

## 2008 Projects

**Thank you to all of our volunteers, partners and staff who collaborated on these projects!**

### **COMMUNITY LAWN FERTILIZER ORDINANCES PROTECT LAKES AND STREAMS FROM EXCESS PHOSPHORUS**

Town and Country RC&D Water Team is working with local communities to control phosphorus runoff from the unnecessary use of phosphorus in lawn fertilizers. Since local soils are naturally high in phosphorus, the application of additional unnecessary phosphorus in lawn fertilizers does not benefit our lawns, and can cause big problems for the lakes. When soils are saturated with phosphorus, it runs off into our lakes and streams where 1 lb. of phosphorus can generate 500 lbs of algae.

Because of our efforts, the City of Oconomowoc, the Villages of Lac La Belle, Chenequa, and Nashotah, and Towns of Merton and Oconomowoc, have all passed phosphorus ordinances to protect the lakes in their communities.

We are also supporting the Wisconsin Association of Lakes in an attempt to pass a statewide law. The law passed the Senate, but not the Assembly, last session, and will be reintroduced in 2009.

### **EMERALD ASH BORER EDUCATION AND PROFITABLE WOOD UTILIZATION**

Town and Country is working with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and Department of Natural Resources, local municipalities, and the local wood processing industry to initiate a local network for profitable utilization of trees killed by the Emerald Ash Borer. The anticipated surge in dying ash trees resulting from this pest present a great challenge for communities, but the wood resource also presents a great resource. Development of an urban wood utilization network will expand in 2009 including equipment demonstration workshops and outreach to private landowners.

### **FARM FRESH ATLAS**

The Farm Fresh Atlas of Southeastern Wisconsin is a local food guide for the Milwaukee Metropolitan area and surrounding counties. It features farms and businesses that are family or cooperatively owned, operate in a way that protects and sustains the region's land and water resources, provide safe and fair working conditions, and produce, use, or sell Wisconsin farm products.

The Farm Fresh Atlas of Southeastern Wisconsin has been in print and online for 4 years. In 2008, 90,000 copies were printed and are in the process of being distributed. The online version is available at: <http://www.farmfreshatlas.org/southeast/>.

The Farm Fresh Atlas is supported by the following organizations, whose members make up the planning committee: UW Cooperative Extension, Town and Country RC & D, Slow Food Wisconsin SE and the Milwaukee CSA Initiative.

Funding for this program comes from farmer and business listing fees as well as from businesses who choose to support the atlas as major underwriters.

The budget for the 2008 atlas is approximately \$15,000, which does not include all of the in-kind support from the organizations that plan the atlas, as well as the in-kind support we get from UW Parkside, whose graphic design students put the atlas together as part of an internship experience; SEWRPC, who supplies us with the map; and countless individuals who distribute the atlases in their local communities.

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[And all or part of the following river basins: Fox \(III\) River, Rock River, Milwaukee River, Root – Pike River, Sheboygan River, Sugar – Pecontonica River, Lower Wisconsin River, and Upper Fox River Basins](#)

## **Town and Country Resource Conservation & Development, Inc.**

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The Farm Fresh Atlas of Southeastern Wisconsin is one of five grassroots efforts throughout the state working to support direct marketing farmers, farmers markets and local businesses by connecting them to consumers in the same local area.

### **FORAGE SUITABILITY DATABASE**

Town and Country RC&D created the Forage Suitability Database, a national database project under the direction of the Natural Resource Conservation Service. The purpose of the database is to organize and make available to grazing planners, landowners and others, forage information used in developing management plans for producers engaged in Management Intensive Grazing or grass-based farming. For the Wisconsin database, a team of NRCS soil scientists, grazing specialists, state climatologists and UW Extension research specialists worked to identify those soil and climate features which most influence forage species selection, growth curve and yield data in the state. The goal of the database is to help farmers and ranchers succeed in grass-based production and promote the positive economic and environmental benefits of this type of land use.

