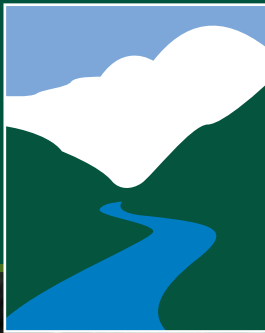


Spring 2008



Kinni Keeper

A publication of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust



Kinnickinnic River Land Trust 2008 Annual Meeting

See page 7

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Partnerships Enhance KRLT's Watershed Restoration Efforts

The Kinnickinnic River Land Trust (KRLT) is serious about its mission to work with the community to protect the natural resources and scenic beauty of the Kinnickinnic River watershed. We actively work for land protection through the use of conservation easements, which limit development on private lands and also protect and conserve natural resources such as plant communities, water quality, and the stability and protection of soils. We work to restore and improve the lands we own (see Kelly Creek article on page 4). Another important way KRLT protects land is actively working with various partners to assist private landowners in the restoration of their land's rare or endangered plant communities.

In 2004 and 2006, the KRLT and The Prairie Enthusiasts (TPE) received grant funding totaling \$100,000 from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for use in restoring plant communities (KinniKeeper Spring 2006). To date, KRLT and TPE have worked with 15 area landowners to restore approximately 75 acres. Most of the sites are

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Cover Photo: Restored goat prairie on the lower Kinni
All photos by Margaret Smith except where noted.

Executive Director's Message

Spring Season Signals Stewardship – KRLT's Responsibility to the Land

It is early on a Saturday morning in early March, my computer is booted up, the sun has just crept up over the horizon, and I have just heard the announcement on public radio to turn my clock forward an hour—the infamous “Spring Forward”. Thus begins one of many Spring rituals—the great tradition of recognizing the arrival of Spring through this mechanical step in honor of daylight savings time—even though the thermometer is still reading a nice, even 0 degrees Fahrenheit outdoors!

We each celebrate the arrival of the Spring season with our own rituals. Many landowners are preparing to plant their crops for the 2008 field season. Many who come to the Kinni Watershed in search of a great trout fishing experience have already started that pursuit—and have stopped in at Lund's Hardware to pick up the newest in fishing gear they need to enjoy this season on the Kinni.

On the landscape the sap will begin to run in the plants and trees, the Spring ephemerals will be poking up through the soil and regaling us with their fleeting blooms, and the migratory songbirds will return to the forests and grasslands of the Kinni Watershed to conduct their annual ritual of mating and nesting to insure the continuation of their respective species.

To us at KRLT, Spring means Stewardship. We are preparing for an extremely busy season in the field following through on our responsibility to work with landowners to understand and protect the natural resources of the Kinni Watershed. Whether it is our own Kelly Creek Preserve—or stewardship on private lands—we are focused on maintaining a healthy landscape and a cold, clean and clear Kinni River.

In this issue of the Kinni Keeper you will read some of the ways we go about following through on our stewardship obligations. As you will read, this work is completed through an extensive array of partnerships with private individuals, public agencies, donors and members. To do our job well KRLT will call upon members to help us obtain the financial and volunteer resources needed to do our job.

We are focused on maintaining a healthy landscape and a cold, clean and clear Kinni River.

We hope you agree that ensuring that our preserves and the surrounding landscape are well managed is a laudable goal. Through the numerous partnerships with private and public landowners we are living our mission by working with the community to protect the natural resources and scenic beauty of the Kinnickinnic River watershed. ➡



Ohio Spiderwort

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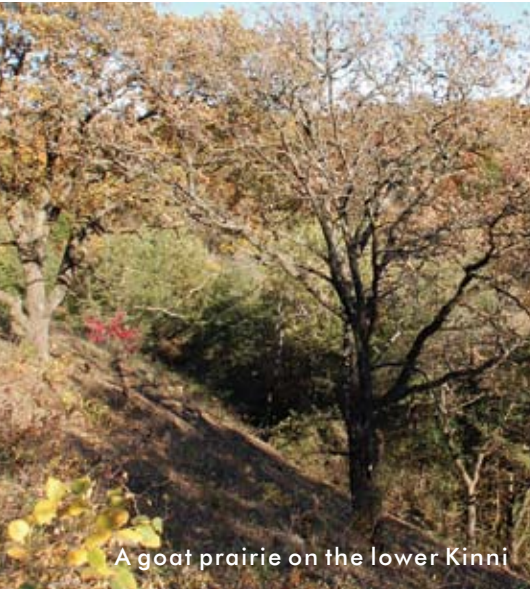
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Partnerships Enhance KRLT's Watershed Restoration Efforts

Continued from Page 1

restore & improve lands



A goat prairie on the lower Kinni

in the lower Kinni canyon, and involve the restoration of goat prairies and oak savannas, two of Wisconsin's most endangered and rare plant communities. Goat prairies are short grass prairies typically found on the south or west facing cliffs or slopes. They are so named because their steepness is such that only a goat would be able to traverse them.

