



Driftwood

Fall/Winter 2015/2016

The newsletter of the
Turtle Flanbeau Flowage
and Trude Lake
Property Owners'
Association, Inc.

Sam Jonas: Keeping a Watch on Wildlife

By Mike Hittle

Experiences in the outdoors as a child and youth—including some especially memorable ones observing and later working along side a veteran wildlife biologist—set Sam Jonas off on a path that was eventually to lead to his current position as Wildlife Biologist for Iron and Southern Ashland counties. A native of Waterloo, Wisconsin, Jonas graduated in 2011 from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with a degree in wildlife biology, with an emphasis on large game animals in general and ungulates (deer, elk, moose) in particular. After graduation, he worked for a summer as an independent contractor for a program jointly sponsored by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources that focused on the Kirtland's Warbler. That was followed by an internship with the WDNR in Lake Mills, which in turn led to his appointment as a Limited Term Employee wildlife technician. His last step before assuming his responsibilities in Mercer was a stint as Assistant Big Game Ecologist at the WDNR in Madison.



Sam Jonas holds (very tightly) a forest friend.

events dictate his agenda, such as responding to reports of nuisance animals, or outright emergencies (recently he had to rush off to Mellen to assist a trapper in dealing with a bear caught in a coyote set). And, on occasion, observations reported to him by citizens require some kind of follow-up.

Jonas encourages citizens to report interesting observations of wildlife to the WDNR or to him. Reports to the WDNR can be made at the website, dnr.wi.gov. Type "large animal observation" in the box and you will be directed to a form. Jonas can be reached at either Samuel.Jonas@wisconsin.gov, or (715) 476-7843. He welcomes communications and questions from area residents and visitors.

As important as these aspects of his job are, Jonas believes that his work on land management has the greatest impact on area wildlife. Good habitat is absolutely essential if wildlife are to flourish, and any steps that can be taken to promote appropriate habitats will surely pay dividends in the future.

This past summer and into the fall, for example, Jonas and an LTE under his supervision have worked on maintaining some 90 wildlife openings, whose average sizes run from one half to one and a half acres. These openings are of value for numerous animals, from woodcock to whitetails. Keeping some places open is not the whole story, however. Jonas is quick to point out the importance of forest management in creating habitat. While old-growth forests have their charms and play their role in woodland ecosystems, new growth forests are of particular value in nurturing and sustaining many species. "Young trees need hugs too," Jonas said, in a twist on an old environmental saw.

His wide-ranging responsibilities afford Jonas a broad

According to Jonas, the position of wildlife biologist has almost endless possibilities. There are, of course, some fairly regular activities, such as surveys of wolves, otters, grouse, bear, etc., many of which tend to be season-dependent. But other times	
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President's Letter

By Terry Daulton



"The State Budget (Act 55) Rolls Back Shoreland Zoning; Counties Lose Local Control over Their Shorelands." This headline, on the Wisconsin Association of Lakes website, encapsulates a political battle that began last spring as a few paragraphs in the state budget and has grown into a grass-roots effort involving 51 lake associations, nine northern countywide or regional lake and/

or river alliances, and the Northwest Area Wisconsin Land And Water Conservation Association (representing land and water departments from 11 counties). At issue is the ability of counties to exert local control of shoreland zoning. The stated intent of Act 55 was to standardize and simplify regulations. The on-the-ground impact would remove the ability of counties to tailor shoreland zoning standards for local concerns such as protecting water quality and habitats, or preserving the northwoods shoreline aesthetics.

I would like to share some history from the 1980's and 90's that I believe is germane to this topic. Picture the scene, Tommy Thompson was governor, the first wave of baby boomers were retiring to the north and building larger homes on lakes, and undeveloped shores and lakes like the Turtle Flambeau Flowage were seen as rapidly disappearing resources.

To address concerns about the rapid rate of change in the north, in 1993 the DNR launched the Northern Initiatives, a two-year dialog with the public to guide the Department in managing resources in the northern third of the state. What came out of that dialog was the motto, Keep the North the North, as well as a roadmap focused on preserving the character of the north and planning economic growth to enhance stewardship as well as strong communities. Protecting the character of northern lakes was at the heart of this effort. Citizens said that they came to northern lakes to experience tranquility and beauty, not the suburban landscape that characterized southern Wisconsin shorelines. At the time of the Northern Initiatives, it was estimated that without changes to shoreland zoning and other protections, all the existing undeveloped northern lakes would be fully developed by 2015.

In the interim between Northern Initiatives and today, lake associations, local governments, scientists, and DNR staff

worked together to tailor shoreland zoning in such a way as to protect resources, while accommodating economic development. Studies were established to evaluate how development impacted wildlife, water quality and property values.

Fast forward to 2015 and the state budget (Act 55). In effect, Act 55 reverses years of work to tailor regulations to the needs of northern lake and communities.

