

ON THE WATERFRONT is published by:  
 WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES & RIVERS ASSOCIATION, INC.  
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## Contacts to help protect lakes, rivers & shorelands

Private citizens, especially shoreland property owners, are the first line of defense in preventing irreparable damage to our waters and shorelands. But **do not trespass** to investigate a suspected violation! Instead, please contact the following authorities:

### DNR Water Regulation Violations:

**Dan Harrington** (Water Management Specialist, Spooner Office).....635-4097  
**Brian Knepper** (Conservation Warden for Southern Washburn County).....635-4099  
**Dave Swanson** (Conservation Warden for Northern Washburn County).....466-5428  
 If wardens are in the field, call them through the Washburn County Sheriff's Dept.....468-4720  
 or through the **DNR's toll-free 24-hour tip line**.....1-800-TIP-WDNR (847-9367)

### County Shoreland Zoning Questions or Violations:

Web Macomber (Zoning Administrator).....468-4690

### County Planning, Land/Water Resource Management:

Brad Robole (Director).....468-4654

### Aquatic Invasives:

Kris Larsen, DNR.....635-4072  
 Lisa Gabriel, Washburn County Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator.....468-4654



# ON THE WATERFRONT

The newsletter of the  
 WASHBURN COUNTY LAKES & RIVERS ASSOCIATION, INC.  
 PROMOTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESPONSIBLE USE OF  
 WASHBURN COUNTY WATERS, SHORELAND AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Spring 2008  
 WCLRA #18

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## President's Comments

### *Flurry of water-related bills reconsidered*

As I write this in early spring, there's little traffic on our road and most of the cabins and homes are unoccupied this time of year. I look forward to having neighbors return and to the sounds of summer fun. But before our thoughts turn to the warmer months ahead, I'd like to make sure you're aware of some of the activity that has taken place over the winter.

On the state level, several bills related to the protection and enjoyment of Wisconsin's waters were introduced in the Legislature. This is an arena in which we get excellent help from the Wisconsin Association of Lakes (WAL) in following what's happening in Madison and letting us know when it's important to communicate with our legislators. (See Fred Blake's article on Page 4 for more on the relationships among the three levels of lake associations.)

Only one of the water-related bills that were introduced passed (the pier legislation); the others will likely be reconsidered next year. Here is a summary of those that were introduced:

**Piers:** The extent to which piers should be regulated has been hotly debated since 2003, when Act 118 (the "Jobs Creation Bill") defined piers that may be placed without any state permit. The bill that was passed this legislation session was the result of much discussion and compromise. It allows piers, including boat hoists and boat lifts, that were placed on or before Feb. 6, 2004 and are not more than 8 feet wide. It also continues the existing allowance of no more than 2 boat slips for the first 50 feet of shoreline and no more than one additional boat slip for each additional 50 feet of shoreline. WAL has been an active participant in this debate. You can learn more about the history and other provisions of the resulting legislation at their Web site, [www.wisconsinlakes.org](http://www.wisconsinlakes.org) and see Page 4 for more information from DNR.

**Banning phosphorous in lawn fertilizers (SB 197):** This bill would have enacted a ban on phosphorous in lawn fertilizers, similar to the Minnesota law that has been in place for several years. It would apply to lawns, golf courses, and other mowed areas but not to agricultural land. Most land in Wisconsin has sufficient phosphorous anyway and there were exceptions for new lawns and those shown to be lacking phosphorous. (WCLRA adopted a resolution in May 2007 urging Washburn County to support this ban.) This legislation was passed by the Senate but got held up in the Assembly despite a unanimous recommendation for passage by the Assembly Natural Resources Committee.

