut coir in my composting to soak up moisture and balance my carbon to nitrogen.

While backyard composting is important it is also important to praise and support business and institutions that support composting such as the city of DePere, Bellin Health, and Kavarna Coffeehouse.

As long as I am on my soapbox, please realize that pet waste should not go in a compost pile because of possible disease and that pet waste according to the EPA from dogs is best flushed down a toilet (not with the bag even though the bag may be labeled compostable) where it can be treated and not go to the landfill where it adds to methane gas production.

Oneida Nation: Garden Smarts Pilot Program

By Guest Writers: Samantha Boucher, Tonya Laurent, and Sarah Chisholm

Our Garden Smarts pilot grew out of a training we attended in November 2025 with Leah's Pantry, where we saw an immediate opportunity to bring this program to the families in our community. The pilot kicks off by establishing shared expectations — students collaboratively build a set of garden safety guidelines and reciprocity agreements, which are captured on a poster displayed throughout the entire 6-week program.

Each week, students engage in immersive, hands-on garden experiences designed to build curiosity and observation skills. In one activity, they construct their own rain gauges, place them beside the garden, and return the following week to record and discuss what they've measured. In another, they assemble a mini compost system inside a recycled soda bottle, then watch over the coming weeks as organic matter transforms into rich, usable soil.

By the end of the 6-week program, the impact reaches

Oneida Garden Smart student participates in activity teaching sustainable gardening skills. Photo credit: Sarah Chisholm

well beyond the classroom. Students bring home new knowledge, excitement, and a sense of pride that sparks conversations around the dinner table and inspires families to explore growing food together. The garden becomes a shared space where children and their families connect with one another, with their neighbors, and with the simple joy of nurturing something from seed to harvest. Garden Smarts is more than a pilot — it's a seed planted in the heart of our community, one family at a time.

Editor Comment: *Gardening education of youth is essential in fostering a life-long relationship with the earth and water, especially in urban settings, or in situations when connection to seasonal changes has been lost. The Garden Smarts Pilot is an example of an educational program that integrates sustainability practices and how they link to urban agriculture, and our relationship to protecting the earth and water.*

GUEST WRITER BIOS

I'm **Samantha Boucher**, Office Manager at the Oneida Emergency Food Pantry. Serving my community is at the heart of what I do, and it's a role I take seriously. At home, I'm a mom of eight — which means I'm basically a professional adventurer. Whether it's a hike, a road trip, or just exploring somewhere new, the outdoors is where I recharge.

Sheko'li (hello), my name is **Tonya Laurent** and I am the nutrition educator at Oneida Food Distribution. I offer participants classes and information on how to incorporate healthy food choices and adding more movement to their everyday lives.

Hello! My name is **Sarah Chisholm**, UW Madison Division of Extension Brown County, Nutrition Educator. I love connecting students with garden-based nutrition education and where real food comes from. Seeing the spark when they observed all the many parts of soil with magnifying glasses and how they were so engaged and could observe all day was a tremendous gift. At home, I enjoy growing our "Grandpa Grapes" and tending to our many plants with my three kiddos.

The Greenwashing of Eco-Friendly Meat Production

By Dean Hoegger

In the 1970's, I was a student at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, which was nicknamed Eco U. I was also a member of the Northeast Wisconsin Whole Foods Cooperative, simply referred to as the Co-op. I was also a frequent diner at The Shire restaurant in Green Bay where I enjoyed their soy burgers. So, you guessed it, I am a baby boomer and a product of the "let's make the planet a better place" movement including eating little or no meat.

Even though there was a great deal of science about going vegetarian and getting the right combination of foods for a complete protein, I had a friend who thought eating Cheetos and peanuts was the answer. Others of us were making soymilk, lentil and soy burgers, and making granola with all the necessary protein combinations.

Since the 70's, the science of eating vegetarian has continued to evolve and is available online, so I won't bore you with the details. What I would like you to consider is how the meat and dairy industry has been greenwashing what they are doing to reduce their impact on the environment, including the impact on climate change.

A recent report by the United Nations body on climate science[1] stated that we can help stop the destructive impacts of climate change by making dietary choices. The production of meat for human and animals is estimated to account for 57% of the worldwide emissions from food production and about 3% of that number is from the dairy industry.

Time magazine reported in April 2026 that "The world's top five emitting companies—JBS, Marfrig, Tyson, Minerva, and Cargill—were responsible for an estimated 496 million tonnes[2] greenhouse gases in 2023, more than reported for Chevron, Shell, or BP." Now some of those companies are using the new USDA label "climate friendly" which is certified by third party firms hired by the USDA. Other companies are simply making climate claims like "climate smart" or "net-zero emissions."

To get the USDA label, producers must prove that their cattle are raised in a way that emits at least 10% less greenhouse gases than an industry baseline. For example, Tyson Foods is a company that was USDA certified for their Brazen Beef brand. However, they were sued in 2025 by the Environmental Working Group, which cited their high emissions and lack of transparency in their reported data. In an out-of-court settlement, Tyson agreed to refrain from making environmental claims for five years.

In a separate action in 2025 by the New York attorney general's office, JBS USA also agreed to stop making unsubstantiated claims about meeting "net-zero" greenhouse gas emissions. JBS USA and Tyson Foods produce about 50% of the beef consumed in the United States.