Under the new law, counties may not enact ordinances stronger than the state's shoreland zoning standards in NR115. Changes include:

- setting the minimum shoreline lot size at the state standard of 100 feet
- removing the ability of counties to require the establishment of vegetative buffer zones
- expanding the definition of non-conforming structures from buildings to include fire pits, decks, retaining walls, sidewalks, etc.
- changing the ability to regulate repair and building of non-conforming structures
- removing the ability to restrict outdoor lighting along shores
- changing how counties can measure shoreline setbacks like setback averaging
- changing how counties can regulate impervious surfaces

As a result of Act 55, a coalition of concerned lake interest-groups formed to work on repeal or revision of these changes to local control. This fall our association board unanimously voted to join this coalition and sent a donation of \$500. Named the Wisconsin Shoreland Initiative, Inc., the coalition includes many of our neighboring lake groups such as Plum Lake, the Manitowish Chain, the Iron, Oneida and Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Associations, the Eagle River Chain, and Boulder Lake, to name a few. Some lake groups gave as much as \$5,000 to the cause. The coalition hired Wisconsin's premier water law expert, Bill O'Connor, to help guide a response to Act 55. At present, legislation is being drafted to address some of the issues created by Act 55. It is hoped that this effort will be bi-partisan, and details are still pending on content and sponsors for the legislation. Our state senator, Janet Bewley, has authored a bill to repeal the shoreland zoning section of Act 55, but without bi-partisan support, it has little chance of getting on the natural resources committee agenda.

In the mean time, the DNR and county zoning administrators have been grappling with the implications of Act 55. Iron County Zoning Administrator, Tom Bergman, shared the current strategy suggested by the DNR in its guidance document. On the one hand counties cannot have shoreland zoning that is stronger than the statewide regulation; and Iron County's lake classification system is no longer allowed. On the other hand, the DNR guidance suggests that if a county has county-wide zoning authority (as we do

in Iron County), then it can regulate lakeshore lot sizes and other specifics under its general zoning authority.

This is probably not the last word on shoreland zoning. More complications are likely before the dust on this issue settles. Sources in Madison suggest that the DNR guidance to zoning administrators may well be challenged in court. In addition, it is likely that any bi-partisan legislation to change Act 55 will be hotly debated.

During the past few months, I have been asked whether this issue is a political one, and as such, something our association should steer clear of. My answer is that this is really about the quality of life here in Iron County.

During this fall's low water, I took my three grandchildren to the "beach" on Horseshoe. We spent the afternoon

building sandcastles and following the tracks of otter, deer, and wolf down the beach. Our view was largely of wild shores, with a few homes tucked into a shore lined with brilliant maples and aspen. It would be hard to quantify the value of that afternoon in the sun. You likely have similar stories of evenings at a favorite walleye hole, picnics, or pontoon boat excursions. There are real economic values in our shorelines and there are intangible values like beauty, solitude, and adventure. I am proud that our board stepped up to the plate and decided to brave the "political winds" by taking a stand for lakeshores. Democracy with a small "d" is built on the work of citizens who act on strongly held values that cross party lines. As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments, and I for one would be interested in your views on this complex issue.

Lawmakers Seek to Curb Licentiousness

By s. a. tire

In an unexpected and unprecedented action, the Wisconsin State Legislature (with the Governor's approval) recently assumed full control over the reproductive rights of lake sturgeon—in particular, those sturgeon who reside in the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and swim up the Manitowish River in search of a suitable site to spawn. For eons, or at least for a pretty long time, these sturgeon, happily responding to their primal urges, found the Manitowish more than satisfactory both for trysting and propagating. Then came the Rest Lake dam, with an operating order which reversed the natural flow of the river, thus denying the sturgeon's offspring adequate nursery cover for their survival. Help seemed on the way, however, when the DNR, known for its reckless advocacy of fish sex, recently proposed a new operating order that would return nature to a natural place. But the legislature, apparently fearing a surge of massive, lusty, prehistoric fish engaging in rank carnality in a public space (see: public distrust doctrine), decided to put the brakes on things. And, since the issue was all about sex, the legislators chose language that was anything but transparent; and they buried the announcement of their power grab in the fine print of Act 55, the recently-passed state biennial budget for 2015-2017.

SECTION 1066g. 31.02 (4d) of the statutes is created to read:

31.02 (4d) The department may not issue, amend, or revise an order under this section or under s. 182.71 (7) (b) with respect to a dam that, on June 1, 2015, met all of the following conditions unless the appropriate standing committee in each house of the legislature, as determined by each presiding officer, approves the order, amendment, or revision:

(a) The dam regulated the water levels of one or more lakes located in Vilas County.

(b) The dam was located in whole or in part in a city, village, or town with an equalized value exceeding \$500,000,000.

