

On The WaterFront

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

Washburn County
LAKES AND RIVERS
ASSOCIATION
Spring/Summer 2022 #48

Action Urged For Local Control, Buffers, Campgrounds, and Renewable Energy

Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association (WCLRA) endorsed four resolutions that passed at the April 11 meeting of the Washburn County Conservation Congress (WCCC). Of the many important issues on the WCCC agenda, these four pertain especially to water quality issues.

The **local control resolution** urges the Wisconsin legislature to reinstate each county's ability to regulate its own shoreline zoning using the State's standards as a minimum. Counties, including Washburn, lost the ability to set higher local standards in 2015.

The **campground resolution** asks the State Legislature to address the sanitary needs of private campgrounds. Large recreational vehicles and residential campers that use private campgrounds require higher capacity septic systems than are now mandated.

The **vegetative buffer** resolution recognizes the value of wide buffers along lakes, streams, and ditches to remove sediment and pollutants, provide wildlife habitat, deter flooding, and prevent erosion. It asks the legislature to adopt buffer legislation similar to Minnesota's.

The **renewable energy resolution** calls upon the WI Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to acknowledge that "every farmer, forester, hunter, trapper, angler, boater, hiker, biker, skier, birder, camper, resident and visitor is being impacted by and is contributing to climate change." The highly respected DNR is urged to take a leadership role in dealing with climate change by creating a Renewable Energy Action Plan.



Photo courtesy of Linda Anderson

These four resolutions and others from Washburn County Conservation Congress have been sent to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC). Each Wisconsin county holds a County Conservation Congress meeting annually in April. Resolutions passed locally are sent to the WCC. The WCC is the only statutory body in the state where publicly elected delegates advise the Natural Resources Board and the WIDNR on responsibly managing Wisconsin's natural resources for present and future generations.

Thank You Members

A heartfelt thank you to all members who renewed their WCLRA membership. It provides a strong signal that we're focusing on important water issues. We always invite member feedback and you can share your thoughts anytime using the "email us" link at the bottom of our website home page: wclra.org.

Shell Lake Healthy Lakes Grant

In the fall of 2021, the City of Shell Lake applied for a WDNR Healthy Lakes & Rivers grant. It was approved in March of this year. The focus of these grants is to protect and restore the health of Wisconsin lakes and rivers by increasing property owner participation in habitat restoration and runoff and erosion control projects. The Healthy Lakes & Rivers initiative includes 5 simple and inexpensive best practices that improve habitat and water quality on shoreland property. The Shell Lake project focuses on establishing an area of native plants adjacent to the lakeshore for participating property owners.

Native plantings are a transition zone best practice. Template planting plans, provided under the grant, are designed for a contiguous area of at least 350 ft². Each template has a corresponding list of native plants suited to the given soil conditions and function of the plan, including lakeshore, bird/butterfly habitat, woodland, low-growing, deer resistant, and bare soil area plantings. Seven Shell Lake property owners are participating this year and will be planting this spring. Each will be eligible for up to \$1000 at the project's completion. The grant also allows for other interested property owners to be added over the summer.

Focus on Natives

by Linda Anderson

Cardinal flower, *Lobelia cardinalis*, is a native American plant that is often used as an ornamental garden plant. This showy species is in the bellflower family.



The bright red flowers are pollinated by hummingbirds and are enormously attractive to these birds. Butterflies and bees will also visit the flowers. Because the flowers open from the bottom to the top over a period of several weeks, this plant provides lasting nectar for pollinators. The flowers are followed by capsules containing numerous tiny seeds. It is considered a short-lived perennial because it will die after blooming, although offsets will continue growing to perpetuate the plant. Under the right conditions, cardinal flower will readily self-seed.

Lobelia cardinalis is easily grown in moist soils in full sun to partial shade. It has few pests and is not favored by deer or rabbits.

Use cardinal flower in borders, rain gardens, and native gardens, especially on the edges of streams or ponds. They will naturalize in moist meadows and can be grown in a shallow water garden or in containers.

