

REGIONAL PLANNING NEWS

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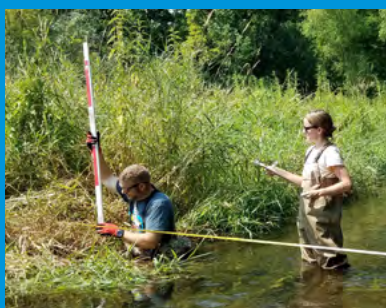
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Results of the Regional Food System Plan Virtual Kick-Off Meetings

Two virtual kick-off meetings for the Regional Food System Plan were held in August. The public was invited to learn about the Region's food system, provide input on what should be included in the plan, and share thoughts on food-related assets and concerns in the Region. When asked about the Region's food-related assets, the most popular answers included the Region's people and farmers, farmers' markets, access to water, the food and beverage (FaB) manufacturing industry, urban agriculture, and farmland. The most frequent food-related concerns included access, cost, food waste, and inequities in the food system. The most important topics attendees identified for the plan to address included the impact of farming on the environment, wages and worker safety in the FaB industry, the location of grocery stores and restaurants, food assistance programs, food literacy and safety, and issues related to food waste.

The meeting presentations and results, along with full recordings of the meetings, are available at www.sewrpc.org/RFSP. You can also spend a few minutes filling out an online survey if you were unable to attend a kick-off meeting.

The next step in the planning process is for Commission staff to continue drafting plan chapters related to the different components of the regional food system, the Region's consumers, and environmental stewardship. Remember to stay up to date on the plan through our website, Facebook, and Twitter.



2 Regional Chloride Impact Study



3 Mussels in the Fox River Watershed





Commission staff collecting data for streamflow measurements at a sampling location



The stream sensors required periodic cleaning for sediment, debris, and small aquatic organisms

Regional Chloride Impact Study Update

The Regional Chloride Impact Study is the Region's foremost comprehensive study to identify significant sources and magnitudes of chloride (salt) in surface water and groundwater resources. Several potential sources that contribute chloride to the environment are being examined, including road and private salting, water softener discharge to wastewater treatment plants and private septic systems, and fertilizers.

Major milestones have been achieved this summer with the completion of field data collection. For the greater part of the last three years, data have been compiled from our 42 monitoring stations, which consisted of collecting monthly water samples to determine chloride levels in streams. Sensors installed at the same 42 monitoring stations continuously measured "specific conductance," which will be correlated to chloride levels based on the sampling data. Commission engineers also surveyed many of our stations to collect flow data relevant for developing chloride loads at each station.

Having collected over 1,100 water samples and millions of data points, most of the equipment from the Commission monitoring stations is now being removed from the field. A few of the sensors remain in place to aid local university projects that have received grants for more aquatic-related chloride research.

Commission staff will now analyze these data to determine the relative contribution of chloride from the various sources. Once the analysis is complete, the study will develop options to help reduce the amount of chloride placed in our natural environment.

Additional information on the study can be found on the project website at www.sewrpc.org/chloridestudy.

Commission Adopts 2021-2025 CEDS

On September 15, 2021, the Commission adopted the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Southeastern Wisconsin. The CEDS was prepared by the Milwaukee 7 Economic Development Partnership (M7) and the Commission, with input from M7's Regional Economic Partnership (REP) working group and other stakeholders. The CEDS represents a collaborative effort to develop a strategic plan that will diversify and strengthen the Region's economy. Now that it has been adopted, the Commission will submit the CEDS to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). The adopted CEDS maintains eligibility for EDA funding for communities and organizations within Southeastern Wisconsin. It also makes it possible for the Region to apply to EDA to become an Economic Development District (EDD), which could expand EDA funding opportunities. Information about the CEDS, including the full report and summary materials, can be accessed at www.sewrpc.org/CEDS.





Mussel specimens observed during surveys of the Fox River

Freshwater Mussels in the Fox River Watershed

The Commission is collaborating with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Carroll University, Illinois Natural History Survey, and others to study the abundance and distribution of freshwater mussel communities within the Fox River watershed. The Fox River watershed is an important area for mussel conservation as 34 species have been observed within the watershed, including five species considered threatened or endangered.

Freshwater mussels are two-shelled mollusks that live in sediments of rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds. They play an important part in aquatic communities by helping stabilize river bottoms; serving as natural water filters; and serving as food for fish, birds, and some mammals. Mussels have a unique life cycle that includes a parasitic stage: female mussels release mussel larvae onto the gills, fins, and body of host fish species. A few weeks after attaching to their host fish, the mussel larvae will detach and settle into the bed of a stream or lake. Mussels are filter feeders and an individual mussel can filter 10 to 20 gallons of water per day. Many mussel species have long lifespans, with some able to survive for up to 100 years.

Mussels are important, sensitive indicators of changing environmental conditions. With their long lifespans, mussels can help document changes in water quality over long periods of time. Their shells accumulate metals from both water and sediment, so testing heavy metal concentrations in shells can provide information on pollution history. Water and sediment quality are important habitat criteria for mussels, so the presence of mussels is an indicator of a healthy aquatic environment. Most species of freshwater mussels prefer clean running water with high oxygen content, and all species are susceptible to pollution, including pesticides, heavy metals, and toxins. Due to water pollution, invasive species, and habitat alteration, freshwater mussels are the most threatened group of animals in Wisconsin, with nearly half of the state's 52 mussel species listed as either Special Concern, Threatened, or Endangered.

The Commission encourages anyone interested in learning more about freshwater mussels or in helping to survey freshwater mussels in Wisconsin to visit the Wisconsin Mussel Monitoring Program website (wiatri.net/inventory/mussels).



Mussel observed during survey of Lake Wandawega in the Fox River watershed



Living mussel observed in the Mukwonago River



Credit: Via

NSF Awards Mobility Solutions Grant to UWM and SEWRPC

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a \$1 million Civic Innovation Challenge (CIVIC) grant to a team of UW-Milwaukee professors and Commission staff. Using the grant funding, the team will implement a pilot transportation program to get workers from Milwaukee to jobs in the Menomonee Falls area. The funding period is only for one year so the team will be working with several partners this fall to design and initiate the services. The program's on-demand services will include first-last mile mobility solutions intended to fill a critical need of both employers and potential workers to expand access to jobs in the study area.

Did You Know?

Southeastern Wisconsin has over 3,500 farms and almost 740,000 acres of farmland.



Know an employer struggling to get workers to the workplace? Tell them about the Workforce Mobility Team! The Team is here to work with any employers in the Region to help them address their workforce mobility challenges.

For more information:
sewrpc.org/mobility

To arrange a meeting:
mobility@sewrpc.org

W239 N1812 ROCKWOOD DRIVE
PO BOX 1607
WAUKESHA, WISCONSIN 53187-1607



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