



A Campus of the University of Wisconsin Colleges

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Press Release



Arbor Day Tree planters included:
Ken Anderson, tree planting consultant, in back.
Front row (L-R): Faculty organizer Dr. Norlene Emerson, Colton Heding,
Fred Bernhagen, Kacey Crooks, CEO/Dean Dr. Patrick Hagen

MAY 2, 2011

5000 trees planted on Arbor Day: **Going green at The Smart Farm**

“My goal is to see the Smart Farm have a net zero carbon footprint,” said Terry Sebranek, chair of the committee managing the UW-Richland Joe and Mae Senneke Smart Farm, an outdoor facility for University of Wisconsin-Richland students and for community education.

“We may be close to that now. We might even be on the plus side of a carbon footprint,” another committee member said.

The April 29—Arbor Day--planting of 5,000 conifer and hardwood trees on the 194-acre property, a portion of which is designated a Wisconsin School Forest, is the most recent of many green initiatives undertaken at the Smart Farm since 2009 when development as a public educational facility began.

“We’re working on a Managed Forest Plan that includes a long-term plan for maintaining the forest, removing invasive species and including scheduled timber harvests,” Sebranek said.

In addition to community volunteers, UW-Richland students helping with the tree-planting initiative included:

Fred Bernhagen, Cazenovia;
Chase Cooper, Richland Center;
Kacey Crooks, Prairie du Chien;
Joel Feldhacker, Richland Center; and

Colton Heding, LaFarge.

Dr. Norlene Emerson, UW-Richland associate professor of geology/geography, organized the student efforts.

The trees, provided by the School Forest Program, were planted on about five acres, two small oddly shaped fields that were difficult to use as cropland. The new woodland is intended to serve as an additional teaching tool, a lab where students can learn more about forestry, wildlife and birds, plants, environmental science, management and more. The newly established woodland will be managed for sustainability. The tree planting is just the latest of on-going work to enhance energy efficiency on the Smart Farm.

Energy improvements made to the residential buildings include a geothermal heating/cooling system in the house, insulation, and new windows, which greatly enhanced energy efficiency. New steel roofs that look like shingles and new siding have been installed. Underway currently is a project, funded by a local donor, to install solar panels expected to supply sufficient electricity for heating and cooling, and provide energy for additional uses. An energy audit of the house is planned and the results are expected to point the way to additional efficiencies.

“The Smart Farm Committee’s goal is to be heating and cooling the home using 100% renewable resources. The combination of the new solar panels and geothermal heating/cooling system will provide the family occupying the home comfortable temperatures year around using only Green Power that is produced on site,” Sebranek explained.

Other improvements include a new well, providing fresh water right from the farm. Land conservation initiatives are being undertaken to minimize soil loss in areas of the farm used as cropland.

“In an effort to respect the land, and to honor the wishes of Mae Smart, we’re implementing a Conservation Stewardship Plan for the cropland. The land renter will be undertaking additional conservation measures and also improving, maintaining and managing existing conservation activities,” Sebranek said.

Art, literature and a number of science courses have met for labs or held classes on the farm. To expand and enhance uses of the Smart Farm effectively for education, help new faculty discover and continuing faculty expand their endeavors, UW-Richland faculty will be participating in a May 20 seminar entitled “The Outdoor Classroom: How to smartly use the farm.” Seminar leader Dr. Jeffrey Paul Steffen is a UW-La Crosse professor whose specialty is in outdoor education.

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