

On The WaterFront

A newsletter promoting The Environmental Protection & Responsible Use of Washburn County Waters, Shorelands and Wildlife Resources

Yellow River Is Generally Healthy

Rivers have been a focus throughout 2018, the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Yellow River came on WCLRA radar following a concern brought to us about aquatic vegetation choking the channel. What should we know about the Yellow River?

In December, board members and Bob Ostenson (trapper and resident) inspected springs and trout streams in Bashaw, Evergreen, Spooner, and Crystal Townships that contribute cold, clean water to the upper Yellow River. A meeting with Craig Roberts (DNR Fisheries Expert), Craig Roesler (DNR Water Quality Expert) and Brent Edlin (County Land and Water Conservation Specialist) indicated some point pollution from agriculture, the old Spooner landfill, the fish hatchery, and Spooner Lake. Yet, in the opinion of these experts, Yellow River overall water quality is relatively good.

For a more personal look, board members canoed the river in June from the Spooner fish hatchery to Swan Bridge Road. They found a scenic river that is quite free of trash although canoeing was obstructed in places by fallen trees. We all know wild rice is a valued native species, but a dense crop like that observed this year in some areas west of Spooner can make travel by canoe or kayak a bit complicated. Purple loosestrife, an invasive species that plagued the river in former years, has been largely contained by annual releases of leaf-eating beetles that are natural enemies of loosestrife. A new invasive species, yellow flag iris, was discovered growing all along the river course.



Photo by Linda Anderson

When we checked back with Bob Ostenson in September, he reported that channel blocking was not as severe this year, perhaps due to higher water levels.

IN THIS ISSUE

President Comments.....	2
Zebra Mussel Lookout.....	3
WCLRA Year in Review.....	4
Wood Tick Deterrents.....	5
Climate Change.....	6
Minong flowage Drawdown.....	7
Tree, Shrub, and Wildflower Sale.....	7

United Voice At The Polls President's Comments by Phil Sylla

When speaking in unison, 330 members have a loud voice. Romaine Quinn (incumbent candidate) and Ali Holzman (challenging candidate) in the 75th Assembly District November election gave generous amounts of time when meeting with delegates from WCLRA's Government and Environment Committee. Both Quinn and Holzman find the voice of 350 members, including over 100 new shoreland property owners, to be worth listening to, a bloc of voters united in the goal of protecting Washburn County waters.

Six conservation issues were presented to each candidate during, approximately, one hour meetings.

1. Replacement of de-funded DNR scientist positions
2. Transportation of petroleum via pipeline and rail through Washburn County
3. Recognition of climate change as a cause of environmental changes in NW Wisconsin
4. Finding new sources of funding for conservation in light of declining hunting and fishing license revenues
5. Protecting and increasing wetlands to stop flooding as so-called "100 Year" rains become frequent
6. Protecting against aquatic invasive species (AIS)

In addition to individual members, 27 Lake Associations and Lake Districts comprise WCLRA. What important issues is your lake facing? Let us know and we will carry your issues to local representatives and the State Legislature. We meet regularly with senators and representatives, our affiliate organizations including Wisconsin Lakes, Wisconsin Wetlands Association, and Wisconsin Rivers Alliance lobby in Madison. Our voice is loudest when we speak together.

WCLRA's purpose is to promote the environmental protection and responsible use of Washburn County surface waters and their attendant wetlands, shorelands and wildlife resources.

The WCLRA Board of Directors generally meets the 3rd Friday of the month in the Oscar Johnson 4-H Center at the Spooner Fairgrounds. Visitors are welcome.

Check out our website.
www.wclra.org

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On The Lookout For Zebra Mussels

By Cathie Erickson and Lisa Burns

Throughout this summer and fall, volunteers and professionals in Washburn and Burnett Counties have been monitoring our waters for the presence of zebra mussels and encouraging watercraft decontamination to stop their spread. A \$20,000 Rapid Response grant from the WDNR provides some of the equipment needed for these dual endeavors.

At the time of publication of this newsletter, results from the monitoring efforts are largely incomplete. Many plate samplers used to collect adult mussels will not be pulled up until later in October. Samples from veliger tows used to search for the larval stage of the mussels have not yet been analyzed. What we have found is that the zebra mussels in Big McKenzie are larger this year than last, and that the number of mussels is significantly greater. Early reports indicate 5-6 times as many as last year. In addition, Middle McKenzie Lake, which is connected to Big McKenzie now has an established population of zebra mussels.

