



Driftwood

Fall / Winter 2018

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

Coming to a Scenic Waters Area Near You: NR 44 and Master Planning

By Mike Hittle

Although the WDNR has dropped its recent effort to open part of the TFSWA to use by recreational vehicles (see article on page 11), the issue may well resurface in the future when the department gets around to revising the flowage's master plan. That possibility means that the TFF&TLPOA will need to be on top of the master planning process if we are to have the greatest possible impact on the future of the flowage.

Master plans are the vehicles by which the WDNR manages its many properties, and, quite naturally, they stand in need of periodic review and revision in response to a whole host of factors—environmental, economic, social, and political. The master plan for the TFSWA is well overdue for its scheduled revision, as, apparently, are many of the state's properties. In order to provide association members with an overview of the master planning process, I thought it best to have a conversation with someone at the WDNR who was thoroughly familiar with it. I was directed to Diane Brusoe, who heads up the Bureau of Facilities and Planning Services at the WDNR in Madison. I contacted her by email, indicated that I had some questions about master planning, and asked that she let me know a convenient time for a phone conversation. She responded by asking me for a written list of questions, which I sent her. After a week, I received from her some written responses, plus a statement that she had “no more information to offer.” Clearly, a phone conversation in which these matters might

be discussed more fully was not in the cards. What follows is a summary of my questions and her responses. I have made no attempt to outline the entire complicated process; rather, I have focused on issues that have come to light since master plan revision for the TFSWA has been placed on the agenda.

It has been reported in the press and confirmed by WDNR employees that the department has decided to replace planning for each individual property it owns with planning on a regional basis. And so I asked Mr. Brusoe what prompted a revision in the master plan process from past practices. Her response: “At the June 2017 NRB [Natural Resources Board] meeting, the board approved agenda item 2B3, request approval to conduct regional master planning. The master plan process was not revised.” What Ms. Brusoe apparently means is that whether a master plan applies to a single small property or to a region, its development follows the guidelines contained in Ch. NR 44 Wis. Admin. Code. Indeed, NR 44 is the governing document for the development and revision of master plans, and close familiarity with its intricate bureaucratic taxonomy, its carefully delineated procedures, and its subtle calibration of the respective weights of institutional and public interests is essential for understanding how the agency goes about the task of making these plans.

If there has been no change to the ruling position of NR 44, the decision to apply it to regions did call forth some adjustments. Specifically, the WDNR needed come up with coherent and workable criteria for establishing the regions that would be subject master planning. This need was met by the introduction of 16 Ecological Landscapes (ELs). These landscapes, the product of more than ten years of work by some first-rate, now retired WDNR scientists, have been described by a knowledgeable observer as a “very good summary of the major ecological and land use elements of Wisconsin.” Their introduction into the master planning process as a “general guide” to planning will help the agency

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President's Letter

By Randy Schubert



I would like to first thank our past president, Jeff Malison, for all his work, leadership, and foresight in strengthening the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake Property Owners' Association. During his presidency he helped lay the ground work for an organization that would bring together Turtle-Flambeau Flowage stakeholders. This group includes representatives from various organizations which all have an interest in the flowage, including downstream groups such as the Flambeau River State Forest, local business associations, and user groups. The purpose of the stakeholder's group is to have a forum where those interested in the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and its watershed can interact, work on common concerns and communicate regularly with the WDNR. Some common items of interest include water levels, AIS, fisheries, water quality, land usage, and future management of the flowage. The stakeholders group will give our association a seat at the table for participation related to issues involving the flowage. The first meeting of this group is proposed for December 2018. Further, under Jeff's leadership the TFFTL-POA driveway signs were introduced and have become a huge success. It is nice driving around the flowage, seeing all the signs which demonstrate the strength of our membership. Thank you again Jeff for all your work and effort in strengthening and growing the organization and for enabling a smooth transition when the gavel was handed over to me.

When elected president I read the mission statement of the TFFTL-POA again: "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." I then took a look at how Webster defines stewardship: "The conducting, supervising, or managing of something especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." I thought about how we, as part of the association, are entrusted as stewards of the flowage which aligns with our mission statement. When I look around at all the volunteers who participate in the various committees, work days, and in leadership positions on the board, I see a certain passion in each of them to not only follow through on our mission statement but also to be stewards of the flowage for future generations. I look forward with excitement to leading the organization and strengthening our relationships with the DNR, Xcel Energy, and Iron County.