The canyon area is also home to oak savannas, the transition plant community between prairie and forest. The remaining majestic bur and white oaks along the Kinni and its tributaries are the original or descendants of the original oaks identified here by United States government surveyors in 1847. However, the goat prairies and oak savannas are being degraded or destroyed by encroaching invasive species such as buckthorn, garlic mustard, wild phlox,

knapweed, and other foreign species. Through the grant funding, KRLT and TPE have worked with 15 landowners, a number of restoration experts and volunteers, to remove the invasive species which often outcompete the native plants for sunshine and soil nutrients. With the invasives removed, better sunlight penetration allows the native grasses and flowers of different plant communities to flourish. (To learn more about invasive plant species, go to www.ipaw.org).

In 2006, a lower Kinni landowner with a conservation easement held by KRLT partnered with the Community Forestry Resource Center (CFRC) to harvest timber on his Managed Forest Law (MFL) lands. The timber harvest needed to meet both the landowner's MFL requirements and the requirements of his conservation easement. The CFRC developed a model forest management plan that cleared invasive species, reduced the non-oak understory trees, and provided for the enhancement and restoration of the former oak savanna. In addition, a field day for the community showcasing horse-logging and sawmilling provided an educational opportunity for area landowners.

Turn to page 5 for our current
KRLT Restoration Project...



Leadplant
(Pictured on Cover)



Beardtongue



Hoary Puccoon



Before restoration on the gully
Photo by Eric Forward



After restoration on the gully
Photo by Eric Forward



A prescribed burn at Kelly Creek
Photo by Jude Kroutil



Harvey Halvorsen, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, leads a prairie restoration field trip at Kelly Creek Preserve

KRLT Works to Protect and Maintain Kelly Creek Preserve

Kelly Creek Preserve is the “star in the crown” of KRLT. The original purchase of 46 acres in 1998, and the addition of 20 acres in 2001, gave KRLT ownership to fully protect Kelly Spring which pumps an estimated 700,000 gallons of water per day in the Kinni, as well as 28 acres of restored prairie. The landscape and early records indicate the area was tall grass prairie at the time of European settlement.

Since 2001, KRLT has completed two separate prairie restorations at the Preserve. The first restoration, in 2001, was a 15-acre project aimed at quickly establishing a prairie community to reduce the soil erosion that was occurring. The second restoration, in 2003, was a 13-acre project adjacent to the first. Prairie restoration has greatly enhanced bird habitat, reduced erosion, provided a seed source for other local restoration projects, and given the KRLT an excellent resource for environmental education.

Prescribed fire, or burning, is an essential component of effective prairie management. While prairie plants evolved to withstand periodic fires, invasive and exotic species are generally destroyed by the fire. Burning warms the soil for native plants, which generally emerge late in the spring, and it destroys thatch buildup, allowing native seeds to germinate. The KRLT’s management plan for the Preserve calls for burning every 3 to 5 years and we partner with the University of Wisconsin-River Falls’ (UW-RF) wildfire burn class led by Professor Michael Kaltenberg and with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR) biologist Harvey Halvorsen. Participating and monitoring at each prescribed burn are various representatives from WIDNR and three to four dozen UW-RF wildfire burn class students. This is a very successful partnership with KRLT’s Preserve getting a needed prescribed burn and university students getting a hands-on learning experience.

Restoration on the Preserve has included partnerships with volunteers. A few years ago, an eroding gully on the Preserve was contributing significant sediment into Kelly Creek. The

KRLT reduced the erosion by removing box elder trees and regrading the banks of the gully to a lower slope. Volunteers planted prairie seed, installed erosion control practices such as silt fence, mulch, staked bales of hay, and erosion control blankets. The gully now has banks stabilized by long-rooted native plant species, and is a beautiful wildlife area.

KRLT is proud of our Kelly Creek Preserve. It has been used by local schools for outdoor education, is one of the sites of Leadership River Falls’ Natural Resources Day, and is the site of KRLT prairie restoration field trips. KRLT invites you to come and explore this wonderful property! ➡

Restoration on the Preserve has included partnerships with volunteers.

Current KRLT Restoration Project:

The success of the past private land restoration projects has led to a 2008 effort among three of the landowners, the KRLT, and the CFRC, to cooperatively manage their forest and grassland habitats in the river lowlands. The landowners are allowing each other access to hard-to-reach portions of their properties, jointly managing those habitats that cross property boundaries.

