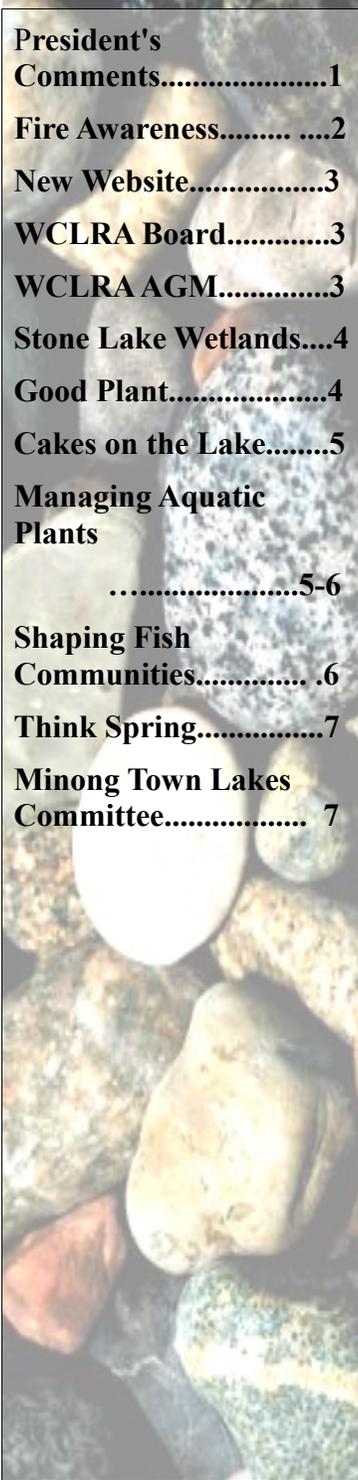


**Fall 2014 Newsletter #34**



President's  
 Comments.....1  
 Fire Awareness.....2  
 New Website.....3  
 WCLRA Board.....3  
 WCLRA AGM.....3  
 Stone Lake Wetlands....4  
 Good Plant.....4  
 Cakes on the Lake.....5  
 Managing Aquatic  
 Plants  
 .....5-6  
 Shaping Fish  
 Communities.....6  
 Think Spring.....7  
 Minong Town Lakes  
 Committee.....7

**PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS**

September 23, 2014 was a most beautiful day and Jane and I were canoeing at sunset. I thought I heard a cricket. Jane thought it was a bird. I don't hear crickets like I remember when growing up.

In the 1950s in Chicago, when I was five, we chased and captured lightning bugs and put them in glass jelly jars with grass to feed them hoping they would live. We would shake the jars so they would become lanterns. A dozen kids chasing and capturing lightning bugs in our yard on any given night could never exhaust the supply. I hope my Mom released them when we lost interest.

Similarly in the 1950s and 60s, I would listen to a world of chirping crickets outside my Chicago bedroom window. The sound was like a continuous pulsing rhythm. It was deafening and dominated the night sounds lulling me to sleep.

In the late 1960s, we had a lake cabin in Southeast Wisconsin. I would listen to the frogs croaking in the night similar to the rhythm of the crickets. All are gone now. I see a few lightening bugs sometimes in mid-June. I hear no crickets at all. Although our Spider Lake shoreline is a perfect habitat for frogs, I rarely hear frogs at all.

I set the first draft of this article aside for a few days and I began to wonder. Did I imagine the abundance of lightning bugs that were so numerous that watching them could make you dizzy? Were the crickets really that numerous and loud? Were there so many frogs that you had to watch your step walking on wet grass after dark? Jane says, "Oh yes. I remember those same things growing up in the country."

We have two breeding pairs of loons that return to our lake each spring which takes me back to the 1950's when we vacationed Up North and loons were much of the experience. No change here thank goodness, but I worry when they too may be gone.

Sorry. Fall makes me think about such things. I hope everyone has a safe and mild winter.