I will continue to work with our board in identifying areas that we as an organization need to participate in that will align with our mission statement and being stewards of the flowage. Some future items that we may be reporting on include:

- Future Master Plan for the Turtle Flambeau Flowage
- Proposed ATV trails in the TFSWA
- Trail systems through the TFSWA
- TFFTL Association Face Book page

The items that have been reported on in the past and that will continue to be a priority include:

- Water quality monitoring
- Fish management
- Invasive species
- Water levels

I encourage everyone to check out our web page along with our new Face Book page (Thank you Susan Payne for creating the Face Book page and maintaining it).

As in all organizations like ours, it is the volunteers who create our identity and our foundation. I would like to thank all those who chair the various committees, show up for work days, or show your support by displaying one of the driveway signs. I encourage those who have been thinking about lending a hand in one of our various projects, chairing a committee, or perhaps considering running for a board position to do so. It is a great way to meet many of your neighbors on the flowage and share in something special that we all cherish and enjoy. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this great organization.



Charismatic Characters

By Jenna Kosnicki, WDNR Wildlife Biologist



Bull, cow and calf moose on Bridge Road, just off Highway 182. Photo courtesy of Tom Lehrer.

Walleye, loons and waterfalls, oh my! There are many remarkable features that make Iron County a marvelous place to live and recreate. As a wildlife biologist, what really fuels my enthusiasm are the rare species that inhabit this great county. American marten and moose are two of those captivating species.

MARTEN: Iron County is lucky to have a local conservationist who spent over 1000 hours monitoring the American martens that live and breed in the isolated Island Lake area. Zach Wilson stumbled upon marten while researching fisher over a decade ago. Since then, he has been leading educational outings with high school students to identify the locations and home ranges of martens. When possible, non-intrusive DNA samples have been taken (i.e. hair snare). Later, when marten were observed on the Apostle Islands, UW-Madison led a research project with assistance from the U.S. National Park Service to confirm the presence and determine the origins of the marten on the islands. Hair samples indicate that most of the martens in the Apostle Islands have their origins in marten populations in Michigan's Upper Peninsula or Wisconsin's Iron County. This means that the martens have travelled at least 40 miles, over ice and through a variety of terrain, to find new homes. Iron County can claim ancestry to at least one marten identified on Stockton Island. These findings bring new questions such as why an individual animal would travel that far? What corridors are used? How common is this type of movement? Additional research is needed to answer these and many other questions.

MOOSE: At least seven separate moose have been observed in Iron County this year—mostly nomads and a few possible residents. A cow and her two calves were observed in 2016 and 2017. They were spotted many times along Hwy 187 and Hwy 47 between Manitowish and Springstead. This year a seasonal resident got video footage of a bull moose and two young bulls in the same area occupied by the cow with calves. This may indicate successful calf survival. Two bulls were located separately in northeastern Iron County. One bull was recently caught on camera for a second time and appears to have stayed in the same area over the last month.

Research shows that one factor influencing moose survival are low deer densities. The Springstead area has large tracts of unpopulated bogs and wetlands, not ideal for large populations of deer, but perfect for moose. Because deer carry brainworm parasites that are lethal to moose, moose survival is compromised when deer density is greater than 10 deer/square mile. In 1990, 40-70% of deer in northern Wisconsin were estimated to carry this parasite. Therefore, the fewer the deer, the less likely a moose is to incidentally eat an infected snail carrying the parasite. Recently, Iron County's deer population surpassed the 10 deer/square mile threshold. Will we see a difference in the abundance of moose in the future, or will moose continue to occupy those areas where deer numbers are fewer than average?

If you ever encounter a moose or marten, please submit your observation to the WDNR webpage at dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "large mammal observation" or at <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/mammalobsform.asp>. It is never too late to submit observations!



