

# News on the Sugar

A Publication of the Upper Sugar River Watershed Association

[www.uppersugar.org](http://www.uppersugar.org)

**SUMMER 2020**

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# A Summer of Webinars, Celebrations, and Planning for the Future

2020 was not the year we imagined it would be. When practices to physically distance from others were implemented back in March, we already had 28 in-person events planned and scheduled with more on the way. We doubted if many of our foundational programs would be able to continue, including our citizen-science research, restoration workdays, outreach and educational opportunities for students and adults, and our cornerstone fundraiser Rob's Sugar River Ramble, just to name a few.

Despite the incredible adversity, our team stayed resilient and found new ways to re-imagine our programs. Matt began hosting invasive species workshops for students and adults using Zoom, and he offered a new outlet for our citizen scientists to make an impact through the EDDMapS website and smart phone app. Hannah created an interactive audio/visual Watershed Explorer Trails (debuting this fall) and navigated the training and coordination of our citizen science programs in a physically distant way. In May, we created a staff role for a Social Media Internship and hired Paige to start an Instagram account, boost our outreach on Facebook and keep people engaged. Our field assistant Marina seamlessly adjusted to the new Clean Boats Clean Waters protocols as a way to educate boaters about spreading invasive species, while being respectful of physical distancing.

As for myself, this time has offered the opportunity to think big. Since early spring we began forging partnerships and planning significant restoration projects on the Sugar River that we've dreamed about for years. Farmers for the Upper Sugar River is

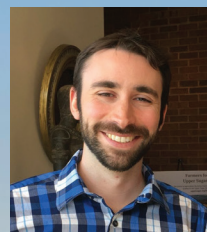
also leaping into new and exciting on-farm research opportunities, while seeking additional funding sources to keep up with the growth of its popular cost-share program. As these opportunities develop into concrete projects, I promise to keep you updated.

In addition, our staff and board are currently updating Upper Sugar's five-year strategic plan, which could not come at a better time. It has allowed us to reflect on how much our organization has grown and developed in just a few short years, and chart a new way forward to make a greater impact. We've made some incredible strides, but there are many opportunities for us to still improve, including the inclusiveness of our programming and outreach.

Please take some time to read our report and learn about our key achievements this past year. I encourage you to check out our newly-designed website for all our upcoming events and programs and to find ways you can get involved. In this season of uncertainty, we are even more certain about one thing - that healthy land and water is not a privilege for some, but it is a right for all. And your continued support is how we pursue our mission of a watershed for all.

For the Watershed,  
Wade Moder

  
Executive Director, USRWA



# An Update on Farmers for the Upper Sugar River

by Wade Moder

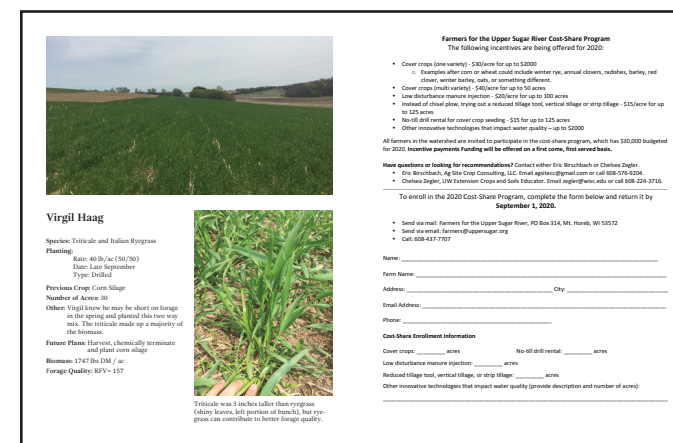
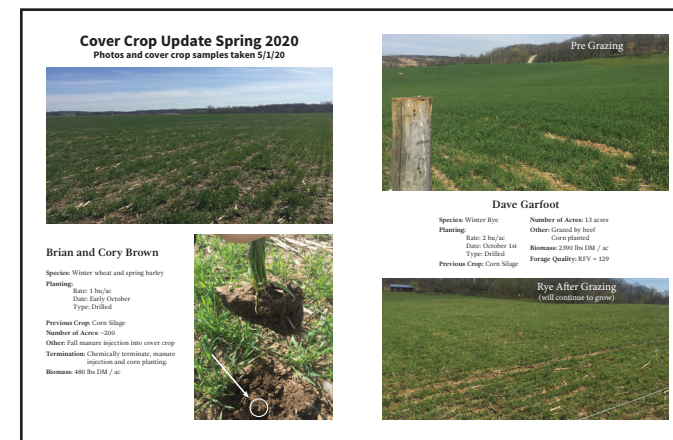
Farmers for the Upper Sugar River (FUSR) has rolled with the punches in 2020 and continued to make progress in the absence of in-person planning meetings, field days, and group gatherings. This year, FUSR decided to create a 'field day newsletter' highlighting five different farms in the watershed and the

