

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 2017 #40

Citizens and Professionals Respond to Zebra Mussel Threat

by Cathie Erickson

Nine zebra mussels, a destructive invasive species, were found in Big McKenzie Lake which is located on the border between Washburn and Burnett County. Following that discovery, nearly 90 people attended a public meeting to learn more about the mussels. The WDNR pulled together a McKenzie Lakes Area Zebra Mussel Management Team with representatives of county, state and federal agencies working together with lake and river associations to stop the spread of zebra mussels in this region. In April, sixty people attended a zebra mussel workshop hosted by the St. Croix River Association with experts from Minnesota and Wisconsin. A public open house was held May 18 to provide more information including decontamination processes for boats, trailers and personal watercraft.

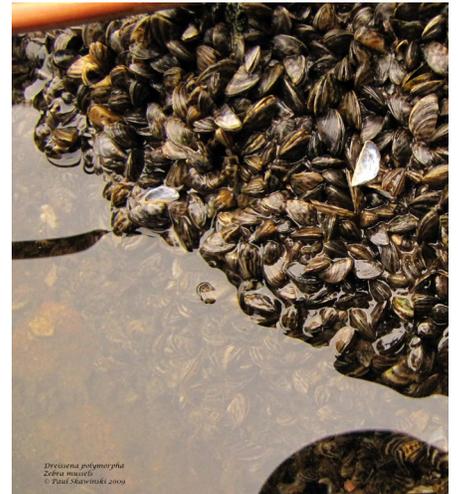
Zebra mussels are an invasive species that can displace native species, disrupt ecosystems and hamper recreation. They are fingernail-sized bottom-dwellers native to Europe and Asia. A ballast water discharge from an ocean-going ship most likely introduced zebra mussels to the Great Lakes from Europe in the mid-1980s. They are spread when adult mussels are attached to a hard surface or plant that is moved to another waterbody and when water containing zebra mussel veligers (larvae) is transferred into another lake.

Pamela Toshner, DNR lake biologist, said the Big McKenzie zebra mussel

discovery reinforces the need for boaters to take action to stop aquatic invasive species. "We are fortunate in northwest Wisconsin to have lakes that are mostly free from aquatic invasive species, so this finding is of concern," Toshner said. "All boaters have the ability to stop the spread of invasive species by removing plants and draining water before leaving the boat landing and anyone who enjoys area lakes can help by keeping an eye out for invasives."

Another way to stop the spread of invasive species is the use of wash stations to clean boats and other equipment. With so many people on our lakes hiring service providers to put in docks and pontoons this time of year, it is important that they take precautions too. The Fish Lake Association, which is in Burnett County near Big McKenzie, took the lead by asking businesses that provide service on their lake to either segregate equipment used on Big McKenzie or disinfect it before putting it in another lake. Burnett and Washburn Counties also sent a letter to the service providers we are aware of. Those that have been contacted have been very cooperative. We urge you to print a copy of the letter at wclra.org/wp-content/uploads/Zebra-Mussel-Service-Letter.pdf and show it to your service providers.

Clean Boats, Clean Waters grants are available to ramp up watercraft inspection efforts to contain the zebra mussels and prevent the



spread to other area lakes. The DNR encourages citizens to become engaged in the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (CLMN), which provides access to training from lake experts from across the state. (See the article inside.) Signage, monitoring and educational efforts are being increased at boat landings in the McKenzie Lakes area and on other vulnerable lakes.

Most Wisconsin lakes have been modeled to determine which ones have suitable levels of calcium to support a zebra mussel population. The results are shown on the website at: www.aissmartprevention.wisc.edu/mappingtool.php

You can get more information on zebra mussels by at the Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference in Hayward on June 16. Conference details and registration information are available at:

www.northland.edu/sustain/soei/conferences-symposiums/lakesconference/

President's Comments

Craig Walkey

The Big McKenzie Lake zebra mussel discovery last fall really shook both Burnett (BCLRA) and Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Associations (WCLRA). Both of our Boards of Directors have appointed representatives to work on the McKenzie Lakes Area Zebra Mussel Management Team. Cathie Erickson is WCLRA's representative and Bob Baker is BCLRA's representative.

In a conversation with Roger Noe, BCLRA this morning (4/27), he expressed his discouragement and disappointment over yet another local lake discovering infestation by an invasive species. He feels it all seems so hopeless.

