



## **April 2018 News Update**

### **FOPFC Sunflower Days 2018 Cancelled**

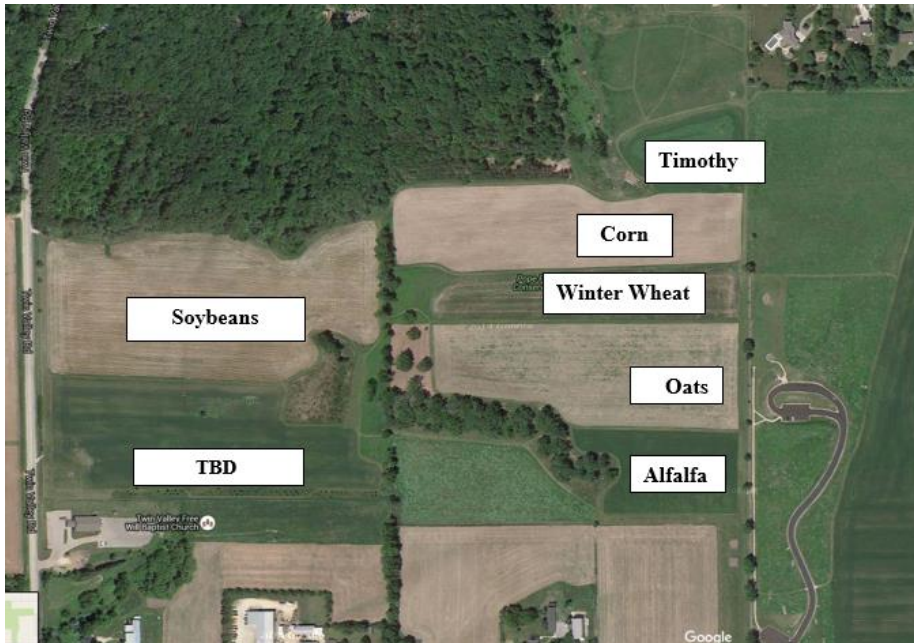
It is with deepest regret that we must announce the cancellation of FOPFC Sunflower Days 2018 due to safety concerns. As we prepared for this year's event, it was apparent that limited parking and anticipated crowd size would prohibit the Friends from safely hosting Sunflower Days. In the likelihood that we would have to redirect vehicles to off-site parking, visitors and families would be required to walk along the road, and to cross Old Sauk Road, to enter the Conservancy. This would create a potential safety issue for thousands of people. All of us who have worked so hard on the event over the years believe this is unfortunate, but necessary.

Since the first planting of sunflowers at Pope Farm Conservancy in 2007, we've seen incredible growth in the number of visitors. Last year alone, we estimated over 92,000 people came to PFC during the 9-days of Sunflower Days. It was truly a wonderful experience to see so many families and smiling faces enjoying the beautiful sunflower field. We are incredibly grateful to all those who attended and especially to our dedicated volunteers who committed many, many hours to make this event run smoothly.

We have great hopes to organize a FOPFC Sunflower Days in 2019. In the meantime, the Friends will be taking this opportunity to reevaluate our current limitations and research ways to safely accommodate all persons wanting to see the sunflowers, including the possibility of a shuttle service. We thank you for your understanding, and we hope to see you in the future.

The Friends remain committed to advancing and facilitating educational opportunities and interpretive programming at the Pope Farm Conservancy for students and the general public. We are very excited to be offering 8 educational talks/tours this season. (See our 2018 Events Calendar below.) Topics include photography, birding, prairie management, geology, Native American history at PFC and more! We will also be hosting a series of prairie seed collection sessions in the fall to improve the quality and diversity of the prairies. We hope that you will join us for one (or more!) of these exciting tours.

## Pope Farm Tapestry 2018



Crop Rotation creates a different kaleidoscope of colors every year. The seven different prairies change each year depending on the species, the maturity of the prairie, and the growing season. The rotations of 5 different crops within the Conservancy contribute to a different look and feel every year. When you combine this with changing site lines during the growing season, you have an ever-changing kaleidoscope of colors and textures spring, summer, and fall. This year will look familiar, yet different...

As you walk down through the center of the Conservancy through the prairies, you will look down at a beautiful field of Winter Wheat that will create a sharp contrast to the different shades of green created by the corn and the pines in the background.



