

# Dane County Exec. Parisi: Dane County will award grant to Groundswell Conservancy for land purchase in Westport, will help preserve and restore Six Mile Creek and surrounding wetlands

Posted on Thursday, May 2, 2019

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## *Site Could Be A Future "Suck the Muck" Location*

Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced that Groundswell Conservancy will receive Dane County's Conservation Fund Grant to help purchase approximately 84 acres of property in the Town of Westport. The parcel is dominated by wetlands and contains an approximately 1,500-foot segment of Six Mile Creek. The acquisition and restoration of this area will assist with flood storage and mitigation, protect this stretch of Six Mile Creek and adjacent wetlands, help maintain and improve water quality, and provide public access for nature-based outdoor recreation, including an existing snowmobile trail.

"We appreciate the O'Malley family's willingness to help us preserve and restore this land," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "By partnering together, we can now work to ensure this natural space and its environmental benefits can be enjoyed for generations to come."

Six Mile Creek supports a diverse forage, warm water sport fishery, and spawning grounds. In addition to Six Mile Creek, the parcel also has an unnamed tributary and a drainage ditch. The wetlands in this parcel are valuable for protecting the Yahara River and Chain of Lakes. A restriction covers approximately 12.5 acres on the east side of the property that was restored to wetlands as part of a mitigation project on nearby land. This coming winter, the site will also be tested for its potential to be included in Dane County's "Suck the Muck" initiative.

"Suck the Muck" is a \$12 million initiative, introduced by Parisi in his 2017 budget and implemented by the Dane County Department of Land and Water Resources, to clean up 33 total miles of streams that feed into the lakes. The sediment found in these streams is estimated to be at least 125 years old and contain 870,000 pounds of phosphorus, which can increase the frequency and extent of hazardous algae blooms. It is hoped that work from "Suck the Muck" will also improve the natural reproduction and diversity of fish populations.

"Growing up adjacent to the Six Mile Creek and this marsh, I've seen the tremendous amount of water the marsh can hold helping alleviate flooding downstream," said Dane County Board Supervisor Dave Ripp. "With perimeter trails, this will be a great resource for the area."

The property being acquired lies just east of the DNR's Waunakee Marsh Wildlife Area, and north of Dane County's North Mendota Natural Resource Area. The Village of Waunakee's Ripp Park is south of the property across Highway 19. Development and a golf course are to the north and east of the parcel. Hellenbrand Road is on the west side of the parcel, along with roughly 28 acres of cropland.

Overall project costs for this acquisition are \$404,770. Dane County will allocate \$113,042.50 in matching funds. A Knowles Nelson Stewardship grant and a North American Wetland Conservation Act grant have been secured by Groundswell Conservancy. The Village of Waunakee has also committed funds toward the parcel purchase.

The resolution to award Dane County's Conservation Fund Grant to Groundswell Conservancy to assist in the purchase of this parcel will go before the County Board at tonight's meeting.