



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.

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Winnebago Lakes Council

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Grant awarded to implement AIS plan

Phase II aimed at local and regional decision makers

The Winnebago Lakes Council has been awarded a \$67,500 state grant to initiate implementation of a regional aquatic invasive species (AIS) plan for the Winnebago lakes in 2009-2010. This will be Phase II of a project begun with Winnebago County in 2006 as a major AIS effort to develop a regional plan for the Winnebago Pool lakes and to establish public education programs, principally Clean Boats Clean Waters, at public boat launches.

The Winnebago system has had numerous detrimental aquatic invasive species introduced to it—carp, zebra mussels, Eurasian water milfoil, VHS virus and others—and is threatened by hundreds of additional species from the Great Lakes, a short distance downstream or via trailer. By awarding this grant—the only AIS education, prevention and planning grant given during this grant cycle in the Northeastern region—the state is recognizing the significance of the AIS threat

to our lakes and the importance of the lake system to the state. The goals for Phase II of the AIS project are to:

- Hold an educational workshop on AIS prevention and control for local and regional decision makers;
- Finalize the regional AIS strategic plan by completing inventories and seeking public comments;
- Present the AIS regional plan to local governing bodies and public audiences;
- Continue and broaden support for Clean Boats Clean Waters
- Hire a coordinator and interns to assist with these goals

A draft of the regional AIS plan and information about the public participation planning process during Phase I can be found on the Winnebago Lake Council's Web site: www.winnebagolakes.org.

Spring Events

State of the Winnebago Pool, May 19, 2009, 7 p.m. Fin 'n Feather, Winneconne

Popular speaker Kendall Kamke, DNR fisheries biologist, will share information about efforts that help ensure a stable and robust local fish population in the Winnebago Pool. The fish in the Pool provide valuable economic and recreational benefits to the area. Walleye season accounts for about \$300 million to the local economy and sturgeon season \$3 million. The event is free and open to the public.

Conservation Expo, May 30, 2009, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Sunnyview Exposition Center, County Y, Oshkosh

Booths, demonstrations and talks about rain gardens, rain barrels, native plants, residential well sampling, well abandonment, fish habitat, attracting wildlife, landscaping for water quality, shoreline restoration, composting and yard care. Live plant sale. Featured speakers include *Lene D'Hondt*, building your own rain barrel; *Jennifer Baker*, landscaping with native plants; *Lisa Reas*, construction and installation of a rain garden; *Dan Rudebeck*, Lake Poygan water quality issues; *Jon Huser*, shoreland restoration; and Wisconsin Public Service, Focus on Energy program for saving energy at home. This is the third annual Expo sponsored by the Winnebago Land and Water Conservation Department. Free admission and parking. For more information contact www.welwcd.org/expo2009.htm

Around the Lakes

Miller's Bay Vegetative Management Study

You may recall last summer the City of Oshkosh received a \$25,000 grant to conduct a vegetative survey of Miller's Bay in Menominee Park. Last month the consultant, Onterra LLC, presented its findings, indicating vegetation is primarily native coontail and waterweed, with some invasive Eurasian water milfoil and curly leaf pond weed. Onterra's recommendation is to purchase a weed harvester for long-range weed removal and naturalize the shoreline to buffer the waterway. This summer, however, the city will again use herbicides to control troublesome plants in navigation channels and near mooring sites.

Rosendale Dairy. In our last issue we reported that more than 500 people attended a public informational meeting on an Environmental Impact Statement for a waste water discharge permit for the Rosendale Dairy. In February the DNR awarded the permit to the dairy. Located on County Trunk M in Pickett, this dairy is categorized as a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) and is anticipated to house and milk up to 8,300 dairy cows. Among citizens' concerns was contamination of ground and surface water from land spreading up to 46 million gallons of manure a year.

North Fond du Lac TIF District. On April 16 a fire destroyed the former Lagoon exotic dance club at 1050 Lakeshore Drive. This building was on the site a Green Lake developer proposes to turn into a hotel/convention center/mariner. The plan would involve public and private financing. In our last issue we noted the plan was opposed by some residents who in November voted for forcing a referendum any time village expenditures of \$1 million or more are needed.

Events on the water

Fishing Has No Boundaries. May 30, 31. All day. Menominee Park, Oshkosh. Educational fishing and fun for individuals with disabilities. Reservations. uwosh.edu/home/events/fishing-has-no-boundaries

Free Fishing Day, June 8, 8 a.m – 2 p.m Jefferson Park, Menasha. Heckrodt Wetland Reserve and A Fish Tale and More are sponsoring this free event during Wisconsin's Free Fishing Weekend. No fishing license is needed. Exhibitions, food, bait, equipment, and lessons for participating youth.