conservation measures they took in fall 2019, along with follow up photos from spring 2020. This was mailed out in the summer as a way to provide examples and promote FUSR's cost-share offerings this year, so farmers could try things like cover crops, no-till planting, and other practices themselves.

Five years into forming as a farmer-led coalition, FUSR is also cognizant of becoming stagnant and continuing to do the same things year after year. In 2021, FUSR plans to take on a greater research role as a way to exhibit practices and techniques that are not currently visible in the watershed. This will include the following:

- As part of our cost-share program, we will look to involve farmers in a zero nitrogen check strip trial in different areas of the watershed. This will be a farmer-driven research exercise to compare traditional nitrogen applied management with strips that are not treated with nitrogen, and comparing the yields from each. Our goal is to understand if the cost of applying nitrogen in some fields is worth the yield benefit. Depending on the results, we would plan to host a future field day on one of the participating farms.
- FUSR is taking part in a five-year grant proposal in partnership with Dane County and the Yahara River farmer-led coalition Yahara Pride. If funded, this project will assist agricultural producers in moving toward maintaining continuous vegetation cover on the land. Soil health will be promoted by practices such as cover crops, no-till, and managed grazing, which will in turn improve water quality by increasing infiltration and reducing erosion.

Good growing conditions for the majority of the year has helped to lessen the blow of economic challenges and continued uncertainty. Upper Sugar thanks the hard work of FUSR and the dedication towards a more sustainable future for both the environment and agriculture. We're proud to take part in its continued success.



## Hello from the Social Media Intern - Paige Sadoff



Hey y'all! My name is Paige and I am currently a senior at UW-Madison studying Community and Nonprofit Leadership with a certificate in Entrepreneurship. This past summer I've had the privilege of becoming the Social Media Intern for Upper Sugar. This opportunity has been nothing shy of fulfilling in every aspect. I am very passionate about the nonprofit sector and with this internship and my correlating coursework, my passion has only deepened. I am grateful I have been able to combine my dedication for nonprofit work with my personal enjoyment of social media. This past summer I assisted the Upper Sugar team in launching our Instagram page - you can find check us out @UpperSugar. I've had the greatest time learning about the Upper Sugar River Watershed and I am excited to continue learning with Upper Sugar this fall.



# The Great Dragonfly Quest

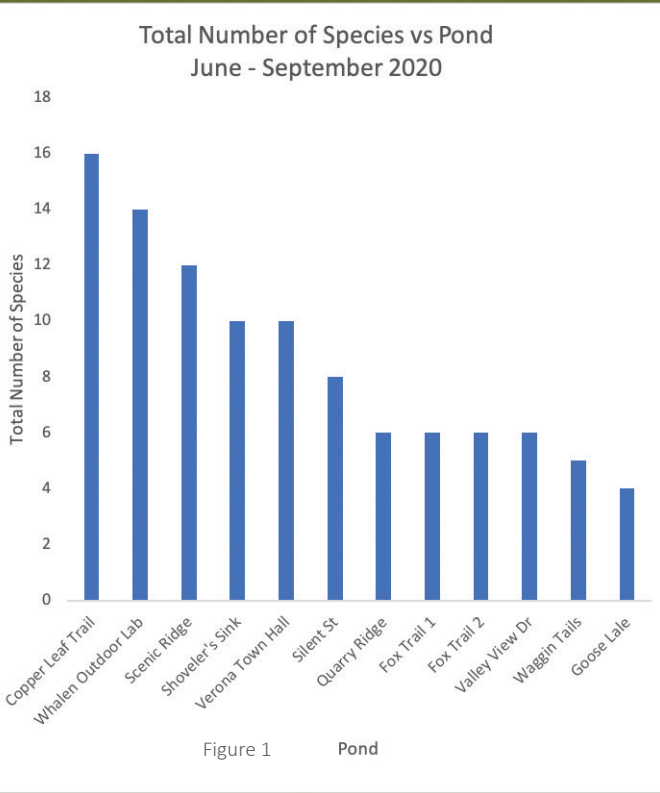
by Robert Bohanan, Ph.D. USRW Board President and WISCIENCE

