

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 2022-23 #49



How Water-Friendly is Your Shoreline?

Check out a new Shoreland Evaluation Tool, a result of a collaborative effort by the Wisconsin DNR, Extension Lakes at UW Stephens Point, and the Wisconsin Lakes nonprofit association. This online tool walks a property owner through questions about the physical aspects of a lake or river property, as well as how it can be managed. Register for an account or answer anonymously.

The final score will help a property owner understand the management levels—entry, restoration, enhancement or protection. Information received from the online tool will help determine specific projects that could improve not only the score but help the lake or river, too!

Take the survey here: <https://survey.healthylakeswi.com/>.

For questions regarding the tool, please email Sam Blackburn, DNR project manager manager, at samuel.blackburn@wisconsin.gov.

Many Thanks to Board Member Pat Shifferd

Pat Shifferd, a long-time WCLRA Board Member and Secretary, has recently concluded her Board service. When Pat came on the Board more than 10 years ago, WCLRA was working on a fundraising campaign to purchase and protect 262 acres with over 2.5 miles of frontage on the Totogatic River which had recently been designated as a Wisconsin Wild River. With her excellent organizational and communications skills, Pat was instrumental in the success of that project. Other directors recall the excitement when she put us “over the top” by securing the last contribution from the Town of Chicog.

Pat’s contributions to protecting the waters of Washburn County are many, including numerous projects that benefited from her excellent writing skills including compiling succinct minutes of monthly WCLRA Board meetings. At the same time, Pat has been active in her local Twin Lakes Preservation Association. Thank you, Pat!

President's Comments

By Craig Walkey

The Spider Lake Chain of five lakes five miles north of Birchwood has a strange characteristic. There is an overflow inlet that drains part of the Birchwood Fire Lane watershed into the lakes during extensive wet weather conditions. However, the Spider Lake Chain has no outlet. The lake level varies constantly with the whim of Mother Nature.

We have lived on the lake chain for over 20 years and do not really know what normal lake level is. We have witnessed the lake drop seven feet from what might be normal and the past three years the lakes are about four feet above that normal.

Many Washburn County lakes have experienced abnormally high levels these past years. My next door neighbor built his cabin in 1946 on a low peninsula (before setback rules) and these past three years his cabin has had about an inch of water on his first floor. He told me this has never happened before in 75 years.

Since October 2021 the lakes have been dropping steadily one inch every two weeks. We are still about 12-18 inches above what now seems normal.

Why did this high water happen during a period in which Washburn County was experiencing drought? A scientist from the U.S. Geological Survey says, "Who knows?"

Significantly changing lake levels create various property management challenges. My neighbor hasn't decided what he will do. We hope he will rebuild and not vacate the cabin. Our cabin is about 17 feet above the normal lake level and the land continues to drop into the lake so that at the end of my 24 foot dock the lake is about 12 feet deep. The lake level has not yet affected us much except during the 2021 summer when I had to raise my dock five times. Oh the joys of living on a lake!

Craig

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Support Conservation by Expressing Your Views

The winners in the November Election will determine future Wisconsin conservation policies. WCLRA's Government and Environment Committee meets with candidates to bring them up-to-date on important issues and to hear their opinions.

WCLRA has met with most candidates: for Senate District 25, Kelly Westlund (D) and Romaine Quinn (R); for Assembly District 73, Laura Gapske (D) [Angie Sapik (R) will be interviewed before the election]; for Wisconsin Assembly District 75, David Armstrong (R) running unopposed; for US House of Representatives, Richard Ausland (D) [Tom Tiffany (R) is yet to be interviewed.]

Issues discussed are: establishing appropriate zoning rules for residential campgrounds, providing funding for Zoning Rule enforcement, reinstating county authority over lakeshore zoning, reinstating Wisconsin's Lake Classification System, providing sustainable energy, concentrated farm animal feeding operations (CAFOs), controlling Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), increasing funding for county conservation offices.

Before meeting, candidates are informed that "WCLRA is a non-partisan, not-for-profit, all volunteer association for the protection of the waters of Washburn County. WCLRA represents 26 lake and river organizations. WCLRA communicates with more than 400 individuals through Spring and Fall Newsletters and timely emails on specific issues. WCLRA does not endorse candidates."

