

## A firsthand look at work on the Sheboygan River



Shown is a new restructured water runoff holding pond near Sheboygan's Taylor Drive and Indiana Avenue that has been planted with native upland and wetland plants and will provide better water control and improved habitat for birds, animals, and other assortment of aquatic creatures. PHOTO BY JIM BAUMGART



### River habitat tour

It was 9:30 a.m. on a cold damp Saturday, Dec. 1, when this writer and about 10 others gathered at the UW Extension office to learn about the Sheboygan River dredging, river habitat project, take a tour and have a firsthand look for ourselves. We met Debbie Beyer, UW Extension biologist assigned to the Sheboygan River habitat program, who provided background information and answered questions before we took the tour.

Our first stop was the reconstruction of water pond at the southwest juncture of Sheboygan's Taylor Drive and Indiana Avenue. We were told that over two years prior to the final dredging of the river, she and other experts put together a detailed plan on how best to improve the river and shoreline habitat over the long-term once the overall dredging was complete.

The original pond was first built to compensate for the loss of wetlands when Taylor Dive was built. While the pond served its purpose to a point, it was not well built to restore habitat. Native upland and wetland plants and shrubs have now been planted, habitat

for salamanders, turtles, frogs, birds and small animals have been improved, and the pond itself is now far better structured to handle water runoff than before and still be a true wetland.

Across the river, canoe and kayak, and fishing access were developed and river bank stabilized. Down river from the bridge, the south river bank was stabilized and fish habitat and spawning areas improved.

The islands downstream, called Wildwood Island complex were dissected (17 core samples taken), some pollution sediment were found and required to be removed and water movements and sediments better understood. The islands themselves are in a location that has a dynamic flux of downstream river flows, and a collection of sediments, were the river can meet incoming lake water. On any given day, water may flow downstream or be pushed upstream by the Lake Michigan tide.

Habitat in and around the islands were changed to native shrubs and plants, a blue heron rookery that existed on the south shore 25 years ago was restructured in a way to encourage nesting again of this large bird.

Along the north side of the river to Kiwanis Park, rehabilitation work has been done on public lands. At Kiwanis Park, erosion control structures were established, native trees, shrubs and grasses have been planted, bird houses have been added throughout the river sections and habitat for fish are being improved. Efforts were made to provide the types of plants that provide food and cover for local and migrating birds.

Our tour then took us

to the dredging and trucking of sediment locations down river. Here, a hundred trucks or more a day, working 24 hours/six days a week were observed in action. By the end of December the river dredging should be completed. As for the habitat efforts, some work will still need to be done next spring. And for the native trees, shrubs and grass planting's, the company hired must follow up for the next three years to replace lost plants.

It was a rewarding tour. We received a good first hand look at the river project, and had a knowledgeable experienced biologist along to answer any and all our questions and take us to the right spots.