



The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Creating a Conservation Future for the Badger Lands

NEW TRAILS OPEN



Alliance volunteers complete assembly of trail markets.



Ben Levers, youngest Alliance volunteer and mountain biker, flags trails



Nancy Piraino swinging a pick ax.

AT BADGER!

Interested in exploring Badger? It's now easy, thanks to the efforts of a large group of Alliance volunteers who marked over 12 miles of trail on the state-owned Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area this summer. Throughout much of August and September, volunteers invested almost 300 hours of labor flagging trails, constructing trail markers, and installing trail markers for three trail systems at Badger. The trail marking effort culminated with the formal release of the Alliance's "Visitor Guide to the Badger Lands" that identifies the accessible public trails. All trails are open to hiking and biking, while some trails are also open to horse riding. Vehicles are limited to a few main roads into and throughout the Recreation Area.

The three trail systems that have been marked are temporary until which time DNR is able to plan and install a comprehensive trail system on the property according to their Master Plan. The new trails are located on different parcels of the Recreation

Area, but all follow the old roadways of the former ammunition plant. (See map on page 7.) The yellow trail in the north traverses a pleasantly undulating terrain with views of open meadows and closed forest. The middle trail section—green—follows a network of old north-south and east-west roads through relatively open and flat terrain. This trail system offers great views of the nearby Baraboo Bluffs. The third trail system—red—is in an isolated tract of state land in the south of the Recreation Area. This series of loops offers easy walking or biking through tranquil meadows and shrublands.

The Alliance is grateful to our dozens of volunteers of all ages from 12 to 80 who have helped with trail work at Badger this summer. These dedicated and hard-working volunteers have truly contributed to a historic moment by providing new and easy access to a landscape that was heretofore hard to traverse. Come explore Badger! More images continued on Page 3.

Meet the Board: David Serafy-Cox



My involvement with Badger and the Alliance began many years ago (when we were called the Community Conservation Coalition for the Sauk Prairie, CCCSP) and has to do with another organization of which I am a member, Madison Mennonite Church. Jesus' vision of a healed and reconciled world of peace and wholeness, involving all of creation, is central to Mennonite theology. After a group of us Mennonites had attended several of the impressive CCCSP-sponsored public

lectures about the Badger Plant and its possible future in 2000, and after we had met some of the early CCCSP folks and heard their visionary hopes and plans for the land at Badger, we decided to join up. Our reason was very simple: we were, and continue to be, drawn to the powerful idea of a former military ammunition plant, with its fraught history and function, being transformed into a place of peace and life-affirming uses, for both the human community and the land itself, a symbol to those who come after us of how harmony among people, and between people and the land, can be established and maintained.

As many of us know, the transformation of the Badger lands has been, and will continue to be, a long and sometimes discouraging process. So why have I stayed involved all these years? In addition to the vision of transformation on the land and in the community, it has been the many fine folks who share this passion for Badger whom I am privileged to know and have come to admire through these years. My thanks to them.

Note: David attended countless meetings during the early phases of planning the future of Badger, he regularly participates in volunteer work days at Badger, and he has served on the Alliance Board of Directors for more than a dozen years.

in his own words

LAWSUIT UPDATE

Brian Potts, attorney for Alliance

Our members are aware that the Alliance sued the DNR and the National Park Service (and others) this winter for including inappropriate—and we argue, illegal—high impact recreation activities (off-road motorcycles, dog training, helicopter training) in their final approved Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area, the almost 3,400-acre state-owned land at Badger.

There are three things associated with our lawsuits that are pending:

- Earlier this summer, the federal district court in Madison refused to grant a “stay” (temporary cessation) of the high-impact uses while our case proceeds. We have appealed that decision to the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago and expect a decision later this fall.
- In the federal district court in Madison, the federal government just filed the record, which means that briefing on the merits of our case can begin. We will be filing briefs in September and October, and we expect the federal district court to decide the merits of our case sometime in early to mid-2018.
- In state court in Sauk County, we are waiting for the judge to rule on whether or not the DNR should have allowed us to have a contested case hearing (which is effectively a trial before the agency). All of the briefs have been filed, and we are just waiting for a decision. We expect a decision sometime in the next few months. This is just a procedural question; the judge will not be deciding the case on the merits.