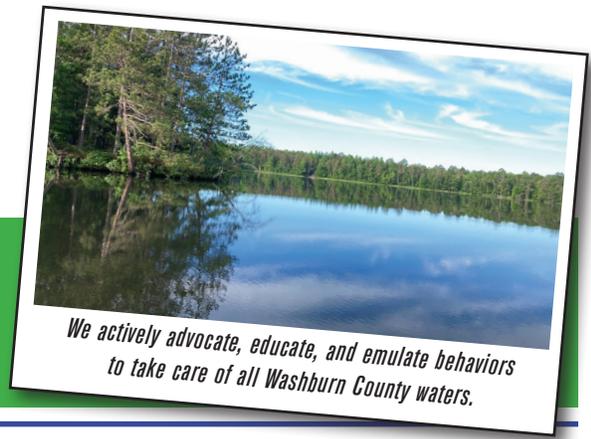
Voting records for incumbents and past members of the Wisconsin State Legislature can be found on the Wisconsin Conservation Voters Scorecard. Go to conservationvoters.org/eye-on-wi. David Armstrong (R) is incumbent for the 75th Assembly District. Romaine Quinn represented the 75th Assembly District from 2018-2020. Voting records for U.S. Senators and Representatives can be found on League of Conservation Voters Scorecard scorecard.lcv.org/.

Many WCLRA members are not Wisconsin residents and may not vote in State elections. However, all property owners may attend County and town Government meetings. In meetings of the Washburn County Zoning Department dealing with applications for campgrounds, several participants have been lake property land owners who do not reside permanently in the County. WCLRA urges all property owners to participate in town government.

Time To Vote

November 8 is election day. Many issues that impact lakes, rivers, and watersheds stand to be addressed or ignored by who is elected. Warming water, extreme weather impacts, invasive species spread, shoreland protection, zoning enforcement, and many more are critical issues. Regardless of where your permanent residence is, please study your candidates' positions on issues you care about and vote accordingly. If you don't vote, you cede your opinion to others. Wisconsin residents can find ballot, candidate, and voting information at myvote.wi.gov.

WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL REPORT
 AUGUST 2021 - AUGUST 2022



Mission and Focus

The Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association is a not-for-profit association of people dedicated to being good 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 everyone.

Membership

- 374 current paid memberships (individual, family, and groups).
- Invited 302 new shoreland property owners to join WCLRA, sent them free newsletters for one year, and together with UW Extension, mailed them New Shoreland Owner information packets.
- Maintained a mailing list with more than 1250 people, including members, local lake and river association board members, county and town officials, and resource agency partners.

Ongoing Education and Advocacy Outreach

- Concerned about the outdated, inadequate campground ordinance to address threats to the County's surface and groundwater from development of large permanent/semi-permanent RV campgrounds. Wrote and approved a position statement, developed conditional use permit conditions, and recommended ordinance changes to the County Zoning Committee. An updated campground ordinance is in process.
- Discussed need for a new Zoning enforcement position with County Personnel Committee, resulting in full County Board approval and hiring for the role.

- Maintained strong relationship with the Farmer Led Yellow River Watershed Council as they advocate land management practices which focus on healthy soils and help protect watersheds of lakes and rivers.
- Partnered with real estate agencies to continue distributing information packets for prospective buyers of shoreline property and building sites. Information helped interested buyers better understand landowner rights and responsibilities before buying.
- Contributed to NW Wisconsin Lakes Conference planning and sponsorship; presented about prospective shoreline buyer packet project.
- Shared information about protecting our waters at the Fishing Opener with the Governor and Wisconsin Canoe Heritage Festival.
- Posted timely information and events on WCLRA's website, wclra.org, and published two member newsletters and several timely articles in local newspapers.
- Designed new Earth Day and Memorial Day print advertisements for the Spooner Advocate which highlighted the importance of keeping our waters healthy.
- Together with the County Land and Water Conservation Office, promoted educational invasive species workshops and Clean Boats, Clean Waters training.