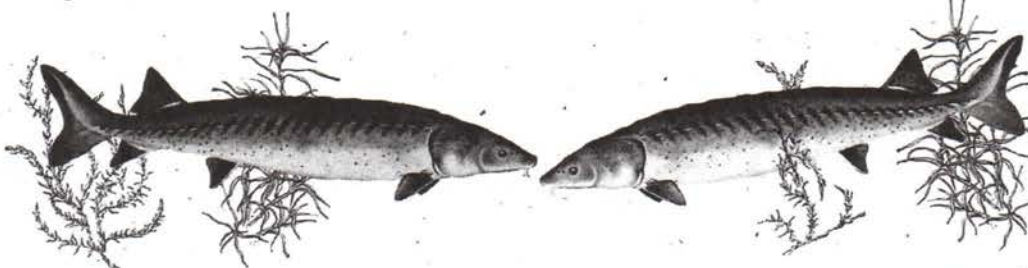
(c) The dam's impoundment area at normal pool elevation exceeded 4,000 acres.

(d) The dam was continuously subject to a lake level order for a period of at least 40 years.

Could it possibly be that this section refers to the Rest Lake Dam? Taken together, the clues clearly lead to that conclusion, though point (b) alone would probably suffice to make the identification. And so it is no longer up to the DNR and its fisheries biologists (who, by the way, have their own prudish euphemisms: "good recruitment," for example, means fish having scads

of babies) to relieve the sturgeon of their decades-old frustration. That task now lies four-square in the hands the solons of sex in the state legislature.

Rumor has it that the sturgeon have decided to forego their historical ascent up the Manitowish River



next spring. Instead, they plan a swim/march to the state capitol, where they hope to make their case to the legislature that procreation trumps prudery...and property values. Wish them luck; they'll need it.

overview of the status of the area's various critters. His observations on some signature species are as follows.

Not surprisingly, given his education, Jonas keeps a close eye on the area deer herd. The good news is that this past winter and spring were kind to the deer, and fawn production was definitely up. The bad news is that the previous hard winter (2013-14) exacted a heavy toll on the herd, both in terms of winter mortality and reduced fawn production. Fawns born in the spring of 2014 will be yearlings this year, a fact that takes on particular importance in light of the historical fact that approximately 60% of the bucks taken in the county are yearlings. But it is precisely this yearling class that suffered a reduction - perhaps as much as 25 to 30 per cent - as a consequence of the winter of 2013-14. So the outlook for this year, Jonas thinks, is probably better than for last year, but the supply of yearling bucks will be low.

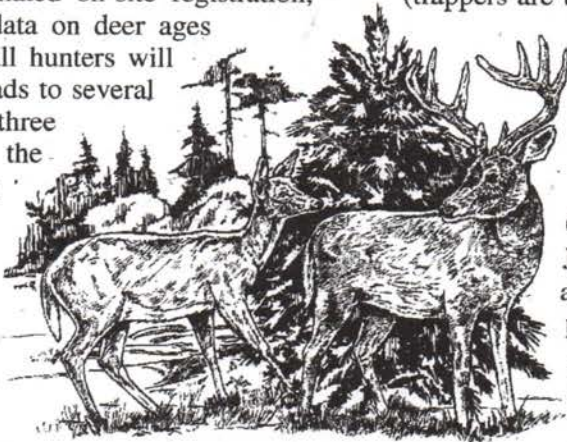
Getting data on the deer herd is, of course, crucial to its management. In April, Jonas participates in a herd health assessment. This entails looking for and examining road kills. He looks for fat on the heart and liver, as an indication of post-winter health, and he does a fetus count. In addition he records the location of the animal's death—wooded areas, towns, farmland, etc. Another traditional body of data that has figured into deer management is the age structure of the deer killed during the hunting season. Since the new WDNR hunting regulations have eliminated on-site registration, some other means of getting data on deer ages has become necessary. This fall hunters will be encouraged to bring deer heads to several locations around the county—three cooperating businesses and the Mercer Ranger station. In return for their participation, hunters will receive \$2.00 and a free pair of leather work gloves.

Sightings of moose (the other ungulate) in the county—including some in the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area—if not frequent, are far from unusual. And, it would seem, these sightings add up to more than the odd stray animal that has worked its way down from the Upper Peninsula. Indeed, Jonas notes that there is evidence of a small breeding population of moose in the vicinity. A year ago this spring he observed a young-of-the-year male moose that had been killed by an automobile. Its mother was visible in the immediate area as well, which strongly suggests that the young bull was born in the area.

Wolves, once again declared by the courts to be an endangered species, remain present throughout the state. A survey conducted in the late winter of 2014-15 concluded that the minimum number of wolves statewide is between 746 and 771, apportioned out among some 208 packs. Past wolf-hunting seasons notwithstanding, wolves maintain their presence in Iron and Ashland Counties.

Area black bears, beneficiaries of good habitat and ample food supplies, are doing well, though their exact numbers are hard to measure. Given the limitations of bear surveys, Jonas says that he looks for trends in their numbers instead of seeking to make firm population estimates. That said, he estimates that their numbers are up about 10 per cent from last year. Next spring the WDNR will renew a study of the bear population using an antibiotic marker the bears ingest while feeding on selectively placed baits during their spring rounds. In the fall, bears harvested during the hunting season will have their bones examined for signs of that marker, which in turn will enable the WDNR to calculate the ratio of bears harvested to bears that hit marked baits in the spring. Such a study helps to get a handle on hunter success, which is the principal factor in the size of the bear population.

