

Recreational land scarce

Study: Counties' resources don't match image

By JOHN DPKO
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MADISON — Forests and wetlands are plentiful in Brown County and four other Northeastern Wisconsin counties, but so are polluted waters.

Not so abundant are conservation or recreational lands, though Oconto County in 2000 boasted almost 200,000 acres, or almost 30 percent of the land within its borders. And less than 1/20th of Door County, known for its scenic beauty and tourism, falls under conservation or recreational land category, though the county still offers 14,515 acres within both categories.

It seems like a lot of land is open and there's not much development there," said Josh Hanson, co-owner of Nordik Sports, a Howard-based bicycle and cross-country ski shop. "You'd assume that a lot of it is set aside and protected."

Researchers from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy found these and other nature-related surprises as they compiled the latest installment of Sustaining Wisconsin, a project to gather data and profile several factors within regions around the state.

The newest report, released today, looks at Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto and Shawano counties. "You'd assume that a lot of it is set aside and protected," Hanson said he goes to be outside, doesn't have a lot of specifically designated recreation and conservation land, "Jacob said.

Hanson said he goes to Door County "quite a bit in the summer" and sees much of the terrain. "We tend to go up to Wisconsin-Madison. We found that Door County, where everybody goes to be outside, doesn't have a lot of specifically designated recreation and conservation land," Jacob said.

Wisconsin-Madison. "We found that Door County, where everybody goes to be outside, doesn't have a lot of specifically designated recreation and conservation land," Jacob said.

About the study

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is researching and presenting regional reports as part of its Sustaining Wisconsin project. The project is designed to provide social, economic, political, demographic and environmental snapshots of a region for people to use in learning about their communities. The latest one deals with Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto and Shawano counties, and most data is before 2001, when an economic slow-

down became more acute. Previous reports deal with regions including Bayfield, Ashland, Price, Sawyer and Iron counties; Racine, Kenosha and Walworth counties; and Chippewa, Dunn and Eau Claire counties. The next report, on the region including Taylor, Clark, Marathon, Wood and Portage counties, is due out in early February. The reports are part of a broader effort by the center to explore the state of rural Wisconsin.

Study findings

Among the excerpts from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy's study looking at Brown, Door, Kewaunee, Oconto and Shawano counties:

Jobs and economy: Per capita income in Kewaunee, Oconto and Shawano counties was below state averages between 1969-99, though Shawano County's grew after 1999. Brown and Door counties remained at or above average over 20 years, but Door County saw the sharpest jump in seasonal unemployment from 2.6 percent in August 2000 to 8.1 percent in January 2001.

Families and communities: Median household income grew in all five counties between 1995-98, with Brown County staying above the state as a whole. But more than four in 10 families in Door and Oconto counties couldn't afford Fair Market Rent — the cost to rent a home or apartment plus the cost of utilities — in their areas.

Future: More than 87 percent of Brown County mothers sought prenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy in 1998, the highest rate in the region. Except for Shawano County, the region had higher rates of prenatal care than the state average. Generally the student-teacher ratio in public

schools in the region was slightly above the statewide average of 13.29 in 1999-2000. All counties in the region had lower arrest rates as a percentage of the adult population than the state average of more than 8 percent in 1998.

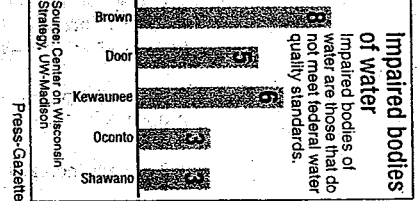
Environment and natural resources: Twenty-five waterways in the region — 14 in Brown and Kewaunee counties — didn't meet water quality standards under the federal Clean Water Act. One-fourth of Oconto County's acreage was wetlands in 2000, ranking it seventh-highest in the state. Brown County had the lowest percent of forestland in the region — at 14 percent — while Oconto County had 60 percent — the most in the region in 2000.

Democracy and civil participation: State Rep. John Gard, R-Peshigo, spent \$82,994, more than 10 times the amount that Democratic challenger Alan Hager of Lena spent — \$7,935 — in the November 2000 election. Republican Judy Krawczyk and Democrat Steve Pegg's spent \$85,404 and \$63,954, respectively, on the 2000 race for the 88th Assembly District in Green Bay — far outpacing the state spending average of \$46,732 on competitive races.

Seeing the report

Full reports are available at www.sustainingwisconsin.org

under the "materials" link and the "regional report" section.



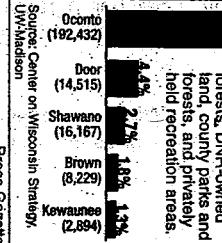
Source: Center on Wisconsin Strategy, UW-Madison Press-Gazette

Natural/Project explores the state of rural Wisconsin

A-10 ★ Sunday, January 13, 2002 Green Bay Press-Gazette

Door County fairly regularly, not specifically the park but on some of the back roads," he said. "We do a lot of riding and some hiking as well."

The percentage of Door County land designated as conservation and recreation land may be relatively low, but a large amount of property — such as land along the Lake Michigan shoreline — is under private ownership and used for second homes, a recreational use, Door County Planning Director Robert Florence said.



Source: Center on Wisconsin Strategy, UW-Madison Press-Gazette

"But are people crying loud and hard that we need more public recreational land? I'm not sure I hear that." On the whole, all five counties share a substantial percentage of wetlands and forestland, the study found. Not surprisingly the acreage-rich Oconto County led the pack with 189,717 acres of wetlands and 382,700 acres of forestland. On the pollution front, Brown County led the region with eight so-called "impaired water bodies," or bodies that don't meet clean-water standards under the federal Clean Water Act, the study found.