I told Roger a story about a Clean Boats/Clean Waters seminar to "Train the Trainers" WCLRA hosted at the Spooner Agriculture Station about six years ago. It was attended by about 30 volunteers from around Northwest Wisconsin. I don't remember the instructor's name, but he was a professor from UW Stevens Point. During the Q&A session at the end of his presentation someone asked, "Is this all worth it?" I will always remember his response. He said, "I am asked that question at every presentation. My response is we may lose the war on AIS control, but we will fight and win as many battles as we can. There is no alternative lest we do nothing."

Roger said thank you, I needed to hear that and I will remember it also.

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers "It's the Law"

- **INSPECT** boats trailers, and equipment.
- **REMOVE** all attached aquatic plants and animals.
- **DRAIN** all water from boats, vehicles, and equipment.
- **NEVER MOVE** plants or live fish away from a water body.

WCLRA will continue to publish current information about zebra muscles and other topics pertinent to promoting the protection and responsible use of Washburn County waters, shoreland and wildlife resources on our website.

www.wclra.org

WCLRA Annual General Meeting: August 26
Check the website for details.

THE BOARD

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

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

Pat Shifferd, Secretary
715-466-5867
patriashifferd@gmail.com

Kevin Campbell, Treasurer
709-902-6106
kevmann50@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@aol.com

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

Charlotte Shover, Director
612-850-0113
cshover@lightblast.net

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

UWEX
John Haack

Planning, Land & Water Resource
Management
Lisa Burns

DNR
Kathy Bartilson

Conservation Wardens
Dave Swanson
Jon Hagen

Zoning Administrator
Web Macomber

CLMN: Citizen Lake Monitoring Network

The Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (CLMN) creates a bond between 1000+ citizen volunteers statewide and the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership. Our goals are to collect high quality data, educate and empower volunteers, and share this information.

CLMN staff provide volunteers with the necessary equipment and training to conduct these monitoring activities. Volunteers provide their time, expertise, energy, and a willingness to share information with their fellow lake residents or other lake users. The information gathered by these monitoring programs is used by Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and university biologists and researchers, UW-Extension, and other interested individuals.

Water clarity monitoring is a process in which the volunteer lowers an 8" diameter, black & white disc ("Secchi disc") into the deepest part of the lake to determine how far down they can see the disc as it is lowered. Water clarity monitoring is done every 10-14 days throughout the open-water season. Water clarity is a quick way to estimate lake health, and it plays an important role in determining the types of plants and animals that a water body can support.

Water chemistry volunteers ensure phosphorus levels, chlorophyll-A concentrations (a measure of algae growth in the water), water clarity, and a temperature profile from the top to the bottom of the lake. This type of monitoring is done four times per year, and requires several hours of time during each monitoring event. Chemistry monitoring helps determine if



Using a secchi disc to monitor water clarity.

Photo by Charlotte Shover

nutrient pollution is occurring in a lake, or if seasonal fish die-offs may be a possibility due to low oxygen levels.

Ice on/ice off monitoring is a simple type of lake monitoring. Volunteers simply record the date that ice completely covers the lake in the fall, and record the date that the ice is completely gone from the lake in the spring. This information is used to track changes in the open-water season, which is useful in many different types of lake-related research projects.

Aquatic invasive species (AIS) monitoring involves searching the lake for aquatic invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussels, rusty crayfish, and others. The frequency that volunteers perform AIS monitoring varies, but most volunteers do this a few times per year. Most volunteers conduct AIS monitoring in high-risk sites around their lakes (like boat landings) to detect early populations

of AIS. Early detection of AIS is crucial for effective, inexpensive management, so these volunteers are incredibly valuable.

Native aquatic plant monitoring is a relatively new type of volunteer lake monitoring, which involves collecting data on a lake's native aquatic plant community. These activities are repeated every 2-3 years to track changes in the abundance and distribution of these species. Aquatic plant identification training is provided by the CLMN Educator, usually at the lake being monitored. Native plant monitoring is broken down into three levels which volunteers can choose from, depending on their familiarity with aquatic plant identification and the amount of time they have available.