Craig walkey, President

## WILDFIRE AWARENESS

Article provided by Ben Garrett  
Wildland Urban Interface Specialist

As homeowners, landowners and recreationists in Northwest Wisconsin, we all love stepping back in time and enjoying a simpler life. Even if only for a weekend, we take in the beautiful forests, grasslands, marshes, lakes and rivers that make up this unique area. With all of the visitors to the forests of Northwest Wisconsin, there is one visitor that we often don't think about, but should prepare for....wildland fires.

Over the last 10 years, Washburn and Burnett Counties have experienced about 850 fires burning over 1700 acres. Across the state, each year, we experience around 1500 wildfires burning around 3000 acres. Though fires can occur at any time of year in Wisconsin, the greatest risk occurs from mid-March through early June. (See Figure 1).

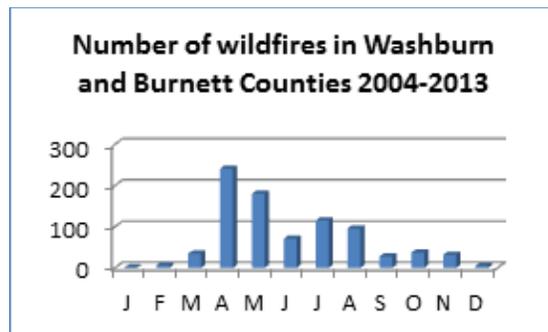


Figure 1: Number of wildfires in Washburn County by month.

The buildup of dead leaves, pine needles and plants in the fall and winter greatly increases the amount of "fuel" near your home. This dead vegetation quickly dries up once the snow melts in the spring, becoming readily available fuel for a wildfire. Human activity causes nine out of 10 wildfires in Washburn County, 22 percent of which are started by people burning debris. Contrary to popular belief, lightning accounts for less than 5% of wildfires in Wisconsin (See Figure 2).

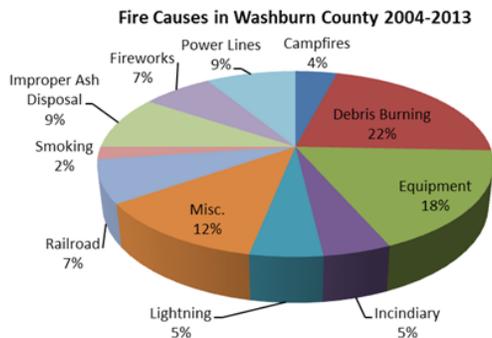


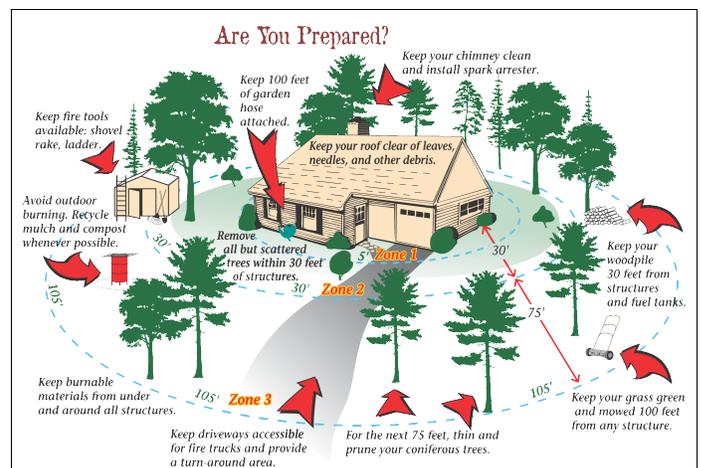
Figure 2: Washburn County annual fire causes.

Here are some easy things that we can do before snowfall that can help protect our homes and natural surroundings without a lot of extra expense.

1. Remove flammable materials such as pine needles and dry leaves on roofs, in rain gutters or within 5 feet of buildings.
2. Mow the grass within 30 feet of buildings.
3. Prune evergreen limbs away from the ground within 70 feet of the structure.

Before spring, make sure to move any remaining firewood to a spot at least 30 feet away from buildings and away from overhanging branches.

If you need suggestions for your property visit our web page at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) and search the key word "Ember", or contact Ben Garrett at (715) 635-4088.