The bodies include parts or all of the Fox River, Dutchman Creek, East River Bay of Green Bay and Trout Creek. Rebecca Katers, executive director of the Clean Water Action Council in Green Bay, voiced little surprise. "We have a strong industrial base but also an active dairy farming industry that has impacted water quality too," Katers said. "There are problems with manure and nutrient management. This is also the third-largest metro area in the state so we have urban runoff problems too. As a region, we're not getting to the root causes of these problems."

WAKESHA Freeman Program offers information on the state of the state

By Freeman Staff

December 17, 2001

A lot of things are right with Wisconsin, but the state is not immune to problems. And, those problems will need to be addressed, or the many things we take for granted will no longer be here.

Like any attempt to correct faulty situations, we need to know the history of the issue, as well as the current problems, before we can offer possible solutions. Because problems are not due to one single event or cause, we must understand how all these issues are related.

With the exodus of Tommy Thompson from Madison and Scott McCallum yet to prove himself as the next great leader of the state, the 2002 election will mark the first time since the mid-1980s that voters will be faced with a wide-open race for governor.

A statewide policy education project - Sustaining Wisconsin - is designed to highlight key choices and challenges facing the state. The information centers on five broad areas of public policy, all in advance of the 2002 gubernatorial election.

Those five major issues are jobs and the economy; families and communities; children, education and the state budget; democracy and civic participation; and the environment.

Within each, officials have identified several crucial areas around which to frame initial discussion about the future of Wisconsin. Policy interconnections are the focal point throughout.

The point of Sustaining Wisconsin is not to get everyone to agree to the solutions they offer. Rather, it is to provide a starting point for meaningful discussions that may lead to other alternatives.

Some of the proposals advanced as possible solutions to Wisconsin's problems include:

- Gradually increasing the minimum wage to \$6.50 per hour
- Including affordable housing in all new residential development

• Reforming the spending cap on public school districts

• Implementing sprawl controls and regional planning

• Prohibiting non-fiscal provisions from being included in the state budget

One-page summaries and background papers of eight to 10 pages lay out the choices and challenges faced and some potential solutions.

The Web site www.sustainingwisconsin.org includes searchable county and regional databases.

Databases include key social, demographic, political and economic indicators; media information; elected officials; and bite-sized policy-oriented facts.

If nothing else, Sustaining Wisconsin offers a good starting point for some serious discussions on the issues that must be addressed.

12/18/2001

Residents offered a host of state data

Information presented ahead of governor's race

BY PATRICK MARLEY
KENOSHA NEWS

RACINE — A barrage of facts was unleashed Wednesday night:

■ Only Louisiana's poverty rate among blacks is worse than Wisconsin's.

■ Wisconsin has just \$32 in its rainy-day fund.

■ Unlike other legislation, crime bills do not need to take into account how much they will cost the state.

But as startling as that information may be, the state's problems are not insurmountable, Michael Jacob of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy said.

Jacob's whirlwind public-policy briefing — which touched on education, the environment and the economy — was designed to arm citizens with information as Wisconsin heads into next fall's race for governor.

The talk, held at the Racine Public Library, was part of the 18-month-long "Sustaining Wisconsin" project, which examines the social climate in various regions of the state. This week COWS — the acronym is not an accident — issued a report focusing on Kenosha, Racine and Walworth counties. The center, run by the Uni-

versity of Wisconsin-Madison, launched the program to combat cynicism, Jacob said.

"We've found people are very interested in public policy, but we've also found they're busy," he said. "If think politicians will take the busy-ness and label it as apathy."

While the center suggests solutions in broad sketches, its main purpose is to get people talking so they can come up with their own answers, he said. "It should involve all the stakeholders and bubble up to the leaders," he said.

While there are no easy solutions, by focusing on the big picture Wisconsin can secure its future, he said.

"In some cases you're not going to be able to stop a bad trend," he said. "Maybe the farmers are going to be priced off their land here, but as they

are, let's think smartly about transportation issues and where we're putting housing and jobs."

The center also analyzed campaign finance filings, which Jacob said reveal the source of voter apathy.

"There's a cynicism out there we've got to chip away," he said. "Good people with good ideas are priced out of participating in democracy."

Voters are also frustrated by unrelated legislation that winds up in the state's budget.

"We don't know what's going through the budget," he said. "I think people see the headlines coming out of the budget process and they say, 'Those guys aren't working for me' so they tune out."

Because of the broad scope of the center's study, Jacob skimmed over most of the

issues. He referred people to the center's Web site, www.sustainingwisconsin.org, for more details and endless links.

The stream of facts led many attendees to say they plan to explore the issues more deeply. The state's 40 percent graduation rate for blacks alarmed Dick Ammann of Racine.

"That's disgusting and really tragic," he said. "That statistic really shows very bluntly the disparity we have — a racial disparity and income disparity."

Betsy Georg of Racine said she wanted to find out more about the growth of Wisconsin's prisons. While Minnesota and Wisconsin had a similar number of prisons in 1970, Wisconsin now has three for every one in Minnesota.

"I was under the impression the prison industry was booming everywhere," she said.

"While that might be true, it's particularly true here."

Racine Mayor James Smith agreed, saying prison costs have to be kept in check.

"That really siphons dollars for schools and local government, but it seemed to be a popular thing to run on: 'I'm tough on crime,'" he said. "It seems like there's always money to build prisons but very little dollars available for rehabilitation and prevention."

While Lillian Trager of Racine said some problems seem entrenched, she remains hopeful that securing better jobs for the region and increasing education funding can be achieved.

"I'm somewhat of an eternal optimist so, I feel it is possible to change some things," she said. "I find the perspective they're taking very useful."

LEADER-TELEGRAM

www.cvl.net

November 1, 2001

education mismatched, study finds

By Michael Klein and Nick Sargent
Leader-Telegram staff

People in the Chippewa Valley are educated better but paid worse than the state as a whole, according to a research center study.

For instance, 44 percent of residents in Eau Claire and Chippewa counties in 1999 couldn't afford the area's average

Fair Market Rent, which is the cost to rent a home or apartment plus the cost of all utilities, the report from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy said.

