

# LOWER WISCONSIN STATE RIVERWAY

## A Property Owner's Guide to a Healthy River



Chances are, if you own property on the Wisconsin River, you love rivers and streams and you appreciate the scenic beauty of the entire river valley. You also care about your investment and, quite likely, have a good time sharing it with friends and family. You enjoy boating, fishing and watching the sunset. You treasure “river time” and hope your kids and grandkids will come to appreciate life on the water too.

Unfortunately, the health of our rivers is threatened by excess sediment and pollutants. The good news is that small changes to landscaping practices can reduce these threats and help keep our rivers clean and our fish populations healthy. Here are some suggestions for simple ways that you, as a property owner, can help protect the health of the Wisconsin River.

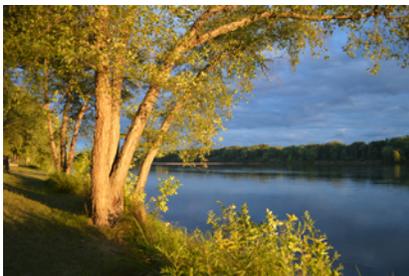
### What can you do? Pick a few!

#### **Create a Shoreline Buffer to Help Stabilize Your Streambank and Reduce Flood Water Damage (and keep the geese away!)**

- ☆ Create a “no mow zone” along your riverbank (2-5 ft. is a good start; more is better).
- ☆ Plant native grasses and shrubs in your buffer area for extra protection.

#### **Keep Yard Waste and Contaminants Out of the River**

- ☆ Store trash, chemicals, leaves and grass clippings away from the water.
- ☆ Compost yard waste.
- ☆ Avoid burning refuse near the river.
- ☆ Use caution when applying pesticides or herbicides near the water; many are poisonous to fish, turtles, and other aquatic life.
- ☆ Avoid pouring toxic products down a sink, drain, toilet, sewer, or on the ground.
- ☆ Minimize use of fertilizers; avoid using them at all near rivers, sloughs and ponds.
- ☆ Store loose piles of soil away from the river and cover with tarps for protection.
- ☆ Use salt and de-icers sparingly and mix with sand; in the spring, sweep up excess and place in the garbage.
- ☆ Clean up cigarette butts - they are made of fiberglass and are harmful to fish and wildlife.
- ☆ Organize a family litter pickup around your property and along nearby roads each spring.



### **Limit Storm Water Runoff**

- ☆ Re-route downspouts to drain over gardens or lawn or into barrels, not paved areas.
- ☆ Set your mower blades at least 3 inches high to slow runoff and resist drought.
- ☆ When paving surfaces, use porous cement or pavers that allow the rain to soak in to the ground.

### **Protect Your Property from Invasive Species**

- ☆ Identify and eradicate one or two of the most troublesome invasives found in the Riverway (garlic mustard, purple loosestrife, honeysuckle, etc.).
- ☆ Join forces and share what you learn from your efforts with your neighbors.
- ☆ Survey and treat your property for invasives in the early spring and fall.

### **Share the Love with Friends and Family - Remind Everyone to...**

- ☆ Carry a waterproof container for trash in every boat.
- ☆ Follow the timeless lessons of Scouting: "Leave No Trace" and "Leave a Place Better Than You Found It."

## **Easy Ways to Learn More**

### **Social Media - Facebook**

- ☆ "Like" Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board.
- ☆ "Like" Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.



### **Online Resources**

- ☆ Read about the unique history of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway and find links on river flow, recreation, geology, maps, meetings, and LWSR regulations ([lwr.state.wi.us](http://lwr.state.wi.us))
- ☆ Sign up for the Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway (FLOW) newsletter and consider becoming a member ([wisconsinriverfriends.org](http://wisconsinriverfriends.org)).
- ☆ Check out the Wisconsin DNR website for comprehensive information on how to control invasive plants on your property ([dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/invasives/)).
- ☆ Review "Shoreline Plants and Landscaping," for information on creating a shoreline buffer using native plants and shrubs (<http://clean-water.uwex.edu/pubs/pdf/shorlpl.pdf>).

### **In-Person**

- ☆ Attend a monthly meeting of the Riverway Board.
- ☆ Join the Water Action Volunteers Stream Monitoring Program, a program for citizens who want to improve the quality of Wisconsin's rivers ([watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav](http://watermonitoring.uwex.edu/wav)).

**Healthy habitats are essential for wildlife, recreation and water quality**

**Together we make a difference!**

*Handout developed by Laurie Elwell, Wisconsin Master Naturalist volunteer and Richland County property owner, in collaboration with the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board.*