

On The WaterFront

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

WCLRA Partnerships

By Madeline Roberts and Lisa Burns

WCLRA and UW Extension Washburn County partnered to offer educational materials to new waterfront owners this year. WCLRA offers free membership every year to people who bought waterfront property in the last year. Madeline Roberts, Natural Resources Extension Educator, and the WCLRA board proposed using this mailing to educate new owners on how they can protect water quality on their property. WCLRA generously covered the additional postage for the education materials and Extension Washburn County put together the information.

The information that was added to the free membership offer included a Healthy Lakes brochure, a booklet on practices owners can use to protect water quality and their property investment and a list of waterfront resources with contacts for Washburn County. Over 250 new shoreland owners in Washburn County received the free membership and educational information. These owners should have a better understanding of how to protect water quality and who to contact if they have questions thanks to the successful work of WCLRA and Extension Washburn County.

The WCLRA Education Committee partnered with the Land & Water Conservation and UW-Extension Departments on two Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) educational initiatives for 2019.

The first includes a small packet of information to provide to resort owners throughout the County. It is anticipated the information will be placed in each cabin for renters to view. The packets include information on AIS identification, decontamination and how to help prevent their spread.



Photo by Linda Anderson

The second initiative provides AIS education at bait shops. If there is interest, AIS Identification cards and decontamination information will be available for the general public to grab as they browse the business.

Planning is still occurring, but the information is anticipated to be at resorts and bait shops this summer.

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WCLRA Resolutions at the Conservation Congress

President's Comments by Phil Sylla

WCLRA Board Members introduced five resolutions at the 2019 Conservation Congress Annual Spring Hearing held in Spooner on April 8. The Conservation Congress presents a real opportunity for grass roots organizations like the WCLRA to shape conservation policy in the Wisconsin. It is the only statutory body in the state where citizens elect delegates to advise the Natural Resources Board and the Department of Natural Resources on how to responsibly manage Wisconsin's natural resources for present and future generations.

One resolution introduced by a WCLRA director encourages the legislature to reinstate local control over shoreline zoning, a power that was largely taken away from County boards a few years ago. A second resolution asks for restoration of funding for the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program which preserves natural areas in Wisconsin including Washburn County. Knowles-Nelson has experienced sharp budget cuts in recent years and funding will expire completely in 2020.

A third resolution asks for increased DNR regulation of high capacity wells that affect ground water levels here and around the state. The fourth and fifth resolutions ask for recognition of climate change and for increasing the number of scientists in the DNR back to previous levels. All five of these resolutions were passed in Spooner.

Because all five resolutions were passed in Spooner on April 8, 2019, they stand a good chance of being voted on state-wide by Conservation Congress participants in 2020. That will bring them to the attention of a lot of citizens. Over 10,700 people participated in the annual Spring Hearings this year throughout all 72 counties.

The Conservation Congress gives all citizens the opportunity to raise the issues that are important to us. The Natural Resources Board and the DNR take careful note of the issues raised. Our Senator Janet Bewley and Representatives Nick Milroy and Romaine Quinn listen too. In meetings this spring with legislative representatives, WCLRA has been able to say, "Look at our five resolutions. All were passed at the Spooner Spring Hearing. Support us in achieving our goals."

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Continuing the Zebra Mussel Battle

By Lisa Burns and Cathie Erickson

Many monitoring and sampling methods were used in 2018 for zebra mussels to help identify any new infestations before they spread. Citizen monitors continued to find Zebra mussels on plate samplers throughout Big and Middle McKenzie Lakes. The WI DNR conducted Environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling, which is the detection of DNA shed from an organism. This method is primarily used to determine the presence or presence of AIS. It doesn't tell how much there is or if it's dead or alive. Ten total lakes were tested in Northwest WI, with Big McKenzie being the only one to have a positive result. State, County and Federal staff along with many trained citizen volunteers, conducted early detection surveys. Results all came back negative for zebra mussels in lakes outside the McKenzie Chain.