"Affordable housing is one of the rights we want all Americans to have," said Debbie Singer, a research associate with COWS.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy is a research and policy center based at UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee. The regional

See **STUDY**, Page 2A

Study/Rent, incomes rank low

from Page 1

report on Chippewa, Dunn and Eau Claire counties released today is part of its "Sustaining Wisconsin" project to educate people on public policy in all areas.

While job growth has been strong in the three counties, the nature of work is changing, as it is in the state as a whole, the report said.

"We are moving from family-supporting jobs in the manufacturing sector to low-wage, dead-end jobs in the retail and service sectors," the report said.

Many people get two jobs or have their spouse get a job, said Michael Jacob, COWS outreach director.

Many of the jobs being created in the Chippewa Valley are in the service sector, which is typically low-paying, the report said. The manufacturing sector, which provides high-paying jobs, is no longer the largest sector in the three counties.

All three counties have per capita incomes lower than the national and state averages, the study said. And poverty rates in the Chippewa Valley are higher than the state's, especially among children, the study said. Some job seekers confirmed COWS' findings.

Walter Westlund of Eau Claire has been looking for a manufacturing job for four months, but he's finding them scarce.

"If's more you have to hunt them down," he said. "Before you could lay back and take it easy and something would come around."

Carie Carmen of Eau Claire has been searching for a job since June or July, and she's run into a glut of low-paying jobs at restaurants and stores.

"It's usually under \$8 (an hour)," she said. High rents and child care costs make it hard to survive on such a job, she said.

Sue Henning, employee relations team leader for Job Service of Wisconsin in Eau Claire, said manufacturing jobs are limited, but the service industry is always looking for people.

"This is a big service area," Henning said. "There are a lot of retail, restaurant and food service type jobs. It's true, it's hard to support a family on that."

On the plus side, the fair market rent is much lower in the Chippewa Valley than in Wisconsin as a whole, the COWS study said. Still, because of the low incomes, many residents still can't afford them.

The other good news is that the Chippewa Valley is a good place to receive an education, with high graduation rates in high school, the report said. ACT scores are in line with the rest of the state.

That educational success shows that the Chippewa Valley has workers who can be trained in skills to qualify them for better paying jobs, Singer said.

COWS suggests Wisconsin create policies to try to attract more high-skill, high-paying jobs. Even in low-paying industries such as service and retail,

companies could pay more and the increased efficiencies may pay off, because they'd have better employees who would stick around longer, Jacob said.

Other findings from the study include:

■ The population in Eau Claire and Dunn counties has grown faster than the state as a whole in the past decade, and that's expected to continue in the next 20 years. Chippewa County is growing slower than the state as a whole.

■ The number of full-time farms declined in all three counties between 1992 and 1997, but at a slower rate than in Wisconsin as a whole. But the number of farms over 1,000 acres grew from 66 in 1987 to 83 in 1997 in the three-county area.

Klein can be reached at 833-9204, (800) 236-7077 or michael.klein@ecpc.com. Sargent can be reached at 833-9211.

Views of ^{2/26/01}

The Capital Times

Wisconsin's experiment

When the French writer Alexis de Tocqueville penned his optimistic assessment of the still new American nation in the early years of the 19th century, he wrote: "In that land the great experiment was to be made."

It would not be until the first year of the 20th century, however, that the great experiment would come to fruition. That miracle of democracy would occur in Wisconsin, with the election of Robert M. La Follette, a de Tocqueville enthusiast, as the state's governor. La Follette's three terms at Wisconsin's helm transformed the politics, the government, the landscape and the very character of the state that would, ever after, be identified with the progressive movement he led.

La Follette and the progressives made Wisconsin "a laboratory of democracy." Freed from the constraints placed on most politicians by special interest money, La Follette invited the best minds at the University of Wisconsin to help him expand access to education, construct a social safety net for the elderly, protect workers from abuses both physical and economic and, above all, make real the promise of democracy.

"The Wisconsin Idea" was the name La Follette and the progressives gave to a remarkable collaboration between citizens with needs, academics with ideas to meet those needs, and leaders with the power to turn the ideas into public policy.

At the close of the 20th century, the Wisconsin Idea was little more than a slogan — resurrected only by business-funded professors and politicians who promote anti-democratic "reinventing government" schemes in order to shift power from the people to corporate monopolies.



La Follette

It has been a very long time since this newspaper, which was founded to defend and advance La Follette's progressive cause, has seen someone take a serious shot at reasserting the Wisconsin Idea in its true form. But, fittingly, as the 21st century dawns, that is precisely what one of the UW's greatest thinkers is prepared to do.

Joel Rogers, a professor of sociology, law and political science, has over the past 15 years earned international recognition as his generation's boldest proponent of progressive public policy initiatives. The recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "genius grant," Rogers is an author, adviser to governments around the world, and a frequently mentioned candidate for presidential Cabinet slots.



Rogers

Yet Rogers' passion is for restoring the Wisconsin Idea. He established the innovative Center on Wisconsin Strategy to begin to restore the link between UW researchers, citizens and elected leaders. Now he is in the forefront of an initiative dubbed "Sustaining Wisconsin."

Over the next 18 months, Rogers will travel the state, speaking with thousands of Wisconsinites in an effort to open an honest dialogue about economic, social and political challenges facing their state. With a team of academics and activists, he will endeavor to turn that dialogue into a dynamic experiment in democratic engagement. There is no shortage of ambition here: Rogers wants to make the Wisconsin of our day every bit as intellectually and politically alive as the Wisconsin of La Follette's time.

We're excited by Rogers' project. That's why we are proud to begin running his weekly "Sustaining Wisconsin" column today. That's also why, as a central focus of The Capital Times editorial agenda over the months to come, we will highlight the Sustaining Wisconsin initiative as a new chapter in the great experiment that de Tocqueville imagined, that La Follette realized, and that Wisconsinites of the 21st century can and must renew.