Walleye Weekend, June 12, 13, 14. Lakeside Park, Fond du Lac. Three days of fun for the entire family. http://www.fdlfest.com/walleye_weekend.html

Otter Street Fishing Club Walleye Fest, June 19-21 Menominee Park, Oshkosh. Team walleye tournament, fun for everyone. www.theosfc.org



Pelicans congregate at Terrell's Island (Photo by Andrew Sabai)

Bird watching on the Winnebago system

Spring is a great time for viewing birdlife on the Winnebago system. Just as the ice retreats from the shore of the lakes, many species of ducks begin to congregate in large numbers. Most of these are diving ducks (scaup, canvasbacks, mergansers, etc.) At this time they are close to shore and easy to view with binoculars, especially in places like Miller's Bay in the City of Oshkosh. On March 31st I counted 1,779 ducks of 10 species. Many of these are fueling up to journey to breeding grounds in Canada.

As spring progresses, the diving ducks follow the open water north and are replaced in places like Miller's Bay by hundreds of American coots and puddle ducks like mallards, wood ducks, and teal. Great-blue herons, common egrets, black-crowned night herons and white pelicans return to their nesting sites at the man-made islands of Miller's Bay and within Terrell's island on Lake Butte des Morts. While these places are worth the visit, you can view the far-ranging birds almost anywhere on the lakes or local marshes as they gather food for their young. So take a trip down to the lake, watch the water, and look in the sky—you might even see a bald eagle or two. Andrew Sabai, *WDNR Critical Habitat Coordinator*

Tom Nedland and Diane Schauer join board

Tom Nedland and Diane Schauer are the newest members of the Winnebago Lakes Council board. Tom is an ecologist for Natural Resources Consulting, working with wetlands, wildlife, limnology, and habitat restoration. Diane is the Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator for Calumet County. Both offer expertise in their fields and broaden the board's geographic coverage. Tom lives in Appleton. Diane lives in Brillion.

Lizotte receives environmental award

At its annual meeting on May 2, Winnebago Audubon presented Dr. Michael Lizotte with the Katherine D. Rill Environmental Award for his outstanding work in citizen science, environmental education and habitat preservation. Mike's activities for the Winnebago system were particularly noted.

Mike has introduced citizen-based water quality monitoring, regional aquatic invasive species (AIS) planning, and Clean Boats Clean Waters to the Winnebago lakes. Previously our lakes had none of these programs, unlike 1000 other lakes in the state. He has brought in over \$200,000 in grants, trained more than 200 citizen monitors, and educated hundreds of local residents about the importance of the area's lakes and rivers.

Mike is considered one of the leading experts on the lakes. He has been called upon to testify at public hearings. Much of his community work is done as a volunteer on the boards of the Winnebago Lakes Council and the Fox Wolf Watershed Alliance. He is a UW Oshkosh professor and Director of the UWO Aquatic Research Laboratory.

Oshkosh resident spurs beach testing

Sometimes persistence pays off. Over a year ago, Justin Mitchell, an Oshkosh resident, began urging the City of Oshkosh to test the water at the public beach in Menominee park for E. coli and other contaminants. His well-researched letters and encouragement from the city's Sustainability Advisory Board finally convinced local officials to establish a beach monitoring program for 2009.

The city's Health Department worked with the UW Oshkosh Biology Department to establish the program. The Biology Department is already involved with beach testing from Great Lakes beaches to inland beaches. Cost is usually \$10-15 a week, but UWO will test free for 2009. Arrangements are:

- Monitoring will begin May 25 and continue through August
- Samples will be taken twice a week, with additional testing as needed
- Test results will be posted at the DNR's beach website:
www.wibeaches.us/
- Signage will alert beach users of the most recent test results



Photo by Louise Coumbe

Ron Hardy, chair of the Oshkosh Sustainability Advisory Board, said "This is a win-win for everyone. Beach users will have more information and the city will have affordable water testing. This is also a great example of citizens and government working together to solve a problem."

New state regulations impact waterways

Phosphorus free fertilizer. Governor Doyle signed the Clean Lakes bill into law on April 14. The statewide law prohibits the display, sale, and use of lawn fertilizer containing phosphorus, with certain reasonable exceptions. It will take effect next year, giving retailers time to order phosphorus-free fertilizer. Phosphorus causes excessive algae blooms and nuisance plant growth in our lakes. Thanks to local legislators Gordon Hintz, Dick Spanbauer and, Randy Hopper for sponsoring this legislation.

Slow no-wake zone. A bill (SB 12) to establish a statewide slow no wake zone for motorboats within 100 feet of a lake's shoreline awaits the Governor's signature to become law. This bill is a positive step forward to preserve water quality, prevent shoreline deterioration, and improve public safety for citizens who are fishing, swimming, and paddling on our shorelines.

