



Driftwood

Spring / Summer 2021

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

Turning 25 – Cake, Candles and Opportunities

By Terry Daulton

In *Driftwood* (Fall 2012) Mike Hittle wrote the following about the founding of our association: “Under the leadership of Paul Gottwald, a retired DNR Area Director, and Maryann and Rod Brown, flowage resort owners, 25 flowage residents gathered on June 8, 1996, to bring into being the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage-Trude Lake Property Owners Association, Inc. Those present approved a set of By-Laws for the organization; elected a slate of officers and board members; and set annual dues for members at \$15 dollars per year. By July 23 of the same year, the association had a bank account, with a balance of \$363.63, and a post office box, #631, in Mercer.”

This spring/summer marks 25 years since that first gathering. Through the intervening years many volunteers have contributed to the growth of the organization and work in support of its mission, “...to maintain, protect and enhance the quality of the lake and its surroundings for the collective interest of members and the general public.”

Birthdays can be a time for reflection. A trip down memory lane might bring to mind any number of association efforts, such as Jim Leever’s member opinion surveys, training of water quality volunteers, chili feeds, work days and sore backs from construction of hundreds of fish cribs, or magical evenings at Lake of the Falls helping with walleye watch, a program to keep poachers away from walleye spawning beds below the falls in spring. Perhaps you recall the presentation on our US Geological Survey-led water quality study, or slogging through the



wetlands doing invasive species control (i.e., digging soggy purple loosestrife). We have provided education to our members in the form of annual meeting speakers and newsletters, and more recently we promoted the association through driveway signs, Facebook and the website.

Perhaps you recall divisive public policy issues — town meetings when we spoke in favor of personal watercraft and fireworks ordinances.

Maybe you helped craft comments on motor trolling, trail plans, or fisheries regulations. We have partnered with the DNR, Xcel Energy, the Natural Resources Foundation and local NGO’s as well as the TFF (business) Association on projects from wildlife tours, to osprey platforms, to wildlife and fisheries surveys. How about the 2010 tornado or the historic drought with the ensuing water level conflicts and challenges that face a waterbody with a dam and ties to our electric grid?

If you visit our website at tfftl.org and look to the tab Association Projects, you might be surprised by the length of the list. As Margaret Mead so famously stated, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

But before we blow out the 25 candles on the cake and sit down to celebrate, maybe it is time to ponder the next 25 years. Our membership has trended toward an older demographic, with retirees and second home owners making up most of our volunteer base. How might this change as new people move to our area? We are seeing more visitors for boating and camping, especially since Covid, but they may have less outdoor savvy and be in need of and open to our educational resources. How can we reach new user groups and new partners? Perhaps it is time for the association to conduct another member survey to assess what projects and interests are most important to those living and recreating on the TFF today.

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President's Letter

By Randy Schubert



When I received an email from our Communications Committee with a request for the spring summer *Driftwood* President's letter, I asked myself, where has the time gone? It seems like just yesterday we were in the midst of a sub-zero cold spell,

wind blowing and temperatures hovering in the 30 degree below zero range. Now its early June. As we slowly work our way out of the pandemic, hopefully we all can start to see some type of normalcy returning to our life. The flowage area wildlife is already moving forward. I saw my first baby fawn yesterday close by its mom. The geese are already proud parents as they closely watch their young goslings swimming in formation on the flowage and the loons have brought back their haunting calls. Another chapter has started on the place we all love; the Turtle Flambeau Flowage.

This year is also special to our association, since we are celebrating 25 years since its creation. We are truly grateful for those who had the foresight to create our association and

other groups that share our goals. Over 200 members strong, our association has grown and will continue to promote the stewardship of the TFF and Trude Lake. We should all be proud of what our association has accomplished since its inception!

During our most recent board meeting the topic of invasive species took center stage. Every year there seems to be growing concern about invasive species. Invasive plants have already established themselves in some lakes near the flowage, an alarming situation as fishermen move boats from one lake to another. Our association has an opportunity to increase our leadership, preventing the spread of invasive species to the flowage. We already have an invasive committee which has combated purple loosestrife. However, our association will need to respond to new threats. We need to work with other organizations, including the WDNR, to improve invasives signage at boat landings, to assist with funding boat washing stations, and to increase educational outreach. We can and will face this challenge and make a difference. I would like our association to be a leader and model for other lake associations on what can be done to slow, stop and prevent these threats.

As I conclude, I would like to thank everyone who has been so supportive of our association, whether participating in a work day, chairing a committee, posting a TFFTL POA sign in front of your property or just being a great steward of this wonderful place we all enjoy and love. So I look forward to another summer and hopefully being able to meet more of our members. Let's all work to continue the tradition that our founding members started 25 years ago. It's now our turn to create a legacy, so in 25 years the next generation will be able to reflect on the good work we have completed.

