



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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Area residents concerned about waterways

Two projects slowed as information is gathered

Citizens are making their voices heard about two projects that may impact water quality.

North Fond du Lac Waterfront Corridor. In November residents of North Fond du Lac overwhelmingly voted in favor of forcing a referendum to occur any time village expenditures of \$1 million or more are needed. The vote was prompted by citizen opposition to village involvement in a multimillion dollar resort proposed on the former Chaparral property on Lake Winnebago. The village had formed a tax incremental financing district to help the project and proposed funding nearly half through tax incentives and other means. While the developer continues to receive necessary permits from the DNR, it is likely that the proposal will be modified to address citizens' concerns. The village recently received a Wisconsin Waterfront Planning Grant and hired a Madison engineering firm to prepare a Waterfront Corridor Plan. The Chaparral site is within this corridor.

Rosendale Dairy. Responding to a group of concerned citizens, the DNR agreed in November to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a waste water discharge permit for the Rosendale Dairy. The dairy, located on County Trunk M in Pickett, would house and milk up to 8,300 dairy cows. This is believed to be the first time the DNR has prepared an EIS for a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO). Among citizens' concerns is contamination of ground and surface water. On January 23 the DNR held a public informational meeting on the EIS in Ripon. More than 500 citizens attended. Written comments from the public were accepted until February 4.

Upcoming Events: Walleye Fishing Workshops

Thursdays February 12, 19, 26, 2009, 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Fox Valley Technical College, 150 Campbell Road, Oshkosh

A few openings are still available for the walleye fishing workshops. This is the second year for this popular series. Topics include fly fishing for walleyes, seasonal movements of walleyes, and setting up sonar/gps units. Presenters are Ryan Standke, Rob Teske and Chris Gasser. Sign up for one or all workshops. Workshops are open only to Winnebago Lakes Council members. Call Jack at 920-233-3536 for reservations.



Ryan Standke

Some questions answered

Membership renewals. A few Lakes Council members have asked why they received membership renewal notices toward the end of the year when they had sent in contributions only a few months earlier. The explanation is a change in our membership procedures. Members no longer renew on their anniversary date; rather, all memberships run from January through December. By next December, we will all be on the same renewal schedule. Your membership is important to us. Please continue to help protect the Winnebago lakes with your contributions.

Group programs. Yes, we are still offering programs about the Winnebago lakes to interested groups. Our grant supporting this project has been extended to December 31, 2009. Most recently Dr. Michael Lizotte spoke to the Oshkosh Area League of Women Voters and the Wisconsin Association of Lakes. Contact us at info@winnebagolakes.org to schedule a speaker for your group.

Around the Lakes

Informational Meeting on Lower Fox River TMDL, February 24, 7-830 p.m. Grand Chute Town Hall, 1900 Grand Chute Blvd, Appleton. Conservation and environmental groups are invited to learn more about ongoing projects to protect and restore the Lower Fox River. RSVP Erin Hanson 920-662-5419, ErinE.Hanson@Wisconsin.gov.

The TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load), to be completed by the Wisconsin DNR in 2009, is an analysis that identifies sources of pollutants in a watershed and establishes limits for each source to ensure water bodies will eventually meet water quality goals. The Lower Fox River and its tributary streams are impaired by sediment and phosphorus (PCB cleanup is ongoing under a separate effort). Numerous permitted entities have begun to decrease phosphorus and sediment loads under existing programs. However, meeting water quality goals will also depend on watershed residents, including the Winnebago Pool, to voluntarily change their actions. Interested organizations should check out this website (<http://basineducation.uwex.edu/lowerfox/tmdl-outreach.html>) and answer a short survey.

Conservation Day, February 25, 2009. Wisconsin State Capitol. Join hundreds of citizens from across Wisconsin to talk about lake conservation issues with state senators and representatives. To RSVP, visit www.conservationvoters.org. Deadline is Feb. 13.

Wisconsin Lakes Convention, March 18-20, 2009. KI Convention Center, Green Bay March 18-20, 2009. The 31st annual Wisconsin lakes Convention will focus primarily on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), a topic of critical importance to users of the Winnebago lakes. Consider attending. Our lakes need representation at this conference. www.wisconsinlakes.org

Clean Boats, Clean Waters Workshop, March 28, 8:30 a.m.- noon. High Cliff State Park. Become a trained volunteer to inspect boats and distribute information about aquatic invasive species (AIS) at boat landings during the boating season. Co-hosted by Calumet County AIS Coordinator Diane Schauer and Naturalist Josh Bray. No cost, but handbooks and kits will be available for \$25. Registration is limited to 15, so call early. Contact Diane at 920-849-2361, ext.273.

Free Fishing Day, June 6, 8 a.m.- 2 p.m. Jefferson Park, Menasha, sponsored by Heckrodt Wetland Reserve and A Fish Tale and More. Families with young children are invited to fish in Lake Winnebago at this free event during Wisconsin's Free Fishing Weekend. No fishing license is needed. Exhibitions, free food, bait, equipment and lessons for participating youth. The Winnebago Lakes Council is supporting a grant Heckrodt is requesting to help with this project.

