

# Help sought for River Monitoring

## Volunteers needed to collect data on Yahara water quality

**By Scott De Laruelle**  
Assistant Editor

If this week's winter thaw has people in the mood for a season change, some "Friends" are looking for help with an upcoming spring cleaning project.

The Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters, a DeForest-based citizen's group, is holding a public informational meeting from **6:30-7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 8** at the DeForest Area Public Library, 203 Library St. The meeting will cover the group's upcoming plans to work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and Dane County Land Conservation Department to begin monitoring the water quality of the river as it flows through the village.

WDNR biologist Mike Sorge will give a presentation on the ecology of the river, and a history of past attempts to monitor its condition.

### HELP WANTED

Gwen Boettcher's environmental studies class from DeForest Area High School will be assisting with collecting data, and the "Friends" are seeking adult volunteers to help with the monitoring, and to join their ranks.

"People that live on the river, a lot of them could walk out their back door for us and take some readings and be done with it," said group member Ken Woode. "We're looking for people who are interested in being excited and having a stake in the river."

Member Brian Tkachuk said in the past six months, the Friends have coordinated with WDNR officials to obtain monitoring equipment for the river.

"(We've got) things to monitor water flow, rate, temperature, depth, maybe some monitoring devices that can tell what types of things are in the water," he said. "These devices will be placed in the river."

Tkachuk said the group will likely need 12-15 volunteers to help read the monitoring devices along the river using computers. He said training sessions will be set for early spring.

"You can be standing in the river, or along the river, you have this laptop, and you take a cord, plug it in, and the data will be fed in," he said. "There are some monitoring devices out and about now, so we're working closely on the DNR with this to set a baseline so we can go from year to year and see what this river is doing."

### BIG PICTURE

Doug Porter, president of the Friends of Yahara River Headwaters, said the health of the river is closely tied to the quality of life in the DeForest area.

"Water quality data collected will dramatically improve the ability of local and state officials to work with farmers, landowners and urban residents to improve the Yahara River," he said.

Tkachuk said village officials have paid a contractor to clear large debris that was hindering clean-up and movement along the river.

"There was major debris, especially down toward the Windsor area," he said. "Now I understand there's a clear flow from Veteran's Park all the way to Windsor Road. Once they've got the debris out, obviously the flow's going to change. We want to monitor the flow and see if we've got to dredge certain areas, or maybe everything will be fine."

With two canoe launches ready for spring at Conservancy Place and Veteran's Park, Tkachuk said it will be an exciting time for river enthusiasts.

"If we can get people excited about this, in fall comes Riverfest, and people will realize it's all about this river," he said. "We want to keep plugging away. If we can't pass the beauty of what's happening with the river and some of the walking paths to our kids, then we've failed. We need to get them away from playing video games inside. Who's going to take care of this stuff once we've moved on?"

For more information on the project or about the Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters, visit their website at [www.yaharariver.org](http://www.yaharariver.org) or call Tkachuk at 438-7522.

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