

On The WaterFront

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

Zebra Muscle Update By Cathie Erickson

Professionals and volunteers have been working together through the summer to determine how many zebra mussels have made their way into northwest Wisconsin and to curtail their spread. In addition we are monitoring developments in other parts of the country to make sure that we are following the best practices available.

In August, the WDNR led an intense day of searching in Big McKenzie. Experts from around the state used three pontoon boats and scuba gear to search the shoreline and submerged objects. Unfortunately, more adults were found. The total number of adult zebra mussels found in Big McKenzie is now approaching a thousand and is considered an “established population”.

Watercraft inspections in the McKenzie Lakes area were increased this summer. Both Washburn and Burnett County provided paid inspectors, a WDNR Water Guard covered other shifts at Big McKenzie and lake associations provided volunteers. As a result, the public landing on Big McKenzie was covered most daytime hours Friday – Sunday.

Decontamination of watercraft entering area lakes and especially those leaving infested lakes is our best tool for preventing the spread. Self-service wash stations have been installed at all three McKenzie Lakes, Fish Lake, and Lipsett Lake. Owners are strongly encouraged to use the mild bleach solution (2 tbs. bleach per gallon of water) provided at these stations. Signage provides guidance on how to thoroughly decontaminate watercraft using the tools provided. (Continued on page 5).



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PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

By Phil Sylla

It's surprising. Of the 478 people who are currently members of the Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association only 104 of them will receive this Fall Newsletter at a Washburn County Post Office: Spooner, Minong, Shell Lake, Birchwood, Sarona, Springbrook, Trego, or Stone Lake. Of the remaining 374, some newsletters will go to adjoining counties; a good many will be delivered to the Twin Cities area; quite a few will go to the Eau Claire area; others will travel further south in Wisconsin, and a few will go to Illinois. 78% of WCLRA's members are nonlocal. Several things can be inferred: our lakes and rivers exert a wide spread allure, and (if our members are property owners) a lot of recreational property owners live outside the county.

By maintaining WCLRA membership, members show interest and concern for the welfare of our waters no matter where they live. The number of nonlocal members, however, indicates that the demographics of our county are different from counties that rely less heavily on tourism. Non-residents, you are important. We need you and your love of water to help us safe guard our treasures.

WCLRA members who are not county residents may feel that they do not have a voice in the Washburn County community, but the Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association can be their voice. Contact us and let us know the concerns you feel for our waters. Visit our web site to familiarize yourself with local water issues like invasive species, Wisconsin legislative issues, or the oil pipeline. Attend a meeting of the Board of Directors. All meetings are open and are announced on our web site. Be aware that you are part of a majority on our membership list and we want to hear from you.

WCLRA ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

The Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association (WCLRA) elected the following officers at their September 15 board meeting: president, Phil Sylla, Trego; vice-president Dave Vold, Spooner; secretary, Pat Shifferd, Trego; and treasurer, Kevin Campbell, Sarona. WCLRA promotes protection and responsible use of Washburn County's surface waters, wetlands, groundwater, shorelands, and wildlife. Membership includes lake associations, individuals, and organizations. For more information, see WCLRA.org.

If you own property in Washburn County and want to contact a legislator about an issue or concern, these are your representatives:

Wisconsin State Senate:

Janet Bewley Sen.Bewley@legis.wi.gov

Wisconsin State Assembly:

Romaine Quinn (District 75) Rep.Quinn@legis.wi.gov

Nick Milroy (District 73) Rep.Milroy@legis.wi.gov

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DNR
Kathy Bartilson

Conservation Wardens
Dave Swanson
Jon Hagen

Zoning Administrator
Web Macomber

2017 ANNUAL REVIEW

Purple loosestrife beetles: Two board members worked with Washburn County Land/Water Conservation Department to put beetles on the Yellow River. Over the five years WCLRA has been helping to put out beetles, we have seen significant reduction in loosestrife on the river.

Washburn County Zoning Committee: A dedicated member monitors and attends Zoning Committee meetings with agenda items that impact our shorelines.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS): The Board supported a successful \$49,000 AIS grant for Washburn County Land/Water Conservation.

Educating Youth: Membership dues and contributions to our education programs contribute to the Youth Environmental Stewardship (YES) water resources focused program At Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary for elementary students in Washburn County.

