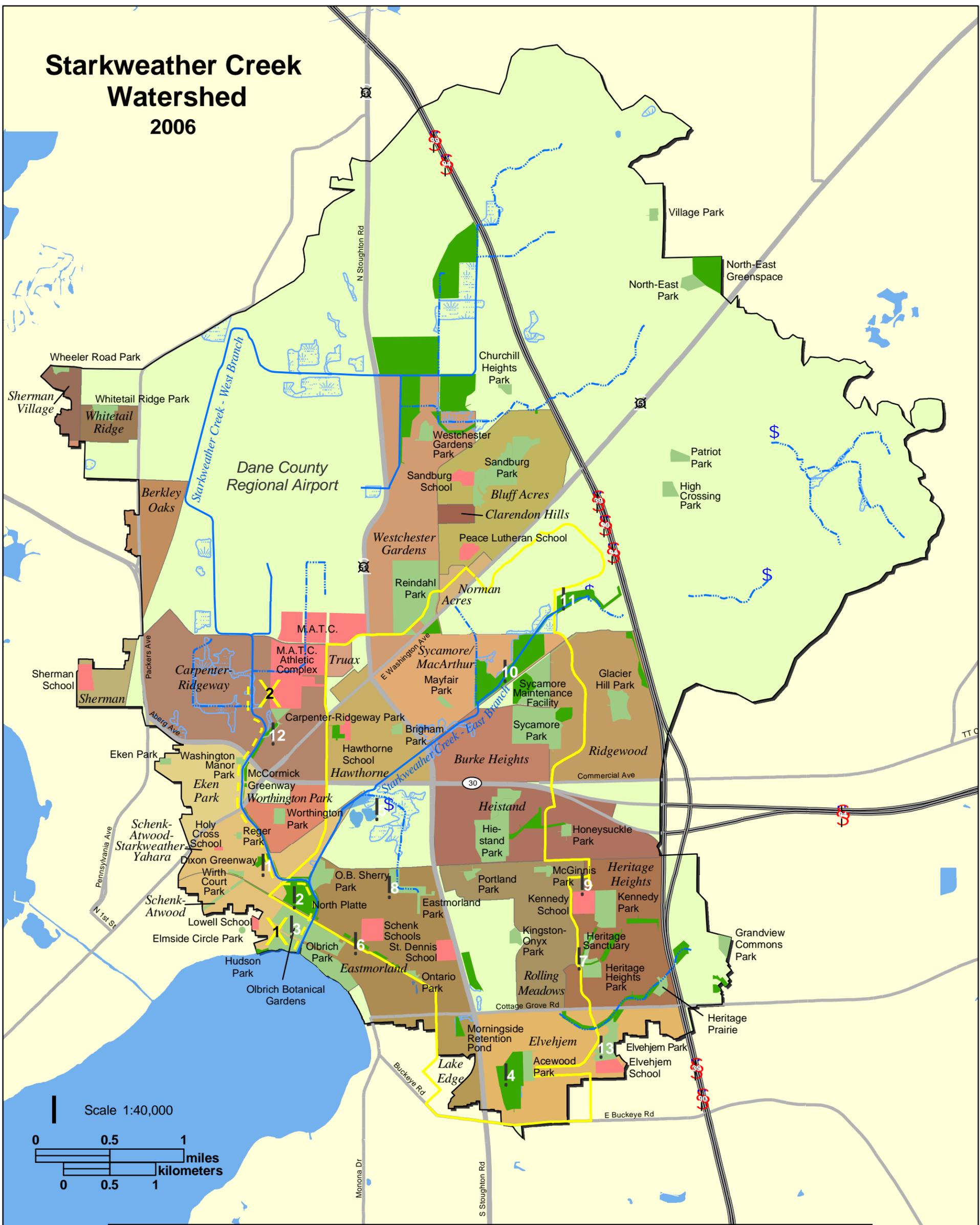


Starkweather Creek Watershed

2006



Explore Your Watershed!

- Bike Route
- Watercraft Route
- Walking Trailheads
- Points of Interest

Hydrologic Features

- Intermittent Stream
- Perennial Creek
- Watershed Boundary
- Lakes and Ponds
- Wetlands
- Springs

Community Features

- Neighborhoods (shades of brown)
- Park
- Open Space
- School
- Roads**
- Arterial Road
- Highway

Map created by:
 Water Resources Management Practicum, 2005
 Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies
 University of Wisconsin – Madison
 With assistance from:
 Friends of Starkweather Creek

STARKWEATHER CREEK WATERSHED

is the largest watershed in Madison. It encompasses the eastern parts of the city as well as the towns of Burke and Blooming Grove. The creek begins as two branches, the East and West, each fed by springs in the upper watershed. As the branches flow toward Lake Monona, they are augmented by urban runoff that increases the total discharge of the stream. The two branches converge southeast of the intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Milwaukee Street and flow into Lake Monona and the larger Rock River. Historically, the watershed was rich in wetland and marsh ecosystems, although less than one-quarter of these wetlands remains today. Although the watershed has experienced serious environmental degradation, with the help of private citizens, businesses, and community groups, some of these conditions can be restored.



