

# On The WaterFront

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

## A Report For The Year 2019: What We Have Done

- Initiated a study on the condition of the Yellow River, including working with the City of Spooner to develop a waste water runoff plan which will improve water quality
- Collaborated with University Extension and Washburn County Land & Water Conservation to provide information about invasive species for distribution to resorts & bait shops
- Presented resolutions at the April Conservation Congress Washburn County meeting in Spooner to: restore funding for the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program, urge the DNR to actively provide up-to-date scientific information on climate change including reinstatement of the Natural Resources Science Services Bureau, and restore County ability to regulate shoreline zoning
- Provided major organizational work for the Northwest Lakes Conference, Hayward, June 21, 2019
- Attended member lake association meetings and invited representatives to our meetings
- Met with area state assembly and senate officials to share our concerns and press for environmental protection legislation
- Completed the value of our waters tax study, documenting the contribution of lake property to the budgets of towns and other taxing authorities
- Maintaining liaisons with county agencies responsible for water quality, including Land & Water Conservation, the Board of Adjustment, and the zoning department



Photo courtesy of Linda Anderson

### On-going work

- Maintaining a website, publishing newsletters, providing newspaper articles about water issues
- Providing free one-year membership privileges to new shore landowners
- Participating in zebra mussel monitoring and public education
- Continuing to help finance Youth Environmental Stewardship (YES) school field trips to Hunt Hill for Washburn County students.

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## Meet The New WCLRA Directors

**KATHY BARTILSON** - As an employee of the Department of Natural Resources before she retired, Kathy worked with many non-profit groups including WCLRA, St. Croix River Association, lake associations in several counties, Northwoods and Waters of the St. Croix Heritage Area, Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters, and the St. Croix Basin Water Resources Planning Team. She is currently a Board Member of the Namekagon Barrens Wildlife Area. Thus, as she notes, she is able to “connect the dots for WCLRA between different organizations. Protection and conservation of land and water resources has always been the driving force in my professional and personal life.” Kathy lives on the Yellow River near Spooner.

**BRUCE KEYZER** – Bruce brings scientific knowledge and sharp analytical skills to WCLRA from his former career as a high school science and math teacher. From his home on Deep Lake near Sarona, he volunteers with the Deep Lake Association, and is a Citizen Lake Monitor. Bruce is a member of the Shell Lake Lions Club. He is a co-leader of the Birchwood Chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby. He feels that serving on the WCLRA Board of Directors will give him an opportunity to work on issues important to protecting and preserving Washburn County Lakes and Rivers.

**BEVERLY STENCEL** - As an employee of the University of Wisconsin Extension Service in Washburn County before retiring, Beverly specialized in the areas of leadership and organizational development. One of the organizations she was involved with from start-up until her retirement in 2017 was WCLRA and she had hoped to serve on the WCLRA board post-retirement. She lives on Trego Lake and served on the Board of Commissioners for the Trego Lake District in the past.



WCLRA promotes the environmental protection and responsible use of Washburn County surface waters and their attendant wetlands, shorelands and wildlife resources. We share ideas and information through education and active participation for the benefit of individual property owners, lake and river districts and associations, local governments, the general public, and future generations.

The current membership of Washburn County Lakes & Rivers Association is 643. This includes 255 individuals who are new shoreland owners and were given free one-year membership privileges. In addition, WCLRA has 26 lake association members. An individual/family membership in WCLRA is just \$20. Go to [wclra.org](http://wclra.org) for information on how to become a member.

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## LIAISONS

Lisa Burns, Land and Water Conservation

Madeline Roberts, UW Extension

Dan Harrington, Wisconsin DNR

Larry Dammen, Conservation Congress

# State Of The Lakes

By Phil Sylla

At the **Shell Lake** District protection meeting June 9, Craig Roberts, DNR, reported that walleye levels are rebounding. The City had prepared plans to control geese but geese have not been problematic this summer. Water levels are high but the District has not had to use the pipe to divert water to the Yellow River.