We had fourteen volunteer citizen-scientists participate in the Great Dragonfly Quest 2020. There were couples, parent-child teams, and individual observers - and several amazing photographers. Twelve ponds were observed several times over the course of the summer. It is amazing that these dedicated volunteers made 112 observations that included 580 measurements. Throughout the summer, we had weekly meet-ups (we masked up and practiced physical distancing!) at various ponds to hone our observation and identification skills, and to share our excitement and enthusiasm.

We are only just beginning to analyze and interpret the data to learn more about what dragonflies can tell us about the environmental health of neighborhoods in our watershed. Here are a few interesting results that we are excited to share with you. We observed a total of 32 different species this summer. Five of these (Comet Darner, Blue-eyed Darner, Spatterdock Darner,

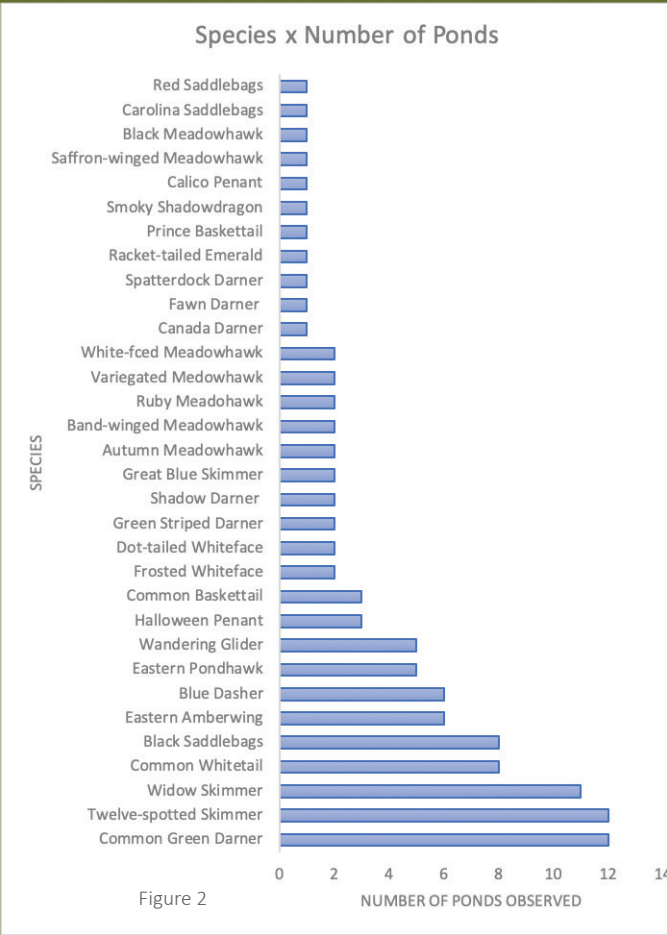
Carolina Saddlebags, and Great Blue Skimmer) are relatively rare in Wisconsin and the WI Department of Natural Resources has designated them as species of interest. In Figure 1, we see that all ponds had at least 4 species of dragonflies observed. One pond, Copper Leaf Trail, had 16 species observed. Half of the ponds had 8 or more species and the remaining half had less than 8 species. The Common Green Darner and Twelve-spotted Skimmer were observed at all 12 ponds and 11 species were only observed at one pond.

Let us know what questions that you have and we'll do our best to answer them. Stay tuned for The Great Dragonfly Quest 2021 when we plan to add more ponds of different varieties and hope to add female dragonfly and damselfly identification to our field guide as well as pilot a naiad or larvae emergence protocol and sampling. We hope that you will get involved – it's always fun, and there is so much we can learn from these creatures.



**Figure 1** (above) - compares the total number of species observed at each of the 12 ponds that volunteer monitors observed June - September 2020

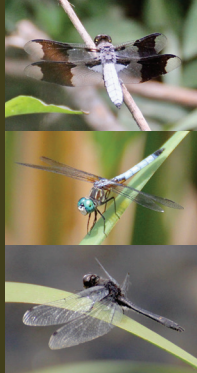
**Figure 2** (right) - compares the total number of ponds that each species was observed at from June - September 2020.