Watercraft decontamination stations have now been set up at Matthews Lake, Nancy Lake, Spooner Lake and Stone Lake as well as the 3 McKenzie Lakes and 8 Burnett County Lakes. Washburn County's Bass Lake and Long Lake are considering stations.

This time of year it is important to check your dock, lift, swim raft and other equipment for zebra



mussels and other invasive species when you bring them in for the winter. Remember that many zebra mussels are very small and often feel like sandpaper on a piece of equipment. Washburn County has sent letters to the larger service providers in our area reminding them to be on the lookout too. If you see any suspicious or have a question contact Lisa Burns, Washburn County Conservation Coordinator at 715.468.4654 or Lburns@co.washburn.wi.us.

A copy of the service provider letter, which includes a photo of a decontamination station, is available on wclra.org.



Wisconsin Lakes Trivia

1. When going out on lake ice, what is the minimum thickness of ice to safely use an ATV or snowmobile?
2. What 2 panfish are most commonly caught by ice-fishing in Wisconsin?
3. What device is used to help hoist a slippery fish through an ice-fishing hole?
4. Which WI frog freezes almost solid each winter and can also be found near the Arctic Circle?

1. 5 inches 2. Bluegill and perch 3. Gaff hook 4. Wood frog

WCLRA 2017-2018 Annual Review

Presented at the Annual Meeting, August 25, 2018

Zebra Mussels: WCLRA fostered many educational components to lakeshore owners on the new decontamination ordinance and got volunteers interested in zebra mussel monitoring. Brochures were developed and distributed, members spoke at association meetings, town board meetings and conferences. News articles were published and information on the WCLRA website was kept up-to-date.

Threat of Oil Transportation: Efforts continued to reduce the impact of a potential pipeline failure on our county waterways. After extensive study, our Government/Environment Committee recently submitted a report containing our suggested pipeline improvements to Enbridge. We have proposed the insertion of additional valves in the pipelines with the goal of reducing the oil loss in a pipeline failure situation.

WCLRA Board Members invited to attend lake association meetings: Board members attended 2018 annual meetings of Potato Lake Association, Trego Lake Association, Horseshoe Lake Property Association, Twin Lakes Preservation Society, Long Lake Property Owners Association, Spooner Lake Association, Shell Lake District, McKenzie Lake Association, Shoreowners of Stone Lake and Little Ripley Lake Association. The goal is to seek input and share information with member associations.

Upper Yellow River: After concern was expressed about aquatic vegetation choking the channel of the Yellow River, WCLRA investigated. *See article in this issue.*

Support Hunt Hill: WCLRA donated \$600 to the Hunt Hill Endowment Fund over 3 years. \$300 was contributed to their Youth Environmental Training program.

Support to Whalen Lake: WCLRA assisted Whalen Lake when a culvert replacement at its outlet led to a lowered lake level. WCLRA Board members met with both the DNR and the Town of Trego. A modified culvert structure would require DNR Approval. At this time, neither a suitable project proposal nor the necessary funding has been identified.

Support for Minong flowage draw down: When the Minong Flowage applied for a permit to draw down the lake level 4-5 feet during the winter of 2018-2019 in order to control milfoil, WCLRA invited DNR input to a discussion of whether a drawdown would be detrimental to the Totogatic wild river. The DNR indicated that the effect on the river would be minimal. *See article in this issue.*

Economic Value of Waters: A study is underway to determine the economic value of water front property to Washburn County. Tax information has been gathered and the amount of taxes paid by lake shore owners will be compared to the amount paid by others.



Contribute to WCLRA When You Shop on Amazon

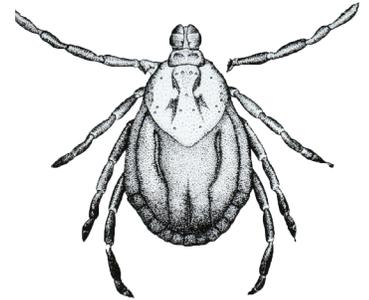
Sign in to **smile.amazon.com** on your desktop or mobile phone browser. From your desktop, go to Your Account from the navigation at the top of any page, and then select the option to Change your Charity. Select “Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association” to support.

