



Winter 2020

President's Message

The seasons will be changing soon and hopefully no flooding for the McGilvray Road. The winter has been pretty good but March can bring several inches of snow as we all know.

The Friends of McGilvray Road continue to oversee the walking trail and have plans to re-deck bridges 2 & 4 this spring.

I hope you enjoy the childhood memory from Russell Glomstad as he remembers a spring field trip to the bottoms. If you have stories or photos to share please let the Friends organization know.

The community of Holmen continues to grow including the Seven Bridges Housing Addition, which will bring more people to walk and hunt the

**The Official Newsletter of the
Friends of McGilvray Road
PO Box 2976
La Crosse, WI 54602-2976**

Board of Directors

Nancy Hill	Mike Howe
Pat Caffrey	Butch Kleinsmith
Linda McMullin	Jay Fernholz
Herbert Grimek	Ruth Scholze
Roger Ziegler	John Papenfus
Barb Wuench	Mike Wuench

Officers

President - Ruth Scholze
Vice President – Herbert Grimek
Treasurer - Pat Caffrey
Secretary - Nancy Hill

Check out our website and connect with us at <http://www.7bridgesrd.org>

Join us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofMcGilvrayRd>

McGilvray Road. Please visit our Friends table at the upcoming **Holmen Business & Community Expo March 21, 2020** at the Holmen High School, 11:00 am- 2:00 pm. Thank you for your continual support of this backyard treasure.

Ruth Scholze, President of the Friends of McGilvray Road

Wet Weather Woes

By Pat Caffrey

It was a dark and stormy night. Apologies to Snoopy for the plagiarism, but in recent years we have had a lot of dark and stormy nights! In 2019 La Crosse received 44.67 inches of rain. That was 11.67 inches above normal and just 0.09” below the all-time record set in 2016. Between those extreme years, 2017 and 2018 had precipitation 6.5 inches and 9.5 inches above normal, respectively.

The trend of increased precipitation is longer than just 4 years. Average or normal weather data is based on the most recent 30-year period by the National Weather Service. Averages are updated every ten years, adding the most recent decade of data, and dropping the oldest decade. The annual average precipitation for the 30-year period ending in 2000 was 30.86 inches. For the 30-year period ending in 2010 it was 32.36, a significant increase of 1.5 inches, even though 20 of the 30 years remained the same. Another increase in the average is almost guaranteed when the average is updated at the end of 2020.

How does this relate to McGilvray Road? More precipitation means more flooding, and more flooding means more washouts. Flood records on the Black River (Galesville gauge) go back to 1930, and 3 of the 6 highest floods have occurred since 2010. The 6th highest flood was in 2019, but what caused even more problems for trail maintenance last year was the **duration** of flooding. Significant portions of the trail were under water for much of the year. Volunteer Roger Ziegler, with what we can only assume is an amphibious, high clearance, all-wheel drive mower and a snorkel, managed to keep the trail mowed on a regular basis. Hand work was done on washouts to allow pedestrians to get through when water levels permitted. Significant work on washout repair and bridge re-decking was prevented primarily by water levels, coupled with some endangered species timing concerns. In the fall we were finally able to grade from Bridge #1 to just past Bridge #3, but most of the larger washouts are further west.



When McGilvray Road was open to traffic in the first half of the 20th century, the Town, County, and State each tried to get one of the others to take responsibility for road maintenance, largely because of the frequent washouts. With the increased precipitation washouts are now even more of a problem. The Friends and the DNR are investigating ways to minimize future washouts. Washouts not only damage the trail, but wash sediments into the adjacent wetlands, so we really want to minimize them.



Holmen Community Business Expo & Job Fair
Saturday, March 21st
Snow date: Sunday, March 22nd
11am-2pm
Holmen High School
(1001 McHugh Rd., Holmen, WI)

- Business Expo
- Job Fair
- Entertainment
- Food

Sponsored by:

Holmen HBA Business Association, Premier Spine Health & Injury, Kwik Trip, Mix 96.1 107.3 WXTM, CouleeLife Church

The Friends partnered with the DNR to lower three sections of the trail to allow flood waters to pass more easily, and that has provided some relief. Because of the limited access and weight limits on the bridges it is difficult and costly to haul in significant amounts of rip-rap, which is the traditional method to “harden” erosion prone trail sections. It is possible some modern geotextiles may be the best answer for protecting the historic trail, but we need some dry weather to even have a chance to fully investigate that option.



If we get some dry weather in 2020, there is a lot to do. In addition to repairing the many washouts, we hope to complete a re-decking of Bridge #2, and significant repairs and re-decking on Bridge #4. Anyone reading this that has any influence over the weather, please help!

Meet the Board of Directors

President – Ruth Scholze



Ruth has lived in Holmen for more than 60+years. She has been a librarian for over 40 years working for the School District of Holmen and the Holmen Public Library. Ruth has been active with the Holmen Area Historical Society, the new Holmen Area Community Center, and DKG-Theta an organization of women educators. She is active in her church, Halfway Creek Lutheran and is currently President of the Friends of McGilvray Road, thanks to her former teacher Nancy Hill. The McGilvray area is a

special treasure just north of Holmen which provides beauty and peace along the back waters of the Black River.