Five things you can do to help the Starkweather Creek watershed

1. Install rain gardens and rain barrels at your home, business, school, community center, and place of worship to use precipitation that might otherwise enter the watershed as runoff.
2. Rake and compost leaves and debris regularly so that they are not carried by storm drains into our lakes where their decomposition adds to nutrient loading.
3. Report any illegal or suspicious dumping activities to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (800/TIP-WDNR — 800/847.9367).
4. Take part in the Starkweather Creek cleanup days organized by the Friends of Starkweather Creek and the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission
5. Educate yourself, your family, friends, and co-workers about Starkweather Creek watershed.

Sites of interest

Numerous natural and cultural landmarks make the Starkweather Creek watershed a unique landscape in Dane County. The following are just a few locations in the Starkweather Creek Watershed that are worth getting to know.

1. **Madison Gas & Electric Marsh.** A small remnant fen nestled between the Creek's West Branch, the SOO rail line and the MG&E substation, the marsh is a unique example of a wetland that has survived heavy urbanization. It contains to more than forty wetland plant species. *To ensure the continued survival of this wetland, please do not enter—view from the bike/hiking trail that lies along the creek.*
2. **North Platte.** The North Platte, a recent addition to the Olbrich Botanical Gardens holdings, has been home to a number of different industries over the course of Madison's history, including a sugar beet processing plant and Garver Feed and Supply Company. Unfortunately, the North Platte was also used during its industrial phase as an area to dump fill from construction and dredging operations, so it is also home to degraded wetlands, which will become the focus of restoration work in the near future.
3. **Olbrich Botanical Gardens.** One of the premier botanical centers in Wisconsin, Olbrich is dedicated to the creation, conservation, and interpretation of gardens and plant collections hardy to the American Midwest or native to the world's tropics. Olbrich is a leading partner in educating Starkweather Creek watershed and Madison residents about watershed issues via the gardens located on the banks of Starkweather Creek and the shores of Lake Monona.
4. **Acewood Pond and Park.** A small kettle pond located at the southern edge of the watershed, Acewood Pond ranges from open water to shallow emergent marsh at the pond's edge. The pond has a healthy community of floating hydrophytes as well as other wetland species, such as bulrushes, cattails, and broad-leaf arrowheads. Acewood Park borders the pond along the eastern edge and allows some access for fishing as well as for viewing the waterfowl that feed in the pond.
5. **Voit-Blattner Property.** The Voit-Blattner property is one of the largest undeveloped areas in

the urbanized central part of the watershed. The area is bounded by Milwaukee Street, Fair Oaks Avenue, and Highways 51 and 30. The property hosts a number of small springs and foxes. One of the main landowners is discussing plans with the city to sell part of the property; surrounding residents and the Friends of Starkweather Creek Watershed are putting forward an environmentally friendly development plan for the area.

6. **Dempsey Ditch.** Running along Hangrove Street and Dempsey Road, the Dempsey Ditch is a concrete lined, open stormwater drainage ditch that drains much of the southern and far eastern parts of the watershed into the natural part of the creek. The manmade channel is dry for part of the year and might one day be the target for restoration to a more natural channel.
7. **Heritage Sanctuary Woods Conservation Area.** An 8.5-acre oak forest stand, Heritage Sanctuary offers a 0.5-mile trail hiking trail. Although the canopy is composed of oak trees, the wildflowers that make up the forest floor are consistent with those that would be found in a maple forest. May is the peak period of trillium bloom and an ideal time to visit.
8. **Eastmorland Park.** Eastmorland Park lies west and south of Woodman's Food Market. The park is used by residents of the Eastmorland neighborhood and also stores stormwater runoff from the neighborhood and Woodman's. Eastmorland Park also has a concrete channel to convey water through the area, and it may be targeted in the near future for restoration.
9. **Kennedy School Prairie Restoration.** Intended as a place to teach fifth-grade students about the environment in conjunction with the Arboretum's Earth Partnership Curriculum, the Kennedy School Prairie was restored six years ago at a cost of \$1,000. Today, the prairie provides habitat to many native Wisconsin plants and also contains a number of community gardens.
10. **Lien Wetlands.** The Lien Wetlands lie along the East Branch of Starkweather Creek to the south of Lien Road. This area contains a remnant fen, peat mound, and emergent marshes along retention ponds built to store stormwater runoff. Nearly fifty species of wetland plants can be observed here.
11. **East Towne Mitigation Wetlands.** Created to mitigate wetlands lost during the construction of the East Towne Mall shopping complex, the East Towne Mall Wetlands accept runoff from the parking lots and rooftops on the East Towne property. The entire complex, which extends along East Springs Drive, contains springs and is one of the more pristine stretches of the creek.
12. **Carpenter Ridge Neighborhood Restoration.** In conjunction with the Carpenter Ridge neighborhood, members of the Friends of Starkweather Creek have been involved in restoration work along the West Branch of the Creek across from the Bridges Golf Course. This work involves removing invasive species and returning the creek banks to a more natural state.
13. **Elvehjem Sanctuary.** Connected to the Heritage Prairie and Elvehjem Park, this 9-acre sanctuary has 1.2 miles of trail and a Native American Mound. It is composed of a red oak-basswood forest and boasts exposed sandstone bedrock. Elvehjem Park has a shelter, tennis courts, playing fields, and a playground.