The KRLT is very pleased with this project that has as one of its key goals the improvement of bird habitat through land management practices. The lower Kinni canyon is an important bird migratory route and is part of the Mississippi flyway, one of the most significant bird migratory corridors in the United States. The KRLT is partnering with the CFRC and volunteers to complete management plans for each of the properties. The plans will help landowners guide future management of their properties and continue to improve bird habitat and bird populations. ➡



Burning during restoration on Mann Creek
Photo by Troy Meacham



After restoration on Mann Creek
Photo by Troy Meacham



Restored goat prairie on the lower Kinni

land
management
practices



Preserve Day with Community Forestry Resource Center

May 31, 2008: A field day is planned at one of the KRLT preserves and is sponsored with cooperation with Community Forestry Resource Center. There will be subject experts leading discussion and exploration trips on birds, forest management, and invasive species identification and control.

Please check our website or contact the KRLT office at 715.425.5738 or e-mail eric@kinniriver.org

Monitoring the Flow of the Kinni

An important stewardship activity of the KRLT is monitoring the flow of the lower Kinni. Since 2005, the KRLT has been partnering with Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the City of River Falls, and the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to fund a real-time river monitoring gauge at the County F river crossing. The USGS gauge has been operating continuously since July 2002.



The USGS gauge at County Rd. F

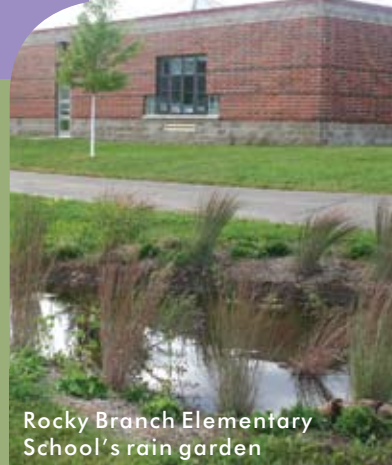
The gauge collects real-time data at 15 minute intervals which is stored onsite, and then transmitted to USGS offices every 1 to 4 hours. Data from real-time sites are relayed to USGS offices and are available for viewing within minutes of arrival. The USGS web site’s recordings of gauge height, discharge, and precipitation are available through a link on the KRLT website, under “Fishing”.

The gauge height measures the height of water at the gauge location; the discharge rate is the flow of water (volume) coming by the gauge location; and precipitation is the amount of rain recorded at the gauge.

The readings from the gauge are useful for many groups. The KRLT, Trout Unlimited and the City of River Falls use the readings to monitor how rain, snow melt, storm water runoff, underground spring activity, and dam maintenance affect the flow of the Kinni. It is also useful for anglers and paddlers who use the discharge rate readings to determine the best days for recreation on the Kinni. Anglers and paddlers prefer calm, clear waters when the discharge rate is between 70–100 cubic feet per second.

The gauge is a useful tool to accurately measure stormwater runoff as well as the adequacy of underground spring activity. The tributaries and springs of the Kinni contribute to the base flow (discharge rate), and during sustained or prolonged periods of drought, the base flow of the Kinni can gradually decline. That is why recharge areas and infiltration are so important to keep the springs healthy and active. Stormwater runoff or snow melt, on the other hand, appears as spikes in the discharge rate and the spikes generally correlate with the recorded precipitation. Sudden spikes and dips in the discharge rate which aren’t related to rain or snow melt are also of interest to KRLT, Trout Unlimited and the City of River Falls, as these may be related to the operation of the dams in River Falls. The dams should be operated to maintain a steady source of water to sustain a healthy cold water environment for trout and their food sources.

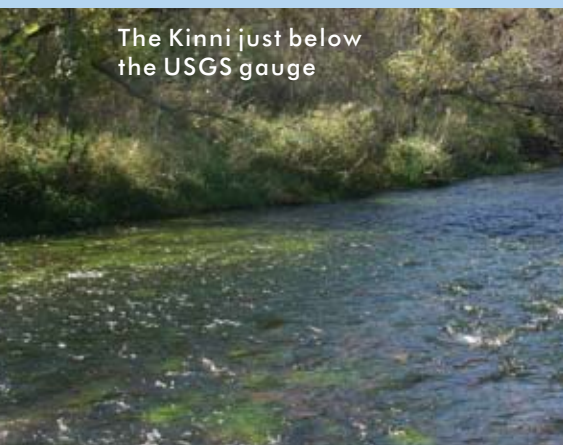
The KRLT is dedicated to protecting the exceptional resource waters of the Kinni. The funding partnership of the USGS gauge is one important tool in our protection efforts. ➡