Citizen Science and Itsy-Bitsy Sturgeon: A Role For Volunteers

By Mike Hittle

In our last issue, WDNR fisheries biologist Zach Lawson wrote an article describing a pilot program to use citizen science in a research project on sturgeon spawning in the Manitowish River. The project called for volunteers to monitor riffles where the river passes under US Highway 51—a known site of sturgeon spawning activity. From one to three hours every morning from mid-April through the end of May volunteers were to take water temperatures, record interesting natural phenomena, and look for the presence of sturgeon. In the event any sturgeon showed up, the citizen scientists were to immediately notify Zach so that he and his crew could come to the site as soon as possible, net the sturgeon, and acquire needed data from each of them. (More than half of the sturgeon in the system have been tagged, so it is possible to identify specific individuals.) In short, the volunteers were to serve as scouts so that the fisheries personnel could go about their time-consuming spring tasks of sampling walleye and musky populations yet still be able to respond quickly to the presence of spawning sturgeon.

A dozen people signed up to participate in the project, some of them offering to be present along the river multiple times. They did their work well, establishing a solid record of rising spring water temperatures and amassing a number of observations of plants and animals—and even black flies. Most importantly, on the 16th of May a volunteer noted a sturgeon in the rapids. But at this point, the project encountered a hitch: the late ice-out had conflated the normally sequential spawning of walleyes and muskies, forcing Zach and his crew to devote their full attention to the peak spawning moment of these two important species. They simply could not follow up on the scouting report the volunteer had provided them. This outcome was disappointing, to be sure, but in Zach's view, it did not spell total failure: the volunteer system had functioned as designed—gathering useful data and alerting the fisheries folk to the presence of a spawner. This successful outcome of the citizen science component of the project persuaded Zach and his colleagues to go all in with the project in the spring of 2019.

Recruiting is now open for monitoring slots for 2019. (Note: there are no signing bonuses!) If you would like to help, contact Zach at (715) 476-7847 or Zachary.Lawson@wisconsin.gov. He would like to complete his schedule of volunteers by the end of February or in early March.

It might be helpful at this point to review what is ultimately at stake with this project. In the early 1990s, the WDNR turned its attention to the seriously depleted sturgeon population in many of the state's waters. Locally, under the direction of then fisheries biologist Jeff Roth, the agency

worked vigorously to re-establish a healthy sturgeon presence in the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. Stockings undertaken in the 90s turned matters around in surprisingly short order, and subsequent stockings in 2005, 2012, and 2015 have added strong year classes. (Fish stocked in 2005 are in the 40 to 50 inch range; those stocked in 2012 are in the low to mid-30 inch range; and those introduced 2015 are already in the 25 to 26 inch range.) In both numbers and in size structure, then, the sturgeon population of the flowage can be said to have been fully rehabilitated.

But two questions remain unanswered. First, what is the carrying capacity of this water system? That is, how many sturgeon are too many. And second, what are the best means to sustain the optimum population? Should stocking continue or should the WDNR rely on natural reproduction? Obviously, the effects of stocking are quite evident; but natural reproduction is something of a puzzle. It is not known for certain whether there is any natural reproduction, and if there is, how much it contributes to the sturgeon population. The citizen science project that Zach Lawson has set in motion is designed to get some solid data that will shed light on these questions.

At the risk of oversimplifying matters, the heart of the problem of assessing natural reproduction of sturgeon lies in the difficulty of sampling juveniles. Young sturgeon are believed to spend up to three years in deep holes in the Manitowish River where they are difficult to access by electro-fishing; and when they move into the flowage, they remain equally difficult to capture. They do not show up in shoreline electro-shocking work, and gill nets capable of securing them would produce undesirable collateral damage. To counteract these difficulties, Lawson's project is designed to look for evidence of natural reproduction at a much earlier stage in the sturgeon's life cycle—the larval stage. About three weeks after spawning fish have been observed and studied, larval sturgeon should be “free floating” in the river current. These miniscule creatures can be captured by means of drift sampling—that is, by deploying drift-sock shaped water filters at differing levels of the water column. The presence of larval sturgeon in the filters would confirm that sturgeon can successfully spawn in the Manitowish River. Such a finding could play a significant role in future management plans for the flowage's sturgeon.

The opportunity for citizens to participate in this important work is one that does not come down the road (pike?!) often. If you can work into your schedule a spring day beside the bubbling waters of a north-country river, get in touch with Zach Lawson.



Update From the Invasives Crew

By Zach Wilson

Hello from the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department.

