



ON THE WATERFRONT

The newsletter of the
WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES & RIVERS ASSOCIATION, INC.
**PROMOTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF
WASHBURN COUNTY WATERS, SHORELAND AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES.**

President's Comments



FALL 2010

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WCLRA provides copies of its *On The Waterfront* newsletter to individual members and to associations. If your association has recently had elections, please make us aware of the address changes. Contact Fred Blake at 715-4693228 or blakelake@centurytel.net

Have you heard of Wisconsin's Lake Leaders Institute? It's a program sponsored by the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership (UWEX, DNR, and Wisconsin Lakes) to assist citizens in developing and enhancing their technical and people skills so that they will be more effective in their efforts to protect our state's water resources. I was fortunate to be chosen to participate this year as one of eighteen members of Crew VIII. At least five other WCLRA Board members have participated in previous crews.

The Lake Leaders program consists of three two-day seminars held at different beautiful locations around the state. Session I focuses on Society and the Environment; Session II is about Aquatic Ecology and Watershed Management; and Session III is on Organizations, People, and Politics. Each session has a series of expert speakers. In addition, Lake Leaders is a wonderful and stimulating opportunity to meet other people who care about our lakes and to share ideas and experiences with them.

Session II was most helpful to me with a variety of speakers talking about lake science and the impact of development on our lakes. One speaker told us that a lake's reaction to human activities is not linear; there are thresholds. Degradation or improvements due to what we do to our lakes might not show up immediately. In other words, a lake might seem to be doing okay in spite of an increased nutrient load and then suddenly take a turn for the worse. Likewise, a lake that is rehabilitated might take awhile to get better. That's kind of disconcerting. It means that we should not be complacent about lakes that appear to be healthy or discouraged if we don't see immediate results from efforts to improve water quality in less healthy lakes.

Education is an important component of volunteering for our lakes. Usually we're talking about educating others, but we must also educate ourselves. The Lake Leader's Institute was a fabulous experience and I encourage you to get more information about it at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexplakes or 715-346-2116. Another outstanding opportunity to make beneficial contacts and learn more about our lakes is the 2011 Wisconsin Lakes Conference in Green Bay April 12-14. Or, for a similar experience closer to home, check out the Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference scheduled for June 24.

Cathie Erickson
President

2010 WCLRA ANNUAL MEETING

By Barb Robinson

What could be better than starting the morning with pancakes with maple syrup, bacon, fresh coffee and juice? A FREE pancake breakfast with all the trimmings. This year's Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association Annual Meeting was held at Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary on August 28, 2010. Nikki Nelson welcomed us to Hunt Hill, giving us a little background on the facility and the programs they offer.



Breakfast

After breakfast the group moved over to the Library for the Business Meeting and Speaker presentation.



Hunt Hill Library

Our speaker this year was Dr. Paul McGinley (UW-SP and UW-Ex) Central Wisconsin groundwater Center. With the drought issues northern Wisconsin has been experiencing over the past several years, it was important to address not only surface water but also the importance of groundwater on our seepage lake levels and our drinking water sources.

According to Paul only about 1/3 of the water from rain and snowfall ends up in the groundwater. Groundwater provides the bulk of the drinking water in Wisconsin. Wisconsin groundwater is also mostly "home grown" meaning that it comes from within the state rather than a supply outside the borders. Seepage lakes are dependent on the level of groundwater. As the groundwater goes down so do the seepage lake levels. It takes a long time for groundwater to respond to heavy rainfalls. It may take several years of above normal precipitation for our area seepage lake levels to respond.



Dr. Paul McGinley

Paul finished by saying that although the groundwater in Washburn County is generally considered of good quality, he recommends having your water tested periodically. The groundwater is only as good as the surface water feeding it. Beverly Stencel, UW-Ex, said that you can pick up groundwater test kits at the University of Wisconsin - Extension offices in Spooner.

During the Business Meeting, Secretary Pat Shifferd, Treasurer Ed Fischer and Directors-at-large Earl Cook, Wayne Sabatke and William (Chip) Wood were reelected. Two amendments to the by-laws were put before the membership and unanimously passed. Under **Article 1**, to more accurately describe our areas of interest, *watersheds* and *groundwater* were added. To help WCLRA accomplish the protection of a water resource as defined under Article 1, **Section 2** was added allowing WCLRA to acquire property under various means to be used in a manner consistent with the purposes of the corporation. To view the complete by-laws and their changes go to our website at www.wclra.org.

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THE CONTINUING BATTLE WITH AIS

By Fred Blake

The AIS wars continue. We are fighting the war not in one epic single battle, but as a mix of significant battles and smaller skirmishes that will hopefully eventually win the day. How have we done in 2010? A few items may be worthy of note.

