



The Winnebago Lakes Council promotes the long-term sustainability of lakes Winnebago, Butte des Morts, Winneconne, and Poygan and their connecting rivers.

The Council's mission is to protect and improve the ecological health and scenic beauty of the Winnebago lakes through citizen involvement in research, education, communication and cooperation.

#### Website

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

#### Email

[info@winnebagolakes.org](mailto:info@winnebagolakes.org)

#### Winnebago Lakes Council

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## Natural Shoreline Expo set for June 2

Most of us who care about water quality know the value of vegetative buffers, a width of suitable plants bordering lakes, rivers and streams. Buffers can control erosion, filter pollutants from water running off the land, and increase wildlife habitat. Implementing them on a scale large enough to protect our waterways, however, is a challenge—even though they are easy to install, relatively inexpensive and fairly simple to maintain.

To help meet this challenge, on June 2, 2007 the Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) is hosting the first annual Natural Shoreline Expo at the Sunnyview Exposition Center in Oshkosh.

The Expo will bring together in one place a broad range of information about vegetative buffers and shoreline restorations. To promote the event, the Winnebago Lakes Council, with Fox Valley Wild Ones, Winnebago Audubon, and the Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin, helped pay for a mailing to 7500 waterfront property owners and others. The Expo is expected to be of interest to both urban and rural residents.

More than 130 exhibitors have been invited to participate. Featured will be an exhibition hall where individuals can meet with shoreland restoration specialists, native plant experts, Wisconsin nurseries, and a variety of conservation organizations and lake groups. Information also will be available about local sources of phosphorus-free fertilizer.

Speakers are scheduled throughout the day: Mike Lizotte, UW Oshkosh, at 10 a.m. on aquatic invasive species; Rob McLennan, DNR, at 11 a.m. on treatment of aquatic vegetation on shorelines and Jim Ryf, shoreline property owner, at 1 p.m. on restorations and plantings. Other speakers are Rob Bursick, Dragonfly Gardens Nursery, on building butterfly and hummingbird gardens and Lisa Reas, LJ Reas Environmental, on shoreline restoration procedures.

The Expo will be held indoors from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Sunnyview Exposition Center, 500 County Road Y, Oshkosh. All events, including parking, are free. For more information, or if you want to be an exhibitor, call 920-232-1950 - Keith Marquardt, LWCD

## Join us

**Wednesday, May 16, 2007**

**6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.**

**Fin N' Feather, 22 W. Main  
Winneconne**

Join members of the Winnebago Lakes Council for a fascinating presentation given by Bill Wresch from UW Oshkosh on the trials and tribulations of the Marquette-Joliet expedition which traveled through the Lake Winnebago area. Refreshments and a cash bar will be available. Guests may also order food before, during, or after the presentation. This may be the first in a Winnebago Lakes Council speaker series. What a great opportunity to get together with like-minded friends and learn more about our region's water heritage and other topics of interest. Please encourage interested friends to attend with you. Public is welcome. - Jan Keene



**Articles:** Jan Scalpone, Mike Lizotte, Catherine Neiswender, Mark Sasing, Jan Keene, Keith Marquardt **Photos:** Louise Coumbe, Candice Mortara

## Around the Lakes

### May 16 – Marquette and Joliet Expedition

6:30 – 7:30 p.m. Fin N' Feather, Main Street, Winneconne. Bill Wresch, UW Oshkosh, recounts trials and tribulations of early exploration of the Winnebago lakes. (more on p.1)

### May 19, 20 - Fishing Has No Boundaries

Menominee Park, Oshkosh. A chance for people with disabilities to experience the fun of fishing. More information at 920-424-1389

### May 1-31, American Wetlands Month

Celebrate the uniqueness, beauty and importance of wetlands. The health of our lakes depends on wetlands. Urge elected officials to join in wetland protection efforts. Restore wetlands by planting native vegetation. Monitor their health. Or enjoy a trip through one on your own or with the Wisconsin Wetlands Association. [www.wetland.org](http://www.wetland.org).

### June 2 – Natural Shoreline Expo 2007

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Sunnyview Expo Center/Fairgrounds, Oshkosh. Exhibits, demonstrations, presentations (more on p.1)

### June 8, 9, 10 - Walleye Weekend,

Lakeside Park, Fond du Lac. Three days of fun for the entire family. [www.fdlfest.com](http://www.fdlfest.com)

**Water Quality Monitoring.** Spring has arrived, and for the third year in a row citizen monitors are collecting water quality data in the Winnebago Pool lakes. We now have over 100 trained volunteer monitors on our lakes. Data collected by volunteers is complemented by data from satellite imagery and monitoring conducted four times a year at three WDNR stations on Lake Winnebago. These stations are located in the south, mid and north zones of the lake. Parameters measured or analyzed at these stations include nutrients (phosphorous, nitrogen), chlorophyll (measure of algae), Secchi clarity, dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles. Recently aquatic invasive species monitoring was begun for plankton tows for the spiny water flea.