For those of you new to our program I'll start with a little background. The Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department has been committed to working on aquatic invasive species and water quality monitoring throughout the county for many years. Thanks to a partnership with Xcel, the Land and Water Conservation Department funds two summer interns, each of whom works mostly on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake.

These Limited Term Employees (LTE's) are supervised and trained by the County's Conservation Specialist (yours truly) to educate boaters about aquatic invasive species while inspecting watercraft and equipment through the Clean Boats Clean Waters program. Starting in late May and ending in late August, boat landings on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake are staffed with boat landing inspectors from Friday to Sunday. In addition to boater education, the LTE staff monitored for aquatic invasive species through surveys using approved scientific methods. With over 14,000 acres of water to survey, overall coverage of the flowage and Trude Lake are monumental tasks and take several years to complete. To date, no major aquatic invasive plants have been found during these surveys. Purple loosestrife, a semi-aquatic invasive, has existed on the flowage for many years, and a monitoring and control plan has been established thanks to a great partnership between the flowage association and the WDNR.

As many of us are aware, the flowage is one of the great gems of Wisconsin and a popular destination. With that popularity comes the threat of invasive species entering our water bodies. Each season our summer LTE's collect data at the landings which help us understand this threat. During the 2018 season our staff spent 598 hours talking to boaters about aquatic invasive species. They contacted 2934 people at the landings and inspected 1364 boats. Interestingly, data show that people came from 24 different counties and two states. When asked whether their watercraft had been in a different water body within the past 5 days, boaters reported that they had come from 84 different lakes throughout the state. Many of these lakes contain a whole slew of different invasive species, from spiny water fleas at the Gile Flowage (Iron County) to zebra mussels in Lake Mendota (Dane County). Boater education and watercraft inspections are our best defense against invasives. The threat of invasive species continues to be on our radar, and with help from partners like Xcel, WDNR, U.W. Extension, and the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage Trude Lake Property Owner's Association hopefully we can keep these invaders out of our county and our beautiful Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake.

If you have any questions about water quality, invasive species, or if you want consultation on protecting your shoreline from erosion, feel free to give us a call.

Zach Wilson
Iron County Land and Water Conservation Specialist
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Iron County "Clean Boats Clean Waters" staff with boaters at landing



NR 44 and Master Planning

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avoid the “extremely time-consuming” task of applying the cumbersome NR 44 process to small properties. And as the WDNR website on planning notes, the full body of research that led to the creation of these Ecological Landscapes “provides tools to develop management strategies that are ecologically appropriate for a region.” It seems hard not to view the use of Ecological Landscapes for regional planning as anything but a sensible and soundly based modification (change?) in the master planning process.

A close look at a map of the Ecological Landscapes shows that the TFSWA falls into two different ELs: Most of it is in the Northern Highland EL, but the western part, including Big Island and the Turtle River basin, falls into the North Central Forest EL. What are the implications of this division of the scenic area for master planning? According to Diane Brusoe, “When properties cross multiple Ecological Landscapes, the department will decide which region to plan the property with based on program priorities and timeliness to management issues. In the case of TFF, I anticipate that the property will be planned with whichever region is planned first (either North Central Forest or Northern Highland).” In short, the TFSWA will NOT be split apart for the purposes of master plan revision.

If Ecological Landscapes are a new presence in the planning process, the Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA) is a now a well-established one. This document catalogs existing recreational opportunities on state properties in various regions of the state, attempts to assess public needs, and then suggests where and how those needs might possibly be met. Because of its considerable power to direct policy changes, this document warrants close and skeptical reading, especially of those sections that lay out needs based on public input. For example, the portion of the ROA that deals with public input for the Northwoods Region contains several indications that its data are suspect. The analysis states that hunting and target shooting were UNDER-represented in data gathered from the public. How does the WDNR know that to be the case? Probably because such results contravene what common sense and observation tells them. Might it be that the data gathering techniques have flaws? And if so, could it possibly be that some other expressions of public interest are OVER-represented in the ROA analysis, such as the most mentioned category: more trails for motorized recreation? The authors of the ROA acknowledge that “from a statistical perspective there is no way...that the results [of the information gathered from the public] can be generalized with an associated error margin to a larger population.” In short, their data have no statistical significance. Yet on the basis of such “data” the ROA recommends this or that activity be promoted on various state properties. The ROA also states that “department priorities” play a role in determining future recreation goals, but nowhere is it made clear where those priorities can be found. It is hard not to find troublesome

that such a document has any force whatsoever in making master plan decisions. When I raised this concern with Ms. Brusoe, she responded that “I am not the best contact for ROA questions,” and sent me a link to the ROA website.