Eyes to the skies: Amateur astronomers team up with Wyalusing State Park / D-3

Hometown: 791-8217

La Crosse Tribune

Sunday, February 25, 2001

Hometown

Members of a Madison-based research and policy group were at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Saturday, training people on how to get people in their communities talking about state and local issues.

The Center on Wisconsin Strat-egy, an institute housed in UW-Madison's sociology depart-ment, is traveling the state as part of its Sustaining Wisconsin pro-ject.

The project gathers information about the environment, economics and urban sprawl in Wisconsin and promotes discussions of those issues on a local level. COWS hopes local residents then will take their concerns and questions to their local representatives.

Ryan DeWald of COWS said the project is not intended to give solutions, but to look at how statewide issues are dealt with by individual communities. "And

By BOB GUTSCHE JR.
Of the Tribune staff.

Madison group hopes to foster local interest in state subjects

Ryan DeWald, the training team coordinator for the Center on Wisconsin Strategy, speaks during a meeting at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.



sometimes these communities have issues of their own," he said.

UW-La Crosse senior Stacy Boots, a member of the Greens environmental organization on campus, was one of three people trained by COWS Saturday to present Sustaining Wisconsin to the community.

Boots said she wants more local debate on the French Island inci-ent, which she said produces smog in the area. She plans to talk with public officials about this issue and encourage others in the community to do the same.

"A lot of what they touched on here is relevant to what is going on in our community," the 22-year-old said.

The Sustaining Wisconsin pro-ject keeps individuals informed about the program through its Web site, where it also posts brief-ing papers written by UW-Madison student on specific social issues.

That, DeWald said, is where com-munities might find answers.

Sherry Pater, a representative

of La Crosse's Livable Neighbor-hoods, was looking for answers on how to improve wages in the city. She said too many people are working at near-poverty levels.

Rather than simply pushing for more industry in La Crosse, Sus-taining Wisconsin suggested look-ing at how traffic patterns, urban sprawl and neighboring communi-ties might be affecting the local economy, DeWald said.

DeWald said COWS plans to return to La Crosse in the next couple months to help assist in holding local Sustaining Wisconsin forums.

Sustaining Wisconsin will stop in June 2002, when candidates begin filing for state office, so the project doesn't appear to be politi-cally partisan, DeWald said.

Bob can be reached at bguetsche@hotmail.com.

For more information about COWS and Sustaining Wisconsin, visit www.sustainingwisconsin.org



Daily News

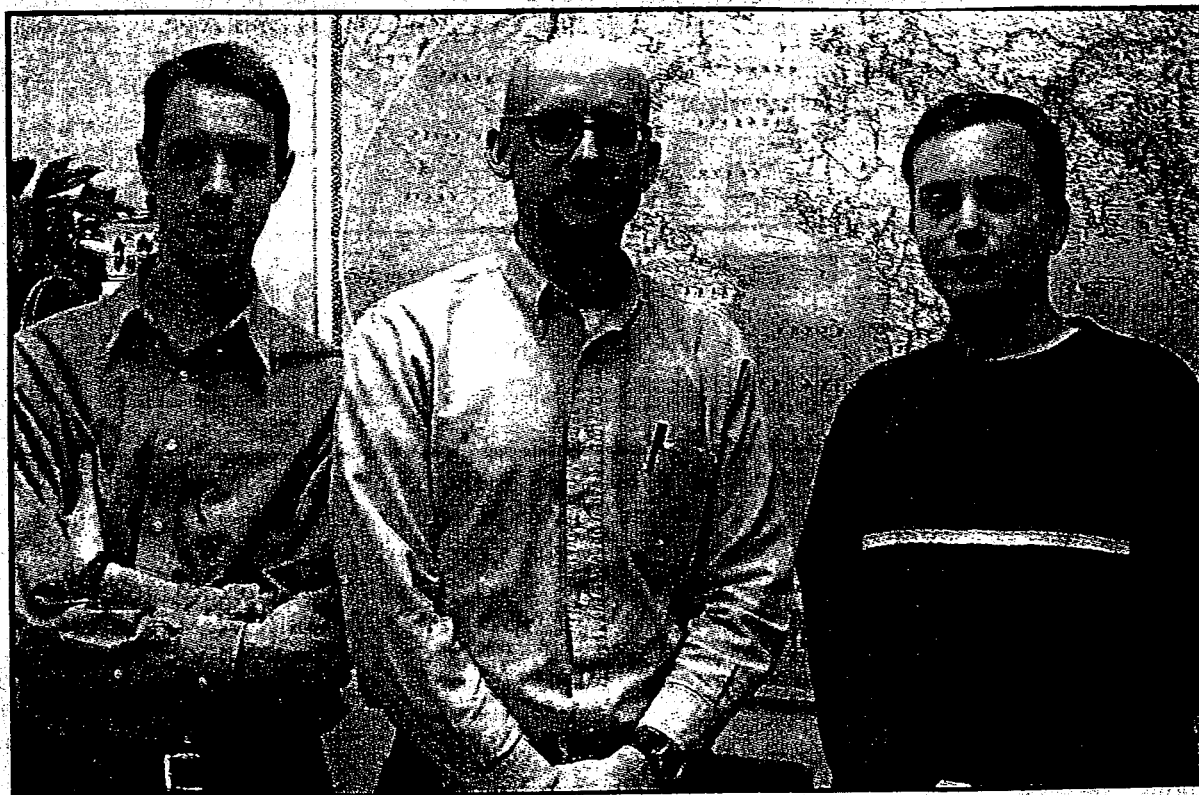
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\$1²⁵



From left, Ryan DeWald, Center on Wisconsin Strategy policy director David Wood and Brian Gumm, pose during a visit to Rhinelander. DeWald and Gumm are law

student interns at the University of Wisconsin-Madison participating in the Sustaining Wisconsin Project. (Daily News photo by Joe Costanza)

Sustaining Wisconsin new project

So much for the boilerplate.