In April 2026, PLOS Climate[3] published "Environmental claims, climate promises, and 'greenwashing' by meat and dairy companies." The authors concluded that the meat and dairy industry was misleading consumers and investors regarding the extent of their environmental efforts including reducing climate change impacts. "They make many promises and provide little supporting evidence," the report stated.

We should not allow ourselves to be fooled by the industry's "greenwashing efforts." The global livestock industry alone is estimated to produce 12%-19% of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions, so we must consider their environmental claims with critical questions. Where is the livestock produced? Is deforestation occurring? Is the type of manure management being used creating nitrous oxide, which is a serious greenhouse gas? How is the livestock raised? Corn and grain feed, or pastured or free-range raised?

Over the years, we have supported farming methods that provide greater protection of our water, such as managed grazing versus feeding harvested crops which require additional fossils fuels. However, it should be noted that all meat and dairy cattle, no matter what the farming method, do produce methane as part of their digestive process.

I will leave you to think about this claim by Yale Environment 360: "A plant-based diet yields one-fourth as much heat-trapping gas as a diet rich in meat, according to an exhaustive new analysis." What if restaurants had a climate warning on their meat dishes? In the U.K., a test of that label reduced meat consumption by 7.4%. How would you react to such a label? Would it cause you to look at the restaurant's vegetarian dishes?

Lastly, I leave you with this plea: If it is not lost forever, help me find The Shire's secret recipe for soy burgers. Maybe it could replace the portobello mushroom vegetarian dinner at the CWAC banquet.

Citations:

[1]https://time.com/5646787/ipcc-climate-change-land-report/
[2]https://www.iatp.org/roasting-the-planet
[3]https://journals.plos.org/climate/article?id=10.1371/journal.pclm.0000773&utm_source=pr&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=plos006

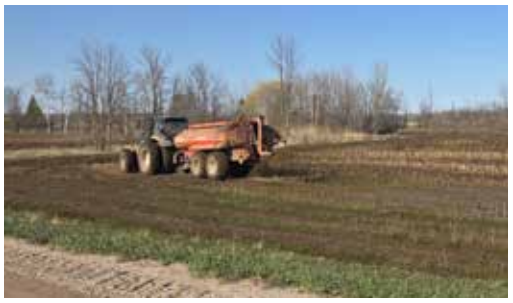
ISSUE UPDATE/EL NA FARMS: Farmers and Regulators Need to Prepare for Extreme Weather Events Due to Climate Change

By Debra Noel

This past January had a thaw of a significant amount of snow accumulated over a couple weeks. A Kewaunee County CAFO decided this was a good window to spread liquid manure in a field that the DNR reported met standards for manure spreading as stated in code NR 151 and NR 243. El Na Farms was warned by Kewaunee County Land and Water Conservation and the DNR of the potential for run off violation due to forecasted rains within the next 12 to 24 hours.

The farmer chose to take the risk. This irresponsible risk polluted our streams and Lake Michigan in a massive run-off that occurred during and after 0.7 inches of rain, hours shortly after spreading the manure. This was a blatant violation despite warnings, but there have not been enforcement actions taken yet.

This El Na CAFO farm is hosting the "Breakfast on the Farm" event on Father's Day, June 21, 2026. Please see the link for the DNR report showing



A tanker hauled by a tractor spreads manure on an agricultural field without cover crops.
Photo credit: Debra Noel

the timeline and lab analysis of samples taken. E-coli was extremely high. The owner had left town and could not be reached during the event, and farm staff and trucking/tankers service were left to clean up what they could and respond to the DNR and County officials.

REVIEW THE REPORT

Follow this **link** to the full El Na Farms LLC Manure Spill Report provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This report includes time lines, data, and images of the event.

A few of us citizens in Kewaunee County were sending emails requesting this information and asking what will be done. We feel charges and fines should be made and brought to the Wisconsin Department of Justice. There are blatant violations, negligence, and dangerous risks these CAFO's continue to do with little enforcement or repercussions. Maybe if there were criminal charges this would help them be more careful and take the regulations seriously.

This early spring brought torrential rain over a couple weeks in early April. Day after day the rains washed unmeasurable amounts of manure laden bare ag fields' soil, with chemicals, nutrients, and everything it could carry into our waterways and dumped this toxic mess into Lake Michigan, the bay

of Green Bay, and smaller lakes as well. Erosion, flooded roads, yards, houses, and fields were evident throughout Northeast Wisconsin.

The damage and toxic effects will not be erased if not given time to heal. These assaults continue and CAFO's are allowed to expand with only the past regulations and practices that need massive revision. If we want to save the health of our soils, environment, beaches, ground water, lakes and streams, and the aquatic life and creatures depending on these water ways, we need to make changes now. The new technologies that CAFO's claim are so great have limitations. *Nature has the final word.*

Agricultural runoff and sediments fill local waterways after April storms, and flow into Lake Michigan, creating harm for water, local wildlife, and humans. Photo credit: Debra Noel

I sent a letter to the DNR and Kewaunee County to see if they had any violations or plans to update regulations and prepare to prevent or reduce these disasters from the more frequent extreme climate change events. I included a few suggestions as well. (**See letter in the next column**). I attended Land and Water Conservation meetings to also express my concerns and observations and asked more questions to directly request action.