**Fox-Wolf Partners Network.** The Lakes Council recently mailed questionnaires to more than 50 conservation organizations around the lakes to obtain information for posting on the new Fox-Wolf Partners Network website. When launched, the website will be promoted to encourage greater collaboration on lake improvement projects. As the site becomes more established, partners from the business and institutional communities will be asked to participate. Let us know if your organization wants to receive a packet. [info@winnebagolakes.org](mailto:info@winnebagolakes.org)

## Spring cleaning? Parking improvements? Yard work?



### What's new in lake protection

On-going research shows that our contemporary life style continues to add new pollutants to our waterways. Here's an update on ways you can help.

**Cleaning out the medicine cabinet?** Increasingly, pharmaceuticals are contaminating our lakes and streams, leading to reproductive and developmental problems in fish and other aquatic wildlife. Don't flush waste drugs down the toilet or sink drain. Best to dispose of them at medication collection programs, similar to the one four area counties held early in May at several Senior and Civic centers. Otherwise, render leftovers unattractive by mixing them with coffee grounds or kitty litter before placing them in the trash for disposal in a licensed solid waste landfill.

**Planning to have your driveway resealed or know of a parking lot scheduled for resealing?** Sealants are a black liquid spread or painted on asphalt pavement to protect or beautify the pavement. Make certain asphalt-based, not coal tar, sealants are used. Coal tar contains high levels of PAHs—polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons—which have been linked to lesions in fish and cancer in humans. Run-off from driveways and parking lots contaminated with PAHs builds up in sediments in lakes and streams. The Dane County Board recently banned coal tar sealants, following the lead of Austin, Texas. Other communities are expected to do the same.

**Fertilizing your lawn?** Phosphorus pollution is not new, but the increased availability of phosphorus-free lawn fertilizer in many garden shops around the Winnebago area is a new and welcomed addition. Check out labels and purchase only fertilizer with "0" as the middle number, then fertilize sparingly. Phosphorus is responsible for excessive weedy growth in our lakes. Most soil in this area has sufficient phosphorus. The Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation Department has compiled a list of area shops selling phosphorus free fertilizer. Pick up a copy at the Expo on June 2 or call the department at 920-232-1950.

## Website goes live, outreach increases, thanks to help from the community

The Winnebago Lakes Council recently launched its website. Check it out: [www.winnebagolakes.org](http://www.winnebagolakes.org). The site provides up-to-date information about events and projects and describes opportunities to participate in various lakes-related research, educational and organizational activities. It also has links to other resources about our lakes. Mike Lizotte, Jan Scalpone and Greg Keil worked with eBiz Results in Oshkosh to set it up. Thanks to the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation and WDNR for financial help.

Launching the website coincided with increased activity of the Lakes Council's Membership Committee. On March 24, Bob and Karen Beckstrom exhibited the Lakes Council's new display board and membership brochures at a well-attended forum presented by the Wolf River Conservation Alliance at Mosquito Hill Nature Center. The Lakes Council anticipates participation in future events by other lake-related organizations Thanks to Castle-Pierce for printing our brochure and to the many businesses displaying our membership material. Membership Committee co-chairs are Dani Stolley and Paul Fowler. Check our website to find out how to join the Membership or other Lakes Council committees.

## Busy summer planned for aquatic invasive species projects

This summer the Lakes Council will be engaged in several major efforts to involve and educate citizens about aquatic invasive species (AIS). The Clean Boats Clean Waters program will be expanded, a new Wisconsin AIS volunteer monitoring program will be initiated, and a regional AIS plan will move forward. The Lakes Council will be cooperating with UW-Extension and UW Oshkosh to implement these activities, funded in part by a state AIS grant received in 2006.

**Clean Boats, Clean Waters.** Last summer, five interns from UW Oshkosh worked at Winnebago Pool boat landings to launch the education and watercraft inspection program. This spring, 32 students are taking the Clean Boats, Clean Waters training in hopes of qualifying for the ten internships open this summer. Some of the experienced interns from last year are returning as trainers, with a goal of training 100 citizen volunteers.

Volunteers work at busy boat landings checking boats to remove vegetation, collecting data on various boater characteristics and handing out educational material. Training sessions take about two

to four hours. Last year's interns inspected over 1600 boats and made more than 2000 contacts with boaters.

**Wisconsin AIS Volunteer Monitoring Program.** This is a new Wisconsin program. Volunteers will be trained to collect animals and plants, identify the species, and tell them apart from natives. They will be given a manual, gear to trap crayfish and net waterfleas, and instructions on reporting new invaders. More trained eyes will help us find invaders while there still may be time to act, and to establish where they first show up so we can try to understand how they got here. This program also responds to the many requests we have had from non-boaters who want to help monitor lakes.

