

Letter to the Editor of the Capital Times
From Jamie Saul, Staff Attorney
Midwest Environmental Advocates, Inc.
October 31, 2007

Re: *227,000-square-foot Monona Wal-Mart one of country's biggest* (by Karyn Saemann, Capital Times, 10/30/07).

“Monona Wal-Mart is Better, but the Company Must Keep Improving”

The opening of one of the nation’s largest Wal-Mart Supercenters in Monona, as described by Karyn Saemann on October 30, is surely a mixed blessing. Only time will tell if predictions that the store won’t drive small retailers out of business, or drastically increase local traffic, will come true. But Ms. Saemann’s article fails to acknowledge Wal-Mart’s continuing impacts on urban sprawl, and leaves readers with the impression that the retail giant has voluntarily “gone green.”

Many concerned citizens rallied in 2005 to pressure the company and the City of Monona Plan Commission to do more for the community and the environment than Wal-Mart’s usual slash-and-burn development tactics allow. The result was a renewed focus on planned growth and a project that is more consistent with Monona’s Comprehensive Plan than would otherwise have existed. But what about the other new Wal-Mart stores in Wisconsin? The citizens of Hartford, Jefferson, Green Bay, and other cities around the state haven’t been so lucky. In those communities, Wal-Mart’s policies continue to result in the paving of open space, alarming wetland destruction, and increased erosion and stormwater discharges to our lakes and streams.

This new Monona Supercenter, while imposing, is a more appropriate model for how Wal-Mart can and should build stores in the future. Advanced stormwater controls, use of vacant urban land, underground parking and energy efficiency should be the rule, not the exception. Let’s hold Wal-Mart to the same high standards at each new development they pursue.

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