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New Projects

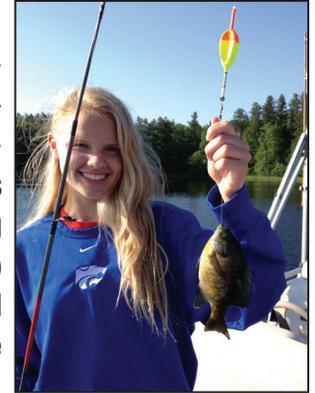
- Collaborated with UW-Madison Extension to send members educational emails on zoning and healthy shorelines.
- Provided timely email updates to members and contacts about useful resources and training opportunities.
- Sent postcards about benefits of shoreland buffers to new shoreland property owners.
- Led a discussion about Manoomin/Wild Rice, ricing on the Yellow River, and Ojibwe rice culture. Organized by Yellow River Protection Conservancy at the Spooner Library in July.
- Five teams trained by Water Action Volunteers (UW Extension, DNR) monitored the Yellow River on a monthly basis (since May). These teams measured water temperature, dissolved oxygen content, water clarity, macroinvertebrate populations that indicate levels of pollution, volume of the river, and status of the river shore.
- Board member volunteers served as “Rain Rangers” working with the City of Spooner on a stormwater planning study. Three teams of volunteers monitored stormwater outfalls during rain events in 2021 and spring 2022 to identify problem areas with discharge volumes and turbidity. The project and related reports from an engineering firm are



expected to be completed by December 2022. Funded by a DNR Surface Water Grant, WCLRA volunteer work provided a grant match.

Legislative Priorities

- Conservation Congress Resolutions introduced in 2022 in Washburn County (local control of shoreline zoning, buffers on streams and ditches, campground zoning concerns and climate change) were approved at the County level and will be voted on at the State level in 2023.
- Interviewed legislative candidates for the November election and provided them information about County, State, and regional conservation issues of interest to WCLRA members. Issues discussed include residential campgrounds, lakeshore zoning rules, sustainable energy, CAFOs, pipelines, and aquatic invasive species. Interviews to-date include Laura Gapske (D) candidate for 73 Assembly District (northern Washburn County), Kelly Westlund (D) candidate for 25th State Senate District, and Romaine Quinn (R) candidate for 25th Senate District. Other candidate interviews will continue.
- Continued to support the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund, which focuses on preserving natural areas, water quality, and outdoor recreation opportunities. Monitoring proposed legislation which may affect the grant program.



Washburn County LAKES AND RIVERS ASSOCIATION



A PUBLIC BENEFIT CORPORATION
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www.wclra.org

City of Spooner Completes Stormwater Plan

By Kathy Bartilson

The City of Spooner contracted with Cooper Engineering to make a detailed study of stormwater runoff from city lots and streets. A comprehensive plan and map have been finalized, providing Spooner valuable information for future stormwater control projects. This project resulted after several years of discussions between WCLRA and Spooner on stormwater improvements and phosphorus reduction.

Based on existing maps and plan drawings, along with field surveys by Cooper Engineering staff, 2,585 acres were studied with 30 separate stormwater runoff areas identified within the city limits. In each area or basin, rain and snow melt flow across the ground, streets, pavement, and through storm sewers and enter either wetlands, the Yellow River, the Yellow River Flowage, Rabbit Ear Creek, or Randall Lake. Stormwater can also enter infiltration areas and get filtered through the soil into shallow groundwater.

The surveys and plan development were funded by a Department of Natural Resource Surface Water Grant, with in-kind support from volunteer hours from Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association (WCLRA). WCLRA “rain rangers” monitored stormwater outfalls during and after rains.

Why Have a Stormwater Plan?

Stormwater poses threats to water quality, aquatic habitat, and public health. City stormwater runoff contains pollutants like bacteria and organic matter from pet waste, litter, motor oil, yard clippings, fertilizers containing phosphorus and nitrogen, pesticides, soapy car wash water, and eroded sediment from exposed soil and construction projects. In Spooner’s stormwater runoff, the most detrimental contaminant is phosphorus. Just one pound of



phosphorus can result in growth of 500 pounds of algae.