Wood and his two young companions spoke enthusiastically about the work during an interview with the Daily News about the Sustaining Wisconsin Project, which was launched Jan. 29

"All the research and policy recommendations are designed to stimulate the public dialog and action," said Wood.

"The training in Ashland will show how to give slide presentations and prepare a script for communities. We have 13 regions in the state and our policy education project is aimed at the community level."

As the project sees it, the five big issues are jobs and the economy, families and communities, the future, democracy and civic culture, and the environment. "Within each we have identified five or six crucial issues around which to frame initial discussion and dissemination of the project," Wood said. "We will expand to more than 50 issues by mid-spring."

See Sustaining, Page 3

BY JOE COSTANZA

Daily News staff

COWS — a nifty and apt acronym for the Center on Wisconsin Strategy — is both a "think tank" and a "do tank," says policy director David Wood.

Wood and two law student interns from the University of Wisconsin-Madison — Ryan DeWald and Brian Gumm — stopped in Rhineland Friday on their way to Northland College in Ashland. Their weekend mission: To hold a training session for future COWS presenters.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy, based at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a research and policy center dedicated to improving economic performance and living standards in the state. COWS conducts research on regional economic trends, generates ideas for alternative economic development, works with business, labor, and communities to implement those policies, and draws policy lessons from that experience for application.

"Wisconsin was once known for its high-level voter involvement and civic participation. I don't know if it's apathy or overriding cynicism, but we don't engage as much with our neighbors, much less our government."

jobs, development and land issues, poverty-level wage pressures, environmental issues include environmental issues in the rural North, key

Sustaining

From Page 1

DeWald, a third-year law student from New Berlin, has shun politics, Wood said. "We been assigned the job of coordinating training. What Sustain Wisconsin aims to do is to general dialogue at the community level to create solutions," he said.

Gumm, a third-year law student from Kohler, heads up the Sustaining Wisconsin recruitment team, drawing interested volunteers and community members into active roles in the project. "We see our role as to help community consider our ideas as suggestions and possible policy solutions. We want to get people talking to each other," he said.

Wood said the Sustaining Wisconsin team plans to be back in the Rhineland area soon to encourage local participation.

to continue to grow economically and more efficiently. Wisconsin is not gaining population, but it has strengths that it can continue to build on such as manufacturing and tourism," he added. Wood heads a full-time staff of 11, assisted by 21 students, some of whom are earning course credits over the 18-month project. Launched in 1992, COWS is the brainchild of UW Professor Joel Rogers. Two web sites — www.COWS.org and www.sustainingwisconsin.org — are filled with data and links, including up-to-date statistics on counties such as population, employment, income level, and other interesting tidbits. Wood said that while the project provides "the raw numbers," it also explains how trends emerged and comes up with ideas for the arena of public opinion. It's a constant learning experience for everyone, he said. "We have more to learn that we perhaps have to offer," Wood said.

Group pushes public involvement

Event to teach people about state issues

By Amber Paluch
Wausau Daily Herald
apaluch@wdhprint.com

A group promoting a statewide effort to get residents more involved in their communities will come to Wausau on Saturday to recruit local residents for the effort.

Organizers of Sustaining Wisconsin say the program will tell people what's going on in their state so they can affect Wisconsin's future.

"The range of issues that we cover tap into the very heart of everybody on some level," said Michael Jacob, director of the Center on Wisconsin Strategy Outreach, which created Sustaining Wisconsin.

Families and communities, the future, jobs and the economy, the environment and natural resources, and democracy and civic participation are the five topics that will be discussed this weekend, Jacob said.

"Saturday we hope to help folks go beyond those one or two issues (that they

If you go

On Saturday, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy will bring an interactive presentation on the state's future to the Westwood Conference Center, 1800 W. Bridge St.

The free program will run from 10:30 a.m. to noon, and include refreshments. Call 261-6800 to register. For more information, check the center's Web site at www.sustainingwisconsin.org.

care about," he said. "And also to present them with some opportunity to change the way we're heading in some cases and maintain our progress in others."

Mayor Linda Lawrence invited the group to Wausau after receiving a packet of information from Sustaining Wisconsin.

"I'm intrigued at the balance between growth and development and preserving the environment," Lawrence said. "This is the kind of thing that I think addresses that and keeps it on the mind of citizens."

Wausau's changing economy, its land-use plans and an already high level of participation in the community make the city a likely target for the group, Jacob said.

The center will offer presentations in Wausau, Sheboygan and Dane

Republicans disagree with, Baas said.

"What I've seen of their Sustaining Wisconsin agenda, most of it is pretty anti-free market and pretty pro-regulation and pro-centralized planning," Baas said. "We naturally think the economy works better when the market, to the greatest extent possible, drives decisions for both the consumer and the entrepreneur."

Jacob said the idea behind Saturday's program is to show people the connection between issues they care about and those they're not as interested in.

For example, he said, air quality is seen as an environmental concern. But the health of children, the state budget and transportation issues all are affected by air quality.

Lawrence's assistant, Amy Frolik, who will attend the program Saturday, said it offers a chance for local residents to catch up on state issues.

"There's a lot of issues in Wisconsin that, unless you read the paper, you don't know what's going on at the state level," she said. "It doesn't seem like it affects you in your daily life, but it really does."

WET

COMMENTARY

SUSTAINING WISCONSIN

COWS hoping encounter will help tip the balance

It is terribly tempting — especially for one who has been watching and writing about the public's business and how it

gets done for more than 30 years — to dismiss as a sky-high daydream a new project to convert Wisconsin into a state of "effective, engaged citizens."

