# Friends of Capital Springs







DED HIKES • FAMILY-FRIENDLY FUN : BIRDS OF PREY • NATURE ART AL FOOD CARTS & CRAFT BEER

AUDUBON Capital Springs

### **Spring Newsletter 2015**

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# SUMMER TRAILS FESTIVAL JUNE 6, 11 AM – 4 PM

The Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area (FOCSRA) is partnering with Madison Audubon to sponsor a Summer Trails Festival on National Trails Day. All state trails will be free that weekend.

The Festival will be located in the Capital Springs Recreation Area (CSRA) next to the Capital City State Trail across Lake Farm Road from the Lussier Family Heritage Center in Lake Farm County Park. There will be several tents providing **family friendly fun** and

guided hikes. There will also be **food, beer, and other beverages** available for purchase . (See the full page <u>Trails Festival Flyer on page 7.)</u>

We ask for a \$5.00 donation as this event, in addition to fun and environmental education, is a fundraiser for both organizations. This is a perfect opportunity to ride your bike and stop by! Vehicle parking will be limited.



Family Fun includes children's story tent, nature art (butterfly watercolors) and building bird feeders, as well as first hand encounters with amphibians, turkey vulture, other birds and mammals. Maynard the Mallard will make an appearance courtesy of the Shoebox, and the Madison Audubon Goose is also scheduled to make a visit. For more information, visit MAS online at

madisonaudubon.org/trailsfest.

All **Capital Springs guided hikes** will incorporate **natural history** of the park including water trails, bird observation, and native wildlife. In addition, the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District, which borders Capital Springs, will have a **special Nine Springs E-Way Biking Tour** of the Nine Springs wastewater treatment plant. See <u>page 7 for details</u>. Additional sponsors include Dane

County Parks, WI Department of Natural Resources, Wheels for Winners, JUST Coffee Co-op, Fontana Sports, and Dane County Environmental Council.

We are in need of more volunteers to help organize the event. It's also not too late to be a sponsor!

Contact us at capsprings@gmail.com.

#### TRAIL DEVELOPMENTS AT CAPTIAL SPRINGS

By Adam Lipscomb, Capital Springs Park Ranger

There has been a lot of things evolving in the way of trails in and around Lake Farm County Park. Over the winter, a

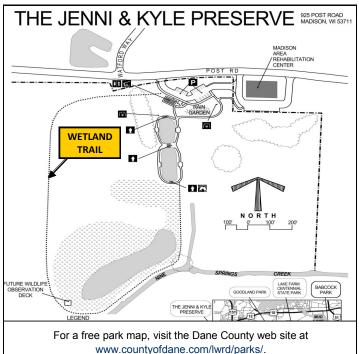


The new trail at Lake Farm Park provides scenic views of wetlands.

trail was developed for hiking and snowshoeing. This trail starts at Shelter 1 at Lake Farm during the winter, and during the warm months hikers can start at the Lake Farm parking lot opposite the boat launch. The trail goes though a large field that

has recently been seeded with native prairie plants and continues near a wetland and a scenic walk along Lake Waubesa. The trail was overgrown with many invasive species, but thanks to our volunteers and staff--including hundreds students from Minnesota this spring (see article on page 8)--it is now open to enjoy lake vistas and prairie.

In addition, we opened the Wetland Trail at Jenni and Kyle Preserve this spring, located at 925 Post Road. This trail was proposed in the master plan and is approximately ¾ mile loop out into the wetlands offering great nature observation, hiking and snowshoeing opportunities. You can park in the parking lot, walk straight back on the east side of the ponds. The Wetland Trail continues out into the wetlands surrounding Nine Springs Creek and ends up back at the parking lot.



Friends volunteer Dan Kerkman and I, along with help from Operation Fresh Start (OFS), developed a half mile loop trail that takes you on a scenic tour of the wetlands surrounding Nine Springs Creek. A small walking bridge and some fill dirt are still needed to complete this trail project; we plan to finish these tasks this summer. Operation Fresh Start – Conservation Crew is a work team contracted by Dane County to support our volunteers with the many projects they are working on. The crews rotate weekly to each park and help with trail building and land management projects.