Charlie's Corner



By **Charlie Luthin**,
Executive Director

The summer has passed with breathtaking rapidity. There was hardly a moment to catch our breaths, so much has transpired! Thanks to the great efforts of Bob Schwartz, our Restoration Coordinator this season, we've held bi-monthly volunteer restoration days at Badger since April. A second major volunteer effort has been to flag and then mark hiking/biking trails on the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area. Finally, we have been successful at planning a variety of interesting programs, tours and events at Badger this fall. Following the marking of 12 miles of trail at Badger, we have released the print version of our “Visitor Guide to the Badger Lands” to the public. At long last, the public lands at Badger are now easily accessible. We celebrated public access to Badger with our “Explore Badger Day” on September 23. If you have not received our fall program brochure, please visit our website for details of that and other fall programs. See you at Badger!

Ho-Chunk Nation Names Badger Property “Sacred Earth”

Excerpted from a report by Randy Poelma

Chair of the Ho-Chunk Nation Badger Oversight Team and property manager



The Ho-Chunk Nation has officially named its 1,550 acres at Badger, “**Maa Wakȁçąk,**” meaning Sacred Earth. This name was chosen because of the proximity of these lands to Tee Wakȁçąk, the Ho-Chunk name for the area known to us as Devil’s Lake.

The Nation has been an exemplary leader in demonstrating good stewardship of land at Badger. With the goal of restoring native grassland to the majority of its property, the Nation burned approximately 750 acres this past spring, including the majority of the grasslands on the northern half of Nation land. Next spring the Nation plans

to burn approximately 570 acres on the south half of their land.

In order to clear large areas of invasive shrubs from its grasslands, the Ho-Chunk Nation has contracted what is called “forestry mowing” on approximately 570 acres on the southern half of their property last winter and summer. This work complemented prior forestry mowing on 480 acres on the northern half. Additional shrub control is ongoing, funded by a Bureau of Indian Affairs invasive species grant and almost \$20,000 provided to the Nation by the Alliance from a Sauk County ATC fund grant.

The Alliance provided the Ho-Chunk Nation with \$20,000 to support brush-clearing on their land at Badger this past summer.

MORE TRAILBLAZERS

continued from page 1



Badger Apples Thrive!

by **Curt Meine**
Badger Apple Corps

This past spring, a group of volunteers joined the Alliance's "Apple Corps" team to graft cuttings of historic apple trees from Badger onto rootstock. (See Spring 2017 newsletter). Those young trees were planted by a dozen volunteers into a new nursery on Dairy Forage Research Center land in late May. Here is a summary of the status of those grafted apple trees in the nursery:

- Total grafts done at spring workshop (March 26)~210
- Total grafted trees planted (May 30) 130
- Surviving successfully grafted trees (August 15)82
- Failed grafted trees (August 15)40
- Total # of historic apple trees from Badger successfully grafted25

So we lost a few trees, but that is natural for grafted stock, especially for first-time inexperienced grafters! Nonetheless, we are happy with the success so far. We're grateful to the many helpful volunteers this season and to Dairy Forage for their help with caring for the nursery.

The Apple Corps is now in the process of re-marking and mapping all of the historic Badger apple trees. The Alliance is also supporting the production of a short video about the Badger apples. The video will be available on our website and on the forthcoming "Badger App" being developed for the Badger lands.





Volunteers helped plant grafted apple trees into a new nursery at Badger in May.

Membership expiring?
Not a member yet,
but like what you see?

