



ECHO on Lake Champlain, Vermont

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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Inside This Issue

- 2.... Fox Locks meetings
- 3 2007 Annual Report
- 4 Lake Butte des Morts survey

Lakes education center on the waterfront?

Has the time come to build a waterfront education center focusing on the Lake Winnebago system?

The idea has been floating around since the early 1990's when a visitor/nature center was proposed in the Fox-Wisconsin National Heritage Corridor Plan and incorporated into the 1993 Oshkosh Comprehensive Plan.

Now Mary Hiles, an Oshkosh writer, is promoting a similar concept envisioned by her neighbor Mike Lizotte. Mike is Director of the UW Oshkosh Aquatic Resource Center. In a recent article in the *Oshkosh Northwestern* (www.winnebagolakes.org) Mary describes how a lakes education center might fit into current plans to redevelop the waterfront in downtown Oshkosh.

The idea is to build a waterfront education center that would focus on the Winnebago system and connect this downtown center via the planned Riverwalk and bicycle trail to the university, Oshkosh Public Museum, Paine Arboretum and WIOUWASH Trail.

The center would have permanent exhibits that tell the story of the lake system's rich geologic, social and cultural history, as well as temporary exhibits, lectures, and educational

and entertainment programs. Along the waterfront trail would be panels with pictures and maps, similar to those found in state and national parks, showing geological and historical features - including the horizon as it was 100 years ago.

A similar project has been successful in revitalizing Burlington, Vermont, a city smaller than Oshkosh. There a combination museum/aquarium/nature center focused on Lake Champlain operates as the nexus of related efforts associated with that lake. Called ECHO, the center was 10 years in the making and annually welcomes thousands of visitors.

Want to talk about it?

Lakes Education Center Meeting
Wednesday, December 12, 4-6 p.m.
Fox Valley Tech , Room 133,
150 N. Campbell Road, Oshkosh

This concept has the advantage of being eminently do-able and, like ECHO, could be accomplished in phases using a combination of federal, state, local and private funds. But it requires setting aside a parcel of land on the waterfront now and marshaling the political will to see the plan through.

Public participates in AIS planning process

Five public meetings held during September and October in various locations around the lakes solicited numerous comments from area residents on ways to control aquatic invasive species in the Lake Winnebago system. Among the ideas discussed were mandatory boat education, "It's the Law" campaign, weed-free boat landings, boat cleaning stations, and a Lake District concept.

The public comments are currently being reviewed by the AIS Advisory Group, a committee of 15 citizens representing multiple lake interests. This group has been meeting regularly with agency staff responsible for managing our lakes. A draft Regional AIS Plan is anticipated for review early in 2008.

The public meetings were structured to obtain maximum input from citizens. Participants were asked for feedback on current AIS regulations. They then discussed brief narratives about ways to increase practices to control aquatic invasive species. These narratives were classified into three categories: public outreach/education, facilities, and a regional approach.

Funding for the AIS plan comes from a state grant. The key to the plan's success is participation from a wide variety of lake interest groups executing a shared vision. If your group is interested in being involved in the implementation strategy, please contact Candice Mortara at kevcn@ameritech.net.

Around the Lakes

Meetings set for boat transfer plan

The Fox River Navigational System Authority is holding public meetings in five locations to present a preliminary overland boat transfer and aquatic invasive species management plan for the Rapid Croche Lock site near Wrightstown. This plan is related to opening the locks for through navigation on the Lower Fox River. All meetings will go from 6-7:30 p.m. Contact: Harlan Kiesow, 920-202-1855

December 5. Green Bay. Brown County Ag & Ex. Building, 1150 Bellevue Street, Green Bay

December 12. Appleton. Grand Chute Town Hall, 1900 Grand Chute Blvd. Town of Grand Chute

December 13. Oshkosh. LaSure's Banquet Hall, 3125 S. Washburn Avenue, Oshkosh

January 7. Fond du Lac. Fond du Lac Government Center, 160 South Macy Street, Fond du Lac

January 9. Winneconne. Village Municipal Center, 30 S. First Street, Winneconne

New grant aimed at outreach

How to get citizens involved in lake issues in a system as large as the Winnebago Pool has been an on-going challenge for the Winnebago Lakes Council. Now thanks to a state small scale planning grant for \$3000, in 2008 we will be able to schedule at least six speaker events in different parts of the system. In addition, we will be planning an Annual Conference devoted entirely to the Winnebago Pool. Topics will range from the ever-present concern about algae and weed growth to boating safety, species diversity and landscaping practices. The Lakes Council will be looking for local conservation, fishing, boating and civic clubs to partner in these events. Our message: the lakes are for everyone.