I received replies for the emails that there were no violations that they knew of, and luckily there were some empty manure storage pits that farmers at their storage

Dear [redacted], [redacted], and DNR specialists,

The torrential rains we had over the last couple of weeks caused a widespread flooding not seen in decades in Kewaunee County and many parts of Wisconsin. Many of us are concerned about the runoff from fields, especially bare fields and fields that have recently had manure spreading. As recently as a couple days before and in between the rain days, testimonies from witnesses observed manure being spread throughout the county.

I have some questions that many are asking.

1. *Was there any emergency permits or permission given for any discharges and spreads?*
2. *Were there any monitoring or reports made on which fields or farms had manure leave their fields and run off into ditches and streams?*
3. *Were any farmers in Kewaunee County forced to discharge manure or have overflowing manure pits? I observed at least 1 pit with level up to or over top which is Heim's Dairy.*
4. *Are there any calculations for how much manure spilled and how much ran off fields?*
5. *Will there be citations and fines for these CAFOs that have violated?*
6. *How will these CAFOs be prepared in the future to ensure there is no more spills, discharges, or runoffs from more frequent rain events and irregular weather events that are occurring more often with climate change?*
7. *Is the DNR and county planning for changes to regulations and incorporating mandatory rules for field requirements and manure spreading timing and amounts?*
8. *I am requesting an open record on reports filed in Kewaunee County to CAFOs and other farms during the month of March and April.*
9. *A CAFO permit moratorium should be put in place and a county ordinance until this problem is addressed and a plan is in place. These events will continue to happen. There needs to be reduced herd sizes to become manageable and decrease risks to public health and the environment.*

The risk is now a reality with massive herd sizes and unmanageable millions of gals of manure on bare fields and in bloated storage pits. This is leading to more runoff, accidents, equipment failures, and extremely contaminated streams, lakes and ground water. There needs to be well testing paid for by these CAFOs in all areas with Karst landscape or at least a 1/4 mile proximity to fields used for manure spreading or drainage ditches and streams carrying the runoff.

These CAFOs should not be spreading after growing season or on bare fields and plowing should be prohibited unless right before planting. All this requires less cows/manure per acre on NMP permitting. Planting into living cover crops is also possible and should be required. Strip planting crops and rotational pastures for summer grazing is a much safer, cleaner, and healthier way for our land, water and communities. That way manure storage is mainly for winter use.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue that our current rules and regulations are not enough to protect our environment and health of the public. Please push for change in Kewaunee Co ordinances and DNR permitting and NR243.

Sincerely concerned,

Debra Noel

limits could truck over manure to these available pits. What happens if those are used up? The county was out checking but they have limited staff and there are many miles and farms to cover, and not all fields or farming operations are visible from the road.

I also suggested a volunteer program and training I could assist with to monitor streams after significant rain events causing run-off to enter streams. I am currently monitoring six streams in Kewaunee County for phosphorus and at least two for baseline monitoring indicating health of stream. Volunteers are assisting, and I am providing training if anyone is interested. (Please see stream monitoring volunteer program opportunities

CWAC in the News

Read local news reports on the incident, including an interview of Charlie Frisk, CWAC Board Vice President in the articles below.

Kewaunee County farm to be cited after manure runoff; residents worry about water quality

Kewaunee County officials address manure runoff incident in Casco | WFRV-TV Local 5 News

on page 11). I have not received a response from the county to my suggestion.

On April 14, 2026, a few days after torrential rains, I took a sample of the Casco Creek and had phosphorus tested at a certified lab. It was 8 to 10 times higher than normal summer tests. That's why it's important to test streams shortly after significant rain events.

Clean Water Action Council continues to attend public hearings on CAFO permitting, interviews and comments on news reports, and includes information on CAFO violations and actions to reduce agriculture pollution supporting small farms, regenerative and sustainable farming practices for a cleaner future.

Beavers Are the Answer

By Devin Hessler, CWAC Spring 2026 Intern

Well, maybe not the answer—but they may be an effective solution for capturing farm runoff. When a beaver builds a dam on a section of river, it does so to increase the area it can occupy while reducing interactions with predators. The water does not simply fill the river; instead, the dam causes the entire floodplain to become saturated.

This slowing of water provides a major benefit in combating the algal blooms that fill our lakes every summer. As the river begins to back up, the flow of water can no longer carry smaller particles such as nitrates and phosphates. These particles settle into the bottom of the newly formed ponds, enriching the wetland around the dam with excess nutrients.

You might be thinking that this does not solve the real problem—that farms need to reduce over-fertilization and excessive manure spreading. That is correct, and those practices must be addressed to prevent future issues. However, this discussion focuses on contaminants that have already left the fields and entered the water system.

Beavers also help with many other things besides locking up contaminants. As mentioned earlier, beaver dams slow the flow of water, allowing it to seep into the ground in areas where water may be scarce. In some regions, translocated beavers have been deployed in desert canyons as a passive way to restore riparian ecosystems along streams.

Many people view beavers as a nuisance because they can cause damage to agricultural land and forests. However, I believe beavers should be considered a keystone species, much like wolves. Their activities clean water, restore water to areas that have not seen it in a long time, and increase biodiversity wherever they go.