On July 6, the **Horseshoe Lake** Association discussed the need to renew its aquatic lake management plan with special emphasis on controlling Eurasian water milfoil.

Efforts to set up a decon station at the **Stone Lake** landing have been interrupted by the repair and expansion of the landing. Perceptions about the need for more slow speed/no wake zones generated lively discussion at the June Meeting. Their association has approximately 80 paying members.

On **Spider Lake**, high water continues to be an issue as it has for the past several years.

The **Lake Nancy** Protection Association completed a two-year fact gathering process culminating in a new aquatic plant management plan. Eurasian water milfoil reduction is ongoing. Lake Nancy's boat decontamination station usage and awareness have increased. The Association communicates with members through both a website and Facebook.

**Tozer Lake** is a deep, stratified lake with good to very good water clarity. Even in August, water temperature at 45' in depth was only 43.50F. Phosphorous level is average for a natural lake. Chlorophyll level is very good. Tozer Lake is in the highest trophic class, "oligotrophic." Purple loosestrife is a continuing problem and yellow flag iris is an increasing problem.

**Spooner Lake**, is a 1000 acre lake that is eutrophic. This year the lake district revised its aquatic lake management plan with the help of a consultant. In the past, the Spooner Lake District treated curly leaf pondweed annually, however, this year it was not chemically treated because of doubtful effectiveness. To ensure open navigation, a harvester company was to be hired. However, at the annual meeting of the Lake District, the membership overruled the board regarding hiring a vegetation harvester. The membership directed that chemical treatment resume and determined that the lake should be drawn down 3 feet to kill aquatic vegetation. The County, which owns and operates the dam, approved the drawdown request but only for one foot given the dam's capability.

**Trego Lake** District bought a portable suction dredge to continue a successful project to combat sedimentation. Trego Lake District uses their tax levying power to pay for some projects and additional revenue comes from Excel Energy which has a hydroelectric dam on the lake. Weed harvesting took place in July. The District has 250 members. They have recently launched a new website. A Clean Boats/Clean Waters grant is being utilized.

This summer the **Minong Flowage** was drawn down one foot for repairs to the dam. The water level was to be restored by September 9.

The **Little Ripley Lake** Association's discussed their lake aerator at their Annual Meeting in May. Without aeration Little Ripley is susceptible to winter kill.

At the **Long Lake** Preservation Association (LLPA) meeting June 1, members were polled to measure interest in continuing annual lake drawdowns to control weed growth. The lake was not drawn down last fall. Light pollution and high-water levels are issues. LLPA wants to replace some culverts with bridges to "Holy Island" to allow free flow of water in times of storms.

**Twin Lakes** Protection Association (TLPA) met August 3. They are proud of their new newsletter. TLPA has 72 members with 23 attending the Annual Meeting. Their on-going "Increase Membership" project is succeeding. The water level in July 2019 was the highest since they began monitoring in May, 2017. No invasive species have been found. Noise pollution is an increasing problem.



## Wisconsin Lakes Trivia

1. What 2 panfish are most commonly caught by ice-fishing in Wisconsin?
2. Which Wisconsin frog freezes almost solid each winter and can also be found near the Arctic Circle?
3. When going out on lake ice, what is the minimum thickness of the ice to use an ATV or snowmobile?
4. How many years do wild rice grains stay viable in lake or stream sediment? 2 yrs., 6 yrs., or decades

1. Bluegill and Perch 2. Wood frog 3. 5 inches but ice is never totally safe 4. Decades.

# Landmark Conservancy

A Land Trust Conserving Wisconsin's Natural Legacy for Everyone... Forever

by Jane Anklam

What is a land trust anyway? Unlike a financial trust, it is NOT a way to shelter your estate or a mechanism to transfer land to your children. It IS an organization backed by state statute, policy and procedures with a mission to protect land of defined conservation values. Land trusts across the county have developed an accredited and sophisticated way to do so with the support of private landowners and conservation partners resulting in millions of acres being permanently protected for the public good.

