

## What Are Fish Worth?

What is the value of a walleye or a sturgeon or a perch? While that may depend on how hungry you are, there are ways to determine what all of the fish in our system are worth. Fishing is more than just a pastime on the lakes and rivers of the Winnebago System. It is a vital component of our local economies.

A crude estimate of the economic value of the Lake Winnebago fishery was calculated 15 years ago, based on known angler hours and some nation-wide expenditure information from the National Sportfishing Association. At that time it was estimated that \$400 million were contributed to the local economy by sport fishing on Lake Winnebago alone. However, we don't know of how much fishing currently contributes to all of our communities' bottom lines.

To remedy this situation, economists from UW-Oshkosh, UW-Green Bay, UW-Extension and UW-Madison have teamed up on a study to determine the economic impact of the Winnebago system fishery on local communities. A survey has been developed to poll a random selection of fishing license holders about their activities. If you or someone you know receives a survey, please take the time to fill it out and return it.

**Winnebago Lakes Gathering — Feb 9th**  
See inside for details.

So far, funding for the effort is being contributed by the following diverse group of clubs and businesses interested in the results of the economic analysis:

Oshkosh  
Convention &  
Visitors Bureau  
Photo



**Winnebagoland Conservation Alliance**  
**Otter Street Fishing Club**  
**Mercury Marine**  
**Sturgeon for Tomorrow**  
**Walleyes for Tomorrow**  
**Shadows on the Wolf**  
**Butte des Morts Conservation Club**  
**Lake Poygan Sportsmen's Club**  
**Lighthouse Anglers**  
**Winnebagoland Musky Club**  
**Tews Two Sporting Goods**  
**Fox River Bait and Tackle**  
**Wolf River House Resorts**  
**Critters Wolf River Sports Shop**

The survey is the first part of a larger effort to determine the economic value of our system's natural resource base. Since public policy makers seem to be driven almost solely by dollar signs, we need accurate, local economic data to balance the scales when decisions are being made about our natural resources. Current information is essential to ensure the Winnebago System fishery gets the attention, respect, and support it and our anglers deserve. The Winnebago Lakes Council will keep you and our decision makers informed about the survey results—stay tuned.

# WaterWays

Lakes Winnebago, Butte des Morts, Winneconne & Poygan

WINNEBAGO  
LAKES  
COUNCIL  
Newsletter  
Volume I, Number I  
Winter 2006



Sturgeon season activity on Winnebago in VanDyne, photo courtesy of Shawn Wendt

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:**  
[www.winnebagolakes.org](http://www.winnebagolakes.org)  
**Email:**  
[winnebagolakes@yahoo.com](mailto:winnebagolakes@yahoo.com)

**Winnebago Lakes Council**  
P.O. Box 100  
Winnebago, WI 54985

### Interim Board of Directors

**LuAnn Bird**, Town of Oshkosh  
**Paul Fowler**, Town of Black Wolf  
**Greg Keil**, City of Menasha  
**Michael Lizotte**, City of Oshkosh  
**Jack Quigley**, Town of Winneconne  
**Nile Roeder**, Town of Oshkosh  
**Jan Scalpone**, City of Oshkosh

### Inside This Issue

- 2.....Citizen Monitoring
- 3.....Bricklayers
- 4.....Value in Fish?

**Welcome** to the Winnebago Lakes Council. We are dedicated to protecting and improving the ecological health and scenic beauty of Lakes Winnebago, Butte des Morts, Winneconne, and Poygan. Now citizens like you can join a diverse group of lake enthusiasts and help us achieve this mission.

Already, I have benefited from my involvement. Through networking, I was able to get help from the Butte des Morts Conservation Club to take action to eliminate Purple Loosestrife, a harmful invasive species infesting a marsh in my neighborhood. Two years ago we released beetles that destroy the plants by eating

the leaves. This summer I could see a decline in the number of blooming plants. By getting involved in the Lakes Council, I learned about an issue and became part of the solution.

When you become a member of the Lakes Council, you can share your concerns, learn about issues, participate in research, educate others and increase our ability to influence

policy decisions that affect our lakes. On behalf of the Board, I invite you to join the Winnebago Lakes Council. Together we can create a strong voice for our lakes.

— LuAnn Bird, Board Chair

## Who We Are

Forming a lakes council was a top recommendation from a workshop hosted by the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation in 2003. Representatives from over 40 community groups, recognizing the importance of the Winnebago Pool Lakes to the area, said we needed to sustain our lakes for the future. They drafted a blueprint for citizen action and involvement.

The Winnebago Lakes Council is implementing that blueprint. This first issue of *WaterWays* tells about some of its activities and offers other information about our four lakes. The enclosed letter asks you to share your interests in the lakes and invites you to participate in actions to protect and improve them.

