



Summer 2015

# The Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance

Creating a Conservation Future for the Badger Lands



## *Behind the Fence*

### Ho-Chunk Nation Celebrates Ancestral Land Acquisition

*By Gail Lamberty, Co-Chair, Badger Forward Committee*

The long-awaited gathering on June 26, 2015 came after more than 15 years of hard work. Congress transferred over 1,500 acres of land at the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant to the Ho-Chunk Nation in December 2014. On a calm summer day with the Baraboo bluffs standing as silent sentinels, several hundred citizens joined the Nation to celebrate the reclaiming of their ancestral homeland.

The theme of the day was a deeply felt “thank you” to members of the Nation who persevered in their quest for the property, and to the community members (including the Alliance) who supported those efforts over many years.

WDNR Secretary Cathy Stepp reminded those gathered, “Few places in Wisconsin or the Midwest are as rich with cultural, historical, geologic and ecological significance.” U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin reiterated her commitment to the future of the property, “I will continue my work of advocacy to ensure that the vision of the Reuse Committee is ultimately fully realized.”

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Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Secretary, Cathy Stepp, speaks at Ho-Chunk celebration at Badger, while former Ho-Chunk President Jon Greendeer addresses the assembled crowd. (Photos: Hocak Worak)



Traditional Ho-Chunk dancer Robert Mann. (Photo: Hocak Worak)



Ho-Chunk Property at Badger, June 2015. (Photo: Hocak Worak)



Samantha Skenadore (l), Ho Chunk member & private attorney, Randy Poelma, Chair of the Ho Chunk Badger Oversight Team, and U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (r), received recognition for their efforts toward land acquisition at Badger by the Ho Chunk Nation. (Photo: Hocak Worak)

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Randy Poelma, chair of the Ho-Chunk Nation Badger Oversight Team, reminded the audience, "What has transferred is the responsibility to heal and protect this land. This responsibility is back in the hands of the original protectors, the Ho-Chunk People. This responsibility is founded on, as the Ho-Chunk say, a respect and an obligation to protect our mother...the land, air, water...everything. This responsibility is something that the people, and we as land managers, take very seriously."

Ho-Chunk President Jon Greendeer told the gathering of attendees: ***"Let her (the land) heal. Let us be her caretakers and her stewards. It is a place of worship, a place of healing and a place of respect."*** 🌸



Wisconsin Dells Drummers. (Photo: Hocak Worak)

## Ho Chunk Initiates Stewardship on New Lands

Only a few months following the transfer of title of former Army property to the Ho Chunk, the Nation had already initiated a significant effort to steward their newly acquired lands. In May, the Ho Chunk Burn Crew convened on the property and completed a controlled burn on 460 acres. Burning the grasslands helps reduce or kill unwanted and invasive shrubs and trees. The goal of the Ho Chunk is to restore native grassland on their portion of the Badger lands, and the first step is to stop the advance of exotic shrubs. 🌸



The Ho Chunk Nation Burn Crew assembles at the former Badger Plant to begin stewarding their newly acquired lands (top). Smoke rises from the Sauk Prairie plain below the Baraboo Hills during a 460-acre prescribed burn by the Ho Chunk Nation in May 2015. (Photos: Ho Chunk Nation Burn Crew)

## NEW...Alliance Website!

This summer we are revitalizing our website to be able to provide more information, updates, and stories. This will be particularly relevant when the DNR releases its Draft Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. Check in regularly at: [www.saukprairievision.org](http://www.saukprairievision.org). 🌸



## From the President



I have the good fortune to take the helm of the Alliance at a time of important changes for the Badger Lands. Most importantly are the recent transfer of over 1,500 acres to Ho-Chunk Nation (HCN) and the impending release of the Department of Natural

Resources (DNR) Draft Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. I look forward to working with both the DNR and the HCN, as well as the Dairy Forage Research Center in realizing the vision of the Badger Reuse Plan for ecological restoration, low-impact recreation and conservation management of the Badger Lands.

As the management of the Badger Lands is evolving, the role of the Alliance will also change to working in collaboration with the landowners. To help us in this transition, the Alliance has secured the services of Charlie Luthin, who was among the Alliance's founders in the late 1990s, and has extensive work experience with a number of conservation organizations, including nearly a decade as the Executive Director of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. With Charlie's help, the Alliance Board, and all of us as members, will be in a good position to help realize the vision of the Badger Reuse Plan. ~Rob Nurre



Cherrie Nolden, Alliance volunteer and board member and PhD Candidate at UW-Madison, is studying the use of livestock for control of invasive plants. Goats LOVE autumn olive and other invasive shrubs, and they've been engaged to help control brush on Dairy Forage Research Center lands at the former Badger Army property. (Photo: Gail Lamberty)



## Volunteer Program Update

*Alison Duff, Chair, Alliance Restoration Committee*

The Alliance has coordinated four volunteer work days so far this summer. Restoration was done on April 11 and May 9, and invasive plant monitoring was completed on June 13-14. Sixteen volunteers attended, contributing more than 100 hours over the four days. To start off restoration season, local prairie expert and nurseryman Scott Weber (above, center) led an April hike for volunteers through Kindschi Prairie along Hwy 12. Then in May, focus was on garlic mustard control at the Hillside Prairie (DNR property), a site that volunteers have worked on since the 1990s. The number of garlic mustard patches and their relative sizes are significantly smaller than in previous years, attributable to the combination of volunteer work over the last 10 years and two sequential spring burns in 2014 and 2015. In June, we had a dedicated crew of volunteers complete the 2-day invasive species "monitoring protocol" at the Hillside Prairie. This is the fourth year in a row that invasive plant monitoring has been done there. These data will be used to guide future restoration efforts and prioritize volunteer time. 🌱

## DNR Draft Master Plan Release

The Alliance has been informed that the much-awaited Draft Master Plan for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area will be released by DNR very soon, perhaps even before you receive this newsletter! We plan to circulate a special summary of the Draft Master Plan and the Alliance's response shortly after we have a chance to review it. There will only be 45 days for public response, so stay tuned to our website for details!



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## Summer Events

**Friday, August 14, 6:30-7:30pm:** Presentation by Alison Duff at REI's Madison location (7483 West Towne Way), "Inside the Fence: an abbreviated history of civic engagement and volunteer stewardship at the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant." Open to the public.

**Saturday August 29, 9:30am-3pm:** A morning of presentations about the original Sauk Prairie landscape at the Ruth Culver Library in PDS, followed by a tour of three remnant prairie parcels. Open to the public. Check our website for additional information: [www.saukprairievision.org](http://www.saukprairievision.org).



The Alliance is grateful to REI for their continuing financial support of our growing volunteer program. THANK YOU REI! Join Alison Duff, the Alliance's

Restoration Committee Chair, at a presentation about restoring lands at Badger on Friday, August 14 at REI's westside Madison store (above). 🌱

## Fall Volunteer Workdays

**Saturday, September 12**

**Saturday, September 26**

**Saturday, October 10 (with REI)**

**Saturday, November 14**

All work days are scheduled from 9am until noon, and interested volunteers should meet at the highway 78 entrance gate ("East Entrance, Badger Army Ammunition Plant") by 9am to caravan to the work site. Everyone is welcome! 🌱

THANK YOU to the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) and American Transmission Company (ATC) for their support of our education events, as well as Foley & Lardner for providing support.

