

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 coming soon:**  
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## Aquatic invasive species project begins

### Clean Boats, Clean Waters comes to our lakes

Boaters at busy boat launches around the Winnebago lakes were the first to see the effects of a \$75,000 grant awarded to our lakes to educate, prevent and plan for aquatic invasive species.

Six UW Oshkosh student interns have been hired to educate boaters at these landings about invasive species problems and how to inspect and clean their boats. Look for their bright blue shirts sporting the Clean Boats, Clean Waters logo. The interns were among the first 12 Winnebago area residents trained for this program at UW Oshkosh on May 23. Hundreds of others, mostly volunteers, have been trained elsewhere and are monitoring boat landings on their lakes ([www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/CBCW](http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/CBCW)).

Two other interns have been hired to collect submerged plants and zebra mussels. The goal is to produce a map of Eurasian watermilfoil, curlyleaf pondweed, and zebra mussels to guide future control or eradication efforts. The interns will also map the total plant cover, which should help boaters avoid problems and anglers find new fishing grounds. So if you see some people dipping a rake into your bay, understand that they are collecting samples, not tidying up.

The Winnebago Lakes Council is also reviewing applicants in order to hire a part-time coordinator for the comprehensive planning part of the project. This person will be responsible for working with stakeholders to draft a management plan that can protect the Winnebago Pool lakes from future invasions.



*UW-O student intern Philip Lee describes his job at the boat landings to Bob Stine.*

## Members, friends enjoy picnic, learn about invasive species

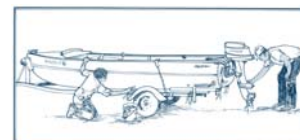
About 50 members and friends of the Lakes Council spent a hot Sunday afternoon cooling off at our Volunteer Recognition Picnic in American Legion Hall on July 16.

Charmaine Robaidek, a WDNR Invasive Species Specialist from the Green Bay office, gave a presentation on aquatic invasive species found in the Winnebago lakes, and what citizens can do to help stop their spread. Also on hand were representatives from Clean Boats, Clean Waters, volunteers in the lake and stream monitoring network, and a group from Earth Charter Oshkosh.

The picnic was co-sponsored by Earth Charter Oshkosh. Building local community support for a clean, healthy environment is a priority for both organizations. ([www.uwosh.edu/earthcharter](http://www.uwosh.edu/earthcharter))

## Invasive Species Tip

**Know the Wisconsin law** – which “prohibits the launching of boats or boating equipment in navigable water if the person has reason to believe that the boat, boat trailer, or boating equipment has any aquatic plants or zebra mussels attached”. Note that the law applies to any aquatic plants – so you don’t need a botany degree to be a clean boater. Penalties include fines, and even prison sentences for repeat offenders.



A high-profile case, earlier this summer up north, showed that local communities can up the ante. A fishing tournament entry launched with weeds attached, despite warnings from watercraft inspectors. The angler was not only fined by the state warden, but was also disqualified by tournament rules – losing third-place prize money and earning a ban from future contests.

## Around the Lakes

- **Local Groups.** The desire for good water quality unites us all – boaters, anglers, hunters, swimmers, property owners, hikers, bird watchers. That's why the Lakes Council is identifying local groups that might work together to sustain our lakes. It's easy to find the big organizations – it's the little groups we're having trouble locating. We know quite a few associations are organized around a road or bay. If you belong to one, or know of any, contact us at [winnebagoakes@yahoo.com](mailto:winnebagoakes@yahoo.com).
- **Fall Events.** The Lakes Council will be offering a panel discussion on sustaining our lakes at the Earth Charter Community Summit, October 7-14 at UW-Oshkosh ([www.uwosh.edu/earthcharter](http://www.uwosh.edu/earthcharter)). Experts will address beach research, algae growth and aquatic invasive species. Around that time, too, we'll be holding our first Annual Meeting.
- **Volunteer Monitors.** Over 100 lake and 25 stream monitors have now been trained to collect data on the Winnebago system. The most recent training session was on the evening of August 1, but UW-O's Mike Lizotte plans to continue offering sessions as long as individuals and groups want to participate. Monitors receive all necessary scientific equipment and contribute to a valuable collection of data used by local and state groups interested in the health of our lakes. [winnebagoakes@yahoo.com](mailto:winnebagoakes@yahoo.com)
- **Thanks to the Buttes des Morts Conservation Club (BDMCC),** which administered two small DNR grants for us, the Lakes Council has been able to develop a communication program to inform residents about lake projects. The BDMCC is one of the most active conservation groups on our lakes. In 1998 it purchased an 1183 acre wetland area known as Terrell's Island and placed it in the public trust. If you haven't done so, walk its trails, check out the restoration projects – some completed, some in progress – and enjoy the views of the lake and wildlife. Turn off Hwy 21 toward Lake Buttes des Morts on Rivermoor to Shubert. More info at [www.bdmcc.org](http://www.bdmcc.org).
- **Picnic Point.** Saving some of our undeveloped shoreline is a high priority when we think of lake protection. The Lakes Council was among several concerned civic groups and municipalities to go on record protesting the potential sale of Picnic Point, a state-owned parcel adjacent to the Winnebago Mental Health Institute. This 117 acre property with woods and prairie has 3700 feet of natural shoreline. The state has included it on a list of potential sale of state lands.