Citations:

Hill, A. R., & Duval, T. P. (2009). *Beaver dams along an agricultural stream in southern Ontario, Canada: Their impact on riparian zone hydrology and nitrogen chemistry*. Hydrological Processes, 23, 1324–1336. https://doi.org/10.1002/hyp.7249

Gibson, P. P., & Olden, J. D. (2014). *Ecology, management, and conservation implications of North American beaver (Castor canadensis) in dryland streams*. Aquatic Conservation: Marine and Freshwater Ecosystems, 24, 391–409. https://doi.org/10.1002/aqc.2432

TAKE ACTION: Baseline Stream Monitoring – Adopt a Stream

By Debra Noel

Thank you to those who signed up for baseline stream monitoring volunteering at the Clean Water Action Council Banquet. Others who wish to sign up for stream monitoring volunteer training, there will be more months and dates available. Please contact Debra Noel if you have a specific range of dates that work for you. We will be scheduling from July to October. We can also train to monitor more streams other than those listed below, in both Kewaunee County and Brown County. Previous training sessions have occurred for Wequiock Creek in Brown County, and Mashek Creek in Kewaunee County.

Interested in Helping with Stream Monitoring? Here's what you need to prepare:

Streams we monitor are no deeper than 1 ft to 2 ft in the working area.

1. Please take the 1-hour course on baseline stream monitoring from the WAV Program before attending a session. An Introduction to Water Action Volunteers (WAV): WAV Online Introduction to Baseline Monitoring
2. Wear water shoes, or Rubber boots. You are welcome to bring a lawn chair, hat, sunglasses, and water bottle if needed.
3. Dress for the weather.
4. The access to streams will not be difficult, but it is a short trail and some rocky and wooded decline to stream.
5. I will have the monitoring kits needed for these training events.
6. Anyone who wishes to bring a partner along to participate is welcome to do so.
7. These training sessions can be 1.5 to 3 hours depending on number of attending, discussions and questions. Once you have this training, a stream monitoring process will be an hour or less at most locations, months, or situations.
8. We will provide refreshments and snacks after our outdoor event.
9. After this training there will be other streams open for your consideration to start monitoring. I will be available to help you and others with a different stream of your choosing to get started. It is best to have a team of 2 to 3 people per baseline monitoring session per month.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns. We are looking forward to these fun events and hope you are too! You may email me at ramsey4me@gmail.com or call 920-655-4394.

Thank you! ...for your support of our annual banquet!

Thank you to all of the area businesses and community members that donated to our Annual Banquet, held on Thursday, April 23, 2026. Because of all of the generous contributions of our members through our silent auction and donations to our causes, we raised $8,547.00! Local businesses, artists, and community members that contributed:

Ace Hardware of Luxemburg
Ace Hardware Sturgeon Bay
Angela Lensch Gallery
Bella Luna Apothecary & Boutique
Benson Designs LLC
Bike Hub of De Pere
Caffé Tlazo
Caitlin Cravillion
Chain Reaction Bike Store
Chris Belport
Chris Style
Civic Symphony
Clay on Steele
Cornucopia Kitchen Shop
Costco of Green Bay
Curt Andersen
Dancing Bear
Danica Oudeans
David & Sher Verhagen
DC Kayak Tours
Dean Hoegger
Debra Noel
Donny's Glidden Lodge
Fairy-Tale Couture
Family Pet Food Center
Full Circle Farms
Green Bay Botanical Gardens
Green Bay Packers
Green Bay Rockers
Gretchen Schmelzer
Hoegger Pottery
Holiday Motel
Intention Boutique
Jane Benson
Joyce Fritz
Judith Rybicki
Judith Van Ryzin
Kitz & Pfeil Ace Hardware
Kewaunee High School Art Department
Lion's Mouth Books
Luxemburg-Casco High School
McFleshman's Brewing Co.
Michael Younkle
Monticello
Mulva Center
MUSE
National Railroad Museum
Nicolet Bank of Luxemburg
Nicolet National Bank Sturgeon Bay
Novel Bay Book Store
Olson Dental
PCM Credit Union
Peninsula Players
Poh's Corner Pub
Popelka Trenchard Gallery & Glass Studio
REI
Resource One
Riverside Ballroom
Seek Careers/Staffing
Seroogy's Chocolates
Settlement Bar & Grill
Sherry's Hallmark Gifts
Shipwreck Tattoo
SLO Farmers Coop
Starboards Brewery
Stillmank Brewery
Stodola-I.G.A.-Luxemburg
Tennie's Jewelry
The Hairipist
The Red Room
Third Avenue Gallery
Third Avenue Play Works
True Value Hardware of De Pere
TUK Music & Media LLC
Valentine Gardens
Vicki Medland
Von Stiehl Winery
Wave Point Marina and Resort
Weidner Center
Wheel & Sprocket of Appleton
White Lace Inn

Highlights from the Banquet

The Clean Water Action Council Annual Banquet and Fundraiser at the Riverside Ballroom in Green Bay took place on Thursday, April 23, and featured an evening of community gathering, silent auction, and introduction to this year's Adopt A Stream initiative. The program included remarks from Crystal Brown, Executive Director of CWAC, and live musical entertainment by Jenna Noelle. The Environmental Citizen Award was presented to the Green Bay Conservation Corps, with assistance from Green Bay Mayor Eric Genrich, State Representative Amaad Rivera-Wagner, and State Senator Jamie Wall. Thank you for joining us!