THE BOARD

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

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

Pat Shifferd, Secretary
715-520-3526
patriciashifferd@gmail.com

Kevin Campbell, Treasurer
708-902-6106
kevm50@msn.com

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

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

Cathie Erickson, Director
715-865-4406
CathieErickson@gmail.com

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

Bruce Keyzer, Director
bkeyzer1@gmail.com

Beverly Stencel, Director
715-416-0194
bcintrego@centurytel.net

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

LIAISONS

Lisa Burns, Land and Water Conservation

Madeline Roberts, UW Extension

Dan Harrington, Wisconsin DNR

Larry Damman, Conservation Congress

Mike Peterson, County Forester

Protecting Shorelines from Erosion: Make the “Natural” Choice

By Kathy Bartilson

Which would you like best if you were a turtle or a songbird? A shoreline of native plants, grasses, shrubs and trees, with rushes, sedges and tree-falls along the waterline, or an armor of rocks lining the entire shore, in and above the water?

Usually nature protects our shorelines, but sometimes work is needed on our part to prevent erosion from wind, waves, and boat wakes. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website offers this insight on the need to protect our shorelines: *“In their natural state, Wisconsin waters are protected by thick and diverse shoreline vegetation. Development often changes the face of that shoreland buffer. Every activity on a lakeshore, even small ones, changes the water and the land. It is for this very reason that shoreline activities must be conducted with the utmost care.”*

Natural methods

There are several ways to protect lake and river shoreline from upland runoff and wind, wave, and ice erosion. Many native flower, shrub, and tree species have deep roots and do a great job of holding soil and bank material in place. Further, providing all three vegetation layers including tall tree canopy, shrubs, along with grass and flowers, helps capture and break the velocity of falling rain drops. This vegetative “umbrella” reduces, slows and filters runoff to prevent shoreline erosion as well. These native shoreline protectors also provide habitat for wildlife and the insects and other species that support our native food web. Plants and trees along the shore provide shade, shelter, and food for shallow-water fish and other aquatic life. Native plant buffers also offer privacy and are usually fairly low maintenance.

Sometimes however, the forces of wind and water require stronger methods to protect our shorelines and near-shore areas from erosion and sedimentation. Again, there are natural materials to accomplish this, including combinations of erosion matting, fiber rolls, brush bundles, and plantings.

These plant-based methods, along with providing habitat, help maintain a native shoreline view from the land and water. Enjoyment of natural scenic beauty on our waterways is one of our rights and responsibilities under the Wisconsin Public Trust Doctrine, along with navigation and transportation, recreation, and water quality and habitat protection.

Riprap: why or why not?

Some shoreland owners consider a blanket of uniformly-sized rocks (“riprap”) along the shore, from lot line to lot line, aesthetically pleasing. Some even assume that installing riprap is the right thing to do as a good lake steward when they see it installed on neighboring properties. However, riprap offers little habitat for wildlife, pollinators, or native plants. It usually has no vegetative cover to absorb and filter upland runoff. While there are definitely vulnerable shorelines where rock armoring is needed to prevent and curtail erosion from ice, river current, and waves, it should not be considered a “landscaping” option on shorelines except where an extreme erosion and bank loss hazard exists. In fact, Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 328 restricts use of rock riprap to specific areas considered as “moderate or high energy” sites. Even on these sites, native plantings can be used in combination with rip rap to provide habitat and filtering benefits that aren’t achieved with the rock alone.

Wisconsin has an excellent guide to shoreland stabilization methods, explaining the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Titled *“Shoreline Stabilization: A Guide for Landowners and Conservationists on Inland Lakes and Flowages,”* this attractive and informative booklet was written by a team of Wisconsin County Conservation Department staff and published in 2021. The guide can be downloaded from this web address: <https://www.bayfieldcounty.wi.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12801/Shoreline-Stabilization-Guide-PDF>.

