



Blazing Star

Newsletter for the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District

Welcome to the Blazing Star, the newsletter for Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District. Stay up to date on our current projects and events while learning about conservation and management efforts, endangered species, and habitat restoration.

Let's come together to protect our precious local flora and fauna.

From the President

Update from the Board: President's Report

Fall. We knew it was coming, and yet it surprised us once again. As I write this in mid-September and the leaves are just starting to turn here in the District, the temperature will see the high 80s today. A time of transition. The "super monarchs" are emerging for their long voyage. The teal are thinking about heading south. The mice are thinking of finding indoor homes. The snakes are lying in the trails to find the sun. Seeds of all types are drying in place and ready to propagate.

We humans will start our "winterization" processes as the days shorten and the leaves fall. Another growing season has passed. As we navigate through the turmoil of the times, I urge each of us to take a moment and reflect on what is happening immediately around you. A day in the life of a "super monarch," the urge of the teal to duck out of Dodge before the first frost. Life goes on, rocky soil and all. We grow what we can and tend to it.

Brian Headlee
President, FSCWMD

Acting Project Leader

Hunting Season Reminders for WPA Visitors

As hunting season gets underway, we welcome sportsmen and women back to the Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) of the St. Croix Wetland Management District. These public lands offer exceptional opportunities to enjoy the outdoors and pursue game, but they also rely on responsible use and shared stewardship.

Before heading out, please take a moment to review the rules and regulations that help protect wildlife, habitat, and the experience for all visitors.

Key Reminders:

- **Only foot travel is allowed on WPAs.**

Motorized vehicles, including ATVs and UTVs, are not permitted beyond the designated parking areas.

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Hunting Season Reminders. continued

- **Hunting is allowed for migratory birds, upland game, and big game** in accordance with state seasons and regulations.
- **Non-toxic shot is required** for all shotgun hunting. Lead shot is not allowed on WPAs.
- **Portable blinds, tree stands, and "trail" cameras** are permitted but must be removed daily. No permanent structures may be built.
- **Dogs are welcome** for hunting, but must be under control at all times to avoid disturbing wildlife and other visitors. Dogs not taking part in legal hunting activities must be leashed at all times.
- **Respect posted signs and boundaries.** Some areas, like Oak Ridge WPA, have seasonal restrictions or closures.

In 2025, thousands of hours will have been donated by volunteers to maintain and improve

these lands. From mowing parking lots to restoring habitat, their work helps ensure WPAs remain healthy and accessible for all users—including hunters.

We encourage everyone to hunt ethically, follow the rules, and leave no trace. Your actions help preserve these lands for future generations of hunters, birdwatchers, and outdoor enthusiasts alike.

Chris Trosen
Acting Project Leader
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
St. Croix Wetland Management District
Whittlesey Creek National Wildlife Refuge
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New Richmond, WI 54017
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Conservation Update

Too Much of a Good Thing

By Will Maher

Trees! How wonderful they are! They give us clean air to breathe, help hold soil in place, store carbon, and give wildlife homes. The list of benefits could go on and on, but can you have too much of a good thing? There is no doubt a fully stocked stand of mature timber is a beautiful sight to behold. But what happens when trees are left unchecked in the wrong habitats? The grasslands and savannas found across the St. Croix Wetland Management District are prime examples of habitats that can easily get overcrowded and outcompeted by woody species. In these environments, non-fire-adapted tree species such as boxelder, Siberian elm, eastern red cedar, and the dreaded European buckthorn serve as perches and den trees for predators, but shade out the rich

diversity of native forbs below them and block otherwise unbroken horizons that many species depend on. Grasslands in Wisconsin face a unique challenge compared to other areas of North America when it comes to tree encroachment because Wisconsin has no shortage of moisture. Given the opportunity, trees can grow just about anywhere in the state, which is not always the case in the grasslands of the west. Because of this active habitat, stewardship is key to maintaining our grasslands and savanna ecosystems. Fire, grazing, mowing, grinding, and herbicide applications all play a role in keeping woody growth in check and are all used at St. Croix to keep habitats in tip-top shape for wildlife and the recreationalists who treasure them!