Other local animals that seem to be doing well for themselves include otter (they are the subject of a winter-time aerial survey that looks for slides along the shores of lakes, rivers, and streams); bobcats (efforts to study them via radio collars are currently underway) and fishers (trappers are turning up signs of a bit more activity of this species). Cougar reports continue to come to Jonas' attention, but there have been no confirmed sightings in the county during his watch.



On the avian front, Jonas, along with Jeff Wilson and Bruce Bacon, have been at work on the placement of new osprey platforms in the flowage area, thanks to grants from the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology and the Turtle Flambeau Flowage Association. The goal is to build ten platforms and locate them at some distance from known eagle nests. One such platform, constructed this past spring in Bastine Lake, proved to be the site of a successful nest.

When he is not at work on official business, Sam Jonas, like so many WDNR employees, likes to spend his free time hunting and fishing. But unlike some of his colleagues, he also likes to shoot a few hoops.

Fire Safety and . . . Chocolate?

By Chad McGrath



What do you yell if you fall into a vat of chocolate? You should yell "Fire." Why? Because if you yell "Chocolate," no one will come to rescue you.

Apologies to the Smothers brothers.

Here around the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage we don't have vats of chocolate, but we do have lots of woody vegetation and sometimes a high fire risk. Besides being careful in your use of fire, there are other preparations you can make that in the event of a fire will help save your home and outbuildings from the conflagration. Some are simple but most involve tradeoffs. For instance: not stacking firewood within 30 feet of your house; or using rock mulch instead of wood/bark.

These and other recommendations can be found in the DNR publication, Point of Origin. DNRFRPointofOrigin@wisconsin.gov. This publication contains some interesting facts about fire in Wisconsin. Perhaps most critical for us near the flowage is that we live right on the western edge of one of four "highest risk fire landscapes" in the state. All of the landscapes (Central Sands, Northeast Sands, Northern Highlands and Northwest Sands) have a couple of things in common. There are lots of conifers, which once ignited can form fast moving, hard to control crown fires. And as the names imply, they all have mostly sandy soil.

Also included in Point of Origin are some results of an in-depth study done by a team of DNR fire staff of a May 2013 fire in northwest Wisconsin. The Germann Road Fire burned 7,500 acres on which stood 270 structures. Some of those structures were lost to the fire, but the summary of the study in Point of Origin does not tell us how many. One of the most interesting facts was that out of 174 outbuildings (structures that were not homes) 103 were destroyed or damaged and 62 were saved (the math is *not* this author's). Of the 103 destroyed/damaged outbuildings, the average distance to "unmanaged" vegetation was 6 feet. Of the 62 undamaged, it was 17 feet. So the seemingly obvious assumption that the further a building was from unmanaged vegetation the less likely it was to burn was confirmed. This was also true for homes. Homes which survived the fire averaged 27 feet from unmanaged vegetation, and homes which didn't make it averaged 19 feet. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends a "fuel modification area" of 30 feet surrounding structures.

There is a 4 minute video called "Be Ember Aware," which resulted from the Germann Road Fire study. Find it at dnr.wi.gov (keyword 'ember').

So be careful and perhaps take some preventative measures around your home on the flowage. No one wants to have to yell fire, unless of course you've taken a delicious spill into a vat of chocolate.

Up, Then Down, Down, Down: Water Levels During the 2015 Open Water Season

By Jim Moore

The 2015 open water season on the flowage began with nearly a full pool. Above average rainfall in May, June, and through the first half of July provided a continual source of water to maintain water levels and fully recharge the surrounding wetlands. Water levels allowed full recreational use of the flowage.

Decreased rainfall through the balance of July, August, and September, coupled with continuation of an unsustainable discharge rate of water through the dam, decreased water levels by September 1st below what has been determined to

be a level at which property owners can reasonably access and utilize the flowage. The 2015 summer drawdown of the water level has approximated 3.5 feet during October, well below last year's maximum summer drawdown of 1.75 feet. Nonetheless, this 3.5 foot drawdown was less than the 4.0 feet allowable by the Memorandum of Understanding. It was disappointing to see both the summer and the water level wind down and pass us by. We continue to work with Xcel Energy and the Department of Natural Resources to manage the water level of the flowage in such a way as to maximize the benefits for all stakeholders. For more details on water levels, visit the association's redesigned website and click on the News and Reports tab.

Profiles of Board Members

The third installment of profiles of members of the association/s Board of directors follows.

Bill Ficek, Director

In 1976, my wife, Donna, and I established an electrical/telecommunications business in Illinois. Four years later, we purchased a home on Bastine Lake, which we visited seasonally. Upon retiring, we turned the business over to one of our six daughters, and at the first of this year we sold our home in Illinois. Our place on Lake Bastine has become our new home.