On-going Board education:

Two members graduated from WI Lake Leaders Institute.

Two members serve on the boards of the St. Croix River Association and Wisconsin Lakes.

Several members helped plan the WI Lakes Northwest Lakes Conference

Communications outreach:

Maintained wclra.org website.

Published two *On the Waterfront* newsletters

Revised our WCLRA brochure and purchased WCLRA floatable key chains for giveaways.

One-year free membership and newsletters to first-year lake property owners.

Submitted for publication "Water Wise" articles related to water resources protection to local newspapers. All were published in at least one newspaper.

Had displays at WI Lakes Conference, Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary's Spring Fling, WI the Canoe Heritage Museum Wooden Boat Show, and informational meeting zebra mussels featuring WCLRA, Enbridge pipeline in Washburn County, and zebra mussels.

Brought Wisconsin Historical Society's display "Wisconsin's Waters: Great Lakes/Small Streams" to Shell Lake Schools.

Met with local legislator regarding zebra mussels found in Washburn County.

WCLRA Engaged In Critical Water Issues in Washburn County.

- Zebra mussels after their discovery in big McKenzie Lake. Cathie Erickson represented WCLRA on a Zebra Mussel Management Team that was assembled to determine the scope of the invasion and minimize the spread.
- WCLRA adopted a position statement about oil pipelines in March that promises to continue constructive discussions with Enbridge Energy Company; build public awareness about pipeline hazards; and encourage the development of renewable energy resources rather than pipelines. Board members met with Enbridge officials and attended training in case of rupture.

JOHN HAACK HONORED

On August 16, Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association (WCLRA) held an appreciation gathering for John Haack, retired natural resources specialist with University of Wisconsin Extension. John has been an invaluable resource to WCLRA and the community at large over the years. Pat Shifferd, board member, praised John, saying, "he has been a stalwart environmental educator providing high quality input on a range of programs from scientific research to family and child naturalist programs." Fred Blake, board member, noted that "John is so well recognized as THE person to go to for natural resources information, that most people refer to him by his first name alone."



Thanking John Haack for his contributions to WCLRA are board members (front, left to right) Charlotte Shover, Linda Anderson, Pat Shifferd, Cathie Erickson, Kevin Campbell; (back, left to right) Fred Blake, Ed Fisher, Phil Sylla, Dave Vold, and Craig Walkey, WCLRA chair.

Next year marks the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This Act was designed to preserve outstanding natural, cultural and recreational qualities of over 12,700 miles of national, beautiful rivers. Look forward to more information on our local wild rivers the St. Croix, Totagatic, and Namekagon in our next newsletter.



LOON MIGRATION

(Reprinted with permission of Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine. Excerpt by Glenda C. Booth)

In late October and early November before lakes freeze, loons fly south to coastal seas, with some traveling 3,800 miles. Loons are one of the few birds found in both freshwater and salt water, from northern lakes to southern marine environments.

Loons migrate south their first autumn and do not return to their breeding area for three years on average, says Andrew East, who has studied loons as a field biologist in Wisconsin and other states. Scientists are trying to understand where loons go during that time.

From mid-January to February, adults have a "catastrophic" molt, losing all feathers and becoming flightless for three to four weeks.

"Winter is stressful for loons because new feathers are growing and they are having a complete molt," explains Jim Paruk, director of the Center for Loon Conservation at Maine's Biodiversity Research Institute.

Loons return to northern lakes and rivers sporting their distinctive plumage usually in April or early May to breed and raise their young. Most migrating loons will return to the same area within 30 miles of their birthplace.



To take flight, loons may run as far as a quarter of a mile on the water's surface to build enough speed to get aloft.

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Zebra Mussels

By Cathie Erickson

Monitoring For Mussels

Veligers are the larval stage of zebra mussels, and looking for veligers is an important part of early detection. A veliger tow is a method of collecting a sample from a waterbody that can be analyzed in laboratories to determine whether veligers are present. The presence of one or more veligers indicates that the waterbody may have a reproducing population of zebra mussels. Veliger tows have been done in Big McKenzie as well as other lakes in Washburn and Burnett counties. Two veligers were found in Big McKenzie but none in the other lakes.