Did You Know That Wood Ticks Don't Like Wood Chips (and some plants)?

by Mitchel Block

(Reprinted from *Lake Tides*, Volume 43, No. 3 Summer/Fall 2018)

The weather might be cooling off a bit as kids go back to school: Halloween items start appearing on the shelves of stores, and you start thinking about making chili and that pumpkin spice latte. But beware, the weather is still plenty warm for an atrocious arachnid waiting right outside your door, ready to suck your blood...the tick! These tiny pests are hosts to all sorts of bad bacteria and diseases, including Lyme's disease. Since 1980, over 38,000 cases of Lyme's disease have been reported in Wisconsin, and an estimated 75% of those cases were contracted right in residential backyards. Ticks aren't easy to stop either. They can easily survive through the frigid Wisconsin winters and can even survive underwater for over two weeks! So, what can stop these pesky parasites from finding their way into your backyard? Well, it turns out simple wood chips are able to do the trick. Amazingly, ticks are afraid of getting lost in the wood chips and dehydrating, so they avoid them altogether! A strip of wood chips just a few feet wide is enough to create an impassable barrier that stops ticks in their tracks. Wood chips aren't the only strange way of stopping the bothersome blood suckers. Plants like lavender, sage, or chrysanthemum, or strips of cedar mulch with cedar oil have also all been suggested to prevent the spread of ticks.



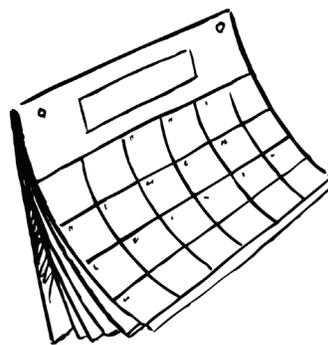
Info For New Property Owners

For more than 10 years, new Washburn County shoreland property owners have been given a free one-year membership in WCLRA. The intent has been to focus attention on protecting and preserving Washburn County waters.

To further promote that goal, next year's free memberships will be accompanied by three publications (Protecting Your Waterfront Investment, Healthy Lakes and a list of resources) provided by the University of Wisconsin Extension (UWEX). Madeline Roberts, UWEX Natural Resources Educator, suggested this partnership project to the WCLRA board and it garnered immediate board support. This type of information is particularly useful to new shoreland owners who may know little about protection of our lakes. Since WCLRA was formed in 1999, we have partnered with UWEX on numerous projects aimed at protecting and preserving

our Washburn County waters.

Madeline's office will provide the informational publications and WCLRA will assemble and distribute the mailing expected to be out in February.



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

April 10-12, 2019

Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Convention
Steven's Point, WI

June 21, 2019

Northwest Lakes Convergence
Hayward High School, Hayward, WI

High Waters and Algae Blooms?

by Bruce Keyser

Global warming has been studied and its effects predicted for more than a century. The link between CO₂ in the atmosphere and global temperature is well understood and documented. The effects of global warming on our lakes and rivers is important to understand.

A major impact affecting NW Wisconsin is intense rainfall and flooding. Extreme rainfall events have increased in the last century and are predicted to continue increasing. Flooding impacts human health, transportation, infrastructure, wildlife and agricultural yields.

Changing land use and expansion of urban areas combine with more rain intensity to increase runoff into our lakes and rivers. Storm-induced runoff, together with rising water levels and warmer water temperatures, leads to increased phosphorus and nitrogen loading that contributes to algae blooms. Flooding can overwhelm septic systems as well as some city sewer systems. The U.S. EPA estimates that more than 800 billion gallons of untreated sewage is released in the nation's waters annually. An excellent source of the history of our understanding of climate change, by the American Institute of Physics is found at <http://history.aip.org/climate/index.htm>.

Our warming climate is impacting our lakes, rivers and connected wildlife habitat and ecosystems in number of subtle ways. The Hine's emerald dragon fly is on the federal endangered species list. Wisconsin is one of the few states where it is found. The emerald dragon fly larvae require cool summer waters (16-20°C) for development. As water warms in its current distribution there may be a northward shift of the species where other factors necessary for survival may not be present. In a study of black terns in WI, weather was the most important cause of nest failure. The black tern is listed in significant decline. The common loon is also being impacted by failure of nests due to water level fluctuations. Also, warmer springs result in black fly swarms peaking in mid-May.