If you think you know COWS, prepare yourself to encounter COWS, the acronymic nickname for something you've probably never heard of, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy.

In turn, COWS has invented a project using the latest technology and some old-fashioned grassroots networking techniques to assemble and spread information about what ails the state so people can fix it.

"Sustaining Wisconsin" is the name of the project. It is the invention of a bright — some say brilliant — and engaging University of Wisconsin professor of economics and related stuff, Joel Rogers.

He is the inventor and director of COWS, assisted by David Wood, another bright and personable fellow as policy director, and Mike Jacob, who brings governmental and political experience to the job of communications director.

Says Rogers, "Sustaining Wisconsin is another expression of the Wisconsin Idea. Informed citizens are our greatest strength



CLIFF MILLER
Post-Crescent Madison bureau

Rogers and his team merely hope to penetrate the unconsciousness of a public fascinated with sports, unreal "reality" television, what's to eat, what's to drink and how do we pay for it and hard-pressed to take time every year or two to vote.

— in our economy, our environment, our communities, and our political system.

"It's up to them to decide what to do with it." The project is designed to peak and conclude just before the 2002 elections.

At its core "is the conviction that average citizens are more than capable of talking about the issues of the day."

The project offers an impressive collection of issues, facts, single-page summaries and eight-to-10 page papers on problems and choices facing the state under general headings of democracy and civic participation, the future, families and communities, environment and natural resources and jobs and the economy.

The aim is through an internet web-site (www.sustainingwisconsin.org) the network of UW 2-year and full degree campuses, local Leagues of Women Voters and other community leaders, to draw ordinary folks into studying and discussing the subjects and issues. "People can drill down to the level of information they want," said Rogers.

Those who wish can get trained to give presentations in their communities.

As I said, it is tempting to dismiss the whole thing as a neat idea without a chance in the Snow Belt of melting through our epidemic of public indifference.

Rogers and his team merely hope to penetrate the unconsciousness of a public fascinated with sports, unreal "reality" television, what's to eat, what's to drink and how do we pay for it and hard-pressed to take time every year or two to vote.

This past week showed what COWS is up against in the news-dissemination industry and its presumably professional choosers of what we read, see and hear.

On the day Wisconsin experienced the spectacle of a governor for 14 long years voluntarily giving up his powers and perks for an uncertain future in the presidential Cabinet, and a largely untested lieutenant governor taking over, what was the top news story? Some jock named Wolf hanging it up as boss of the Green Bay Packers.

Football defers history. Big time, as someone said recently.

Still, the earnest idealism of the COWS boys, trying to round up a sense of civic involvement in the land of the "frozen tundra" got me thinking about why I got into my line of work.

It came to me that I do pretty much what COWS and "Sustaining Wisconsin" are attempting: Tossing information where the public can find it and hoping that some who come across it will put it to good use. So, good luck, COWS. Prof. Rogers and the rest of the gang. And don't get discouraged if what you offer is a hard sell during football season.

Cliff Miller covers state government for The Post-Crescent. You can e-mail him at cmillerpc@aol.com.

COMMUNITIES

The Capital Times ■ Monday, March 19, 2001 *

Program looks to state's future

By Samara Kalk

The Capital Times

In Madison and other communities around the state, disciples of Sustaining Wisconsin are holding community meetings to talk about democracy, social problems, prisons, the environment and the economy.

An intimate gathering at Beth Israel Center on Sunday morning featured a continental breakfast and a presentation on information gathered by the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Center on Wisconsin Strategy, also known as COWS.

Dr. Carl Silverman, a local physician and member of the congregation, sought to educate an audience of about 25 about Sustaining Wisconsin, a COWS project. The academic think tank, directed by Joel Rogers, designed the program to inform people at a grass-roots level about a variety of issues in anticipation of the 2002 gubernatorial election and to inspire them to improve life in Wisconsin. People who attend the events are encouraged to host or lead their own presentations.

Sustaining Wisconsin is focusing on five broad goals: jobs and the economy, the environment, families and communities, children and education, and government and the election process. Silverman said he became a COWS volunteer to "get people up to speed on where we've been, where we are now and what problems we may encounter in the future."

Wisconsin has a long tradition of progressive politics, Silverman reminded the audience. The state had the earliest workers compensation and Social Security programs in the nation. It was the first state to ban DDT and to offer same-day voter registration. The state is home to what former Gov. "Fighting Bob" La Follette called the Wisconsin Idea, where the boundaries of the public university system stretch to all corners of the state.

The state has much to be proud of, said Silverman. For instance, Wisconsin's students have scored highest on the ACT college entrance exams for eight years in a row.

But when it comes to African-American child poverty, Wisconsin comes in 49th, second only to Louisiana.

"Many of us are optimistic about what is possible but we have to acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead," he said. "The devil lies in the details and, regrettably, we don't always get the details."

COWS data, for instance, show that 52 percent of new jobs since 1982 have been in the retail trade and service sectors. Although there has been a boost in women's wages, the minimum wage hasn't kept up the cost of living.

"Wisconsinites are not benefiting equally from our economic boom. The richer are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer and the middle income people are stuck," he said.

David Wood, a COWS policy director, said that while some of the values behind the numbers may be "dressed up as progressive," the presentation defies labels and has surprised people around the state.

More information can be found at www.sustainingwisconsin.org.

Being informed a year-round task Project focuses on issues

In as much as we have just completed a presidential election, and a controversial one at that, this isn't a time most people concern themselves with studying issues and following politics. In fact, just the opposite is true. But one organization hopes to change that.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy, based at UW-Madison has launched "Sustaining Wisconsin," a project to educate voters on major issues between now and the 2002 election.

Editorial

The core of the education campaign is its Web site (www.sustainingwisconsin.org) and a slide presentation that it hopes will find its way into meetings of service clubs and other interested organizations in the next year.