Ecological Landscapes, because they are new, and the ROA, because of its central role in planning, are obvious candidates for discussions of master planning. But there are other issues that might well be raised in this connection. Here are some additional ones, in no particular order, that I raised with Ms. Brusoe, along with her responses (in quotation marks).

What role does the existing master plan play during a revision? Is it the starting point, or will the WDNR engage in what might be called zero-based planning? “When the department initiates a planning process, staff evaluate existing property conditions and resource and recreation management objectives to best understand what aspects of the current plan need to be updated. As the revised master plan is developed [following NR 44] ...some elements of the existing master plan may remain the same while some may change.” Ms. Brusoe gave the same response to the following, related question: What role does the historical experience of a WDNR property play in the updating process? (Some properties, for example, have undergone a formal review; others, like the TFF, have not.)

At its founding, Governor Thompson hailed the TFSWA as a legacy for all Wisconsinites. Will the regional focus that seems to be at the heart of current master planning diminish the statewide import/value of the TFF? “No. The regional planning approach will not diminish the import/value of the TFF. The regional planning approach provides an opportunity to consider the TFF in a broader context and highlight the unique management opportunities and niche that TFF provides.”

Citizen involvement in master planning is a crucial issue. When the TFF master plan was being developed, a citizen advisory committee worked closely with WDNR planners. The situation seems to have changed since that time. For example, the draft of the Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Region master plan, prepared under the aegis of NR 44, was prepared entirely by WDNR personnel. Will public input for the updated TFF master plan follow the process used in creating the Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Region master plan? “Public input for the regional plan including TFF will be similar to the process used for Northern Lake Michigan Coastal Region. NR 44 discusses opportunities for public participation. You are correct: this typically includes an opportunity to provide public input when the department initiates the planning process, when the draft plan is ready for review, and again when the department presents the draft plan for Natural Resources Board approval.” Both Ms. Brusoe’s response and the language of NR 44 on public input make it clear that there will be no citizen advisory committee in place during the upcoming revision of the master plan. That does not, of course, preclude interested parties, whether individuals, groups,



or government entities, from weighing in during formally designated public comment periods.

When will the WDNR set in motion the process for revising the TFF master plan? Ms. Brusoe said she didn't "anticipate we'll be planning either of these regions [the North Central

Forest EL or the Northern Highland EL] until at least the summer of 2020." At that time, she acknowledged, there will be "plenty of time to answer more questions." I'm certain interested parties will have plenty of them to ask. In the mean time, however, those who care about the future of the TFSWA will be well advised to study NR 44.

Full to the Brim

By Jim Moore

The 2018 open water season on the flowage will not only be remembered for its late start but also for the higher than average water levels throughout the season. The 2018 flowage water levels exceeded those of 2017 as well as our desired minimum target levels from July 1st through October 31st.

We started the season with a very high regional water table which the summer and fall rains perpetuated, insuring ample water for recreational use. Here's hoping that we carry the high water tables into spring 2019. Thanks to Mother Nature for providing the requisite precipitation and to Xcel Energy for the balancing act required to manage the flowage during a challenging weather year.

Dam Dike Developments

By Chad McGrath



As a requirement following from Xcel Energy's licensing process, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has required an upgrade to the flowage's dike system near Sportsman's Landing. (If you never knew that there was a dike there, join the club.) The new requirement demands a rise of four to six feet in the dike that runs below part of the entrance road to Sportsmen's landing. "Why does the dike need raising?", you ask. "Because the standard for protecting against catastrophic flooding has changed", the government answers. Should the water control system at the Little Turtle Flowage fail, the resulting rise in water would overtop the existing dike near Sportsmen's landing.

Ross Peterson Construction out of Hurley was in charge of the project, which involved installing erosion control materials, some tree removal and then removal of top soil down to more suitable, less permeable and erodible soils. To raise the

dike level, fill material was hauled in from Terry Palecek's pit near Park Falls. The material was sampled, and laboratory tested to assure compliance with project specifications. The dike specifications called for 10,000 cubic yards of material. Turning cubic yards into something more tangible and doing the math, at 15 yards per truckload, that's 667 dump truck loads of fill! Placement of the fill began in early October, but unusually wet conditions set back the timetable for the project. As of this writing, placement of the fill base course was to have been completed by November.