The major trail project this summer is "phase one" of the new Lower Yahara River Trail (LYRT), the bike route that will soon connect Capital City State Trail from the Lake Farm Park campground to the Village of McFarland. This

summer, the county hopes to have a compacted gravel-based trail from the campground to the railroad trestle bridge. In the summer in 2016, the State will start "phase two", its portion of the project which includes building a bridge and developing a path along the



Phase one of the Lower Yahara River Trail will go to the trestle bridge.

railroad track. Once the trail is finished, it will then be paved. The estimated completion date for this project is late summer 2017. In addition to recreational bicycling, users of the LYRT can look forward to great fishing opportunities and scenic views of Lake Waubesa.



#### MMSD WILDLIFE LAGOONS - THEN AND NOW

By Ralph Erickson, FOCSRA Board Member

Starting in 1928, the treated effluent of the Nine Springs Wastewater Treatment Plant was delivered to upper Mud Lake (Lake Waubesa) via an effluent ditch. The ditch, no longer used for plant effluent, is still visible along the north dikes of the lagoon system. Decisions of necessity due to labor shortages during World War II led the District to create the sludge storage lagoons south of the effluent ditch. Treatment plant digested sludge was pumped to the lagoons up until the 1970's. Bird watchers from near and far have come to the fertile tidal flat-like sludge lagoons to glimpse common and less-common species.

The evolution of the Metrogro biosolids land application program in the 1970's gave the District the opportunity to remove lagoon sludge and to combine it with "freshly" digested biosolids in the Metrogro program. By the late 1980's, new uses were being evaluated for the lagoons, and soon they were to be entirely emptied of sludge.

The western area of the lagoon system was reconstructed for wildlife habitat and recreation, and water levels are now managed in the new lagoons to provide mudflat conditions for migratory shorebirds. Highly treated Nine Springs plant effluent can be pumped to the lagoons during non-migratory periods to help control weed growth. Willows were removed from the west lagoons this past winter.

The Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District's brochure "MMSD Wildlife Observation Area", available in the Operations Building lobby and on the District web page, indicates that over 200 different bird species have been documented at the site. The District helped to construct the boardwalk that allows the casual wildlife viewer to make the short walk from the Lewis Nine Springs E-way

Many migratory birds stop at the lagoons, including Green-winged Teal. Photo by Herbert Lange

parking lot to peek into the lagoon area. For a closer look, the District welcomes wildlife enthusiasts to walk the dikes of the lagoon system.

The District asks that you leave your bicycle and pets for other days on other trails, and users should not engage in activities that would

disturb wildlife in the lagoons.



The boardwalk trail at MMSD Wildlife Observation Area, part of Capital Springs Recreation Area, is popular with birdwatchers and hikers alike.

Keep an eye out for these upcoming MMSD projects that will benefit visitors to the Capital Springs Recreation Area:

- A bike rest stop with water fountain and bike maintenance stand will be built along the Capital City Trail this spring at the Nine Springs Plant Gate # 1 near the railroad tracks at South Towne Drive.
- Pumping Station 11 near Larson Road (just off the Capital City Trail) will have an upgrade project that, when completed, will include a picnic table for hikers and bikers.
- Capital City Trail users, near Clayton and Larson Roads, can see far to the north a new MMSD maintenance building under construction on Moorland Road. The new shop will allow the District to repurpose the old shop located at Gate #2 on South Towne Drive. The re-purposed former shop building will be used for public education events associated with District operations and also for trail and park users as well.

For more information about this unit including maps, visit the Friends web site at

www.friendsofcapitalsprings.org/enjoy/mmsd/.



#### MEET RICK EILERTSON

Friends of Capital Springs Board Secretary

#### How did you come to join the FOCSRA Board?

I found out about the Friends while researching the Capital Springs Recreation Area Master Plan. I was in the process of creating the Nine Springs Creek Watershed Master Plan through my work as Fitchburg's Environmental Engineer. Chris James, Dane County Parks Planner, was able to connect me with the Friends group and I've served as a volunteer and advisor since 2011.

## What experiences do you wish to bring to the Friends and to Capital Springs Recreation Area?

Community involvement and networking: one of the keys I've learned as a public works professional is that an involved and engaged community can get a lot more done when they understand the big picture and have a say in how the picture gets painted. The Friends already have a tremendous network of volunteers and my hope is that we can continue to grow that network and get paint and paintbrushes to an even larger audience.