Make a donation or
JOIN the ALLIANCE online at
saukprairievision.org

The Alliance is a volunteer tax-exempt organization that has been working for and with the community to promote a "green future" for Badger since 1997. We offer free public presentations, lectures and tours. We conduct bi-monthly volunteer restoration days at Badger through spring, summer and fall, and we promote the safe and easy access to the state-owned portion of Badger, the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area. **PLEASE SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS WITH A DONATION OR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!**

Over 70 1/2 years of age? You can help us with a **tax-free charitable contribution (up to \$100,000) directly from your traditional or Roth IRA.**

Wildlife at Badger



Bluebird Report

By Donna and Bill Stehling

We maintain a 20-mile "bluebird trail" with 67 bluebird houses on old roads at Badger. We monitor those boxes every week throughout spring and summer until the last of the nests is empty. Our route takes us 2 hours each week to monitor... and it is very rewarding! We are pleased to share this summary of this season's nesting activity:

- **42 of 67 boxes** were used by Bluebirds
- A total of **376 Bluebird eggs were laid**, and **215 Bluebird eggs hatched**
- **125 Bluebirds fledged**
- Other nest box inhabitants included Tree Swallows (**13 Tree Swallows fledged**) and House Wrens (**39 House Wrens fledged**). Nests of these species were left undisturbed.

This season's considerable rainfall from March into July caused deaths of many Bluebird hatchlings. So instead of three distinct nesting periods this season, we observed only two due to that early mortality. This trend was reported across the state.

Charlie Luthin: I've been spending quite a bit of time at Badger, coordinating trail marking crews and helping on our regular restoration days. While flagging the northern trail close to the boundary fence with Devil's Lake State Park, I

found a very dry scat (animal dropping) that was completely full of hair. A similar scat was found by our trail crew not far from the first. I attributed this scat to a lone wolf, but sent this photo to DNR biologists to confirm. Other wildlife and signs that

I have seen include: a skunk ambling along the road, many signs of coyote, a red fox and lots of birds, most notably a lone peregrine falcon sighted in the power poles on Ho-Chunk land at the entrance to Badger.



Other wildlife observations & musings

The Alliance, Ho-Chunk Nation and Dairy Forage contracted **Mike Mossman** to undertake a thorough bird survey across all of Badger this spring/summer using the same transects he used in 1997-1998 and 2011-2012.

“The Badger bird community has continued to shift from open grassland species like the increasingly rare Eastern Meadowlark, Bobolink and Field Sparrow, to those of dense shrubs, like the common Gray Catbird and House Wren. But recent habitat work done by DNR and especially the Ho-Chunk Nation has made a huge difference in halting this vegetation shift. The Ho-Chunk grasslands managed with prescribed burns and invasive shrub control were full of meadowlarks and bobolinks, and there was even an Upland Sandpiper apparently nesting there. This illustrates the immediate positive effects of management efforts and gives great hope for the future of Badger bird life.”



Possible wolf scat at Badger, summer 2017

Visitor Guide to Badger Lands Now Available

The Alliance's long-anticipated **"Visitor Guide to the Badger Lands"** is now available to the public! This useful brochure provides an overview of the history of the land and a full-color map of the 7,400-acres that comprise the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant. The four primary landowners are identified on the map: Wisconsin DNR, Ho-Chunk Nation, USDA Dairy Forage Research Center and Bluffview Sanitary District. Public access is allowed **ONLY** on the 3,385-acre Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area.

The map shows public roads and three color-marked trail systems on the Recreation Area (see accompanying article) and also identifies over 20 points of interest on public land. Brief narratives of the points of interest accompany the Visitor Guide. You can now comfortably explore Badger on your own—by car, by foot, by bike or on horse! We anticipate that the Visitor Guide will have a short life span, as there will be many changes at Badger in the next several years as DNR begins to implement its master plan for the state-owned portion of Badger. New trails will be planned and marked and infrastructure and parking areas will be constructed and opened to the public. Better signage will be installed guiding visitors to different areas of the property.