One long standing battle has been with **purple loosestrife** and specifically on the Yellow River here in Washburn County. Loosestrife basically crowds out native shoreland vegetation and wildlife habitat. In recent years, we worked downstream from Spooner with beetles, but there was a lot of area to cover and the availability of manpower and loosestrife beetles were limiting factors. This year, Lisa Burns, Washburn County AIS Coordinator, enlisted support from downstream landowners to expand the efforts to control this relentless invader. With their help mature plants were cut and an herbicide was applied to kill the plants before seed heads were formed.

Zebra mussels are a threat that had, until recently, seemed far away. To date, they have been found largely in the great lakes waters and only occasionally in inland waters. This year, they were found in Lake Minnetonka in the Twin Cities area. In early September, they were also confirmed in Keyes Lake in Florence County, in northeastern Wisconsin.

Zebra mussels cluster on hard surfaces and can clog motors and utility intake pipes. Their sharp shells washed up on beaches make barefoot strolling uncomfortable at best. Zebra mussel infested lakes tend to become noticeably clearer as these filter-feeding mussels consume small organisms such as plankton. Unfortunately, plankton are also a major source of food for smaller fish species which are, in turn, food sources for larger predator species. The result of this disruption in the food chain can be serious reductions in fish populations. Zebra mussels are very small, 1/8 to 2 inches in size. The picture makes it look bigger than it really is.



Zebra mussels are a major concern because the immature “veliger” form is nearly microscopic and not readily observable. The tiny veligers will travel unnoticed in bait buckets, live wells and bilge water. To protect our lakes, we will have to shift our thinking to increase emphasis on making certain that water potentially containing zebra mussel veligers is not transported from lake to lake. Landing monitors may require some additional training to focus on this invasive species threat that is new to our area.

Thomas Jefferson once said “The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.” I suspect that maintaining clean, healthy lakes will come at the same price.

NOTE: Photo Taken from Texas Liberal

UPCOMING EVENTS

12TH ANNUAL PROTECT THE ST. CROIX CONFERENCE

April 7, 2011, University Center, UW River Falls

Contact John Haack 715-635-7406

WISCONSIN LAKES CONVENTION

April 12-14, 2011, KI Convention Center, Green Bay

Contact UWEX 715-346-2116

YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP 2010

Craig Walkey, Education Chair

This Fall, all five Washburn County Elementary Schools attended the second annual one-day YES field trip series at Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary. A total of 222 students attended. Each school had its own special day and Spooner Elementary School divided their third grade class into two separate days. The Hunt Hill staff was kept busy.

The YES program teaches elementary students basic water science with hands on water sampling and laboratory testing. The children learn the effects of pollution and poor water use practices on our local aquatic flora and fauna. The goal of the program is to cultivate awareness of the value of good stewardship practices to the future generation of lakes and rivers users.



Craig Walkey thoroughly enjoying himself!

This year I taught “Water Quality Ponding” to the Spooner third graders. We removed our shoes and socks, rolled up our pants, and waded into the lake to net benthic macro invertebrates (bottom dwelling small insects). We identified the “bugs” and categorized them into good and poor water quality “bugs” as an indicator of the lake’s general health. My session was one of four concurrent session thatday. Other sessions included water animal identification, water chemistry, and stewardship practices. At the end of the day we discussed what we learned and what we would take home. The schools were to follow up the field day with a local community-based stewardship project. day. Other sessions included water animal identification, water chemistry, and stewardship practices. At the end of the day we discussed what we learned and what we would take home. The schools were to follow up

the field day with a local community-based stewardship project.



Craig Walkey “in charge”

The results of student and teacher evaluations find the YES program is very popular and beneficial to the students. The major funding for this program has been through DNR grants. These are start-up grants only and we will need the support of Washburn County citizens, businesses, and industries if the YES program is to continue.

Note: Photos courtesy of Marsha Stelzer of Long Lake Preservation Association.

NEXT GENERATION

By Fred Blake

At our inception in 1999, Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association recognized that we needed to look to future generations to continue the work that we were just beginning. Without a younger generation that appreciated the value of our lakes and rivers, our work would die with us.

Until two years ago we hadn’t found the recipe for a program that would accomplish what we wanted. Then, in 2008, we began a cooperative program with Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary and Long Lake Preservation Association (LLPA) and called it the Youth Environmental Stewardship (YES) program.

The YES program provides a hands-on opportunity for Washburn County elementary school students to learn about the wonders and the vulnerability of our lakes and streams. The Washburn County schools involved have been enthusiastic especially since the costs to this point have been covered by DNR grants.

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This program is a real success story and it should continue, but there is a hitch. DNR grants can fund the start-up of new programs, but they do not fund their continuation. We need to find a funding source to continue the program once the initial grant funding expires within a year or so.

Our next membership form (members will get a request for renewal in mid-January) will provide an opportunity for those who might want to contribute a little extra when renewing and direct that extra contribution to the YES program. Think about it!!!