The Action in Clean Water Action Council

By Crystal Brown

As summer begins to take shape, the work of the Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin continues at a steady pace. We have officially started our ***Baseline Stream Monitoring Program***, which is partially funded by our **Adopt A Steam Campaign**, that was introduced at the Annual Banquet on April 23. This initiative will strengthen monitoring efforts in Kewaunee and Brown County, while creating additional pathways for residents and interns to engage in hands-on environmental stewardship. In addition to a successful banquet, here are some of the other actions we have been taking over the past few months:

LEGAL AND ADVOCACY ACTIONS

Wisconsin PFAS Coalition: CWAC continues to be a part of the Wisconsin PFAS Coalition, which is resuming monthly meetings this summer, and promotes awareness of PFAS contamination for affected communities and advocates for legislation to support the health of the public.

Sign-On Letters: CWAC participated in a sign-on letter with the Alliance for Health and Safe Chemicals Coalition regarding PFAS and TSCA-related legislation.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

PFAS Education: CWAC Executive Director Crystal Brown presented on PFAS and Fishing at a Lifelong Learning Institute session at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Approximately 20 individuals were in attendance, both online and in person.

Youth Education: Spring Intern Brie Schuldt presented on environmental contaminants and bioaccumulation of fish species at the annual banquet and at Red Smith K-8 School in Green Bay. If you are interested in having Brie present to a school in your community, or a local youth group, please contact our office.

Microplastic Education: A Do-It-Yourself Zero Plastic Laundry Soap and Microplastics Workshop was held at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay, to engage students and community members with this hands-on activity. Participants received a copy of Summer 2025 Newsletter regarding Microplastics and were able to make environmentally friendly, zero-plastic waste laundry soap to take home.

UW Green Bay Student Outreach: Spring interns tabled at the University Union to inform students about CWAC, upcoming events, and ways to get involved in our efforts.

CWAC Book Club:
CWAC completed its series of meetings for the Winter Book Club, *The Serviceberry*, continuing discussions around ecological responsibility, sustainability, and community systems thinking. Participants included members, interns, and community partners. The book club concluded with a tour of the serviceberries located on the UW-Green Bay Campus.

Every Day is Earth Day: Board Treasurer John Hermanson represented CWAC at the Every Day is Earth Day event in Door County.

***Sand County Almanac* Reading Event:** Board Vice President Charlie Frisk (aka Aldo Leopold's ghost) and Executive Director Crystal Brown participated in an Sand County Almanac Reading to Celebrate Aldo Leopold in Green Bay. Charlie opened the event with an essay he wrote about Aldo Leopold's life and land ethic. Many CWAC Members were in attendance. The event was coordinated by CWAC Members David Volker and Susan Vande Hei.

CWAC in the News: Both Board President Dean Hoegger and Vice President Charlie Frisk provided interview for local news sources regarding PFAS Legislation and the El Na Farm Runoff Event. Executive Director Crystal Brown provided commentary for articles on the proposed WOTUS ruling.

To schedule any of our educational presentations with a community group, free of charge, please contact the CWAC office at 920-421-8885 or email: contact@cleanwateractioncouncil.org

ACTIONS TO PROTECT AND MONITOR WATER QUALITY

Baird Creek Water Sampling: We have committed to another year of water sampling at Baird Creek, which has commenced in May with our spring and summer interns. This summer, intern Vikram Khot will work on analyzing previous years of data and expand our outreach to teach area youth about water sampling. We are partnering again with Baird Creek Preservation Foundation to teach their youth campers about water quality and sampling, and give them hands-on experience using equipment to take samples.

Kewaunee County Water Sampling: Debra Noel has been instrumental in ensuring water sampling takes place in Kewaunee County through the WAV program and will expand this effort with the help of volunteers and members in Baseline Stream Monitoring. In collaboration with CWAC, Debra is starting an "Adopt A Stream" program to ensure that phosphorous monitoring happens for five creeks in Kewaunee County.

OTHER ACTIONS

Packers Concessions Volunteering/Luke Combs Concert: A special thank you to Jane Benson and David Verhagen for volunteering at the Luke Combs Concert at Lambeau Field. We will have a booth throughout this upcoming season. Please join us as a volunteer. Contact the office if you are interested.

Coalition Building: Executive Director Crystal Brown continues to participate in the Community Waters Coalition, a Citizen Advisory Committee for the Green Bay and Fox River Area of Concern efforts. CWAC was a sponsor of the **Wisconsin Environmental Health Network's Annual Conference**, on March 6, in Madison, WI. Spring Interns attended the conference, tabled on CWAC information, and toured an art exhibit "For the Love of Water," featuring activist, further connecting environmental advocacy with creative public engagement.

Community Roundtable – Food Sovereignty and the Environment: CWAC will be participating in another Community Roundtable that is headed by NEW Leaf Foods. Last summer we participated in a Community Roundtable on Climate Change. This summer the focus will be on Food Sovereignty and Sustainability. This event is a collaboration between CWAC, NEW Leaf Foods, Citizens Climate Lobby, JOSHUA, Wisconsin Conservation Voters, Brown County Community Garden Program, NWTC Sustainable Agriculture Program, UW-Extension Brown County, and Oneida Nation Garden Smart Program, as well as local community members focused on sustainable food sovereignty efforts. The event is set for ***Saturday, August 1, 2026, from 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM at Wise Women Gathering Place.***

Ground Water Training Mini Grant Recipients: Crystal Brown and Mark Valentine were recipients of a mini-grant through the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and received a ground water model and training for educating youth on ground water contamination. The Training took place at the UW-Stevens Point Tree Haven Campus in Tomahawk, WI. Crystal applied for the grant in an effort to expand our educational outreach for youth.