Monitoring...another excuse to be on the lake.

www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/programs/clmn/default.aspx

Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary Is Taking Flight

Hunt Hill has been protecting pristine Wisconsin land and waters since it was donated to the National Audubon Society (NAS) in 1954. But even before, Frances Hunt Andrews and her family had a great appreciation for the protection of wild places. When Frances donated the Hunt Hill property, she stated that "It is good to live with large and old trees," and requested that "the wild fauna- and flora, too – live their natural lives." Today, Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary protects nearly 600 acres of pristine Wisconsin land and waters. Within a short walk of the main property, visitors can experience glacial lakes, old growth and cutover forest, prairie, marsh, bogs and even a small creek. People are encouraged to visit and explore the ten miles of trails that are open to the public and free of charge at Hunt Hill.

In 1986, NAS closed the camp and talked of selling the property. That's when a group of people started the Friends of Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary (FOHHAS) and saved the camp. Since 1990, the volunteer board of directors has worked hard to create a nature sanctuary that respects and protects the natural environment while also developing high quality educational programs on the environment.

It is because of Hunt Hill's strong educational programming and diverse natural property that we have formed a long standing partnership with WCLRA. One wonderful partnership has been the Youth Environmental Stewardship (YES) program which funds water education for schools in Washburn County. The program, currently supported by WCLRA and the Long Lake Preservation Association, fully funds classes to spend the day at Hunt Hill discovering aspects



of lake health, invasive species, stewardship and more.

To achieve the goals of preservation and education, our nonprofit must find ways to raise funds each year. Although Hunt Hill hosts a wide variety of programs and welcomes thousands of people each year to these programs, program income covers just 40% of total expenses. Hunt Hill is fortunate to receive support through memberships, donations and foundation support to cover the difference. With this additional support, we can continue to offer programs at affordable rates to area youth, schools, other organizations and the community.

Recognizing the success and impact Hunt Hill has had on the local environment, a family has stepped forward with a Matching Gift Challenge. FOHHAS is excited to announce that the Cleveland family has offered to match every dollar we raise, up to ONE MILLION DOLLARS, to establish an endowment. This endowment will create a more stable financial base for Hunt Hill and the income generated off the principal will help with costs of operating Hunt Hill, as well as facility improvements, program growth and more. Raising one

million dollars is a very big task and FOHHAS has until the end of 2019 to raise the funds. We are turning to our members, neighbors, friends and community to request support. Every dollar donated turns into two!

If you appreciate the protection of wild places, accessibility to these places and education of their importance to the health of our environment and to people, we hope you will consider supporting Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary.

If you would like more information on the campaign, contact Executive Director, Nikki Janisin at 715-635-6543 or Campaign Chair, Wayne Sabatke at 715-790-7418. To learn more about Hunt Hill and programs, you can find information at www.hunthill.org, call the office at 715-635-6543 or stop out to say hello. The office is located in the farmhouse and the address is N2384 Hunt Hill Rd. Sarona, WI 54870.

Thank you. Nikki Janisin, Director

P.S. We hope you will visit us this year for great community programs like: Prairie Fling Festival on May 20, Cakes at the Lake, Youth Day Camps, Let's Go Birding, Birds and Beer, Mushrooming and more.

Wisconsin Lakes Trivia

1. How many species of frogs live in Wisconsin?
2. How long can a river otter stay under water?
3. What percentage of endangered or threatened species spend all or part of their lives in shoreland areas? 80%, 40% or 20%
4. Which Wisconsin fish is a close relative of the musky?

1. 12 (including 1 toad) 2. Up to 4 minutes and they have been known to dive to depths of more than 40 feet 3. 80% 4. Northern pike

Be On The Lookout for AIS

by Linda Anderson

The beauty of our lakes in Northwestern Wisconsin is framed by the abundance of native trees, plants, grasses, and shrubs. Not only do they showcase the lakes, they provide a rich habitat for birds, bees, butterflies, and wildlife that are part of our rich ecosystem. Unfortunately, there are non-native species that invade and threaten the delicate balance that nature intended. Many of these invaders may seem to be beauties but they are not and will overwhelm and destroy native habitat. This article will introduce you to four aquatic invasive species.

