

FRIENDS OF THE PWLC



FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER



Above: "Prairie Smoke" by Sheila Hanson, Grand Prize Winner of the Friends of the PWLC Annual Photography Contest.

See pages 8- 21 for more contest photos.

Inside:

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This fall, two important local issues are on the ballot and the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Board are happy to extend our support to both of them.

First, on all ballots in Minnesota, there will be a question about renewing a constitutional amendment that dedicates proceeds from the Minnesota lottery to conservation-related activities. These funds go to the Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund, which has “helped local communities protect ecosystems, promote outdoor recreation, improve health outcomes, bolster agricultural resiliency, and support thriving businesses and good-paying jobs” and has provided over \$1.1 billion dollars towards conservation projects in Minnesota since 1988. Over 50% of voters must vote “Yes” in order for the funding to pass, and a blank vote counts as a “No” vote, so please don’t skip that question on the ballot.

Visit <https://www.conservationminnesota.org/news/fall-2024-newsletter> for more information on the ENRTF amendment question.

Second, for voters in the Fergus Falls school district, there are two questions related to a school bond referendum. Question 1 is for a \$48.84 million bond levy to build a new school for 3-5 grades. Question 2 is for a \$910,000 bond levy to build baseball and soccer fields at the new school. The new school would be built on land that the school district has already purchased, across Highway 210 north of the PWLC.

In addition to the great need for an updated school facility in our community, it would be a great benefit for all students who would attend school there to be located so close to the Prairie. The environmental education that students receive at PWLC is unparalleled. Nature-based learning has many benefits to physical and mental health. Having access to a space like PWLC plays a big part in providing those benefits. If we can make it just a bit easier for the students of Fergus Falls to learn their core subjects while also spending time in a beautiful expanse of prairie, the cost of this referendum will be well worth it. There are no downsides to an investment in the education of our future generations, and there is no better time than now to make it happen.

The Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Board support voting “Yes” to both ballot questions regarding the Fergus Falls school bond referendum this fall. The Friends’ mission is to enhance and promote the understanding and conservation of the prairie pothole region, and having a school nearby, with classes that visit everyday, is an exceptional way to promote a lifelong appreciation for our prairies.

Visit <https://bond2024.fergusotters.org/> for more information on the bond referendum.

»»» Prairie Science Class Learns about . . .

Our 4th graders have been studying the “Big 3” grasses: Indian grass, big blue stem and switchgrass. Students sketch each plant, then record at least 3 observations, usually about the plant’s height, stem, seed head and color. Other plants included in our studies are sideoats grama, lead plant, goldenrod, grey-headed coneflower, monarda, and milkweed. We recently began collecting seeds from each of the plants for various uses in our classrooms, as well as for planting in the greenhouse in the spring.

In early spring, PSC students will also be involved in snow seeding, which allows them to spread seed directly onto snowy patches. In late spring, they plant their seedlings from the greenhouse in areas of the PWLC that are in need of restoration.

INDIAN GRASS IS EVEN TALLER THAN MS. STREGE!!



TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT SIDEOATS GRAMA

PRAIRIE SCIENCE CLASS UPDATE CONTINUED





FRIENDS FORM ADVOCACY GROUP

By Molly Stoddard

Rud Wasson and I would like to express our sincere gratitude for the impressive response to information we provided earlier this year by local community members. As a result of your letters and phone calls, USFWS regional director Will Meeks committed to fill two of our four vacancies at the PWLC. While we are grateful for this improvement, it is highly unlikely that the USFWS would have the funds to fill the other two positions, so attention is shifting towards seeking adequate budgetary support from Congress to address this gap along with the larger, deeper issue of reversing the 15-year pattern of flatlined annual budgets for the USFWS.

