

Driftwood

Fall 2020 / Winter 2021

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

Flocking to the Flowage: Use Up in the Pandemic Year

By Beth Feind, Property Manager, Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area

The rumble was not thunder this summer but the sound of campers, fishermen/fisherwomen and recreationalists of all types firing up their vehicles to get to the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage Scenic Waters Area. As many locals saw and first-timers discovered, the flowage was very busy compared to previous years. I heard more than once from fellow WDNR employees, guides, and area locals that this was the busiest year they could remember for the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. I also noticed an increase in occupancy, throughout the season, of our WDNR boat-in campsites and use of our WDNR boat landings. From mid-June to Labor Day the landings would start filling up on Thursdays with campers, canoers/kayakers, boaters and anglers. My crew could tell when it was getting busy on the flowage because toilet paper would start to “fly off our shelves” to fill our boat landing bathrooms!



Summer visitors enjoy the waters of the TFF. Photo by Terry Daulton

Camping this year seemed to replace users' trips to Canada,

the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in Minnesota, or just to provide a safe and healthy place for people to forget for a moment about the world around them. On average, based on talking to users on the flowage or over the phone, it

seemed like we had about a fifty-fifty ratio of returners to first-timers. Many people I spoke to over the phone were coming to the TFF for the first time and for some, it was their first time EVER camping! Can you imagine the experience? Covid-19 diminished many aspects of everyone's life this year but it may have also pushed people, who normally wouldn't have, to experience the outdoors, seek solitude, and find a place to be thankful for and

recreate. All across Wisconsin, many state properties saw a significant increase in occupancy and day usage. My crew and I were gratified that so many recreationalists sought to spend their time at the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage.

The increase kept us busy cleaning bathrooms, moving pit toilets, mowing, and cleaning campsites. Surprisingly, the amount of trash at our campsites was comparable to that of other, less busy years. We did see an increase of dumpster usage at our landings, so we increased the size of our trash dumpsters and placed recycling dumpsters at all our landings. It seems that some canoers and kayakers

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President's Letter

By Randy Schubert

As I prepare this letter, the ice is starting to form on the smaller ponds in the area and snow is on the ground. The pier has been removed and the boats stored for the winter. It seems like just yesterday when the loons were making their annual journey back to the flowage to start another cycle of life, the chorus of frogs highlighted the sounds of the evening, and the leaves on the trees were emerging. The loons have since left for warmer waters, the leaves are long gone, and winter is knocking on the door. Another summer and fall on the flowage are in the books.



I have had the opportunity to spend more time on the flowage thanks to my employer and COVID. Beginning in April, I have spent the majority of my time on the flowage working from my cabin. I am probably working more now than when I was in the office – with the tradeoff of being able to spend my non-working time close to the flowage. I quickly realized after a long day of work that there is nothing like walking to the pier, stepping into my pontoon, and cruising around seeing and hearing the sights and sounds of this beautiful body of water. My Labrador retriever Boone probably has enjoyed being full time up here even more than I have. Having the opportunity to spend more time in the area and on the flowage has given me a much deeper perspective on and respect for the flowage and reinforced my confidence in the important role our association plays as stewards of this one-of-a-kind jewel.

The current pandemic has impacted all of us in one way or another—our social activities, family gatherings, or just how our lives have changed as a result of this once in a generation event. At times like these we are reminded of how the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and surrounding area is such an important recreation and therapeutic outlet for all of us. I think being out on the water and in nature can temporarily remove all the challenges and noise of current events and enable us to find a little bit of comfort and peace. These benefits of the flowage in times of stress are available

not only to those of us who have residences here, but also to friends and visitors who seek refuge and enjoyment here. In another section of this publication, Beth Feind, the DNR Property Manager, provides a column regarding the increased number of visitors to the flowage this summer--including many first-time visitors.

As with any volunteer organization, its success largely depends on its members. Our Association is no different. In order to remain viable and continue to carry out our mission, we need members to step up and participate in our leadership as officers and board members, as well as chairs of the various committees. I once again encourage and urge anyone who has an interest to consider being part of our leadership group or offering up some help with one of our work days. You would be surprised how personally rewarding it is, in addition to helping our association remain strong. As you continue through the pages of this newsletter you will see all the great projects we are currently involved in; please do join in.

One of my goals this year was to try and meet more of our association members. I met a few of you, always social distancing when necessary. However, there are still a lot of members that I have not met; and I look forward to hopefully having the opportunity to meet more of you in the future. For those of you that I didn't have the opportunity to meet this summer, perhaps our paths crossed while on the water with a friendly wave as we passed by on our boats on one of the beautiful TFF days this summer. I was the guy in the blue pontoon boat with my two co-captains, a black Labrador retriever and black chow proudly sitting on the bow of the boat as they took in all the excitement of being on the water and anxiously awaited their adventures on Swimmer's Island.

As I close this article I once again want to thank everyone who contributes to our association, whether it be chairing one of our committees or events, volunteering for a work day or just proudly having one of our association signs posted in your yard at or near the flowage. Hopefully in the not too distant future we can once again get together at our events, annual meetings, or perhaps be able to sit at a picnic table without having to be six feet apart with a return to some normalcy to our lives. Just as the loons, geese and osprey return every spring to this place we all love, one day hopefully our world will return to normal and we can continue to enjoy our awesome crown jewel. I hope everyone stays safe and has a great winter season, whether it be in a warmer place or hunkered down enjoying a winter in Wisconsin.