Rusty crayfish are nasty invaders. They are more aggressive than other native



Korin Doering, Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance

crayfish, better able to avoid fish predation, and can harm native fish populations by eating their eggs and young. They can displace native crayfish, hybridize with them, and graze on and eliminate aquatic plants. They can be identified by a rusty-colored spot on each side of the body.

www.seagrant.umn.edu/ais/rustycrayfish

Sometimes invasive species are disguised as beauties when we find them on our shorelines and wetlands. Yellow flag iris is a showy plant that escaped from backyard water gardens and ponds and has entrenched itself by forming dense clumps or floating mats that can alter wildlife habitat and species diversity. All parts of this plant are poisonous.

www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialplants/herbaceous/yellowiris.html



Iris pseudacorus
Yellow Iris
© Paul Skawinski 2012

Purple loosestrife is another plant introduced by garden centers as an ornamental. Each plant can produce between 2 and 3 million seeds. It invades marshes and lakeshores forming dense, impenetrable strands which are unsuitable as cover, food, or nesting sites for a wide range of wetland animals. Many rare and endangered wetland plants and animals are also at risk.



Lythrum salicaria
Purple loosestrife
© Paul Skawinski 2012

dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/aquaticplants/purpleloosestrife/index.html

Curly-leaf pondweed grows from the shore to depths of 15 feet. Leaves are crinkled and have small “teeth” visible along the edge of the leaf. It appears reddish-brown in the water but is actually green when pulled out. It can become dominant and invasive due to its tolerance for low light and low water temperatures. May outcompete other underwater plants and become dominant, which causes problems due to the formation of dense mats that interfere with recreational activities. It also causes an increase in phosphorus concentrations as it dies, causing an increase in algae blooms.



For more information on Aquatic Invasives Species (AIS) or if you need help with identification, contact Lisa Burns, Washburn County AIS Coordinator. lburns@co.washburn.wi.us 715-468-4654

Bass and Walleye Interaction

Larry Damman, Retired Fish Biologist

Lately there has been a lot of debate among anglers and management professionals about whether largemouth bass are detrimental to walleye populations. The idea that largemouth bass and walleye are fierce competitors is not new. Lakes where walleyes reproduce naturally always have relatively low largemouth populations. In the past it was clear that walleye could be destructive to bass populations. In the 50's and 60's walleyes were stocked into all the bass lakes where walleye had never existed before. Most of the stockings simply failed. In some cases, stocked walleye survived and started to reproduce. As with natural walleye lakes, wherever stocked walleye reproduced, the native largemouth population decreased, often to the point of near extinction. Bass Patterson and Shell Lake are local examples.

Community interactions like bass/walleye encompass the struggle to survive and thrive. Fish populations are always in a state of flux as the community adapts to local weather patterns, new species introductions, water level changes, and even management practices like stocking or size and bag limits. Community interactions assure that net biological productivity is maintained even as individual prey and predator species go up or down with changing conditions.

Anglers tend to think of these interactions in terms of direct predation. If walleye are in decline it must be because something is eating too many walleye fingerlings. Since largemouth bass numbers have increased it seems obvious who is eating the walleye. Still, why did bass populations increase across northern Wisconsin in the first place?

Wisconsin has a wide diversity of game fish species. We fall within the northern range limits of the sunfish family which includes largemouth bass and the southern limits of "near arctic" species like northern pike and walleye. It should be no surprise that a long period of warmer weather with fewer weeks of ice cover would favor bass over a near-arctic species like walleye. Studies of largemouth and other sunfishes in northern states strongly link reproductive success to the size fingerlings reach by fall. Largemouth fingerlings have been getting several extra weeks to grow before winter sets in. Higher recruitment rates will shift community balance.

The other side of the equation is management. Back in the 1980's anglers were becoming more interested in catching bigger fish. To address changing public expectations, DNR formed bass and walleye committees to propose regulation changes. The bass committee finished its work first and minimum size limits went into effect statewide in 1989. I was skeptical that size limits would have much effect. Bass anglers already practiced total catch and release. I was wrong. Surveys showed increases in largemouth bass numbers over historical averages the first year of the regulation. Numbers continued to increase in subsequent years. Apparently panfish and pike fisherman had been keeping more bass than I thought.

Changing walleye regulations took an extra year. Walleye lakes were placed into size limit categories based on their level of natural reproduction. The regulations were only somewhat more conservative than previous ones so the response was not very noticeable.



Photo: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

Of course timing can be everything. Had the walleye regulations come first it might have helped keep bass populations in walleye lakes in check a little longer. Still 25 years of high bass recruitment would have pushed community balance toward bass over time.

Bottom line is that largemouth bass and walleye are fierce competitors and up to now, nature, angler harvest preferences and management efforts have favored largemouth.

