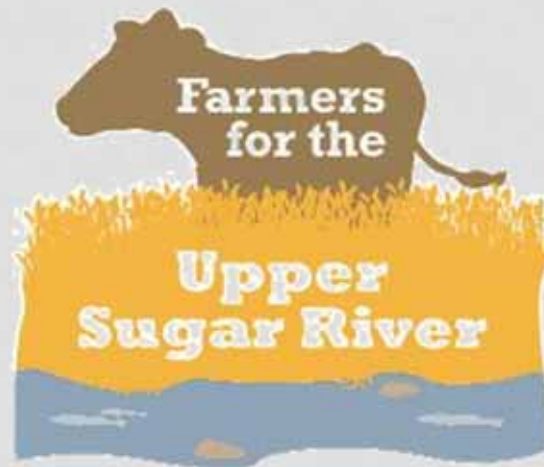




# Involving Farmers in Watershed Management

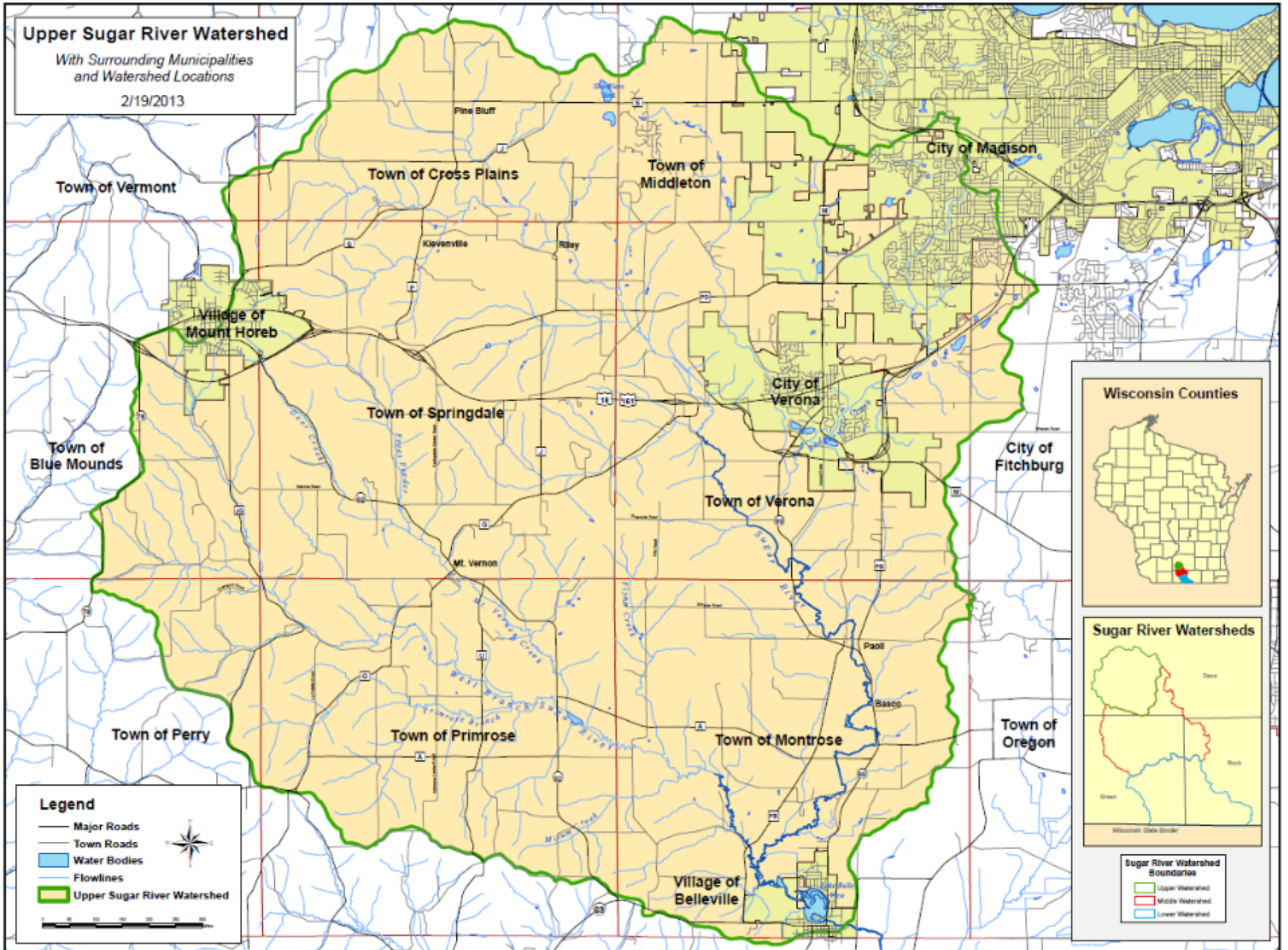


Wade Moder  
Executive Director  
Upper Sugar River Watershed Association  
[usrwa@usrwa.org](mailto:usrwa@usrwa.org)