**Figure 2**



## Dragonflies as Seen by a Citizen Scientist



*Blue Dasher*

by Cee Cee Cohen

Flying jewels with names like Dragon Hunter, Meadow Hawk, and Widow Skimmer populate the skies over the Sugar River Watershed from early spring into late autumn. They are Dragonflies (Odonata — “toothed one” in Greek) and everything about them is fantastic. I have been a citizen scientist participating in the Dragonfly Monitoring group for a couple of years now and am thrilled to share a little of what I learned about these magnificent creatures.

I have space to tell you about one dragonfly and one behavior - the flight patterns of the Blue Dasher.

The Blue Dasher has a vibrant blue abdomen and metallic green eyes; they like to perch on the ends of grasses around the pond. When I arrive at the edge of the pond they will take flight, circle me several times as if to check me out and then return to their perch. They were skittish early in the spring but by midsummer

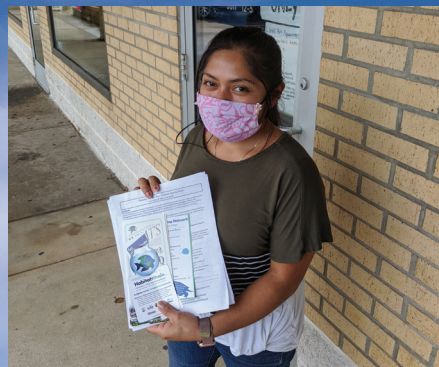
would allow me to walk within a few inches of them. They are the prima donnas of the pond and I captured many photographs.

The flight pattern of a Blue Dasher appears quite ethereal to a human but it is an ambush predator. It eats other insects, up to 10% of its own weight per day in mosquitoes alone. It waits for insects to fly near and then darts out, captures and devours them. They are spectacular fliers. Able to move each wing independently, they can change their flight patterns in midair and sneak up on their prey from any direction, and if necessary, even fly backwards.

Beyond the dragonflies, monitoring the pond has brought me into close contact with other inhabitants: Green and Great Blue Herons, deer, ducks, geese, redwing blackbirds, and a plethora of frogs. The pond is a hidden treasure and a microcosm of the Upper Sugar River Watershed.







## Continued Progress Eliminating

# INVASIVE SPECIES



By Matt Wallrath

Invasive species projects at Upper Sugar have been going well and going remotely during the pandemic. Marina, our Conservation Field Assistant, and I have continued "organism in trade" outreach with the Habitattitude campaign at pet and bait shops, sharing the message that shop workers and owners can help prevent the spread of state regulated invasive species over the counter. We've also created many new records of spreading populations of restricted purple loosestrife, invasive knotweed, and non-native phragmites. This is leading to new control efforts in the region to stop pioneer stands of these invaders before they can spread out of control! We are using our nature-given allies, goats, in this effort. This has been fun to see as I coordinate a community of volunteers to shepherd goats that prevent the spread of invasive species on river and forest edges by munching away - these goats are well-fed!

Looking to the future, we just got approved by the DNR to serve as part of the Lake Monitoring Protection Network and are working with counties Dane, Sauk, Green, Iowa, Lafayette, Grant and Vernon in 2021 to continue our core campaigns. These include placing signage and brush stations on waterways, purple loosestrife bio-control, citizen monitoring for lakes and rivers, and adding boat inspectors for Clean Boats Clean Waters education at landings. We will be seeking biologists as leads for our Project RED (Riparian Early Detection) and Citizen Lake Monitoring Network monitoring for the 2021 season, so please let us know if you can help! For trainings, we are honing our resources for a different way to reach people in this unique season and have gone to mostly remote programming and small group classes. This year has been challenging, but we have adapted and are thriving.

You might be thinking that invasive species prevention isn't for you, that it is too technical. But, you *can* get involved! Keep an eye out for opportunities to Adopt A River as we empower membership to find wild spaces, learn ecology, and prevent the spread of invasive species in our watershed.