Our *On The Waterfront* newsletter is sent to individual members and to the officers and directors of member associations. If your association had elections this summer, please make us aware of any changes in your board composition or the addresses of officers and directors. Contact Fred Blake at 715-469-3228 or by email at [blakelake@centurytel.net](mailto:blakelake@centurytel.net)

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## WEB SITE

[www.wclra.org](http://www.wclra.org)

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John Haack

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**Resource Management** (including  
AIS)

Lisa Burns

### **DNR**

Kathy Bartilson

### **Citizen Lake Monitoring (DNR)**

Kris Larsen

### **Conservation Wardens**

Dave Swanson  
Jon Hagen

### **Zoning Administration**

Web Macomber

## NEW WEBSITE NOW LIVE ON-LINE

By Pat Shifferd

A completely revamped WCLRA website is now available at [www.wclra.org](http://www.wclra.org). The site provides water quality news, both regional and from around the state, along with helpful hints for lake and river property owners and links to agencies and groups who work with WCLRA to protect our precious water resources. This information, including our newsletters, is presented online in a user-friendly, easy-to-access format that can be easily updated by WCLRA volunteers.

A feature that the developers are particularly proud of is the ability to link to our member lake associations and other groups. Clicking the tab "Member Associations" brings up a list of our member groups. For those with their own websites, a link has been installed. For member lake associations who do not have their own website, we will eventually be able to provide a page for any member group that would like to take advantage of this service. To see what a member association would look like, go to the WCLRA website and click on "member associations". By clicking on either Stone Lake or Twin Lakes you will be able to see what the association webpage will look like. Both of these pages are works in progress. If your member association is interested in this type of service, click on the "contact us". Once we are fully operational, Don Shaner, from the website committee, will be contacting you with more details.

Another new service is the ability to join, renew, or make a donation to WCLRA online through PayPal. This will streamline our membership processes for both members and WCLRA. Those who do not use online payments can print a form from the website, and we will continue to mail renewal letters and forms annually.

The new site has been made possible by a grant from DNR and through a creative partnership with Chris Frasch of CF Web Services in Cable WI.

## WCLRA AGM 2014

This year's AGM was held at the Spooner Ag Research Station. The guest speaker was Tracy Hames, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA), who spoke to the group about the roles of wetlands in protecting our lakes, rivers and streams. According to Mr. Hames, Washburn County has over 80,000 acres of wetlands, covering more than 15 percent of the county. In spring the wetlands help prevent flooding by holding snowmelt and rain. Wetlands remove pollutants as the water filters through the soil to the groundwater. Wetlands provide a rich habitat for ducks, amphibians, and a variety of insects that start their life cycle in water.

Hames said funds are available through the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) or the Fish and Wildlife Service to restore wetlands. WWA also has a program to help private landowners protect wetlands.

Also on the agenda was the election of board of directors. The following directors were re-elected: Pat Shifferd, Ed Fischer, and Wayne Sabatke. Two new directors were elected: Dave Vold and Philip Sylla.

During the round table discussion one topic was how WCLRA can attract younger people to its membership. Another topic was where lakes can find grant help. Several members shared information on these topics.

Presentation of the new website along with the new WCLRA logo was well received. The new logo will replace the "blue canoe" on all communications.

## STONE LAKE COMMUNITY WETLAND PARK

By Cathie Erickson

Our AGM keynote speaker, Tracey Hames, Wisconsin Wetlands Association's Executive Director, closed his talk with a slide showing the Stone Lake Community Wetland Park. He cited the park as an example of a local initiative that exemplifies how communities across Wisconsin can preserve the wetlands that remain and restore those that have been lost.

The 17.6 acre park was created by the Town of Stone Lake along with community volunteers and donors and funded by two WDNR Stewardship Grants. The first grant was used for purchasing the property with the primary goal of preserving the wetland to cleanse water entering Stone Lake. Next, a park committee was formed to plan the development of the park which now includes a trail system through the upland, boardwalk along the wetland, and a gazebo overlooking the lake. Signs were made to inform visitors about some of the park's natural features. The second grant was obtained to help fund these features.

