



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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Focus on the Fox-Wolf Partners Network

This issue of WaterWays describes the Fox-Wolf Partners Network—a new way groups concerned about our lakes and rivers will be able to work together on protection and improvement projects. Included is an explanation of how the Network will work, why it is needed and what types of collaborative projects it intends to promote. By forming the Fox-Wolf Partners Network, the Lakes Council hopes to significantly increase ideas and funding for habitat stewardship and pollution control.

One of the main goals of the Lakes Council for 2007 is to create a Fox-Wolf Partners Network to enable groups interested in conservation projects to communicate and coordinate with each other. Initially we are focusing on groups involved with the Winnebago Pool. Two steps are now underway:

- Compilation of a database of relevant agencies, organizations and businesses with interests in the Winnebago Pool. Groups will receive a questionnaire to help provide this information.
- Construction of an interactive, comprehensive website as an informational resource and communication tool. Potential participants will have an opportunity to determine desired website features at a meeting on April 30.

As organizations begin to communicate with each other and new ideas are generated, the Winnebago Lakes Council will help facilitate resource groups and assist in seeking needed finances for watershed projects.

Once the Network is up and running for the Winnebago Pool, the next step is to incorporate groups throughout the watershed – on the Upper Fox, Lower Fox and Wolf rivers. We anticipate the Fox-Wolf Partners Network will play an important role in implementing actions spelled out in various management plans throughout the watershed.

Funding to develop the Network came from the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation, a Wisconsin DNR River Planning Grant and membership fees.

New staff contracted



Working with the Winnebago Lakes Council in setting up the Fox-Wolf Partners Network is Nicole DeKeuster, a graduate student in Public Administration at UW-O. Nicole's undergraduate degree is in Environmental Studies and Political Science. She has worked with various environmental and political groups around the Winnebago lakes and knows the area well, recently moving from Fond du Lac to a home on the Fox River in the Town of Aurora. Nicole is also assisting the Lakes Council with administrative and other grant activities. Expect to hear from her often for she is committed to getting the message out about the importance of taking care of our lakes.

Editorial content: Jan Scalpone, Mike Lizotte, Dick Mason, Art Techlow
Photos: Louise Coumbe, Nicole DeKeuster, Paul Fowler, Dick Mason

Around the Lakes

• Wisconsin Lakes Convention, April 26-28

at the K1 Convention Center in Green Bay is held annually by the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership. This is the largest lakes convention in Wisconsin, located a short distance from us. We urge attendance. This year's theme is Agents of Change: We Make a Difference. The event is filled with interesting sessions, exhibits, and some of the state's best experts on lake issues. To register, contact: www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/conventions/

• Wolf River Conservation Forum, Saturday,

March 24 at Mosquito Hill Nature Center in New London from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. welcomes the public to check out groups and projects dedicated to conservation around the Wolf River. Sponsoring the forum is the Wolf River Conservation Alliance, a new partnership dedicated to long-term sustainability of the Wolf River Basin. Groups wishing for a display should contact wolfriverconservation@yahoo.com.

• **Lake Sturgeon.** For a few days every February the Winnebago lakes make headlines as thousands of sturgeon spearers take to the ice. Our lake system supposedly has the largest population of lake sturgeon in the world. A host of area groups collaborate to maintain a healthy sturgeon population. A UW- Green Bay survey indicated in 2002 the 10-day sturgeon season poured \$3 million into the area economy – putting a dollar amount on the value of these conservation collaborations.

• **Shad Die-Off.** The DNR reported it received numerous calls about the number of dead fish on the Winnebago lakes this winter. Fish biologists identified them as gizzard shad. They said winter kill of this species is common, but people don't usually see the effect because it happens under ice, which came late this season. Shad are on the northern edge of their range in this area, so abrupt changes in fall and winter temperatures may cause large die-offs.

• **Another Invasive Species.** A half inch long shrimp called red mysid – scientific name *Hemimysis anomala* – is the latest species we have to worry about invading our lakes. It found its way to the Great Lakes in ballast water from the Caspian Sea. The shrimp competes with area fish for zooplankton. Exotic species documented in the Great Lakes now number more than 180, with new invaders discovered at a rate of one every eight months. Our lakes are just a short trip up river from the Great Lakes. So far we've been lucky—lots of bad stuff hasn't reached us. But it takes only one watercraft with a few viable members to get a species thriving. It's a tough issue—one the Lakes Council is addressing by collaborating with area citizens to develop an Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Control Plan.