The photo on the left shows a stormwater sample from one storm drain discolored by sand and sediment, leaves,

and litter. Litter was one of the biggest problems noted, along with construction site runoff. Impacts on wetlands in city limits included litter and sediment with resulting changes in vegetation that alter wetland ecology and habitat.



The stormwater plan provides Spooner a detailed stormwater map and 17 Best Management Practices (BMPs) to reduce phosphorus and sediment loading from stormwater. Some practices are already used, including street sweeping and soil infiltration. Examples of other practices recommended for most of the Spooner’s stormwater basins include:

- Preserve all isolated wetlands from filling and degradation.
- As undeveloped areas grow and develop, look for opportunities for regional stormwater treatment to consolidate treatment as opposed to multiple small BMPs.

What Residents Can Do

- Be a pooper scooper and pick up after pets
- Keep soil in the yard and out of waterways
- Keep leaves and clippings out of ditches, waterways and streets
- Kick chemical dependency and consider non-toxic alternatives
- Conserve water and harvest rainwater
- Don’t overfeed lawns with unnecessary fertilizers and chemicals
- Practice careful car care by properly disposing of harmful fluids
- Use a proper container for trash and recyclables
- Be a watershed watchdog and report potential problems
- Support local efforts to improve water quality

(“Rain to Rivers” organization of Northwestern Wisconsin Communities raintorivers.org/what-can-i-do)

Washburn County Tree, Shrub, and Wildflower Sale

The Washburn County Land & Water Conservation Department is getting ready for their annual tree, shrub, and wildflower sale. All sales are on a first-come, first-serve basis so be sure to order early. You do not have to have property in Washburn County to order.

- ***Pine and Spruce** Trees are sold in bundles of 25.
- ***Shrubs** are sold in bundles of 10.
- ***Native Perennial Wildflowers and Grasses** come in 2 inch pots and are sold in flats of 32 plants.

Order forms will go out around Thanksgiving. To get on the mailing list, email Lisa Burns lburns@co.washburn.wi.us or call 715-468-4654.



Advice on Fishing Bluegills and Panfish Through the Ice

Bait use

Make it tasty. Baits vary as much as anglers but mousies, wax worms, and spikes (insect larva) typically grace the business end of ice fishing jigs. Don't be shy about using a small plastic "wedge" or teaser to attract attention or trigger a strike. Have a selection of colors available to work with changing water clarities. And check your knot! There are methods of tying on jigs and baits that create "bounce" or wiggle that entice hesitant fish into biting.

Line and hook tips

Keep it light. Bluegills are dainty sight feeders. Keep your line light (2- to 4-pound test monofilament) and the terminal tackle small: rat finkys, marmooskas, tear drops, and ice jigs need to be kept to scale with a bluegill's mouth, such as #12. The same goes for floats or spring bobbers...keeping them sensitive and offering minimal resistance means more bites. But if the bite isn't happening, don't be afraid to switch it up and offer up a big meal...sometimes big aggressive fish will take a large flashy lure.

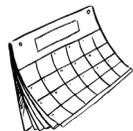
More tips

Be quiet. More often than not, it's the quiet, focused anglers that fill their pails. Fish spook and avoid vibration and noise. A stealthy approach pays its own dividends. To keep disturbance to a minimum, drill extra holes when you first arrive so when the bite gets hot, you can maximize the potential of the area you are fishing.

-Kurt Welke, retired DNR fisheries biologist for Dane County



DNR.wi.gov



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

**April 19-21, 2023 The 45th Wisconsin
Lakes and Rivers Convention, Stevens
Point, WI**
[https://wisconsinwaterweek.org/home/
lakes-and-rivers-convention/](https://wisconsinwaterweek.org/home/lakes-and-rivers-convention/)

**June 23 Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Con-
ference, 2023 Hayward High School. Keep
up-to-date at www.wclra.org**

On The Waterfront is published by:
 WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ASSN, INC.
 PO Box 129
 Spooner, WI 54801
 Editor: Linda Anderson
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 www.wclra.org
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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).....715-468-4695

Washburn County Land and Water Conservation

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