Rud and I believe that of all local organizations, the Friends of the PWLC is the most appropriate one to lead this effort. At the July 8 board meeting, I provided ideas for the Friends to consider after Rud and I met with Mark Musaus, vice president of the Coalition of Refuge Friends and Advocates based in Virginia. Consequently, the Friends of the PWLC voted to form an advocacy group consisting of Micayla Nelson, Jane Stock, Brad Anderson, and myself. Since then, with help from Liz Anderson, we four advocates have organized and mailed a sign-on letter from 20 local partners to our three members of Congress in a unified show of support for a fully funded, fully staffed, and fully operational PWLC and National Wildlife Refuge System. No response has yet been received.

We also drafted a second sign-on letter inviting school boards of past and present school districts who have sent students to the PWLC for field trips. We aim to send this letter to our members of Congress by October 31.

After that, we plan to prepare a 3rd sign-on letter for Friends groups of Minnesota field stations within the US Fish & Wildlife Service to send to our members of Congress.

The main idea here is to continue putting this local and nationwide issue before our members of Congress so it can catch their attention among a myriad of other priorities such as an election, wars, and hurricanes.

Meanwhile, Fergus Falls Wetland Management District manager Neil Powers hosted a tour of the PWLC for Ben Lien, congressional aide in the Moorhead office to U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar. Mr. Lien also visited separately with Rud and I at Perkins where he encouraged us to continue our efforts to build coalitions of supporters.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



What You Can Do

We'd like to encourage you to visit the National Wildlife Refuge Association website to urge your federal representatives to join the Congressional Wildlife Refuge Caucus (CWRC). Currently, Representative Betty McCollum is the only Minnesota congressperson who is a member of this vital bipartisan group. By joining the CWRC, our representatives can advocate for adequate funding while the next fiscal year's budget is in the planning process.

You can also click any of the links in this article to learn more about how the Refuge System is near the point of collapse.

With the initial thrust of phone calls and letter-writing behind us, and with the Friends taking the lead now in advocacy as an organization, the other best way for you to support our efforts is by increasing your involvement at the Prairie. Please personally commit to completing at least one of these actions this week or month.

- Volunteer to help staff the front desk so the visitor center can reopen for another day
- Donate any amount of money you wish to the Friends of the PWLC
- Give a gift membership to someone you know
- Invite five other people to join the Friends
- Attend Friends board meetings
- Attend Friends events
- Share your Prairie Wetlands experiences on social media
- Invite your Facebook friends and Prairie Science Class parents to like the Friends of the PWLC page

Thank you for continuing to show your support by participating in the life of the Prairie. We need you! The Prairie needs you, too!



**THANK YOU TO MOLLY STODDARD AND THE ENTIRE
ADVOCACY GROUP FOR THEIR WORK**

Looking ahead: Braiding Sweetgrass Walk

Saturday, Oct 26th 3PM-5PM

Teens and adults who have read or may be interested in reading the book *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer are invited on a walk on **Saturday, October 26 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center in Fergus Falls, MN. Please register by emailing friendspwlc@gmail.com.**

The purpose of the book and walk is for readers and participants to become more skilled, knowledgeable, and responsible land stewards and ancestors; to weave Indigenous wisdom, western scientific knowledge, and the lessons of plant life; and to imagine a relationship in which people and land are good medicine for each other.

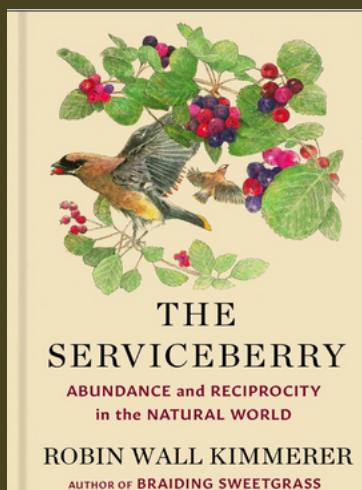
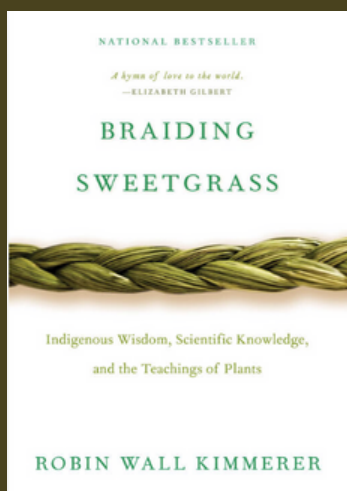
The walk will take place outdoors on hiking trails, stopping periodically to share excerpts from the book, observe nature, and discuss ideas. A shorter version may be provided indoors in case of inclement weather.

