

Land Restoration School

AN INITIATIVE OF



Crossroads
at Big Creek

LEARNING CENTER NATURE PRESERVE

Becoming a restorationist

BY EMILY SAUTEBIN

My summer at the Land Restoration School at Crossroads was metamorphic. My love for the environment grew this summer, and I started to see the world around me differently. The passion of my colleagues and teachers was contagious. I was lucky to get to see Crossroads' fields and forests through their eyes.

The first two weeks were all about introductions. We got to know Crossroads and each other as we explored different ways to understand the theory and practice of ecological restoration. We journaled, painted, made prints, wrote poetry, and got acquainted with the landscape of Door County. By the end of the first ten days, we were ready to explore what it is to be a restorationist.

The following three weeks were all about the science of ecological restoration. Whether we were in the classroom or in the field, we were constantly learning. Every day or two, a new guest instructor would arrive and teach us about their discipline. We covered ecology, geology, botany, soil science, and water quality, among other subjects. When we were not in the classroom, we were learning field methods or removing invasive species. We learned how to treat reed canary grass and how to take samples of a site using quadrats to obtain useful information. We learned how to identify plants, soils, and aquatic macroinvertebrates. We were challenged to question how these pieces of information were related to the landscape's past, present, and future. Because ecological restoration is such an interdisciplinary field, I found it valuable that our curriculum allowed us to explore each discipline. The knowledge we gained during those few weeks served us well as we embarked on a journey to write our own ecological restoration plans.



Seven new ecological restorations, along with instructor Chrissy Hanke, head out into the world. Top to bottom, left to right, they are: Ben Kielar, Andrew Umentum, Megan Hart, Liz Metz, Hanke, Emily Sautebin, Hanan Ali and Mars Patterson.

The last three weeks were challenging, but also incredibly worthwhile. We synthesized everything we had learned to write our plans. A few busy days later, we presented them to the public.

After a summer of learning and growing, I feel more prepared and more excited than ever to begin my career. The Land Restoration School has opened my eyes to new passions to chase and new paths to follow. Still, this summer was about more than learning. It was also about the people. Again and again, I was moved by the enthusiasm and wisdom of my colleagues and teachers. I feel so grateful to have been a part of the first Land Restoration School cohort. Thank you, Nancy Aten, Dan Collins and Chris Young, for creating such a beautiful, powerful thing. Thank you, Crossroads, for bringing it to life.

Emily Sautebin is one of seven students who participated in the 8-week Land Restoration School. She is a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin-Madison majoring in Environmental Sciences and Geology and Geophysics. Bios for all seven students, and links to the ecological restoration plans they developed, can be found at: landrestorationschool.org/alumni.