Honoring Service Through the Outdoors

Annual Veterans and Active Military Canada Goose Hunt a Resounding Success

By Chris Trosen and Chuck Wincek

Earlier this month, the St. Croix Wetland Management District, in partnership with the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District and The Fallen Outdoors-Team Wisconsin, hosted its annual Veterans and Active Military Canada Goose Hunt—an event that continues to grow in meaning and impact each year.

With strong support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI-DNR), Star Prairie Game and Fish, Willow River Rod and Gun Club, Russell's Sport N' Bike, and other local partners, this year's hunt welcomed six veteran participants. Three hunters joined us on Friday, September 12, and three more on Sunday, September 14. Among them was a Purple Heart recipient, whose presence reminded us all of the deep sacrifices made by those who serve.

Two of the six hunters harvested geese for the very first time—an exciting milestone that added to the spirit of camaraderie and celebration.

Participants included both local hunters and those who traveled from as far as Nebraska and Iowa to be part of the experience. WI-DNR Conservation Warden Chuck Wincek played a hands-on role in the field, assisting with decoy placement and ensuring all hunters were properly licensed. A longtime volunteer and board member of the Friends group served as the lead guide. Members and volunteers from the Friends group provided essential logistical support, and Troy Hill from The Fallen Outdoors-Team Wisconsin ensured a smooth and welcoming experience for all.

This event is truly amazing,” said Acting Project Leader Chris Trosen. “It’s an opportunity for the community to rally around a common goal—supporting our veterans and recognizing the sacrifices they’ve made for our country. The camaraderie, the shared stories, and the connection to the land make this event incredibly special.”

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make this event possible. Your dedication and teamwork continue to make a difference.





Photo Credit: Don Curtis

Volunteer Spotlight – Don Curtis Seeing What's Possible

Despite being the dog days of July and August, these last several evenings of seed collection have been fantastic. Pleasantly warm and dry with a light breeze, some of these grassy spaces are surprisingly filled with blossoms, and each one reminds me that I have so much to learn about the plants in these spaces.

I look forward to seed collection evenings. It's another opportunity to wander into spaces, to be amazed with the different blossoms, and to be able to stand with pollinators as they work through those

blossoms, each benefiting the other. I find it reassuring to know that all of this takes place without the need for human influence and has been doing so for much longer than I can imagine, and will likely persist after winds, floods, and fires.

I haven't always valued these spaces, as I was most familiar with the grassy buffers between a stream and a cornfield. Grass was grass. I suspect my awakening was a visit to the Oak Ridge WPA to watch bird banding. Although banding was interesting, what really caught my attention was the small group

touring the savanna. Soon after tagging along, I realized this was not just another grassy patch.

There was so much more variety than I expected. I was surprised to see the impact of burning and how the introduction of a variety of seeds could change the space.

The visual beauty and surprises will keep me visiting these areas because it's just good for what's inside. Certainly, seed collection will be a part of those visits so that we can continue the transformation of these spaces for our children. They need to see what is possible.

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How to get involved

1. Volunteer

We're always looking for volunteers to help with our conservation projects and events. Contact us by sending an email to StCroix@fws.gov or visiting our website to learn more (link below).

2. Upcoming Events

The Friends Group holds monthly meetings at the headquarters office on the first Wednesday of every month, 6 pm. See our calendar for more events!

Thank you to our many partners!

For more information on our partners, please visit fscwmd.org.

3. Donate

Your donations help support our conservation efforts and make a difference. All donations to the Friends of the St. Croix Wetland Management District are 100% Tax-Deductible. Donate here through [PayPal](#).

4. Follow Us

Please stay up to date on our latest projects and events by following us on social media. Find us on [Facebook](#), join our email list, and check out our website (link below). Don't forget to shop the [Friends Apparel Store](#) while you're there.

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