Iron County's Deer: A Healthy Herd

By Jenna Kosnicki

Each year summer deer observations and Snapshot Wisconsin (a citizen science trail cam monitoring program) collect data to identify deer recruitment. These observations confirm successful reproduction and early fawn survival. Although the data have yet to be analyzed, anecdotal evidence shows strong recruitment. Similar reports have been trickling in from landowners involved in Snapshot Wisconsin as well, with only a few of them seeing fewer deer than desired. Final data will be presented at the March Iron County Deer Advisory Council meeting.

I can't say I'm too surprised by this anecdotal evidence and the data I collected this summer. Prior to the 2017 winter, Iron County's deer population was at a point where production was its highest because deer were in balance with their resources. Does, buck and fawns alike were able to easily find food and put on enough fat to sustain them through the severe winter and even through the late green-up. With all this stress, does were still seen with multiple fawns—a direct function of health.

When I was walking deer yards during the late winter of 2017-18, there were few dead deer found (by myself, volunteers and venison-motivated dogs). Most of the dead animals were fawns—which is expected during any given year—with the minority being adults. I believe the deer fared the winter well because they were going into the winter healthy. One dead doe still had full bone marrow, an indication that she was not stressed by the winter whatsoever (see photo).

A deer herd in balance with its habitat can survive a severe winter much better than an overpopulated herd. Stockpiling deer to create a “buffer” for deer deaths does no good for



*Bone marrow in healthy deer that overwintered near Saxon and didn't die of starvation.
Photo courtesy of Jenna Kosnicki*

hunters. High populations create less healthy deer, which in turn are less likely to survive a severe winter. Severe winters will kill deer of all ages instead of just the very old, young and injured. Does will give birth to fewer fawns—if any—and poor fitness is likely to negatively impact the following year's recruitment because the doe needs to completely rebuild fat reserves and nutrition. Bucks, too, suffer from poor fitness which can be seen in reduced antler development.

The 2018 hunting season has thus far been less than desirable with a hot, buggy start, a rainy transition and a cold end. Crossbow use continues to grow and has accounted for 73% of the archery season harvest in Iron County as of Nov. 6th. Hopefully this early gun season (which falls earlier in the November calendar) will give hunters the opportunity to hunt

near the rut and see some bucks. Good luck to all of those who participate in the hunt and to those waiting at home craving grilled backstraps!



Dead Deer Walking

Photo courtesy of Mike Hittle



Words from the Warden: “Call, Call, Call”

By Mike Hittle

When Matt Meade took up his duties as warden for southern Iron County in June of 2013, his resume included eight years as the sole warden in Marinette County, service as a ranger and a technician for the WDNR, and conservation work for the US Forest Service. As it turns out, he has had ample cause to draw on this experience during the last five years—years that have been marked by some significant policy changes that have directly affected our state’s wardens. And so it seemed a good time to get Matt’s take on life as the Mercer-based warden. The following is summary of our conversation.

For the first year of his tenure, Matt shared coverage of the county with John Wendt, who handled the northern region. Upon Wendt’s retirement a year later, responsibility for the whole county fell to Matt. That situation turned him into “a street cop,” hurrying from one urgent matter to the next. It also left him precious little time to build the kinds of relations with constituents that might help to prevent problems from arising in the first place. After going it alone for three and a half years, Matt’s territory was halved early this year with the appointment of Robin Miller (715-208-4671), working out of Hurley, as the warden for the northern half of the county (roughly from County Highway G north).

As we enumerated in our 2013 article introducing Matt, wardens have a lengthy list of responsibilities, from dealing with violations of fish and game laws to appearing at schools to give boating safety instruction, and much in between. Two years ago a new duty was added to this list when the WDNR decided to abolish the position of ranger at various state properties, such as campgrounds and parks, and to shift those responsibilities to wardens. The new policy, fully implemented this year, assigned wardens to various state properties, often at some distance from their home bases. Matt had one three-day stint in the northern Kettle Moraine, and spent considerable time at state properties in the Northern Highland State Forest. Needless to say, these time-consuming assignments diverted wardens from their traditional roles—especially those of protecting natural resources—and left a noticeable gap in law enforcement. Moreover, it is far from clear the expected cost-savings that helped drive this new use of wardens ever materialized as the wardens incurred new expenses traveling hither and yon.