The flowage is a gift from God that we love and enjoy. We spend our time here on a variety of activities: hunting, fishing, friends, and hobbies. Every day on the flowage is an adventure.

The flowage is a gift, and I urge everyone to take care of it for our children and their children, for all residents, and for the many tourists who will visit in the future.



Bill Ficek chilling at his flowage home.

Jeff Malison, Vice President

Leann and I are both native Wisconsinites from the southern part of the state, and have been vacationing in Wisconsin's northwoods ever since we were children. Up until the last decade, most of our time here had been spent at a family home on the Eagle River chain of lakes. About 15 years ago, when we began thinking about our retirement, we observed that the Eagle River chain was getting more and more crowded, with all of the vacant land being built up and large multi-unit condo developments replacing campgrounds and small resorts.

So we began a search to find a quieter, less congested area to build our retirement home. For over 30 years a close friend had been camping on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage, and suggested that we check out the area. We did, and fortunately in 2006 we found an ideal lot available on Trude Lake. We built our retirement home in 2011 and have lived here since.



Jeff Malison, on an "area lake," with a volunteer for fish fry.

We lived most of our married life in the Madison area, where I received my Ph.D. and became the Director of UW-Madison's Aquaculture (fish farming) Program. During my career I was lucky enough to train students and researchers in my lab from all around the world, including Brazil, Korea, France, Norway, Lithuania, Belgium, Ireland, Japan, the Philippines, Trinidad, and Honduras. In 2006 I accepted a joint appointment with the UW-Stevens Point to co-direct the Northern Aquaculture Demonstration Facility, which is located just north of Bayfield. For anyone interested in learning more about fish farming, the facility is a great UW resource located not too far away from Iron County. Although I am more or less retired now, I am still a co-owner of a yellow perch and walleye fish farm in southern Wisconsin, and consult occasionally with other fish farms.

The Board makes a conscious effort to try to have representation from all of the different geographical area of the flowage. I have been the "Trude Lake" representative since 2013, and now serve as vice president and chair of the fish management committee. Although I have a doctorate in "fish," my fields of expertise do not include fish management, but rather fish biology and physiology. I think that we need to rely on fish management experts to help drive the activities of the committee. In addition to the fish management committee, Leann and I participate on the invasive species committee, and Leann has done a great deal of work developing the association's new web page.

As for activities, you can tell from the attached picture that I love to fish walleyes and paddle around the area. We also spend a fair amount of time biking, hiking, and snowshoeing. We go on occasional wilderness canoe trips to Canada, and take out our frustrations on the golf course. We shorten the winter by a month or two by scuba diving and visiting beaches in the Caribbean and Pacific.

Jim Moore, Director

Jim Moore grew up and primarily lived in suburban Milwaukee until 2011, but he has fished the Flowage for over 45 years. He and his wife, Barb, have owned a home in Springstead in the Horseshoe Lake area for 13 years, and have been full-time residents for the past four years. He has worked with Jim Bohmann, former association board member; on water level issues, has helped build fish cribs and is an active member of the purple loosestrife patrol.



With the leaves down, Jim Moore contemplates the old dilemma: to rake or to fish.

Jim graduated from Marquette University and became a CPA, beginning his career with a national public accounting firm, then moving to other sectors and finally settling in the health-care field. He retired from his position as Vice President – Finance for a Milwaukee-based health-care system six years ago. Jim is a veteran, having served with the Marines in Viet Nam. In addition to fishing, he enjoys hunting-- and he has done both in the midwest, the west, Alaska, and Canada. He and Barb enjoy traveling to Alaska, Florida, and national parks. Their travels also take them to southern Wisconsin and Washington, DC, to visit six grandchildren (and the kids' parents!).

Although Jim and Barb enjoy their travels, returning to the flowage continues to be a respite and a real treat.

Time on the Lake and a Picnic, Too? Do We Have Fun!!

By Beth and Mike Myers

Some of the most fascinating aspects of the flowage are found along the shoreline. Hidden bays, beaver lodges, plenty of wildlife, and interesting geology can be yours to discover when you navigate slowly along the shoreline. A perfect way to make sure you get out there at least once during the summer is to volunteer to patrol a section of the flowage or Trude Lake during the annual purple loosestrife/ invasive species survey or to assist with water-quality monitoring. Jean Burns has captured the volunteer experience in the following reflection: *"Outside temperature was in the high 40's. It was sunny and rather windy so the lake was choppy. Earlier this morning there were three trumpeter swans on the main body of Trude. Osprey nesting on the east end of the lake. Same nest that had hatchlings last year."* April 27, 2015, Trude Lake.