For the last few years, the park committee has focused on eliminating some of the buckthorn that dominates many parts of the park's wetlands while maintaining the trails, benches and picnic tables. This is a physically demanding job and one that will continue long into the future. It's necessary, though, because if left unchecked the buckthorn would eventually crowd out natural vegetation in the park.

If you would like to visit the Wetland Park, look for the entrance sign on Hwy. 70 just east of the town of Stone Lake or enter via the boardwalk that is near the covered bridge and public restrooms in town.

### KNOW THE NATIVE WETLAND PLANTS

#### Common Bladderwort

How to identify common bladderwort:

- Long, free-floating stems have finely divided, leaf-like braches.
- Scattered on the braches are bladders that trap prey. Young, green bladders turn brown and black as they age.
- Yellow, two-lipped flowers grown on stalks above the water surface.

#### Common bladderwort provide:

- Food and cover for fish.
- Fish habitat in areas not already colonized by rooted plants.

The common bladderwort is a native plant common in parts of Wisconsin and most of the United States.

· Bladderworts are carnivorous plants; they eat meat! The bladder entrance has a flap-like hinge door surrounded by antennae-like projections and trigger hairs. When prey, from one-celled protozoan to mosquito larvae, brush against the trigger hairs, the trap door opens and they are swept inside. Most prey are digested by the plant's enzymes.

· There are three other sub-species of bladderwort in Wisconsin.

· It is found in still, shallow waters of wetlands, sphagnum bog pools, lakes, ponds, and marshes.

· **It is best to just enjoy them and let them grow.**

Learn more about common bladderworts and other native aquatic plants in *Through the Looking Glass: A Field Guide to Aquatic Plants*, Wisconsin Lakes Partnership, 1997. Contact: UWEX Lake Program, College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, 715-346-2116, [www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/publications](http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/publications).

#### Sources:

*Through the Looking Glass: A Field Guide to Aquatic Plants*, Wisconsin Lakes Partnership, 1997; DNR publication: # FH-207-97.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Natural Resources Magazine, August 2009, "Meat Eaters with Roots and Leaves," by Teresa A. Golembiewski.



## 2014 CAKES AT THE LAKE

By Marsha Stelzer

Another season of Cakes at the Lake, LLPA's longest-running public environmental series, ended in September with a fascinating look at wild rice from a cultural and ecological perspective. Wild rice pancakes on the breakfast menu from Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary's kitchen amplified the Cakes finale. A good crowd enjoyed that morning even though many around the lake had departed seasonal homes.



Midsummer Cakes attendance peaked in July with 225 hearing the clicks of and seeing Wisconsin bats. In late June, almost 200 filled the program barn to learn more about the Common loon from LLPA Loon Ranger Barb Sabatke. And a new program on The Good Aquatic Plants from UW-Madison's Susan Knight allowed many to see fresh plant specimens in dozens of containers.

LLPA's lineup for the 2015 summer season of Cakes at the Lake is again outstanding, so circle these Saturday mornings on your calendar and don't miss the multigenerational and free of charge educational programs that follow each tasty Hunt Hill breakfast.

June 13: Wetland Wildlife, with John Haack, UW-Ext Regional Natural Resources Educator. John will share his knowledge of marsh, shore and swamp species and usually has in hand turtles, frogs and other wetlanders plus recordings of frogsong—a special spring treat.

June 27: Hummingbirds. With Laura Erickson renowned Duluth ornithologist, author, birding blogger, wildlife rehabilitator and public radio host of "For the Birds" to Cakes. Laura's program will focus on ruby-throated hummingbirds.

July 18: Northwoods Niche with Audubon Center of the Northwoods a nature center from Sandstone, MN.

The program highlights live animals that make their homes from canopy to forest floor.

August 8: Spiderman Weber, with Larry Weber. An arachnid fan, Science Teacher of the Year (retired), prolific author and photographer from MN, Weber intrigued young and old at a past Cakes with his close-ups of fangs and webs and his collection of live spiders.