The Point Intercept Survey: Measuring a Weedy Water Wonderland

By Zach Wilson, Conservation Specialist,
Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department

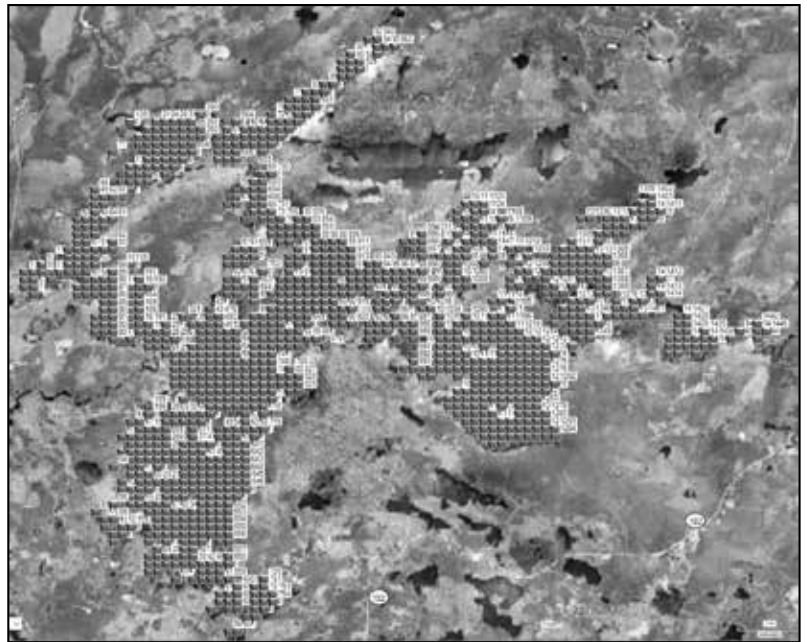
Hello and happy fall from the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department. Here's a mind-blowing activity for you as you sit in your warm cabin along the shores of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. Just imagine surveying 14,000 acres of water for aquatic plant abundance, diversity, and water depth. Well, mind-blown or not, we did it. In 2013 the department, with some support from WDNR, embarked on an expansive multi-year aquatic plant monitoring project on the flowage. The method we used is called a Point Intercept (PI) Survey. It is the standard method for sampling aquatic plants in a waterbody. When we undertake a PI survey, we must first determine the number and location of sample points. The size and complexity of the shoreline affect how we distribute the sampling points. One of the key objectives of this process is to accurately capture aquatic plant data in a way that allows for scientifically sound comparisons. To achieve that goal on a waterbody the size of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, we assigned 1445 points on a grid across the entire waterbody--excluding Trude lake, which is being treated separately.

The Point-Intercept method is considered the standard protocol for sampling aquatic macrophytes (plants) because it offers a methodology that is quantitative (e.g., frequency of occurrence), repeatable (can be used to track trends in aquatic plant communities over time), and geo-referenced (can be used to compare plant communities within different areas of a lake). From these data, a Floristic Quality Index (FQI) can be calculated for each lake that measures the diversity and health of the aquatic plant community. The FQI can then be compared to that of other lakes in our region.

Understanding the dynamics of aquatic plant populations in a given waterbody has become increasingly important because of the introduction and spread of numerous nonnative species, in particular, aquatic invasive species (AIS) that can profoundly affect a lake's ecosystem. Invasives such as curly leaf pondweed or Eurasian water milfoil, for example, can affect the aesthetics, drainage, fishing, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, flood control, human and animal health, hydropower generation, irrigation, navigation, recreation, and property values of a lake. Determining aquatic plant diversity and abundance helps lake managers identify the presence and possible spread of these non-native species.

PI surveys collect a variety of information at each point. The first step after finding the geo-referenced point is to

measure water depth. We then lower a long-handled double-headed rake directly below the boat. The surveyor turns the rake head 360 degrees to aid in plant collection. The rake is then carefully returned to the boat where the surveyors meticulously identify and record the various plant species collected as well as their abundance. A sample of each species is collected, pressed, vouchered and sent to



Point Intercept grid for the TFF

the Robert W. Freckmann Herbarium for permanent record. Plants that have floating or immersed vegetation are also observed and recorded (e.g., water lilies or cattail beds not collected on the rake but observed).

Results from this multi-year monitoring project will tell us about the frequency with which plants were found in water shallower than the maximum depth of plant growth (that is, how weedy the lake is), and it will tell us about the flowage's plant diversity. An index called the Simpson Diversity Index Value is used to measure plant diversity. This index considers both the number of species present and the evenness of species distribution. It also gives each waterbody a score ranging from 0 to 1. 1 represents infinite diversity and 0, no diversity. A high score indicates a more diverse plant community—a higher probability that two randomly selected plants will represent different species. Anyway, maybe I'm getting into the "weeds" too much trying to explain the process and methodology. The bottom line is that we carefully surveyed the flowage, and the process has been peer reviewed.

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Lost Lakes

By Chad McGrath

It was Terry Daulton's idea, first spoken in the spring, at our Driftwood planning meeting: a visit to "Donut Lake", a little lake on Big Island, with a circular bog island surrounding the lake's watery center, making it look like a donut in aerial photos. But then spring blossomed into summer and the trip never happened. During our fall Driftwood planning meeting, Terry revived the idea and we picked a date. The expedition included Terry Daulton, Mike Hittle, Jeff Wilson, and me. I felt honored being with three people who arguably combine more knowledge about the flowage than any other trio on the planet. Terry and Jeff graciously supplied the conveyance.

We embarked from near Fisherman's Landing. An invigorating 10-minute boat ride ensued. It took us beneath the imaginatively named Big Island Bridge which crosses over the shallow ribbon of water that confers island status to Big Island. A lone gull flapped its way across the water ahead of us, looping gently onto a reedy shallows. Soon the island loomed large on our left and Terry slowed the boat as she turned and headed straight into shore. Terry and Jeff discussed landing on the shore versus trying to fit the boat through the small channel visible ahead. Squeezing



Donut Lake's Bog Island Photo by Mike Hittle

won. The motor came up, a paddle was lifted and became a pole. With rocks lurking on both sides and the bottom, we made it through, without even a scrape. We were floating on Donut Lake.