#### How does Capital Springs benefit Madison and surrounding communities?

Nature access and immersion: The Capital Springs Recreation Area has a tremendous variety of natural environmental features that are part of the greater Madison Metropolitan E-Way, most of which are within 15-30 minutes of biking and walking distance from a huge urban population. It provides a significant linkage for urban residents to easily connect with nature right out their back door. The Friends group provides a great opportunity not only to show off the great features available to these residents, but also help connect them with a wide variety of volunteer projects so they can take a stake in improving these great features.

## Do you have a favorite feature, unit or recreational activity at Capital Springs?

The springs: one of the key namesakes for the Capital Springs Recreation Area is the springs. Wayne Pauly, Dane County's Naturalist, showed me several of these springs shortly after I started working in Fitchburg in 2006. I fell in love with them. Each are unique, but I think that Nursery Springs is my favorite.

For a more information about the Nine Springs E-Way and a recreational map, please visit <a href="https://www.friendsofcapitalsprings.org/enjoy/eway/">www.friendsofcapitalsprings.org/enjoy/eway/</a>.

#### **Upcoming Friends Events (Save the Date!)**

<u>Summer Trails Festival</u> in partnership with Madison Audubon Society - June 6, 2015, 11 a.m. - 4 p.m., along the Capital City Trail across from the Lussier Family Heritage Center. See <u>page 1 article</u> for details and <u>flyer on page 7</u>.

Fitchburg Bike Trail Dedication/Celebration Event - June 6th, 9 - 10:30 am, Dawley Hub Shelter (3041 S. Seminole Hwy). The event celebrates the numerous 2014 cycling developments in Fitchburg--bike paths, bridges, and shelters--as well as the hard work of local bicycle aficionados, contractors, Fitchburg/Dane County staff and elected officials that made it all possible. For event details, visit www.fitchburgwi.gov.

Jenni and Kyle Fishing Day - July 16, at the ponds at Jenni and Kyle Preserve. Fishing is at 4:30-6:00 pm; cookout from 6-7 p.m. The event is limited to 40 disabled anglers. To volunteer, contact Chris James at Dane County Parks, james@countyofdane.com. Sponsors include Friends of Capital Springs, Madison Fishing Expo, Dane County Conservation League, Dane County Parks, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District, Dorn Hardware, Lundgrens Sign Shop, UW Provisions, Perkins Restaurants & Colonial Bakery. Regularly, these ponds are open only for fishing to children 15 yrs and younger and all disabled anglers.

**80th Anniversary of Dane County Parks** - September 1, 2015 - a fundraiser for the Friends of Dane County Parks Endowment Fund, Lussier Family Heritage Center, Capital Springs Recreation Area, 5-7 p.m.

<u>Magic Bus Tour of Capital Springs Recreation Area</u> - September 19, 2015, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. Includes a tour of the neighboring Madison Metro Sewerage District areas.

<u>Harvest Moon Festival</u> - October 2, 2015, 6 - 9 p.m. at the Lussier Family Heritage Center, Lake Farm County Park.

Winter Fun Day - February, 2016 (see website for date).



Rick Eilertson, shown here with his two sons, is the new Friends of Capital Springs Board Secretary.

Rick is an Environmental Engineer with the City of Fitchburg and has worked on the Nine Springs Creek Watershed Master Plan.

#### WINTER & AUTUMN CELEBRATIONS - ANNUAL FRIENDS EVENTS

By Judie Pfeifer, FOCSRA Board Treasurer

#### Winter Fun Day, Feb. 28, 2015

Thanks to our Naturalist Program Coordinator, Carson Main, we had our first annual Winter Fun Day at the



Lussier Family Heritage Center. It was a sunny day and Rutabaga brought snow shoes and gave a presentation about their use. In the morning, a group of adults and children tried out the snowshoes on the

new snowshoe trail at the Centennial Unit of Capital Springs Recreation Area. The group snowshoe was led by

Dan Kerkman, our wonderful Capital Springs volunteer who mowed and laid the trail. We are grateful to Rutabaga for a



well-organized and educational session!

In the afternoon, a naturalist from the Aldo Leopold Nature Center led a session on winter survival skills and fire building. Two groups tried their skills outdoors at building fires. Snacks and hot chocolate were available at the Lussier Family Heritage Center. We appreciate the help of the Aldo Leopold Nature Center! See our website next winter for the 2016 Winter Fun Day.