To celebrate and thank our volunteers for water quality testing and invasive species surveys, we held our First Annual Volunteer Picnic on Big Island this past July. The DNR helped us out by ensuring we'd have access to a group site on Big Island, large enough for our group of 27! The potluck, with bring your own beverage, was the perfect way to get to know each other better, share concerns, and enjoy the sun and water. Thanks to Sandy Gitzlaff and Diane O'Krongly for planning and organizing. We had so much fun we forgot to take pictures! *You, too, can be part of this new tradition: Get involved with the Purple Loosestrife invasive species survey or the Water Quality Sampling program!*

The Water Quality sampling season for 2015 ended in late September. The season begins within the first couple of weeks after ice out. Throughout the season, water samples are taken at each of six locations on the flowage and one location on Trude. Chemical analysis, temperature, and clarity samples are taken and reported into the DNR's state wide database. Chemistry results at the various sites have remained fairly steady since sampling began, as far back as the late 1990's for some of the sites. Water clarity fluctuates more, depending on weather, including rainfall or lack thereof, water temperatures, and water flows from locations upstream of the flowage.



Next time you see Deb Garny or Jeanne Hryciuk, please give them a big thanks for volunteering to take over the sampling duties at Townline Lake. Christine Paulik retired from the DNR and had been responsible for sampling the site in previous years. They jumped right in and not only sampled for chemistry and clarity, but also provided their observations about the weather and lake level. These are details the state uses to develop a complete picture of the overall health of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake.

If you are interested in volunteering, please visit the "Volunteer" page on the association's new website.

New Recruits Sign Up for Finny Service

As a way to check on some "conventional wisdom" that has recently been making the rounds, Driftwood engaged Zach Lawson, Fisheries Biologist for Iron and Ashland Counties, in the following Q and A.

- Q. *Is it true that some natural reproduction of sturgeon is taking place in the flowage itself, rather than in the Manitowish River, thus lessening or eliminating the desirability of a new flow order at the Rest Lake Dam?*
- A. Examination of smaller sturgeon in the flowage suggests that there may be some natural reproduction going on. Put another way, some of the captured fish do not seem to belong to known year classes of stocked fish. Any such natural reproduction, however, would involve spawning in the river itself, not in the flowage.
- Q. *Is it true that anglers who have had difficulty catching walleyes this summer can attribute their problems to a bumper hatch of perch that provided stomach-stuffing forage for walleyes?*
- A. It is a fact that there was a big perch hatch this year. But that is only part of the story. There were bumper hatches for other fish as well, including bluegills and walleyes. Fall recruitment surveys show that there are "lots of young of the year running [swimming, one hopes] around in the flowage." The cumulative effect of this bumper crop, Lawson says, might have made catching walleyes "slightly more difficult" this summer. But the best news from this year's data concerns the future: walleye recruitment was the highest it has been in a number of years. The effects of this excellent natural reproduction will show up in three to four years, hopefully on a table near you.

Lawson and his colleagues are not resting on the walleyes' laurels, however. They are working on a study to determine where in the flowage the strongest walleye recruitment is taking place and what factors are present in those areas that promote such good recruitment. The study will look at two variables: water chemistry and habitat, as they relate to specific areas of the flowage. Information from such a study might well identify ways to improve areas that currently have poor recruitment.

More details on fish studies can be found at "News and Reports" on the association website.

Association Launches New Website: (tfftl.org)

By Leann Malison

Check out our new look at tfftl.org. It has easy-to-find information about the association, its activities, and upcoming events. The site has been updated with new content, but we have kept some information from the previous website to help you stay informed. Our new features include:

A "Join or Renew" page that shows the benefits of membership with a new option to pay your dues online using Paypal.

A "Volunteer" page that describes important work needed around the flowage and provides contact information should you wish to volunteer for such work.

A list of current and past association projects showing how the board and other volunteer members work on important issues such as water level management, invasive species control, and fish management.

The website also features current news and events, including our newsletter, notices of upcoming meetings, links to past reports, and links to other important resources.

We also have a "Member Photos" page that depicts our members in volunteer and fun activities and shows the beauty of our scenic waters. We are always looking for current images of our area and member activities. Send your photos on jpg files to tfftrude@gmail.com.

The website was made possible through IT resources provided through member Gail Ondresky. We thank her for her support and service to the association.

The Tale of the Four Sisters Islands

By Terry Daulton

Maybe you have your own pet names for places on the flowage. It would be fun to compile these various unofficial names, some given affectionately like the well known Swimmer's Island or Crow's Nest, and others associated with misfortune like Broken Leg Island or Mortician's Mile. I wanted to share some name lore from our family, with a mystery tucked inside.

If you have headed into Horseshoe for an evening of walleye fishing or a picnic, you have probably seen what our family call the Four Sisters Islands. These "sister islands" are all roughly the same size and shape but each has a distinct personality. Pine Island was at one time my favorite. Boating into Horseshoe from the west, it is the first you see with its stand of tall Norway pines framed against the sky. Originally a camping island, when the state acquired the flowage it was deemed too small for an outhouse. It still stayed popular with picnickers who would spread blankets under the shady singing pines and cast for bass along the boulder-strewn shores.