**Transportation of aquatic species:** Current Wisconsin regulations address only the act of launching a boat carrying an aquatic invasive species. Many grassroots organizations, including WCLRA, have called for a prohibition on the transportation of any aquatic species, to help prevent the spread of exotic species such as Eurasian water milfoil. We will have to wait until next year for another opportunity to pass this legislation

**Appointment of the Secretary of the DNR:** Under current law, the Secretary of the DNR is nominated by the Governor and, with the advice and consent of the Senate, appointed to serve at the pleasure of the Governor. This is an exception to the general statute which provides that in a department supervised by a board, the board appoints the secretary to serve at the pleasure of the board. The proposed legislation would have deleted the exception and provided that the Secretary of Natural Resources is to be appointed by the Natural Resources Board for a four-year term. The senate passed the bill and sent it to the Assembly. It was held in an Assembly committee and never reached the Assembly floor. It has been rained out for this session but is expected to be back next session.

(Continued on Page 5)

WCLRA provides copies of its *On the Waterfront* newsletter to individual members and to the officers of member associations. If your association has recently had elections, please make us aware of the address changes. Contact Fred Blake at (715) 469-3228 or by email at [blakelake@centurytel.net](mailto:blakelake@centurytel.net)

# Moratorium remains on new resorts, campgrounds

Several years ago, one of our Washburn County resort and campground operations requested a major change in its operation. As these businesses operate under a conditional use permit (CUP), that meant a change in the existing CUP and that, in turn, required action by the Zoning Committee.

A great deal of controversy quickly surfaced. The residents on the lake where the campground was located felt that the scope of the expansion was too great and would cause degradation of the lake. The campground owners felt that their request was well within reason. The lake residents actively opposed the proposal and a protracted legal battle ensued.

The state Department of Health and Family Services issues resort and campground permits under HFS 178 from the standpoint of water and septic requirements. HFS 178 does not, however, address shoreland development and density standards for these types of land uses.

County officials realized that the absence of development and density standards for resorts and campgrounds would make dealing with future applications very difficult for the Zoning Committee. The county elected to adopt a moratorium on new lakefront operations or modifications of existing lakefront operations pending the adoption of an ordinance governing them. It also appointed a citizens committee to participate in drafting the ordinance.

While WCLRA's mission is to protect our waters, we also recognize that resorts and campgrounds serve an important purpose in providing access to our lakes and rivers for those who cannot or do not own shoreland property. Wisconsin's Public Trust Doctrine states that the waters of Wisconsin are held in trust for all the citizens of the state. Campgrounds and resorts are also significant contributors to the economy of Washburn County.

The process of drafting an ordinance is complex and has been ongoing for the last several years. New impetus was introduced, however, when in just the last few months, two new applications for campground expansions were submitted. The Zoning Office and the citizens committee were approaching completion of their work and assembled a draft ordinance for public comment.

The ordinance text was made available and an information meeting was held on March 18, 2008

On March 25, a formal public hearing was convened before the Washburn County Zoning Committee and public comment was taken.

Balanced and rational comments came from both the resort and campground operators and those who were concerned with preservation of the lakes. After the hearing, the Zoning Committee opted to send the ordinance on to the full Washburn County Board of Supervisors.

It was acknowledged that the draft was probably not perfect, but that changes could certainly occur in the future. It was also emphasized that, since control would be through the CUP process, the Zoning Committee could attach further conditions as it saw fit to provide added protection for the lakes.

At the County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, April 15, the proposal to adopt the draft ordinance was defeated. Therefore, the originally adopted moratorium on new or modified resort or campgrounds will remain in effect until an ordinance is adopted.

--Fred Blake, WCLRA Director

## Lake Fair on Lake Wissota

Lakes are a vital part of our communities, and we all have a valuable role to play in keeping our waters healthy. The Wissota Lake Fair at Chippewa Falls offers an opportunity for a fun, hands-on approach to lake issues and emphasizes family participation.

Pontoon classrooms led by lake scientists will demonstrate ways that you and other lake enthusiasts can learn more about your favorite lake, collect valuable data, and watch for changes in lake health over time. Learn how the assistance and enthusiasm of local volunteers is playing a key role in monitoring and managing Wisconsin's lakes.

Plus, explore Lake Wissota's shorelands and shallows to discover the vital habitat these areas provide for all kinds of aquatic life, birds, and other wildlife.