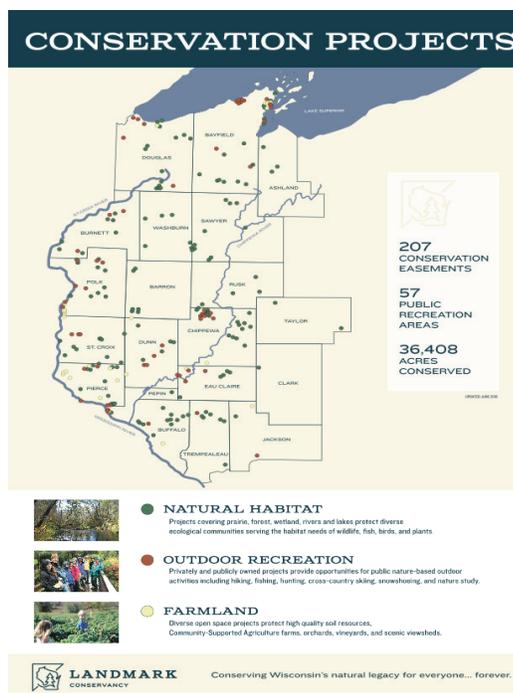
Landmark Conservancy, a non-profit land trust, was born of a merger between two nationally accredited land trusts: West Wisconsin Land Trust and Bayfield Regional Conservancy. Landmark serves a 20-county geography across western Wisconsin. It works with private landowners who own land with significant conservation values and wish to conserve these values in perpetuity. It also works with local municipalities, state, and federal entities to create public preserves and trails for all to enjoy. Projects are carefully selected based on defined criteria including natural resource values and alignment with conservation priorities. As of 2019, the trust has conserved over 36,500 acres in the combined 30 years of land protection work. Many of these properties remain in private ownership, protected with a conservation easement. Some are now in public ownership to provide habitat conservation, research opportunities, quiet appreciation, and nature-based recreation.

Over the years, the trust has enjoyed a supportive relationship with Washburn County Lakes and River Association. Water quality and aquatic habitat conservation are most often a result of land protection, significant for a county blessed with several important Wisconsin river systems.

Landmark Conservancy has helped to protect natural gems of the Namekagon and Totogatic River watersheds along with glacial pothole lakes of the Hayward moraine, including within Washburn County's Birchwood Lake Wilderness Area. We have helped landowners consider how to conserve those precious lakes in farm country to help maintain both habitat and water quality.

Our new efforts in Washburn County will be reflected in our work with the St. Croix River Association through a grant with the Healthy Watershed Consortium. The intent of the project is to increase strategic land protection in the St. Croix River Watershed especially in relation to forestry and its impact on hydrology, habitat, and water quality. In addition, the Landmark commitment will be to prioritize projects in those areas that are most resilient to the changing climate and that offer connectivity for species movement and migration. The Landmark Conservancy has engaged the Nature Conservancy's Resilient and Connected Landscape modeling program to help zero in on those corridors. Local conservation partners and municipalities will be engaged to compliment the prioritization, developing synergy for protection within those places to support our various conservation goals.

Landmark Conservancy looks forward to continued work with WCLRA to make significant strides in conservation in Washburn County and throughout the resilient and connected areas of the St. Croix River Watershed. To learn more about Landmark, visit [www.landmarkwi.org](http://www.landmarkwi.org)



# Farmers Coming Together to Protect Water Quality

by Madeline Roberts

Local farmers are helping to protect and improve water quality in the Shell Lake and Yellow River watershed through a farmer-led watershed council. The council is made of nine local farmers and the council's mission is "working as a non-profit organization to improve soil health and water quality through outreach, education, and conservation practices that improve sustainable agriculture." The farmer-led council was formed after Washburn County Land Conservation department successfully applied for a Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant for \$15,600 through the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. The council is supported in its work by Extension Washburn County, Burnett County Land and Water Conservation Department, Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network, USDA-NRCS, and Wisconsin DNR.