The Lakes Council appreciates those who have supported its initial efforts: 30 Charter Members, the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, the Lake Poygan Sportsmen's Club, the Butte des Morts Conservation Club, Southwest Rotary, the Citizens Natural Resources Association, On the Water Magazine, the Oshkosh Area League of Women Voters, River Planning Grants, the UW-Oshkosh and the UW-Extension.

Change Service Requested

WINNEBAGO  
LAKES  
COUNCIL  
P.O. Box 100  
Winnebago, WI 54985





# Around The Lakes

- Don't miss the Otter Street Fisheree on February 4, 10 a.m. at Miller's Bay in Oshkosh. Funds from this event go toward lake improvement projects.
- DNR Lakes Specialist Mark Sesing is looking for citizen help in identifying critical areas on Lake Winnebago to protect remnant shore habitat from further loss. Call him at 920-485-3023 if you know of any special places.
- What's the value of our fishery? Check out the article on p.4 to see who's participating in this important economic study.
- Opening day for sturgeon spearing is Saturday, February 11. Even if you don't spear, catch sight of these prehistoric monsters and enjoy the party atmosphere at registration stations around Lake Winnebago.
- Are you interested in exploring our lakes? The Winnebago Marketing Group has created a new map of area attractions, eateries and other sites of interest. Pick up a copy at visitor centers in Winnebago, Calumet or Fond du Lac counties.

## What we know about our lakes...

- The Winnebago Pool is the collective name for Lakes Winnebago, Butte des Morts, Winneconne and Poygan and their connecting rivers
- The Winnebago Pool encompasses over 166,000 surface acres; its watershed drains almost 12% of the entire area of Wisconsin
- Lake Winnebago is the largest lake in Wisconsin and one of the largest lakes in the United States
- Over two million people live within 75 miles of our four lakes
- Over 200,000 people, including residents of Appleton, Neenah, Menasha and Oshkosh, draw their drinking water from the lakes

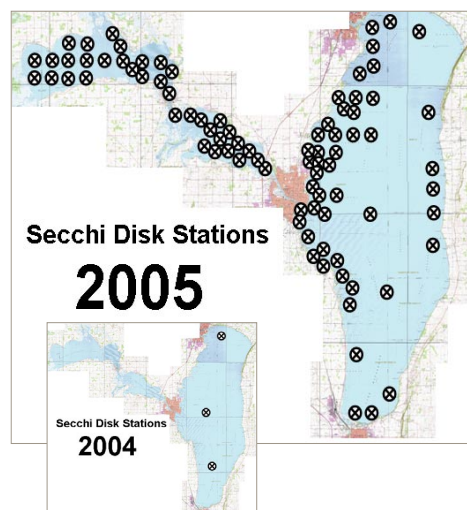
## And what we don't know...

- Whether the clarity of the water in our lakes has changed significantly over the last 12 years
- Whether zebra mussels are a threat to the long-term health of the lake sturgeon population
- How much all the recreational activities depending on our waterways are worth to our local economies
- Which of the 150 aquatic invasive species that live in the Great Lakes pose the greatest threats to our lakes
- Which streams and shorelines are most responsible for depositing sediments and phosphorous pollution into the Pool lakes

# Volunteer Monitoring Takes Off

## Citizens Dip Into Lake Research

Last spring, a new wave of volunteerism kicked up on the Winnebago Pool Lakes. Citizens have been volunteering to help monitor water quality in these lakes for decades, but their numbers were usually low -- a few people to cover the largest area of open water in the state. The low numbers were a mystery, given that the Winnebago Pool Lakes are surrounded by about half a million people and are used by thousands of boaters on a good day. So the Winnebago Lakes Council teamed with the UW-Oshkosh and UW-Extension to recruit and train 86 citizens to monitor the lakes this summer. The citizen volunteers took advantage of two-hour training sessions held in Winneconne, Oshkosh, Fond du Lac, Hilbert and Menasha. They each signed up to monitor one or more stations. Some volunteers formed teams with neighbors or relatives. Birthdates weren't collected, but ages probably ranged from nine to ..., um ..., uh ... "you look too young to be retired"!



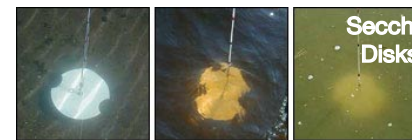
The training covered information on our lakes, how they change over time, and what we can tell about a lake from its water clarity. Volunteers were trained to use a Secchi disk, which is lowered into the water to record the depth at which it disappears. Algae blooms or excess sediment in the water will make the water less clear, decreasing the depth of the reading. With a large network of citizens, we will be able to tell where and when algal blooms were

most intense over the summer. Springtime data will help us locate the largest inputs of sediment to the lakes.