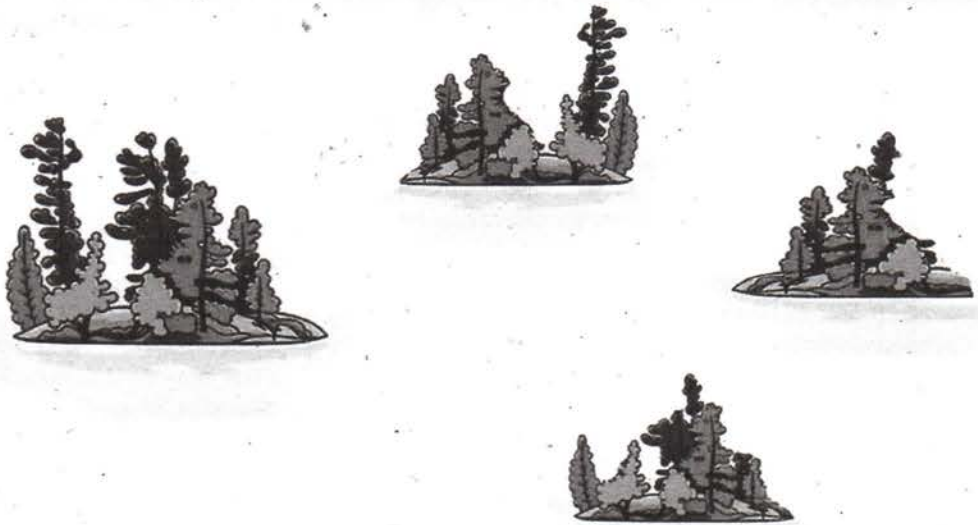
Perhaps Pine Island, with its beautiful trees, got a little too vain because when the tornado ripped across the flowage in 2010 it hit Pine Island like the wrath of Zeus. It swiped a swath of destruction through that grove: so much for picnics under the pines!

Sailboat Island is the second sister. It is the most popular camping island on Horseshoe, boasting a lovely little sandspit with enough depth near shore that a keeled sailboat can anchor, and for many years sailboats were moored there each season. This charming sister offers a protected harbor during a blow, a perfect vantage point to watch the sun rise, and an inviting beach for a swim on a hot July day.

Chorus Frog is the third sister. The farthest to the east, Chorus Frog can claim neither extreme beauty nor sandy shores, but it does hold a gem in its interior. Each spring a small vernal pool fills with snowmelt, and that pool is home to not only spring peepers, but also chorus frogs that raise their lusty voices at twilight and lull campers to sleep.

The fourth island held the mystery. If you looked at a flowage map, you would see that it was colored white, not the green denoting state ownership. For many years, we puzzled over ownership of that island, wondering who owned it and whether it would ever be developed. Then last year, it came up tax delinquent and the state was able to purchase it from Iron County. For now, the DNR says that it will remain undeveloped, but they may evaluate it for a future campsite.

For some reason, we never came up with a pet name for that island, maybe because we didn't want anyone to notice it and take advantage of its unprotected state. Or perhaps, because there was no history of camping and use, it never made it into our local lore. It reminds me a bit of Cinderella, the fourth sister who was overlooked, but was really the princess. This summer I ventured over to the fourth sister for a reconnaissance. I found several good climbing trees and great rocks to fish from. During low water it even had some sweet little sandy beaches for swimming. Maybe now, the fourth sister deserves to get a name of its own. Ideas anyone?



Snowy Winter Fun

By Chad McGrath

A brief foray outside my Springstead home an hour ago revealed just a tad of snow on the wood porch and held in the cupped surfaces of fallen leaves. It's October 17th and it got cold enough to snow. (30 degrees here near the flowage and much colder elsewhere here in the North). I am lucky, I love snow. There are others who do not hold snow so dear, who view it as an impediment to moving about, who worry about getting stuck, falling and even freezing to death in its icy grip. I just like playing in it, sliding on it, falling in it.

So, I am writing this to help those of you who may have a love-hate relationship with snow. Let's pump up the love a bit by playing in it. Here are some suggestions.

First, get to know snow. Don't just sit in the living room and moan about it during this year's first real snowfall. Go out in it! But prepare. Dress so you'll be comfortable. If you're taking a brief sojourn, put on that down coat and gloves and a hat. If you are going to warm yourself up before getting to know the snow, then dress a bit lighter and take that energetic walk. Generating your warmth internally by walking or other vigorous exercise is always a good idea out in the cold.

Knowing something is sometimes an important precursor to liking it. So it is with snow. Grab a handful, or a pinch. Look at it carefully. Look for its structure. Is it classic, with intricate crystals or is it more pellet-like, little round or misshapen hunks of white ice? Does it melt almost instantly in your fingers, or does it take a while? Does it leave moisture on your hand/glove/mitten when it melts, or does it seem to evaporate instantly into the air? Taste it. Put a little on your nose and feel it. Throw some of it into the air and watch it. Look back and see your footprints in it. Experience snow. Know the snow. Have some fun.