#### Harvest Moon Festival, Oct. 3, 2014

On a cold and windy evening, the Friends of Capital



Springs Recreation Area (FOCSRA) held the 10th anniversary Harvest Moon Festival. All attendees had a great time! The educational exhibits, both inside and outside the Lussier

Family Heritage Center, were very popular and roaring bonfire (with s'mores and music) provided welcome warmth.

The Moonlight Walk Interpretive Trail presented outdoor exhibits included:

- Upham Woods, Reptiles and Amphibians of WI
- Leave No Trace, Sierra Club / Inner City Outings

- Animal Eye Shines / Animal Tracks, WDNR
- Archery, NASP
- Modern Harvest, Bob Uphoff's Ham & Bacon Farm
- Dane County Sheriff
- Mad City Disc Golf
- Zoo To You, Henry Vilas Zoo Education
- WI Bears, North American Bear Center
- Sheep to Shawl, SC WI Pleasant Spinners
- Howlin' Bonfire, Brandon Beebe's Beatle Band

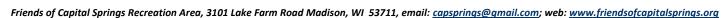
Inside Exhibits and Fundraiser included:

- Aldo Leopold Nature Center
- Capital Off Road Pathfinders (CORP)
- Dane County Beekeepers Association
- Dane County Parks/ WDNR
- Friends of Capital Springs
- Ice Age Trail Alliance
- Lake Farm Archeology
- Madison Audubon Society
- Maynard the Mallard courtesy of the Shoebox
- Madison Metro Sewerage District
- Smokey the Bear
- West Waubesa Preservation
- Wisconsin Furbearers
- Silent Auction Fundraiser

Soho Food Cart, Cupcakes-A-Go-Go, and Grandma Jo's homemade pies and ice cream were available.



Thank you to all the volunteers and to all those who attended!



#### MEET RALPH ERICKSON

New Friends of Capital Springs Board Member

#### How did you come to join the FOCSRA Board?

As an Madison Metropolitan Sewarage District (MMSD) employee, I have observed the wonderful friends and volunteers in action when I set up an educational exhibit at the Harvest Moon Festival. When our Chief Engineer asked around for a District employee to serve on the board, I knew I had to throw my name in. I have been watching and using the Capital Springs lands for three decades, and I work in and commute through them as well. This land (and water) is dear to me and I look forward to helping out the best I can for the next thirty years.

#### What experiences do you wish to bring to the Friends and to Capital Springs Recreation Area?

I have interests in many of the things that make Capital Springs so special – the glacial geography, history of past and present peoples, water, fish, wildlife, forest, marsh and prairie. My list of career accomplishments is not so long, although I am able to lend my knowledge of water resources and ecology (UW-Stevens Point grad) and am capable of working either the ideas or the shovel and pruner. I like to think outside the box.

#### Have you worked with other nonprofit organizations?

Possibly the only nonprofit that I worked for, failed in its role. We were kids trying to save an urban woodlot from development; it was our play land. We went door to door raising awareness and selling raffle tickets (the celebrity auction had some nice donations - John Wayne's comes to mind). The community of West Bend gained a nice YMCA facility from the loss of our woodlot, but I learned then and have seen again in adulthood that sometimes a loss for a few is a gain to the community. And so now, we plan and develop a fantastic environmental resource known as the Capital Springs Recreation Area. I hope this is nobody's loss and everybody's long-lasting gain.

#### Do you have a favorite feature, unit or recreational activity at Capital Springs?

Tough question! Thirty years ago, it would have been fishing the shoreline at Lake Farm Park. Later, it was lunch -time runs up the little forested hill where the disc golf course would later be built. Today, my favorite unit is the DNR land, the diamond in the rough, near Hog Island.

#### 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Take a Stake Grows Year-Round Fun

#### www.takeastake.org

Finally, It feels as though summer is around the corner and a perfect time to get out and "Take a Stake" in our waters that is. Join us in our Take a Stake in Our Waters projects which continues to offer events that help people celebrate, learn about, pro-



tect, and improve Dane County's COMMISSION lakes and streams.

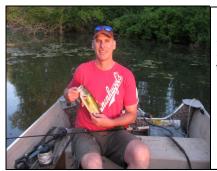
Groups, clubs, businesses, individuals and families collect litter and rake aquatic debris from beaches, shorelines and streams. Some adopt boat launches while others paddle their canoes or kayaks to pick up trash. Others mark storm drains with messages reminding folks to keep trash, leaves and grass clippings out of

the street gutters, which drain directly to our lakes and streams. Thousands of volunteers have removed hundreds of tons of waste all over Dane County over the past quarter century.