Website is key to Network success

The Winnebago Lakes Council is developing an interactive website with a goal of increasing collaborations that improve the Winnebago Pool lakes and their watershed. The **Fox-Wolf Partners Network Website** will be launched as a prototype in the next few months, demonstrating a few past projects that are good examples of collaboration on watershed and lake projects. Initial features will include: project descriptions, brief webpage descriptions of partners, a database to search for partners with similar interests, and an event/meeting calendar.

The Lakes Council needs input from partner groups, agencies, and businesses. One challenge is to determine how this new website tool can help fill communication needs for partners. Additional website features, such as calendars, forum boards, blogs, links to other websites, lake/watershed data sets, etc. will be prioritized after consulting with potential partners in the next few months.

A second need is to get advice on how to organize a network to increase project development and success. The Lakes Council is proposing the formation of "Resource Groups" based on partner interest. To give one example, the Lakes Council will propose that an Invasive Species Resource Group would help us find partners to plan and carry out projects in boater education, monitoring, and control or eradication of non-native species.

The Lakes Council will be contacting and meeting with potential partners. A brief questionnaire will ask potential partners about contact information, priority issues, projects, and communication needs. A meeting has been scheduled for April 30 to give a demo of the website and discuss its launch and future development.

Fox-Wolf Partners Network gathering

Date and Time: Monday, April 30, 2007, 6:30-8:00 pm

Place: Coughlin Center, County Y, Oshkosh

The Winnebago Lakes Council will host a meeting to discuss the development of new website tools to help groups collaborate on projects to improve and protect our lakes and watersheds. Are you a member of another citizens group, local business, or agency that is tied to lakes, streams, and water? Come and learn how groups can work together, and discuss what goals we might have in common. The meeting will include a brief demonstration of the website under development, what resource groups we might form to spur new projects, and a brainstorming session about future network activities. Refreshments will be served.



Annual Meeting

UW Extension staff Chad Cook and Catherine Neiswender record concerns of Lakes Council members about the Winnebago Pool lakes at the Annual Meeting on October 26, 2006. These concerns are among those anticipated to be addressed through collaborative projects generated by the Partners Network

Collaboration Works

Fishery projects demonstrate possibilities

The Winnebago Pool is fortunate to have many dedicated groups, agencies and businesses working to preserve and improve the lakes. We do not have space to recount all partnerships that have paid off in the past, but here are a few examples from a single perspective, the fisheries:

- Establishing a portable hatchery to stock and restore the sauger fishery
- Educating tournament anglers about invasive species
- Creating reefs to improve forage and shelter for young game fish
- Determining the economic value of the recreational fishery
- Restoring marshes critical as spawning and forage habitat
- Documenting the history of sturgeon fishing and management
- Helping handicapped citizens get into angling
- Producing and distributing a comprehensive report on water quality

Following are examples of two recent collaborations. The Lakes Council hopes these successes can be continued and multiplied with creation of the Network.

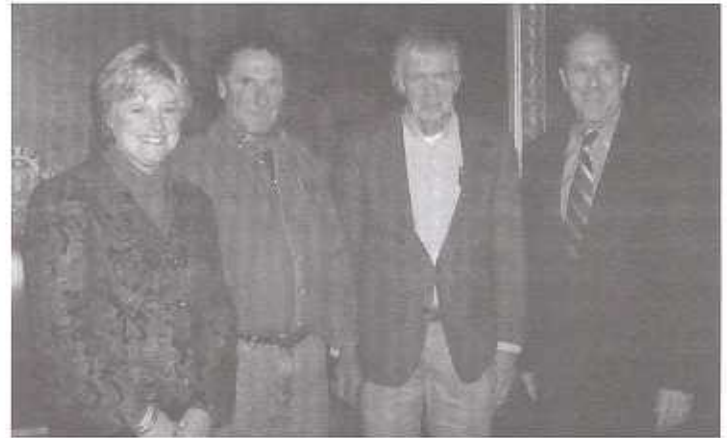
Groups cooperate in project to survey Lake Butte des Morts property owners

Several board members and advisers from the Winnebago Lakes Council attended a workshop on fostering sustainable behavior and heard some new ideas based on Doug McKenzie-Mohr's book: *Community-Based Social Marketing*. The book describes methods for surveying people about attitudes and designing programs to change behavior.

Let's try it, Lakes Council attendees suggested. Let's start by conducting a survey of shoreland property owners to determine what they perceive to be the benefits or barriers to adopting practices that protect water quality.

To make the project manageable, they limited the survey to residents on Lake Butte des Morts. Several partners stepped up. The Winnebago Lakes Council would oversee the project. The Butte des Morts Conservation Club agreed to seek, and subsequently received a small scale DNR grant for funding. The Citizens Natural Resources Association of Wisconsin offered matching funds. Local and state specialists from UW-Extension helped design the survey. The Lakes Council Board, representing numerous lake interests, served as a test group.