Staff and citizens will continue monitoring efforts throughout Washburn and Burnett Counties. Lower McKenzie will undergo an early detection survey in July of this year..

Decontamination stations have been installed at five lakes in Washburn County, including: Mathews, Nancy, Spooner, Stone, Long Lake (has four). More are anticipated this year. In February 2018, a County Ordinance passed which states if a station is available at a landing, the boater is required to use it. This applies for boaters entering and leaving a waterbody. These stations are a simple way to continue to prevent the spread of invasive species across the landscape. The stations consist of a 4'x8' sign, a long handled soft brush, weed remover, goggles, a gallon sprayer and a pre-mixed mild bleach & water solution. The mild solution will kill microscopic zebra mussel larvae and other invasive species. If you are interested in receiving a decontamination station on your lake, contact Lisa Burns at 715-468-4654 or lburns@co.washburn.wi.us.

2019 Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) grants were awarded for the following lakes: Big Bass,



Gilmore, Horseshoe, Kimball, Minong Flowage, Nancy, Pokegema, Bear, Big Chetac/Birch Lakes, Long, McKenzie Chain, Shell, Stone and Trego. Many other lakes that have AIS grants, have CBCW incorporated into their work plans.

If you find a suspected aquatic invasive species, contact Kris Larsen 715-468-4072 or Lisa Burns 715-468-4654.

Thank you to ALL for your continued efforts to prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species and working to keep our lakes healthy in Northwest Wisconsin. **Zebra mussels will continue to be a threat so vigilance is essential.**



Wisconsin Lakes Trivia

1. Restrictions on bait minnows for fishing are designed to prevent the spread of what fish disease?
2. What black and white disc is lowered into the water to determine the clarity of the water?
3. A group of turtles on a log is called a _____.
4. How many legs does a tick have?

1. VHS (viral hemorrhagic septicemia) 2. Secchi disk 3. Bale 4. Eight

Property Taxes On The Lake

By Mike Tewalthomas

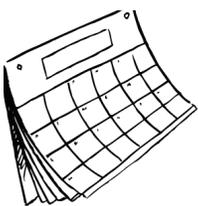
A common question from those owning lake properties is whether they are paying more than their fair share of property taxes. A WCLRA study lasting several months concluded that, in general, the tax valuations throughout the county are fair.

Township tax rolls were acquired; lakeshore properties were identified; and taxes paid on non-lakeshore property were compared to taxes paid on lakeshore property. Several factors made the comparisons difficult. Most lakeshore properties are highly sought after so the law of supply and demand makes them more valuable. Lakeshore properties are generally small while non-lakeshore properties may be large fields or forests. Property tax valuations consider buildings and development of the property, not just acreage, and many lakeshore properties are highly developed. There are 964 lakes in Washburn County in 21 townships so there were many properties to review.

The data collected confirms that land next to lakes generally has a higher valuation than properties away from lakes. However, a higher valuation of a property doesn't mean the mil rate applied to the property is unfair, it just means that property has a higher value. A high-value property away from a lake pays the same taxes as an equivalently priced property on a lake. The same taxation rules apply to owners of properties on lakes as to owners of properties away from lakes.

Under the state's Public Trust Doctrine, Wisconsin lakes and rivers are public resources and owned in common by all Wisconsin citizens. Owners of lake properties have additional rights as "riparian" owners that include the use of the shoreline, reasonable use of the water, and a right to exclusive access to the water from the shore.

WCLRA's conclusion (Washburn County tax evaluations comparing lakeshore and non-lakeshore properties are fair) is a generalization. You may still feel that you are paying more than your fair share. But, for most of us, the share we pay is just about right.



**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Northwest Lakes Conference

June 21, 2019

Hayward Middle School, Hayward, WI

To register online: <https://www.stcroixriverassociation.org/events>

Get a Grant and Make a Difference!