Exhibitors and speakers at the Wissota Lake Fair will address soil testing and lawn fertilizer, septic systems, shoreland restoration and rain gardens, aquatic plants, and invasive species.

Opportunities for individuals to get involved with lakes, such as LoonWatch, Clean Boats Clean Waters, and NatureMapping Programs will also be presented.

Visit the Wisconsin Association of Lake's website ([www.wisconsinlakes.org](http://www.wisconsinlakes.org)) for more event details.

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# 10th Northwest Lakes Conference set

The 10th Annual Northwest Lakes Conference will be Thursday-Friday, June 19-20, at Telemark Resort, Cable. Thursday's schedule includes several workshops.

This year's NWLC features two special attractions:

\* Keynote speaker on Friday will be Dr. John Magnuson, UW-Madison Professor Emeritus of Zoology and Director Emeritus of the Center for Limnology. Dr. Magnuson, an expert in global climate change and its relationship to our lakes, will speak on the impacts of climate change on lakes and streams.

Dr. Magnuson played a lead role in the lakes and streams portions of the 1995 and 2001 assessments by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as well as the 2003 Union of Concerned Scientists' Confronting Climate Change in the Great Lakes Region. He is presently a co-chair of the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts. His research interests are in long-term regional ecology, the effects of climate change on inland waters, biodiversity and invasive species, and fisheries ecology.

\* NWLC will feature a two-hour special performance of *Wild Woods and Waters* by Warren Nelson and the full Big Top Chautauqua theater troupe, thanks to sponsorship by the National Park Service and the River Alliance of Wisconsin. This is a special show written to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

NWLC registration is just \$45 and includes a continental breakfast, lunch and a ticket to the Big Top matinee performance. Extra tickets to the shows are also available.

The Northwest Lakes Conference will also feature a Clean Boats/Clean Waters training workshop, a great Thursday BBQ, many displays by lake protection agencies, organizations, business partners and much more.

Complete schedule, details, and registration info will be posted at the [WisconsinLakes.org](http://WisconsinLakes.org) website.

## Celebrate 40 years of Wild & Scenic Rivers

"Take Me to the River" is a celebration involving special events and service-learning projects to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act this year.

Working cooperatively, the National Park Service, the University of Wisconsin-Extension and the University of Minnesota Extension are creating opportunities for people throughout the area to share in this celebration and promote stewardship and understanding of the Riverway, its watershed and unique resources.

The St. Croix River is the culmination of more than 1,500 springs and brooks and 16 major tributaries merging together, its watershed an expansive basin covering more than 7,700 square miles in the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota. It is your watershed.



As fragile as it is beautiful, and protected as a unit of your National Park system, the St. Croix and its largest tributary, the Namekagon River, together form the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, a thin ribbon of protection that today is 252 miles in length. The landmark legislation that created the Riverway symbolizes the need to understand the importance of all of our rivers.

Learn about service learning projects, the St. Croix Sojourn, affiliated events and more at <http://www.wildrivers40.org>

# An update on the aquatic invasive species program

Spring is filling the air in Washburn County. Snow finally has melted, birds are chirping, and the longer daylight hours are bringing sun back into the forecast. The shoreland flora is greening up and lakes will soon be full of activity.

There are also changes starting to emerge with the county aquatic invasive species program. To start off, many of you may not know me yet. I am the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator for Washburn County. I started last July, and am in a 2-year grant position.

The primary goal of the AIS program is to prevent the spread of invasives to additional locations. I help create public awareness about the negative effects of AIS infestations through workshops and presentations to lake associations and others.

Of course, all aquatic invasive species are harmful, but the two primary ones located in Washburn County are purple loosestrife and Eurasian water-milfoil.