The negative reaction to this policy was substantial, and the WDNR has now decided to reinstate rangers on appropriate state properties. This process, however, will take time. New rangers must be recruited (not an easy task given current negative attitudes toward careers in law enforcement); and, as appears likely, they will be more fully trained in law enforcement than was the case in the past. In the short

run, then, wardens will still have to assist at state properties as the WDNR transitions back to the use of rangers. It is uncertain how much time will pass before wardens can once again devote full attention to their core responsibilities.

The rapid and major overhaul of the procedures for licensing anglers and hunters has, in Matt’s opinion, produced challenges both for citizens and wardens. In practically the blink of an eye, the very tangible WDNR-issued green licenses and tags disappeared as the procedures for authorizing sporting activities shifted “into the Twittersphere.” Negotiating the shift to a paperless (unless, of course, you are fishing on Lake Superior) system has confronted older generations of Wisconsin outdoor men and women with a steep learning curve. People may think, for example, they have paid for this or that license, but have no concrete evidence to prove they have done so. Confirmation of what they have or have not purchased depends on facility with computer or smart phone. And then there are the little things, like where to affix one’s federal waterfowl stamp.... According to Matt, “most people he talks to—a high 90 percent” are frustrated with these changes. For his part, the warden says he has tried hard to be understanding of those caught-up in this transition.

Citizens are not the only ones perplexed and inconvenienced by these new procedures. Wardens like Matt Meade and Robin Miller also have problems: they have no choice but to work with a phone-dependent system in a county with notoriously poor cell phone coverage. Checking individuals for licenses and tags, once a very quick process, becomes substantially more time-consuming in areas with no cell phone service. In such cases, wardens have to take down phone numbers and addresses to use when they are back within the friendly perimeters of transmission towers or in their offices. These problems notwithstanding, Matt points out that other states are going to similar licensing arrangements. And, he noted with a wry hope for the future, members of Gen X and Gen Y find cell-phone licensure a breeze.

To the question of whether the absence of paper licenses promotes poaching, he replied cautiously. For sure, it is too early to come up with a definitive answer to this one. That said, Matt suspects that the presence or absence of a license or tag is not likely to influence someone who is intent on violating.

These distracting changes aside, Matt said that the majority of his time is spent on traditional “hook and bullet” issues—

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Words From the Warden

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i.e., pursuing fish and game violations. This conforms to his belief that there is a difference between technically breaking the law (driving 56 mph in a 55 mph zone) and poaching. The latter case is far more serious because people are despoiling the public's resources, "our deer, our bear, our grouse." It is not surprising, then, that he relies on the public to point him in the right direction. Sometimes people are aware of violations that have occurred for years or even decades and finally get sick of them; sometimes they observe directly an obvious violation; and still other times people see "something that did not seem right." Matt's simple counsel to them all: "Call, call, call." The most valuable calls are those that provide as exact information as possible, such as the color of a boat or vehicle, a fire number, a name, a precise location. Small details can be huge to his investigation. He also cautions, wisely, against confronting anyone who is actively violating.

Matt says that he returns every call. And callers have the following choices: they can be anonymous when calling; they can identify themselves during the call but ask to be anonymous subsequently; and, of course, they can waive anonymity. Critical to the reporting of possible poaching is the caller's trust that the warden will investigate the complaint thoroughly and fairly and take appropriate action when applicable laws and statutes have been violated.

Matt recounted a recent incident when a citizen reported after-hours shooting at waterfowl. He followed up the

complaint promptly and on the next evening, aided by another warden, observed two individuals blazing away after dark. When the men were approached and asked what they were shooting at in the murk, one replied that "he had heard a duck." The follow-up investigation uncovered an over-bagging violation, as well as an acknowledgement by the men that they have been hunting this way for decades. "These," Matt remarked, "are the kind of people we don't want in Wisconsin's outdoors."

