



## Legacy Prairie & Woodland Update, August 2026

*By, Peter Antonie*

It has been a hot and dry summer, but work has continued to further develop the new 3-acre parcel purchased late in 2025, collaborate with groups interested in what has been created in the Prairie & Woodland, and creating a usable trail along the east side of Vermont Creek.

**A New Name:** Rather than referring to the new 3-acre parcel as “the former Cushman property,” our congregation voted on a new name to this spectacular parcel. Historically, the former farm and this parcel were owned by Pastor John Fjeld (Field), who was recruited to come from Norway to serve the fledgling Vermont Church congregation in the 1880’s. So, it is fitting that the new name, **Fjeld’s View**, pays homage to Pastor Fjeld.

**Hydro Seeding Fjeld’s View:** In our last update, we described the hydro seeding process and the hoped-for results. Below is a picture taken on the day the hillside was hydro seeded followed by a picture taken in late July of the hydro seeding result.







**Collaboration:** One use of the Prairie & Woodland is as a tool for collaboration with other organizations that share a common interest in conserving and protecting natural resources and areas. Developing relationships with organizations such as the Dane County Land & Water Resources Department, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Black Earth Creek Watershed Association (BECWA), the Capitol Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC), Groundswell Conservancy, etc., has proven to be invaluable in moving our project forward and, in the process, learning from each other. Here are a few recent examples:

- BECWA – Our congregation raised funds, during July, to support BECWA’s 3-D watershed model project. The Legacy Fund committee challenged our members to contribute to the project with the promise of up to \$500 of matching funds. The challenge was successful! Members contributed \$725, meaning BECWA received a donation of \$1,275 for their project.
- St. John’s Lutheran Church, Oregon WI – 12 members of the church’s Care for Creation team came to take a tour of the Prairie & Woodland on Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup> to learn about our process for raising the funds to purchase the property,



development thus far, and how they could use our model for developing a 7-acre property the church has.

- Blue Mounds Area Project (BMAP) – As stated on their website, “Our community-based non-profit organization partners with local landowners to enjoy, protect, and restore native habitats, wildlife, and ecosystems.” And their emphasis is on partnering landowners with their staff and other landowners who are involved in protecting and conserving their natural resources. They regularly hold tours of local properties to learn from each other. On Saturday, August 1<sup>st</sup>, BMAP held a tour of our Prairie & Woodland. We provided a short PowerPoint presentation of what has evolved since the property was purchased in 2022 followed by the BMAP ecologist leading a tour of a portion of our property.



The group was very impressed and appreciative of our efforts to preserve and protect the prairie, woodland and wetland.





**Vermont Creek East Side Trail:** After the forestry mowing that took place on both sides of the creek during the winter of 2024 – 25, it became evident that a trail along the east side, starting near the bridge on Church Road, could be created to provide easy access for hikers and fishers. Here's a picture of the trail starting near the road,



The trail is close to the creek, with wetland being to the right, in the picture, between the trail and highway 78.



And the trail also provides access to areas along the creek and wetland where plans have already been made to plant several native trees and brushes, like Tamaracks, Maples and Dogwoods, this fall.

We needed to remediate 6 small ditches that crossed the trail. These ditches drain water from the wetland to the creek. We secured an erosion control permit from Dane County allowing us to work on the ditches and do the planting from July 29<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>. Here is a summary of the remediation work.

Ditch Cleanout: Used a skid loader to clear backed-up ditches. Per permit guidelines, all excavated material was removed from the floodplain (no fill left behind).



Base Layer: Filled the bottom of each ditch with 5-inch clear crushed stone (no fines).





Fabric & Topsoil: Covered the rock with geotextile fabric to prevent topsoil from migrating downward.



Then added topsoil level with the original grade.





Seeding & Mulch: Seeded the topsoil with grass mix and covered it with weed-free straw mulch.



Erosion Control: Final step - Installed erosion control silt socks on the creek side of the trail.



**Perfect Time for a Hike:** The Prairies are in full bloom, the Bluebirds are active, and the trails are in great shape. And you just might find Torin!



**Future updates and questions:** We know there is a great deal of interest in the Prairie & Woodland, and we will continue to provide regular updates. To contact the Legacy Fund Committee (LFC) with questions or suggestions, email the church ([vermontoffice@vermontlutheran.org](mailto:vermontoffice@vermontlutheran.org)) or speak with an LFC member: Peter Antonie, Greg Herrling, Larry Ziemer, Leonard Schaub, Karsten Haugen, Jim Herrling, or Gary Olsen.