Also, keep in mind that state and local permits are needed in most cases for work along the shore. This Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website has further information: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/shoreline/shoreline.html>.

For the reasons mentioned above, when evaluating shorefront aesthetics and protection, consider native plantings and vegetation over hard-armoring practices. You’ll be protecting the lake or river where you live from sedimentation and turbidity, protecting your investment from erosion, and enhancing habitat and natural scenic beauty as well.

Taking Care of Walleye

by Barb Luck

Fishing season is well underway. While we're fortunate to have many species of fish in Washburn County waters, from northern pike to bass to trout and walleye, according to WDNR, "The walleye is one of the most highly prized game fishes in Wisconsin. Thousands are caught each year during their spring spawning runs." Because of this popularity, the WI DNR uses a walleye management plan to oversee the quantity and quality of walleye throughout Wisconsin. The plan includes stocking lakes with hundreds of thousands of fingerlings, surveying walleye populations and anglers, and taking on walleye habitat projects. The current plan developed in 1998 focuses on stocking, fishing and harvest opportunities, habitat, and more. DNR is in the process of updating this plan.



Photo provided by Max Wolter, WIDNR

New approach to walleye planning

The new draft walleye management plan, which was developed with significant public input, moves toward more scientific and environmental management of walleyes, rather than hatchery and stocking emphasis. It contains two new goals regarding partnerships with tribes, private groups, fishing industry representatives, and also working toward long-term sustainability through rehabilitation. To read the plan, visit <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fishing/outreach/WalleyePlan>.

The draft plan highlights actions with broader implications. Of the total 49 actions planned to improve walleye and sauger management in Wisconsin, some of the most significant actions include:

- Examining support for a statewide 3-daily bag limit to simplify regulations and provide additional protection to populations.
 - Developing a "Walleye Lakes of Concern" plan, outlining lake-specific collaborative strategies to address recruitment failure and population decline.
 - Updating information sharing to connect people with walleye fishing/harvest opportunities, including creation of online resources for viewing survey results.
 - More clearly establishing roles for the many partners who want to assist with walleye management activities.
- Anyone interested in receiving updates about the plan, including possible future input, please send an email to Max Wolter, fisheries biologist, at Max.wolter@wisconsin.gov.

Water quality changes

Scientists are watching Wisconsin average temperatures increase, with 2.1F increase since the 1950s, and are expecting future rates of warming to increase. In recent years, Wisconsin has experienced record warm and cold temperatures, with "extreme" rainstorms and flooding with increased potential for impact on both species and habitat. For example, walleye require a cool water habitat, whereas largemouth bass like warmer water, so bass are starting to be more plentiful in those conditions. (Continued next page.)



Photo provided by Max Wolter, WIDNR

More on Walleye



Photo provided by Max Wolter, WIDNR

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin are studying low oxygen levels in lakes during the summer when hot air warms the water. Called dead zones, scientists have found that these periods of low oxygen are growing longer. They suggest that this comes from more nutrients and pollutants such as manure and chemicals entering the water. Unfortunately, invasive fish species can thrive in warmer water and with lower oxygen, whereas walleye prefer cooler water.

Another team of WDNR fishery researchers are looking ahead, assessing 30 northern WI lakes, and what climate change likely means for walleye. The difficulty is that many other factors such as lake size, shoreline characteristics including downed trees, and extent of human development also impact habitat. Some lake walleye populations remain stable, whereas others are declining. Chains of lakes and rivers where cool water continues to move, may help to support stable populations. “

Where are the walleye?

For those looking to fish for walleye, WDNR provides information [<https://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/lakepages/Default.aspx>] on lakes such as size and depth, plus the type of fish found in each lake and any fishing advisories. Remember to review catch and release and limit information in WI fishing regulations [<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/fishing/regulations>].