## Strategic Plan

Since our AIS program resources are limited to 2 years, we are focusing on creating a framework to carry out a plan beyond the grant period. A strategic plan will be developed that will outline goals, identify problems, and identify actions to control invasive species. The focus will be on known problematic areas in the county, and ways to improve them for the future. One concept that worked in Vilas County is the creation of Town Lake Committees. They function as the local group to carry out tasks identified in the plan. We are in the process of developing an AIS Advisory Committee to help generate ideas for the strategic plan, and so far, we have about 14 people on board. It's great to see the cooperation!

## Purple Loosestrife

We also have a purple loosestrife biological control program we've been implementing since 2006. We dig and raise our own rootstock, collect our own Galerucella beetles, and release them throughout the county. The majority of beetles are released on the Yellow River, which has the county's biggest infestation of purple loosestrife.

In 2007, we raised about 13,000 beetles. This year, we are hoping for 75,000 to 100,000. It is important to remember the beetles will not invade your window sills, doors, and ceilings, (like Asian ladybird beetles and box elder bugs)! They only feed on the purple loosestrife plant and then they go dormant -- without the plant, they will die. The long-term objective of biological control is to reduce the abundance of purple loosestrife in wetland habitats. Purple loosestrife will



**Brent Edlin from the Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department, right, and Craig Walkey from WCLRA release a purple loosestrife plant covered with Galerucella beetles along the Yellow River last July. It's hoped that the beetles, raised under a grant-funded county program, will reproduce and feed on the invasive loosestrife found along the river.**

*Photo by Lisa Gabriel*

not be eradicated from most wetlands where it presently occurs, but its abundance can be significantly reduced so that it doesn't dominate the natural plant community.

Workshops are scheduled later this spring and early summer to train volunteers to help locate and control aquatic invasive species in Washburn County:

### Workshops for 2008 -- (Space is limited to 25)

\* Citizen Lake Monitoring (CLMN) training: Saturday, May 31, 9 a.m. to noon, Spooner Agricultural Research Station headquarters, 1 mile east of Spooner on Hwy. 70.

\* Northwest Lakes Conference: June 19, Telemark Resort, Cable, WI, CLMN 9 a.m. to noon; Clean Boats, Clean Water, 1 to 4:30 p.m.

For more information regarding the workshops, or if you'd like me to come and talk to your lake association about aquatic invasive species, please call me at 468-4654 or email me at lgabriel@co.washburn.wi.us

*--Lisa Gabriel, Washburn County  
Aquatic Invasives Species Coordinator*

# Aquatic invasives transport bill ALMOST passes

It is well known that movement of aquatic invasive species (AIS) from one water body to another via our boats, trailers and other recreational water equipment is one of the most serious threats to our lakes today. Under existing Wisconsin law, it is illegal to launch a boat with aquatic invasive species attached, but it is not illegal to transport aquatic vegetation on our public roadways. Law enforcement cannot legally stop vehicles carrying aquatic vegetation and require that it be removed or ticket the vehicle operator. In this sense, enforcement has its hands tied.

No one seems to disagree that it is imperative that we make every possible effort to prevent infestations from spreading. One part of an effective prevention program would be prohibiting the *transport* of aquatic species on our boats, trailers and other equipment over our public roads and giving law enforcement officials the power to deal with violators.

Once lakes are infested with aquatic invasives, efforts to manage or control them are very costly and seldom as effective as we would like. Further, management and control methods do not eradicate the problem and management costs continue year-to-year. The only sensible path is to focus our efforts on prevention in the hope that costly management and control can be avoided.

Senate Bill (SB) 454 was considered in the Wisconsin Legislature this last session. It passed in the Senate, but failed in the Assembly. It was a good bill and we hope that it will be revived during the next session. However, the political climate in the Legislature has not been favorable to environmental protection in recent years.

WCLRA has been active in this area on the local level over the winter. In the hope of spurring action either in the Legislature or at the county level, we adopted a resolution requesting action to make transporting AIS illegal and we



**WLCRA is promoting state rules prohibiting transport of aquatic plants on boats, trailers and vehicles.**

passed it on to our state legislators and to Washburn County. The text of the resolution can be found on our website, [www.wclra.org](http://www.wclra.org). The county referred that resolution to its Agriculture and Land Conservation Committee (Ag and LCC), where it is currently being considered.

