

# Dane County Success from the Field

## Nonpoint Source Success: Restoration of Pleasant Valley Branch Through Stream Corridor Rehabilitation

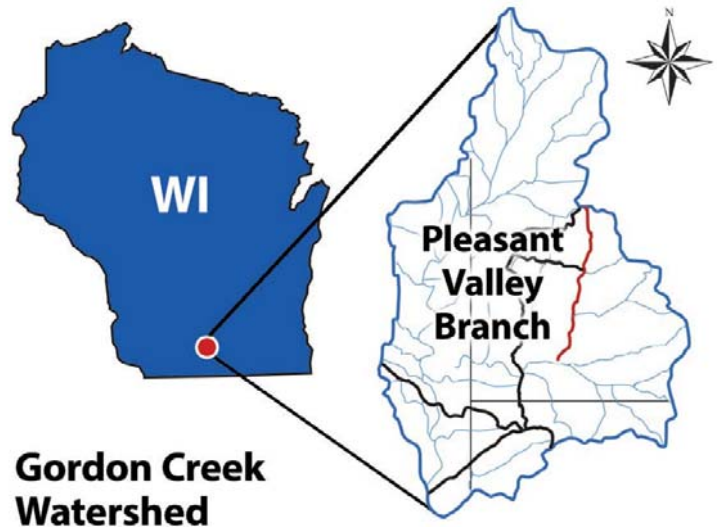
### Background

Pleasant Valley Branch is located in the Gordon Creek watershed and historically served as an important wildlife habitat refuge for coldwater native fish species including the mottled sculpin and brown trout. However, studies and surveys conducted in the early and mid-2000s found that water condition in the subwatershed has been so severely degraded, that it in turn, was having a detrimental impact on the desired aquatic population. For example, habitat and fish assessments found that the stream failed to support its coldwater fish and aquatic life, while a fish survey conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) found that the fish population consisted of pre-dominantly pollution-tolerant species such as white suckers, creek chubs and brook stickleback. The disappearance of trout appeared to be habitat degradation due to sediment deposition as well as excessive erosion caused by livestock pasturing along the stream. As a result, the entire creek was added to Wisconsin’s 1998 Clean Water Act (CWA) section 303(d) impaired waters list for degraded habitat.

### Highlights

The Wisconsin Dane County Land and Water Resources Department (LWRD), in partnership with a consortium of public and private partners, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), completed the habitat restoration on Pleasant Valley Branch in fall 2017. The project consisted of carefully implementing coordinated restoration efforts and upland conservation practices to decrease sediment inputs along 2.2 miles of Pleasant Valley Branch to improved riparian corridors and stream habitats while also addressing nonpoint source issues.

The WDNR conducted another set of assessments in 2009 and 2013 after completion of restoration efforts and found that the percentage of fine sediments had dropped from 71 percent to less than half that amount while mean bank erosion dropped from a mean of 2.5 feet prior to projects being implemented to a mean of 1.2 inches afterwards. The health of the fishery also improved as the pollution-tolerant fish assemblage was replaced with a community of pollution-sensitive coldwater species. Based on these results, it was determined



**Gordon Creek Watershed**

*Pleasant Valley Branch is in southern Wisconsin’s Gordon Creek watershed, pictured above.*

that the stream had reached its potential use and was removed from the CWA’s list of impaired waters in 2016.

Adam Dowling, NRCS District Conservationist for Dane County praised the project and credited its success to the ability for different agencies to come together and work toward a common goal. “This project truly demonstrates how a collaborative energy amongst varying local, state and federal agencies, combined with farmers and landowners who truly care about and believe in conservation, can lead to positive change,” explained Dowling.

### Future Plans

Dane County, the WDNR, and affiliated public and private agencies will continue to monitor water temperature, habitats and fish community health. The NRCS will also continue to do its part to make sure that Pleasant Valley Branch continues to maintain its current status as a flourishing subwatershed basin.

*Story content in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.*

**Wisconsin  
Natural  
Resources  
Conservation  
Service**