*All five counties surrounding the Winnebago lakes have land and water conservation plans aimed at sustaining the lake system. A major goal of these plans is to reduce phosphorus runoff into our waterways. Phosphorus is one of the components of most fertilizers. Tom Davies, Director of the Winnebago Land and Water Conservation Department, offers tips on how area residents can maintain healthy yards without negatively affecting our lakes.*

## Give me a healthy yard and lake and hold the "phos"

**We've all heard the saying "you can get too much of a good thing."**

When fertilizing lawns, gardens and flower beds, this definitely is the case. Excessive or incorrect application of plant food can have detrimental affects on the plants and our lake system. The best procedure is to have the soil tested and follow the recommendations provided for the plants to be grown, be they turf, vegetables, flowers, shrubs or trees.

Soil tests can determine the type and proper amount of fertilizer needed, but just as important is how and when fertilizer should be applied. Apply fertilizer only to the target site, keeping it off such hard surfaces as driveways, sidewalks or roads. This will prevent it from washing off during a rain storm or when watering and finding its way into local lakes. Contrary to what most people think, it's not wise to apply plant food just before or during a rainfall. It's better to apply it to a dry lawn, allowing the granules or droplets to move down to the base of the grass, or to mix it into dry, workable garden soil.

Following these simple tips when fertilizing your lawns and gardens can help sustain our waterways, since most fertilizers contain phosphorus. Phosphorus is the second number listed in the standard N-P-K (Nitrogen-**Phosphorus**-Potassium) fertilizer analysis. When phosphorus enters surface water it becomes a food source for aquatic vegetation and algae. Excessive vegetation and/or algae growth in a water body caused by over abundant phosphorus can reduce water quality and impair the ability of desirable plant, animal and aquatic species to survive.

If your soil tests indicate little or no need for phosphorus, you can also begin using low or no phosphorus fertilizers, now available in area stores.

– Tom Davies

*Learn more about testing your soil from your county's UWEX office.*

## Should the Winnebago area ban the sale of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus?

Some communities in Wisconsin with large lakes, such as Madison, have banned the sale of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. They claim that tests show most soils in their area contain sufficient phosphorus. Should the Lakes Council consider promoting a similar ordinance in our area? Or perhaps this issue should be

addressed on a statewide basis. Several counties in Wisconsin have passed resolutions urging the governor, state legislators and the appropriate agencies to consider a statewide ban. Remember, at one time most detergents contained phosphorus until it was banned. Let us know what you think. [winnebagoakes@yahoo.com](mailto:winnebagoakes@yahoo.com)





*During one short boat ride, evidence of 22 fires was found on the shores of Lake Winnebago. Phosphorus in ashes from these fires contributes to excess algae growth in the lake.*

## Shoreline fires: food for thought, food for algae

You've got to love lakes Winnebago, Poygan, Butte des Mort, and Winneconne. These lakes represent Wisconsin's most interesting shallow lake system – the Winnebago Pool. The lakes are fertile and can grow lots of algae. Algae form the food base for small animals called zooplankton. Zooplankton in turn feed small fish which feed big fish which feed anglers and their families.

As we all know and have seen, however, too much algae is a bad thing. Excessive algae cause the formation of scum, foul odors, low oxygen in water, and offensive views. The grandkids don't take kindly to it either.

So what does this have to do with shoreline fires? Good question. The answer is simple: **ASH FEEDS ALGAE**. Any fire will create ash waste. On average, the burning of wood results in about eight percent ash. You might think, so what? How is my little fire going to hurt this big lake?