Walking trails

1. Olbrich Park, Botanical Gardens, and the North Platte

- Begin across from Olbrich Botanical Gardens on south side of Atwood Avenue at Olbrich Park. The mouth of the creek is at the edge of the park.
- Cross Atwood Avenue and enter Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Walk along the streambank walkway. Note the watershed signage near the bank.
- Exit Olbrich Botanical Gardens and walk north through the parking lot, across the Capital City Bike Trail and railroad tracks to the North Platte. Notice the large brick Garver Building.
- Walk east, past the Garver Cottage toward Starkweather Creek.
- Walk north along the creek and notice the wetland restoration (in progress). OB Sherry Park lies across the convergence of the two branches of the creek.
- Continue walking along the West Branch of Starkweather Creek through the wooded area of the North Platte.

- Cross South Fair Oaks Avenue. Two blocks north are rain gardens and rain barrels being used by residents.
- Return to south side of the Fair Oaks Avenue creek crossing and head northwest on the trail that follows the stream. On the left side of this trail is the MG&E Marsh.

2. Carpenter Ridgeway

The Carpenter Ridgeway neighborhood is north of East Washington Avenue off Carpenter Street.

- Follow the bike trail northeast toward the tree stands that line the creek.
- On the left side of the paved trail is a gravel trail that leads toward the creek through a wooded area that is being restored by the Friends of Starkweather Creek.
- Follow the creek side trail to the northeast. Across the creek lies Bridges Golf Course, built on a former garbage dump. Water seeping from this area is leaching organic pollutants from the soil into the creek.

Starkweather Creek Watershed Bike Trail

Approximately 15.5 miles long, the Starkweather Creek Watershed Bike Trail visits many natural and cultural landmarks that make the watershed a unique part of Madison. The trail follows the lake bike path for almost its entirety and focuses on the East Branch of the Creek. Signs mark the City bike path and should be followed except where noted.

- Starting point: Olbrich Gardens Graver Building and its intersection with the lake trail (1).
- Start heading east on the lake trail. Notice the Garver Building on the North Platte to the left.
- After crossing Dennett Drive, notice the Dempsey Ditch on either side of the trail (2).
- Continue on the lake trail and follow the trail signs until you reach the intersection of Lakeview Avenue and Buckeye Road; turn left on Buckeye Road.
- At Woodvale Avenue, turn left.
- At Academy Avenue, turn left off the path and continue two blocks to Acewood Pond (3).
- Return to Meadowlark Drive/Path via Eldorado Lane.
- To the right is Elvehjem Sanctuary Conservation Park (4).
- North of Twin Oaks Drive is Heritage Sanctuary Woods Conservation Park (5).
- At Milwaukee Street, turn right off the path and right at Lamplighter Way, where the Kennedy School Prairie Restoration is located (6).
- Return on Milwaukee Street to the path and turn right at Swanton Road.
- North Thompson Drive climbs the ridge that is the source of springs in wetlands along the East Branch (7).
- Zeier Road crosses the East Branch between Lien Road and East Springs Road.
- To the right of East Springs Road is the East Towne Mall Mitigation Wetlands (8).
- East Springs Drive circles around East Towne Mall, a major area of impervious surfaces in the watershed (9).
- Continue following path markers through Reindahl Park and MATC until Wright Street/Fair Oaks Avenue and continue south by turning left.
- At the junction of Fair Oaks Avenue and Milwaukee Street on the northeast corner is the Voit Property, one of the largest undeveloped areas in Madison (10).
- After crossing the East Branch, a small trail leads west to the MG&E Marsh (11).
- Continue on the trail back to the Garver Building and Olbrich Gardens.

Resources

Friends of Starkweather Creek

www.starkweatherfriends.org

For creek cleanups, canoeing/walking/bicycling advice, rain-garden building/monitoring assistance, and streambank-restoration projects.

City of Madison Engineering

© 608/266.4751 www.cityofmadison.com/engineering/

For rain-garden building/monitoring assistance, including grant and stormwater utility credit information.

Olbrich Botanical Gardens

© 608/246.4550 www.olbrich.org/

For vegetation, gardening, and environmental education activities.

Dane County Lakes and Watersheds Commission

© 608/224.3764 www.danewaters.com/

For creek and lake cleanups, watershed events, and education activities.