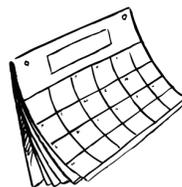
The council hosted three educational events this year on local farms targeting farmers and agriculture consultants to help them learn about farming practices that help protect water quality, including rotational grazing, cover crops, and nutrient management. The council also held two public outreach events to connect farmers to their watershed neighbors and educate the public on current farming practices. The council is offering farmers financial support and expertise to help them get started on conservation practices as well as partnering with the Spooner Agricultural Research Station to conduct research on what cover crops work in our local area. One of the practical challenges faced by modern agriculture is developing economically sustainable methods of growing food while enhancing soil and water resources. This "grass roots" effort should provide local farmer leadership and results helpful to Washburn and Burnett county communities while protecting our natural resources. If you are interested in learning more about the group or would like to sign up for the mailing list, please contact Brent Edlin (715) 468-4654 [Bedlin@co.washburn.wi.us](mailto:Bedlin@co.washburn.wi.us).

## Think Spring 2020 Tree/Shrub/ Wildflower Sale

Although fall/winter is here, it's never too early to "think spring". Think about the emerging wildlife, birds, frogs and other critters looking for some additional habitat to settle into. Perhaps you've lost some trees or other vegetation to the fierce storm events or maybe you just want to add more variety to your property? What about your shoreline? Would you like to add to or improve it?

The Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department has an annual tree, shrub and wildflower sale. They offer a variety of evergreens (spruce and pine), shrubs, and wildflower flats.

Informational order forms will be available in December. To request an order form, please email Lisa Burns at [lburns@co.washburn.wi.us](mailto:lburns@co.washburn.wi.us).



**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

*April 1-3, 2020*

**Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Convention**  
Steven's Point, WI

*June 19, 2020*

**Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference**  
Spooner High School, Spooner, WI

## 2020 Loon Count

by Phil Sylla

Sixteen Washburn County Lakes are due for a loon census in 2020. However, only four lakes have registered census takers at this time. The 16 lakes are Casey Creek Flowage, Deer Lake, Ellsworth Lake, Gull Lake, Haugen Lake, Island Lake, Little Devil Lake, Little Kekegama Lake, Little Ripley Lake, Mack Lake, Sand Lake, Shallow Lake, Sleepy Eye Lake, Unnamed Lake T41 R10W S23, Unnamed Lake T41 R10W S35, Watson Lake. The four lakes that have census takers are Gull Lake, Island Lake, Mack Lake and Little Devil Lake.



Minnesota DNR

If you would like to participate in Project Loon Count on an “unclaimed” Washburn County lake or an “unclaimed” lake in another county, go to this website, <https://www.northland.edu/sustainability/soei/loonwatch/loons-get-involved/#wisconsin-loon-population-survey> and scroll down to Volunteer Registration or search for “LoonWatch Northland College”. The census is conducted by LoonWatch, a program of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute of Northland College in Ashland.

According to the website, every five years since 1985, “LoonWatch has conducted a one-day loon survey on 258 pre-selected lakes to estimate the size and distribution of Wisconsin’s common loon population. Volunteer observers visit a lake or lakes on one day in July between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m. to count both adults and chicks. This information is then used to estimate the number of breeding adults and the number of chicks produced. Over time, the survey tells us the trend in the state’s loon population—whether it is stable, increasing, or declining.” Next year, the survey will take place between 5 a.m. and 10 a.m. on July 18.

To get the most accurate estimate possible, the survey’s duration is just five hours, minimizing the possibility that a loon counted on one lake can fly to another lake and be counted again. The count is on July 18 because by this time chicks have hatched. Visit the website to see the census results for each of the 258 lakes every five years since 1985.