Wood ash contains nutrients required by plants for good growth. Ashes contain one to two percent phosphorous, five to ten percent potassium and trace amounts of micro-nutrients such as iron, manganese, boron, copper and zinc. In fact, many gardeners tout the virtues of adding ash to the garden. Any gardener worth his salt knows about adding phosphorus and nitrogen for its tomato growing power. But it's the phosphorus component in ashes that stimulates algae growth. Phosphorus is a powerful growth agent.

Here are a few quick facts:

- One ton of wood will produce about 160 pounds of ash
- 160 pounds of ash will produce about 2 ½ pounds of phosphorus
- 2 ½ pounds of phosphorous can generate 1,250 pounds of wet algae

One thousand two hundred and fifty pounds of algae! Whose shore will it wash up on?

So when you pile that brush high and throw that match, don't do it on the shoreline. Don't unwittingly aid and abet the algae beast. If you burn leaves, scrap wood, tree limbs, paper, or other trash, help out the lake by burning away from the shore, where it won't blow

or wash into the lake. Thirty-five feet is a good distance if you don't have a fire pit. Shoreline burning also kills vegetation and changes the soil structure with the end result being more soil erosion into the lake. So set that fire back from the water's edge.

You can use the ash in your garden, but don't use too much as it decreases soil acidity. Soil acidity is necessary for nutrient transfer to garden plants. Instead of applying directly to the soil, use wood ash as an amendment to the compost pile. The acidity of the decomposing materials in the compost pile will offset the alkaline ash.

The high nitrogen content and low phosphorous and potassium level in compost will form a balanced fertilizer product with the addition of ash. Compost can then be added to the soil to help improve the soil structure and provide a balanced fertilizer solution. You can store ash for later use or disposal as well. The storage area should be located away from wells, water, animal watering areas, and covered to prevent nuisance conditions during dry or windy weather.

Whatever you decide, be careful about what you burn. Burning tires, shingles, plastics or other materials that contain toxics threatens everyone's health. - Mark Sesing

**It's a big job protecting and restoring the Winnebago system.** Recent successes with the walleye and sturgeon fishery demonstrate the power of community partnerships with citizens and agencies working toward a common goal. However, many existing forces continue to threaten the system's health, including invasive species, rapid development, land runoff, and even global warming.

It's a big challenge, reminding one of the proverbial question, "How do you eat an elephant? The answer is "One bite at a time." There's plenty left to "eat" on the Winnebago lakes. If we all take our bite, as small as it may seem, we can ensure clear water, clear sky, abundant wildlife, and a balanced fishery. It translates into healthy recreation and lifestyle choices that feed back into the stability of our families and community. - Mark Sesing

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## Fishery generates \$221.4 million

### Sustaining our lakes makes \$\$ and sense

Results of a recent survey of 2000 anglers found tournament and recreational fishing in the Winnebago lake system generates about \$221.4 million dollars annually in local spending and supports 4,300 jobs in the five counties surrounding the lakes.

That's good news to the Winnebago Lakes Council, whose mission is to sustain our lakes. We've always known anglers think the fishing is good here. Now we have reliable data to show fishing is also good for our local economy. It adds another dimension to lake sustainability – confirming that anything we do to negatively impact the fishery or other wildlife on the lake system can end up impacting our economy and the entire community.

The survey indicated tournament, out-of-state and local anglers make an estimated 1.1 million trips to the region annually. An estimated 170,000 people come to the system each year to fish.

The survey was coordinated by UW-Extension, UW-Green Bay, UW-Oshkosh, UW-Madison and the DNR. "The data was generated locally from actual numbers reported by anglers – not extrapolated from statewide or national figures," said Catherine Neiswender, UW-Extension Winnebago County. "We can be quite confident that these numbers do a good job reflecting the economic contribution of angling to our local economy."



*Big fish attract big numbers. Out-of-state and local anglers make about 1.1 million trips annually to the Winnebago system.*

Surveyed was a random sample of recreational and tournament anglers who fish on the Lake Winnebago system, including anglers living outside the region and outside the state. The response rate was high: 60 percent. When all the data is analyzed, there'll be a detailed report of spending amounts and activities for all four types of anglers: tournament, in-state, out-of-state, and local. This information will be useful to people making local policy and spending decisions impacting the Winnebago system.

The survey project was co-sponsored and supported by more than a dozen fishing and conservation clubs, fishing-related businesses, and planning and economic development organizations. Survey coordinators are currently creating a media presentation to be available to area groups. Contact Catherine Neiswender, UW-Extension at (920) 232-1972.