This is the 3rd in a series of walks, you do not have to have attended previous walks to participate in this Fall walk.

Participants should meet at the barn and bring their own journal or notebook and pencil for opportunities to write, sketch, and reflect on paper. They may also bring their own copy of either edition of the book. Copies are available at the Fergus Falls Public Library for check out. Extra copies of the young adult edition will be available from the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. All other materials will be provided.

If you have special needs which need accommodating, please let the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center know in advance by calling 218-998-4488 or friendspwlc@gmail.com.

Leaders are Jacob McArthur, West Central Initiative board member representing White Earth Nation, and Molly Stoddard, retired Prairie Wetlands Learning Center educator.



Visit
www.robinwallkimmerer.com
 for more information about
 this bestselling and award-
 winning author.

Friends of PWLC Photography Contest Awards “THE FINE DETAILS” BY TYLER ZIMMERMAN

Tyler’s photo won the following three awards:

Overall First Place in the Open Division

Second Place in the Open Division Prairie Invertebrates category

Director's Choice, selected this year by Neil Powers, Project Leader of the Fergus Falls Wetland Management District



“HAZY SUNSET” SHEILA HANSON



Awards:

Overall Third Place in the Open Division

First Place in the Open Division Prairie/Scenic category

Sheila Hanson's "Prairie Smoke" (cover page) won Second Place in the Open Division.

“THE BEAUTY OF BLAZING STAR” TYLER ZIMMERMAN

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Award:

First Place in the Open Division Prairie Plants category



**Second place winner in the Open Division Prairie Plants Category:
"Morning Dew and Remnant Prairie" by Tyler Zimmerman**



**Third place winner in the Open Division Prairie Plants Category:
"Western Prairie Fringed Orchid" by Sheila Hanson**

“WOOD DUCK BUFFET”

BY ROBIN STUMBO



**AWARD: HONORABLE MENTION IN THE OPEN DIVISION
PRAIRIE PLANTS CATEGORY**



ABOVE: "JUVENILE BALD EAGLE" BY SHEILA HANSON, FIRST PLACE WINNER IN THE OPEN DIVISION PRAIRIE WILDLIFE CATEGORY

RIGHT: "LOOK WHOOS HERE!" BY LORI PUGHERDLE, THIRD PLACE WINNER IN THE OPEN DIVISION PRAIRIE WILDLIFE CATEGORY



"HEY, LET ME SEE!" BY LORI PUGH-ERDLE



Awards:

