

Dept. of Natural Resources: Names Blanchardville resident Heidi Hankley State Natural Area Steward Of The Year

Posted on Wednesday, Nov 2, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

BLANCHARDVILLE, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) today announced Blanchardville resident Heidi Hankley as the 2022 State Natural Areas Volunteer Steward of the Year for her contributions to York Prairie State Natural Area.

Driven by a life-long love of nature and interest in conservation, Hankley has been volunteering at York Prairie State Natural Area for the past 10 years. In her time working on the property, Hankley has organized workdays clearing brush, planting native seeds, pulling invasive species and participating in rare plant monitoring surveys.

“When I had children, I decided to stay home and eventually to homeschool. Volunteering at York Prairie gave me a way to continue to work on behalf of nature, and I often brought my girls along, which provided wonderful learning experiences for them,” said Hankley.

Aside from her work at York Prairie, Hankley serves as a Water Action Volunteer on a local stream and has been running a frog and toad survey with her family since 2010.

“Heidi is a busy mom, but she gives what she can, and it’s high-quality time, providing steady leadership for the York Prairie volunteers,” said Jared Urban, the DNR’s Volunteer Program Coordinator for state natural areas. “She understands

how to encourage others to take the next step in leadership.”

In addition to seeing improvements at York Prairie, one of Hankley’s favorite parts of volunteering is the people she meets along the way.

“Volunteering has been a wonderful way for me to get together with other people interested in taking an active role in caring for York Prairie,” said Hankley. “I’ve learned a great deal from other volunteers and have benefitted from training opportunities offered through the DNR.”

Along with her passion for nature, Hankley also shares her deep love of art by facilitating several field trips for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, blending exploring the site with an art activity.

“Now an empty-nester, I’m actively pursuing my artwork, but volunteering keeps me connected to caring for the land, and my time spent at York Prairie really inspires my art,” said Hankley.

Become A State Natural Area Volunteer

[State natural areas](#) are designated to conserve the best of Wisconsin prairies, forests, wetlands and other habitats. These unique places support 90% of rare plant species and 75% of rare wildlife species. Nearly all properties are open to the public to enjoy while bird watching, hiking, hunting and fishing.

The Wisconsin DNR is actively recruiting volunteers to help care for these unique places. No experience is necessary, and training and equipment are provided on-site.

To get involved and sign up for workday notifications, visit the [DNR’s State Natural Areas Volunteer Program webpage](#).