Something else will be a bit unusual in the crop rotation at the Conservancy. At the top of the hill, Oats will be planted. As you walk between the Alfalfa and the Oats, you will feel green on one side and a rolling golden carpet of Oats and Winter Wheat on the other.

On the South side of the Oat field you will be able to see over the Oat field and perhaps catch a distant glimpse of the water tower in Dane, WI. When you are in the picnic area at the top to the hill, you will be able to look across the dark green Soybeans will lay in the valley to the west.



And at the end of the growing season, the Corn field will take on a whole new look, and you won't be able to resist a visit to see the golden hues of autumn.



This is the crop rotation, and like every other year it will create change. With a very light twist of the kaleidoscope, the colors and textures of the land will change and form another beautiful tapestry at Pope Farm Conservancy in 2018.

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## THANK YOU, DANE COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL!

This month, we are pleased to announce that the FOPFC will receive a \$2,500 grant from the Dane County Environmental Council. The grant will fund a DR Field and Brush Mower, which will be used to control taller grasses and invasive weeds in areas adjacent to the prairies and savanna we manage. Being able to control specific weeds by mowing will help reduce the amount of chemical pesticides we use in these areas. The Friends are contributing \$12,240 in matching and in-kind funds, including 300 volunteer hours valued at \$3,900. The Dane County Environmental Council has been our valued partner for several years now, providing vital funding for land management at the Conservancy.



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## Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars!

### Archaeology Walking Tour

**Thursday, May 10th, 2018 (6:00 – 7:30 pm)**

*Speaker: Dr. Amy Rosebrough, Archaeologist with the Wisconsin Historical Society and a long-time volunteer with Pope Farm*

Dr. Amy L. Rosebrough will lead a guided walking tour of the archaeology of Pope Farm Conservancy, from ancient Native American hunting sites to erosion control structures dating to the Great Depression. Artifacts from Wisconsin's past will be available to examine and explore, and pre-Contact-Era hunting and gardening techniques will be demonstrated. This tour is free, family-friendly, and open to the public.

## 2018 FOPFC Events Calendar

The Events Team is excited to announce this year's line-up of talks and tours. We have 8 different speakers, covering a wide range of topics. All FOPFC tours are free, family-friendly, and open to the public. Additional event info will be posted at [www.popefarmconservancy.org](http://www.popefarmconservancy.org).

- **Archaeology Walking Tour**  
Thursday, May 10th (6:00 – 7:30 P.M.)  
Speaker: Dr. Amy Rosebrough, Archaeologist with the WI Historical Society and a long-time volunteer at Pope Farm
- **Geology Walking Tour**  
Thursday, June 7th (6:00 – 7:30 P.M.)  
Speaker: Eric Carson, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey
- **Bees and Pollinators at Pope Farm**  
Tuesday, June 12th (6:00 – 7:30 P.M.)  
Speaker: Susan Carpenter, Outreach Specialist at the Native Plant Garden of the UW-Madison Arboretum
- **Birding Tour at Pope Farm**  
Saturday, June 16th (7:00 – 8:30 A.M.)  
Speaker: Mike McDowell, Photographer and Birding Expert
- **Prairie & Oak Savanna Tour at Pope Farm**  
Saturday, July 14 (9:00 – 10:30 A.M.)  
Speaker: Mike Anderson
- **Mel Pope's Annual Tour**  
Tuesday, August 7th (6:00 – 7:30 P.M.)  
Speaker: Mel Pope, FOPFC Chair
- **Photography Walk at Pope Farm – Tips, Techniques, Ideas, and Visions**  
Saturday, Aug 18th (8:00 – 9:30 A.M.)  
Speaker: John B. McComb, wildlife/outdoor photographer, instructor and photo group/nature guide
- **Friends' Annual Party – Brunch with a View**  
Saturday, Aug 18th (10:00 – 11:30 A.M.)
- **Migrating Birds at Pope Farm**  
Sunday, Sept 9th (7:00 – 8:30 A.M.)  
Speaker: Mike McDowell, Photographer & Birding Expert
- **Prairie Seed Collection**  
Sept & Oct – Dates/Times TBD



## Upcoming FOPFC meetings

There is no shortage of ways to get involved with the FOPFC. We welcome everyone to attend the following meetings to observe, offer your viewpoints, or to join these committees if you are interested.