The project focuses on five areas: Jobs and the Economy, Families and Communities, Democracy and Civic Participation, Environment and Natural Resources, and The Future. It by and large does not paint a rosy picture. Here are a few of their conclusions outlined in the project's "State of the State."

■ Voter turnout has gone down while special interest campaign contributions and lobbying expenses have skyrocketed.

■ The state budget is as thick as the Madison telephone book, but "rarely understood" by the Legislature and the people who elect it.

■ The media has replaced substantive campaign dialogue coverage with sound bites instead of debate.

■ The state is moving from family-supporting manufacturing jobs to low-wage retail and service jobs.

■ The gap between rich and poor is widening.

■ Many people in Wisconsin with full-time jobs are poor.

■ Funding for education is inadequate and unfair. The Web site and slide presentation go much deeper into these and many other issues within the five broad categories listed above. The Web site also has statistical breakdowns on each county in the state showing poverty and income levels, and other information.

The project is not an advocacy effort for any candidate or political party. That's one reason the project will end a year from June, which is the deadline to file nomination papers for the fall 2000 state elections.

This initiative is important because the issues are far too complex to explain in any 30-second commercial, most of which are negative attack ads anyway.

But studying the issues is only half the equation. The other half is figuring out how much we can afford to pay, and who will pay. Remember, even with all the challenges listed above, property taxes in Eau Claire are up 11 percent this year, far above the rate of inflation. Part of the reason for that was our approval of a \$43 million school building referendum, but the point is that everything we do, from building schools and prisons to extending the sentences of criminals has a cost.

A lot of people simply complain about "high taxes" and that they have no say. But they do if they and enough other people who feel the same way participate. Special interest groups have been so successful affecting the outcome of elections because they bombard the airwaves with their message and sway public opinion based on emotion rather than sound reasoning.

Sustaining Wisconsin is an effort to reach out to voters in a substantive way. Take advantage of it.

—Don Huebscher, editor

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La Crosse Tribune

Opinion

□ OUR VIEW

Let's foster a debate on crucial state, local issues

Wisconsin has had record low unemployment. But despite the apparent good times, too many people are struggling with low wages.

A total of 12 of 20 occupations in Wisconsin paid less than the statewide average of \$12.80 an hour.

Wisconsin's communities are growing. But all too often, the central cities are not. Jobs and people are leaving these core areas.

In the aftermath of welfare reform, more people are working than ever before. Welfare rolls are way down. But the people are still poor.

These challenges are among many that Wisconsin faces. We face them in the Coulee Region, too. How do we address them? An agency of the University of Wisconsin wants to start a discussion on these and other issues in communities throughout the state.

It's a good idea.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy is a research and policy institute housed in the Sociology department at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Between now and June 2002, it will conduct a project called Sustaining Wisconsin. The idea is to encourage discussions in Wisconsin communities on these general areas: jobs and the economy, democracy and

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civic participation, families and communities, the future, and environment and natural resources.

The time could not be better. Wisconsin is in a transition, as Gov. Tommy Thompson moves to Washington to head the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Lt. Gov. Scott McCallum takes Thompson's place at the top of state government. Next month, representatives from the Center on Wisconsin Strategy will come to La Crosse to conduct a meeting

designed to train people to conduct policy discussions in a variety of settings — service clubs, government meetings and other places.

Center staff people will seek out representatives of community groups — Livable Neighborhoods, United Coulee Region and the League of Women Voters would be good starting points. And there are other possibilities — including environmental and human service organizations.

These local people could become a corps of volunteers who could help lead discussions on a variety of issues.

By the time the project is over in June 2002, candidates for statewide office — including governor — will have to file their nomination papers.

But a debate will have already been in progress for more than two years on key issues. Wisconsin voters will then be better able to make decisions about their future. Representatives from the center were in La Crosse last week to discuss their plans. They will return next month to seek out and train volunteers.

It's an interesting prospect — and a good opportunity to begin a dialogue on several issues of crucial importance to Wisconsin and to the Coulee Region.

Stay tuned.

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OUR VIEW

Dialogue on future can help voters make best choices

An organization known as COWS ought to be good for the Dairy State.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy (COWS), an interdisciplinary group at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, promises to live up to that expectation. It's reviving the 20th century "Wisconsin Idea" of extending education to all citizens by initiating a 21st century dialogue on the state's future.

The "Sustaining Wisconsin" program of COWS includes "analyses of the state" challenges facing Wisconsin, a series of computerized one-page briefings and background papers on 30 key issues, and a half-hour slide presentation.

Sustaining Wisconsin's goal is to foster a more informed dialogue on the key issues facing this state in time for the 2002 elections, David Wood, a COWS senior associate, said in an interview at The Press last week. He sees the election as vitally important for the state because it will be the first public vote for a new governor after 14 years under Tommy Thompson and two years under his replacement, Lt. Gov. Scott McCallum. He said it could open up policies to closer public scrutiny and he hopes the center's program can contribute to informed debate of the issues and choices.

Sustaining Wisconsin groups its background and briefing papers into five categories: jobs and the economy, families and communities, the future, environment and natural resources and democracy and civic participation. Papers under jobs and the economy deal with such issues as "income and wealth inequality," "gender gap, income and wealth inequality," "jobs mismatch," "tax burden," and "changing the face of farming." The center has lined up many volunteers including UW law students and members of the National Honors Society at one of Madison's high schools to present the half-hour slide presentations that highlight issues.

But it still needs civic organizations, business groups, religious organizations and volunteers to sponsor or present its program in local areas such as this county. The presentation can be tailored with Sheboygan County data, according to Wood.

Those interested in reading issue papers can go to the organization's Web sites: www.sustainingwisconsin.org or www.cows.org. For more information or to volunteer, contact Michael Jacob, the center's outreach director, at University of Wisconsin, 1180 Observatory Dr., Madison WI 53706 (Phone: 1-608-263-3889).

