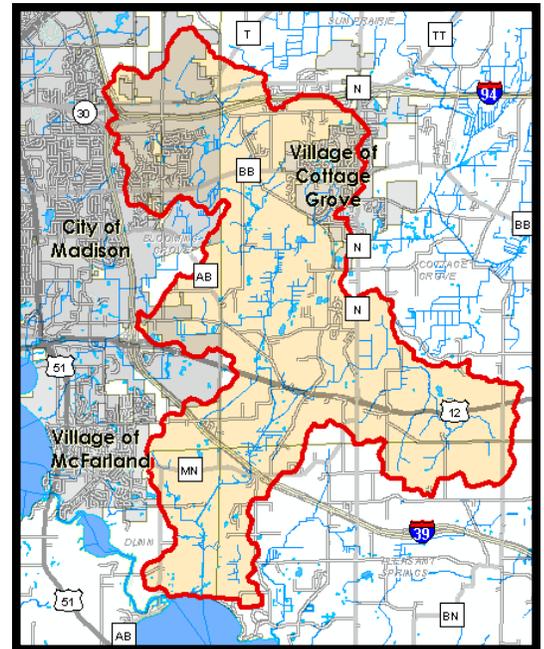


Door Creek Watershed

Door Creek Setting and Location

Door Creek begins as a small stream on the northeast edge of the City of Madison and flows south twelve miles to Lake Kegonsa, the most southern of the Yahara River chain of lakes. Door Creek and its tributaries drain nearly thirty square miles of land in the drumlin-marsh area of eastern Dane County. All of the land that drains to the creek is called its watershed.

Upland areas in the northern and eastern portions of the Door Creek watershed include many small drumlins (long, narrow glacial hills), interspersed with an extensive system of interconnected slowly draining wetlands. To a large extent, Door Creek has been straightened and ditched, and its once abundant wetlands tilled and drained to provide more suitable land for farming. As a result of these early 20th century alterations, very few reaches of Door Creek and its tributaries still exist in their natural states.



Today, the predominant land use is agriculture, accounting for 9,800 acres or 47% of the watershed. Wetlands are the second largest land cover, accounting for 2,700 acres or 13% of the watershed. Past practices have resulted in a legacy of accumulated sediment in Door Creek and nutrient loading to the lakes such that the Door Creek watershed contributes the second highest phosphorus load from agricultural land in the larger Yahara Watershed.

Water Quality Concerns

In natural, native plant covered landscapes, rain soaks into the ground gradually. Nowadays, much of the land is covered by impervious surfaces – such as streets, parking lots, roofs, compacted turf grass, and heavily tilled agricultural fields – where the water cannot soak into the ground. Instead, water runoff flows over the land, picking up pollutants, sediment, and nutrients along the way and transporting them to streams, rivers, and lakes. One of these nutrients is phosphorus which can cause excessive algae growth, oxygen depletion, reduced submerged aquatic vegetation, water clarity problems, and degraded habitat.

Increasing stormwater infiltration and reducing phosphorus and sediment runoff in the Door Creek watershed is very important to improving water quality within the Yahara and other downstream watersheds. Through a watershed improvement network called Yahara WINs, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District and Dane County are working with towns, villages, cities, agricultural producers, state and federal agencies, and environmental organizations to implement cost-effective phosphorus control practices throughout the Yahara watershed with the goal of reducing phosphorus by 106,000 lbs/year.

Door Creek Watershed Management Plan

Dane County Land and Water Resources Department staff, with funding support from the Sand County Foundation, have developed a watershed plan for Door Creek with goals to:

1. Reduce annual phosphorus runoff by about 38% (approximately 5,775 lbs) from agricultural lands and urban sources so that phosphorus concentration in the creek meets state standards, thereby improving water quality to a level where we can recommend to
2. Remove Door Creek from Wisconsin's impaired waters list. By working together to improve water quality and biological health in the creek, we hope to
3. Maintain and improve Door Creek's natural communities of fish and aquatic life.

Achieving the goals and objectives of the watershed management plan will depend on actions and involvement of watershed residents. For this reason, the management plan includes an information and education work plan to engage watershed residents.

Implementing the plan

Community Engagement

The Dane County Land and Water Resources Department is working to engage watershed residents to help them understand the management plan and the actions they can take to help improve water quality. The Door Creek aquatic tour is part of this community engagement program. Other engagement opportunities include a kiosk installation at Fish Camp County Park, a bike route through the watershed, community discussions, and working with agricultural producers and landowners to implement agricultural practices.

Agricultural Practices

County staff can provide planning and technical assistance to help agricultural producers, landowners, developers and municipalities identify practices that can be implemented, with financial assistance if eligible, to help meet the watershed goals. Agricultural practices that help improve water quality and soil health in the Door Creek Watershed include harvestable buffers, grassed waterways, and cover crops.

Harvestable Buffer



A vegetated buffer along the edge of an agricultural field and waterway that captures runoff, including sediment, nutrients and pesticides. Agricultural producers can harvest hay or grass from the buffer planting for dairy feed.