Anticipating the limited future utility of the Guide, we are currently building a digital version of the Visitor Guide — the "Badger App." This web-based application (and eventual downloadable app) will include all of the same content as the Visitor Guide, and much more. Points of interest will be interpreted in photos and text, and the Badger

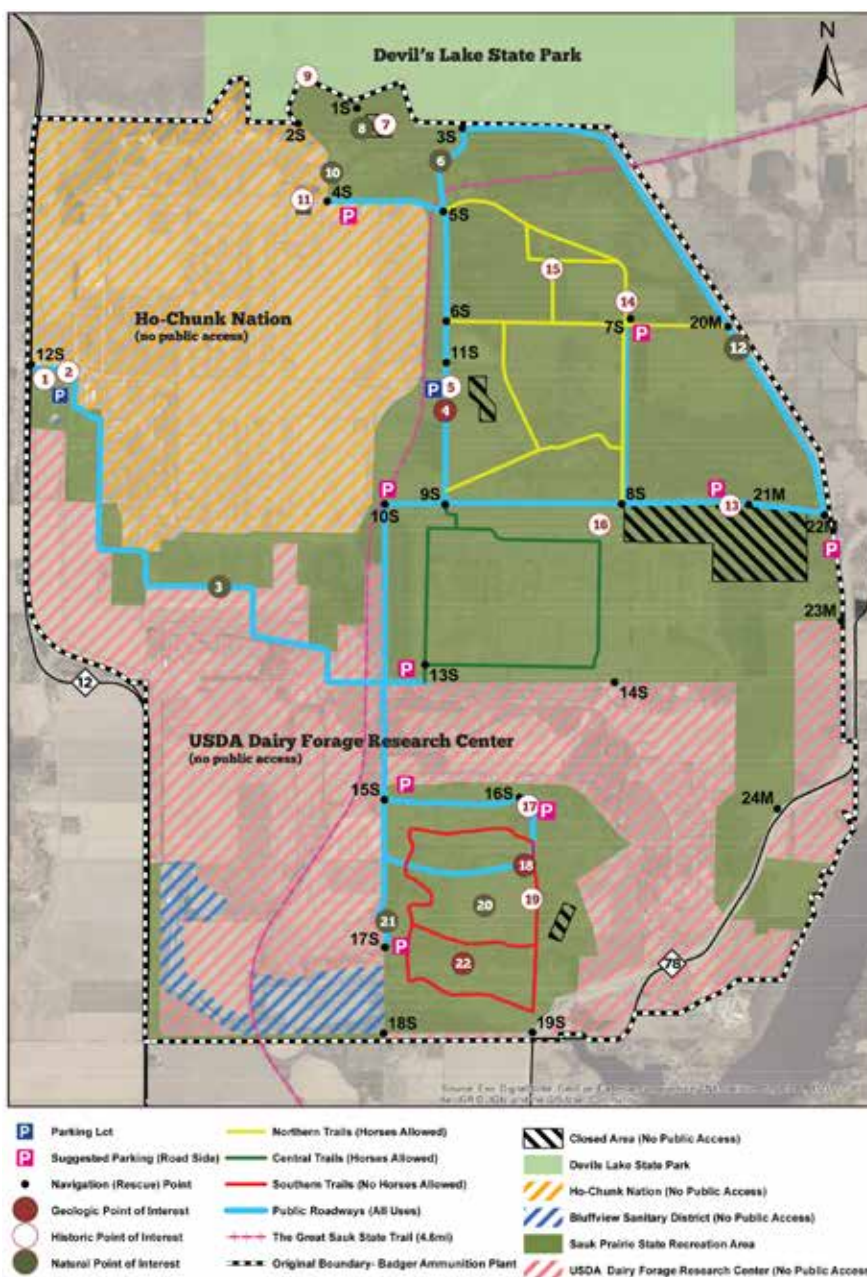
App will include video clips and interviews to provide robust content. We'll include interpretation along the Great Sauk State Trail that will be constructed through Badger starting in 2018.

We are grateful to REI (Madison store) for their generous grant that catalyzed this project in 2016. McFarlane's (Sauk City)

generously supported the printing and mailing of the Guide. Other sponsors include the Norma and Stanley Quiet Trails Fund of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, and Friends of Scenic Lodi Valley.