Board Member Updates: CWAC would like to express gratitude for our departing board members, as they enter new chapters in their lives. We are grateful for all of their contributions toward supporting clean water and human health, and the advocacy they will continue in their work. **Jane Benson** has been an integral part of providing public testimony and commentary on PFAS legislation, CAFOs, and the threat of Data Center expansion in Northeast Wisconsin. **Debra Noel** has been a fierce advocate for water quality, baseline stream monitoring, and opposing the expansion of CAFOs in Northeast Wisconsin, with much advocacy for the threats faced by the citizens of Kewaunee County. **John Gosling** has served as a voice for issues

affecting our members in the Fox Valley, being a link to the Appleton community. His uplifting perspective always reminds us about the importance of peace infusing activism in our region. **Amanda Giannunzio** has supported work towards strategic planning, young adult engagement, and communications outreach. **Mark Valentine** has offered his perspectives on environmental education, youth and community engagement, and perspectives from sustainable agriculture. Their presence on the Board of Directors will be missed, and we are glad they will continue to support the promotion of clean water and human health in the community.

Staffing Update:
Executive Director Crystal Brown Resigns

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the members of Clean Water Action Council for welcoming me over this last year. I have appreciated the opportunity to interact with many of you as we work towards protecting water and promoting human health, through community engagement, education, and advocacy. My last day with CWAC will be June 19, 2026. I will miss supporting this work directly with CWAC but will continue towards these efforts in other spaces. I will be spending this summer at the UW-Madison Trout Lake Research Station as a Manoomin Stewardship Research Technician, working with the Lac du Flambeau Nation on Niibi (water) protection and Manoomin (wild rice) conservation efforts. The actions of all our members in the community have been one of the most inspiring parts of this role and I will miss you all. - Crystal Brown

CWAC'S NON-PROFIT STATUS

To learn more about our non-profit status and financials, go to the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, Credential Lookup, and then go to Credential Search for Clean Water Action Council. (https://apps.dfi.wi.gov/ice/berg/Registration/CredSummaryDetails.aspx?chid=933009&h=1122515367)

Welcome Administrative Assistant: Brie Schuldt

We are pleased to announce that former Spring 2026 Intern, Brie Schuldt, has accepted an offer to join CWAC as a staff member in our Administrative Assistant role. Brie has shown dedication and creativity through out her internship, and has contributed to creating an educational presentation for youth on bio-accumulation of toxins in aquatic species. Brie is excited to grow professionally in this role and continue her work towards supporting CWAC's mission. Welcome to the team Brie!

Work with Clean Water Action Council on Local Environmental Actions

By Dean Hoegger

Here is a list of environmental actions that you can do on your own or with support from CWAC. Contact our office if you are interested in learning more and participating; call 920-421-8885 or email: contact@cleanwateractioncouncil.org

Be a farm field cultivation monitor: Monitor cultivation of farm fields for plowing closer than the state minimum of five feet from a stream, river, or wetland. Some fields may have a conservation easement of 25 feet or more and may be identified by a conservation easement sign. Enforcing these setbacks is one of simplest actions we can take to protect water resources.

Take a photo of the possible violation and indicate the location using a road address, the direction and distance from an intersection, and other landmarks. Or turn on GPS settings in your camera. Then send that information to contact@cleanwateraction.org or to your local land and water office. CWAC has a drone if we need to get a closer look at what is farther from a public road.

Assist with water quality monitoring: CWAC monitors several creeks, one through our office in Green Bay on Danz Avenue, and several others that Deb Noel is doing in Kewaunee County. Deb is looking for citizens to adopt a stream and assist with data collection. There are also opportunities to monitor streams in Brown County. See Deb's article for more details.

Monitor fertilizer sales at retail establishments: To protect surface waters, Wisconsin has a law that restricts the sale of lawn fertilizer with phosphorus. "Retail Display Restrictions: Retailers cannot display turf fertilizers with phosphorous or available phosphate." Monitor stores that sell lawn fertilizers and report violations to our office for further action. In the past, feed mills and farm cooperatives were frequent violators. Go to this website for more details on restrictions: https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents2/TurfFertilizerRestrictions.pdf

Has your municipality banned the use of coal tar pavement sealant? CWAC has been educating municipal officials about the hazards of high PAH pavement sealants, such as coal tar sealants. These contain the carcinogen, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. We have helped area communities, including Sturgeon Bay, Jacksonport, Liberty Grove, Luxemburg, and Green Bay, to pass a ban on these sealants. Many other communities have also banned the product, such as Algoma, Manitowoc, De Pere, and Sheboygan. Help us educate your municipality about the need to ban this product.

Join the Microplastics Education Committee: Board member John Hermanson is our representative to the national organization, Beyond Plastics and Dean is offering the in-person presentation, "Protecting Your Family from

Microplastics." Join this committee to help educate the public about this concern. Watch Beyond Plastics programs and assist with CWAC's presentations and become a community educator.

Be an environmental sloth. Search for industrial permit violations using an EPA database: Use your online detective skills to monitor area industries for compliance with their pollution permits using the EPA's ECHO database. We offer instruction on using the database. Finding serious violations in the past have resulted in successful legal actions, which included damage awards and agreements to protect the environment.