TOTAGATIC: WILD LAND AND WILD RIVER
By Kathy Bartilson, WDNR

On August 25th, WCLRA Board members joined our state legislators at Governor Doyle's press conference announcing state acquisition of land along the Totagatic River. It was a real pleasure to hold this gathering right on the banks of the river, on property that now belongs to the citizens of Wisconsin.



Senator Bob Jauch, Representative Nick Milroy, Governor Doyle

Earlier this year, the state completed acquisition of 2113 acres from The Conservation Fund. This organization had secured the land from Wausau-Mosinee Paper Company. The state purchase was paid for through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund. As mentioned in the last newsletter, this acquisition includes 6 miles of river frontage (12 miles if one counts both banks). Most of the newly-acquired parcels lie along the river downstream of the Minong Flowage in Washburn County, although some of the acreage is also in Douglas County.



Fred Blake, Earl Cook, Nick Milroy, Bob Jauch, Gov. Doyle, Sec. Frank, Wayne Sabatke, Barb Robinson, Pat Shifferd

The next project for land and water protection along the Totagatic was to seek public input on how the Department should manage these parcels. An open-house type meeting was held on Thursday, November 4 at 6:30 pm at the Minong Town Hall to explore options with interested members of the public.

Approximately 25 people attended, including representatives of the National Park Service, Washburn County Zoning Department, Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association, Town of Minong, West Wisconsin Land Trust, Minong Town Lakes Committee and Gilmore Lake Association.

Information was presented on the acreage purchased and special requirements for managing Department lands along a Wild river (Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 302). Some questions from the group included:

- Is the Department interested in purchasing more land?
- If so, will adjoining private land be condemned?
- What activities are allowed along the other state wild rivers?

The staff explained that the Department is interested in acquiring more land, but does **NOT** condemn or "take" land. Rather, the DNR only works with *willing* sellers as funding is available, and only with authorization from the Natural Resources Board. It was also re-emphasized that the goal of the Wild River designation (from it's first proposal in 2004) was for all of the landowners along the Totagatic to work together to protect it and keep it wild.

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Participants then spoke directly with staff on their ideas for managing the new state parcels. Some landowners had specific questions on how the Wild River designation and local shoreland zoning affect their property on the river. In general, the attendees were supportive of further protection efforts for the river. Most of the ideas recorded asked for non-motorized and "quiet sport" day-use of the lands: paddling, hiking, etc. Other suggestions called for sharp-tailed grouse management and ATV use under the supervision of ATV clubs.

Thanks a million to the WCLRA members who attended the meeting, helped with logistics and preparation, and expressed support for further river protection.

MINONG TOWN LAKES COMMITTEE
By Russ Robinson

In 2008, Sam Lewis brought together a group of concerned citizens in the Town of Minong to form a town lakes committee that would act in an advisory role to the Minong Town Board on lake related issues. The economic strength of the Town of Minong is directly related to the quality of its lake resources. Nearly all of the town's income is generated through property taxes and 70% of this is paid by lake property residents. Maintaining quality lake resources is critical to the town's economic value and desirability. A degradation in these resources would lead to loss in value and eventually erode the town's ability to generate property tax income.

The Minong Town Lakes Committee (MTLC) represents all lakes in the town, thus giving voice to lakes having well-established associations and to those lakes without formal representation. The MTLC charter addresses the following areas of involvement:

- Education related to the preservation of the lake resources.
- Lake water quality.
- Control of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS).
- Watershed and shoreline preservation/improvement.

In general, the MTLC is committed to work with the Town Board to protect the quality and value of our most important economic resources.

In 2009 we took on the task of sponsoring an educational fair for the residents of the Town of Minong and surrounding areas. Presentations and activities were designed to be of interest to all age groups This event was extremely successful and well attended by nearly 1000 people from the region far exceeding our expectations. The Fair allowed us to reach out to many non-lake residents who use, and appreciate the importance of protecting, the town's lakes.

In 2010 our focus continued to be on education with a very successful Pontoon Boat Educational Field class held on the Minong Flowage. This year we have been successful in obtaining funding from the Town of Minong and a grant through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) for significant safety and aesthetic improvement of some of the town's boat landings. Docks will be installed on Bass, Pokegama and Gilmore lakes which will improve lake access for area residents and visitors. Also in 2010, we have begun evaluating and coordinating AIS activities in some of our larger lakes.



Pontoon Classroom on Minong Flowage

For 2011 we hope to expand these AIS efforts substantially. In addition we plan to sponsor the second (not so annual) Lakes Educational Fair at the Minong Town Hall on July 23, 2011 and you are all invited!

The 2011 Fair will be even bigger and better than the 2009 Fair. There will be educational presentations, kids' games and activities, lake association presentations, expanded vendor displays, door prizes, cash raffle, music and a delicious lunch. Many details are yet to be finalized but you and your kids will get the chance to be up close and personal with some pretty awesome and impressive birds.