Are you looking to find ways to improve wildlife habitat, add native plant diversity along your shoreline or do you have erosion problems on your property and need some advice? Help is available through a couple of resources including The Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department and a WI DNR Healthy Lakes Grant.

The County Conservation department provides funding to individual waterfront landowners to help plan and design a natural landscape of vigorous trees, shrubs, grasses and wildflowers that can sustain any soil type. The program is based on a cost sharing program, in which the department pays up to 70% of the costs. Landowners pay 30% and individual labor can help off-set that cost. Staff will do a site visit and assist landowners with a plan. Funds can be limited, so early planning is essential. Call 715-468-4654 or visit <http://www.co.washburn.wi.us/departments/land-water-conservation>

The WI DNR Healthy Lakes Grant funding is available to eligible sponsors for projects that improve fish habitat, integrate native plantings, divert and clean runoff water, and promote natural beauty. Eligible sponsors include lake groups, waterfront organizations and local governments such as towns and counties. Healthy Lakes Grants are capped at \$25,000 and each best practice is capped at \$1,000 in state funding. The WI DNR pays up to 75% and applicants pay 25%. Match can be volunteer labor, equipment and cash from participating property owners or other partners. Applicants apply on behalf of lakeshore property owners. This funding is not intended for large, complex sites with substantial runoff or erosion problems where engineering design is more appropriate. Applications are due February 1 to the DNR. Materials and assistance can be found at www.healthylakeswi.com

Spring Ice Ridges On Shores

How do ice ridges form? Ice ridges are caused by the pushing action of a lake's ice sheet against the shore. Cracks form in the ice because of different contraction rates at the top and bottom of the ice sheet. This is especially true in years that the ice sheet lacks an insulating snow cover. Ice cracks also develop because the edges of the ice sheet are sometimes firmly attached to the shore. When water rises in the cracks and freezes, the ice sheet expands slightly. Rising air temperatures warm the ice, leading to additional expansion, which exerts a tremendous thrust against the shore. Alternate warming and cooling of the ice sheet leads to additional pushing action, causing the ice to creep shoreward and scrape, gouge, and push soil and rock into mounds (called "ice ridges", "ice pushes", or "ramparts"). That can be as high as five feet or more.

What are the benefits of ice ridges? Ice ridges are natural berms that have formed around Minnesota's lakes over thousands of years.

These mounds of material provide the lake with ecological benefits by creating a barrier to nutrient loading. Nutrients collect on the landward side of the mound, producing fertile soil where plants and trees thrive. The root systems of this near-shore plant community help to protect the shore from erosion and soak up additional nutrients. Shade and habitat offered by near-shore plants benefit organisms along the shore and in the lake, thus supporting nesting and spawning fish. *(Minnesota DNR)*

See page 6 for what you can do without a permit.



Enbridge Update

By Fred Blake

Over the past several years, WCLRA has carried on a dialog with Enbridge Energy Company with the goal of learning about how pipelines, and specifically Enbridge pipelines, operate. We became generally familiar with methods for leak detection and with the rationale behind placement of control valves to isolate sections of the lines in the event of a failure. We visited valve sites and pumping stations along the lines running through Washburn County.

Our primary concern is the volume of oil that would be discharged if a line ruptured at or near a water course. We have four significant St Croix River tributaries running through northwest Wisconsin and two cross Washburn County.

We were given access to Enbridge personnel and to the specifications of the pipelines and we undertook the estimation of the potential oil losses at failures at our local river crossings. The basic premise was that oil loss in a rupture situation would be limited either by the closest control valves or by adjacent high points in the lines; our calculations were based on the locations of these features.

The “worst case discharge” (WCD) numbers obtained showed that the largest projected oil losses would be at the Totagatic and Namekagon River crossings respectively and roughly two thirds of that would escape before the rupture could be confirmed and the control valves closed.