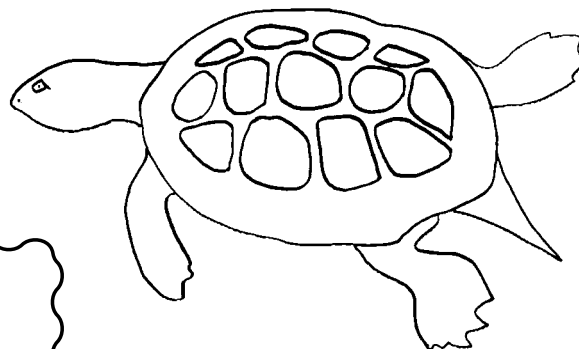
When I asked Matt Meade what changes he had noticed in public attitudes and behaviors with respect to natural resources, he quickly responded that people seem to be more cognizant of the need to protect resources—especially along lakeshores. He has received a growing number of calls pertaining to wetland violations or other prohibited activities beyond the normal high-water mark that are intended to create beaches or enhance views. As he sees it, the public has a growing interest in seeing that the state's valuable water resources are protected. This attitude stands in contrast to notions he encountered 15 years ago, when people often argued "It is my property and I'll do with it as I want." Perhaps surprisingly, the recent weakening of shoreland regulations has not led to behaviors detrimental to waters and shorelands; on the contrary, concern for these resources has grown. Our conversation concluded on this positive note.

To contact Warden Matt Meade, call:
Bus. (715) 476-7845;
CELL (715) 329-0615;
or email him at Matthew.Meade@Wisconsin.gov

Water Quality Volunteers Needed!

The Water Quality group is trying to increase the number of Secchi disk readings for water clarity on the flowage. We are in need of up to three more volunteers to do this.

Please contact Mike & Beth Myers at mikebethmyers@gmail.com, if you would like more information or to be part of this ongoing project.



Loosestrife Still on the Loose?

By Randy Payne

This summer, for the first time in a few years, the entire flowage (all 200+ miles of shoreline) was surveyed for purple loosestrife by TFFTL- POA members and Zach Wilson's crew. Complete coverage eliminates gaps in the records over time, and improves monitoring accuracy. The greatest problem areas continue to be the north side of the flowage (The Hideaway down to Pink Rock), with five sites of infestation of over 100 plants, and one over 500. Most other sites are scattered and have fewer than five plants. Other than the Hideaway to Pink Rock area, the flowage remains relatively free of purple loosestrife, with the exception of the Bonies Mound area, which is showing a moderate number of small infestations. The workday had a weather forecast of only 20% chance of rain, but unfortunately it did rain right after lunch, and we had to quit around 2 PM. Zach and crew returned the following Monday to finish up. It's important to have Iron County and WDNR crews present on work days as they can use herbicide to treat the large sites, which can't be effectively handled by the volunteers on their own. In general, it appears we are keeping the Loosestrife under control.



Photo courtesy of Chad McGrath

TFSWA ATV Trail Proposal Turned Back (*For Now*)

By Tom Mowbray

As most TFF-TL POA members know, in January 2018 WDNR initiated a proposal to amend the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area (TFSWA) Master Plan and add a new ATV/UTV trail partially inside the TFSWA project boundary. The proposal called for ATV's to exit Popko Circle East on Hadley Road, then run across Iron County forest land, private property and TFSWA land, and then reconnect with Popko Circle West just north of the Little Turtle River.

From January to July, WDNR solicited input from the public about the master plan amendment and the proposed trail. In keeping with the opinions of the vast majority of association members, (as expressed in the association's most recent recreational use survey), the board worked to oppose the proposed trail.

In late September 2018, WDNR announced that they had decided to drop the proposed master plan amendment and ATV trail, but left the door open for the future possibility of ATV trails inside the TFSWA. Specifically, WDNR noted this matter may be looked at again when a complete master plan revision takes place as a part of a new WDNR "regional planning" process. At this time we are not aware of any specific timetable for regional planning to begin in our area (see lead article for more details).

The Board would like to thank all those members who took time to write or email WDNR with their thoughts and opinions on the proposed ATV/UTV trail. We also plan to continue monitoring various WDNR planning processes that have an impact on the TFSWA that we care so deeply about.



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Driftwood

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

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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.

Published Twice Annually

If you would like to contact the Association electronically, please visit our website
www.tfftl.org and search under "CONTACT US"

