



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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Fish biologist optimistic about Winnebago's fishery

Efforts to increase the walleye and sauger populations in the Lake Winnebago Pool appear to be successful, DNR fisheries biologist Kendall Kamke told those attending his Winnebago Lakes Council-sponsored presentation on May 19 at the Fin 'N Feather Supper Club.

Kamke, who works in the Department of Natural Resource's Oshkosh office, recently completed an inventory of fish in the system.

He said the population of both walleye and sauger, two of the traditionally most popular catches for area fishermen, had dropped in the mid-80s. Now both the amount and the growth rate of walleyes are healthy. Kendall attributed the improvement to more normal climate conditions and efforts such as the 13 spawning reefs built by Walleyes for Tomorrow.

He also said sauger stocking and other efforts seem to be working and they appear to be "on the road to recovery." Previously they

had seen very few adult saugers, but now the number of adults is climbing. They found a lot of younger, smaller males, which dominate the fishing stock, and an increasing number of females spawning. They also

Notice to anglers
If you catch a tagged fish,
contact a fisheries
biologist at 920-424-3057

counted an increasing number of small-mouth bass. "We have a healthy bass population for a northern climate," Kamke said.

In addition to going out on the water and looking for fish, DNR personnel are gathering information with the help of fish provided by tournament fishermen and other anglers who contact them when they catch a fish that has been tagged by the DNR. They urge anyone catching one of their tagged fish to contact a DNR fisheries biologist.

- Peggy Davidson

Upcoming Events

Watch for notices of these events

2009 Annual Meeting. Fall, 2009

Have lunch with other members, hear an annual report of Lakes Council activities, elect board members and learn about what's happening on the Winnebago system. We continue to look for interested residents from unrepresented areas on our lakes to serve on our board. Contact us.

Mysteries of the Deep. Winter, 2010.

Attend a showing of this film at one of several venues around the lake. Those who have seen it at the IMAX theatre in Milwaukee praised the segment on sturgeon in the Winnebago Pool. About 40 minutes long, the film is now available in DVD format under special circumstances. We are looking for partners interested in bringing the film to this area. Contact us.

Winnebago Pool Lakes Conference: Celebrating Accomplishments of the Winnebago Comprehensive Plan. Winter/Spring 2010

Help identify planning needs for the next 20 years and celebrate accomplishments of the previous 20 years. In 1989 hundreds of area citizens worked with DNR staff Art Techlow and Ron Bruch to draft the Winnebago Comprehensive Plan. Most of the plan now has been implemented, much of it by partnering with local groups. Hear about the results and help plan for the future of our lakes.

Around the Lakes

Oshkosh envisions vibrant waterfront

Results of a visioning process for the City of Oshkosh show an overwhelming majority of more than 2300 participants want a vibrant and active waterfront. Recommendations by consultant Tony Nelessen, of A. Nelessen Associates, include designation of a Waterfront Urban Area; creation of a network of trails and pedestrian connections that link to the waterfront; completion of the walkway on both sides of the Fox River; concentration of marinas, boat up restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues; and maintenance of a minimum vegetated buffer between all water bodies and impervious surfaces outside the Waterfront Urban Area. Read the full report at www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/

N. Fond du Lac plan presented

A draft Waterfront Corridor Plan for the Village of North Fond du Lac is currently making its way through the adoption process. Meetings in July allowed citizens to comment on recommendations, followed by presentations to the Plan Commission and the Village Board on August 17. Its goals are to encourage connections along the lakefront, protect natural and cultural resources, encourage appropriate public and private waterfront access and improve bicycle and pedestrian connections. A \$20,000 state grant helped fund the plan. For more information, contact Village Hall at 920-929-3765.

Calumet wind ordinance questioned

A Court of Appeals decision in July ruled that local units of government do not have the power to adopt siting standards of general applicability for wind energy systems, thus placing in question Calumet County's local ordinance regulating wind turbines. Meanwhile, in June state legislators introduced AB 256 which would charge the Wisconsin Public Service Commission with studying and determining safe permitting standards for wind farms and replacing local ordinances with statewide standards. How this plays out will affect future placement of wind turbines along Lake Winnebago's shoreline, already dotted with more than 150 turbines from two wind farms.

Expansion sought for Terrell's Island

The Butte des Morts Conservation Club is currently raising funds to purchase an additional 18 acres at the entrance to Terrell's Island, a 1,200 acre wetland on the south shore of Lake Butte des Morts. Since purchasing the island, the club, with help from the community and the state, has invested over \$2.5 million in improvements to enhance and protect it. The area is open to the public for fishing and duck hunting from a skiff, and is a popular destination for environmental education, hiking and dog walking. The additional land offers high ground for a possible nature center. For more information on how you can help, log on to www.bdmcc.org.

Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway seeks national designation

The final draft of the Feasibility Study for the Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway has been completed and is on its way toward possible designation as a National Heritage Area (NHA). On June 23, staff from the Friends of the Fox and the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission presented the study to staff of Wisconsin's congressional delegation. They agreed to work together to jointly sponsor legislation needed to move forward with the designation. The study was also sent to the National Park Service for review and recommendations.

The Fox-Wisconsin Heritage Parkway is a non-continuous parkway with the purpose of highlighting and enhancing the unique cultural, historical, recreational and natural resources of this river corridor. The boundaries follow the Marquette and Joliet route of discovery and incorporate the Lower Fox, the Upper Fox, and the Lower Wisconsin rivers. Designation as a National Heritage Area enables the corridor to be eligible for technical, planning and limited financial assistance from the the National Park Service. To read the Feasibility Study, go to www.eastcentralrpc.org/ and click on draft Feasibility Study.

Winnebago beaches test favorably

Beach monitoring early this summer has shown relatively good water quality at tested sites in Winnebago County and the City of Oshkosh.

Jeffrey J Phillips, RS, Environmental Health Supervisor with Winnebago County, said "Over the course of the summer swimming season, we have had very few samples with elevated bacterial (E.coli) results. No sampling points have had ongoing elevated E.coli levels. The swimming beach at the county park has also had relatively good water quality this year."

Dr. Colleen McDermott of the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh microbiology lab, had similar comments: "There has been only one exceedance of the E. coli limit for good water quality at recreational beaches (235 E. coli/100 ml). The average E. coli concentration found at Menominee Park Beach this season has been 39 E. coli/100 ml water." Dr. McDermott suggested the dry spring and summer this year may explain the low E. coli concentrations.

Regarding blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria) Jeff explained that the cooler weather we've had so far has likely limited the growth of blue-green algae, and as a result there are no large mats of algae being formed.

Beach monitoring is important for determining possible environmental contamination and ensuring waters are safe for public use. Our waters can become contaminated with germs from sewage, animal waste, water runoff following rainfall, and fecal accidents causing numerous illnesses.

2009 beach monitoring is a cooperative effort of Winnebago County, the City of Oshkosh and the UWO microbiology lab. UWO students collect water samples from public access points, then analyze samples for total coliform and E. coli bacteria. For more information on water quality monitoring efforts in Winnebago County, visit this Web site: <http://www.co.winnebago.wi.us/health/Index.htm> —Justin Mitchell

TEST SITES

Menominee Park beach

Asylum Point Park

Black Wolf boat landing

Boom Bay boat landing

Grundman Park

*Lake Butte des Morts
(south side) boat landing*

Lake Poygan boat landing

*Lake Butte des Morts
(north side) boat landing*

*Winnebago Community Park
swim area*

Winneconne Park

Controlling the spread of aquatic invasive species

Addressing aquatic invasive species (AIS) in the Winnebago lakes continues to be a top priority this summer. The boat launch education program has been expanded, with Clean Boats Clean Waters workers joined by a new group called the Workforce. The Regional AIS plan is entering a second phase. And Diane Schauer, Calumet County's AIS Coordinator, the only AIS coordinator on the Winnebago system, continues to focus on promoting an informed public. State and local funds support these programs.

Clean Boats, Clean Waters continues

This summer boaters who launch at busy public boat landings around our lakes are again being greeted by watercraft inspectors in the familiar Clean Boats, Clean Waters blue shirts. Inspectors are checking boats for vegetation, collecting data on various boater characteristics and handing out educational material about aquatic invasive species. This is the fourth year for this program. The Winnebago Lakes Council, with a state grant and matching funds from dues, has partnered with the Center for Community Partnership to hire seven UWO interns to help with the work.

New Waterforce trained as inspectors

A new group of watercraft inspectors has been trained this summer. WDNR, UW Extension, and the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) have partnered to provide paid watercraft inspectors called the Waterforce. Statewide, up to 55 young adults 18-24



Wisconsin Labor Secretary Roberta Gassman at High Cliff State Park with two Workforce recruits wearing the familiar blue Clean Boats, Clean Waters shirts. - Photo by Diane Schauer

years old have been trained to provide invasive species education and watercraft inspections. Five from this group are working on the Winnebago system, joining the seven interns already trained through the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program. Funding for this effort comes from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

- Diane Schauer

Updated AIS plan to guide actions

This summer inventories and more defined local recommendations are being added to the Regional AIS Plan which will serve as a guide for local AIS actions. For the next two years focus will be on how municipalities can help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in the Winnebago Pool. To accomplish this, municipalities will be invited to a regional AIS conference in spring, followed by presentations to city councils and county and town boards bordering the Winnebago system. The regional plan was initially developed in 2008 by a 15 member citizen advisory board with public input from five meetings around the lakes. Read the draft plan on our Web site www.winnebago-lakes.org.



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

✓ Clean ✓ Drain
✓ Inspect



IT'S THE LAW!