WCLRA Position Statement Campgrounds

A growing trend in camping vehicles is being seen in dealership lots and private campgrounds. Tents and “pop-up” trailers still visit campgrounds, but large, more permanent camping vehicles are increasingly common. Large campers accommodating up to 10 people increase the pressure on campground infrastructures, for instance, septic systems. The WCLRA Board of Directors adopted the following Campground Position Statement at its April 22 meeting. On April 26, the position statement was presented to the Washburn County Zoning Committee.

The Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association is a non-profit, all volunteer organization. Our stated purpose is to promote the environmental protection and responsible use of Washburn County surface waters and their attendant wetlands, shorelands, and wildlife resources. We have been doing that for over twenty-two years 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. We are not against the establishment of campgrounds in Washburn County. We are concerned that our present campground zoning regulations are outdated and are inadequate to deal with other than temporary tent/trailer camping rather than the campgrounds consisting of large long-term recreational vehicles with their attendant higher water usage, wastewater, and impervious surfaces.



The 2022 Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference will be held at Spooner High School from 9:00 am to 3:45 pm on June 17, 2022. It is a hybrid event.

To register go to: nwwislakesconference.org

Assessing the Impacts of Climate Change on Washburn County

by Pat Shifferd



We are now aware that the climate is changing and that these changes are due to human activity which increases the amount of carbon and other temperature-altering elements in the environment. We must wonder how these changes will impact us in northern Wisconsin.

Globally, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), created in 1988, combines scientific expertise from across the world to provide the information citizens and governments need to understand and adapt to changes in temperature, precipitation, and other phenomena which threaten ecosystems and the economic and social structures dependent on them. The IPCC just released its 6th assessment of the scientifically verifiable reasons for the need for action to avoid and adapt to these threats. The full 2022 report is available at <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.

So how does this impact Wisconsin and more specifically Washburn County? In 2007 the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (WICCI) was formed as a cooperative effort between the Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies at UW-Madison and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Since its formation in 2007, WICCI has issued 2 major reports (2011 and 2021) to help us understand and hopefully adapt to the ways in which our environment is and will be changing. The website (<https://wicci.wisc.edu/wisconsin-climate-change-impacts-adaptation/>) is well worth spending time on to bring the questions we have “down to earth”.

Here are a few of the conclusions the most recent report and other sources provide:

- Wisconsin is becoming warmer and wetter.
- “Statewide temperatures have warmed by about three degrees Fahrenheit and precipitation has increased by nearly twenty percent since 1950.” 2021 report, page 5.
- A detailed series of maps (<https://wicci.wisc.edu/wisconsin-climate-trends-and-projections/>) on temperature and precipitation levels from 1950-2018 show that while the warmer and wetter conditions affect the entire state, the northern tier of counties are somewhat less impacted than the southern areas.
- Projected changes (2041-2060) however show that the NW counties are “catching up” with the south in increased temperatures and precipitation, especially in winter. There will be fewer nights below 32 degrees for example, good for lower heating bills, but not good for invasive species of various kinds.
- “Different fish species have different temperature requirements for feeding, growth, reproduction and survivability. Rising water temperatures in streams and lakes due to increasing air temperatures will favor warm-water species like Largemouth Bass and Bluegill over cool-water species like Walleye and Northern Pike and cold-water species like Brown Trout and Brook Trout.” <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/climatechange/impacts>
- “Wild rice is an early indicator of climate change. Wild rice is vulnerable to a range of climate impacts, from warmer winters, more humid days and nights, and fluctuating lake levels due to heavy rains. Climate change threatens to move the plant’s habitat farther north, putting this important resource out of reach for many tribal nations in Wisconsin.”
- It is hard to predict the impact on tourism and forestry, both hugely important here in our county. These could be both positive and negative. Some tree species, like boreal evergreens, will become less common, requiring changes in forestry. Similarly, hotter temperatures further south may see people wanting to come here to escape. However, less snow in winter will affect winter recreation opportunities.

Although the environment will be wetter over all, this does not erase the possibility of wider temperature fluctuations leading to increased wildfire and air quality threats. Last summer’s drought in NE Minnesota and to a lesser degree in NW Wisconsin is an example. There will be public health and water quality threats: algae blooms, more ticks, increased risk of asthma, etc.