Second Place in the Open Division Prairie Wildlife category

People's Choice Winner



**TYLER ZIMMERMAN'S PHOTO WON FIRST PLACE
IN THE PRAIRIE INVERTEBRATES OPEN DIVISION.**

**TYLER ALSO WON SECOND PLACE IN THIS
DIVISION WITH THE PHOTO ON PAGE 8.**



**THIRD PLACE IN THE OPEN DIVISION PRAIRIE INVERTEBRATES CATEGORY:
"MONARCH ON BLAZING STAR" SHEILA HANSON**

**HONORABLE MENTION IN THE OPEN DIVISION PRAIRIE WILDLIFE CATEGORY:
"SCALEY SIDE-EYE" ROBIN STUMBO**





**HONORABLE MENTION IN THE OPEN DIVISION PRAIRIE INVERTEBRATES
CATEGORY: "LUNCH DATE" ROBIN STUMBO**



**IN THE OPEN DIVISION CATEGORIES, THIRD PLACE IN PRAIRIE
SCENIC/RECREATION IS,**

"FALL GOLD" TYLER ZIMMERMAN



IN THE OPEN DIVISION SECOND PLACE PRAIRIE SCENIC/RECREATION IS,

"THE CLEAR GLOBE OF THE DAY" ROBIN STUMBO

**THE FRIENDS OF THE PWLC BOARD OF DIRECTORS ALSO CHOSE THIS PHOTO
FOR THEIR FRIENDS CHOICE AWARD
CONGRATULATIONS, ROBIN, ON RECEIVING DOUBLE HONORS FOR
"THE CLEAR GLOBE OF THE DAY"! YOU WIN A \$20 GIFT CERTIFICATE TO THE
BLUESTEM STORE.**



**FIRST PLACE IN THE YOUTH DIVISION,
"GOLDEN BEGINNINGS" BY ABIGAIL DREWS.**

**CONGRATULATIONS, ABIGAIL, ON COMPLETING THE SWEEP--
WINNING ALL OF THE YOUTH DIVISION AWARDS!**



SECOND PLACE WINNER IN THE YOUTH DIVISION: "WHITE WONDERS" BY ABIGAIL DREWS



LEFT: "SUNNY CRIMSON" BY ABIGAIL DREWS, THIRD PLACE WINNER IN THE YOUTH DIVISION.



**THE YOUTH DIVISION DIVISION HONORABLE MENTION GOES TO
"THISTLE FROG" BY ABIGAIL DREWS**

THANK YOU to the sponsors of our Pints for the Prairie Fall Fundraiser

American Federal
AMP Insurance
Climate Makers
Companion Animal Hospital
Fergus Falls Fish and Game Club
Fergus Tire Center
Field Chiropractic LLC
FM Bank
Invision Eye Care
Mark Sand & Gravel
Midwest Insurance Agency
Northern Lakes Dental
Northwestern Bank
Nycklemoe & Ellig, PA Law Firm
Ottertail Coaches
Park Region
Pheasants Forever Otter Tail County MN Chapter
Prairie's Edge Dental



FPWLC President Micayla Nelson accepts the generous donation from Mick Siems, President of the Fergus Falls Fish and Gun Club and his team. FFF&GC donated all proceeds from their annual fundraiser - over \$10,000! - to the Friends of PWLC to go towards youth environmental education.

THANK YOU to everyone who came out to support the Friends of the PWLC at Pints for the Prairie!



Kitty Lahti, Board Member, and Liz Anderson, Administrator, greet attendees at the Fergus Brewing Company where Friends of Prairie Wetlands Learning Center enjoyed food from Bossy Babes BBQ, beverages, and live music.



Our gratitude to the following for supporting our fall fundraiser:



- Bluestem Store
- Bossy Babes BBQ
- Dorn & Co
- Fabled Farmer
- Farmers Feed Mill
- Fiesta Bravo
- Fergus Brewing Co
- Fleet Farm
- Jayne Mace Family Dentistry
- JK Outdoors
- Lifsmiles Dental
- Lundeens
- Mabel Murphy's
- Natures Garden World
- Peney Cakes
- Perkins
- Taco John's
- Teresa Jaskiewicz
- Tia Thysell
- Todd Biederman
- Union Avenue Eatery
- Wild Blue Walrus Card Co
- Windflower Natives
- Zens



**'RISE AND SHINE'
BY ANNE KAUFMAN**

The PWLC is a wonderful place to volunteer in all seasons! Thank you to all those who help make programming possible at the PWLC.

The Friends of PWLC Board are looking for 2-3 new board members to join by January 2025.

If you have an interest in joining the Board or volunteering with the Friends of the PWLC please visit our website and contact Friends Administrator, Liz Anderson, at friendspwlc@gmail.com.

You can also volunteer at the PWLC through the USFWS by contacting the PWLC at prairiewet@fws.gov

Follow the Friends group on Facebook (facebook.com/friendsPWLC) for the latest happenings at PWLC.

