

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Major Stream Restoration Project Launches In Oconomowoc River Watershed To Improve Water Quality

Oconomowoc, WI – The Oconomowoc River Watershed Protection Program (OWPP) recently announced that another major water quality improvement project is underway. The focus is on an unnamed tributary – locally known as Golf Course Creek or Cottonwood Creek – where significant enhancements are being made at the stream’s headwaters.

During the past 18 months, the OWPP, Tall Pines Conservancy, and its dedicated partners have been planning, coordinating, and fundraising to bring a transformative stream restoration effort to life. At the end of the project, Cottonwood Creek will flow more like a natural river with curves and bends that help to reduce erosion, improve drainage, and enhance habitat for various species. Completion is expected in summer of 2025.

“Lac La Belle is a cherished part of the community, whether you live on its shores or simply enjoy its beauty and recreation,” said Paul Meuer, Land Protection Manager with Tall Pines Conservancy. “The Cottonwood Creek restoration project is critical to protecting that shared resource. By reducing erosion and runoff, we’re helping keep the lake clean, healthy, and vibrant for everyone who lives and recreates here for generations to come.”

“This project uses proven ecological techniques to improve water quality and stabilize the stream. By planting native wetland vegetation, we’re helping absorb excess nutrients before they reach Lac La Belle. At the same time, installing root wads along the banks provides both critical habitat for aquatic life and natural protection against erosion. It’s a science-based solution with long-term benefits for the watershed,” Meuer concluded.

This ambitious project would not be possible without the unwavering support and collaboration of our partners and their commitment to the health of our lakes and rivers. They include: City of Oconomowoc, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Village of

Lac La Belle, Lac La Belle Management District, Waukesha County Parks & Land Use Dept, C.W. Purpero, and Fish Creek Restoration.

ABOUT THE OCONOMOWOC WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM

The City of Oconomowoc launched the Oconomowoc Watershed Protection Program as an innovative Adaptive Management approach to improve the water quality of the many lakes and rivers in the Oconomowoc River watershed. The goal of the Program is to reduce non-point source pollution from urban storm water, construction sites, and agricultural land to improve water quality, thus enabling the City to reach compliance with the Department of Natural Resources wastewater and storm water permit requirements in a cost-effective manner. Since the Oconomowoc River is upstream of the Rock River, the program also improves the water quality of the Rock River and aids in the objectives of the Rock River Total Maximum Daily Load rule. The specific pollutants to be reduced are phosphorus and total suspended solids. In addition to improving surface water quality in area streams and lakes, the program will enhance local wildlife habitat and ecology, control excessive aquatic plant growth, reduce algal blooms, and improve soil health throughout the watershed. For more information, please visit oconomowocwatershed.com.

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