September 12: Logging Days in Story and Song, with Kevin McMullin, composer, educator, international performer and fiddler in the "Duck for the Oyster" band. Raconteur Kevin will mesh voice and instruments, lumberjack history and humor for our Cakes finale.

## MANAGING AQUATIC PLANTS

By Carroll Schaal

*Editor's note: This is an abridged version of the original article which you can find at: <http://www.dnr.wi.gov> under the title "A Peek Beneath the Waves".*

People's attitudes about lake plants reflect their different interests. Swimmers going to a lake to enjoy a cool dip may find brushing against aquatic plants unappealing. Lakeshore property owners often curse the plants around their dock, as do motor boaters and water skiers if they tangle with plant mats in open water. Kayakers and other silent sport boating types may look for wildlife and take delight in the varied forms of underwater vegetation. The best anglers know that the sweet spot is between a dense plant bed and deeper open water; hunters know wild rice is where the ducks hang out.

### **Making decisions, considering values and managing expectations:**

Choosing what to do with excessive aquatic plant growth, and how to do it, comes back to societal values, user expectations, the lake's natural conditions and the type of plant community the waterbody is able to support. When it comes to aquatic plant management, there need to be reasonable expectations and careful considerations. Not very many lakes are capable of being a swimming pool.

What can go wrong if lake plants are managed incorrectly? When native rooted plants are removed, a void is created and more aggressive and tolerant invasive species may replace those removed. In addition, depending on how many plants are removed and the nutrients present, the algae that were attached to the surfaces of those plants may be replaced with free-floating algal species, turning formerly clean water "pea soup" green and possibly toxic. Zooplankton, barely visible invertebrates, that feed on floating algae helping to keep it in check, seek refuge from floating predators among rooted plants.

## Managing Aquatic Plants.....continued from page 5

As plants decline so do zooplankton, potentially compounding algae problems. Fisheries may decline or change with these associated changes in water quality.



**Aquatic Plant Management:** Most native water plants don't need to be managed — they do quite fine without our assistance. When plant growth gets out of hand, the first step for a property owner can be to selectively hand-pull the nuisance plants. Manual removal of any plant within a single 30-foot wide access area around docks can be done without a permit. Invasive species can be hand-pulled anywhere. If the plant problem grows, mechanical or chemical control may be needed. This requires a permit.

With the help of lake organizations, property owners and individual recreationists, the DNR aims to maintain its long-standing mission to balance the environmental, recreational, social and economic needs of all of Wisconsin's lakes users — not always an easy task as different people like to enjoy the lakes in their own way.

*Carroll Schaal is the DNR's Lakes and Rivers Section Chief in the Bureau of Water Quality where he has worked for 20 years with the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership.*

### SHAPING FISH COMMUNITIES

By Larry Damman

Each species of fish has a climatic range determining how far north and south it will survive. Fish distribution changes are good indicators of climate change. For instance, over the last 2 decades smallmouth bass have extended their range almost 100 miles further north. That's not necessarily a bad thing but it is, in a sense, an exotic invasion into those waters. When you add or lose a species, it's going to have ripple effects throughout the fish community.

Wisconsin is blessed with a wide diversity of fish species. We are in the "tension zone" just far enough north to have the near arctic species like brook trout, walleye and northern pike but still warm enough to have the bass/sunfish family and other fish of the south. We are close to the southern limit for walleye and northern pike. Some climate predictions suggest that these species could be lost from Wisconsin within our lifetime. If you don't

relish being limited to only bass and panfish fishing, take heart. Muskies will be around for a long time. They tolerate much warmer climates than their cousin, northern pike.

Angler behavior also shapes fish communities. Many fish biologists believe that anglers catch and harvest fish faster than they can reproduce or live to large size. Therefore we protect small fish until they grow old enough to spawn. This belief is fundamental to our fishing regulations. Biology tends to be more complex. For example there was a Canadian fly-in lake which of course had big northern pike. It was no surprise that the size quality of the pike declined dramatically after road access was put in. However it wasn't entirely because the anglers harvested them before they could grow old. There were still plenty of pike, including old ones. To compensate for harvest, the pike population started to spawn at much younger ages. Because these fish were directing energy to producing gametes instead of body growth, they just didn't grow as fast. They couldn't reach the same maximum size in a normal life span.

