

On The WaterFront

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

Washburn County
LAKEs AND RIVERs
ASSOCIATION
Fall/Winter 2023-24 #51

Washburn County AIS Updates

A sixth lake in Washburn County has confirmed Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM). A landowner on Stone Lake found a stem of it growing off the end of his dock and carefully pulled it out. Fortunately, Stone Lake has a very active lake association and a good relationship with the township. Together, they worked quickly with WIDNR to secure the proper permits to mark the area with buoys and hire professionals for two days of hand pulling and suction removal before it got too late in the season. A DNR grant application will be submitted, for a more comprehensive survey and management plan in 2024.



Seven lakes were tested for zebra mussel veligers this summer--Gilmore, Mathews, Minong Flowage, Nancy, Slim and Stone. This is a collaborative effort with Burnett and Polk Counties and Wild Rivers Conservancy. To date, Big and Middle McKenzie continue to be the only lakes in Washburn County with zebra mussels. The test also included testing for



spiny water fleas (SWF). Spiny and fishhook water fleas are predators since they eat smaller zooplankton. This puts them in direct food competition with juvenile fish. Also, young fish have trouble eating these water fleas due to their long, spiny tails. To date, there are no SWF in the County. Test results are anticipated in late fall.

Kimball Lake Association installed a decontamination station this spring. This is the 17th one in the County. If your association is interested in having one at the landing, contact Lisa Burns.

Fall is here and recreational equipment is being removed from the water for the year. It is essential everyone continues to take the proper steps to make sure all equipment is cleaned properly to prevent the spread of AIS. The following steps should be made when taking equipment out of the water for winter storage:

1. Remove all plants, mud or other debris found on equipment that has been sitting in water such as dock posts, wheels, boats, motors, rafts, pontoons, kayaks and jet skis.
2. Spray all equipment (including live wells) with a hose or pressure washer. This will help get unwanted invasive species that are hanging on tight or that you can't see.
3. Spray down your equipment with a bleach/water solution, including the inside of live wells. One tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water will kill unseen hitchhikers. This small amount of solution won't harm paint or decals.
4. Drain all water.
5. Talk to your service provider and neighbors about taking these steps.

History of the YES Program

By Craig Walkey, Education Committee Chair

In 2006 Patty Lowe, Wisconsin Public Radio, was the keynote speaker at Telemark Resort for the Northwest Lakes Conference. She asked, "There are a lot of grey heads out there. Are there any young students?" About four young people stood up out of at least 200 attendees. She said, "I don't mind preaching to the choir, but if you do not include the next generation in your work, you are only talking to yourselves." It was a light bulb moment for me. I had to figure out how to introduce the Washburn County school students into appreciating their 964 lakes and 700 miles of rivers. That was fairly easy. I had volunteered at Hunt Hill and I knew that would be the perfect place to start. Hunt Hill was totally interested. WCLRA applied for two \$3,000 DNR Educational Grants and got them both. It was our seed money to get started and WCLRA and Long Lake Preservation Association contributed funding and in-kind matching labor.

We invited Spooner, Birchwood, Shell Lake, St. Francis de Sales, and Northwoods Schools. They all came, mostly 3rd and 5th grades. Our seed money was to pay for busing, expenses, supplies and equipment. To keep the project going Spooner/Trego Lions Club, Shell Lake Lions Club and the Birchwood Educational Foundation pledged annual funding.

The Youth Environmental Stewardship Program (YES) has brought students to Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary for day-long exploration of our County water resources and the importance of protecting them. The program includes experimental work with water chemistry, invasive species, pond ecology and responsible stewardship.

While the program was discontinued in 2019 due to COVID, later this fall we look forward to rethinking the YES Program with Hunt Hill.

WCLRA Board Members

Linda Anderson, President
763-221-8136
roblinander@gmail.com

Dave Vold, Director
715-635-2034
natland2002@yahoo.com

Kevin Campbell, Treasurer
708-902-6106
kevmam50@msn.com

Craig Walkey, Director
715-354-7386
cwalkey@centurytel.net

Fred Blake, Director
715-469-3228
blakelake@centurytel.net

Ed Fischer, Director
715-635-7704
efischer812@gmail.com

Phil Sylla, Director
715-939-2029
Philsylla@gmail.com

Kathy Bartilson, Director
715-635-3871
oh2paddle@gmail.com

Barb Luck, Director
651-214-4262
anyluckhere@hotmail.com

Cathie Erickson
Liaison, Wisconsin Lakes



April 10-12, 2024 The 45th Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention, Stevens Point, WI
<https://wisconsinwaterweek.org/home/lakes-and-rivers-convention/>