The point is that change is happening at an increasing rate. It is impacting our lands and waters, and will continue to do so. We invite you to look at some of the sources provided here to get ideas of how you can consider changing behavior to best protect you family and property.

Due Diligence in Development

Comments by Craig Walkey, WCLRA President

During the 1960s my second home was on a 32 ft. deep, 120 acre lake located about 10 miles north of the Illinois state line into Southeast Wisconsin. I say second home because this Chicago kid did not want to be anywhere else. The lake must be nameless because it was one of many like it in that part of Wisconsin.

We had a dock that my Dad and I put in and pulled out every summer season. The lake had about 15 inches of muck over a gravelly base. The lake would be choked by mid-August with Eurasian Water Milfoil to about 100 yards from shore. We lived on the fairly private north shore and a popular County Park and beach dominated the south shore. By mid-August, despite modern restrooms, the south beach would be closed due to high urine content.

We learned not to go bare foot placing the dock. Some 4 years into our ownership, my instincts stopped me from adjusting a dock post and I very carefully reached down and pulled up two halves of a glass one-gallon pickle jar. Without a word between us we waded to shore to find old shoes before finishing the work.

Borrowing our neighbor's long-handled scythe, it was my Saturday morning job to step into my shoes and harvest, in waist deep water, the Eurasian Water Milfoil I could reach and rake into small piles on shore. By noon, the sun would bake the weeds into nearly ash. You cannot imagine the amount of junk I pulled out along our 100 ft. frontage, including a 10 ft. submerged and waterlogged complete section of picket fence. I must have walked over it 100 times.

The point was, the whole shoreline around the lake, except the beaches,

was like this. The lake was developed and very popular beginning the 1920's when it took all day to get there from Milwaukee or Madison and especially Chicago.

In 1964 I had a part-time summer job as life guard and caretaker for the private beach next door. I mowed grass, cleaned the beach and checked membership cards on weekends. I took it upon myself to use that scythe to clean the areas around boat slips on two 50 ft. docks bordering the beach swimming area. I found cans and junk and I had quite a pile, mostly bottles. The local grocery store would redeem 2 cents for each bottle. I had a lot of kids lined up all morning until the store owner came down to the beach to beg me to stop as he was running out of pennies. Who knows how much more I missed because the next morning when the water was clearer my friend pulled out a like-new 15 hp Evinrude motor right where I was working.

The lake I live on today is north of Birchwood and most of it is in County Forest. I enjoy kayaking the shoreline. When our lake was very low in 2010 I must have retrieved a canoe load of mostly cans and a few bottles that I could see to reach.

I am not opposed to development. After all, I have been part of it. Development is a reality. However, I am opposed to over development. I have experience with it. With differing community interests, a lake can be neglected intentionally or unintentionally from overcrowding. I have been on the Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association Board of Directors for many years. I, and we, are dedicated to preach and teach stewardship of our County waters for ourselves and for generations to come.

WCLRA Annual Meeting

The date has not yet been set for the annual meeting but information will be available on our website at www.wclra.org

Yellow Flag Iris Workshop

When: June 10th

**Location: Long Lake W2795
County HWY B Sarona, WI
54870**

Time: 1:00 pm

***Register by June 6th**

Yellow Flag Iris is very invasive plant that grows along shorelines and crowds out native species of plants and inhibits wildlife habitat. It has a bright yellow flower that blooms in mid-late June. Lakeshore owners are encouraged to take measures to control it if found along their shoreline. We will be going to some sites on the lake that have the invasive growing and discuss control options.



On The Waterfront is published by:
WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ASSN, INC.
 P.O. Box 129
 Spooner, WI 54801
 Editor: Linda Anderson
 roblinander@gmail.com
 www.wclra.org
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG US POSTAGE PAID PERMIT NO 20 SPOONER



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 and Violation 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 Edlin bedlin@co.washburn.wi.us.....715-468-4654