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**RACINE COUNTY AND ROOT-PIKE WIN  
TO RESTORE PRITCHARD PARK WETLANDS**

*Park transformation will now include enhancement of natural areas*

Racine – Racine County and Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network have announced a partnership to restore wetlands and other natural areas in Pritchard Park.

As part of the partnership, Racine County will provide \$25,000 to restore a four-acre wetland that was overrun with invasive buckthorn in the southeast portion of the park, near the corner of Ohio Street and Durand Avenue (Highway 11). Along with the removal this winter of hundreds of dead or dying trees affected by the Emerald Ash Borer, the area will become a better-functioning wetland, with thriving and diverse plant communities to help reduce flooding and runoff pollution, improve and expand habitats, and create places where people want to be.

Root-Pike WIN will lead the effort to restore that area of the park, which is next to the SC Johnson Community Aquatic Center under construction. The investment in the wetland will kick-off a multi-phased effort to restore select areas of Pritchard Park to a more natural state. The enhancements to the natural areas will occur over the next few years and as grant funding is secured.

“The Pritchard Park partnership represents the willingness of Racine County to find ‘win-win’ projects with Root-Pike WIN and other community groups – recreating the park as a place where more people want to be for a variety of active and passive activities,” said Dave Giordano, Root-Pike WIN’s Executive Director. “The wetland restorations have aesthetic and functional upsides that will make the park a better overall experience and reduce pollutants and water volume downstream.”

“We envision Pritchard Park becoming a destination for Racine County residents, beginning with the SC Johnson Community Aquatic Center opening this summer,” County Executive Jonathan Delagrave said. “As we continue to plan Pritchard Park’s future and look at other amenities and areas that could be upgraded, we’re grateful to partner with Root-Pike WIN to ensure the park remains environmentally sound.”

Additional funds are being sought through grants to restore the buffer vegetation along the middle pond and in other select areas of the park. A previous trail is also planned to

create easier access to all areas of the park while allowing for better groundwater infiltration. In the southwest forest, more invasive species will be removed, but the oak, hickory and other native trees will remain.

Giordano added, “While the removal of dead or dying trees can feel disheartening, native grasses, flowers and shrubs create better conditions for birds, bugs and other species that kids love. Experiencing these natural amenities will be unique in this highly-urban neighborhood. Threatened pollinator species like bees and butterflies will also have better conditions to do their valuable work within the park.”

Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit that restores and protects the Root-Pike basin by building partnerships to advance projects benefitting the watershed.

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