A bit more maneuvering, motor up, motor down, paddle pushing, and we spied a landing spot. Terry guided the boat there, and we all clambered ashore and up a steep incline blanketed with slippery red pine needles. We quickly found a relatively flat spot to have our picnic lunch of sandwiches and cookies that Terry had made earlier.

We could see most of little Donut Lake from our lunch perch. Terrestrial plants, including tamaracks and a pine or two grew amidst the bog island that curved around on itself. Fallen trees and old logs were splayed here and there in the channel along with much emergent vegetation. The shoreline was steep on all sides, although it didn't rise more than 15 to 20 feet from the lake surface. The scene reminded me of an impact crater.

After lunch and some picture taking, we sort of slid down the bank on the pine needles and maneuvered back



Old trees, some fire scarred, on Lost Lake. Photo by Mike Hittle



into the boat. An effort was made to circumnavigate the Donut's channel, but a fallen tree prevented egress. With our voices calling out disparate directions, ignoring all, Terry performed a nifty, back up-go forward turn, and retraced our route out to the big water.

Our next and final stop was an unnamed lake on the other side of Big Island. But first we detoured slightly to pass close to Pink Rock for pictures. One of many locally named landmarks, Pink Rock isn't really pink, at least in most light. One suspects that given certain conditions and reflective sun angles it might indeed take on a pink tinge. But today it was gray.

Another 10-minute boat ride, a hike up, then down a hillside, brought us to the shore of Lost Lake, the smallest lake, on the biggest island, on the sixth biggest water body inside Wisconsin. A jumble of fallen tree trunks was piled up in

the water near shore. The 10 acres or so of open water in the middle was dotted with a few lily pads. The colors of fall pressed between forest green conifers stretched up the steep hillside beyond. Terry mentioned that some of the logs in the water looked charred. They perhaps dated to before this was a lake on an island, back to when fire swept through the slash, most evidence of which was now awash beneath flowage waters.

I find that whenever I'm on the flowage, I think about what's below me, not just the water, but the bottom. I wonder what plants once grew there, giant white pine, huge hemlock, delicate mountain maple, and how I'd be paddling through their branches were they still here. I thought about those ghost trees on our ride home, as our boat pounded through the waves. I wondered what it would've been like to walk home....

The Editorial Board of *Driftwood* is considering a possible series on little known haunts of the flowage. Suggestions welcome if you have a favorite out of the way special place you would like to share, we are hoping for more adventures AWAY from our desks and laptops!

Flocking to the Flowage

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had to test their arm strength and stamina on the busiest weekends. My crew was flagged down a few times to point the non-motorists in the direction of a possible open site after they had been trying for hours to find one. Although tired, they were usually successful or ended up back at the landing crafting a new plan. We hit full campsite capacity most weekends in July and August.

The fall and early cold temps seem to have put a blanket on things for now and use is slowing down... or is it? My calls for winter camping opportunities and questions on "How's the ice fishing up there?" have already begun! Either way; staying safe and healthy and enjoying what nature and the Department of Natural Resources can offer is a great way for the public to enjoy the outdoors, especially during a year like this!



Of Fish and Those Who Would Manage Them

By Mike Hittle

There is plenty of news about the flowage fishery, ranging from the spring 2020 tribal harvest to WDNR plans to re-deploy fisheries personnel. Let's begin with some important data relative to walleyes and then work our way to WDNR restructuring.

Tribal Harvest

As noted in the spring issue of Driftwood, the Lac du Flambeau and Bad River Chippewa tribes declared a harvest maximum for the flowage of 2,962 fish. That number represented 54% of the safe harvest figure established jointly by the WDNR and the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). In the two previous years, the tribe had declared at 94% on the flowage. The actual take this year by the Lac du Flambeau Tribe was 2,658 walleyes. I have not been able to find out whether the Bad River tribe took its full share of this year's declaration—250 fish.

Fall Young of the Year Survey

The Covid 19 pandemic made it impossible for the WDNR to carry out its customary spring walleye survey work. This fall, however, the WDNR and GLIFWC each covered two historic stations (routes) in search of young of the year (yoy) walleyes. According to Jason Folstad, Advanced Fisheries Technician, WDNR electro-shocking turned up the following results. On the station that runs from Lake Ten to the Dam (4.3 miles), the survey turned up 70 yoy per mile, and 13 yearlings (born in the spring of 2019) per mile. On the station that goes from Crow's Nest to Springstead (4.6 miles), the results were even better: 103 yoy per mile, and 13 yearlings per mile. According to Folstad, "Anything over 20 per mile of yoy's is good; the TFF averages 50-90 per mile. Anything over 10 per mile of yearlings is good; the TFF averages 10-30 per mile." He has not received the final data from GLIFWC for the two stations it covered—Big Island Bridge to Fisherman's Landing and Four Mile Creek up to Lake of the Falls—but preliminary conversations with GLIFWC personnel suggest that they had results similar to those of the WDNR. On balance, these are promising data.