Want a copy of the Visitor Guide? Alliance members will automatically receive a copy in the mail. The

Guides are also available at the entrance to Badger, in the Badger Museum, at the Sauk-Prairie Chamber of Commerce, at McFarlanes in Sauk City, and in various tourist venues (hotels, galleries, restaurants) throughout Sauk County. Still can't find one? Send us an e-mail and we'll send you a copy! info@SaukPrairieVision.org.



- 1 MUSEUM OF BADGER ARMY AMMUNITION
- 2 HISTORIC BADGER PLANT ENTRANCE
- 3 PRAIRIE & BLUFF VIEW
- 4 TERMINAL MORaine & OUTWASH PLAIN
- 5 NITROGLYCERINE PLANT
- 6 POND
- 7 RESERVOIRS
- 8 SAUK PRAIRIE OVER-LOOK
- 9 PERIMETER FENCE
- 10 WILDLIFE PONDS
- 11 PIONEER CEMETERY
- 12 PRAIRIE GRASSLAND
- 13 LANDFILL
- 14 DETERRENT BURNING GROUNDS
- 15 TNT PLANT
- 16 ROCKET POWDER AREA
- 17 THOELKE CEMETERY AND CHURCH
- 18 KETTLE POND
- 19 STEIDTMAN FARM-STEAD
- 20 MAGAZINE PASTURE GRASSLAND
- 21 HILLSIDE PRAIRIE
- 22 SETTLING PONDS AND GLACIAL LAKE OUTLET



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FALL 2017

Alliance Calendar

PROGRAMS

Programs are on Thursdays and begin at 6:30pm in the Ruth Culver Library, 540 Water Street, Prairie du Sac.

October 19: The Merrimac Preserve: Preserving and Restoring its Diverse Natural Communities by Linda Lynch, Director, Riverland Conservancy

November 16: Pollinators in southern Wisconsin's agricultural landscapes: Opportunities for conservation by Dr. Claudio Gratton, Professor, UW-Madison Department of Entomology

December 14: Looking Back, Looking Forward: Twenty Years of Community and Conservation on the Badger Landscape, a panel discussion by Curt Meine, Mike Mossman, Gail Lamberty & Mike Degen to celebrate the Alliance's 20th anniversary

TOUR

Saturday, October 28: Geologic History of the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area (1:00pm to 4:00pm) Leader: Philip Fauble, Wisconsin DNR Hydrogeologist. **Reservation required:** e-mail: info@SaukPrairieVision.org or call Charlie at: 608-358-7120.

VOLUNTEER WORK DAYS

Saturdays: October 14, October 28, November 11. Work days are from 9:00am to 12:00pm. Meet at the Badger Museum parking lot on Hwy 12 at 8:45am for directions and to carpool to the work site. Wear long pants, slip-proof shoes or boots and work gloves. More details on our website.

New Book: The Driftless Reader

The Alliance's co-founder, conservation historian and author, Curt Meine, has co-edited with colleague Keefe Keeley a new book about the "Driftless Area" of a four-state area entitled "The Driftless Reader." The authors celebrated their book release at a special event sponsored by the Aldo Leopold Foundation at the Leopold Center near Baraboo on September 14th.

The Badger lands straddle the terminal moraine of the last episode of Pleistocene glaciation. Look to the west beyond Highway 12 and one can see the easternmost sandstone bluffs of the Driftless Area—that region of Wisconsin and adjacent Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois that escaped the glacier's impact. The rugged topography of the Driftless

Area has made it home to unique ecological features and to a distinctive mix of cultures and communities. The Driftless Reader brings together more than eighty selected readings on the natural and cultural history of the region. From geology, archaeology, and Native voices, to the history of exploration, conservation, and contemporary poetry, the Driftless Reader offers a portrait of the region that will appeal to Driftless inhabitants and visitors alike.

Published by the University of Wisconsin Press, The Driftless Reader is available online at <https://uwpress.wisc.edu/books/5538>.

htm, or through your local bookstore. Throughout the fall Curt and Keefe will be traveling around and about the Driftless Area, from Dubuque to Eau Claire, from La Crosse to Baraboo, sharing stories, voices, and images of the region. Look for Curt and Keefe coming to your local community!