Ice harvesting once thrived in Oshkosh Museum's Web site relates the story

Check out the revamped Oshkosh Public Museum's web pages about Wetlands & Waterways for a rich and varied exploration of all aspects of our lakes (<http://www.oshkoshmuseum.org>.) Some of the stories tie in with exhibits at the museum. Many of the historic and other photos are unique. As a brief sample, here is the introduction to a story about ice harvesting, once a thriving industry in Oshkosh:

Every winter, usually in January, crews cut ice from the lake in a highly organized, methodical process. The ice was stored in huge wooden warehouses all along the shore. To insulate the ice, the blocks were packed in sawdust and wood chips, a byproduct of Oshkosh's woodworking industry. The warehouse walls were often lined with thick cork. Oshkosh Pure Ice Co., Doemel Ice, and Winnebago Ice were some of the local ice companies in the 20th century. In addition to local use, Lake Winnebago ice was also shipped by train to large cities. Many individuals and farmers cut their own ice each winter, storing blocks in special backyard sheds or even in basements.

Area legislators sponsor lake protection bill

State Rep. Gordon Hintz, (D. Oshkosh) and State Sen. Randy Hopper, (R. Fond du Lac) are among the co-sponsors of a bill for a statewide ban on phosphorus in lawn fertilizer (with some exceptions). The bill died in the Assembly last session and has been revived to go through the legislative process again. Phosphorus runoff from lawns goes directly into surface waters, fueling smelly algae blooms and nuisance plant growth, depriving fish of oxygen, and making summertime unpleasant for property owners and recreational users on our lakes. Please thank our legislators for recognizing the need to protect our waterways.

Ron Bruch and Dick Koerner attract crowd anticipating February 14 sturgeon season

More than 100 sturgeon spearers and interested residents attended the Winnebago Lakes Council's Speaker Series event about Winnebago's biggest fish at the Stone Toad Bar & Grill in Menasha on January 13. Bruch, DNR fisheries manager, and Koerner, a veteran spearer, talked about the management, culture and biology of sturgeon. Both answered

numerous questions related to VHS, spawning, spearing and future projections. The Winnebago System has the largest sturgeon population in North America, estimated at 37,000.



It takes more than a shanty, a saw and a spear to catch a sturgeon. Here are a few of the dozens of items Dick Koerner, veteran sturgeon spearer, displayed to ensure success. Koerner, from Neenah, is a citizen member of the DNR's Sturgeon Advisory Group and WI Conservation Congress.

Photos by Jack Brauer



New funding for Winnebago Lakes totals \$214,000

Three years of partnerships see results

Since the Winnebago Lakes Council was first formed in 2005, it has worked with more than 30 partners to bring in \$214,000 of new money for projects to help sustain our lakes. These findings were identified in the final report closing out a \$10,000 state River Planning Grant to improve communication and coordination among potential partners in the Winnebago area.

Key partners have been UW Extension, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, UW Oshkosh and the Oshkosh Area Community Foundation. Other partners include communities, businesses and conservation groups. Projects were funded mostly through state grants and matched with local contributions and volunteer hours. Here are the five projects identified:

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Planning and Education. In 2007 and 2008 this project enlisted area citizens to help draft Phase I of a regional AIS plan for the Winnebago Pool. It also introduced Clean Boats, Clean Waters to our lakes—a program where during the past three boating seasons, UWO interns inspected boats and distributed AIS literature at our busiest boat launches and before fishing tournaments. Funding came from the state \$97,000 and local \$82,900.

Lake and Stream Monitoring. In 2006 and 2007 more than 100 citizens were trained to use a Secchi disk to measure the clarity of

water in the Winnebago Pool. A subsequent program in 2007 trained 40 citizens in a more complex procedure to measure water quality in 90 streams entering the Pool lakes. These volunteers post their data on a DNR web site providing us with a view over time about the quality of our water. Funding came from the state \$18,226.

Lake Butte des Morts Shoreland Survey. A survey of 600 lake shore property owners in 2007 provided information about private shoreland management. Findings showed most residents care about water quality and are willing to learn about ways to reduce phosphorus and buffer shorelines. Funding came from the state \$3000 and local \$1500.

Natural Shoreline Expo. The Expo, sponsored by the Winnebago County Land and Water Conservation Department, was held in late spring, 2007 and 2008. It promoted natural shorelines with vendors, seminars and exhibits. Postcards announcing the event were sent to over 12,000 shoreland property owners. Funding was local \$4000.

Lakes Education Center. A current proposal to develop a lakes education center on the waterfront in downtown Oshkosh and link it to the cultural sites along the riverfront is being floated to various groups. Funding to educate the community about this concept and other ways to sustain our lakes comes from the state \$3,000 and local \$4,500.

