

New Innovations Making Lakes Clean, Less Green

By: Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk

Whether it's relaxing from a boat or along shore with friends, wetting a line at sunset or sunrise, or taking a walk, jog, or bike ride along the water, there are many different ways to enjoy our beautiful lakes.

Soon the sounds of cicadas will give way to ringing school bells. Many memories are made in summer. Among those this summer – the good progress we made together on our shared goal of making our lakes the best they can be.

One of my top priorities the past several years was for Dane County to have the first facility in the country, shared by farmers, that keeps manure out of our lakes. In late July, we celebrated the start of this new and innovative approach to keeping our lakes blue.

My hope is this new manure digester shared by farmers near Waunakee, will be the first of many to generate millions of dollars worth of clean energy to light and heat our homes each year. The courage to build a first-of-its-kind facility shows how committed our farmers are to being good stewards of our lakes and lands.

Also this summer, Dane County applied for and received a \$2-million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for our ongoing work with farmers to reduce runoff and slow the growth of algae in our lakes.

Our lakes were the beneficiaries of generous gifts this summer. The Madison Community Foundation is helping us use science to pinpoint the most problematic spots where nutrients like phosphorus wind their way into the waters after it rains.

The Clean Lakes Alliance helped form a partnership between Dane County and the City of Middleton on construction of a new stormwater basin. Instead of rain carrying dirt and crud into Lake Mendota with every downpour, this new facility will capture tens of thousands of tons of sediment each year.

Our lakes are such a big part of our quality of life. That's why together, we continue to work hard to make sure they will be enjoyed for many generations to come.