Local events are listed on www.takeastake.org. Join an event already planned or submit your event to be listed. Volunteer for the lake or stream nearest you! Take a Stake in Our Waters by picking up shoreline trash and aquatic debris any time of the year. Garbage bags, gloves and volunteer t-shirts available on request. Mark storm drains May through September.

To volunteer or add your water-related event to the list, complete the form at www.takeastake.org in the volunteer section. Be sure to indicate whether you are recruiting volunteers for your project or event.



Ralph Erickson, employee at MMSD, brings three decades of enjoying and volunteering at Capital Springs to the Friends Board.

His interests include glacial geography, history, water, fish, wildlife, forest, marsh and prairie.





#### **Lewis Nine** Springs E-Way **Biking Tour**



**Dawley Hub Shelter Dedication to Summer Trails Festival!** 

led by **Board Member Rick Eilertson** 

- →The Bike Tour leaves the Dawley Hub Shelter (3041 S. Seminole Hwy) at 10:30 am and ends at Lussier Family Heritage Center (3101 Lake Farm Rd) at about noon.
- →This Biking Tour provides a connection from the <u>Dawley</u> Hub Shelter Dedication Ceremony (9am, see pg 4) to the Capital Springs Summer Trails Festival (at left, 11 am - 4pm).
- →The pace will be slow along the rolling hills of the route. Led by Rick Eilertson, Fitchburg's Environmental Engineer, the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way Tour will make numerous stops to learning laboratories along the new Cannonball Path and Capital City Trail.
- →For a map and schedule, visit www.fitchburgwi.gov/stormwater.
- →Families and folks of all ages are encouraged to attend! Hope to see you on the trail June 6.

# YOUNG VOLUNTEERS PARTICIPATE IN WORKDAYS AT CAPITAL SPRINGS

By Rhea Stangel-Meier, Dane County Parks Volunteer Program Coordinator

On a beautiful Saturday in March, we were privileged to have 40 energetic volunteers from the College St. Scho-

lastica join the Friends of Capital Springs with land restoration efforts at Hog Island within the Capital Springs Recreation Area.



These awesome vol-

unteers were on their "alternative" spring break with Students Today Leaders Forever - STLF. Their "Pay it Forward Tour" was a cross country trip with 6 community service projects along the way to their final destination of Dallas Texas.

The project consisted of cutting and hauling brush. The STLF volunteers were so productive that FOSCRA lead volunteers decided instead of 1 burning brush pile that 3 were needed. At the end the STLF volunteers were able to see how much they had accomplished while making s'mores.

Word must have spread to other Students Today Leaders Forever groups and we were contacted again requesting



another volunteer opportunity with 109 middle school students on their April 11th "Pay It Forward Tour". Again, the STLF volunteers proved to be fun and energetic volunteers! We ap-

preciate their efforts.

If you get a chance, check out the Hog Island area and see the area where volunteers have accomplished a great deal opening up some beautiful vistas of the area and Lake Waubesa.

If you would like to help with any volunteer events please feel free to contact Rhea, Dane County Parks Volunteer Program Coordinator at 608-224-3601 or at stangel-maier@countyofdane.com.

## Work Days at Capital Springs with Dan Kerkman

This will be our first summer of having work days in the new state park within the Capital Springs Recreation Area, appropriately named the Capital Springs State Park unit.

We officially started last fall after the completion of the parking lot by Dane County Parks. Grass was sown on the new trails through the prairie and bordering trails. Prairie seeds were put down as well. This summer, there will be rocks to move, invasive removal work, continued installation of new nature trails, and old fencing removal.

Our planned work days are as follows:

- May 16
- June 13
- July 18
- August 8
- September 12

All work days begin at 10 a.m. at the new parking lot off Libby Road (right across from the boat launch). We will work until mid-afternoon. All help is welcome.

Please contact me for further details as to equipment and specific tasks for each day: Dan Kerkman hm 271-1044, cell 886-3844 email: <a href="MerkmanDC@att.net">KerkmanDC@att.net</a>. Thanks for helping out at the park.



Capital Springs volunteers work with Dan Kerkman to build a canoe launch for paddlers on Nine Springs Creek.