Polk, Bayfield and Burnett Counties have already passed AIS transport ordinances. This is absolutely critical if we are to keep aquatic invasive species out of our lakes, streams and rivers.

If the Wisconsin Legislature is not up to the task of enacting this critical prohibition, it may be up to the counties to get the job done. Without this kind of protection, it is only a matter of time before aquatic invasive species will find their way into a large number of our local water bodies.

*--Fred Blake, WCLRA Director*

# Legislative session leaves several bills in limbo

(Continued from Page 1)

## Safe Lakes:

This proposed bill, introduced by Sen. Bob Jauch, D-Poplar, called for a 100-foot no-wake area along undeveloped shores. The goal is to protect swimmers and others enjoying quiet sports as well as the shoreline itself.

In addition, the DNR is writing a comprehensive set of new rules dealing with all types of invasive species. Several WCLRA Board members attended a listening session in Spooner on January 10 when a draft version of these rules was discussed.

It will take time, perhaps a couple of years, for these rules to make their way through the proposal and adoption stages and there will be more opportunities for public comment.

At the county level, a group of citizens appointed by the Zoning Committee has drafted a new ordinance related to campgrounds and resorts, which was tabled by the county board April 15. (See Page 8 for more details.)

And finally, looking ahead to early summer, I'd like to highlight a golden opportunity for you to learn more about protection of our lakes:

On June 19-20, the Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference will again be held at Telemark Resort in Cable.

It's always great to see familiar lake advocates returning, but we'd like to see some new faces too. See Page 3 for more details and join us there if you can.

*--Cathie Erickson, WCLRA President*

## Three groups working together to protect our lakes

A not uncommon question from new lake property owners is, "What organization(s) should I join or support -- WAL, WCLRA or my own lake association?" This probably stems largely from not fully understanding the functioning of these organizations.

My stock answer is, "All of them!" And, there are good reasons why. Joining all three is not a duplication of effort because all three help in different ways and all three are necessary in attempting to preserve our lake legacy here in Washburn County and in the northwest corner of Wisconsin in general.

Let's look at what each organization does:

### **The Wisconsin Association of Lakes (WAL)**

We hear about WAL frequently and many of us receive communications from them about statewide issues. WAL is the organization that looks out for Wisconsin's lakes at the state level. They have the ear of the legislature and are a potent force in properly influencing the legislature to make good decisions for our water resources. They also do battle for us in court on important issues. We certainly do not get everything we want in these areas. However, if WAL were not present in Madison, I can guarantee that the situation would be far worse than it is today. If you happen to recall the "Dockaminium" case of a year or so ago, Wal was instrumental in defeating a private developer's attempt to sell rights on our public waters. WAL does for us at the state level what we simply could not do on our own ... and they do it well.

### **Washburn County Lakes & Rivers Association (WCLRA)**

Our organization works with county-wide issues and tries to encourage good decisions within county government relating to the preservation of our water resources. We do, here in Washburn County, what WAL could not do because they are too distant from the county-wide issues. If you ever attend a Zoning Committee or Board of Adjustment meeting here in Washburn County, you will find at least one of us there. We also attempt to inform the public about issues that are important to all of us if our Washburn County lakes are to remain healthy over time.

### **Local Lake Associations**

Washburn County has 26 lake associations. That is not many when you consider that the county has 964 lakes, but many of those lakes are small. Most

of the large lakes have formed lake organizations of some kind. These local associations perform a role that neither WAL nor WCLRA can do as well. They will likely be first to recognize specific problems on their own individual lakes and they are the first line of defense for those lakes. If there is no organization on your lake and you identify a problem, WCLRA is here to help handle that problem. When groups of lake residents elect to form a lake association, WCLRA is there to assist in that process.

When you sum it all up, WAL, WCLRA and the local associations make up an effective team to deal with lake issues at all levels within the state. The system is a bit like the proverbial three-legged stool. All three legs are essential or it simply doesn't work!