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Minong Town Lakes Committee...cont'd from page 6

If you are a resident of the Town of Minong and would like to become involved in the Minong Town Lakes Committee or volunteer to help at the 2011 Lakes Fair please contact me at russrobinson@centurytel.net or 715-466-4152. We'd love to hear from you and look forward to seeing you on July 23!

If you are interested in setting up a town lakes committee or would like more information contact me at russrobinson@centurytel.net or 715-466-4152 or Tony Tubbs at feetinsurf@centurytel.net or 715-466-2557.

A WELCOME RESPITE

By Fred Blake

We finally have at least some temporary relief from the drought that we have anxiously followed for the last few years. With the exception of October 2009 (when we had 5+ inches of rain), low moisture conditions persisted through the end of May this year. The change came when, for the first time in a number of years, we had above average rainfall this summer and through fall. We had an excellent crop year and the entire countryside was greener. Surface soil moisture levels were back to where they should be. We all heaved a collective sigh of relief and the word "drought" was almost absent from our daily conversations. It is no surprise that the U.S. Drought Monitor shows neither drought nor even "abnormally dry" areas within the State of Wisconsin.

2010 PRECIPITATION

<u>Month</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>2010 precip.</u>
January	0.74	0.68
February	0.79	0.25
March	1.36	0.88
April	2.52	1.39
May	3.27	2.88
June	3.97	4.95
July	4.10	5.66
August	4.20	5.44
September	3.89	5.28
October	3.08	3.54
November	1.68	1.56
December	0.96	
Total	30.56	(32.71)

Figure 1

Statistically, we began 2010 with five months of below average precipitation which were followed by five months of above average rainfall (Figure 1).

As of the end of November, the Spooner area precipitation total, as recorded at the Agricultural Research Station, was roughly 3 inches above the local 30 year average (Figure 2). Note that 2008 and 2009 were significantly below the average.

The effects of the added moisture were mixed and a bit of a surprise for some. Lakes with surface inflows and outflows are highly dependent on rainfall and these generally benefited significantly from the increased precipitation.

CUMULATIVE PRECIPITATION

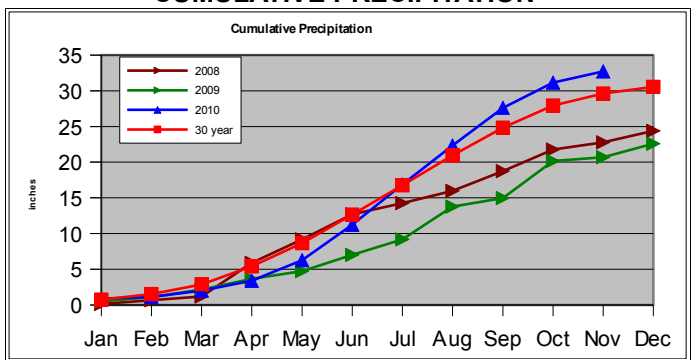


Figure 2

However, seepage lakes (70+% of our Washburn County lakes) have no surface inflows or outflows. They depend more heavily on groundwater to sustain their water levels and generally did not recover to a significant degree. Groundwater recharge after a drought is a slow process. In addition, some of these lakes were down eight feet or more and an extra three inches of rain did not have a significant effect. According to Phil Holman of the Spooner Ag Research Station, it will likely take several more years of precipitation significantly above average to bring the lakes back to what would be considered more "normal" levels.

All in all, this year was a welcome respite from the parched conditions of the last nine years, but it would likely be a mistake to assume that we are out of the woods. Ground water recharge still has a long way to go and our seepage lakes need improved groundwater levels to recover. Since we still need sustained higher moisture, I will not complain if my snow blower gets a good workout this winter.

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Gilmore Lake by Russ Robinson, October 2010

Contacts to protect lakes and rivers

“We need more than ever to provide what help we can to protect our lakes and rivers from environmentally damaging activities. Keep your eyes open! We are the last line of defense! But **do not trespass** to obtain further information. Let those in authority check it out.”

DNR Water Regulation Violations and Information:

Dan Harrington (Water Management Specialist, Spooner Office).....715-635-4097
Jon Hagen (Conservation Warden for Southern Washburn County).....715-635-4099
Dave Swanson (Conservation Warden for Northern Washburn County).....715-466-5428
If wardens are in the field, messages can be related to them through the Washburn County Sheriff's Department at 715-468-4720 or at the DNR's toll-free tip line.....1-800-TIP-WDNR (847-9367)

County Shoreland Zoning Questions or Violations:

Web Macomber (Zoning Administrator).....715-468-4690

County Planning, Land/Water Resource Management:

Brad Robole (Director).....715-468-4654