Dan Kerkman is a long-time volunteer at Capital Springs and Friends Board Member. He works on a wide variety of projects at the park, including woods restoration, prairie seedings, hiking trail development and watertrails (paddling).

# PARTNERING WITH FRIENDS FOR YOUTH EDUCATION: MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY AND BADGER ROCK SCHOOL

By Carson Main, Capital Springs Naturalist Program Coordinator

#### **Madison Audubon Society**

Over the past year, The Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area (FOCSRA) and the Madison Audubon Society (MAS) have developed a strong partnership that has supported youth environmental education initiatives throughout Lake Farm County Park. Madison Audubon received a grant to help get kids outside by covering the cost of transportation for middle school students to the park - the perfect outdoor classroom in the Madison area.

The goal of the trips to the park is to introduce youth to the great environmental education resource that is literally in their backyards! The trips focus on bird and plant identification skills, local history and Native American culture, as well as wilderness survival skills and outdoor recreation.

Both FOCSRA and MAS understand that young people's experiences in nature can cultivate a lifelong love of the environment. This work with youth will help to foster a new generation of stewards for the natural world in Wisconsin and beyond.



Carson Main, Capital Springs Naturalist Program Coordinator, is pleased to partner with MAS and others to bring great programming to Capital Springs.

#### Badger Rock Middle School

FOCSRA is also excited to report on the continued partnership with Badger Rock Middle School, a project-based environmental and sustainability focused charter school on Madison's south side. The Indian Springs and Baxter Parks along the Lewis Nine Springs E-way continue to be utilized as an educational resource and site of service-learning projects.

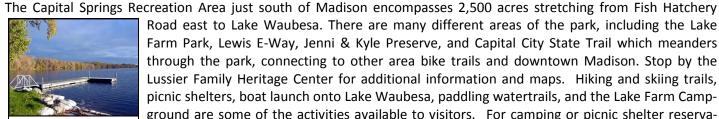
Over one hundred students have developed a sense of place by participating in invasive species control, water quality analysis, trails maintenance, prairie seeding, and bird box maintenance and inventory this past spring. We thank them for their hard work!





Badger Rock Middle School students from Madison put some muscle into their work at Capital Springs this year moving wood chips to area trails.

#### CAPITAL SPRINGS RECREATION AREA INFORMATION 3101 LAKE FARM ROAD, MADISON, WI 53711



**Capital Springs protects** almost a mile of undeveloped Lake Waubesa shoreline.

Road east to Lake Waubesa. There are many different areas of the park, including the Lake Farm Park, Lewis E-Way, Jenni & Kyle Preserve, and Capital City State Trail which meanders through the park, connecting to other area bike trails and downtown Madison. Stop by the Lussier Family Heritage Center for additional information and maps. Hiking and skiing trails, picnic shelters, boat launch onto Lake Waubesa, paddling watertrails, and the Lake Farm Campground are some of the activities available to visitors. For camping or picnic shelter reservations, contact Dane County Parks at 224-3730, or reserve online at www.reservedane.com. Contact Dane County Parks at Dane-Parks@CountyofDane.com.

Your support is vital to the growth and success of Capital Springs Recreation Area. Please

consider volunteering your time, joining the Friends of Capital Springs, or sending a tax-deductible donation to the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc. All funds received go directly to park improvements and Friends initia-

Park Directions: From Madison or Interstate I-90, take US Highway 12/18 to the South Towne Drive Exit (exit 264). Head south. Continue for one mile and turn left on Moorland Road, which turns into Lake Farm Road. The park is located at 3101 Lake Farm Road. See the Lussier Family Heritage Center and campground on your left.

The Capital Springs Newsletter is published by the Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc. as a benefit to its members.

Friends Board of Directors: Matt Carlson, President; Bill Lunney, Vice-President; Judie Pfeifer, Treasurer; Rick Eilertson, Secretary;

Dan Kerkman; Ralph Erickson. Advisors: Michael Mucha and Don Schmidt

Dane County Liaison: Linda Mittnacht Dane County Volunteer Coordinator: Rhea Stangel-Maier Capital Springs Naturalist Program Coordinator: Carson Main Capital Springs Park Ranger: Adam Lipscomb Dane County Parks Director: Darren Marsh **DNR Liaisons**: Kevin Swenson and Sarah Bolser

Newsletter Editor: Clare Carlson



Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area, Inc. 3101 Lake Farm Road Madison, WI 53711