

Nomination for Special Recognition/Friend of Conservation Award

Nominee

Name: Doug Carden
Address: 4754 County Rd. T Barneveld, WI 53507
Phone: (608) 924-8824 (Home) & (608) 279-8047 (Cell) Email: dougcarden76@gmail.com
Title: President of The Friends of Birch Lake Association

Nominator

Name: Katie Abbott and staff (Iowa County Land Conservation Department)
Address: 303 W. Chapel St. Dodgeville, WI 53533
Phone: (608) 930-9893 Email: Katherine.abbott@iowacounty.org

Summary

Doug Carden was the main force behind recent significant renovations to Birch Lake, located in Barneveld, WI. The dam that created the lake was constructed in 1963, and the lake has since been a haven for boating, fishing, and swimming, with an adjacent village park. When the Iowa County Board was considering possible removal of the Birch Lake Dam, Doug Carden stepped up to save and improve the lake. In 2016, he led the formation of The Friends of Birch Lake Association and began serving as its President. Mr. Carden spent significant time and energy to advocate for the lake, create renovation plans, work with partners and the community, raise \$170,000 in donations, and see the project through to completion.

Nomination

Originally 11 acres in size, Birch Lake, like many artificial lakes constructed decades ago, has needed attention for some time now. Its total area decreased 3 acres due to sedimentation. Open water turned to wetland in many areas, algae became a perennial concern, and with it came challenges to outdoor recreation.

Meanwhile, Iowa County was considering the future of the large dams they are responsible for maintaining. Birch Lake dam was one that was under consideration for modifications or removal, partly due to its effects on the trout stream below. Many meetings occurred over several years, and a hydrologic study was completed in 2016.

With the potential that his neighborhood lake could be gone in the future, Doug Carden began discussions with community members, DNR, and Iowa County supervisors and staff. He came up with a plan to save the lake.

In late 2016, Doug spearheaded formation of the non-profit The Friends of Birch Lake Association and creation of plans to improve the lake by dredging excess lakebed sediment, restoring a small beachfront area, and installing a new boat launch.

Because Doug created these plans, received approval from DNR, and raised \$170,000 in donations to pay for the work, the County Board agreed in early 2018 to stop considerations of dam removal and allow the dredging project to occur. This accomplishment took considerable time and effort on Doug's part, as he created extensive plans, applied for multiple permits, rallied the community, and cooperated with the Land Conservation Department and Committee, the Iowa County Board, the Wisconsin DNR, Village of Barneveld, Brigham Township, local contractors, and countless other individuals. He even designed and built a siphon system to lower the lake's water level so the sediment could be dredged. The project was completed in 2021.

Working through challenge after challenge, including multiple torrential rain events and a pandemic, Doug's passion and dedication made it possible. Current and future generations will benefit

from clearer water, better access to the lake, and more fruitful fishing because of these efforts. Future users of Birch Lake will likely never know the difficulties in improving Birch Lake, but we don't think Doug will mind, knowing that the fish are biting, the morels are popping, and more memories continue to be made each year by Iowa County residents and visitors.