Invasive Species Classification rule. The Natural Resources Board unanimously approved the Invasive Species Classification rule (NR 40). This rule, four years in the making, classifies invasive species into two categories: prohibited and restricted. It also requires several preventative measures to limit spread of invasive species, and includes permit and enforcement provisions. It still needs legislative approval. For more information check this Web site: <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/classification/>

Fishing tournament rule. A new rule effective May 1 may impact organizers of some of the more than 75 fishing tournaments held on our lake system annually. The rule aims to reduce user conflicts and complaints about crowding by spreading out tournaments that exceed size limits. The rule will also help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species and VHS disease. Organizers of fishing tournaments with more than 20 boats or 100 participants will need a permit. Most would cost \$25; free for tournaments for kids and disabled people. Organizers already with permits for future tournaments or those who applied before May 1 will not be affected. Visit the DNR's searchable on line calendar that allows all water users to see where and when fishing tournaments are scheduled <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/fishingtournaments/application.html>

Services we offer other groups

Letters of support

The Winnebago Lakes Council is a designated lake and river association and is pleased to offer support letters for groups seeking grants for improvement projects on our lakes. In the past few months we have provided letters supporting grant applications for:

- The Winnebago Land and Water Conservation Department to cover a portion of expenses for the Winnebago County Conservation Expo
- The City of Oshkosh Stormwater Utility to help with projects aimed to reduce stormwater-related pollutants to area lakes and streams
- Natural Resources Consulting to improve the riverfront at the former Gilbert Mill site in Menasha.

If you need a support letter, please submit a short project description to info@winnebagolakes.org.

Group programs

Conservation and civic clubs scheduling meetings for summer and fall can call on us for daytime or evening talks about the lakes. Sessions are of varying lengths. We have given more than a dozen talks this year. Thanks to the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation we now have our own projection equipment. Contact us at info@winnebagolakes.org.

Speaker Series

If your group would like to co-sponsor a speaker with a special message about the lakes at a public event, we would like to partner with you. We schedule about six of these events annually at different locations around the lakes. We are open to suggestions for topics. Contact lopas.jerome@sbcglobal.net

2010 year of the Niagara Escarpment

The Wisconsin State Legislature has proclaimed 2010 as the *Year of the Niagara Escarpment* in Wisconsin. The resolution was authored and introduced by Representative Al Ott of Forest Junction.

The Niagara Escarpment is a 650 mile long geologic feature of global importance that stretches across Wisconsin, Michigan, Ontario and New York. It is of interest to us because it runs along the eastern edge of Lake Winnebago. Locally, it is known as the "Ledge." High Cliff State Park lies along the escarpment. Its cliffs and high elevations provide important vistas and viewsheds for this area.

Activities planned for 2010 will promote this distinctive landscape, a unique geologic and cultural resource in our state. For more information check the Niagara Escarpment Resource Network at this site (www.escarpmentnetwork.org.) The network is a joint effort established in 1998 and led by the East Central and Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commissions and the Wisconsin DNR. For those interested, this site includes information on wind farms and CAFOs, two controversial land uses on the escarpment.

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Spring 2009

WaterWays

Winnebago Lakes Council

Update on boat transfer station attracts crowd

An interested audience of more than 70 boaters and anglers had both positive and negative reactions to a proposal to transfer boats over the permanently closed Rapide Croche Lock on the lower Fox River.

The presentation featured Bill Bush, chairman of the Fox River Navigational System Authority's Aquatic Invasive Species Committee, and Phil Moy, fisheries and non-indigenous specialist for the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute. The March 31 program at the Stone Toad in Menasha was one of the Lakes Council's Speaker Series.

The proposal calls for creation of a boat transfer and cleansing station to lift and move boats overland at the lock, allowing boaters to pass through that stretch of the river. The lock will remain closed to try to prevent aquatic invasive species from Lake Michigan from entering the Winnebago Pool. Lake Michigan has over 160 aquatic invasive species; the Winnebago Pool now has 8. The boat transfer station will allow through navigation from Green Bay to Lake Winnebago when all of the remaining Fox River Locks are operating.

The Fox River Navigational System Authority has been working on the boat transfer plans for several years. Cost is anticipated to be \$3.7 million, with an

annual operating cost of \$77,000. Private funding is anticipated. Among audience concerns were the following:

- Will a 110 degree wash protect against all aquatic invasive species?
- Will these temperatures damage boats and other equipment?
- Is the estimated usage by 1500 people worth the cost?
- Has the public been surveyed to determine potential usage?

Moy and Bush anticipate the boat transfer plans will be submitted to the DNR in about nine months. The DNR's process for determining plan approval will include public review and comment.



Photo by Wayne Risvold

2009 Fishing Workshops

Anglers learned new techniques at three well-attended walleye fishing workshops sponsored by the Winnebago Lakes Council in February and March. Thanks to Ryan Standke, Jack Brauer and Rob Teske for developing and presenting these workshops.

OUR LAKES—A GREAT RESOURCE

Boating season is about to begin in earnest, and we would like to remind you again of what a great resource the Winnebago system is and why it is worth protecting:

Our lakes constitute the largest lake system within Wisconsin. Its 166,000 acres make up 17 percent of the state's inland surface water. About 10 percent of Wisconsin's citizens live in the surrounding counties. As a measure of potential users, over two million people reside within 75 miles.

These lakes are very popular with boaters, including fishing craft, powerboats, and sailing yachts. In a statewide boater survey by DNR, Lake Winnebago ranks second only to the Mississippi River in boater popularity, and would be equal if the entire Winnebago Pool were included.

Each year the lakes support over 75 fishing tournaments. There are 48 public boat launches, and numerous private launches and marinas. The economic impact of the fishery exceeds \$300 million annually.