The data collected by these volunteers is still rolling in—some have entered their data online, some by phone, and some are mailing in results. All the information goes into a database kept by the Wisconsin DNR, which we can all use via the Internet. But instead of the usual tables with a few or no entries for each of our lakes, we will have loads of data. Researchers at UW-Oshkosh will be working with the

data over the winter to produce maps and summaries to help us understand the new findings.

The results of the monitoring will be presented at the Winnebago Lakes Gathering on February 9<sup>th</sup> at the Fin 'n Feather in Winneconne.  
— Dr. Mike Lizotte, UW-Oshkosh



## Monitor's Notes

What great duty! After 40 plus years of discussing, recommending, and setting up monitoring programs, then analyzing the resulting data, I now have had the opportunity to get out on the lake and do the fun part. In a fit of enthusiasm, I had volunteered for the summer to sample two locations on the margin of Lakes Poygan and Winneconne.

Using a 16-foot Lund with 40 HP Honda, Butch Quigley and I sampled these two sites every other week from June through September to chart changes in water quality with time. This basic rig together with a knowledge of landmarks sufficed for access. The actual measurements were made with a Secchi disk to correlate with phosphorus inputs, algae blooms and soil losses around the lakes. We documented a late July algae bloom and other more subtle water color changes as the season progressed.

We won't actually know the outcome of these efforts until February, when a data reporting meeting is scheduled to take place at the Fin 'n Feather in Winneconne. We plan to be there and hope that anyone who is interested in the future of our lakes will join us.

— Jack Quigley

## Stream Monitoring Starts This Spring

Thanks to a new grant from the Wisconsin Citizen-Based Monitoring Partnership Program, volunteers will be trained and equipped to monitor streams entering the Winnebago Pool lakes. The Council is partnering with UW-Oshkosh and UW-Extension to recruit 40 citizens for training sessions in April-May 2006. The grant will also fund field studies in March during the spring flood period, to assess habitat, safety, and legal access for the 95 known streams feeding the lakes. For more information, **contact Michael Lizotte (email: winnebagopool@yahoo.com, work: 424-0848).**

## Please join us for the Winnebago Lakes Gathering 2006

**When: Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, 7 PM**  
**Where: Fin 'n Feather Restaurant**  
(upstairs), 22 W Main St., Winneconne



### Highlights will include:

- Lake Monitor Awards
- A brief talk on the explosion of data from the Citizens' Lake Monitoring Network
- Plans to expand help for citizens monitoring our lakes and streams
- News about Winnebago Lakes Council and its plans for 2006

If you are interested in our lakes, we hope you can attend this gathering.

Come early to patronize the restaurant & bar or order pizza upstairs after 7:00

# Wanted: Bricklayers

"When the white silo on the east shore and the smokestack on the south shore line up with the water tower on the west shore, that's where the fish are" or so dad said.

Forty-five years ago four people went Winnebago fishing; two brothers, their dad (the "guide"), and their grandpa (consultant to "guide"). It was a typical adventure strewn with laughter, baloney sandwiches, Milky Way candy bars, and a smidge of cursing from grandpa when his line fouled. Once in a while a fish might even be involved. Some got a little sea sick, some napped with a rod loosely in hand giving license to all for mischief. It was all about choppy water in a wood boat with family and friends, set in a musk of wet wood, motor, and human spirit.

As the boys grew they took to exploring shorelines in a US Navy surplus raft. The bulbous yellow rubber craft was to be the mule for numerous east shore summer adventures. Dark spaces, deep within tangles of monster willows required their appraisal. Wetlands, woodland, and backwater territories were uncovered.

On one miscalculated exploration, a nasty westerly delivered a quick lesson on the physics of wave energy, hard places, and buoyancy. It was Lewis, Clark, Marquette and Joliet all rolled into a summer of stinging nettle, muck stained shoes, and blissful learning. It was another brick in the foundation.

Memories like this never stop working. They are like bricks in the human foundation. These Winnebago bricks might even have had something to do with keeping the boys out of trouble, relatively speaking of course, as they grew through their teens. Perhaps the bricks from their Winnebago experience fortified and strengthened their personal foundations, providing them solid ground from where they could better view a mixed-up world.

After all, the boys needed a lot of help way back then, in the 1960's, to guide them down a road cluttered with street drugs, society's mixed signals, and global unrest. Maybe it doesn't seem so long ago after all.



— Mark Sesing

**Editor's Note:** Thanks to Mark for offering this personal reflection. We need healthy lakes to keep our own selves and families healthy. If you would be willing to contribute your own personal reflections for printing in future newsletters, please let us know.