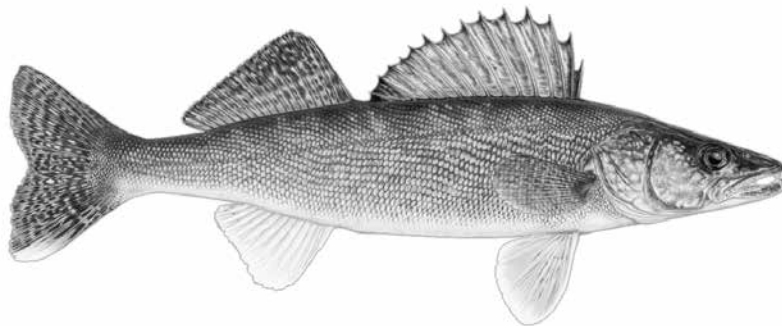
WDNR Walleye Management Plan Update

In late September, a WDNR press release announced the agency's intention to update its current walleye management plan. This initiative appears to be a logical next step after

the publication in May of 2020 of a "Review of Wisconsin Walleye Management Plan (1998)," which contained an exhaustive critique of the benefits and shortcomings of the 1998 plan. In the September release, Mike Vogelsang, WDNR fisheries supervisor, made the following case for a review. "The Walleye Management Plan provides direction to fisheries managers as they implement stocking practices, regulation options, habitat projects and other important factors used to manage walleye populations around the state. The current plan is over 20 years old and needs updating to reflect current science and technology for managing walleye and to address emerging issues and angler desires." Views of the public will be sought through a "public input form," "random mail/online surveys," and "regional virtual meetings with stakeholder groups." The first of these regional meetings took place on October 13. The Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake Property Owners' Association was represented by Jim Kohl, chair of our Fish Management Committee. Jim's report follows in the box at the end of this article.

All association members are encouraged to respond to an eight question WDNR survey about walleye management. Search: "Input to Wisconsin Walleye Management Plan

Update Survey." That should put you in touch with Survey Monkey. Or, use the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/QDRQ7Q9>



Fisheries Personnel

The COVID-induced state-wide freeze on hiring government personnel has made it impossible for the WDNR to bring on board replacements for the Iron and Ashland counties fisheries biologist (Zach Lawson took a post at Brule) and for long-time technician Jim Zarzycki (who retired: see article elsewhere in this issue). That has left Jason Folstad as the sole inland fisheries person for the two-county region. He has already set some priorities for the TFF for next year—COVID permitting. These include surveys of sturgeon, bass, and panfish—and possibly the reinstatement of the sturgeon watch on the Manitowish River. Jason will, of course need help in carrying out such an ambitious program. This fall, according to Steve Gilbert (Woodruff Area Fisheries Supervisor), staff and equipment from Woodruff and Park Falls made it possible to do the walleye recruitment surveys both on the TFF and on the Gile Flowage—more than had been done in 2019.



The Long-Run Structure of Area WDNR Fisheries Management

A recent, detailed communication to me from Steve Gilbert makes it clear that the WDNR is moving ahead with its plan to move the fisheries staff for Iron and Ashland counties to the Ashland Service Center. In early July, Jason Folstad was officially moved to Ashland, though he continues to work one day a week in Mercer, where his main responsibility is to prepare equipment and files for the move to Ashland. Gilbert has also secured approval for a new fisheries biologist for the two counties, and all the recruitment paper work has been filed for the position. When the hiring freeze is lifted, Gilbert expects to move promptly to fill the position. The new biologist will be stationed in Ashland.

Further, Gilbert notes that when hiring resumes, the department will also fill the limited term employee vacancy left by Jim Zarzycki's retirement. That person will also be assigned to Ashland. In sum, the WDNR plans to staff fisheries personnel for Iron and Ashland counties at the level that existed prior to the departure of Lawson and Zarzycki. The big difference is that the staff will work out of Ashland, not Mercer.

Gilbert informed me that this new configuration had its origins about four years ago when Iron and Ashland counties were added to five other counties under the supervision of Woodruff. The thinking behind this move is that the totality of WDNR resources within this seven county area can be brought to bear more efficiently in dealing with program needs than was previously the case; and he cites the assistance given to Jason Folstad in carrying out the fall walleye survey as an example. Gilbert is convinced that Iron County fisheries will see no decline in attention as a consequence of this new arrangement.

“In the future, we plan to continue to provide quality and timely service to the residents of Iron County. We will use the Woodruff area team, district, and statewide resources to see that this is accomplished. You have not lost what was provided in the recent past but rather gained the coordinated resources of four local work units. My staff and I look forward to working with you and the residents of Iron County in the future to maintain and improve the fisheries resources of Iron and the surrounding counties.”

The Mercer Ranger Station will no longer be the home base of fisheries personnel. Only time will tell whether this reorganization bears the expected fruits.

On Tuesday night, October 13, the WDNR held a regional, virtual, zoom meeting with stakeholder group representatives from Douglas, Bayfield, Ashland, and Iron counties to discuss an update of the state's walleye management plan. The meeting was facilitated by Max Wolter, WDNR Fisheries Biologist from the Hayward Office. Participants included eight members of the WDNR and more than a dozen members of the public. As the chairman of our TFFTL-POA fisheries committee, I was asked to represent our association. Other representatives with a focus on the TFF were Jerry and Christa Hartigan from Flambeau Flowage Sports, fishing guide Jeff Robl, and Marv Schilling from Donner's Bay Resort. Additional participants represented Lake Namekagon, the Eau Claire Lakes Chain, the St. Louis River, Chequamegon Bay, Hayward area lakes, the Gile Flowage, Iron River area lakes, and more. They brought a wide variety of perspectives, from those of fishing guides to lodging operators to lake associations.

Two other groups that will be consulted during this process are tribal communities and Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission(GLIFWC).

Comments, concerns, and questions covered a wide range of topics. The diverse kinds of walleye fisheries that were represented and the unique issues highlighted for each of them made it a challenge to voice all of the concerns we have regarding our TFF walleye fishery. Therefore, I recently sent a follow-up email to Max Wolter, listing our priorities.

- Declining walleye population
- No fisheries biologist for our county
- Almost no law enforcement visibility on TFF
- Potential for stocking on the TFF
- Currently only one fisheries tech for TFF
- Lack of larger fish
- Potential loss of our local Mercer WDNR office
- Impacts of a changing climate
- Lack of walleye survey data for 2020

Other concerns not walleye specific:

- Significant increase in TFF traffic in 2020
- Increased conflicts with trolling fishermen



Thanks for the Fish: Jim Zarzycki Retires

By Jeff Wilson

If you are out adventuring on the water or ice and stop for a little fishing camaraderie with fellow anglers a sure conversation starter is to drop the name “Hulio” and watch a conversation unfurl. From the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage to Saxon Harbor or Herbster on Lake Superior you will likely get the response, “Ya, I know him,” spoken with a hint of awe and perhaps followed by fish story. This winter, stories about Hulio may take a new turn as he has recently retired from the Mercer DNR Ranger Station and may well be out and about fishing even more than usual.

I personally don’t know of any human alive who has spent more time fishing, either professionally or recreationally. Hulio (Jim Zarzycki) told me he got his nickname from childhood friends who decided his unusual mix of Polish and Puerto Rican heritage deserved a name with a little more pizzazz than Jim. The name stuck!

Hulio started working for the WDNR Bureau of Fisheries Management at the Woodruff Fish Hatchery in 1987. He spent his career as a limited term employee (LTE), which meant that each year he had to be re-hired for his position. It is clear that he was an excellent and valued staffer as the five different fisheries biologists he worked under hired him 33 times!

When I worked as a wildlife technician out of Mercer I was lucky to work with Hulio fairly often. If the fisheries crew had someone out sick or on leave and they were short on help for field work I was the go to guy. Whether it was netting fish from the shocker boat at night or measuring walleyes from a Fyke net, Hulio was a spectacular guy to watch in action. You basically had to get out of the way and let him go to work, which he did with skill and efficiency. If something went wrong (Murphy’s Law) like a tangled net or a boat high-centered on a stump at 2 AM Hulio calmly dealt with the issue and got you back to the landing safely. Here on the TFF Hulio contributed to the installation of hundreds of fish cribs, winter and summer creel surveys, walleye and sturgeon radio-telemetry studies, several ten-year comprehensive fisheries surveys, and many years of running Fyke nets and electro-shocking to collect data for population and recruitment surveys. He worked on smallmouth bass dietary studies and a muskie genetic study. He also maintained boats, mended nets, fixed equipment, all with a twinkle in his eye and good humor.



James “Hulio” Zarzycki, left, and Lawrence Eslinger with flowage sturgeon.

With his vast knowledge of the fisheries he could have worked as a fishing guide when on furlough but he never wanted to fish for money. Fishing was too sacred to him, and he wanted to choose who he would fish with. A quality experience was his goal, not economic gain. He did, however, enter a few fishing contests and quite a few times finished among the top three positions. He was generous with his knowledge, providing tips and suggestions for less experienced anglers like myself.

Hulio grew up within walking distance of the Gile Flowage, and early on he learned that waterbody by heart. His WDNR work mostly took him to inland lakes in Iron and Ashland County, including the TFF. However, he would probably say that for many years his favorite fishing destination has been Lake Superior where he ice fishes in winter and trolls with his 21 foot cruiser during open water often out of Saxon Harbor.

All of us at the TFFTL POA wish Hulio good luck and great fishing in retirement. We have been privileged to have him on our team, and he will be hard to replace. Next time you reel in a fish take a moment to think about all the hard work that goes into managing fisheries resources and be thankful for dedicated people like Hulio who work for the public good. I, for one, thank him for his service and wish him the best!



Heather Berklund, Mercer Ranger Station Alumna, Named Chief State Forester

By Mike Hittle

WDNR Secretary Preston Cole recently announced that Heather Berklund would become the department's new Chief State Forester, effective October 12, 2020. In commenting on her selection, Berklund said, "the state forestry program has a long history of innovative, well-respected state foresters. I hope to continue this legacy moving forward by showcasing the value that forestry brings to both our state and nation."

Berklund, of course, is well known to area residents and to members of the TFFTL-POA. She served from 2002 until 2012 as Senior Forester at the Mercer Ranger Station where she managed a broad portfolio of responsibilities from private landowner outreach and management planning to forest management for numerous parcels of state lands, including the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area, the Underwood Wildlife Area, and the Moose Lake and Caroline Lake Natural Areas. Members of our association will certainly remember her for handling timber sales on state land in the aftermath of the tornado of 2010. Heather also contributed articles for Driftwood on such varied issues as post-storm forest management and the effects of harsh winters on our forest stands.

In 2012 Heather became a Team Leader/Supervisor for the Mercer and Mellen stations, a position she held until

2016 when she became the Woodruff Area Forestry Leader, supervising a six-county area.

Reflecting on her years at the Mercer Ranger Station, Heather had the following to say. "I treasure my time and memories serving the public in Iron County for the bulk of my field career. I worked with so many dedicated and passionate landowners, contractors, staff and partners that help contribute to the importance of sustainably managing our forests. I never take for granted the many days on snowshoes or swatting mosquitos, but more importantly the remote beauty and diversity and the passion and excitement of those I worked with to ensure we maintain a future healthy forest landscape."

A resident of Rhinelander, Heather will carry out her new duties from her office in that city. We thank her for her service in Iron County and wish her all the best as Chief Forester of the state.



The Mercer Food Pantry Needs Help

By Jean Burns

The Corona Virus Pandemic has affected all of us, some more than others. In the flowage area it has had a very negative impact for two groups in particular, the elderly and low-income families. The Mercer Food Pantry is a lifeline for those less fortunate people in need around the area. Unfortunately, the pantry has been challenged with the extreme escalation in demand. Before the pandemic, the pantry was open on Fridays for food pickup and would service around twenty families. Since the onset of the virus the demand has increased ten-fold. The pantry is now open Tuesdays and Fridays for pick-up. Some days they simply run out of product before closing. Workers at the pantry make direct food distribution to some elderly people and families who have no transportation on Wednesdays and Thursdays. As of mid-October, they were making approximately 225 deliveries in a week. In addition, food prices have gone up, making it even more difficult to meet the increasing demand. The pantry services a large area, as far north as Oma, as far south as Manitowish Waters, and over to Springstead.

With the holidays approaching, the pantry will be giving out food baskets to the many people and families in need. They also supply gift baskets to children that qualify with toys, coats, boots, etc. This year the amount of food, clothing, and toys required will be so much more than in the past years. Your help is definitely needed.

You can help alleviate this situation by making a donation to the food pantry. Checks should be made payable to the Mercer Food Pantry and sent to 5113 Black Lake Road, Mercer, WI 54547 or dropped off at the pantry itself in town, Tuesdays and Fridays 11:00 a.m. -1:00 p.m., or at the Town Hall. We hope you will respond to this worthy cause.



The Invasive Species War: A Report From the Front Lines

By Randy Payne

Purple Loosestrife

Results of the loosestrife survey were very similar to those of 2019. Areas 6, 7a, and 7b (From a little north of the Hideaway to a little south of Pink Rock) were the worst, with the Bonies Mound area coming in second. The other areas are in pretty good shape. The monitoring and eradication of the small infestations that pop up, and the workday eradications of the larger areas, are keeping it from spreading. We are seeing fewer older, seeding plants than before. Surveys of some of the smaller sites show no re-emergence of PL. The workday could not be a typical group gathering due to the COVID pandemic, but hopefully next year things will be different.

Zach Wilson and crew surveyed and hand pulled PL on the entire length of the Manitowish River from Hwy 182 to the flowage.

Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP)

As you may already know, CLP is present in our watershed, and is potentially threatening the flowage. It has become a serious problem in Rice Lake and has spread down the Turtle River as far as Pike Lake. Next downstream are Lake of the Falls, and then the TFF. Rice Lake is 125 acres in size, and the southern half is mainly 3-5 feet deep with a muck bottom that is prime habitat for the CLP. The Rice Lake association attempted eradication by hiring a private firm to come in with large suction machines and scuba divers, but this effort was not successful. This spring, Iron County Lakes and Rivers Alliance (ICLRA) organized a large group of volunteers to go out in canoes, kayaks, and small boats to hand pull the CLP using garden rakes and aquatic weed rakes.

A few volunteers from our organization joined the approximately 30 person CLP “army” for one weekend this spring. We went out in our boats and used garden rakes in about four feet of water, and dug the tines into the muck bottom, pulling the CLP out by the roots. The boats were loaded until they couldn’t hold any more, and then were off-loaded to a pontoon. Here is one of many boat loads before being off-loaded:

Certain areas were really bad, and required repeated efforts. The pulling went on for two days, and some volunteers came back the next week to pull some more. At least two large trailers were filled, containing dozens of garbage bags full. Next spring we will learn how effective the hand pulling army was!

The Rice Lake Association was awarded a three year, \$20K

grant for CLP monitoring and eradication. The grant paid for a private contractor (White Water Associates) to survey the Turtle River and Pike Lake. During the second and third weeks of June, volunteers, along with the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department, visited CLP sites and hand pulled all visible plants at said locations.

Although CLP has not been seen in the TFF yet, it’s not too early to be on the lookout, and report any sighting to Zach Wilson with the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department. CLP is identified by its lasagna shaped leaves approximately a half-inch wide and 2-3 inches long. There are many detailed descriptions on the internet.

Loon Survey

This year we added a new item to our purple loosestrife





survey, loon chicks! While surveying for purple loosestrife, we are now keeping an eye out for loon chicks, and noting their GPS coordinates. The addition to our survey protocol was well received and successful. The data are forwarded to LoonWatch, a citizen science program of Northland College in Ashland who monitor loon populations in Wisconsin. <https://www.northland.edu/centers/soei/loonwatch>.

In an average year, there are from 10-15 chicks fledged on the TFF, and this year we documented 19! As you can see on the map, loon families like to be spread out, with a minimum of 100 acres per family preferred.

Invasives Volunteers Needed

We did not get the entire flowage surveyed this year for PL. *Please consider volunteering for a section or two next year. The membership renewal form has a check box for invasive species, and if you check this, you will get an email about a month in advance with instructions. Thank you.*

Year of the Moose

By Jenna Malinowski, Wildlife Biologist, WDNR

This year has been filled with moose observations throughout the county and Northern Wisconsin. Iron County observations began with two bulls overwintering near Schomberg Park. Observations continued again in June with the first one being a rare occurrence of a cow chasing away a pair of bikers just north of Mercer. The cow was with a calf and was likely protecting it.

Shortly after, a single set of tracks was observed at the MECCA ski trail, and the observations haven't stopped since. I have received nearly 20 observations since June through videos, photos and word of mouth. September was a busy month with two bulls observed moving together on multiple occasions in the Springstead area and two single

bulls videotaped on the same night in two other locations; one on Hwy FF near Black Lake and one on Island Lake Rd. A single bull has called an area west of Manitowish home over the past couple of months. Another cow and calf—possibly the same two from Mercer, but not certain—were seen just a few weeks ago in Springstead. Using these and many other observations over time, I can assume with a fair amount of certainty that at least six individual moose frequent Iron County and maybe even call it home.

In 2019, for the second year in a row, Iron County has had the most reported observations statewide. It's likely that the majority of the non-resident bulls that frequent Wisconsin come from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Since the Wisconsin DNR doesn't currently have a webpage about moose, more information can be found by visiting the Michigan DNR's moose webpage:

https://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-350-79135_79218_79619_84917-256178--,00.html.

You can report Wisconsin observations to: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/mammalobsform.asp>.



P.S. Here are some tips for avoiding and/or surviving a moose attack:

Never approach a moose. Be aware that attacks mostly occur in the spring when cows have calves and in the fall when bulls are in rut. You should always keep your distance and run if charged. Hide behind a tree or other strong structure if the moose gets too close. If knocked down, curl up in a ball and protect your head and vital organs. Wait on the ground until the moose is a safe distance away before getting up and fleeing the scene.

Welcome to the Flowage: Its Future is Up to Us

By Diane O’Krongly

Welcome to the flowage. I hope this article inspires newcomers and long time property owners on the flowage and Trude Lake to become more actively involved in area conservation. This place is a jewel and credit is due to people who had a vision. The future health of the flowage continues to need people with a vision, and people who will step up and volunteer to keep the flowage safe. It’s up to you to get active. I’m not saying you have to single handedly save or protect the flowage. Small actions, if undertaken by enough people can make a real difference. It’s up to all of us to ask, “What I can do?” We are a community that can make that difference.

Invasive species are a major threat to the health of the flowage; purple loosestrife is already present. Volunteers from our organization have worked hard for years to prevent this plant from overwhelming our shorelines. Curly leaf



The Point Intercept Survey

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shallower than the maximum depth of plant growth (that is, how weedy the lake is), and it will tell us about the flowage’s plant diversity. An index called the Simpson Diversity Index Value is used to measure plant diversity.

This index considers both the number of species present and the evenness of species distribution. It also gives each waterbody a score ranging from 0 to 1. 1 represents infinite diversity and 0, no diversity. A high score indicates a more diverse plant community—a higher probability that two randomly selected plants will represent different species. Anyway, maybe I’m getting into the “weeds” too much trying to explain the process and methodology. The bottom line is that we carefully surveyed the flowage, and the process has been peer reviewed.

So now that I’ve gotten you all excited about the surveying methods and procedures, I’m sure you would love to know

pondweed is spreading down the Turtle River toward the flowage. Upstream lake associations need our help, and if we act now we can prevent its spread. Another invasive species found in lakes close by is the spiny waterflea. Other possible concerns are increasing noise and light pollution, and climate change. Climate change has the potential to affect water quality, water levels, and wildlife diversity.

What you can do to help:

- Join the TFF-TLPOA (visit TFFTL.org for more information)
- Attend the annual meeting in June
- Become a board member
- Volunteer to be on one of the following:
 - membership committee
 - invasive species committee
 - water quality committee
 - education and communications committee
 - fish Management committee
 - water level committee
- Visit sites to learn about lake health
 - tfftl.org
 - UW-Extension Lakes
 - Past copies of the TFF-TLPOA Newsletter

Also the membership committee would like your thoughts on how to motivate more property owners to actively participate with our lake association. Contact Diane O’Krongly at jeffokrongly@gmail.com with your suggestions.

what we found. For this I’m going to take you back to the beginning of this article and once again ...blow your mind. Remember, we collected data at 1445 points, a process that was only completed in August of 2020. Unfortunately, we are not yet ready to share our results. We are awaiting confirmation of vouchered specimens sent to the Freckmann lab.

What I can tell you, from personal knowledge during the survey, is that the flowage has a very diverse population of native aquatic plants, and it has very few non-native plant species. Besides the usual purple loosestrife, aquatic forget-me-not, and reed canary grass, our monitoring did not come up with any major threatening AIS. We can also tell you that several species were collected during the surveys that were state-listed “Species of Concern” or “Endangered.” All great things to report. Stay tuned for another article on our results. Until next time, remember to clean, drain, and dry your boats, and never move aquatic plants.



“Custodians or Customers” - What’s in a Word?

By Terry Daulton

I was probably five years old the first time I visited Watkins Glen State Park near my home in western New York State. Over 50 years later I can still recall the mysterious feeling of walking behind a waterfall, the slippery rocks and mist surrounding us. The smell was fresh but earthy and moist, like wet moss. My mother’s hand was firmly gripping mine, keeping me well away from the edge of the falls. During childhood, some of my fondest memories came from our annual family trips to parks like Watkins Glen, Letchworth, and Stoney Brook. Much like the Lake Superior region, western New York State has a wealth of beautiful waterfalls, cut through the glacial tills and shale, and many were protected public lands, set aside for visitors, a beautiful commons for us to share.

I am thankful that my parents loved the outdoors and visiting parks. As we grew up we visited National Parks like the Smokey Mountains, hiking the Appalachian Trail. We explored cypress swamps, beaches, and hardwood hammocks in state parks in Florida where my grandparents wintered. My first wilderness experience was in the Adirondack State Park, one of the first parks established in the United States.

In those days, people exploring parks were called visitors, a word that suggests the status of a guest. After college, I worked for eight years at Apostle Islands National Lakeshore where we also viewed our clientele as “visitors” and enforced codes of conduct for visitors that insured that the park would be protected for future generations.

The American idea of national parks was touted by author Wallace Stegner as our nation’s greatest idea. Parks were inevitable, he said, “as soon as Americans learned to confront the wild continent not with fear and cupidity but with delight, wonder, and awe.” Students of conservation

history are familiar with John Muir, Teddy Roosevelt, and other conservation leaders who fought to establish public lands whether as parks or multiple-use lands like National Forests. But the roots of parks go even farther back in American history, based on western philosophy in which humans are autonomous from and in control of nature. Thus, the idea that in a wilderness, or park, we would be visitors, rather than integral parts of the ecological system itself, is rooted in our psyche.

Several years ago I noticed a big change in the language we use around public lands and people here in Wisconsin. The DNR changed all signs and references to the public from “visitors” to “customers.” This shift in language suggested to me that the state’s view was changing and that the relationship of the public to our shared lands was becoming transactional. In my mind, customers generally get something in return for payment--an experience, good, or service. It is a business transaction. So I began to ponder what services Wisconsin customers receive from public lands. Is payment made in fish caught, views photographed, or clean air breathed into lungs?