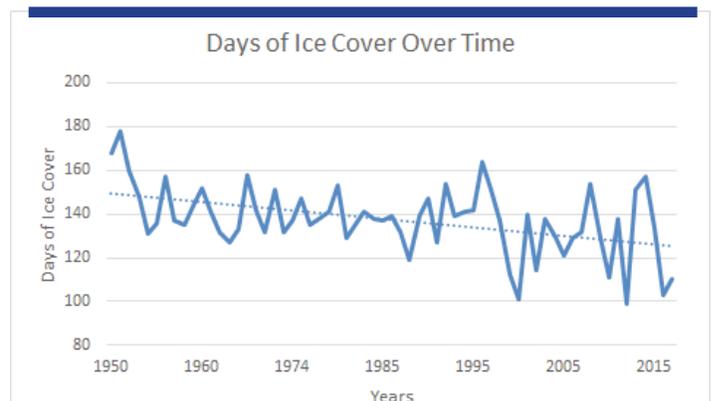
Hines Emerald Dragonfly

Photo by Paul Burton

This earlier-than-normal swarming coincides with loon nesting and contributes to nest abandonment from black fly predation. These are just a sampling of many examples of how climate changes combine with other factors to impact wildlife. More information may be found at <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/ss/SS0197.pdf>

Whether it is the spread of invasive species, the decline in fisheries or water quality, it seems that a link to climate change is close by. As a volunteer with the Birchwood chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby, I am an advocate for reducing our carbon emissions and encourage you to visit <https://citizensclimatelobby.org/> to learn about efforts promoting a solution that will help reduce carbon emissions.

Editor's note: Check out: <https://dnr.wi.gov/wnrmag/html/>



This is data collected on Shell Lake showing the historical number of days the lake has had ice coverage. Courtesy of Mike Pesko.

Minong Flowage Drawdown

The Minong Flowage Association is continuing its battle with Eurasian water milfoil (EWM) and applied for a permit for 2018-2019 from the WDNR to conduct a winter drawdown of the water in the Flowage. The WDNR is in the process of reviewing the application, but Dave Blumer, Lake Management Planner with Lake Education and Planning Services, says it is unlikely that the drawdown will occur this year.

Here is a bit of background for the project. In 2008-2009 EWM covered more than 336 acres of the 1500-acre flowage with dense growth and matted vegetation. During the Minong Flowage Dam Reconstruction Project in 2013-14, a drawdown was conducted that began in March 2013 and was not ended (with the Minong Flowage being refilled) until February 2014. How this drawdown impacted EWM and other aspects of the lake was documented by several scientific and management planning organizations. Only the winter portion of the extended 2013-14 drawdown effectively reduced the amount of EWM in the Flowage. Over the past 4 years, the milfoil has increased and now covers about 140 acres, although it is less dense than it was in 2008-2009. Given the nature of the beast, it is expected that EWM density and distribution could once again cover 300 acres or more if left unmanaged.

The Association, in partnership with Washburn County, tribal agencies, and the Wisconsin DNR, determined that a drawdown would be the most effective way to help control EWM. The winter portion of the 2013-14 drawdown of 5.5 feet resulted in an 85% decrease in EWM over two seasons. It is a more cost-effective alternative compared to chemical treatment, but not cost-free. During the next winter drawdown, it is expected that there will be significant costs associated with reimbursing Renewable World Energies who operate the power generation portion of the dam, for lost power generation.

According to Blumer, the drawdown could happen in 2019-2020 if criteria are met before the winter season. Stay tuned.

Washburn County Tree, Shrub, and Wildflower Sale

Interested in buying trees, shrubs and/or wildflowers? The Washburn County Land & Water Conservation Department has a sale each year, which includes a variety of species. Trees come in 25 per bundle and shrubs are 10 per bundle. Wildflowers consist of 32 two-inch pots.



Sales are on a first-come, first-serve basis so be sure to order early. Pick-up dates for tree and shrub orders is in early spring and wildflowers are in June, both at the Spooner Ag Station. You **do not** have to have land in Washburn County to order.

Order forms will be mailed out in December. To request an order form or for more information, please call the office at 715-468-4654 or check the Washburn County website in December under "trees, shrubs, flowers" to print off an order form.



4" 5-7" 8-12" 12-15"
MINIMUM GUIDELINES FOR NEW, CLEAR ICE

Ice is never 100% safe!

Guidelines for new ice only:

- Under 4" -Stay Off
- 4" -Ice fishing or other activities on foot
- 5-7" -Snowmobile or ATV
- 8-12" -Car or small pickup
- 12-15" -Medium truck

Many factors other than thickness can cause ice to be unsafe. White ice or "snow ice" is only about half as strong as new, clear ice. Double the above guidelines when traveling on white ice.

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/ice/thickness.html>

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Photo courtesy of Linda Anderson

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 Violation 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 relayed 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:

- Michelle Boutwell (Zoning Administrator).....715-468-4690

County Planning, Land/Water Resource Management

Aquatic Invasive Species

- Lisa Burns lburns@co.washburn.wi.us.....715-468-4654