**Regional AIS Plan.** Candice Mortara has been hired as a part-time coordinator to help carry out a planning process to prevent and control aquatic invasive species in the Winnebago Pool lakes. She comes to us with degrees in Philosophy and Public Administration and has a passion for using her skills in community and relationship building to help with complex environmental issues.

The plan is a challenging aspect of AIS activities, as there are very few examples of regional AIS plans covering such a large area with multiple counties and municipalities. It aims to outline



Candice Mortara

prevention, control and response strategies that are acceptable to people around the lakes. It must have ideas and buy-in of residents, anglers, boaters, local governments and many other stakeholders in order to be effective at protecting the lakes from potentially harmful invasive species. With our lakes just a short distance from the Great Lakes, they are especially vulnerable to more than 180 exotic species currently found there.

Questions about the planning process can be directed to Candice at (920) 739-0299 or [kevcan@ameritech.net](mailto:kevcan@ameritech.net). For further information about volunteer opportunities, contact Michael Lizotte at 920-424-3148. Also check our website for AIS updates and tips.

## Invasive Species Tip

### Properly Dispose of Bait

Unwanted fishing bait should stay on shore; it should never be dumped in the lake. The Winnebago pool has at least one invader, the Rusty Crayfish, that started as bait dropped somewhere in the Wolf River watershed. In April, Wisconsin addressed emergency rules about bait to try to stop the spread of the VHS virus, a deadly fish disease.

The first rule of prevention is proper disposal. The bait goes into the trash. Same for land critters – large earthworms are not native to Wisconsin, and have changed forest ecosystems. If there's water, pour it onto the ground away from the lake.

The second step is to clean any bait-holding equipment (buckets, cages, live-wells, etc.). The VHS virus can be found in infected fish, parts, slime, and the water they are swimming in. Disinfection takes soaking in chlorine bleach—1/3<sup>rd</sup> cup in five gallons of water— for five minutes, followed by a rinse with clean water. Note:: chlorine is toxic to aquatic life, so keep it out of the lakes and streams.

Bait can be expensive, but anglers know better than anyone the treasures they are protecting by sacrificing unused bait.—Michael Lizotte



Bait bucket decal  
(UWEX lakes program)

## What is the VHS virus?

Watch your local newspaper for new emergency rules to stop the spread of VHS—Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia. This virus is considered a serious threat to Wisconsin's fisheries. It has killed tens of thousands of fish in the lower Great Lakes. It probably is already in Lake Michigan and could be in Lake Superior and the Mississippi River drainage basin soon. Wisconsin officials are worried about what it could do to our multi-million dollar sports fishery.

VHS is a pathogen that affects fish of all sizes and age ranges. It does not pose a threat to human health. It can cause hemorrhaging of fish tissue, including internal organs, and is often fatal for infected fish. The virus is water borne and is believed to remain active for up to 14 days. Once a fish is infected with VHS, there is no known cure. Not all infected fish develop the disease, but they can carry and spread the disease to other fish.



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## Aquatic plants need help at the starting gate

Spring and early summer are critical times for lakes. Warming waters stimulate the birth of new life and people emerge from their winter “cocoons” to renew lake connections.

In the Winnebago lakes hidden gardens are quietly warming up beneath the water’s surface. Plants with common names like “coontail” and “water celery” are aquatic versions of similar plants we grow in our own vegetable gardens. These plants, however, grow in shallow water, usually less than six feet deep, but only if healthy amounts of sunlight are available as fuel for plant growth.

Even underwater, plants need light, and lots of it. The light is necessary for growth and the process we know as “photosynthesis”. Photosynthesis converts water and carbon dioxide into sugar and oxygen using sunlight as the fuel. When lake plants are healthy they provide us with a harvest of clear water, low algae levels, and homes for

pike, dragonflies, canvasback ducks, and yellow perch .

Because the Winnebago lakes tend to be turbid, essential light is often filtered out before it can reach the struggling garden. On a typical May day, about 90 percent of the noon time light penetrates into the lake.

### Water level management is our best tool for enhancing aquatic gardens in the Winnebago lakes

This sunlight is dispersed and absorbed as heat as it travels downward into deeper depths. The layer of water, therefore, acts like a sunlight filter. The deeper this filter layer, the less sun gets to the plants. The greatest struggle is during May and early June when the small seedling sprouts and buds need quality sunlight.

It’s a problem on the Winnebago lakes . These lakes, over many years, have lost thousands of acres of plant garden due to high lake levels and water pollution. These gardens once bloomed in 10 feet of water or more. Today they struggle for sufficient light at six foot depths.

So, what can we do about it? We can manage the depth of the “sunlight filter layer” during May and early June to help sunlight reach the aquatic gardens. Water level management is our best tool for enhancing aquatic gardens in the Winnebago lakes.

Bottom line? Smart water level management = more garden = clearer water by your pier and beach = more wildlife, more fish = improved economics for the community = community stability = healthy places of living for us all.

Did you know that? Of course you did!

— Mark Sesting, WDNR Lake Specialist