### **FORUM SPONSORSHIP FOR THE DRUMLIN AREA LAND TRUST**

In March of 2008, Town and Country RC&D, in partnership with DALT, and the Jefferson County Farm Bureau, sponsored an educational forum on the Economic Benefits of Preserving Farmland. Scott Everett from the American Farmland Trust conducted two forums in Watertown, educating the public and elected officials on successful ways to preserve farmland.

### **Gasification Education and Experimentation**

Town and Country and Sustain Jefferson members constructed a prototype downdraft stratified gasifier and demonstrated it in operation at the 2008 Midwest Renewable Energy Fair and other venues. In demonstrating our ability to create syngas from biomass, we created a buzz at this largest sustainability fair in the country that was equal parts technological and inspirational. With the evidence before their eyes, fairgoers saw that when it comes to Town and Country members and creating solutions for small farm or home-based energy production, "yes we can!" applies.

### **The Going Green Conference**

The Going Green Conference, created by Town and Country RC&D staff and volunteers, profiled a wide range of transportation, energy, and agricultural sustainability projects, attracting 235 participants from dozens of communities throughout the RC&D region. Presenters connected with attendees ranging in age from high school students to retirees. Vendors and non-profits manned booths adding real-world opportunities for green economic development. The conference was videotaped by volunteers for wide and prolonged distribution of the information. A list-serve was created for on-going participation and networking of attendees.

### **MANAGED INTENSIVE GRAZING ASSISTANCE**

Town and Country provides assistance to beginning and other farmers who are considering converting to a Management Intensive Grazing System for dairy, beef, sheep, goat and poultry livestock.

Town and Country's grazing specialist provides individualized grazing plans and ongoing technical support to farmers in Dane, Dodge, Columbia, Green

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Lake, Jefferson, Washington, Ozaukee and Milwaukee Counties. The specialist works with Michael Fields Agricultural Institute to provide any needed technical assistance to farmers in Rock, Walworth, Waukesha, Kenosha and Racine counties.

The grazing specialist works collaboratively with various agencies and organizations in our thirteen-county area to reach farmers through a variety of educational programs, such as pasture walks, workshops and other outreach efforts. In addition, the specialist and Town and Country volunteers participate in a number of activities to educate consumers on the benefits of grazing and grass-fed products. Town and Country features meats, cheeses and other grass-fed animal products, as well as other local foods, at its conferences, workshops and meetings.

Funding for the grazing specialist comes from the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) Grant program.

### **The Natural Step Study Circles for Sustainability**

Town and Country RC&D, in partnership with Sustain Jefferson, assembled instruction materials for leading Natural Step trainings and recruited local leaders to organize local Natural Step study circles. We provided support materials, advice and facilitation for individuals wishing to organize study circles, or for groups requesting a facilitated study circle in their community. Town and Country led Natural Step discussions in three communities. We provided outreach to local leaders to help them systemically assess their businesses or municipalities for efficiencies and encouraged trainings to promote integrated movement toward environmental and economic sustainability.

### **Regional Water Quality Management Plan Update for the Greater Milwaukee Watersheds**

Town and country RC&D was represented on the advisory committee that completed this report of the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

### **SE WISCONSIN REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Town and Country RC&D is participating on the Plan Advisory Committee which is developing recommendations for communities in the seven county SEWRPC area to better coordinate their use and protection of our ground and surface water resources.

To see progress thus far, go to the web site of the SE Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission: [www.sewrpc.org](http://www.sewrpc.org).

### **Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Cooperative**

The Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Cooperative (SEWISC) is a broad-based coalition that promote efficient and effective management of invasive species throughout an eight-county region. The mission of SEWICS is to education the public and protect biodiversity and ecological function throughout this region, contributing to a high quality of life for present and future generations. SEWICS includes Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington and Waukesha counties.

Town and Country RC&D is acting as the fiscal agent for this Cooperative and is actively fundraising to be able to provide staff support for the Cooperative.

### **TAKE ACTION FOR CLIMATE CHANGE: SPECIAL WISCONSIN VEHICULAR LICENSE PLATE PROGRAM**

Town and Country RC&D, working with other non-profit organizations, is leading and promoting Wisconsin instituting a special Climate Change vehicular license plate and related Conservation Driver promotional program. The special license plate logo

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and motto would be:

Wisconsin Conservation Driver: Curbing Climate Change.