Photo: Scott Hennelly - WI Land+Water

Cover Crops



Cover crops such as grasses, legumes or other forbs protect the soil between cash crop rotations by reducing soil erosion, improving soil moisture and increasing soil animal and plant life.

Photo: Dane County UW-Extension

Grassed Waterway



A grassed waterway is a broad, shallow channel, seeded to grass or other suitable vegetation. Grassed waterways are designed to move runoff water across cropland while preventing soil erosion.

Urban Practices

There are many things that municipalities, urban residents, and homeowners can do to help reduce runoff and improve water quality. Some of the homeowner practices include raingardens, downspout redirection, and removing lawn clipping and leaves from the pavement.

Downspout Redirection



Downspouts can be directed away from pavement and toward grass or rain gardens to reduce water runoff and allow water to soak in to the ground.

Image: www.RainscapingIowa.org

Rain Garden



A rain garden is a landscaped depression that captures rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces, such as roofs or driveways. The runoff is temporarily ponded before seeping down through the soil.

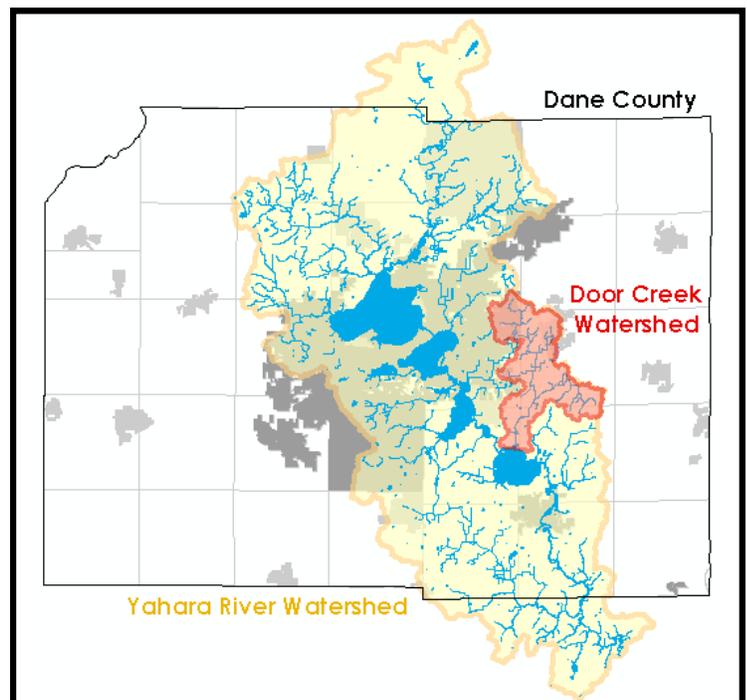
Grass Clippings and Leaves



Leaves and grass clippings are major sources of phosphorus in urban environments. If left on the pavement when it rains, they can wash into storm drains which carry them, and the phosphorus, directly to our lakes and streams.

How YOU Can Get Involved

- Install agricultural or urban water and nutrient management practices on your property. Looking for native plants? PlantDane! provides discounted native plants each spring.
- Learn about the conservation practices being installed and maintained on agricultural land in the watershed, and thank agricultural producers and landowners for their water-friendly work.
- Learn about Door Creek and its watershed on danewaters.com and let the Dane County Office of Lakes and Watersheds know if you would like to receive information about future educational or volunteering activities.
- Volunteer as a citizen water quality monitor or participate in volunteer workdays to improve the creek. Visit takeastake.org to find opportunities.
- Encourage your municipality to participate in the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department's Urban Water Quality Grant Program.
- Know someone in the watershed who might be interested in this project? Share information with them and send the Dane County Office of Lakes and Watersheds their contact information so we can reach out to them.
- Attend a Friends of Lake Kegonsa meeting to find out how you can help their group.



Contact Information

Dane County Land and Water Resources Department

The Dane County Land and Water Resources Department ensures the protection and enhancement of Dane County's natural, cultural, and historic resources; provides the county's citizens with a broad array of accessible, high quality resource-based recreational services and facilities; and supports citizens, communities, local governments and other agencies and organizations in their resource management and protection activities.

For more information, call 608-224-3730 or visit its webpage: www.countyofdane.com/lwr/

Dane County Office of Lakes and Watersheds

The Dane County Office of Lakes and Watersheds is one division of the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department. The office aims to protect and improve the water resources of Dane County by coordinating with other department and agency staff, water-related citizen groups, the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission, and a myriad of other partner organizations in the area.

For more information, call 608-224-3764 or visit its webpage: www.danewaters.com

Friends of Lake Kegonsa (FOLKS)

FOLKS is a non-profit organization whose purpose is to protect, maintain and enhance environmental and recreational values at Lake Kegonsa and its surroundings; and to represent the collective interests of the members. In other words, FOLKS is a volunteer organization interested in preserving its neighborhood.

For more information, contact Peter Foy (FOLKS president) at peterF@kegonza.org or visit their webpage: www.kegonza.org