It is easier to test for the presence of adult zebra mussels. Citizen-led several efforts have dropped dozens of plate samplers dropped in lakes around the area. After approximately a month the plates are pulled about to see if any zebra mussels are attached. So far, more adult zebra mussels have been found in Big McKenzie and two were found in Middle McKenzie. Other area lakes where this was done include Long Lake in Washburn County, Fish Lake, Lipsett Lake, Big Bass Lake and all Town of Chicog lakes including Lower McKenzie. So far no zebra mussels have been found in these other lakes.

In addition to the work done on area lakes, the St. Croix River Association and the National Park Service monitored for zebra mussels throughout the St. Croix River watershed. Most of the monitoring blocks they placed in the lower riverway (near Stillwater, Hudson, Hastings, and Prescott), where there are known zebra mussels, came up heavily encrusted. They also conducted veliger tows in the middle watershed in Minnesota and Wisconsin and did not learn of any new infestations. Likewise the plate samplers they placed in the flowages of the upper riverway found no zebra mussels.

Burnett County, with funding from an AIS grant and area lake associations recently purchased a spray washer which will be used extensively in 2018. The WDNR's hot water pressure washing

station has also been used at the McKenzie landing, but is not often available because it covers a large area of the state.

Information for Service Providers and Shoreland Owners

It's critical for anyone taking watercraft out of the lakes in the fall to avoid using equipment that has been another lake. Both Washburn and Burnett Counties have sent letters to service providers reminding them of the importance of disinfecting their equipment. In addition, both service providers and property owners are being asked to "inspect for zebra mussels along the wheels and dock support systems that sit in the water all year. If you feel something like sandpaper, it may be a small zebra mussel. Sizes range from thumbnail to pencil lead (or smaller)." Anyone who is on a waterbody other than Big McKenzie and finds something suspicious should note the location, bag and refrigerate it, and call Lisa Burns at 715-468-4654.

Looking Ahead

We often hear people say things like, "There's nothing that can be done about zebra mussels, is there?" Right now the main thing we can do is work hard to curtail the spread. However, there is scientific research going on, particularly in Minnesota, to better understand zebra and quagga mussels and test methods for controlling them. Professionals and citizens from the McKenzie Lakes Area Zebra Mussel Management Team continue to attend workshops and monitor new development on this research.

In addition, the Management Team and other volunteers will expand outreach, inspections and decontamination efforts next summer.

Always remember to: **INSPECT** boats and trailers, **REMOVE** attached aquatic plants and animals, **DRAIN** all water from boats and trailers, **NEVER REMOVE** plants or live fish away from a water body.

CONTINUED ENBRIDGE-WCLRA INTERACTIONS

by Fred Blake

Since WCLRA first established a communication link with Enbridge several years ago, our goal has been to evaluate the safety of the four critical pipeline river crossings in our area. They are the Namekagon, the Totagatic, the Eau Claire and the St. Croix rivers. Even though the Eau Claire and St. Croix crossings are not in Washburn County, they are part of the St. Croix river system and, hence, are of definite interest to our group.

During the ensuing period, our efforts have been directed toward educating ourselves on the construction and operation of pipelines to enable us to communicate with Enbridge at a knowledgeable level. A number of field trips and meetings at the Enbridge Superior, Wisconsin facility have given us a good technical foundation on which our interactions have been based. Members of our Government/Environment Committee have visited a pumping station and several valve sites along the pipeline. In addition, experts from Edmonton, Alberta were brought in to speak to us on the topics of valve placement and leak detection, both critically related to pipeline safety.

This summer, we asked to visit the remaining valve sites and crossing areas in our area of interest. That area extends from just north of the St. Croix River pipeline crossing near

Gordon to the Namekagon River crossing just southwest of Hayward. On September 18, four of the five members of our committee visited those valve sites accompanied by four technical staff people from Enbridge. Because of liability and security concerns, we could not visit those sites unattended. Most of the valve sites were at a significant distance from the actual river crossings and there was not time to hike to each of the actual river crossing areas. With the exception of the St Croix River crossing, the rivers were not in sight from the valve locations. The field trip gave our group the opportunity to observe first-hand pipeline valve site locations outside of a pumping station facility. There is surprisingly little visible above ground.