Treasurer – Pat Caffrey



Pat grew up near Superior, Wisconsin. He received an MS in Civil Engineering from UW-Madison. Most of his career was with the City of La Crosse, as a design engineer, wastewater superintendent, and director of public works. He is now retired, and a volunteer for several non-profit organizations. Pat became interested in FMR because of the combination of an interest in the historic bridges and trail maintenance issues (he considers himself a recovering public works guy) and his love of the beautiful Van Loon Wildlife Area. Pat has been responsible for

the majority of the recent maintenance done by individuals on the trail and bridges.

Vice President – Herb Grimek



Herb grew up surrounded by nature in a semi-rural area on the Southeastern outskirts of Onalaska, Wisconsin during the 1940's and 1950's. Herb became familiar with the “Seven Bridges Road” while still a young boy. He would occasionally accompany his father on fishing excursions to the Black River at the end of McGilvray Road when the road was still open to vehicular travel.

Herb received a BS in Biology and Chemistry from UW-La Crosse and earned the MS and PhD degrees in Endocrinology and Reproductive Physiology at UW-Madison.

Herb was with UW-Madison for more than 40 years.

After Herb retired from UW-Madison in 2003 he was able to spend more time hunting and fishing and enjoying long walks down McGilvray Road into the Van Loon Wildlife area. Herb discovered FMR and joined the group in about 2010. He is also a member of many other wildlife-oriented organizations.

Secretary – Nancy Hill



Nancy was a teacher in Holmen High for 33 Years. She has been interested in history for most of her life. Nancy became interested in the Seven Bridges initially because her husband, Ed, takes photos of historic places for the Area Research Center (ARC) at Murphy Library, UW-L in La Crosse. She is a founding member of FMR and has been very active in this group since its inception. Nancy served as President of FMR for a great majority of the years of its existence.

Directors – Mike and Barb Wuensch



Mike and Barb Wuensch are both Holmen natives. They have four boys who have grown up hiking and fishing on the McGilvray Road, just as Mike did when he was a boy. When not keeping up with four boys, they enjoy traveling and antiquing. They became actively involved with the Friends of McGilvray Road last fall after discovering the bridges had been vandalized. They believe in the importance of preserving the area and its wildlife for future generations.

Director – Jay Fernholz



Jay grew up in Arcadia. He graduated from UW Madison with a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture. He worked for three years at Owen Ayres and Associates, an architecture and engineering firm in Eau Claire. In 1975 he started Fernholz Landscaping in La Crosse and J. J. Fernholz and Associates, Landscape Architects in 1994. Jay and Diane have lived in Holmen since 1980, working together and employing many particularly talented professionals, and retiring in 2015. He is looking forward to the spring warbler migration when McGilvray Road comes alive.

Director – Linda McMullin



Linda hales from Kenosha, WI and came to La Crosse to attend UW. She worked in the area of special education for 20 years and then moved on to computer maintenance and software program support. Linda has been retired now for about 15 years. She has been a member of the Friends for over 10 years. Besides serving on the Board, Linda supports FMR in the areas of media and publicity: working with the newsletter, Facebook, and our website.

Director – Butch Kleinsmith



Butch is a lifelong rural Holmen resident and a retired Rural Letter Carrier - US Postal Service. His Grandparent's farm bordered the Van Loon Wildlife area, and the close proximity allowed him many happy hours of exploring, hunting, and fishing throughout his life. Butch helps with trail and bridge maintenance.

Director – Roger Ziegler

Roger was born March 23, 1954, grew up in Fountain City and graduated from CFC High School in 1972. For about a year after high school he worked at a couple of different jobs and decided to join the Navy in March 1973. Roger was on an oiler, did 3 West Pacs and participated in the ending of the Vietnam War.



After the service he met his wife, Jackie, and they married in 1983. The couple went from Fargo, ND to Albuquerque, NM where Roger worked in the R&D division for Sperry Corporation developing the heads up displays for fighter jets. His tenure there included spending 2 months in Israel helping train their Air Force on the equipment. The couple

then moved to Naperville, IL.

In 2016 the Ziegler's built a house just down the road from the Seven Bridges Trail. In 2014 Roger and Lady, his yellow lab, drove to Alaska visiting 10 states and 5 Canadian provinces - traveling more than 10,000 miles over a 4½ week period. It was quite an experience with absolutely beautiful hiking and fishing areas. Growing up, Roger learned to hunt, fish, trap, and love nature. That's what motivated him to become a volunteer and then a Board member for the Seven Bridges Trail. Roger works in maintenance of the bridges and trail and is the primary mower for the trail.

The Spring Field Trip

By Russell Glomstad

As far back as I can remember in school, there was a spring field trip to see the early creations of Mother Nature; the flowers, trees, bushes, birds and many other things left behind from the year before.

There was a large power line from a small sub-station next to the school that went west towards the McGilvray Bottoms. We would walk along these lines, under which there were many kinds of wild plants.

Then we would walk the old bottom road. At that time, the road was open and the only road from the prairie to Trempealeau. There was an area of marsh grass which was cut, dried and bailed for hay. Some places out there were used as places to discard (dump) unwanted items.

As we went along, we passed a house just before we entered to the bottom road. There was an older lady who lived there alone. When we came back (I know she heard us go by the first time) she would always greet us. She would say, "I just made some cookies, would you like to try some?" I know they were fresh because they were still warm. The lady's name was Mary Stevens and I often wondered if

that was planned or if that was a quick made batch of sugar cookies. In any case, I remember they were very good.

We'd go back to school with the treasures we brought back and talk a little about the things we had seen. We would then go home...the end of a perfect day.