There's more fun if you play in the snow. Children do this best. After the first snow or the second or third, when there's enough, go out and do more with the snow. Build a snowperson. It can be little, suitable for standing on the porch. Or it can be big, something to greet others. Build a fort. Make a sculpture. If you're lucky and push enough snow into a big enough edifice, it may last well into spring.

Not so ambitious? Go write something. Take a stick, shovel handle or whatever and make some letters in the snow, on

your car, on the driveway, in the yard, wherever. Say "Hi" to the UPS driver, send "Love" to your beloved. You can even express negative feelings if you want: "Bah-Humbug!" Writing a message in the snow will make you feel good.

Hungry? Have a picnic on the snow. It's kind of like having a picnic at the beach, but unlike sand, if snow gets on your sandwich, it's not a problem. If you have one of those silver/aluminum insulating "space blankets", put it down on top of the snow after you've compacted an area, then put some type of blanket on top. Break open the picnic basket and enjoy. Also unlike at the beach, your cold beverage won't get warm.

And if you really want to get crazy in the snow, head out for a winter camping experience. The flowage has many campsites. Once the ice is firm, snowshoe, ski or hike over to a site and set up camp. Admittedly this is an extreme form of winter worship, but it can be fun. Maybe day camp the first time and get used to the idea and what's needed to make you comfortable. A night spent trying to sleep in near zero or below temperatures can be trying,

no matter how much you love snow.

Certainly there are many other fun things to do on/with snow and ice. My favorite is cross-country skiing. There are several groomed trails within 30 or 40 miles of the Flowage, but I would suggest trying an early season, low-snow ski out your back door. Each year, I try and get out onto the first snow that gives me a couple of inches to glide on. A couple of inches is really all it takes. Usually the ground isn't frozen, so you have to get out soon after the snow falls, before the air (and the snow) warms up. This type of skiing is not only "kick and glide", it's also "kick and stick". Sometimes the snow has melted from the ground's heat and can be so thin as to disappear as you try to stride over it. This makes for an abrupt stop. But don't be discouraged. It may not be like mid-winter gliding, but a little tour will warm you up and help you appreciate the rest of what winter will bring.

A bit later in the season, once the flowage has frozen, skiing or snowshoeing is a terrific way to explore its vast expanse. Snowshoes offer an advantage during most of the winter, because the snow often gets too deep to ski through easily. And snowshoes also offer the advantage of allowing you freer movement up on land, exploring islands and shore-land between trees and brush. Snowshoe out to a campsite and have that picnic mentioned earlier. Or explore Big Island and its trails. Or plot an over-ice route somewhere you've always



Chad McGrath poses for trail cam on an October 31, 2014 ski.

had to drive. I know it's less than a 3 mile trip via ice from where I live to Fisherman's Landing. Driving requires a 74 mile roundtrip!

So, having fun on the snow isn't so hard. Use your imagination. Act like a kid. Be silly.

SNOW

It tickles me,
Without touching.

Tickle's (inside).

Snow
floating
slowly past my window

Settling softly on the bird feeder.
Unlike Summer's rain splashing shamelessly,

Snow is
shy.
Snow is
flaky.



DNR Comings and Goings

Many flowage residents are familiar with the sight of DNR boats out and about on the TFF but there may be some new faces behind the wheel next summer. In the last issue of Driftwood we highlighted the career and contributions of retiring flowage manager, Chris Paulik. In this issue we welcome a recent DNR retiree, who has come back to the workforce part time to fill the position of temporary flowage manager. His name is Brett Bockhop, and he comes to us with lots of facilities and flowage experience. His most recent position was as Ranger Supervisor on the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest, so he is in the know on everything from campgrounds to bike trails. Prior to that position he was the Ranger for Operations on the Willow Flowage. He began on the Willow just a year after the state acquired the property and his work included the drafting of the master plan and construction of the campsites and facilities there. Not a stranger to Iron County, he lives in Hurley where in his spare time he likes to garden and visit Lake Superior beaches. Working on the flowage with its notorious stumps,

rock bars and rough chop will be not problem for Brett; he grew up in Sturgeon Bay, WI and spent lots of time helping his father on their commercial fishing tug on Lake Michigan. He says he is looking forward to meeting flowage residents and partnering with the association on our many projects.



Brett Bockhop stands beside map of his new managerial responsibilities.

Brett will be working one to two days each week year round until the DNR receives the go ahead to fill the permanent flowage manager position, which at this point is "on hold." Brett will have a good team on the ice or water, with our long-standing facilities repair worker, Karl Pilch, who has held the fort through the last several personnel shifts. Natasha Shucha will also be working on the flowage. She works half time as a wildlife technician and half time on the facilities repair staff.

The seasonal LTE ranger position held by Craig Calzavara for part of this summer will be advertised again. Craig moved on to become a Deputy Sheriff in Price County. Until that seasonal position is filled, Craig may help out on the flowage if his schedule allows.



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Driftwood

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— Mission Statement —

The purpose of the Association is to maintain, protect and enhance the quality of the lake and its surroundings for the collective interest of members and the general public.

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