Billboards inform motorists. Two new billboards have gone up on state highways between Lake Michigan and Lake Winnebago to remind those trailing boats to follow state law regarding AIS. Their intent is to stop the spread of over 185 invasive species from Lake Michigan to inland lakes and from inland lakes to each other. The project is a joint effort of Manitowoc and Calumet counties, DNR and three area groups, including the Winnebago Lakes Council. Wisconsin laws prohibit launching a boat or placing a trailer or boating equipment in navigable waters if it has aquatic plants or animals attached.

Kids Fishing Day teaches about AIS

More than three dozen volunteers and natural resources professionals across Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa took part in Mills Fleet Farm Kids Fishing Day on Saturday, July 11th to educate youth about aquatic invasive species. Participating in WinnebagoLand were Mills Fleet Farm stores in Fond du Lac, Appleton, Oshkosh and Clintonville.

In addition to learning how to fish, kids learned how to identify and prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species while fishing their favorite waters. Each store had a station dedicated to aquatic invasive species, with specimens, information and Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers tattoos. Although families were the primary audience, the Mills Fleet Farm staff was also lured to the aquatic invasives station to learn how they could join the fight against invasive species. More than 3,000 goodie bags were distributed and record numbers of kids and families attended. — Diane Schauer

AIS songs aimed at behavior change

Interested in some unusual music for your lake gathering or conservation group? Dr. Bret Shaw, UW-Madison assistant professor of Life Sciences Communication, recruited a group of award-winning Wisconsin songwriters to focus on preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species in our lakes and rivers. The music—rock, rockabilly and folk songs about VHS fish disease, zebra mussels, and other aquatic invasive species—was created to encourage behaviors to protect the quality of our lakes and rivers for future generations.

Dr. Shaw said “Music can influence how we respond to messages, affecting memory, emotion, attitudes, and even behavior.” Recordings of the songs are available on the UW-Extension Web site at www.uwex.edu/erc/music.

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Summer 2009

WaterWays

Winnebago Lakes Council

Blue-green algae, good or bad?

Many kinds of algae bloom at different times of the year on the Winnebago Pool. The spring bloom of diatoms might be overlooked due to their golden-brown color. Early summer blooms of green algae may pass with little notice. But the most memorable blooms occur in the heat of summer, when blue-green algae create a nuisance, present a health-risk, or bring good news about how we are treating the lakes.

Not all blue-green algae cause problems, and they all provide nutrition for animals in the Winnebago food web. Many are not blue-green in color (brown, green, even red is possible), and purists say they are not algae because they are bacteria. Scientists call them cyanobacteria.

Blue-green algae that create a nuisance are usually species such as *Microcystis* that grow large clumps and float. The clumps or colonies can include a gooey gel that makes them stick to boats and bodies. Floating means instead of getting mixed into the lake, they collect on the surface as mats or scum. With our long stretches of open water, wind can push thousands of acres of floating algae into a bay, channel, or shore. Unless the weather (or people) flushes the algae back into the lake, the rotting algae will create a stench. Sometimes the rotting

Five year lake monitor reports observations

This summer marks the fifth year my wife and I have been monitoring for water clarity on Lake Winnebago. Since we boat out of Fond du Lac, I was interested in monitoring the mouth of the Fond du Lac River right off the sanitary plant discharge. I chose a spot about a quarter of a mile out to give the water a chance to mix with the lake water. It was also an easy spot to locate, just north of the outer buoys.

Lake Winnebago surely has a reputation about algae growth, but after monitoring for several years with a secchi disk, you get to know the lake and its patterns. I have noticed that the ambient temperature is in direct correlation to the bloom. The hotter the summer, the less transparent the water. Perhaps the cold July we have had

corresponds to the six inches more of visibility I have noticed this month. I can start the beginning of June at six feet and by the end of August I am down to one foot, nine inches visibility.



Tom Clausen

Jennifer Radtke, then biology professor at UW-Fond du Lac where I work, introduced and trained me when she put out a plea for volunteers. Being an avid boater, I thought I could provide my services. I also participate in Kent State's Annual Dip-in held each July. - Tom and Betty Clausen, North Fond du Lac, are among the 120 volunteers trained to monitor the clarity of our lakes.

algae will use up the oxygen, leading to a local fish kill, adding to the nuisance smells.

Health risks come from the fact that some kinds of blue-green algae make chemicals toxic to humans and animals. *Microcystis* makes a toxin that can damage a liver; other species make toxins that harm nerve cells. Toxins could cause an allergic reaction to skin contact. Human cases of acute toxicity are very rare. Humans find the smell disgusting, so it takes an accident like a near drowning to swallow enough water. Dogs

are at more risk because as scavengers they have a different take on disgusting smells and tastes – so a thirsty dog might drink enough algae to cause harm or death.

Blue-green algae are found in all waters of the world, and blooms are common throughout Wisconsin. Sometimes a toxic bloom can be good news. *Gleotrichia* (which many people mistook for fish eggs) bloomed in August 2007 for the first time in decades; while toxic, it is also a species only found in clean water.- Dr. Michael Lizotte