*--Fred Blake, WCLRA Director*

## DNR update on pier rules

Property owners have been calling DNR offices wondering about a new law that changes longstanding pier requirements. That law took effect April 16 and agency officials are working hard to get the changes in place in coming weeks.

What pier owners need to know this spring is that they can continue to place their existing piers on the water, the same as they've been doing for years.

The law continues to exempt the vast majority of existing piers from needing any kind of permit or state review. These piers meet size and location requirements that have been essentially the same for nearly two decades to protect critical fish habitat and keep piers from interfering with boating.

Larger existing piers will be grandfathered in, so pier owners can keep what they have, with a few limitations.

Owners of piers that are not exempt will need to register their pier with the DNR through a free, one-time process. They will have three years to register by filling out a paper form or submitting the information online.

The DNR encourages people to wait to register their pier until the agency can finish the electronic registration system later this year. Those who want to get a jump on registration, however, can fill out a paper form available at DNR service centers and mail it in.

Existing piers that are too big to be grandfathered will either need to be downsized or will need to get an individual permit with a comprehensive review. These very large structures have the greatest potential to harm fish habitat and interfere with boating and swimming.

*--Wisconsin DNR*

## Lake levels have a history of highs and lows...

If you live on a seepage lake or spring lake without a controlling dam or outlet stream, like we do, you have to wonder about the extreme lake levels we have witnessed these past years.

My wife Jane and I have lived on Spider5 on the Spider Lake Chain north of Birchwood since 1998. Like so many of us, we are relative newcomers. Any noticeable change on our lake is a new event.

But, I can't help wondering. How often has this happened, when, and how many times?

I have been a volunteer lake monitor for the Spider Lake Chain since 2005. Beginning in May and continuing through October, I record Secchi disc readings by weekly and report my data to the DNR. However, since 2004, I have also measured and recorded lake levels biweekly from an iron pipe on our shoreline.

In 2004, our lake was very high, as were confined lakes along a northern line from North Dakota to Rhinelander. Unlike Shell Lake, which received much media attention from the 300-plus damaged dwellings due to the high lake level, we only lost one cabin that was built in about 1910. According to the previous owner (1917-2004), the cabin had never been damaged before due to high water.

Could it be that the high water event witnessed in 2004 had not been as severe in the previous 100 years? The DNR only started collecting lakes data in the late 1960s. Oral history may be all that we have to work with.

Since fall of 2004, our lake has steadily dropped about one inch per week, or approximately 6.9 feet from the high level to the new low level I measured on September 6, 2007.

My neighbor, whose parents built their cabin in 1940, does not recall the water level this low from childhood stories or memory.

I dug out a postcard we bought in Birchwood years ago that is an excellent aerial photograph of our lake. After close inspection, I was surprised to find a small emerged island with at least one season of vegetation on it, clearly visible at a location where no island exists. A trip in the kayak found the island location approximately two inches below the new low water level. Our lake has been lower.

I contacted the postcard publisher in Eau Claire, Wisconsin and after some research, the owner was confident that the photograph was taken in August/September 1966. That would indicate that our lake level was at least six inches lower yet in 1966, for at least one summer season.

I have also found two very old six- to eight-inch diameter tree stumps along our shoreline, approximately one foot below the current water level.

I understand that submerged stumps can be very old. I am encouraged to learn their history.

*--Craig Walkey, WCLRA Director*

## Great Lakes Compact still on hold

In early April, Governor Doyle announced that Wisconsin legislators had reached a compromise on the Great Lakes Compact and he intended to call a special session to adopt the compact. To date, the negotiated language has not been made public and no vote has been scheduled to pass the compact.

Governors of eight Great Lakes States and two Canadian provinces signed the Great Lakes Water Resources Compact two years ago. The Compact would prevent diversion of Great Lakes water by industries and municipalities, with some limited exceptions. As leaders from thirsty Southwest and Western portions of the United States express interest in tapping the Great Lakes as a new source of fresh water, there is a growing sense of urgency to protect Great Lakes resources for Great Lakes citizens.

