



DANE COUNTY

Kathleen M. Falk
County Executive

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Falk: Floods of '07 fuel prevention work in '08 *Legacy, Conservation funds get boost in Executive's budget*

A month after historic heavy rains flooded parts of Dane County and pushed the Yahara Chain of Lakes over their banks, County Executive Kathleen Falk today announced her 2008 budget will double the dollars for wetland and floodplain projects.

“Let’s keep the water where it belongs and not in our basements and backyards,” Falk said during a Thursday morning news conference to announce her 2008 environmental budget provisions. “Just as the waters rose last month, so does the county’s commitment to protecting our wetlands and floodplains.”

Falk’s budget proposes to increase the Land and Water Legacy Fund bonding to \$2.5 million for 2008 – up from \$1.5 million in 2007. “Two million of these dollars will go to wetland acquisition and that’s double the amount from last year, the first year of the fund,” Falk said. “Every dollar spent on wetland protection means less flooding in places where the water shouldn’t be.”

Falk also proposes to place \$5 million in the Conservation Fund to continue significant contributions to the popular park system.

Created in the 2007 budget by Falk, the Land and Water Legacy Fund builds upon the successes of the Conservation Fund by supporting efforts to keep the lands green and the waters blue. Increased dollars (from \$100,000 in 2007 to \$150,000 in 2008) will upgrade more storm sewers so garbage, often swept into the drains, does not get into the lakes. Falk’s budget proposes doubling dollars for streambank easements (\$200,000 – up from \$100,000 in 2007) and increasing streambank protection funds (\$150,000 in 2008, up from \$100,000 in 2007).

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Her budget also proposes \$80,000 to move forward on our manure digester project – another water quality initiative that also helps area farmers.

“These added investments in our lakes, streams and habitat show the county’s commitment to the vital resources,” said Brett Hulse, Chair of the Lakes and Watersheds Commission. “We thank the County Executive for her added commitment to the water resources that make Dane County such a special place to live. Restoring more wetlands will also reduce flood risks that have threatened many county residents.”

Falk made her announcement at McCarthy Youth and Conservation Park just outside Cottage Grove.

“This is what a restored wetland looks like,” she said, standing near the border of a 43-acre restored wetland acquired by the county and restored with help by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Until 2001, the restored area was home to crops. Planting was risky due to wet soils and often failed due to often waterlogged soils. The county began managing the property for the public in the late 1990s, as part of a life estate donation from Russell McCarthy.

Falk also has set aside budget dollars for a pilot project to reduce invasive aquatic weeds and to encourage native plant growth in Turville Bay and management of invasive species such as the gypsy moth and the emerald ash borer.

“We’ll also keep expanding our award-winning pedestrian-bicycle trails,” Falk said.

Those projects include: the Verona/Badger Prairie Bicycle Underpass; a Stoughton-Madison trail that will link Stoughton and McFarland to the Capital City Trail; a Middleton to Waunakee trail; and, a Rockdale bridge project which includes a pedestrian-bicycle trail access.

“We love our lakes, streams and rivers in Dane County. These waters are our trademark and why people in all corners of the county want to protect this priceless resource,” Falk said. “Better land use means cleaner lakes. That’s just common sense.”

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