



The Aldo Leopold Center (www.aldoleopold.org) in Baraboo hosted the Wisconsin Council On Forestry meeting on September 13 and 14, 2023. The first day included the Council meeting with a tour of the “Shack” and the Leopold Pines Conservation Area. The second day included more tour stops on the Center lands and stops on private and Nature Conservancy lands in the area.



Buddy Huffaker, President and Executive Director of the Aldo Leopold Foundation, and Council member, described the original land purchase by Aldo Leopold at the entrance to the original “sand farm” purchased in 1935.



Council on Forestry members and guests in front of the “Shack” at the Leopold Center. From left to right: Don Hoffman (guest), Rebekah Luedtke, Heather Berklund, RJ Wickham (guest), Ralph Heiser (guest), Dr. Adena Rissman, Brad Dorff, Jordan Skiff, Dr. William Van Lopik, Matt Dallman, Tom Hittle, Jim Hoppe, Erik Rantala, Henry Schienebeck, Buddy Huffaker, Julie Church (guest) and Jim Kerkman.



Buddy Huffaker explains the significance of the Wisconsin River to migrating sandhill cranes. Every fall, from late October to early November, approximately 15,000 sandhill cranes stage in this area on their migration south. The Aldo Leopold Foundation has ground blinds that allow viewing of this event.



Brad Dorff reads a paragraph from Aldo Leopold's essay, "The Good Oak" at the very spot the good oak stood until it was killed by a lightning strike and cut into firewood by Aldo Leopold.



Steve Swenson (second from the right), Leopold Center program director, explained the process used to restore approximately 170 acres of savanna/barrens habitat. A low-quality mixed hardwood forest was harvested in 2015 of all merchantable trees except oak and hickory. Since the harvest, multiple prescribed burns encouraged prairie plants and suppressed shrub growth. The goal is to connect with other savanna/barrens areas to create contiguous habitat.



Dick Mielke (in orange shirt), local landowner enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program, hosted a tour of his land. This part of his forest is a mixed planting of oak and white pine. Once a common practice that required removing the white pine with a commercial thinning to release the oaks. This is not a recommended practice anymore due to the small acreage planted and lack of markets in the area for pine pulp.



Ann Calhoun (left), Baraboo Hills Project Coordinator with the Nature Conservancy (www.nature.org), showcases a project to convert an agriculture field into a forest. The field was planted with various species of oak seedlings in 2019. The seedlings are present but have not yet grown past the existing vegetation, other trees such as white pine and ash (seen in the foreground) have seeded in naturally. The goal is to create large blocks of contiguous forest.



Lee Herrick (middle), consulting forester, explains a timber harvest completed in 2021 on 80 acres of Nature Conservancy land. The harvest removed all tree species except oak and hickory. Future prescribed burns will help control the shrubs and competing tree species with the goal of maintaining an oak/hickory forest.