

# Self-Reliant Strategies

*For a “green and growing” Capital Region*

BY JOHN IMES

In this installment, *Making Green Sense* highlights regional food and buy local first initiatives along with “green tourism” as self-reliant strategies to advance a green and growing economy.

Some of the Capital Region’s most popular and authentic attractions are its natural resources, including preserved parkland, 15,000 acres of lakes, open space, and prime agricultural lands, woodlands, wetlands and pastures — not to mention its outstanding cultural diversity, hip urban environs and regional specialties.

## Regional food collaboration

While “greening your kitchen” with energy- and water-efficient appliances, good lighting and ventilation, healthy cabinets and countertops, composting and green-built remodeling are important ways to achieving a more sustainable lifestyle, the decisions you make about the foods you buy and where they come from are just as important.

Fortunately, the Capital Region has exceptional farmers’ markets, locally crafted beers, artisan cheeses, grass-fed beef, heirloom fruits and vegetables, organic dairy and quite a few “slow food” and sustainable dining options to choose from. Together, they demonstrate the potential of regional food, farm and restaurant collaboration.

Many know the Dane County Farmers’ Market on the Capitol Square as the largest of its kind in the nation. Many more markets are sprouting up across the region, increasing opportunities for local, sustainable food consumption. Growth in

community-supported agriculture, community gardens and more sustainable farming practices will also help bridge the urban and rural cultures and introduce more healthy, locally grown and prepared food products for consumers.

## Buy local, buy Wisconsin first

More businesses and organizations are adopting local buying initiatives to promote locally produced products and services as well as purchasing products that have a reduced environmental impact.

One example is Capital Brewery, which recently launched their “Pure Wisconsin” campaign to draw attention to the valuable economic benefits of promoting and buying Wisconsin products.

“We take our heritage very seriously and work diligently to purchase Wisconsin products when possible,” says Carl Nolen, president of Capital Brewery. “This dedication to Wisconsin products extends well beyond our use of organic Washington Island wheat to produce our wildly popular Island Wheat Ale. Every component of our expansion project is local down to the new tanks and pumps.”

Although Capital Brewery could have saved money by purchasing aging tanks manufactured in China, the tanks were engineered by Sani-Matic of Madison and



built in Elroy, Wis. by W.M. Sprinkman. The new pumps were built by Firstam Pumps in Middleton.

Encouraging area residents and businesses to shift their purchasing preferences to more local and environmentally responsible choices helps stimulate the local economy and strengthen the region as a whole.

## Regional “green tourism” strategy

Many think the Capital Region has what it takes to be a leading green tourism destination — diverse geography, quality natural resources and cultural experiences, and a history of environmental leadership, including luminaries such as Aldo Leopold, John Muir and Gaylord Nelson, all of whom resided here.

Recognizing our competitive advantage, the Greater Madison Convention & Visitors Bureau (GMCVB) has joined the Wisconsin Department of Tourism’s Travel Green Wisconsin program, a partnership

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with Wisconsin Environmental Initiative, to certify and recognize tourism businesses and organizations that have made a commitment to continuously improve operations and reduce their environmental impact. The GMCVB is taking an active stance through its Visit Madison, Naturally! campaign and through its publication, The Green Guide to Greater Madison. The guide features articles on the area's green history, attractions, local initiatives and tips on becoming a green tourist.

We can keep the Capital Region "green and growing" by employing self-reliant strategies to protect our natural assets that are so vital for food, high quality jobs, an enhanced environment and outstanding recreation — in short, the world-class quality of life we deserve. ■



## Green-it-yourself resources

- Dane County Buy Local:  
[www.danebuylocal.com](http://www.danebuylocal.com)
- Dane County Farmers' Market:  
[www.madfarmmkt.org](http://www.madfarmmkt.org)
- Farm Fresh Atlas at  
[www.reapfoodgroup.org/atlas/index.htm](http://www.reapfoodgroup.org/atlas/index.htm)  
features many farms and food businesses in southern Wisconsin and lists nearly 30 farmers' markets in the region.
- [www.SavorWisconsin.com](http://www.SavorWisconsin.com) is an online resource for consumers to find food and agricultural products from Wisconsin.
- Slow Food Movement:  
[www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org)
- Visit Madison, Naturally!  
[www.visitmadison.com/green](http://www.visitmadison.com/green)
- Travel Green Wisconsin  
[www.travelgreenwisconsin.com](http://www.travelgreenwisconsin.com)