The compact has been overwhelmingly ratified by several Great Lakes legislatures: Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, and New York. The Wisconsin Senate approved a strong compact bill (SB 523) earlier this year. But the Wisconsin Assembly failed to act on the bill before the close of the regular legislative session.

It was reported that three weeks of closed-door negotiations resulted in numerous compromises to the specific language in the state bill. The original language of the compact was left untouched, including its most contentious element -- that any future water diversion to a community entirely outside the Great Lakes basin will require approval from all eight Great Lakes governors. The actual language of the final deal has yet to be released.

We encourage interested WAL members and all lakes and rivers association members to contact their legislators and ask when Wisconsin will have a Great Lakes Compact and what it will look like.

*--Wisconsin Association of Lakes*

## Clean lakes and rivers require constant vigilance

By now, the winter lake ice is gone or well on the way and activity along the shorelines is increasing. Seasonal cabins are being opened for the summer and permanent residents are out doing the normal springtime tasks.

Along with this comes the onset of construction and remodeling projects and the Washburn County Zoning Department and the DNR wardens suddenly find their lives very busy. This is the time to remind lake residents and lake users to keep their eyes open for what may be shoreland development violations. Many of those that do occur are likely inadvertent because people are simply not aware of the zoning regulations. As time goes on, WCLRA is attempting to convince people that it is wise to ask a question first and avoid the risk of what could be a costly violation.

Zoning and DNR simply do not have enough people to keep an eye on all of Washburn County's 964 lakes and nearly seven hundred miles of streams. It is up to us to inform these agencies of what may be a violation and let them check it out (don't trespass to try to confirm it yourself). Sometimes, what looks like a violation is not, but that is for Zoning or DNR to decide.

It is not unreasonable to expect all who live on the lakes and use them to comply with the same set of rules devised to protect them. Reporting a possible violation is not a nasty thing to do. It may be the only thing that helps the property owner avoid an unintended violation which can lead to legal and financial problems.

As we have requested before, if you see what you suspect is a violation, please report it (the important contact numbers are on the back page of all of our newsletter issues).

If you know the party well, you might suggest that he or she contact Zoning or DNR and ask for direct-



tion. You may be saving them costly future difficulties. Consider this an act of friendship and being a good neighbor.

Remember, what our lakes look like twenty years from now is up to us today!

--Fred Blake, WCLRA Director

### Youth educational initiative being developed by WCLRA committee

The education committee of WCLRA has begun working on a project to include county youth in our mission of informing citizens about how to preserve our precious water resources. While the project is definitely still on the drawing board, the idea is to partner with Hunt Hill Audubon Sanctuary or others to provide hands-on learning about lakes and rivers for school districts in Washburn County.

Area schools are often under time and money pressures which make field trips and other experiences difficult to provide. WCLRA hopes to provide resources so that area youth, most likely of the upper elementary level, would be able to learn first-hand about how water systems work.

The goal of this program is to provide educational opportunities for children in the area which will increase awareness and knowledge of the county's water resources. Programs will be experiential and should include:

- \* Information based on the most complete and up-to-date science
- \* Encouragement of stewardship of the resource
- \* Understanding the consequences of personal action
- \* Emphasis on the larger context of water ecosystems, for example, watersheds, ground/surface waters, global water cycles.

Of course, WCLRA would not be developing the curriculum, nor doing the teaching, should the program come to fruition.

Rather, the education committee sees its role as assessing interest on the part of the schools, providing encouragement, and assisting in raising the funds necessary to get the project started.

--Patricia Shifferd, WCLRA Director

## VHS: Take precautions to 'Stop the Spread'

It's spring open-water fishing season, and it's also the time frame when VHS (Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia) is active and infectious. VHS is a disease affecting over 25 game fish species, and the virus is considered an invasive species. It is not believed to be a threat to humans who catch and consume fish.