June 21 Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference, 2024
Hayward High School. Keep up-to-date at wclra.org



3 WCLRA Board Members Retiring

When **Cathie Erickson** and her husband, Gary, moved to Stone Lake in 2000, she met Michael Norris who was a founding director of WCLRA. Michael was instrumental in getting Cathie and the shoreland owners of Stone Lake and the Stone Lake Community Wetland Park involved in WCLRA. Her many contributions to WCLRA include serving on Communications and Government & Environment Committees, and serving as treasurer, president and webmaster. She wrote eight grant applications over the years and all but one was approved. In 2014, Cathie was elected to the board of Wisconsin Lakes, and she's the current board president of that statewide conservation organization.



Of Cathie's many memories working with "wonderful, smart people working together on goals to protect our precious water," a favorite is securing state legislation to designate the Totogatic River as a Wisconsin Wild River. WCLRA then led a fundraising campaign to purchase and protect 262 acres with over 2.5 miles of frontage on the Totogatic River.



Beverly Stencel has elected to leave the WCLRA Board of Directors. Those who followed the work of the ad hoc committee charged with updating the Washburn County campground ordinances may be aware that Beverly was one of only three citizen members on that committee. She carried our always-constructive message to those deliberations and, although only formally on our WCLRA Board for two terms, she had a very significant impact during that process.

Probably few are aware that she played a major role in the formation of WCLRA 24 years ago while with UW Extension in Spooner. Using her expertise with surveys and focus groups, she identified a group of people who were interested in preserving our Washburn County water resources and willing to become part of an organization with that goal. Out of that group came the people who ultimately became the founding directors of WCLRA at its inaugural board meeting on September 7, 1999. It is not an exaggeration to say that WCLRA might well not exist today without her efforts during its organization and her constant support and assistance since that time.

Bruce Keyzer and his wife, Kris, had been vacationing near Gordon, north of Trego, for many years. So when Bruce retired in 2005, they looked in the area for a cabin. Not one to allow moss to grow, Bruce got involved with Heart of the North. It was through this activity that he met Dave Vold and Phil Sylla. They (mostly Phil) asked him to spread his climate change wings to the Government & Environment Committee of WCLRA.



As an enthusiastic supporter of many facets of care for the environment, Bruce's activities with WCLRA have been building relationships and acting as liaison with local legislators, Clean Wisconsin and Conservation Congress. He and Kris dedicated countless hours to handling labeling and mailings for WCLRA newsletters and ensured timely distribution of information to all members.

A huge thank you for your friendship and contributions to WCLRA!

WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL REPORT
AUGUST 2022 - AUGUST 2023



We actively advocate, educate, and emulate behaviors to take care of all Washburn County waters.

Mission and Focus

The Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association (WCLRA) is a not-for-profit association of dedicated stewards of County water resources. This group of passionate people protect the 964 lakes and 700 miles of rivers and streams as well as shorelands and wetlands vital for continued preservation of wildlife habitats and enjoyment by all. In 2024 WCLRA looks forward to celebrating 25 years of conservation projects with the County and advocacy for waters regionally and statewide.

Membership

- Nearly 400 paid memberships (individual, family, and groups).
- Invited 181 new shoreland property owners to join WCLRA, sent free newsletters for one year, and together with UW Extension, sent them New Shoreland Owner information.
- Maintained a mailing list with more than 1330 people, including members, local lake and river association board members, county and town officials, and resource agency partners.
- Recognizing the need for new Board members, started succession planning and recruiting new members to contribute to varied issues and initiatives.