# Upper Sugar River Watershed

With Surrounding Municipalities  
and Watershed Locations

2/19/2013



## Wisconsin Counties



## Sugar River Watersheds



## Sugar River Watershed Boundaries



## Legend

- Major Roads
- Town Roads
- Water Bodies
- Flowlines
- Upper Sugar River Watershed



# What does USRWA Do Today?



- Farmer-led Coalition
- Habitat Restoration
- Water quality monitoring
- Citizen science programs
- Invasive species management
- Youth education
- Urban & agricultural runoff
- River Clean-Ups



# What makes the USRW Unique?

- Upper Sugar River Watershed covers 170 square miles and 115 miles of rivers and streams
- **74.2% agricultural production** with heavy upland urban influence
- Split between glaciated and driftless zones
- Home to Mt. Vernon Creek, one of two Class I trout streams in Dane County
- Eight Class II trout streams





# Goal #1: Establish a relationship with farmers in our area



# Ultimate Goal: Connect with Farmers in the Watershed

- **March 2015:** Found a USRW farmer who was a known supporter of protecting water resources
- Held numerous meetings over beer talking about challenges for both sides and how to best engage farmers
- **November 2015:** Identified ~10 farmers in the watershed who were relatively like-minded and potentially interested in creating a coalition
- **February 2016:** Held a meeting with interested farmers about creating a coalition
- **April 2016:** Submitted an application to DATCP's "Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant"

# Farmers for the Upper Sugar River

- For farmers, by farmers
- Mutually beneficial solutions for the environment and farmers
- Currently 10 farmer members
- \$30,000 raised so far through grants in 2016
- **Mission:** “Ensuring the future of agriculture by being responsible stewards of the lands and water quality in the Upper Sugar River Watershed”
- USRWA’s role: provide admin support, organize meetings, help implement the farmers’ goals
- **[usrwa.org/farmers](http://usrwa.org/farmers)** to learn more





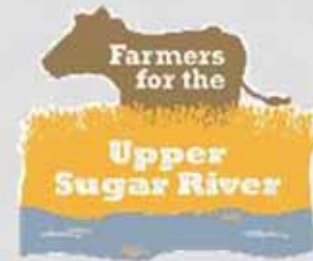
# Goals created by the group

- Water quality monitoring
- Soil quality testing
- Education through mailers the group sends out
- Further education through field days, guest speakers, etc.
- Co-op equipment rentals
- Work with landowners who rent out ag land
- Stream bank stabilization, grass buffers
- Offer Snap Plus classes
- Phosphorus monitoring education to farmers



# Farmers for the Upper Sugar River Timeline

- May-June 2016: Brainstormed goals, became familiar with each other
- July-August 2016: Developed a mission, finalized goals, created a name, discussed cover crop strategies, enrolled farmers in cover crop pilots
- September-October 2016: Created farmer mailing list, produced a letter, planned for a “Lunch & Learn”
- November 2016: Host a “Lunch & Learn” to introduce the group to farmers and recruit more into the group
- December 2016: Distributed checks to pilot farmers
- January-April 2017: Plan for and host a field day, create a protocol and cost schedule for 2017 incentive payments
- May 2017 – Beyond: Provide resources for BMPs trials, provide educational resources, continue recruiting farmers, and offer newsletters



# Total Phosphorus Testing

- Partnership with Mount Horeb Wastewater Utility and grants from DNR to fund certified laboratory testing (normally \$25/test)
- Sites selected at river/stream confluences or strategic locations
- Volunteer-based collection
- Six new sites will be collected in 2017