Not all species can change at what age to spawn. They compensate for harvest by actually growing faster. It's a phenomenon biologists call "density dependent growth". Any lake has a basic limit as to how much forage it can produce. The higher a species population density is, the less forage there is available for each individual's growth. Fish grow the most during their younger years. For instance an 8 year old bass may be around 17 inches while a 12 year old bass might only be an inch longer. Subject that population to a moderate increase in fishing pressure and there may be no apparent change in the population. As more bass are harvested the remaining ones grow faster. If faster growth means an 8 year bass is now an inch longer than before, it may not matter whether any bass survive to age 12.

Back in 1990 bass fisherman wanted more large bass so minimum size limits were imposed statewide. Size limits worked well in southern Wisconsin where angling pressure is 10 times ours and habitat degradation from intense riparian development also limits bass reproduction. Locally we still had excellent bass reproductive habitat. Populations exploded to 4 or 5 times previous levels. With such high densities, growth declined to the point where bass were often dying of old age before reaching the 14 inch minimum size. Time will tell if the recent repeal of size limits in Washburn County will restore acceptable growth and size structure to the population. Today, most anglers see bass as a catch and release sport fish and have no interest in harvesting any regardless what the regulations say.

## Think Spring-Native Trees, Shrubs and Wildflowers Sale!

By Lisa Burns

Although it is only mid-fall, it's never too early to think forward to next 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 late summer storms or polar vortex; or maybe you just want to add more variety to what's already growing on your property? What about your shoreline? Would you like to add to its vegetation and improve its ability to filter runoff?

Well, you're in luck! The Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department has an annual tree, shrub and wildflower sale. All species are native and adapt well to this area. We have a variety of evergreens (spruce and pine), shrubs, and wildflower flats.



Wildflower Flats ready for pickup

### Price Breakdown:

*Evergreens*-\$20.00 per bundle of 25

*Shrubs*-\$16.00 per bundle of 10

*Wildflowers*- \$44.00 per flat (up to 48 plants)

Order forms are mailed out in late December. Depending on weather, tree/shrub pick-up is late April or early May. Wildflower pick-up is early June. You do not need to be a resident of Washburn County to order.

For more information on the sale or to request an order form, please call the department at 715-468-4654 or send an email to [landwtr@co.washburn.wi.us](mailto:landwtr@co.washburn.wi.us)

## Minong Town Lakes Committee (MTLC)

By Russ Robinson

The Minong Town Lakes Committee had a very busy 2014. This was the seventh year of organization operation. Much was done to promote the health of our area lakes and provide educational experiences for the town's residents and visitors.

This was the second year that the MTLC was responsible for monitoring boat landings on lakes throughout the town of Minong. This year, over 2700 boats were inspected at the town's major lakes.

In May, the MTLC distributed a newsletter to many of the town residents and lake property owners. This was the second newsletter produced by the MTLC and it is hoped that this will continue on an annual basis.

The MTLC also held its third free educational fair at the Minong Town Hall. Over 400 people attended this celebration of our lakes. Attendees had the benefit of hearing a number of great speakers talk on lake-related topics. The Fair also highlighted kids education and games. Nearly 400 barbeque sandwiches were served to the hungry crowd. This Fair was primarily funded by generous grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin. The Fair was made possible by hundreds of volunteer hours from members of the MTLC and other residents of the Town.



Chris Cold with friend

Next year, we plan to conduct the boat landing monitoring program again and produce a newsletter with even greater distribution. We are also beginning to plan a series of informal educational events to be held throughout the summer of 2015. If you would like to learn more about this organization go to their website:

[www.minonglakes.org](http://www.minonglakes.org).

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Photo by Russ Robinson  
 Washburn County

## 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 Violations 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 related 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:**

Lisa Burns.....715-468-4654