## Boater Education in the Driftless



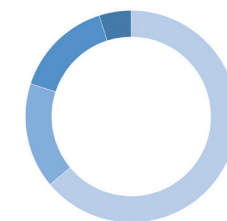
by Marina Steiner

Clean Boats, Clean Waters is a Wisconsin-wide watercraft inspection program that aims to reduce and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. What is an aquatic invasive species, you ask? Invasive species are a certain kind of non-native plant, animal, or pathogen that rapidly takes over a new location by choking out native species. Clean Boats, Clean Waters inspectors can be found at boat landings, educating boaters on how and where aquatic invasive species are most likely to hitch a ride into water bodies. Inspectors also perform boat and trailer checks for any invasive species. Upper Sugar participates in the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program to mitigate the spread of aquatic invasive species and enhance the quality of natural and native resources in our watershed. This work is vital to our mission of serving as stewards of the river and its upland environments through continuous resource improvement that benefit the watershed's land, water and people.

## Annual Report Summary

Financials in Dollars

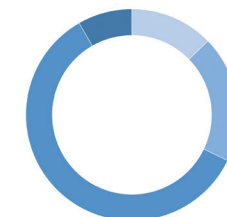
### REVENUE



- Grants & Donations
- Membership
- Special Events/Ramble
- In-kind Donations

Grants & Donations: \$87,074.15  
 Membership: \$21,950.00 (includes individual \$6,400, municipal \$14,700, and corporate \$850 memberships)  
 Programs: none  
 Special Events/Ramble: \$20,555.60  
 In-kind donations: 6,678.05  
**Total: \$136,257.80**

### EXPENSES



- Events
- Outreach
- Programming
- Administration

Events: \$17,405.28  
 Outreach: \$26,551.40  
 Programming: \$81,621.42  
 Admin: \$11,356.26  
**Total: 136,934.36**

## Thank You, Volunteers!

A huge thank you goes out to all of the dedicated volunteers who have committed their time to helping Upper Sugar pursue its mission. In a season that has been full of transitions and challenges for many of us, our volunteers have really stepped up and supported a watershed for all.

This year, Upper Sugar volunteers have participated in our citizen scientist programs monitoring water quality and dragonflies in the watershed, they have taught boater education on the prevention of the spread of invasive species, they have worked on watershed restoration, and much more.

We are not exaggerating when we say that we could not do the work we do without our volunteers - check out just how much they contributed in the past year:

- 5000 staff hours annually
- 8 Board Members = 600 hrs this year
- Invasive Species Volunteers = 267 hrs this year
- Water Quality Monitors = 78 hrs this year
- Dragonflies Monitors = 96 hrs this year
- Volunteer Workdays in the State Natural Area = 60 hrs this year

Total, that is 1,101 hours of volunteer work committed between January and now - and it's been a wild year, so these numbers are vastly lower than usual! To do the work of our volunteers, we would need to hire for another staff position.

We appreciate our volunteers and recognize that because of their hard work, we can continue positively impacting our watershed for the benefit of the land, water and people. *Thank you!*



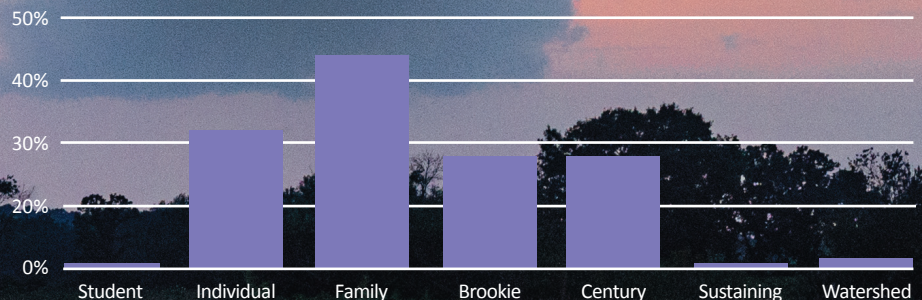
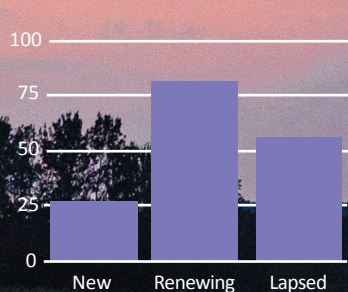
by Hannah Bunting





[www.uptersugar.org](http://www.uptersugar.org)

Our most important funders are our 109 personal members and our 46 corporate sponsors whose support proves instrumental in furthering our conservation efforts in the watershed - the support of our members has allowed us to adapt in the midst of uncertainty and to continue serving the land, water and people in the Upper Sugar River Watershed. Without the financial support we receive from our members, the work being done in our watershed would not be possible. It is members such as yourself that further our capacity to reach our goals. We so appreciate you and are thankful for your dedication to our mission.