Legislative Priorities

- Over the past year, several WCLRA Board members were active participants, sharing their professional knowledge and our organization's concerns in writing and speaking at various Washburn County government meetings and public hearings to amend the County campground ordinance. One of our members served as one of only three citizens on the Ad Hoc Campground Ordinance Committee, which met multiple times a month over eight months. These efforts

were partially successful in that, although our requests to establish a separate RV zoning category and to eliminate campgrounds completely in all residential zoning categories were not approved, several other major campground zoning amendments were approved. There was a significant step forward with new limits to the number of campsites allowed in all zoning categories, with the strictest size restrictions in residential and shoreland areas. Sizes of campgrounds will also be further restricted by the calculation of only developable land (not including wetlands) when calculating the density formula and lot line setbacks were increased from five feet to thirty-five feet. Another huge improvement is the strict guidelines added to the ordinance governing the number and size of accessory structures such as porches, decks, and sheds that can be added to any campsite. WCLRA is proud of our leadership advocating to protect waters on behalf of our members. This required thinking critically about the future of Washburn County along with compromise to safeguard the environment and reasonable coexistence of commercial ventures and individual rural property owners. WCLRA will continue to monitor the campground situation.

- Requested Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services to create a wastewater standard for seasonal campgrounds based on sound science



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and documented wastewater volumes generated at existing seasonal RV campgrounds.



- Continued to follow-up on Conservation Congress Resolutions introduced in 2022 in Washburn County, including local control of shoreline zoning, buffers on streams and ditches, campground zoning concerns and climate change, which were approved at the County level and will be voted on at the State level in 2023.
- Informed legislators regarding key environmental issues, for example, “residential” RV parks/ campgrounds, lake-shore buffers, Farmer-Led Councils, and aquatic invasive species.

- Continued to support the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund, which focuses on preserving natural areas, water quality, and outdoor recreation opportunities. WCLRA will monitor proposed legislation which may affect this grant program.

Ongoing Education and Advocacy

- Maintained strong relationship with the Shell Lake-Yellow River Farmer-Led Watershed Council as they advocate land management practices which focus on healthy soils and help protect watersheds.
- Partnered with real estate agencies to continue giving information packets to prospective shoreland property buyers. This information helps buyers better understand waterfront living rights and responsibilities before buying.
- Encouraged participation in Wisconsin’s “Shoreland Evaluation Tool” through newsletter articles. The tool tells waterfront owners how “lake or river-friendly” their property

and shorefront activities are with recommendations for enhancement. (<https://survey.healthylakeswi.com/>)

- Shared information about protecting our waters at Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Festival and Northwest Lakes Conference.
- Posted timely information and events on WCLRA’s website, wclra.org, updated an educational display, and published two member newsletters and several timely articles in local newspapers.
- Designed new online advertisements for the Spooner Advocate and Sawyer County Record which highlighted the importance of keeping our waters healthy.

New Projects

- Created and distributed a new publication, Washburn County Waters: Let’s Keep Them Healthy, covering safety and other actions for shoreline owners and all water enthusiasts.
- Provided timely email updates to members and contacts about useful resources and training.
- Helped remove yellow flag iris flowers and plants along the shoreline at Spooner Hatchery.
- Provided a final report to the City of Spooner on 2021 and 2022 stormwater monitoring activities. Newspaper and WCLRA newsletter articles provided residents information on how to minimize pollutants in stormwater that enters local waterways.



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LAKES AND RIVERS
ASSOCIATION



A PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION

PO Box 129, Spooner, WI 54801

www.wclra.org

Headwaters and Forested Land Protected Forever

by Zaria Whitacre, Landmark Conservancy

When Fred and Carolyn Blake bought land in Sarona in 1992, the property's 23-acre unnamed lake had no fish. Fred consulted a DNR fisheries biologist and began to put a plan in place, first stocking the lake with 1600 one-inch bass, and later adding bluegill. When high waters filled the typically dry channel connecting to nearby Miller Lake, the fish population diversified further.

Understanding Ecosystems

For Fred, living his golden years on a lake has been a dream come true. He has been a careful steward of their 165 acres of forested land over the years, taking care to harvest only dead and downed wood and maintaining a natural and vegetated shoreline on over 8,000 feet of frontage. He consults a local forester regularly to monitor the health of the forest, recognizing that the whole biosystem protects his cherished lake. The result is a mature dry-mesic forest community with an exceptional red oak / sugar maple stand uncommon by today's standards. Fred likes to quote a comment made by then-president Ronald Reagan about his treasured western ranch. "... If this isn't heaven itself," he said, "it probably has the same zip code." Fred and Carolyn feel the same about their haven.

Fred doesn't just live for his own lake, however. As a founding board member of the Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association (WCLRA), he has spent more than 20 years helping others to access resources and understand the need to protect the 964 lakes and roughly 700 miles of rivers in Washburn County. WCLRA's monthly meetings are open to the public and projects such as sharing knowledge and our



organization's concerns at various Washburn County government meetings and public hearings, supporting the County's Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program and helping to organize the Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference.