VHS emergency rules go statewide

The fish disease, VHS viral hemorrhagic septicemia, was first detected in Wisconsin last May in fish from the Lake Winnebago system. Since then, VHS has not been detected beyond the Lake Winnebago and Lake Michigan systems, but the seriousness of the threat triggered expanding emergency rules from the Winnebago system to the entire state. Emergency rules approved in October by the Natural Resources Board require that all people boating and fishing in Wisconsin must take steps to prevent the spread of VHS. Boaters and anglers, before they leave any Wisconsin waterbody at the end of the day, must drain their boats and make sure the fish they take away are dead, including bait minnows. It is also illegal for people to transport by land into Wisconsin any water in livewells, boats or other equipment. The virus, which can be spread by infected fish and by infected water, can survive in water for 14 days.

Everyone enjoyed the paddle wheeler cruise

Thirty-two Lakes Council members and friends cruised the Wolf River on the Fin N Feather paddle wheeler on October 6. It was a beautiful fall evening, the dinner was excellent, and the narration by Dan Rudebeck pertinent and interesting. Dan is president of the Poygan Sportsmans Club, columnist for the Winneconne News, and a local expert on the lakes. Thanks to all of those who attended. By popular demand we will schedule a similar trip next year.

Photos by Paul Fowler



Marc Blum, Jack Brauer,
Dorothy Brauer, Nancy Blum



Suzette Lizotte, Kathy Kleckner,
Richard Patner, Cati Patner.

Rich and Jan Keene

Lakes Council pairs up with *On the Water* magazine

Beginning in January, look for the Winnebago Lakes Council's special page in *On the Water* magazine. This free periodical is mailed to waterfront residents in the area seven times a year. Thanks to the magazine's publishers, the Lakes Council will be able to get its message out to over 8000 waterfront property owners. New board member Jack Brauer negotiated this deal, and will coordinate our page. We will be writing some of the articles ourselves, but we are also looking for other writers who have something interesting to say about our lakes. Contact us.

Board members elected at Annual Meeting

On September 18 the Winnebago Lakes Council held its second Annual Meeting at the Coughlin Center in Oshkosh. Members heard a presentation of the 2007 Annual Report and offered suggestions for 2008 activities. Reelected for three year terms were Paul Fowler, Jan Scalpone and Dick Snyder. New board members are Marc Blum, Jack Brauer, Jerry Lopas and Wayne Mueller. Continuing directors are Mike Lizotte, Greg Keil and Bob Wojcik. The Lakes Council thanks departing directors Jack Quigley, Bob Beckstrom and Dani Stolley for their board participation.

Meet our new board members

Marc Blum is a retired dentist and FVTC instructor who teaches water safety at the Y and works for a commercial real estate firm.

Jack Brauer is a former publisher who works as a business start up consultant and is active in local and state conservation issues.

Jerry Lopas grew up on the Heckrodt Wetland Reserve property and recently retired after 21 years as engineer for the Village of Ashwaubenon.

Wayne Mueller recently moved back to Oshkosh from New England and is currently employed by a commercial real estate firm.

Winnebago Lakes Council 2007 Annual Report

In 2007 the Winnebago Lakes Council continued to build organizational capacity, expand tools for educating the public, and undertake new projects to protect and improve the Winnebago lakes. New this year was initiation of a regional aquatic invasive species (AIS) planning process, a cooperative effort by citizens and agencies to control and prevent further invasions into the system. This was a timely event in view of the introduction of the VHS virus in spring, highlighting how our system can act both as a bellwether for statewide problems and a buffer to spread of invasive species from the Great Lakes. A grant proposal was also submitted to help address another major challenge—the large scale of our lakes—by seeking to involve a more diverse and geographically representative citizenry in our activities.

Organizational Development

Membership. Membership increased to 200 individuals and organizations. With help from a local printer, we produced 5000 membership brochures for distribution throughout the area, setting up 33 displays in locations around the lakes.

Board of Directors. A nine member board met monthly as we continued to seek additional board members to increase representation from diverse interests and geographic locations.

Staff. A Program Assistant was contracted for part of the year to assist with membership, bookkeeping and various projects. In May an AIS Coordinator was contracted for the regional plan.

Community Education

Web site. The Lakes Council's Web site went on line in March, enhancing our ability to keep area residents informed of lake projects and activities (www.winnebagolakes.org).

Newsletter. We continued to distribute *WaterWays* quarterly to about 700 members, organizations and interested residents.

Events. A Speakers Series was initiated, the first of which was Bob Wresch's presentation on Marquette and Joliet's voyage through this area. We also participated in the Wolf River Conservation Alliance forum in February and the Natural Shoreline Expo in June, setting up display tables at each event.

Programs and Projects

Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Control.

In cooperation with UWEX, UWO and DNR we initiated a process to develop a **Regional AIS Plan**. The new AIS Coordinator assembled an Advisory Group of 15 citizens to help with the plan. This group is meeting regularly and anticipates a draft plan by January, 2008. Five public meetings were held in September and October to gain broader input from area residents. We also promoted the **Clean Boats, Clean Waters** boat inspection and education project, supporting UWO's hiring of 15 interns this summer to check boats and distribute literature at busy boat landings on the system. This is the program's second year on our lakes.