## Take Care of Leaves



Wherever leaves fall, they decompose and restock the soil with nutrients and organic matter. For lake residents this can be a problem because the nutrients will feed unwanted algae growth in lakes next summer. When that algae dies, it decomposes at the bottom of the lake and uses up oxygen that fish and native plants need. Leaves can nourish our soil but avoid putting leaves into or near the lake. Check with your nearest city/town for recycling sites where you can take leaves and other organic material.

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Wisconsin DNR



Zebra Mussels

See Lisa Buns article on page 7.

Purple Loosestrife is an invasive wetland plant that usually grows along a wet ditch or shoreline. Control of this invasive can be achieved by releasing beetles (*Galerucella spp.*) in an area where the plant is growing. These tiny beetles only eat purple loosestrife, and do not eat native plants. These versatile beetles can be used in various sites of large or small infestations.

WCLRA has worked with the Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department for several years, releasing purple loosestrife beetles along the Yellow River. In August 2019, AIS Intern Hunter Denison and a WCLRA volunteer canoed and released beetles between the east Highway 70 bridge and Spooner. Hunter was encouraged to see a decline in the number of purple loosestrife plants since the summer of 2018. For more information about purple loosestrife or how to control it on your shoreline or river front, contact Lisa Burns 715-468-4654 or [lburns@co.washburn.wi.us](mailto:lburns@co.washburn.wi.us).



Photo by Paul Skawinski

## WCLRA Bylaw Changes

At the Annual General Meeting, some changes were passed to help clarify language in the WCLRA bylaws. Two additional articles in the bylaws were modified to allow e-mail to notify members of the Annual General Meeting or a special meeting and allow directors to participate in Board meetings via telecommunications.

With open water season winding down, recreational water equipment is being removed from the water for the year. It is crucial that everyone continue to take the proper steps to make sure all equipment is cleaned properly to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS). Zebra mussels, in particular, are extremely invasive organisms and are currently established in Big and Middle McKenzie Lakes. 2019 has shown increased infestation in the two lakes.

Landowners have reported finding thousands of them covering bottoms of boats, motors and docks. Monitoring plates that citizens use on the McKenzie chain of lakes, are showing an increased population over past years. Zebra mussels reproduce quickly, remove important food sources for other water-living organisms and destroy motors and water intake pipes which can be very expensive to repair. Depending on conditions, they may survive out of water from several days to several weeks. To date, no other lakes in Washburn or Burnett Counties have found zebra mussels.

The following steps should be made when taking equipment out of the water for winter storage:

1. Inspect and remove all plants, mud or other debris found on equipment that has been sitting in water: dock posts, wheels, boats, rafts, pontoons, kayaks, jet skis.
2. Drain all water if possible.
3. Spray all equipment (including live wells) with a pressure washer sprayer. This will help get unwanted invasive species that are hanging on tight or that you can't see.
4. Run water pumps and start motors out of water to flush remaining water from the cooling system.
5. Spray down your equipment with a bleach/water solution, including the inside of live wells. Use one tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water and let it air dry to help kill unseen hitchhikers.
6. Talk to your own service provider and neighbors about taking these steps.
7. If you find something suspicious, take a picture, bag it and contact Lisa Burns, Conservation Coordinator with Washburn County at 715-468-4654 or [lburns@co.washburn.wi.us](mailto:lburns@co.washburn.wi.us).

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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 Southern Washburn County).....715-635-4099
- Dave Swanson (Conservation Warden for Northern Washburn County).....715-466-5428

If wardens are in the field, messages can be relayed to them through the Washburn County Sheriff’s Department at 715-468-4720 or at the DNR’s toll-free tip line.....1-800-TIP-WDNR (847-9367)

**County Shoreland Zoning Questions or Violations:**

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

**Washburn County Land and Water Conservation**

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