In late February, 2007, the survey was mailed to more than 600 Lake Butte des Morts shoreland property owners. This spring Lakes Council staff will tabulate the survey with help from UW-Extension. Based on results, the partners will design two programs aimed at removing barriers, real or perceived, to adopting practices that protect the lake.



Senator Carol Roessler; Gerald Frey, T. Oshkosh Chair; and Dick Mason represent the views of numerous local groups who contacted Governor Doyle protesting the sale of Picnic Point.

Networking saves Picnic Point

One person can make a difference

Sometimes just one motivated individual can create a partnership. Dick Mason, an avocational archeologist from Neenah, writes:

"Last January I read an article in the Oshkosh Northwestern that the state wanted to sell Picnic Point, a 117 acre parcel with 3700 feet of undeveloped shoreline on Lake Winnebago on the north end of the City of Oshkosh. I immediately contacted the State Archeologist who confirmed the existence of an old cemetery on the site.

"I then wrote Governor Doyle explaining I was forming a grassroots protest to stop the sale. It didn't take long to enlist the Town of Oshkosh Chair, State Senator Carol Roessler, people from Sturgeon for Tomorrow and others to form a core protest group, later to become Friends of Picnic Point.

"Archeological sites were not the only concern. This was one of the largest remaining natural parcels along the lakeshore, important habitat for aquatic species and accessible to the public. Working singly and with others, I convinced over 20 municipalities, conservation clubs and civic organizations to send resolutions and letters supporting transfer of title from the Winnebago Mental Health Institute (WMHI) to the DNR for future preservation.

"I also gathered 200 signatures on a petition to the Governor to stop the sale. In support, David Horst, part time columnist for the Appleton Post Crescent, wrote an exceptionally fine article: *For this land the State should say 'no sale'*.

"On a cold, windy day in November I was invited to tour the site with the Ho-Chunk Nation archaeologist, tribal officers, WMHI staff and Rob Cramer, Administrator of the Division of State Facilities. At this point, deluged with letters, it was apparent the state was considering backing off from the sale.

"Soon after this tour Carol Roessler and Governor Doyle received a letter from Rob Cramer recommending title transfer from WMHI to DNR. Senator Roessler, serving her last term on the State Building Commission, introduced the transfer which passed unanimously on December 22, Picnic Point was saved!"

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Why we need a watershed network

Every once in awhile I like to look at old files to make sure history isn't repeating itself. The other day I was struck by the fact that each decade or so some group attempts to connect the varied interests on the Winnebago lakes and rivers. That's generally a good thing, but so far it hasn't worked. The need is real, so I'm glad to hear another attempt is in the works.

Many successful organizations are thriving on the Winnebago lakes and rivers. Most represent well defined interests, be they angling, boating, habitat restoration, waterfowl hunting, etc. Some are more narrowly defined to a specific lake or river, or even a specific area within a lake or river. Having a narrow focus can help a group stay on target, but sometimes the target is much larger than they realize. Water quality is a prime example. With over 6000 square miles of land draining into 260+ square miles of the Winnebago lakes and rivers, water quality is simply too big and too complex for any one group to deal with effectively, in spite of the fact that better water quality benefits almost everyone.

Many groups have similar interests, but don't know what each other is doing. Even groups with the same topical focus or on the same lake are not aware of their commonality. And communication can be worse between groups that don't share common interests.

Locally, groups are interested in just about all aspects of the environment. Some groups are interested in general angling, while others focus only on one or two species of fish. There

are groups concerned with wetlands and waterfowl habitat, and separate groups promoting bird watching. Many people volunteer to collect water quality data, yet others are interested in natural landscaping, or studying frog distributions. Shoreline homeowners, local governments, and other members of the community are concerned with the quality of the lake environment, while Visitor and Convention Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce promote the lakes for recreation. Many businesses—such as marinas, sporting good stores, restaurants and gas stations—benefit from sports people who come to the area to enjoy the lakes and streams.

Certainly a lot of groups care about our lakes. But communication, coordination, and cooperation among these varied interests could be vastly improved, to the benefit of the Winnebago Pool lakes and all who care about their health and well-being.

The history of past attempts to connect varied interests on the Winnebago lakes and rivers is essentially a history of failure, but not because of lack of effort. Numerous and valiant efforts have occurred on the part of individuals and small groups, only to fall short because of the huge challenge coordination presents. New technology may be the answer. A proposal by the Winnebago Lakes Council aims to use the power of Internet networking to increase opportunities for groups to communicate and cooperate. The dream of connecting our wealth of groups to increase the common good is alive and well, and deserves another chance. — Art Techlow

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