

Friends of Wisdom Prairie

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Holy Wisdom Monastery



Thank You!

One can only be impressed by how much volunteers, sisters and staff have accomplished on this sacred land over the years—the impact is undeniable. And no metrics or numbers can ever truly capture the experience of “working” with the land and building relationships with other volunteers. What a joy it is to contribute to this special place.

But what sets it apart from other organizations doing restoration work? The Friends of Wisdom Prairie (FWP) Council has felt a need to have a statement that speaks to the significance of this place of spiritual healing and connection with the earth. We started this conversation over a year ago and after many iterations, have created a statement, shared on the following page, that we would like to share with you. Let’s us know how this resonates with you....



With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Drew Howick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Drew Howick

President of FWP Council





One With The Land Here We Stand

The Benedictine sisters of Holy Wisdom Monastery have committed themselves to restoring these 191 acres of the earth as a healing gift and a living learning resource. The rich diversity of all life forms in the prairie, savanna and woodland are an offering of great beauty to the surrounding communities.

This land, lovingly cared for by many, invites us to be attentive with all of our senses awakened. Learning about and understanding the plants and ecological relationships elevates understanding of ourselves as inseparable from nature.

A quiet mind connects us to the land and dispels separations within ourselves. As our work in the ecological restoration restores us inwardly, it brings us together with others who care, as well as the larger community. The prairie nurtures and restores relationships among us all.

Seeing the cycles of the seasons, the constant changing of colors and species, we can perhaps come to the understanding that the prairie and savanna are an intrinsic part of who we are as humans. The beauty that we see is there because it already exists inside us.

Our care for the land, for nature itself, is ultimately care for ourselves as well as our community.

Ecological Restoration

Nurturing the health of the land

400

Number of hours contributed by Jacob Lawrence, Master's student at Yale Divinity School, who joined our team as a summer intern to explore his interests in religion, ecology and climate justice.

40

Acres revitalized with prescribed fire.

45

Number of native trees and shrubs planted.



RESTORED 3 ACRES OF OAK SAVANNA

BIOCHAR



12

Tons of CO2 sequestered via biochar kilns

7,200

Pounds of biochar produced & used onsite as soil amendment

50

Species planted in seed mix

500+

Volunteer hours

500

Staff hours

\$20,000

Retail value of seed mix donated by Dane County Parks

Ecological Restoration

Nurturing the health of the water

NEW STORMWATER SWALE

- Designed to protect Lost Lake from adverse impacts of storm water coming from new development in the community of Bishop's Bay.
- Functions to redirect and slow incoming water, dispersing its volume and allowing the load of sediments and nutrients to settle out before entering Lost Lake.

**We gratefully acknowledge financial support from Dane County to help fund the swale.*



Volunteers

Our essential partners in caring for the earth

3,090

Hours contributed
by volunteers in
2025.

6

Joint volunteer
sessions hosted with
Dane County Parks.

13

External groups
came to volunteer.

1,370

Pounds of produce
grown in gardens
with support from
volunteers.



Monitoring efforts help us evaluate the impacts of our stewardship work. Thanks to volunteer support, we have a robust monitoring program. *Examples include:*



Monarch eggs
& caterpillars



Bluebird
nest boxes



Frogs
& toads



Bees &
butterflies



Bird/window
collisions



Prairie
plants



Acoustic
soundscape



Trail
conditions



Breeding
birds



Environmental Education

Cultivating relationships with place

FWP OFFERED A TOTAL OF 28 EVENTS

- Great Wisconsin Birdathon
- 4 seasonal prairie tours
- Monthly birdwalks
- Monthly plant ID walks
- Creating Backyard National Parks
- 6-legged Summit: An Insect Conference
- Indigenous Art: A Local's Perspective



NATIVE PLANT SALE

141 total orders
852 plants sold
\$3,236 in proceeds, with gratitude to our plant sale partners Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance and SOS Save Our Songbirds.



KIDS ON THE PRAIRIE

Our volunteers led experiences for kids and their families...

108

Kids attended

6

Sessions



Membership

Your membership helps sustain our work - thank you!



— **31** Lifetime Members

— **13** FWP Council Members

— **42** First-time Members

♥ *Thank you to retiring council members:*

David Liebl & Michael Shinnars

REVENUE

\$10,349 FWP memberships

\$81,865 Care for the Earth

\$92,214 Total

Revenue generated by FWP helped fund: prescribed burns, staff salary, new tools and volunteer supplies and environmental education programs.



Lynne Smith, OSB volunteering.

Gratitude for You

Prioress Sister Lynne Smith, OSB likes to remind us that early Benedictine monastics earned the nickname 'lovers of the place.'

I view the role of the Friends of Wisdom Prairie as working alongside the sisters to support and amplify their deep-rooted love of this place. And this year, that amplification had a global reach. Thanks to the FWP member who tipped off the *New York Times*, thousands of new people have been introduced to the beautiful way the sisters blend ecological and spiritual renewal.

The health of this land flourishes because it is deeply loved and carefully tended. In return, the prairie generously reciprocates by quietly loving and tending those who visit. Thank you for being part of the community that helps this place flourish.

With gratitude,



Amy Alstad

Director of Land Management & Environmental Education





*Thank you for being
a part of our community.*

Volunteer . Donate . Support.

***Holy Wisdom Monastery occupies the
ancestral land of the Ho-Chunk Nation.***

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

[HolyWisdomMonastery.org](https://www.HolyWisdomMonastery.org)



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All numbers in this report
reflect 2025 year to date
through Oct 20th.