Two new members join Lakes Council board

Ken Friedman and Wayne Risvold joined the board of the Winnebago Lakes Council at the 2008 Annual Meeting November 12 at Schmitt's Oar House in Fond du Lac. Ken, from Oshkosh, is a real estate, business, employment and estate planning attorney with Kindt Phillips Friedman & Fremgen, SC, and an avid sailor. Wayne, from Fond du Lac, is a Senior Account Manager with AFLAC and Flotilla Commander of USCGA flotilla 04-01. Both have a keen interest in lake issues. Their terms goes through 2011.

Other board members elected through 2011 were Peggy Davidson, Greg Kiel, Mike Lizotte, and Wayne Mueller. Continuing board members are Dick Snyder through 2009 and Jack Brauer, Marc Blum, Jerome Lopas, and Jan Scalpone through 2010. The board thanked Paul Fowler and Bob Wojcik for their service.

After a brief overview of the year's activities, members offered the following suggestions:

- Coordinate on water quality issues with nearby lakes (e.g. Lake deNeveu in FDL)
- Provide input to High Cliff State Park Master Plan, especially marina management
- Provide more information on water quality monitoring
- Explore how project support is decided via the WI Waterways Commission.

Following the business meeting, Fond du Lac Deputy Sheriff Aaron Rauls presented a program on Safe Boating on the Winnebago Lakes. His talk focused on cooperative rescue operations on our lakes, in addition to giving a brief overview of safety regulations and tips.

Jeanne's Fish Story

If you ask Jeanne Shiras how the fishing is from her front yard on the south shore of Lake Butte des Morts, she'll say it's really good. In November 180 sturgeon and 300,000 pounds of carp were caught there. Her photos tell the tale.



One morning I saw some guys tying the end of a net to my downed cottonwood, then dragging the other end 1½ miles out into the lake. By noon they had gathered the net into a 15x200 foot area right along my shoreline. It was brim full with flapping fish.



The next day a DNR crew arrived and over three days tagged 180 sturgeon up to 230 pounds. They installed sonic devices in 40.



Then for four days and two nights commercial fishermen scooped out carp from the net into large boxes in their boats.



These boxes were emptied into ice filled bins on semis parked at the county boat landing and headed for New York City markets.



Early ice stopped their work. Why in my front yard? Apparently the east end of my property is a gathering place for carp before they move into Lake Winnebago's deeper waters.

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Winter 2009

WaterWays

Winnebago Lakes Council

How global warming affects our lakes

Signs are pointing to significant changes occurring on our Wisconsin lakes as a product of global warming. The cause is carbon, in the form of carbon dioxide gas. It has reached levels in the atmosphere never before seen. Carbon dioxide traps heat energy in the atmosphere. This is not a “maybe” situation. This is an environmental crisis underway and expected to worsen.

Here’s what’s happening on Lake Winnebago. Research study and angler reports document ice thickness and ice duration in a declining trend and the trend is not likely to stop anytime soon. Dr. Stefan Becker at UW-Oshkosh looked closely at 100 years of “ice-out” dates on a handful of Wisconsin lakes, including Winnebago. If current rates of warming are not reversed, Winnebago ice will exist only in faded family photos by century’s end.

At first glance a warmer, ice free lake doesn’t sound so bad. And, from certain perspectives, it might even look desirable; less ice can mean more boating, more swimming and...less ice.

Sunlight is a powerful heat energy source but lake ice acts like a giant mirror reflecting most of that energy. When this icy mirror melts, the light energy heats the water instead of being reflected. Less ice means less reflection leading to even further

warming in our lakes. It is, to use an inappropriately cold term, a “snowball effect”.



A study of ice-out dates show declining ice thickness and duration on Lake Winnebago.

So, who cares?

Care if you fish. Under current warming rates we will see on-ice sturgeon spearing on Winnebago fade into the past because of variable, undependable ice conditions. Walleye preference will shift further north as southern lake water warms beyond their temperature preference. Overall, shifts from cold loving fish (trout, walleye, salmon) to warm loving fish (bass, catfish, bluegill) may occur, including in streams.

Care if you boat or swim. Aquatic invaders will take advantage of warming trends. Plants like “Hydrilla”, originally from Africa, are more aggressive than Eurasian water milfoil. They are quietly marching north as the climate warms. Aquatic plant

habitat will change, and with it, recreational patterns and the economics of lake communities.

Care if you experienced flooding in 2008.

The extreme flooding in 2008 is, in part, reportedly being attributed to warming effects. Experts predicted these events. As air temperatures rise, the water holding capacity of the atmosphere increases. But when it bursts loose, it really comes crashing down. Expect more extremes—more extreme rain, and more extreme drought.

Care if your watershed and shorelines lack resiliency. In the 2008 rains, soil peeled off farm fields and shorelines into our lakes. Extreme events can destabilize everything. Building resiliency, (the capacity to resist stressors) will be essential for ensuring stability.

In the future, good lake management will require fresh ideas on developing resilient features on our shores, watersheds, and lakeside wetlands. Reducing nutrient loading, protecting healthy wetlands, and minimizing removal of water from aquatic and wetland ecosystems become critical. Ask yourself, are you ready to change?

- Mark Sesing, WDNR Lake Specialist

A longer version of this article appeared in *On the Water* magazine, August, 2008.