### Education Team Meeting

**When:** Thursday, April 26th, 2018, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

**Where:** Town of Middleton Town Hall, 7555 W. Old Sauk Rd, Verona, WI (across from the Conservancy)

**Topics:** Working to help bring our stories alive, researching the history of the land, including ownership, crops, buildings, and other interesting features.

### Events Team Meeting

**When:** Thursday, April 26th, 2018, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

**Where:** Robby Sonzogni's home, 3731 Pioneer Rd, Verona, WI 53593

**Discussion topics:** The Events Team will be discussing our upcoming events. Please stop in and share your thoughts & ideas!

## Question of the Month

**Question:** Why do you think Sunflower Days are too big at over 103,000+ visitors?

**Answer:** Sunflower Days has been a wonderful family event that has attracted visitors from near and far. We believe that the parking configuration in 2018, prohibits us from prudently doing Sunflower Days this year. For all of us that have worked so hard over the years this is unfortunate, but it is necessary to cancel FOPFC Sunflower Days for safety reasons. We also have great hopes that this is temporary, and we can reconfigure the event for 2019.

Sunflower Days has grown over 50% in the last two years, yet parking availability remains the same. Last year we had approximately 28,000 vehicles over 9 days. Keep in mind that there are only 45 paved stalls in the Conservancy, and we are dependent on using the adjacent fields and grassy areas to park. From a weather standpoint last year was the best ever, and we were able to contain all the parking within the boundaries of PFC. The reason we were successful is that there were no heavy weather events that caused closure for more than one day, which in turn would shift part of the traffic pattern to come on the “good days”.



We take hourly car counts during the 9 - day Sunflower Season, and last year we had 126 observed car counts during the event. In projecting what we believe would occur in 2018, we used last year's observations as a base (without weather events). We adjusted this base by looking at an estimated increase in traffic consistent over the last three years, and we

increased the duration people spend at the event because the far west location will take people longer to get there. When we examine the results, it shows that we would have to redirect traffic off site over 20 times during the upcoming season. This estimate is very conservative, and if there were any rain event at all, it would be even worse. Every car that is directed off site would cause people and families to walk along the roads, and cross Old Sauk Rd. at some point. This would create a safety issue for thousands of people.

Some have suggested ideas like a shuttle service, the cost of which would be prohibitive given that the event has been free. The transportation companies who we have contacted want to be paid “up front”, and the significant demand from hour to hour would be too difficult to predict. Long term, we believe there are options to balance safety and parking, and one of those could be making a reasonable usage charge to cover costs that will be associated with it. It is impossible to absorb additional expenses when the event is free. Secondly, charging an affordable charge would hopefully reduce the number of visitors to a level that safely matches the available parking (approx..70.000 people).

We thank you for your understanding, and we have great hope for the return of this remarkable event next year.

**If you have a question for us, please send it to [info@popefarmconservancy.org](mailto:info@popefarmconservancy.org) and we will try to answer it.**

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## Friend of the Month

### Thank you, Meg Gores!

Meg Gores has had a huge impact on the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy. Meg loves to write and edit as she did as part of the communications team at the University of Wisconsin-Extension before she retired last summer. Meg has researched and written articles for both the FOPFC newsletter magazine, and the monthly news updates. In addition, she helped develop a PR calendar so that we can coordinate all of our promotions, publications, and printing requirements throughout the year. If that were not enough, she has looked at our printing requirements and has made suggestions about our supply chain. Meg has truly made a difference to the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy, and we appreciate her efforts!



**And a happy field of Sunflowers to you, Meg!**

## Photo of the Month

Thanks to Barbara Esser for this amazing photo of the ice-covered trees last week. While it wasn't exactly the type of spring weather we'd like, it did make for some beautiful scenery at the conservancy.



**Think Spring!** If you have any spring-time photos taken at the Conservancy, we'd love to share them with our membership. You can upload your photo(s) to our Flickr page at <https://www.flickr.com/groups/fopfc-photos/> or email them to [janie@popefarmconservancy.org](mailto:janie@popefarmconservancy.org).

## Connect with FOPFC online

**Website:** <https://www.popefarmconservancy.org>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfPopeFarmConservancy>

**Flickr:** <https://www.flickr.com/groups/fopfc-photos>

**Thank you for supporting the Friends of Pope Farm Conservancy!  
Our journey is ongoing, and you are part of it!**

