

Plans are under way for new school forest

By Meg Heaton | Hudson Star-Observer

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Hudson Middle School science teacher Cindy Landers went before the Hudson Board of Education recently to blow the cover off what she believes is a secret educational opportunity.

Just southeast of the Hudson Middle School there are about 10 acres made up of woods, a pond and lots of native plants that Landers said is just waiting to be “discovered, explored and tended — a perfect place for a school forest.”

The land is owned by the city of Hudson and has no designated use. Landers, who was instrumental in developing the middle school garden, has already used the area as an outdoor, hands-on classroom for water and plant studies and as a means to train students in a whole host of science study skills. She used her experience as a project for a class in sustainability at UW-River Falls.

She then went on to take a forestry class at UW-Stevens Point and while there hit on the idea of making the nearby woods one of Wisconsin’s more than 350 registered school forest sites.

Working with School Forest Coordinator Jeremy Solin, Landers has presented the idea for the school forest to the city of Hudson’s Park Board and City Council and won approval from both for the idea. Contingent on the School Board’s approval next month Landers — and fellow middle school teachers Gwen Conklin, Jim Revoir, Prairie Elementary teacher John Mueller and high school teacher Jamie Holum — will write an education plan for using the forest. Funding for the forest management practices and the education plan are available through grants from the state school forest program. Landers is already at work on the first of several they will be applying for over the next few years. The grants will help cover the cost of interpretive signage, curriculum materials and test kits, even a dock to give students access to the pond for water studies.

Efforts have already been helped through the survey and drafting of a topographical map of the forest that was donated by AndersonPasse Engineering Inc. of Hudson.

Landers said she expects her students and members of the school’s Young Naturalist Club will be putting in volunteer hours working on several projects in the forest including some planting, removal of the invasive buckthorn shrubbery and a variety of other projects that will make the forest user-friendly for both students and the community.

For more information about the proposed Hudson Middle School Forest, contact Landers at (715) 377-3820 or through the district’s Web site at www.hudson.k12.wi.us and click on “Hudson Middle School”.