Other project components include:

- Pledge card, for driver's to personally commit to Climate Change driving actions: Ex: driving the speed limit or lower; keep tire pressure at optimum; regular tune ups, and so fourth.
- Pennant for the vehicle which would visibly signal to other drivers that this car, this driver is "Flying the Flag for Climate."
- Bumper sticker or 'gel' sticker for car windows with a similar message.

### Town and Country RC&D Annual Meeting

Town and Country RC&D held its Annual Meeting on February 6, 2008 at the Oconomowoc Lake Club with over 50 attendees. Ann Sayers, Wisconsin League of Conservation Voters, spoke on "Protecting our Great Lakes with a Strong Compact for a Strong Wisconsin". Executive Chef and Vision Team member, Jack Kaestner, prepared a locally sourced dinner. The evening also included a business meeting and silent auction.

### WATER STAR COMMUNITY PROGRAM

In partnership with the Rock River Coalition, the Wisconsin Water Star Community Program is being developed to reward communities who make exemplary efforts to improve their local waters: surface water, groundwater, habitat and recreation (human health). Communities will be honored annually for their achievements in these areas. In a Water Star Community the elected officials, staff and citizens value, protect, restore and celebrate its lakes, rivers, wetlands, groundwater and shorelines.

### WATER-WISE IN WAUKESHA

Over 120 people came to Carroll College to hear about Global Climate Change impacts on Wisconsin, Saving the Great Lakes, and conserving water at home and in our community. Town and Country RC&D co-sponsors this annual event.

### WAUKESHA WATER CONSERVATION COALITION

Town and Country RC&D is a partner of the Waukesha Water Conservation Coalition, which is sponsoring the Waukesha Water Conservation Challenge. This is the program created to involve homeowners in water conservation and get them thinking about water usage. The program was available to Waukesha Water Utility customers. Registration for the program ended on November 30, 2007. Over 200 people registered to take part in the year-long contest. Prizes will be awarded to those homeowners showing the greatest water reduction on their utility bills. There are also prizes for the most innovative methods to save water.

### WETLAND DETERMINATIONS FOR NRCS

Town and Country RC&D contracted with Steve Prissel and Tom Thrall to complete 6,683 acres of wetland determinations as a service to our counties and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

### WOODLAND OWNERS WORKSHOP

On Saturday, September 6th, over 50 private woodland owners attended an all-day workshop at Riveredge Nature Center to learn about their land. The effort is a collaboration of the Wisconsin DNR, the University of Wisconsin Extension's Basin Education Program and Ozaukee and Washington County's

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Land Conservation Departments with sponsorship from Town and Country RC&D. Participants took to the trails to identify trees and learn about diseases, insect pests, invasives and determine good situations in which to cut. After lunch speakers addressed woodland wildlife and cost-share program opportunities for landowners. A special Emerald Ash Borer session was added to the agenda after the recent arrival of the pest to these counties.

The *Learn About Your Land* program is a state-wide effort that has been promoted by the DNR and UW-Extension to provide more training for the typical private woodland owner. The organizers anticipate more programs in the future and will base their topics on feedback from the participants. They also encourage woodland owners to weigh in with their topic needs by calling Gail Epping Overholt at 414-290-2434 or via email at [gail.overholt@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:gail.overholt@ces.uwex.edu). If other areas in Town and Country RC&D's service area are interested in participating, you may also contact Gail or your own Basin Educator.

### **VALUE-ADDED GRANT PRESENTATION**

Town and Country RC&D hosted this event by arranging for meeting space, publicizing the event and providing refreshments. The presentation focused on federal and state grant programs that help fund value added agricultural enterprises and sustainable agriculture research and education. The presenters included Mike Bandli, Agricultural and Development Grant Program, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Fred Madison, UW-Madison, presenting on SARE (Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education) Grant Program; and Barb Brewster, USDA Rural Development, presenting on the Value-Added-Producer Grant Program.

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