One surprise in all this is smallmouth bass and walleye have turned out to be compatible and even complimentary species. Efforts to harvest down largemouth on traditional walleye waters would do well to maintain protection for smallmouth bass.

Thank You Beverly

If it weren't for Beverly Stencel (UWEX), WCLRA would probably not exist. She was instrumental in getting us started and has remained a valuable support and advisor for the past 18 years. With her retirement from UWEX, we wish her only the best.

We will miss you!

Continued Enbridge-WCLRA Interactions

by Fred Blake

Just after our fall 2016 newsletter issue was assembled, members of the WCLRA Government/Environment Committee had an all-day meeting with Enbridge Energy Company at its Superior, Wisconsin facility. That was our first visit to that facility and we met with Trent Wetmore, Director of Enbridge Superior Region Operations, and other Enbridge staff. We had earlier requested by letter that we work together to make the pipeline river crossings in our area as safe as possible. Those river crossings included the Eau Claire, St Croix, Totagatic and Namekagon rivers.

Our discussions dealt with several technical areas including valve placement and leak detection and we had the opportunity to emphasize the importance of our rivers, and specifically the Totagatic River, to our region and its economy.

In early December 2016, several members of our WCLRA committee, accompanied by Enbridge staff, visited the Totagatic River pipeline crossing area. The visit answered some questions and raised others, but definitely expanded our knowledge and understanding of pipeline operations. Pipeline depth at the crossings had been measured a few days before, but the information was not yet available from the contractor.

Working through Jennifer Smith, Enbridge community engagement manager, April 12 was set for our next technical meeting at the Superior Facility. Because we had raised pipeline valve placement and leak detection as two technical areas of interest, Jennifer arranged to have additional Enbridge expertise brought in from the offices in Edmonton, Alberta. Attending

the meeting were an engineering specialist in valve placement and the Supervisor of Leak Detection Assessment & Support. These technical discussions further enhanced our understanding of the complicated technical nature of the areas in which we are attempting to educate ourselves. We gained insight into the role that computer modeling plays in these two critical areas. As with our visit to the Totagatic River crossing, some questions were answered and some new ones were raised ... typical of scientific inquiries.

WCLRA is well aware that the St Croix River Association (SCRA) is also involved in discussions with Enbridge related to the St Croix drainage as a whole. One of our directors, Patricia Shifferd, is also on the SCRA Board of Directors and we are regularly briefed on the activities of that group. At a recent meeting of the SCRA pipeline task force, pipeline depth and erosion potential at the crossing sites were discussed.

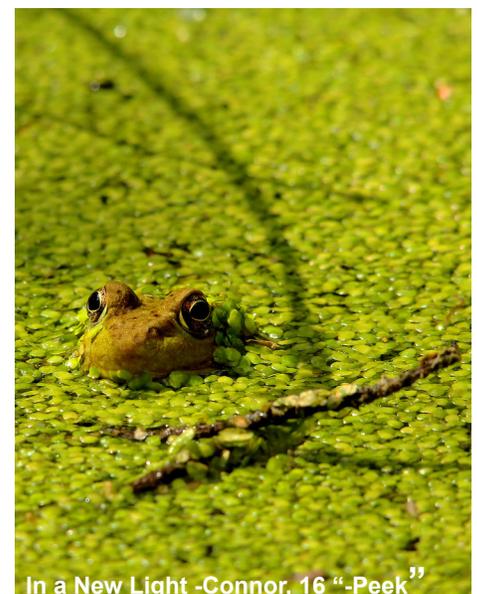
After more than two years of working with Enbridge staff, we feel that we have achieved a good technical understanding of Enbridge pipeline operations in general. We believe that our committee is now technically conversant enough to knowledgeably consider with Enbridge staff the four river crossings in our area. With our acquired technical understanding, we would now look toward studying the specifics of each of the four river crossings and attempting to determine whether there are changes that might be made in pipeline structure or operation to enhance the safety at those crossings. Considering that the subject pipelines cross four

tributaries of one of our nations treasures, the St Croix National Wild & Scenic River, we believe that the very best protections possible are more than justified.

Throughout our discussions, Enbridge has been open with us and forthcoming with requested information. Our committee is grateful for the efforts that Enbridge has made on our behalf.