This project dovetails with other dialogues on the state's future such as the recently completed Kettl Commission report on state-local government partnerships and the UW System's statewide economic summit focusing on high-tech jobs last fall.

Together they can insure that the high level of public participation and social innovation that Wisconsin was known for in the 1900s will continue in the 2000s.

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UW think tank urging citizen debate on key issues

MADISON — University of Wisconsin-Madison think tank is launching a project to get thousands of citizens talking about issues important to the state.

The Center on Wisconsin Strategy — better known as COWS — wants to get people involved in a debate on issues likely to shape the 2002 state elections.

There's no better time for the Sustaining Wisconsin project, according to Joel Rogers, the center's director and a UW-Madison professor of law, political science and sociology.

"The arrival of a new century and political changes in Wisconsin make it a propitious time to have this dialogue," he said.



SCOTT HILDEBRAND
Commentary

Rogers noted that the departure of longtime Republican Gov. Tommy Thompson will make the race for governor in 2002 the most competitive in years.

Thompson resigned last week to become U.S. secretary of health and human services. Scott McCallum, lieutenant governor for the past 14 years, was sworn in Thursday as governor.

McCallum, a Republican, must stand for election in November 2002. Numerous Democrats and even some

Republicans also may run for the office.

At least one University of Wisconsin-Green Bay faculty member will be involved in the Sustaining Wisconsin project.

Larry Smith, UWGB associate professor of social change and development, said it could help elevate Wisconsin as a leader on human concerns and issues.

In their version of the state of the state, the project's organizers say Wisconsin is a distinctive state. It has an abundant supply of public goods, high levels of citizen involvement in politics and a "fiercely defended" tradition of policy innovation.

But they say the state also has its share of problems, including stagnating wages,

environmental degradation, the loss of family farms and legislative gridlock.

Sustaining Wisconsin will focus on five major areas: jobs and the economy, the environment, families and communities, children and education, and government and the election process.

The project already has its own Internet site: www.sustainingwisconsin.org. The site contains political, economic and demographic data for each of Wisconsin's 72 counties. It also has background papers on issues ranging from recycling to education funding.

Although Rogers has been a frequent critic of Thompson, the project will not get involved in partisan politics. Rogers said he does not want to get into the blame game

when it comes to the state's problems.

"There's enough blame to go around," he said.

More information about the Sustaining Wisconsin project and how to get involved is available on the project's Internet site.

Out of limelight

From Tommy Thompson to Ron Wolf, there has been no shortage of high-profile public figures stepping out the state's limelight in recent days.

Augie Cibarich may not be a high-profile figure, but the state owes him a debt of gratitude for years of public service. Cibarich, a highly respected state labor analyst, retired this month after 44 years of state service.

Few people understood Wisconsin's economy like Cibarich. The news media knew him well because he participated in monthly news conferences to relate the state's unemployment numbers.

Although political appointees usually led off news conferences, reporters waited for Cibarich to speak to find out the real story behind the numbers. He was concerned only with facts not with political spin.

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REGION/STATE

Group gives people something to talk about

Residents urged to help shape public policy

By Dan Holtz
Leader-telegram staff

COWS wants you!
A research and policy group wants Wisconsin residents to learn about issues it believes are critical to the state's future.

"We want to raise people's understanding about the critical choices and challenges we face in this state," said David Wood, a senior associate at the Center on Wisconsin Strategy.

"We're doing this because there's a need to improve the civic discourse," he said.

COWS, based at UW-Madison, is a research and policy center dedicated to improving economic performance and living standards in Wisconsin.

The organization does research on regional economic trends; generates ideas for alternative economic development; and works with business, labor and communities to implement those policies.

COWS has identified five broad issues in its new grassroots public education campaign called Sustaining Wisconsin.

Those areas are democracy and civic culture, jobs and the

■ On the Web, the Center on Wisconsin Strategy can be accessed at www.cows.org. A Web site for Sustaining Wisconsin is under construction and should be completed by early February. It can be accessed at sustainingwisconsin.org.

resources, and the future. "We want to provide basic information to allow people to influence policy decisions," Wood said. "We'll use our own ideas as a starting point and hopefully get more ideas generated from the public."

"We want to get people to see the bigger picture and how all issues interconnect," said Michael Jacob, outreach director at COWS.

Group leaders want residents to understand the alternatives available for dealing with these issues.

To that end, COWS plans to train local officials and state residents on how to lead public discussion forums on these issues beginning next month. COWS will complete this education campaign by June 2002.

State residents need to better understand where their taxes go and how services are paid for, he said.

In addition to the education

denis care about most — that should be our goal over the next 18 months," Wood said. Statements that COWS believes should be discussed at local forums include:

■ Wisconsin has a tradition of high voter turnout and open, "clean" government. But voter turnout has declined, while campaign spending and special-interest-contributions have skyrocketed.

■ Voters have lost control of campaigns. Thirty-second ads dominate the political discussion.

■ Wisconsin is the smallest state with a full-time Legislature, which has become paralyzed by partisan bickering and waning public confidence.

■ Wisconsin is moving from family-supporting jobs in the manufacturing sector to low-wage, dead-end jobs in the retail and service sectors.

■ While many people are doing well in the expanding economy, the benefits are not shared by all. The rich are getting richer, the middle class is stuck, and the poor are sliding backward.

■ Housing costs are rising faster than family incomes and down payments keep families from getting into homes.

■ Wisconsin pioneered such innovations as Social Security and worker's compensation, but health care is inaccessible for

■ Education funding is inadequate and unfair. Higher education, and therefore a brighter social and economic future, remains a privilege.

■ Commercial solid waste typifies economic inefficiency and the misallocation of responsibility for the problem.

■ Urban sprawl and farmland conversion are shrinking open space and drastically changing the way Wisconsin works.

"There's not one answer to these problems," Wood said. "We want to present this information and encourage discussion."

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