#### Current Memberships from October 2019 - September 2020

##### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS

Todd Ambs  
Peggy Hager & Tom Andersen  
Diane & Bill Baumann  
Kate Beardmore  
Bill Biesmann  
Sharon Billmeyer  
Eric & Pam Birschbach\*  
Brigitte Boucher  
Jane Breun  
George Brown\*  
Mary Lou Brown\*  
Kelly Maynard & Josh Brown  
Brian & Yogi Brown\*  
Gerald & Jane Brown  
Jane Bruen  
Hannah Bunting  
Tina Buttner\*\*  
Kenneth Cameron  
Marty Cieslik  
Scott & Joan Cramer  
Toni Dallwig  
David Noll  
Scott & Tera DeRuyter\*  
Tom & Sharon Dosch Family  
Joe & Betty Downs  
Guy & Laura Dreger  
Michelle Dunn  
Wade Moder & Alicia Engel  
Frank Fetter  
Phil & Sandy Fransen  
Ron French\*\*  
Steve Gavin\*  
Lisa Goldman  
Alison & Dan Haack  
Leroy Haag Family  
Steven Halverson\*

Mike Hankard  
Laurie & Tom Hartjes  
Palmer & Lydia Hayes  
Pam Heilman Family  
Steve Henningfield  
Andy Hoernemann  
Wade Huston\*  
Charlotte Jerney  
Chuck & Beth Johnson\*  
John & Leanne Johnson  
Jim Just  
Bill & Lisa Keen\*  
Keith Kerle  
Erik Kimble\*  
Amy Klusmeier  
Chad Koch  
Clem & Karen LaMere  
Kristin Lamers  
Susan Lehnhardt\*  
Mark T Lochner  
Nathan & Liz Lockwood\*  
Angie Lucas  
Douglas and Martha Maxwell  
Jon & Aleta McGee\*  
Tim & Liz Melin  
Todd & Holly Dowling Meurer  
Katie & Jacob Mizrahi  
Rojer & Donna Moder\*\*  
Kyle Neeve\*  
Christopher Nole  
Gaila Olsen  
Peter Ostlind\*  
Tom Parker  
Megan Phillips  
Joyce Powers  
Buss Price Family  
Jon Radloff  
Marsha & Michael Ralston-Edlinger  
William Rattunde  
Diane Remeika

Karen Richardson  
Andy & Kathy Richardson\*  
Carol & Charles Rumberger  
Dan & Cindy Salas  
John Scharer  
Jesse Schlingmen  
Jane & Steve Schmieding  
Jim Schmitt  
Dale & Madeline Schoeller  
Tom & Sandy Schwab  
Barry Seifert  
Jeff Klenk & Nancy Sheehan  
Sam Sibley  
Daniel & Bonnie Spencer  
Kate Stroede  
Therese & Daniel Strome  
Sharon Stuckey  
Diane & Tim Tautges  
Jennifer Thieme  
William Van Haren\*  
Gail & Willy Van Haren\*  
Kerry & Sandy Van Kleeck  
Matt Vancik  
Matt Wallrath  
Rodd Wangen  
Mary Wealti  
Dick Wieboldt\*  
Erik Winsand\*  
Don & Dee Wylie\*  
Nidia Aranda & Cody Ebersole  
Jim & Susan Zerwick  
Al & Louise Zerwick  
Mike & Deb Zerwick

\* membership at or above \$100  
\*\*membership at or above \$500

##### MUNICIPAL MEMBERS

Town of Verona  
City of Verona

Town of Springdale  
Village of Belleville  
Madison Metropolitan Sewerage  
District

##### CORPORATE MEMBERS AND SPONSORS

AECOM  
Atkins Bicycle  
Boley Landscaping  
Bruce Company  
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Everlight Solar  
First Business Bank  
Grande Cheese  
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Heartland Ecological Group, Inc.  
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Parisi Construction  
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Socialite Photo Booth  
SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital  
Sugar River Outfitters  
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Wisconsin Brewing Company  
Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance