



# Driftwood

Spring / Summer 2019

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

## Fisheries Futures

By Mike Hittle

According to fisheries biologist Zach Lawson, the WDNR has a number of initiatives under way that bear on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage fishery. These range from a likely change in walleye regulations to the exploration of the potential impacts of hook and line fishing on the flowage's lake sturgeon population. We'll look at these issues one at a time and then take notice of a WDNR organizational move that will affect staffing at the Mercer Ranger Station.

### Walleye Regulations

At the 2019 Spring Hearings of the Wisconsin Conservation Congress, attendees and on-line participants voted on a proposed new set of regulations for the walleyes in the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. The new rule would set a minimum length of 12 inches, allow only one fish above 15 inches, and permit a daily bag limit of three fish. This new regulation would also apply to waters adjoining the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, including Trude Lake, the Bear River, the Flambeau River upstream of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage at Murray's Landing, the Little Turtle River, the Manitowish River upstream of the Flambeau River to the Rest Lake Dam, including Benson Lake, Sturgeon Lake, and Vance Lake.



The WDNR explained/justified the proposed rule change with the following statement: "The management goal is to manage for a walleye population with above-average density (4-8 adult walleyes/acre) and a size structure that provides quality harvest opportunities (30-50% of the adult stock being greater than 15 inches). Under the present regulation, both adult walleye density and adult walleye size structure are below management goals. This regulation proposal is one tool to help meet the management goal as it reduces harvest of juvenile walleyes (less than 12 inches) and reduces harvest of larger adults (greater than 15 inches), important for improving densities and overall size structure of the walleye population on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage."

The proposed rule change received strong support from three locally affected counties: Iron voted 13-3 in favor; Ashland 41-9; and Vilas 42-14. The statewide vote, which included online voters, was 5182-1718 in favor. The proposed rule change will next be voted on by the Natural Resources Board at its fall meeting and then by the state legislature in January. Given the level of support from the most affected areas, it seems unlikely that the rule will encounter any significant hurdles; and it should be in place in time for the 2020 inland fishing opener.

### Crappie Variability

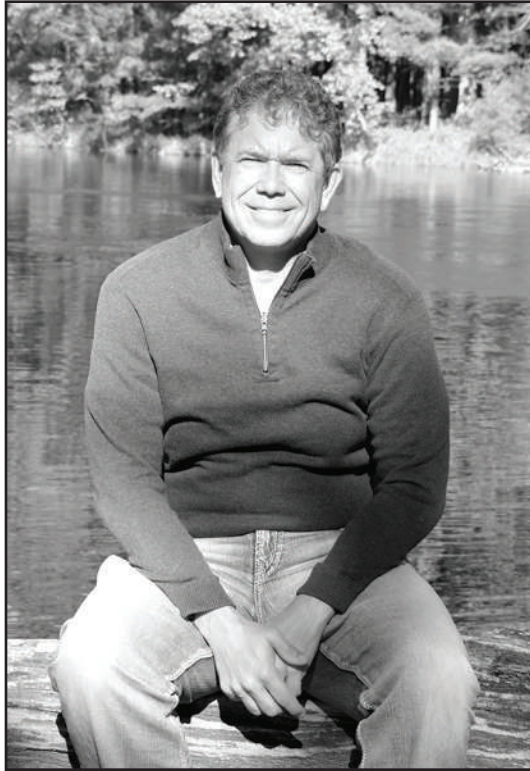
One item on Lawson's research agenda is to investigate differential growth rates and densities of crappie populations in various parts of the flowage. These fish are all black crappies, but some of them seem to do better in some locations in the flowage and less well in others. Identifying the locations that seem most favorable to crappies could shed some light on this phenomenon.

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# President's Letter

By Randy Schubert



As I finish up my first term as President, I have had some time to reflect on the all the people who make the association what it is. Having been a member for several years prior to becoming an officer, I didn't fully realize all the work that our members contribute to this great organization. Being President, however, has allowed me to see first-hand how our volunteers—from officers and board members to committee chairs and volunteers—are the glue that connects us and allows this organization to function the way it does. I am truly amazed at the talent that we have in our group – from former DNR Biologists, engineers, sales professionals, educators and individuals from numerous other professions and occupations. All of them work together for a common objective: to preserve, protect, and act as good stewards of this place we all love, called the Turtle- Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake.

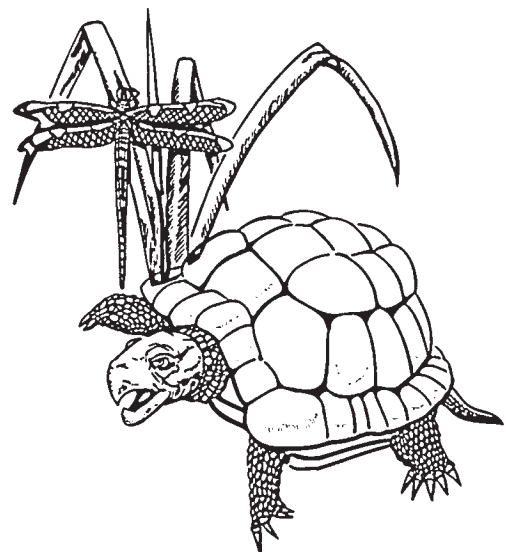
In January of this year, we had our first stakeholders meeting, which brought together representatives from all parties that have an interest in the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage watershed. This meeting provided an opportunity to learn more about how everyone who has an interest in the area can discuss their concerns and propose solutions to problems. While the various stakeholders may have different perspectives on any given issue, the very act of getting together has put us on the path to a broader understanding of the complexity of the watershed and the interests present within it. By working together we can increase our influence at the table

when legislative and planning issues that could impact the flowage on a statewide basis are under consideration.

Our group continues to monitor water quality and water levels, to work closely with the local DNR fisheries managers, to identify and control invasive species, and to provide educational opportunities. Through each of these programs we can have a significant impact on the current and future health of the flowage and all its inhabitants. Further, we have moved into the social media age with our Facebook page. Thank you, Susan Payne, for taking the initiative and getting this started.

As we move forward, there are always challenges on the horizon, such as threats posed by shoreline development and the ever-present uncertainty of state and local budgets that has the potential to impact funding for projects related to the Turtle- Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake area. As long as our group has a voice and a seat at the table, we can and will make a difference. We also need to continue to maintain and even grow our organization in order to support both new initiatives and established projects. The more people who participate, the lighter the workload of current committee chairs and volunteers will be. So I encourage those of you who have been considering stepping forward to lead one of the many committees or perhaps take a position on the board, to give it some serious thought. It is an awesome opportunity to contribute to a great organization and continue the path of stewardship for the flowage which we all enjoy and which has become a part of our lives.

In closing I want to once again thank all the board members, committee chairs, volunteers and members I have met along the way that make this such a wonderful organization. I look forward to another exciting summer and hopefully to have a chance to meet fellow members on the water this summer.



# Buck-Toothed Chaos

By Jenna Kosnicki, WDNR Wildlife Biologist

You guessed it. I'm talking about beavers; the eager rodents who cut down saplings, girdle trees, and flood shorelines. Every spring I get dozens of questions regarding beavers: Why are we seeing more beavers in recent years? What can we do to mitigate the destruction they cause?

To answer the first question, fur prices may be the main driver of beaver populations. For fifty years prior to 2015, prices remained relatively steady, with trappers receiving an average of \$15-\$20 for each pelt. Many trappers put up over a hundred beavers each year and had incomes in the vicinity of \$1,500 to \$2,000. Had prices for the pelts tracked with inflation, trappers today would be receiving around \$161 per pelt, and looking at incomes around \$16,000 for a hundred-pelt year. It is easy to see how the financial incentive in beaver trapping has dropped since the 1970s. The average recreational beaver trapper today is either losing money or making only a small profit.

Another factor influencing beaver populations is an aging trapper demographic. Many, perhaps most trappers, view trapping as part of their heritage—and trap every year no matter the fur prices. This group is aging and declining in numbers. Moreover, these older trappers are not being replaced by younger ones. These two demographic trends combine to reduce the beaver harvest and, in turn, lead to a growing beaver population.

Notwithstanding the trends noted above, four years ago, the WDNR recommended adjusting the beaver season in accordance with population goals. Their concern was that beaver populations were low. To allow beaver to recover, the WDNR adjusted the season length to limit the beaver harvest. This wildlife management tool remains a good one but likely wasn't necessary in this case. Low fur prices, fewer trappers, and the fact that beavers are fast reproducing rodents, allowed for the quick beaver recovery we see today.

We have gone from concern for low beaver populations to a rebounded population that exceeds the social (human tolerance) carrying capacities in some areas. Landowners are losing land and trees due to damming and gnawing; towns are losing roads due to blocked culverts; large rain events wash out large beaver dams sending hazardous amounts of water downstream; and trout fishermen are frustrated by the effects of dams in trout streams. Biologists

receive increasingly more calls each year regarding nuisance beaver.

What do we do now?

First, I think it's important to educate people on the ecological role beavers play. Our ancestors learned the importance of the beaver firsthand. Beavers were eradicated throughout much of the U.S. by the late 1800s. Sadly, not just the beavers disappeared; with them went their ecosystems. As dams disappeared, water began flowing more freely. Wetland plants were lost, erosion increased, and the carbon sink that once existed around tens of thousands of beaver ponds was now high and dry. Protective services provided by the wetlands against storm surges vanished. High quality trout streams in mountainous areas became warm, fluctuating channels. For those interested in more information about beavers in America's history, I recommend reading Frances Backhouse's *Once They Were Hats: In Search of the Mighty Beaver* or Ben Goldfarb's *Eager*.

After discovering your new appreciation for beavers (if



*The original stakeholder.*

you don't love them already), you might try some of the following strategies for deterring bad beaver behavior. **1. Prevent gnawing by using repellents.** Spray repellent from the base of the tree up to 3 ft. A hot sauce mix, rotten eggs, and blood meal are a few natural repellents. Commercial

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# Dark Water

By Jeff Wilson

Friday night January 19 just before dark my cell phone rang. It was T.J. Moberg of Mercer Rentals, a good friend of mine. “Jeff where are you?” T.J. asked. “I’m here at our garage apartment on Norway Point,” I exclaimed. T.J. replied, “Oh darn, I was hoping you were at your island cabin on the flowage. A truck has gone through the ice on the flowage. I heard about it on the emergency scanner and it sounds like they are at the Narrows, near Bonies Mound, across the canoe portage from your island cabin on Horseshoe. Their last message was that they didn’t think that they could make it much longer.” I then told him that my son, Zach, was at the cabin and that I would call him on his cell phone. Luckily Zach answered on the first ring. I told him T.J.’s story and suggested he take an ice chisel and a rope. Zach said he was on the way and hung up. A minute later, T.J. called and asked for Zach’s cell phone number, and I told him Zach would be at the accident site in a few minutes. T.J. said that after Zach finds the victims he should locate the rescue team and lead them to the accident site on safe ice. One minute later, my daughter-in-law Melody called, saying she had heard that a truck had fallen through the ice near Bonies Mound and that I should call Zach. I was stunned that she had heard the news so fast. It turns out that she had heard the call go out on the scanner. We disconnected and I felt reassured that everything would work out. I could get the details from Zach in a few hours.

As someone who had long hunted, fished, and trapped on the flowage, I was shaken by the incident. Over the next few days my thoughts would return to the topic, and I would ponder all the lives the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage had claimed, or almost claimed, during the last four decades. I called Dennis O’Brien a few days later and asked him to take a little ride down Memory Lane to help me piece together a picture of these occurrences. Dennis had been the WDNR ranger on the Flambeau for the best part of 20 years. We came up with 31 accidents and eight deaths. Four trucks or cars, four snowmobiles, and two ATV’s had sunk through the ice. One ice shack sank while it was being towed off the ice, and our

recollections included one snowmobile death by collision. But winter’s thin ice wasn’t the only hazard. Nine people struck by lightning required hospitalization, and one dog was killed by lightning. Five people were struck by falling trees during three severe storms. Five deaths during open water included three boat drownings and two suicides. A few victims of these tragedies were friends of mine. Past Northern States Power flowage manager, Mark Fort, lost his life while early ice fishing when his ATV went through thin ice. Beaver trapper, Ralph Meyer, from Springstead, fell through thin ice while trapping up-river from Murray’s Landing. Shock from the cold water brought on a fatal heart attack. In the 1990’s, I was part of the search crew sent to look for John Peterson and Fred Ralenni, who drowned when their boat capsized in high waves on a November day. They had been walleye fishing on the north end of the Big



*Coming up for air.*

Water. We found John but didn’t recover Gary’s body until the following spring. John had been the cook at Johnny’s Bar in Mercer.

What can be done to prevent such tragedies? Obviously, the Flambeau is a tough place. With two rivers and numerous creeks flowing into the flowage, even in the coldest winters you can find thin ice to fall through. Places to definitely



avoid are river channels and creek mouths. The ice near Trude Lake dike and the Flambeau Dam are always dangerous locations, if ice covered at all.

Obviously, caution and being prepared for the unexpected are critical. Several of the boat landings now have boxes containing life jackets in both child and adult sizes for anyone who forgets to bring one. Because cell phone reception can be spotty on the flowage, an air horn and flare gun are good precautions. In shoulder seasons I carry a sleeping bag and tarp in my boat along with food and water. My 18 foot boat doesn't even have oar locks, so if my motor broke down in a remote area where I couldn't walk out (swamps, stump fields, etc.) I could end up spending the night. Even an emergency space blanket with insulating capabilities could change spending a night in an open boat from life threatening to simply uncomfortable. Other aids to survival include knowledge of the flowage, a GPS and backup maps, extra batteries, adequate clothing for changing weather, and a survival kit. Let a friend or family member know where you are going. Luckily, both the Mercer and Springstead fire departments as well as Iron County dispatch have emergency services that can be reached with a 911 call.

When Zach got to the Narrows he saw two men standing on the roof of their pickup in about three inches of water. The truck was not visible. He reassured them that help was on the way and left to find the rescue team. He found the

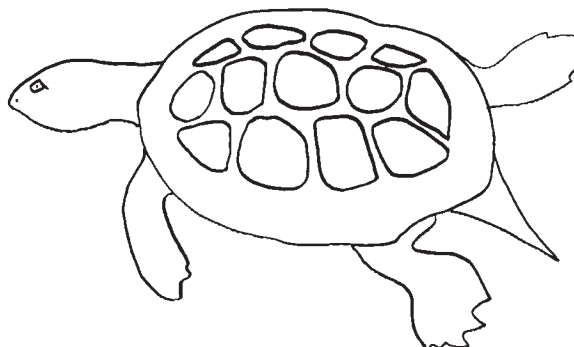
Mercer crew about a half mile away and led them in on safe ice. With the use of dry suits they transported the two victims to safe ice and then on to the ambulance at Murrays' Landing for evaluation. They were OK.

On the night of January 19, temperatures dipped below zero. Had these two men lost the use of cell phones from water damage, or had they been in a location where cell signals drop off, or had they broken through a few feet to the right where the channel deepened, they might not have made it. It would have been very difficult to swim to shore and walk the two miles to Murray's Landing in the dark and cold conditions.

With our increasingly tech savvy lives and more luxurious boats, snow machines and equipment it is easy to forget that the TFF is still a wild and challenging place to recreate. As more tourists come to our area, they can make unrealistic plans with skimpy knowledge of the local weather and geography. Those who live here can get complacent (myself included) and forget that summer storms can build from a clear blue sky and that fog or swirling snow squalls can obscure landmarks, especially in the dark. Part of the reason many of us love the flowage is its big water and wild feel. But, perhaps each season we need to remind ourselves to balance our enthusiasm for adventure with preparation for emergencies. It may come in very handy for ourselves, or for helping another party when the waters of the flowage turn dark.

## Editors' Note

The truck that broke through the ice in the Narrows was not the only vehicle to meet with a similar fate on the flowage this past winter. Two men who thought it a good idea to take a spin around Trude Lake in their truck encountered thin ice on their return to the landing (the one near the Popko Circle West bridge) and gave their truck a cold bath. The occupants got out safely and walked to shore, but their truck was not so lucky. According to Warden Matt Meade, the truck, like the one in the Narrows incident, was extricated from the flowage by Bulldog Recovery Services from Rhinelander. It took proper equipment, experience, and a measure of patience to get both of these vehicles back on firm ground. But that was hardly the end of the two stories. First, both vehicles were totaled. Second, neither party was insured. And third, the cost of recovery could run to as much as \$8,500 for each incident. As a consequence, both parties had to turn their vehicle titles over to Bulldog, and in at least one instance, make an additional cash payment to the company. Even when no lives are lost through the exercise of dubious judgment, a lot of cash can be.



# Greetings From the Land and Water Conservation Department

By Zach Wilson, Iron County Land and Water Conservation Specialist

Happy Spring Everyone!

I'm happy to say that spring finally arrived this year. As I write this article (April 28th) the loons are back defending their territories, and the sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, buffleheads, and common mergansers are busy courting and foraging in the newly ice-free lakes, rivers, ponds and wetlands. A few days ago I even witnessed mallards copulating on the Gile Flowage, a natural history first for me. My notes from last spring mention the thickness of the ice and an April blizzard, so I'm happy to say we are headed towards a somewhat normal spring. However, one big difference this year has been the massive amount of water on the landscape. While driving to work each day I pass along stretches of the Manitowish and Turtle Rivers, and I cannot recall seeing water levels this high in my lifetime. I grew up in Mercer and am now over 40 so that's a few years of recollections.

These high waters will likely mean more shoreline erosion on the flowage this year. This is a good reason to maintain native vegetation in shoreline buffers and riparian (nearshore) zones. You may recall from past issues of Driftwood that over the past few years the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department and WDNR fisheries personnel have embarked on several shoreline restoration projects on the flowage. This year we will begin phase three for these projects and will be planting at some of the sites. The goal of the work is to protect important walleye spawning habitats by stabilizing the shoreline.

In addition to the shoreline work we will continue with our aquatic invasive species work. We'll monitor the flowage for invasive species and conduct watercraft inspections through the Clean Boats Clean Waters program. We are excited to introduce you to our new summer staff (Limited Term Employees), Hannah Gargrave and Lindsay Dashner. They will focus their efforts on the flowage, where you will likely see them working at the landings and conducting surveys. Funding for our summer staff came once again from Xcel Energy, supplemented by additional funds from the Land Conservation Department. An added bonus this year, both Hannah and Lindsay have strong connections to Iron County!

When we received Hannah's application, her cover letter shared her appreciation for the magic of the flowage. She wrote, "I must first pay respect to the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and the impact it has had on my life. This lake is the reason I chose to pursue the natural resources field of study, and it is why I have such an interest in wildlife, plants, and the natural world in general. My parents own a

small cabin on the lake near the Springstead landing, and my grandparents own a house on the lot next door to our cabin. I've spent a lot of time in and on the lake; whether by boat or snowmobile, I am able to navigate my way through certain parts of the flowage without a map, including lakes Baraboo, Horseshoe, Townline, Mud, and Sweeney. I also know where the good and not-so-good fishing spots are." Having experienced the same magic of the flowage as Hannah, I think we all can agree that this place is worth protecting. The Turtle Flambeau Flowage Scenic Waters Area has a much larger purpose than just being a great place to fish for walleyes; it can mentor and inspire future conservation leaders like Hannah.



*Hannah Gargrave shows why these critters are called snappers.*

We also hired recent Hurley High School graduate Lindsay Dashner. Lindsay is eager to learn and is working hard to prepare herself for a career in conservation. Lindsay started at our department last fall, serving as a volunteer two days a week. This experience gave her a basic understanding of our programs and practical career experience while she finished high school. She plans to attend the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point this coming fall, and hopes to pursue a double major in Natural Resources and Creative Writing. Lindsay wrote in her cover letter "I have lived in Iron County my entire life and have good knowledge about the area around me. I am very passionate about the environment and love to spend my free time outdoors. Some of my hobbies include hiking, fishing, kayaking, and photography. As someone who cares about the environment, specifically regarding climate change, I believe the most important





resource available today is education. With the Clean Boats Clean Waters and Citizen Lake Monitoring programs I would be able to educate and inform fellow citizens as well as do hands on work to promote the importance of these programs.” It gives me great satisfaction and pleasure to have these two young leaders on board this summer.

The Land and Water Conservation Department is also gearing up for another great season of “*Conservation on Tap*” lectures which are held at 6:00pm at The Pines beer garden in Mercer. This year’s dates and topics are:

**June 13: *Beaver Ecology*** with Jenna Kosnicki WDNR Game Manager.

**July 11: *Camp Mercer: Civilian Conservation Camp History*** with Jim Bokern.

**August: *A Lakeside Companion*** author Ted Rulseh.

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 at 715-561-2234 or email us at zach@ironcountrywi.org.

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## Buck-Toothed Chaos

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chemical repellents can also be used. **2. Create physical barriers.** Deploy a three-foot tall shoreline fence to exclude beavers from the property (allow passage for turtles and other critters). If only a few trees are being targeted, try wrapping heavy wire mesh to a height of three feet around each tree. **3. Beaver dam issues:** Outsmart the beavers rather than remove them or their dam (often times new beavers will reconstruct the dam). To combat increasing water levels, create a beaver baffle through the dam. Baffles consist of a large pipe inserted into or placed over a dam that allows for water to move past it without beavers noticing (contact me for more info). **4. Culvert issues:** Construct a fence away from the culvert with a baffle running through it. If installed correctly, beavers will build along the fence and not plug the end of the baffle.

If all else fails, removal of the beavers or their dams may be necessary. If you need assistance, USDA Wildlife Services manages beaver complaints and assists landowners and municipalities (1-800-369-5221 ex. 14). The Wisconsin Trappers’ Association website (wistrap.org) has a list of nuisance wildlife trappers as well. If all else fails, contact your local wildlife biologist to get in touch with a local trapper.

### 2019-2021 CWD SURVEILLANCE AREAS

Iron County is now part of a Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Surveillance Area. Northern Wisconsin will be surveyed for the next three years to identify the presence or absence of CWD. Because Iron County only harvests around 600 deer annually, samples may be difficult to obtain. Hunter help in providing samples would be greatly appreciated. Self-serve kiosks and other sampling stations will be available to the public during the hunting season. Once statewide kiosk and sampling stations are established, their locations will be posted to the DNR website: <https://dnr.wi.gov/wmcwd/RegStation/Search>.

I urge anyone who harvests a deer to get it tested. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that to date there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in people. Nonetheless, as a precaution, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recommends that people only consume venison from healthy-appearing deer with test results indicating that CWD was not detected. As a former CWD technician and a hunter who hunts ten miles away from a CWD positive location in southern Wisconsin, I get all my deer tested before eating them. The average turnaround time for sampling is about ten days. Depending on the weather, I either let my deer hang during the sampling period or quarter the deer and freeze it until results return. For more information on CWD, visit <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/regulations.html>



# VIRGIN'S BOWER CLEMATIS

## CLEMATIS VIRGINIANA

### NOTES FROM THE FIELD

By Chad McGrath

Name: *Clematis virginiana*  
Common name: Virgin's Bower  
Hardiness zones: 3 to 8  
Mature height: 20'  
Mature width: 20'+  
Classification: vine  
Landscape use: Anywhere an adaptable vine is needed.  
Ornamental characteristics: Medium green leaves with interesting venation. Striking, 1 1/2 to 2 inch white flowers held above the foliage followed by lovely threadlike seed tendrils lasting well into fall.



*C. virginiana*. The vine was rampant, tumbling over and around thimbleberry (*Rubus parvifolius*) goldenrod (*Soldago sp.*) and sedges (*Carex sp.*). *C. virginiana* is widely distributed. You can find your boots tangled in the vine throughout the eastern U.S. and even into Canada. But I have never identified it around the flowage. If someone knows of a location, feel free to email me about it.

Clematis: a worthy plant with around 300 species world-wide and thousands of cultivars and selections. There are perhaps too many for a mere mortal to contemplate, certainly too many to stock. As Michel Dirr says in his *Manual of Woody Plants*, "The potential for hybridization transcends sanity...." And many of these clematis species can be difficult: cool the roots, sun for the foliage, flowers too big for scrawny vines, too much water, too little water. They can be tricky to grow. But did you know there's a native clematis that grows like a weed? It's a vigorous vine, shade and sun tolerant, not fussy about where its roots are, and regularly produces beautiful, white flowers followed by fluffy white seed-dispersing threads or styles that look like curved needles. Hence one of its several common names is devil's darning needles. Other names are virgin's bower, old man's beard, and, confusingly, woodbine.



On a recent quest for brook trout in a stream bed in Michigan's Upper Peninsula I found myself tangled in something. After several encounters with it wrapping around my wader boots, trying to cast me into the rock filled Little Carp River, I finally looked more closely and discovered the culprit was

Interestingly, *C. virginiana* does not have tendrils or stick-tights. It climbs via twining: pushing its new growth through and around something higher or alongside. So, while it can climb a fence or trellis, it can't mount a stone wall or brick house. As with most vines, the *C. virginiana* plant is difficult to assign a size. Individual runners can exceed 10 feet and if allowed to grow un-pruned, can expand to who-knows-how wide. It's best to do some judicious pruning in the late fall or spring. It blooms on the current year's growth, so don't fear losing blossoms. Some recommend cutting it back to within eight to twelve inches of the ground. Whatever you do, it's doubtful you can hurt the plant. While propagation from seed is possible, the plant roots from its runners with ease. Runners of my potted *C. virginiana* always find a way to root, even through the woven ground-cloth that covers the ground below potted plants in my nursery. It will take a new plant propagated this way only one season to establish itself in a new location if moved in the spring. And long-established plants can be moved with some success too.

My *C. virginiana* are in full flower by the end of July, but bloom time depends on latitude, and can occur in August and September. The inch-wide, four petal-like sepals are organized in clusters and held out from the foliage on branched stalks, which originate at the leaf axils. This characteristic lifts the flowers above the leaves and highlights them (see photo). Seeds (achene) develop in the early fall, are small and flat, 1/8th an inch (see photo) with a persistent tendril or style that can be up to 2.5 inches long. These tendrils are what make the late season post-bloom so lovely: a plume of off-white, gradually browning as fall progresses. They are also what help the seed disperse in September and October. Throughout the season, from leaf development to pre, then post-bloom, *C. virginiana* presents as a delicate, interesting vine. Give it a try.





# Inaugural Stakeholders Meeting

By Tom Aartila, WDNR Natural Resources Basin Supervisor

On January 7, 2019, the first annual Turtle-Flambeau Flowage stakeholders meeting was held at the Mercer Town Hall led by Xcel Energy and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. This stakeholder group has been in the making for a number of years with the intention of bringing together interested parties with Xcel Energy and the WDNR to discuss issues and projects related to the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. These meetings will allow all stakeholders the opportunity to listen to and discuss a wide range of topics that affect the TFF. At this kick-off meeting 19 individuals representing Xcel Energy, WDNR, Lac du Flambeau Tribe, TFFTL Properties Owners' Association, Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department, Iron County Board, Iron County Outdoor Recreation Enthusiasts (ICORE) and Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) were present.



Topics for discussion included an update on the Dike 10 project, flowage water levels, Rest Lake drawdown and refill, Iron County/TFFTL water quality monitoring, walleyes and flowage water levels, flowage bank erosion, aquatic invasive species (AIS) report and monitoring, property management issues, and the fish compensation fund. The decline in adult walleye and recruitment of walleye and habitat changes (bank erosion and expansion of aquatic macrophytes) were discussed and will be a topic for future meetings. Water quality monitoring and the cost of collecting the data was discussed, with possible funding sources identified including lake grants. Iron County gave an overview of the AIS report findings including 2934 people contacted and 1369 boats inspected on the flowage by two interns working for the county. Of those contacted, 174 had been to a different waterbody within the past five days, including 27 different counties, three different states and 70 different lakes. An aquatic plant survey found the flowage to have very diverse plant community with purple loosestrife and reed canary grass on the decline. Jeff Scheirer provided an update on the fish compensation plan. The Water Quality Certification (2008) has a condition that requires Xcel to put a \$6500 stipend per year into an account for fish passage and sturgeon related work. There is approximately \$75,000-\$80,000 in the account now. In 2017, \$3,300 was used for a fish passage project on the Pike Lake Chain. Brett Bockhop highlighted work on the flowage property including a new camping reservation system. Reservations are \$2 cheaper. He also outlined some issues related to docks located at TFF landings. The practice of leaving the docks in the water year-round has damaged some of them. The Springstead dock and sections of the Sportsman's landing dock will need to be rebuilt. The maintenance crew from the Northern Highlands-American Legion State Forest will now take TFF docks out in the fall and replace them in the spring.

The 2020 meeting will be held in mid to late January with a solicitation of agenda topics via email in November 2019. Based on discussions at the first meeting we will be inviting additional individuals or organizations to join the stakeholder's group.

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## Fisheries Futures

*Continued from Page 1*

### Smallmouth Bass

New regulations on smallmouth bass fishing on the flowage went into effect in 2016. Lawson says he hopes to take a first look at the consequences of that change fairly soon. In particular, the research will focus on changes in the size structure of the smallmouth population.

### Musky Genetics

Discussions of this or that strain of muskellunge show up from time to time in outdoor publications and in informal conversations among aficionados of these toothy monsters. Another research agenda that Lawson anticipates working on soon involves a genetic analysis of flowage muskies. Using what he calls "cutting edge" genetic techniques, he hopes to be able to tell where any given musky comes from. Is it the product of natural reproduction? Is it a stocked

fish? Is it a crossback—that is, a cross between a hybrid species and an original parent species? This work could yield some valuable information about the characteristics of the flowage's muskies; it is not likely, however, to explain what makes them decide to bite.

Lake Sturgeon

The waters of the Manitowish River, and perhaps the flowage itself, will soon be the venue for a study of the mortality of lake sturgeon subjected to catch and release. Dr. Stephanie Shaw of the WDNR's Escanaba Lake Research Station will head up the project. Researchers plan to catch sturgeon with hook and line, release the fish, and then monitor what happens to these fish after release. Knowing the mortality of sturgeon under these conditions will play a key role in deciding whether to introduce, at some future date, a catch and release season for the flowage's re-established and healthy sturgeon population.



# The View From the Manager's Office

By Brett Bockhop, TFSWA Property Manager

As many of you know, the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area is now part of the Bureau of Parks and Recreation Management in the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. That's a change from our old Lands and Facilities Division and a result of the Department's reorganization. The TFSWA property manager is supervised by Sara Pearson, who is the Recreation Superintendent at the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest. Our "on-property" staff this year will be the same as last year. I'll continue to work part time and do the administrative work, Karl Pilch will handle the field work, and Sam Weber from the NHAL State Forest will lend a hand one or two days a week.

You may have also heard that there is yet again another change to how law enforcement services will be delivered on state properties. The department will hire 20 Rangers, to be supervised by the Bureau of Law Enforcement, and they will be deployed to the nine busiest state properties. All other state properties, including TFSWA, will continue to have wardens do the on-property law enforcement. Additionally, the WDNR has plans to hire a number of Park Manager and Park and Recreational Specialists in 2019, one of whom will become the new full-time property manager of the TFSWA.

With the election of Governor Evers, we have a new DNR Secretary, Preston Cole. Here are some highlights from Secretary Cole's address to the Joint Finance Committee of the State Legislature regarding the DNR's biennial budget for 2019/2021. His address highlighted several initiatives to address an array of issues dedicated to protecting and managing Wisconsin's natural resources.

## Year of Clean Drinking Water

Governor Evers has declared 2019 the year of clean drinking water, and his budget takes important steps to tackle those issues. For example, the Governor's budget helps provide assistance to those hardest hit by well contamination and fund the completion of a study to identify well contamination across a three-county area. The budget also includes money to help fund lead service line replacement. Additionally, the budget includes money to invest in additional staffing resources to handle permitting, compliance, and

enforcement at large CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations); \$1.5 million in additional grants for improving water quality in rivers and lakes; and many other initiatives pertaining to clean water.

## Science-based Decision Making

The governor is committed to science-based decision making so the DNR will be looking to adding five new research scientists and a new natural resources science advisor who will report directly to Secretary Cole.

## Parks Funding

The governor has called for an additional \$1.43 million each fiscal year to support the costs of operating parks. The funds would pay for additional Limited Term Employees during peak operation times, provide additional supplies for park facilities, and cover costs associated with added electrified campsites.

Here are some of the highlights of what we plan to do this summer at the flowage beyond the "routine" stuff. The Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department (LWCD) has applied to the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin for a grant from its Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area Fund to continue flowage habitat protection work. We need to address bank erosion in the Horseshoe Lake area to protect fish spawning sites, we need to clear brush and trees and re-shape the berm at the Little Turtle Flowage Emergency Spillway to upgrade that facility as a result of a recent dam inspection. Heather Palmquist and Zach Wilson from the LWCD and their interns will take the lead in this work, with assistance as required from fisheries and wildlife staff from the WDNR Ranger Station. We also have some funding available to address bank erosion at campsite F9 but are waiting on final site plans from the DNR Landscape Architect's office before the work can go out for bids. Once again this summer we will continue the great work the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department and volunteers from your association has done to eradicate purple loosestrife on the flowage and Manitowish River. And finally, we'll be working with MECCA ski club on some trail improvements.



## Editorial Note

Following is a short excerpt from Mike Hittle's recent book, *An Accidental Jewel, Wisconsin's Turtle-Flambeau Flowage*. Mike has been the long-time editor of *Driftwood* and is a retired Lawrence University professor and former dean of faculty. He's the guy who keeps Terry Dalton and me from committing catastrophes with apostrophes and all other types of punctuation. He's also a nice guy, who has written a great book on the Flowage.

Enjoy.

Chad

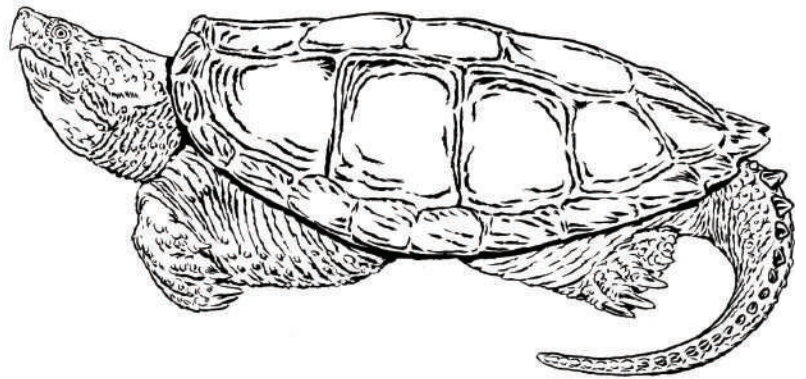
## Film

The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage celebrated its Hollywood film debut in July of 1962, when 20th Century Fox released *Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man*. The plot line of the movie was based on Ernest Hemingway's semi-autobiographical stories about Nick Adams, a young man who came of age in upper Michigan and in Europe during World War I. Richard Beymer, who played Nick, was supported by a heavyweight cast that included Diane Baker, Arthur Kennedy, Ricardo Montalban, Paul Newman, Susan Strasberg, and Eli Wallach.

Mellen, WI, served as the base of operations for the crew and cast for about a month. The town had been selected by 20th Century Fox advance agents, allegedly because they were attracted to the picturesque charm of the local railway station. The role assigned to the flowage by Martin Ritt, the film's director, was to serve as an archetypal northwoods lake on the shores of which Nick's father, a local MD, and mother, had their home—a structure woodsy and rustic on the outside but incongruously citified on the inside. Moviegoers can easily identify one specific location on the flowage fairly early in the film, when Nick rows his girlfriend across the placid water toward a foreground shore. Easily visible in the background are the deteriorating remains of the old Mercer fish hatchery and the falls of the Turtle River. Once he beaches the boat near the site of the present-day west bank campground and boat launch, Nick proceeds to tell his lady friend that it's all over. This stormy moment in their relationship achieves added gravitas as the wind (wind machine?) cranks up and the shrubs, trees, and autumn leaves bend and flutter before its force. In addition to this moment, generic flowage scenes recur throughout the movie to reinforce the northwoods image, though it would be difficult to identify their precise locations.

Two flowage area residents can boast of an association with the film. Norman Severt, brother of the guide Emil Severt, assisted in filming railroad sequences by driving a Soo Line hi-rail truck (he worked for the railroad) along the tracks with a crew of photographers operating out of the truck bed. During the days when the flowage scenes were being filmed, the Mercer guide Mitch Babic lent a boat to Beymer, Newman, and Hemingway for their personal use. Babic also had the pleasure of eating dinner with Newman for a week.

*Hemingway's Adventures of a Young Man* could hardly be called a critical success. Mellen Mayor Howard Peters, who attended the film's Midwest premiere at the Ironwood Theater in the Michigan city of the same name, described it as "long and boring." Bosley Crowther, the venerable critic of The New York Times, translated the mayor's terse judgment into the arch language of a cultural arbiter. It was "a sappy, soggy, movie" totally at odds with Hemingway's prose style and worldview. In Crowther's view, Beymer, as Nick Adams, turned out to be "just a big squashy figure, made from sodden Airfoam, that gropes its way through a succession of 'adventures' that develop no dramatic or emotional punch." And just to prove that he was not dazzled by stars, Crowther observed that "it is Paul Newman's very good fortune that he isn't recognizable in the role of an addle-brained vagrant prize-fighter, for he is simply terrible...." Curiously, Crowther was silent about the flowage. But in this author's humble critical judgment, the flowage performed gracefully, beautifully, and, one could even say, naturally.





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# Driftwood

The newsletter of the Turtle Flanbeau Flowage  
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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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