Shoreland Management. With assistance from UWEX, we conducted the **Butte des Morts Shoreland Management Survey**—seeking information from 609 property owners about landscaping practices on their shoreline. The survey has been tabulated and results are being edited for publication. We also sought cooperation from several conservation organizations—Winnebago Audubon Society, Fox Valley Wild Ones, and the Citizens Natural Resources Association-- to help fund a mailing to 8400 waterfront property owners about the first annual **Natural Shoreline Expo**. The Expo was held in June by the Winnebago Land and Water Conservation Department. The Lakes Council was among 31 groups displaying.

Volunteer Monitoring Programs. We continued to promote volunteer monitoring programs, now with more than 160 citizens trained to monitor lakes, streams and aquatic invasive species throughout the Winnebago system. This is the third year for lake monitoring; the second for stream monitoring. New this year was training through UWO to monitor for aquatic invasive species

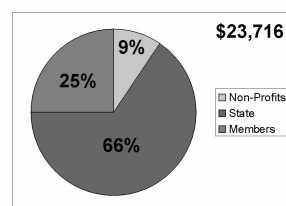
Networking. In April we held our first **Fox-Wolf Partners Network** meeting, an effort to develop a Watershed Network for our lakes. As part of this process, we collected information for a database of local organizations with lake interests and developed a prototype Web tool to allow them to interact with each other. We also joined 20 other organizations in successfully protesting the sale of **Picnic Point**, a 117 acre state owned property with 3700 feet of undeveloped shoreline on Lake Winnebago near Oshkosh. In addition, we gave presentations on lakes monitoring and aquatic invasive species to several **conservation groups**.

Board of Directors 2006—2007

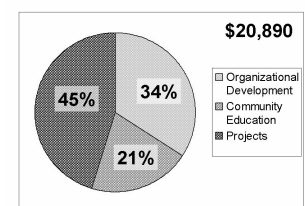
Bob Beckstrom, T. Black Wolf, *Retired, Mid-State Tech College*
Paul Fowler, T. Black Wolf, *Farmer, conservationist*
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Michael Lizotte, C. Oshkosh, *Dir. UWO Aquatic Research Lab*
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Dick Snyder, T. Black Wolf, *Consultant, Mercury Marine*
Dani Stolley, C. Oshkosh, *Staff, UWO*
Bob Wojcik, V. Malone, *Owner, Pro Motorsports, FDL*

Financial Statement August 2006 - August 2007

Income



Expenses



The Winnebago Lakes Council is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization funded by dues, donations and grants. Thanks to the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Butte des Morts Conservation Club, UW Extension, CNRA, and Castle-Pierce for their assistance.

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Findings reported from Lake Butte des Morts property owners survey

How do Lake Butte des Morts property owners manage their shoreland and what are their attitudes toward landscaping to protect water quality?

That's what a survey of 609 lake property owners last spring aimed to find out. The response rate was excellent—425 responses—a 70 percent return. We were pleased to see that, in general, people



A typical Lake Butte des Morts property is worth more than \$250,000, has less than 100 feet of frontage, a low bank and rip rap. Most have lawns; half are fertilized and a third have buffers. The survey shows if given more information about buffers and non-phosphorus fertilizers, residents might change their practices in these areas.

indicated they make their landscaping decisions with water quality and fish/wildlife habitat in mind, even though they sometimes fall short of best management practices.

Lawns. Lawns are important to people. Over 98 percent had lawn on their property. Most residents do their own lawn care. About half fertilize; about a third use herbicides. Over 70 percent think fertilizer adds pollution to the lakes. Not many know about low phosphorus fertilizer, but more than half would consider switching.

Other Yard Practices. Most people keep sidewalks and driveways clear of clippings and leaves, use a mulching lawnmower and direct downspouts to the lawn. However, about 70 percent burn yard waste, with about half burning within 25 feet of the shoreline. Fewer than 10 percent have rain barrels, rain gardens or conduct soil tests.

Buffers. Only 36 percent have buffers. Three-fourths of buffers are less than 15 feet wide. Most people feel buffers help protect water quality and improve fish/wildlife habitat, but a large number also think they are messy, obstruct lake views and make access difficult. Half didn't know where to find information about buffers.

These were among the survey's key findings. Based on these findings the Lakes Council will be developing two educational programs: one to lessen use of phosphorus fertilizers and another to show the positive side of buffers.

The survey was developed and analyzed by UWEX and Lakes Council staff, with funds from the Wisconsin DNR, Butte des Morts Conservation Club and the Citizens Natural Resources Association. A complete analysis will be posted on our Web site at a later date. For further information contact Chad Cook at chad.cook@ces.uwex.edu

Renewal Reminder

The Lakes Council would rather spend funds on projects like the Lake Butte des Morts Shoreland Owners Survey than on renewal notices, so up to now members have received only one renewal notice annually close to their dues anniversary date. Multiple notices are costly. If you have not yet renewed, please do so now. Your annual commitment is important to us. And ask your friends and neighbors to join also. The Winnebago lakes are critical to our quality of life; please continue to help protect and improve them.