Beaver Brook Headwaters

The lakes and springs on the Blake property help form the headwaters of Beaver Brook, a Class 1 trout stream and tributary to the Yellow River, a Wisconsin Aquatic Opportunity Area for Species of Greatest Conservation Need. At 87 years old, Fred hopes to have many more years to fish (mostly catch and release) on his lake and enjoy his oasis with Carolyn and the resident bears, eagles, coyotes, and other critters, and visiting swans, ducks and geese.

Permanent protection After many years of discussion with Landmark, concerns about development pressure in the area and the potential for future commercial logging caused him to act. Fred and Carolyn worked closely with Landmark to protect the property forever through a conservation easement, forever protecting the cherished ecological systems and critical for the health of Wisconsin's lands and waters.

For anyone interested in learning more about these kind of protective land options, please contact the Landmark Conservancy: info@landmarkwi.org or call 715.235.8850.

The Landmark Conservancy is a non-profit conservation organization serving 20 counties in western and northwestern Wisconsin. They help private landowners to conserve their land as is forever.

Farmer-Led Watershed Council Continues Work Protecting Waters

by Dave Vold

The Shell Lake-Yellow River Farmer-Led Watershed Council continues their work providing local farmer leadership and resources and protecting water quality in Washburn County communities. Farmers can adopt practices such as reduced tillage or no tillage, rotational or managed grazing and cover crops. These practices can reduce the amount of nutrients that run into our lakes and rivers, which plays a large role in improving overall water quality. One of the most significant challenges faced by modern agriculture is adopting these farming practices in an economically sustainable way. This Council, which formed in 2019 when the Washburn County Land Conservation Department applied for a grant through the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), works on this challenge. Like the 43 similar DATCP producer-led groups around the state of Wisconsin, the non-profit Shell Lake-Yellow River Farmer-Led Watershed Council offers outreach and education on conservation practices that improve sustainable agriculture. The group hosts events to encourage practices aimed at enhancing and protecting water quality to educate the public about these farming practices and to foster connections between farmers.

Last year, \$13,900 was spent on cover crop incentives with 6 farmers on 695 acres. In addition, the Council partners with the Spooner Agriculture Research Station to collect data on cover crops suited to the area. The Council is supported by Burnett County Land and Water Conservation Departments, UW Division of Extension, Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network, USDA-NRCS, and Wisconsin DNR.

If you are interested in learning more about the group or would like to sign up for the mailing list, please contact Brent Edlin, Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department, (715) 468-4654 Bedlin@co.washburn.wi.us or Sarah Brown UW Division of Extension, (715) 635-4444 sarah.anne.brown@wisc.edu or visit the council's website at <https://washburn.extension.wisc.edu/agriculture/shell-lake-yellow-river-farmer-led-watershed-council/>.



About WCLRA

Washburn County Lakes & Rivers Association (WCLRA) was formed in 1999 as a not-for-profit association to protect the water resources of Washburn County. This association now represents 26 lake and river organizations and roughly 400 individual members who value the 964 lakes and roughly 700 miles of rivers and streams in our county. We know that the waters of Washburn County are fundamental both to the local tourism economy and to the quality of life of this area's residents.

Our purpose is to promote the environmental protection and responsible use of Washburn County surface waters and their attendant wetlands, shorelands and wildlife resources. We do that by sharing ideas and information through education and active participation for the benefit of individual property owners, lake and river districts and associations, local government, the general public, future generations, and the waters themselves.

Everyone is invited to join us at our monthly WCLRA board meetings. We often tackle interesting issues affecting the waters here in Washburn County and get updates from our colleagues in natural resource agencies and University Extension.

Meetings are listed under Upcoming Events on the right side of our home page. They generally start at 9:00. The location has been in flux since COVID. Contact us to confirm the date and location or Zoom information if you wish to join one of our meetings.

Become a member at wclra.org and receive bi-annual newsletters keeping you informed about lake issues.



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PO Box 129
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Editor: Linda Anderson
roblinander@gmail.com
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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)..... 715-733-0019
Jon Hagen (Conservation Warden for Washburn County).....715-635-4099

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:

Dale (Butch) Beers (Zoning Administrator).....715-468-4690

Washburn County Land and Water Conservation

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