Total Phosphorus Monitoring in the Upper Sugar River Watershed													
Site	Municipality	2015 Total Phosphorus Data (mg/L)						2016 Total Phosphorus Data (mg/L)					
		May	June	July	August	Sept	October	May	June	July	August	Sept	October
Badger Mill Creek upstream of Highway 69	Town of Verona	0.173	0.334	0.284	0.236	0.275	0.176						
Badger Mill Creek @ Lincoln St Channel Upstream	City of Verona							0.147	*0.234	0.234	0.178	0.19	0.203
Badger Mill Creek @ Lincoln St Channel Downstream	City of Verona							0.144	*0.22	0.234	0.176	0.187	0.216
Flynn Creek at CTH A	Town of Primrose	0.0692	0.0459	0.039	0.0449	0.0626	0.0547						
Fryes Feeder upstream of Highway 92	Town of Springdale	0.087	0.0501	0.0559	0.0495	0.0398	0.0361						
Milum Creek at Fritz Rd	Town of Montrose	0.102	0.0986	0.0939	0.0791	0.0863	0.0629						
Mount Vernon Creek @ CTH A	Town of Primrose							0.0382	*0.0693	0.15	0.101	0.0488	0.0685
Primrose Branch at CTH U	Town of Primrose	0.157	0.0846	0.0462	0.0595	0.0509	0.0528						
Schlapbach Creek @ Klevenville Riley Rd	Town of Springdale							0.0279	*0.0622	0.0503	0.0793	0.0619	0.0789
Sugar River at Frenchtown Rd	Town of Montrose	0.109	0.181	0.0857	0.144	0.0492	0.061						
Sugar River @ CTH J	Town of Springdale							0.0489	*0.0784	0.0518	0.137	0.0628	0.0737
Sugar River upstream of CTH P	Town of Cross Plains	0.0748	0.0848	0.0593	0.0114	*1.46	0.115						
Trib to Sugar River at White Crossing Rd	Town of Verona	0.103	0.0691	0.0598	0.168	*0.469	0.0718						
West Branch Sugar River at Docken Rd	Village of Mt. Horeb	0.112	0.1	0.11	0.123	*0.156	0.181						
West Branch Sugar River at CTH U	Town of Primrose	0.234	0.151	0.111	0.141	0.107	0.0863						

\* = Significant rain event prior and during data collection  
**Bold** = Data collected exceeds the 0.075 mg/L total phosphorus standard set by WI DNR  
**Bold in Orange** = Data collected is at least 2x the 0.075 mg/L total phosphorus standard  
**Bold in Red** = Data collected is at least 3x the 0.075 mg/L total phosphorus standard

# USRWA & UW-Whitewater

- Partnership formed to create an Erosion Vulnerability Assessment on Agricultural Lands (EVAAL) model of the Upper Sugar River Watershed as a semester project for UW-Whitewater geography students

ConnectVerona.com

December 31, 2015 The Verona Press 3

## USRWA partners with UW-Whitewater

Geology students assist association with finding erosion in the watershed

**KIMBERLY WETHAL**  
*Press Correspondent*

Waterway culverts underneath roads and driveways in the Verona and surrounding Sugar River watershed area have been the biggest challenge for a team of University of Wisconsin-Whitewater students during the Fall 2015 semester.

Finding the location of those culverts became a problematic guessing game for the students, as they worked to create an erosion vulnerability model for the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association.

was "incredible," adding it's something the nonprofit wouldn't have been able to do on its own.

"It's going to allow us to consolidate our time to focus on the areas that need the most help," Moder said. "Given the amount of time and work that goes into this model, I'm pretty blown away by these results."

The model project will allow Moder and the USRWA to save time and money by knowing the areas of the watershed most at risk for erosion. USRWA also plans to use the model to assist local farmers in



ideas off of each other ... it was individually a team effort," he said.

The final results were generated with the help of Geographic Information Services (Smith referred to this as a "Photoshop for maps") and five years of data from the area.

While three of the 11 students on the team graduated on Dec. 19, Splinter hopes one of the remaining eight will be able to pick up where they left off during the next semester as they go even more in-depth into the watershed to further develop their results. Geol-

# EVAAL in a Nutshell



- **EVAAL = Erosion Vulnerability Assessment for Agricultural Lands**
- Created by Wisconsin DNR
- Factors in readily available datasets like topography, land cover, crop rotations, and soils.
- Intended for relatively small watersheds, less than  $\sim 75 \text{ km}^2$
- Designed to produce field/parcel-level data of potential concern on agricultural land
- The EVAAL toolset was designed to quickly identify areas vulnerable to erosion using readily available data and a user-friendly interface



# Accomplishments over the last 12 months

- Set groundwork for building the group's capacity
  - Mission, goals, group expectations, monthly meetings, farmer consortium list
- 5 farmers enrolled in cover crops within the group in 2016, totaling about 400 acres
- Held a “Lunch & Learn” to introduce farmers to the group
- Held a field day on a member's farm showing the result of his cover crop pilot







meeting

Inbox x



**Brian and Yvonne Brown**

6:28 PM (14 hours ago)

to me

Hello Wade,

I still cannot believe the interest we had today.