As we have continued to educate ourselves, many questions have been answered, but, not unexpectedly, others have been raised. We will shortly begin to summarize the information we have accumulated and prepare a report for our board, but there are still some areas where we need additional information. We recently requested additional technical assistance from Enbridge and suggested a working session with technical staff at the Superior, Wisconsin facility as the simplest approach. Enbridge readily agreed. No date has been set at the date of this writing and

the meeting will not likely occur before this article needs to be submitted. Look to our website (www.wclra.org) or our spring newsletter issue for subsequent information. We continue to experience an open and cooperative relationship in our dealings with Enbridge.

What Is Lake Turnover?

During late summer and autumn, air temperatures cool the surface water of lakes causing its density to increase. The heavier water sinks, forcing the lighter, less dense water to the surface. This continues until the water temperature at all depths reaches approximately 39° F. Because there is very little difference in density at this stage, the waters are easily mixed by the wind. The sinking action and mixing of the water by the wind results in the exchange of surface and bottom waters which is called "turnover."

During spring, the process reverses itself. This time ice melts, and surface waters warm and sink until the water temperature at all depths reaches approximately 39° F. The sinking combined with wind mixing causes spring "turnover."

MN DNR <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakes/faqs.html>

Wisconsin Lakes Trivia

1. Which of the following is the most common type of lake in Wisconsin? Seepage lake, spring lake, drainage lake, or impoundment?
2. Seepage lakes have no surface inlet or outlet. Therefore, their average water levels are dependent upon what two water sources?

1. Seepage lake 2. Ground water and precipitation

How Do Fish Survive in Winter?

When the temperatures plummet and our lakes freeze over, it's difficult to understand how fish can survive. Unlike humans who adapt to the cold by adding layer upon layer of clothing, fish adapt naturally but their behavior does change as winter progresses.

Lake temperatures in winter don't drop below freezing unless the lake totally freezes out. In late fall/early winter many lakes turnover. The water has lots of oxygen, the food sources of fish are stirred up, and fish are active. At first ice, pikes and panfish feed heavily and in shallower water. As the winter deepens, and snow covers the ice, oxygen declines, and some but not all vegetation dies back. Fish conserve their energy and have diminished need for food and oxygen. They tend to seek deeper water and gravitate toward cribs. (MN DNR)

LAKE BOTTOM MYSTERIES: WINTER IN THE UNDERWATER FOREST

By Paul Skawinski, CLMN Statewide Coordinator, UW-Extension Lakes

Gazing over a frozen lake it's hard to imagine a lush forest of green plants, especially under your boots, through the snow and under a foot or more of solid ice. But believe it – there is a thriving ecosystem down there even though its residents may be a bit more lethargic than last time you saw them.

In an effort to understand what our aquatic plant communities look like beneath the ice, and which species are toughing it out during the long, dark winter, I have been working with a couple of fellow botanists to peer into this mysterious wintery world. Bringing along a bunch of homemade equipment, some specialized camera gear, a lot of warm clothing and some equally crazy colleagues, I set out to find some answers.

On a few weekends per year since 2012, we have visited fourteen lakes in Central and Northern Wisconsin, marking a few of the sites so that we could repeatedly visit them and watch how they change through the winter season. As of our last adventure on March 1st, 2015, we compiled a list of 30 species that are persisting as apparently healthy, green plants under the ice. We've also been delighted to see an abundance of animal life living in these miniature forests, especially caddisflies, large zooplankton like *Daphnia* and copepods, and fishes such as sculpins, bluegills, and bluntnose minnows. Beds

of green plants appear to be serving as gathering places for animals at a time when other areas of the lakes are desolate by comparison.

Old Man Winter brings us lakes that appear lifeless and frozen in time, but rest assured they are swimming with life.

What started out as a one-day trip to a couple of lakes has turned into a Sunday tradition to explore additional lakes and seek out individual plant species. Each spring, we're always excited to see which of our leafy friends powered through to see the light – the light of springtime, that is.

Check out winter's underwater forest in this video that takes you through ten inches of snow, eight inches of ice and down four feet to the bottom of Big Carr Lake in January.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=te9iF5OTdtg>



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In A New Light: Isabella, 16- "Seeing New Things"

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