Note: The above deals with our interactions with Enbridge Energy Co. relative to its pipelines of immediate interest to us in our county and region. Our WCLRA committee also monitors pipeline activities on a broader basis, but, as we are a county-wide lake and river organization, our newsletter content will, by intent, generally focus on issues and events of direct interest to our county's lake and river resources. Refer to our website:

(www.wclra.org) for our board policy governing the overall direction of our activities relating to pipelines. FB 4/27/17



In a New Light -Connor, 16 "Peek"

On The Waterfront is published by:
WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ASSN, INC.
850 West Beaverbrook Avenue, Suite 1

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO 20

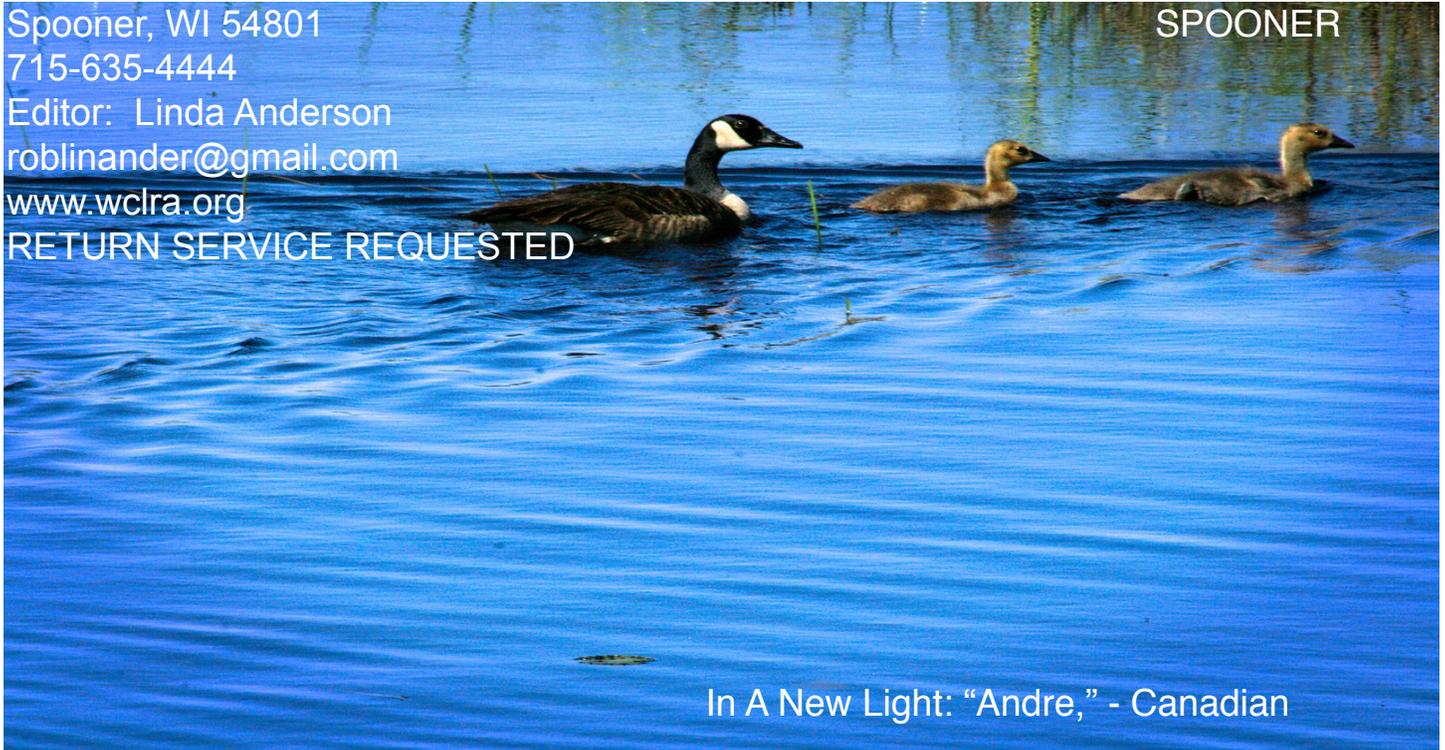
Spooner, WI 54801
715-635-4444

Editor: Linda Anderson
roblinander@gmail.com

www.wclra.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SPOONER



In A New Light: "Andre," - Canadian

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:

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

County Planning, Land/Water Resource Management Aquatic Invasive Species

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