What is the point of these ramblings you might ask? The truth is that both terms--visitor or customer--bother me. One the one hand, visitor suggests a temporary and perhaps even shallow connection with little personal responsibility other than avoiding damage to a place of value. Stop by, don’t break anything, and then head back where you belong. Customer, on the other hand, makes me think of a quid pro quo, I give you X and I get Y in return. The mantra “the customer is always right” rings in my ears and makes me

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“Custodians or Customers”

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wonder what responsibilities we shoulder for our public lands if we are the customers.

Since the year 2000, there has been scientific controversy over the proper label for our current geological epoch. Some have suggested that we have moved out of the Holocene (which began after the last ice age) and have entered a new epoch called the Anthropocene, an epoch named for the driving force of change—humans. Climate change certainly puts us front and center as major players in our planet’s ecosystems – which means that we are a part of our public lands and waters, not a customer or visitor.

In truth, I wish that we could come up with some new words for our state agencies to apply to the public, words such as stewards, guardians, or custodians. These words suggest an individual responsibility for protecting the lands and waters we all share. We could even look to our Native American neighbors for terms and a broader philosophy following their traditional approach in which people are an essential part of natural systems.

In proposing these alternative terms, I guess I am a bit of a dreamer and idealist. The fact is, when I visit the Apostle Islands today I

am still called a “visitor” and when I pull into the Park Falls DNR Service Center I dutifully park in the spot marked “customer”. I have a customer ID for my hunting and fishing license and my state park sticker. This summer we had lots of new visitors/customers in the Scenic Waters Area. I hope that they felt a bit of the awe and appreciation I had as a child

behind that waterfall at Watkins Glen. I am sure that most of them took care of the resources, and also left feeling that they had gotten their money’s worth whether they took home walleye filets, photos of beautiful sunsets, or even a meaningful journal entry.

That said, I do not want to abandon my dreams. As property owners here on the flowage we are all lucky to live amidst beauty and bountiful natural resources, even when the walleye bite is slow. Official DNR signs on the TFF may indeed refer to customers; but as someone who rightly calls the flowage “home” I would like to think of myself as a “good neighbor” to its lands and waters. I am sure that my fellow association members share this sentiment. We are much more than customers; we are doing our best to be stewards of the

commons, of these lands and waters we all call home.



Illustration by Terry Daulton



As “custodians or stewards” of the flowage, the Public Trust Doctrine plays an important role in our thoughts and actions. The following excerpt from a fact sheet by Wisconsin’s Green Fire – Voices for Conservation discusses the Public Trust Doctrine.

Protecting the Public Trust in Wisconsin’s Lakes and Streams Wisconsin’s Green Fire – Voices for Conservation

The Public Trust Doctrine is simply the idea that no one person can claim ownership over the bounty of the lakes and streams... that these are gifts to be enjoyed and cherished by all.

You may be surprised to learn that the early settlers in Wisconsin adopted a concept of common water resource stewardship very similar to the traditions of the native people. The European settlers learned the idea from British law which had roots in ancient Roman laws of water. They appreciated the benefits of the Public Trust Doctrine and so declared the navigable waters and the carrying places between them to “be common highways and forever free” for the use of all citizens.

Wisconsin’s constitution carries the same promise of shared rights for all people in the waters of the state. Wisconsin statutes and common law describe the rights to use lakes and streams for all types of boating, swimming, fishing and hunting, including protecting fish and wildlife, and importantly the habitat and water quality and quantity sufficient to support all of these uses. Wisconsin laws have consistently held that it’s the responsibility of the state to maintain this public trust for its citizens.

Since statehood, Wisconsin citizens have had a say in setting the types and amount of uses of their shared waters. Initially, they had to go to court to do so. Civil War veteran Frank Wade went fishing in a stream claimed by the private Willow River Club, was arrested, and won in court to ensure that everyone could fish in all streams. The legislature took on many decisions about individual uses as settlements grew and lumbering, milling and transportation began to intersect. By the early 1900’s, the pace of development and increasing number of decisions needed about water use led to the creation of administrative

agencies. The Railroad Commission was assigned water duties because many of the decisions still involved dams for milling proposed in waters also used for boat transportation. In 1968, the Department of Natural Resources was established and assigned to manage the uses of water resources, including physical modifications, hunting, fishing, water diversion, and disposal of wastes through discharges to waterways.

While the concept of shared public rights and responsibilities is simple, carrying it out in practice is a challenge. From streams you can step across to lakes you can’t see across, Wisconsin’s waters are diverse. Water uses ranging from tankers and barges moving cargo, to recreational motorboats,



Photo by Jeff Richter

jet skis, canoes and kayaks, fishing boats and hunting skiffs... from pristine natural shorelines to bustling urban waterfronts, makes for a complicated picture. Scientific knowledge about water and land use interactions, fish and wildlife ecology is constantly improving the basis for decisions. The Public Trust Doctrine provides a consistent set of factors for science based evaluation of water use proposals and ensures participation opportunities for all users.

Wisconsin’s Green Fire helps increase awareness of citizens’ rights and responsibilities as participants in this public trust. Its natural resource scientists and professionals want to assure that the people of the state and its decision makers have access to current science and practical solutions as they develop and carry out natural resource policy. Wisconsin’s Green Fire is committed to

the public trust in Wisconsin’s waters, the idea that no one person can claim ownership over the bounty of the lakes and streams... that these are gifts to be enjoyed and cherished by all. For more information visit <https://wigreenfire.org/2019/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/wgf-public-trust-fact-sheet-april-2019.pdf>





Driftwood

The newsletter of the Turtle Flaubeau 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.

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