When you have a chance we should get an agenda rolled out along with notices

- review field day.
  - \* look for future ideas/speakers (Maybe fall field day if there are test plots done)
- grant payment criteria? (model Yahara Prides?)
- Maybe Heidi has some cover crop information we could post or send out?
  
- next meeting date

Wade thanks for getting things together today



**Gerry Krantz**

5:30 PM (15 hours ago)

to me, pcdan, Eric, Heidi, Brian

I'll put it up at the coop tomorrow and thank you all for your due diligence for USRWA Organization

Sent from my iPhone



<Farmer meeting flyer.docx>



Home / News / Business News

# Farmers ensure, share watershed future

Recommend | Tweet | +1 | Share | Post | Email



The Keller family milks registered Holsteins and farms land in both the Upper Sugar River and Pleasant Valley watersheds. They continue to implement a number of land- and water-conservation practices. Kneeling are Andrew and Kimberly Keller, children of Sandy and Tim Keller. Standing from left are Kim and Mark Keller, and Sandy and Tim Keller.

January 10, 2017 12:30 pm • Lynn Grooms lgrooms@madison.com 608-437-2827

## USRWA looks to bolster new farmer-led group

Samantha Christian Unified Newspaper Group Nov 25, 2016 0

f t e p b

### If You Go

**What:** Farmers for the Upper Sugar River "Lunch and Learn"

**Who:** Only farmers in the Upper Sugar River Watershed

**When:** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 30

**Where:** The Red Mouse, 3738 County Road P, Cross Plains

**Cost:** Free

**RSVP:** Appreciated at [sugarriverfarmers@gmail.com](mailto:sugarriverfarmers@gmail.com)

**Info:** Wade Moder, 437-7707

This summer, the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association received a \$10,000 grant to partner with several local farmers in the watershed as part of the state's first Producer-Led Watershed Protection program.

The farmer-led group, named Farmers for the Upper Sugar River, now has a mission statement and nine members from the Verona, Mount Horeb and Pine Bluff areas who try to meet monthly. The coalition is ready to grow, which is why it's holding an educational "Lunch and Learn" event specifically for farmers in the watershed on Nov. 30.

The free event in Cross Plains will feature several speakers, a meal and time to meet with farmers in the group. Among the speakers are USRWA executive director Wade Moder, group members Mark Keller and Brian Brown, no-till farmer Jim Leverich (also a research coordinator from the University of Wisconsin) and cover cropping specialist Heidi Johnson (the crops and soils educator at Dane County UW-Extension).

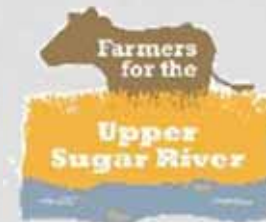
### Mission statement

Ensuring the future of agriculture by being responsible stewards of the land and water quality in the Upper Sugar River Watershed.



# The Next 12 Months

- Enroll over 1,000 acres in conservation pilots using ~\$20,000 in grant funding
- Create a conservation practice pricing schedule
- Create metrics for tracking progress
- Recruit more farmers into the group
- Hold more farmer events like the Lunch & Learn and field days to introduce more farmers to the group



# Our Takeaways

- Understand the challenges on both sides of the equation
- Involve farmers early in the process, but be selective
- Ask crop consultants, ag retailers, county/UW-Ex staff, or local residents to find farmers to talk with initially
- Have a “translator”
- Working with small groups is good in the beginning
- Have a plan and consistent message set before recruiting more farmers or the community
- Be involved and demonstrate value, but don't be overbearing
  - Non-profits are in a potential leadership position
- Crawl, walk, then run
- Food and beer doesn't hurt



# Contact Info

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**Farmers for the  
Upper Sugar River**  
[www.usrwa.org/farmers](http://www.usrwa.org/farmers)