Meet CWAC's Spring Intern: Devin Hessler, TRAQ Certified Arborist (WI-1540a)

Hello, protecteurs d'eau. Wisconsin is a state built on the water and protecting that resource will forever be a passion of mine. I'm a non-traditional student at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, finishing my Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Policy and Planning after a ten year hiatus. In that time I worked as and became a certified ISA arborist. Yes, that's right, I'm a tree doctor. I have spent a large portion of my life caring for our ecological world in some capacity or another. In my free time, I enjoy being in nature with my dog, Buck, on long hikes along the Ice Age Trail and playing in my gardens at home. I am hoping to plant a persimmon tree or paw paw tree this year. Last year I successfully grew an artichoke from seed. I never realized how beautiful artichokes flowers were. If you have questions regarding trees that would benefit the environment on your own property, please contact me at: hesslertreecare@gmail.com

Meet CWAC's New Summer Intern: Vikram Khot

Hello, my name is Vikram Khot, and I will be a summer intern for CWAC! I am currently a student at UW-Madison and I am majoring in Chemical Engineering. I am passionate about sustainability and keeping the environment clean around us, and I am looking forward to working to help educate more people about the importance of clean water during my time with CWAC. I am excited for this opportunity to help spread environmental awareness and also improve my own understanding, and I am looking forward to the summer!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Meetings, Events and Happenings

Saturday, August 1, 2026, from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
Food Sovereignty and the Environment Roundtable
Wise Women Gathering Place, 1644 Commanche Building, Suite 1, Green Bay

Join Northeast WI nonprofits and affiliates for a morning of roundtable discussions around food sovereignty and the environment followed by an optional lunch. This event is in partnership with: NEW Leaf Foods, UW Extension-Brown County, Citizen's Climate Lobby, Brown County Seed Library, Inspired North, and SLO Farmers Coop. For more information: www.newleaffoods.org/events

SAVE THE DATE: World Peace Festival
Saturday, September 12, 2026, 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM
Pierce Park, 1035 W Prospect Avenue, Appleton

At a time when our world is deeply longing for connections, understanding and healing, this festival is envisioned as a living expression of peace in action. Join in uplifting experiences in a welcoming, inclusive, family-friendly environment. There will be food trucks with traditional food and a variety of musical performers. There will be a children's song writing workshop this year as well as arts, crafts, and games for those of all ages. To learn more, go to: www.worldpeacefesitvalfoxcities.org

SAVE THE DATE: Community Waters Coalition: Areas of Concern Projects Tour & Community Input Event
Tuesday, September 22, 2026, 3:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary, 1660 E Shore Drive, Green Bay

Learn about the Fox River/Green Bay Area of Concern Conservation Project Sites and issues that affect our community and our relationship with the water. Enjoy food from Off the Trails and visit project sites. For more information and to register, contact: greenbaycwc@gmail.com

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
Local Urban Agriculture Edition

Check out these local events that will teach you about incorporating sustainable urban agriculture practices into your own homes and property.

Wednesday, June 24, 2026, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
Grassroots in the Garden Growing Community: Berry & Cherry Harvesting
Seymour Park Food Forest, 330 S. Oakland Avenue, Green Bay

Learn about the fruits of the Seymour Park Food Forest and harvest them for yourself. This free community workshop provides an opportunity to explore the food forest, learn about berry and cherry plants, and gain hands-on experience harvesting fresh fruit.

Thursday, June 25, 2026, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Plant Walk
Ukwakhwa Village, N6019 Lambie Rd., De Pere

Walk through the farm with a guide and learn to identify plants and medicines that grow around us.

Monday, July 13, 2026, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Community Drop-In Hours
Ukwakhwa Village, N6019 Lambie Rd., De Pere

Stop by for a farm tour or visit the trading post. No registration needed.

Tuesday, July 21, 2026, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
Grassroots in the Garden Growing Community: Medicinal Plant Workshop
Seymour Park Food Forest, 330 S. Oakland Avenue, Green Bay

Learn how to use and care for the medicinal plants growing at the Seymour Park Food Forest. Participants will discover the value of medicinal herbs and plants while gaining practical knowledge about their cultivation and stewardship.

Tuesday, July 28, 2026, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Community Drop-In Hours
Ukwakhwa Village, N6019 Lambie Rd., De Pere

Stop by for a farm tour or visit the trading post. No registration needed.

Thursday, August 13, 2026, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Plant Walk
Ukwakhwa Village, N6019 Lambie Rd., De Pere

Walk through the farm with a guide and learn to identify plants and medicines that grow around us.

Saturday, August 15, 2026, 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Grassroots in the Garden: Harvest & Maintenance
Seymour Park Food Forest, 330 S. Oakland Avenue, Green Bay

Help care for the Seymour Park Food Forest, harvest delicious plants, and enjoy some cold coffee in the morning. This hands-on volunteer workshop focuses on maintaining the food forest while sharing in the season's harvest.

Tuesday, September 1, 2026, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Community Drop-In Hours
Ukwakhwa Village, N6019 Lambie Rd., De Pere

Stop by for a farm tour or visit the trading post. No registration needed.

Monday, September 14, 2026, 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Community Drop-In Hours
Ukwakhwa Village, N6019 Lambie Rd., De Pere

Stop by for a farm tour or visit the trading post. No registration needed.