Enbridge uses a computer program, its Automatic Valve Placement (AVP) program, to establish its valve locations and can estimate how much oil would be retained in a line after a rupture. Every “dip” or depression in a line serves to hold oil and there are a lot of “dips” in the vertical profile of a pipeline. The AVP program is able



to sum the volumes of oil retained in all of the dips in a pipeline section. Fortunately, for the Totagatic, a recent meeting with Enbridge staff established that roughly three quarters of the oil in the line would be retained.

It now appears safe to conclude that the more accurate line losses predicted by the AVP program would be significantly less than our WCD projections. However, the numbers are still large. We still can't sit back and breathe easily, but Enbridge is working diligently to improve its methods of line monitoring and leak detection and we will continue our dialog with them.

Ice Ridge Remediation

A landowner may correct ice ridges (within one year) and level the berm without a permit if upland soils and materials are kept out of the lake. Typically, the material is pulled back away from the water or a tracked piece of equipment can “mush” the ridge down by traveling over the ridge in a direction parallel with the meander line of the ordinary high water mark (OHWM). In performing such earthwork, no equipment or machinery may be operated from below the ordinary high water mark or from upon the lakebed. No dredging of the lakebed by pulling back of the lakebed is allowed under this exemption. Furthermore, no restoration of lost shore with imported fill materials is allowed. That means you may not redeposit new materials below the OHWM and on the lakebed to restore what was previously there and lost through normal erosion processes other than ice push.

Wisconsin DNR

WCLRA Climate Change Resolution

Climate scientists worldwide are in near-unanimous agreement that the Earth is warming rapidly. A cause of that warming is human activity, especially through the combustion of fossil fuels which emit greenhouse gasses such as carbon dioxide (CO₂). These changes create risks to the waters of Washburn County through imore frequent severe storm events and flooding. Resulting phosphorus-laden runoff can lead to reduced water quality and more frequent toxic algae blooms.

Levying a fee on the release of CO₂ at the point of production is the best researched, sensible proposal for reducing carbon emissions that we know of.

The WCLRA board passed a resolution, forwarded to its congressional delegation, that strongly urges the United States Congress to pass legislation that levies a fee on the carbon in fossil fuels at the point of production or importation that would be sufficient to:

- a. Encourage Individuals and businesses to produce and use less fossil fuels;
- b. Reduce U.S. CO₂ emissions to 10% of 1990 levels by 2050;
- c. Encourage similar actions by other nations trading with the United States, by suitable carbon-content-based fees for imports, and rebates for exports, to nations that have not taken similar actions.

Farmer-Led Watershed Council

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 consists 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."

This year's plan includes the topics of no-till, cover crops, rotational grazing, nutrient

management, and how these practices work in our local growing and soil conditions. The farmer-led council plans to offer on-farm field days showcasing conservation practices and a workshop at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station featuring cover crops, nitrogen management research, and organic weed management options in soybeans. The farmer-led council has plans to recruit additional farmers during the coming year. Meetings and events are open to everyone, so if you are interested in learning more about conservation practices, soil health incentives, on-farm demonstrations, and the council's plans and activities please contact the council to be notified of upcoming events.

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 UW Extension Washburn County, Burnett & Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Departments, Northwest Wisconsin Graziers Network, USDA-NRCS, and Wisconsin DNR. These organizations are adding their support by providing technical personnel and matching funds.

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.

An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and American with Disabilities (ADA) requirements.

For further information please contact any one of the following individuals: council member, Bob Pederson, 715-520-7888, Washburn Co. Land Conservation Department, Brent Edlin, 715-468-4654, or Extension Washburn County Natural Resources Educator, Madeline Roberts, 715-635-4444.

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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).....715-635-4097
 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:

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

UW Extension: Madeline Roberts.....715-635-4454

County Planning, Land/Water Resource Management

Aquatic Invasive Species

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