Infected fish shed the virus in their urine and reproductive fluids. The virus can survive in water for at least 14 days. Virus particles in the water infect gill tissue first, and then move to the internal organs and the blood vessels. The blood vessels become weak, causing hemorrhages in the internal organs, muscle and skin.

Fish can also become infected when they eat an infected fish. Fish that survive the infection will develop antibodies to the virus. Antibodies will protect the fish against new VHS virus infections for some time. However, the concentration of antibodies in the fish will drop over time and the fish may start shedding the virus again. This may create a cycle of fish kills that occurs on a regular basis.

The virus grows best in fish when water temperatures are 37-54°F. Most infected fish will die when water temperatures are 37- 41°F, and rarely die above 59 °F. Stress is an important factor in VHS outbreaks. Stress suppresses the immune system, causing infected fish to become diseased. Stressors include spawning hormones, poor water quality, lack of food, or excessive handling of fish.

It is vital to follow the precautions set out by the Department of Natural Resources to stop the spread of

this disease from waterway to waterway. The most recent information is available at the Department's website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/vhs>. Updates are posted on the website regularly as new information becomes available. A summary was recently posted on new rules regarding transporting bait.

**The Department is asking the public to take precautions similar to those used in stopping the spread of other invasive species on all waters:**

- \* Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and remove visible aquatic plants, animals, and mud.
- \* Drain water from your boat, motor, bilge, live wells, and bait containers.
- \* Do not move live fish from one water to another.
- \* Dispose of leftover bait in the trash, not in the water or on land.
- \* Buy your minnows from Wisconsin bait dealers or catch your own and use it only to fish the water you caught it from. (However, it now is legal to use leftover purchased minnows water if they were not exposed to another water body or other fish since they were purchased.)
- \* Wash your boat and equipment with high pressure or hot water, or let it dry for five days.

Don't forget that VHS and other aquatic invasive species aren't just a threat to lakes, but to streams and rivers as well. Follow the precautions above to help protect our aquatic ecosystem from all of these species.

--Wisconsin DNR

## What's in your tackle box? Let's get the lead out!

Lead fishing tackle kills loons, eagles, swans and other aquatic wildlife which are dependent on Wisconsin's lakes, rivers and streams each year. All it takes is one lead sinker to kill a loon. For a penny more, this could be prevented with a non-toxic equivalent.

Lead is a toxic metal, yet tons of lead are deposited in Wisconsin's environment annually through hunting, fishing, and recreational shooting. Lead deposited in the environment will persist indefinitely and will not break down over time into less toxic compounds.

Lead poisoning has been documented in 25 species of water birds. Lead sinkers and jigs used in sport fishing is a significant source of adult Common Loon deaths, accounting for 46% of deaths in New England, 30% in Canada, and 17% in Minnesota.

This spring, the DNR's wildlife health lab examined 11 dead loons from across Wisconsin and found that more than half died from lead toxicity. Of those with lead poisoning, a high percentage were found to have lead fishing sinkers or jigs in their digestive tract.

You can prevent lead poisoning in wildlife! Here's how:  
\* Replace lead jigs and sinkers with non-toxic equiva-

lents made of tin, bismuth, steel or tungsten.

- \* Ask your sporting goods store to carry non-lead products.
- \* Dispose of old lead sinkers and jigs properly.
- \* Instill conservation ethics in your kids and grandkids by outfitting their tackle boxes with non-lead tackle.

Spread the word. Tell others about the problem and encourage them to switch to non-lead fishing tackle and ammunition.

You can help by distributing "Get the Lead Out" educational "rack cards" to your friends, local sporting goods distributors, and sportsman's clubs.

Go to the website of the Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative -- [www.wisconsinbirds.org/leadpoisoning.htm](http://www.wisconsinbirds.org/leadpoisoning.htm) -- to view the card online and obtain cards for distribution.

Enjoy fishing without poisoning wildlife by using non-toxic fishing tackle.

--Submitted by John Haack, UWEX  
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