

For immediate release

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New program honors Mukwonago for water conservation efforts

Recognition to take place on the banks of the Mukwonago River.

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Mukwonago, Wis.— A new state program is honoring Mukwonago as one of Wisconsin's first Water Star communities Monday for its exemplary water protection efforts.

The new program, Water Star, was launched on Earth Day and honors cities, villages, towns and counties that have taken important steps to protect surface water and groundwater, such as strengthening stormwater controls, ensuring water quality, protecting habitats and encouraging residents to conserve water.

Water Star program sponsors include the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Cooperative Extension, MSA Professional Services, Town and County RC&D, Rock River Coalition, UW-Extension Environmental Resources Center, Dane County, Natural Resources Consulting Inc., Wisconsin Public Service Commission and Ruckert-Mielke.

"Too often we complain about what isn't being done instead of celebrating the positive steps municipalities are taking," said Suzanne Wade, a University of Wisconsin-Extension basin educator and Water Star coordinator. "I'm amazed at the local wisdom that these municipal staff and elected officials have used in solving problems. Water Star is one way for them to share their good work."

Early Water Star participants have welcomed the opportunity to participate in a program that recognizes their municipalities' conservation efforts and helps them identify new ways of improving water resource protections.

The program has already begun to unveil a wide range of innovative ideas Wisconsin municipalities are harnessing to protect water resources including those used in Mukwonago to protect the pristine and ecologically sensitive Mukwonago River.

The Mukwonago River is home to 53 species of fish and 15 species of mussels, many of which are threatened or endangered. The village has made protecting the river a high priority, according to Mukwonago stormwater engineer, Steve Wurster.

"(The Mukwonago River) is in as good a shape today as it was 50 years ago," he said, crediting the village's development philosophy, which has tightly controlled stormwater and allowed the waterway to thrive.

When the village established its most recent industrial development site, for example, it implemented stormwater controls exceeding state and county regulations, daylighted 3,500 feet of a stream buried under farm land, installed several stormwater treatment structures and required property owners within the development to also establish stormwater treatment structures.

For its achievements, the Water Star program will recognize Mukwonago as a Silver Star Community during an award ceremony June 14 at 9:30 am on the banks of the Mukwonago

River near Village Hall. State Senator Mary Lazich, Waukesha County Executive Dan Vrakas and our Waukesha County Supervisor Gilbert Yerke will attend.

Ceremony participants and guests will meet in the parking lot at north side of Village Hall before proceeding to the ceremony site along the river. In case of inclement weather, the presentation will be moved to the Village Board Room.

Water Star determines how well municipalities meet the program's standards for water resource protections and designates participants as gold, silver or bronze star communities. Early evidence demonstrates that Wisconsin municipalities have the capacity to achieve high conservation and protection goals.

Representatives from municipalities, the Department of Natural Resources, the University of Wisconsin-Extension and other organizations said they hoped that when the program begins to show how Wisconsin municipalities stack up, gold star-designated municipalities will inspire other municipalities to set loftier goals.

Jim Congdon, Upper Rock Watershed DNR supervisor, said opportunities for optimizing water resource protections include taking steps that go beyond DNR regulations.

Municipalities that have so far qualified as Water Star communities include three gold star communities—Fitchburg, Dane County and River Falls; three silver star communities—Beloit, Mukwonago and Waukesha County; and two bronze star communities—Darlington and Manitowoc.

Municipalities interested in being part of the Water Star program can apply online at <http://www.waterstarwisconsin.org>