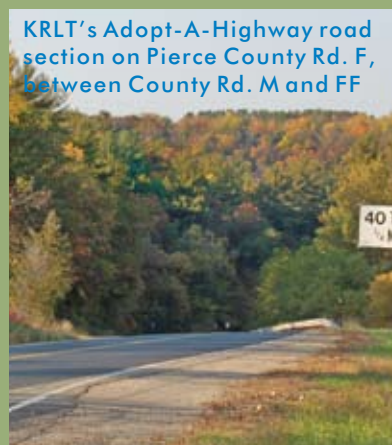
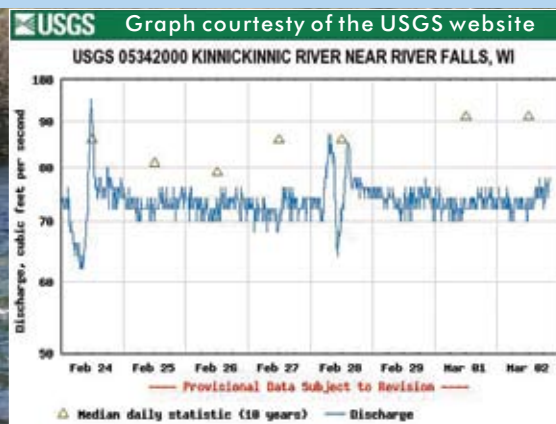
Rocky Branch Elementary School’s rain garden



Volunteers help at KRLT’s 2007 annual River Cleanup



The Kinni just below the USGS gauge



KRLT’s Adopt-A-Highway road section on Pierce County Rd. F, between County Rd. M and FF

Kinnickinnic River Land Trust 2008 Annual Meeting

The Kinnickinnic River Land Trust 2008 Annual Meeting convened on Saturday, April 12 at the Kinnickinnic River Theater on the UW–River Falls campus.

More details in the next KinniKeeper issue.

State of KRLT Report

Presented By: Nelson T. French, Executive Director

Role of KRLT in a Sustainable Watershed Community

Presented By: Dr. Kelly Cain, St. Croix Institute for Sustainable Development

Biodiversity Conservation in the Lower St. Croix Watershed

Presented By: Vince Shay, Director, Upper Mississippi River Program, The Nature Conservancy

More KRLT Protection Efforts...

...Urban Stewardship

Within the city of River Falls, the KRLT sponsored a river protection project through the creation of school rain gardens (KinniKeepers Summer 2006, Summer 2007). Working with the City, the River Falls School District, the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board, and many volunteers, the KRLT involved over 700 students in the creation of 7 rain gardens on school properties. In 2007 a KRLT rain garden project brochure was sent to all the schools throughout Wisconsin. The KRLT also partnered with Girl Scout Troup 52190 on their Silver Star project to educate the public that stormwater sewers drain

directly to the Kinnickinnic River. The troop installed “Drains to Kinni” decals on downtown stormwater sewer drains. The City of River Falls is seeking more volunteers to help with the application of the decals on the remaining stormwater sewers.

...Annual River Cleanup

The 2008 annual Kinni River cleanup is scheduled for Saturday, May 17 from 9:30 a.m. until Noon. If you or a group you are involved in would like to help us keep the Kinni clean, please e-mail Margaret@kinniriver.org. This is a wonderful project for people of all ages and it really makes a difference in KRLT's protection efforts.

In 2007, over 115 volunteers participated in the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust's river cleanup and over 200 bags of trash and various miscellaneous items were found along the banks of the Kinnickinnic River. Volunteers cleaned the Kinni fishing access parking lots north of town as well as through the city portion, including the White Pathway, Glen Park, along the lower river to County Rd. F, as well as the State Park area where the Kinni enters the St. Croix. Canoes were used to pull litter from the river and Lake George, and volunteers walked the banks to pick up litter. Collected were pop cans, bottles, trash, cigarette butts, plastic containers, paper, bicycles, batteries and tires.

...Annual KRLT Adopt-A-Highway Road Cleanup

KRLT has sponsored a three mile section of Pierce County road for cleanup for several years. An additional partnership has formed in the past three years with the University of Wisconsin–River Falls to help in this effort. Student volunteers from the University of Wisconsin–River Falls have been a very important group assisting our efforts to pick up trash and debris for the KRLT's Adopt-A-Highway section on Pierce County Road F between County Roads FF and M. Between 30–50 student volunteers have helped each year with our cleanup efforts and we are grateful for their help. This year's Road Cleanup is scheduled for April 19 which coincides with the University's Earth Day volunteer activities. ←



Volunteer Activities...
You can make a difference in KRLT's protection efforts!



Kinnickinnic River Land Trust
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I want to help the KRLT work in cooperation with landowners to conserve the resources I value—clean water, wildlife, recreation, natural areas, wild trout, scenic beauty, and family farms.

Membership Categories:

- Friend \$35 – \$99
- Sponsor \$100 – \$199
- Benefactor \$200 – \$499
- Patron \$500 – \$999
- River Guardian \$1000 – \$4999
- Watershed Guardian \$5000+

Your support qualifies for an income tax deduction.

- Tell me about property for sale.
- I want to volunteer, please call me

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