Tuesday, September 15, 2026, 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
Grassroots in the Garden: Prepping Gardens For Winter
Seymour Park Food Forest, 330 S. Oakland Avenue, Green Bay

Get hands-on learning and practice preparing gardens for winter in this free workshop. Participants will learn techniques to protect plants through colder months and help ready the Seymour Park Food Forest for the upcoming season.

Looking for a Local Farmer's Market?

Check out the Wisconsin Farmers Market Association for their complete listing of community markets. Support urban agriculture by directly supporting the farmers that grow your food. A map and search tool allows you to find the close market to your home, reducing your carbon footprint! https://www.wifarmersmarkets.org/find-a-wisconsin-farmers-market

Wisconsin Farmers Market Association

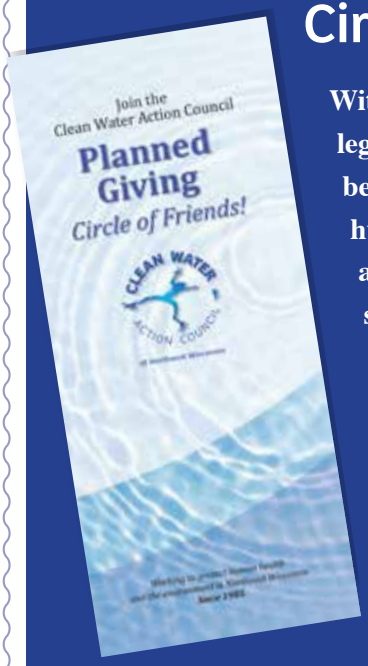
BE PART OF THE PACKERS GAME DAY EXCITEMENT!

We are seeking volunteers for our Packers' game day concession stand for all home games.
We end sales when the fourth quarter starts and leave by the end of the game.

Last season we had lots of fun, connected with fans about our work, and earned $11,564!

Email us with Packers' Concessions in the subject line for more information.

Join Our Planned Giving Circle of Friends



Without planned giving donations or legacies, our organization would not be able to do the work of protecting human health and the environment at its current level. Please consider supporting our endowment fund at the Greater Green Bay Community Foundation with a gift in your will or bequest.

Contact us for a Planned Giving Brochure

Wondering what to do with your required minimum distribution?
Make a qualified charitable distribution from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA) to Clean Water Action Council

What is a qualified charitable distribution?
Starting at age 70 ½ you can choose to gift up to $108,000 annually directly to a qualified charity from most IRAs, with the distribution being tax free. This type of gift is called a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). It's not only a powerful incentive for charitable giving, it also has tax benefits. QCDs count as IRA distributions, so they can be used to satisfy all or some of your required minimum distribution (RMS) for the calendar year.

What type of organization qualifies for my donation?
A QCD must be made to a qualified 501 (c)(3) organization (a charitable organization eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions). Clean Water Action Council of NE Wisconsin is a 501 (c)(3). Contact your financial advisor to learn more about making a qualified charitable distribution!

Thank you to...

Stephanie Heckel & Melissa Roulo
for student internships
~
David & Caroline Link
for educational outreach
~
Carole Wood
for office rent for the year

Please follow us on Facebook.
Click here for our page: ***Facebook***

https://www.facebook.com/cleanwateractioncouncil

Please follow us on Instagram.
Click here for our page: ***Instagram***

https://www.instagram.com/cleanwateractioncouncil/

THANK YOU TO OUR MEMBERS WHO RENEWED FOR 2026

If you have not renewed, please know that memberships are for a calendar year. To check your membership status, look at your address label which shows your last renewal year or in the body of the email for emailed newsletters. You can mail your membership donation with the form on page 19 or go online to http://www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org/membership/.

Join or Renew Your Membership to Clean Water Action Council for 2026!

Date_____

☐ Renewal ☐ New Member

( ) $25 Individual ( ) $50 Sustaining **(this amount would really help)**

( ) $35 Family ( ) $100 Donor ( ) $500 Benefactor

( ) Non-member donation of $ _____for_____

( ) Other $_____

( ) Please send me information about making a planned gift to CWAC

Name(s)_____

Address _____

City _____State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Receive FREE newsletters with each membership.

Please choose one... ☐ Printed version ☐ E-mailed version

Send check or money order to:

Clean Water Action Council
P.O. Box 9144
Green Bay, WI 54308

To pay with a credit card or to make a monthly contribution, please go to:
https://www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org/membership/

CWAC is a registered non-profit organization.
Your contributions may be tax-deductible. ***Thank you!***

PLEASE VOLUNTEER!
(BE SURE TO PROVIDE PHONE NUMBER ABOVE)

☐ the newsletter ☐ events ☐ work at office ☐ mailings

☐ other_____

Office location:
310P Rose Hall, UW-Green Bay, 2420 Nicolet Drive
Green Bay, WI 54311

www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org

Find us on Facebook or updates on hearings and current or upcoming events.

The newsletter, "Clean Water Action Council of N.E.WI" is published quarterly by the Clean Water Action Council of Northeast Wisconsin, Inc., P.O. Box 9144, Green Bay, WI 54308, a registered non-profit charitable, educational organization.
Contributions may be tax-deductible.

To become a member of CWAC, go to https://www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org/membership/

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Urban Agriculture: Growing Solutions to Climate and Water Challenges

For previous newsletters, go to: www.cleanwateractioncouncil.org/newsletter/