Thanks, Carl Pilch, for the Years of Service

Carl Pilch, long time maintenance staff person for the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area, retired this spring. While he declined an interview for *Driftwood*, our association would like to extend heartfelt thanks for his years of service to flowage visitors and residents alike. His many hours working to improve and maintain our landings, trails, campsites, signage, and docks made all of our experiences in the Scenic Waters Area more safe and enjoyable. We wish him the best in retirement!

Silver Linings in New Staff

Although many TFF enthusiasts will miss seeing WDNR staffer Carl Pilch passing by in a boat or visiting at the landing (see related article on his retirement), the silver lining in this staff change is that the new Scenic Waters Area maintenance staffer, David Schmidt, is well prepared for the job. Last summer, in preparation for Carl's retirement, the WDNR hired David Schmidt to work with Carl, so he learned the ropes (and rockbars) of the flowage. David is now working on campsite and landing maintenance, as well as the many other tasks required to keep the TFF safe and scenic. David is a long time TFF enthusiast, having fished here for decades. He brings a strong maintenance background, from his roots as a farm kid to his career in power plant maintenance in the Green Bay area. He is living at a cabin on the Merkle section of the flowage for the summer. When asked what his favorite thing about the flowage is, he said "fishing!" Welcome aboard David!



David Schmidt, new WDNR staffer.

Photo credit, Terry Daulton



Woes, Wardens, and Metrics

By Mike Hittle

As we reported in our last issue of *Driftwood*, the summer of 2020 brought large numbers of people to the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area in search of activities with minimal exposure to the Covid 19 virus. A vacation on the flowage brought these visitors a welcome respite from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, and, for many of them, an introduction to the joys of outdoor recreation that has carried over into the current year. Those of us who know the flowage well can take pleasure in knowing that the refreshing powers of its waters and shores had such a beneficial impact on so many.

But the story is not entirely a positive one. In his comments at the TFSWA stakeholders meeting of March 24, 2021, and in a follow-up conversation, Warden Matthew Meade noted that the high level of usage of the property came with an unexpected cost: disruptive and unlawful behavior by some people who were either ignorant of or outright disrespectful of the ethical norms users of the flowage have traditionally exhibited. These problems included people setting up campsites in advance of actual occupancy; camping “off the grid;” camping on sites closed for repair; stealing items that ranged from tents to fishing and camping gear of every sort; and at Murray’s Landing, breaking into parked cars belonging to hunters on the opening day of the waterfowl season. Meade attributed these actions to “new, different types of users.”

This type of unruly behavior, whatever its cultural causes may be, poses yet another challenge for those entrusted with law enforcement on our lakes and in our forests. The number of wardens statewide remains limited by budgetary constraints, and, more recently, by pandemic-related hiring restrictions. The current web page for the WDNR’s Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection (a title only the WDNR could come up with to add a bureaucratic layer between its personnel and the public) states that there are “no open conservation warden hiring processes.” In short, Wisconsin’s warden resources are thinly stretched and not likely to expand significantly in the near future. By way of example, it might be noted that Warden Meade was hired initially to serve southern Iron County. He has, however, been transferred to Boulder Junction to replace a retired colleague there. He now serves both western Vilas County and, until (or if?) a replacement is hired for the Mercer Ranger Station, southern Iron County.

There was a time, within memory, when natural resources law enforcement received a boost from the seasonal assignment of “credentialed” (meaning they had the power of arrest) rangers to areas of particular need. For a number of years, rangers patrolled the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake, checking on campsite use, monitoring boating activities, checking fishing licenses, and the like. Dennis O’Brien, one of the longest-serving

rangers, gained a welcome reputation as a helpful presence during the busy summer months. Now, however, the WDNR has eliminated the credentialed ranger program in its entirety. Any Limited Term Employees that the agency may be hiring for this summer at the flowage will not have any law enforcement responsibilities.

The allocation of scarce resources is never easy. In the case at hand, it seems the WDNR has settled on a “metrics-based” system to justify the allocation of resources. Where once a warden fielded a complaint and then went out and handled it, today wardens must first log in all calls for service, record the nature of the complaint and assign it a priority, and then report the eventual outcome. At year’s end, the agency examines these records, determining how many actions were initiated by wardens and how many by the public and what the outcomes were—all in an effort to determine which locations are most in need of law enforcement resources.

This system has its merits and is certainly not capricious; but it also has its limitations. As Warden Meade points out, calls for service from Iron County as a whole have never been numerous—in part thanks to poor communications. And when it comes to the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage, there are relatively few property owners, relative to the size of the area, to monitor and report potential infractions, and summer visitors are not inclined to interrupt their vacations to call wardens. As a consequence, Iron County is clearly at a disadvantage under the current system of metrics.

It could be argued that the intrinsic value of a natural resource—along with its level of fragility—ought somehow fit into the formula by which law enforcement resources are utilized. Indeed, the special features of the flowage that were so clearly articulated by Governor Thompson at the time of its purchase by the state speak compellingly for adequate protection by the WDNR. For the moment, however, that does not seem to be the case. We are left with our pens and paper to communicate our concerns to WDNR officials and legislators; and with the WDNR tip line: 1-800-TIP-WDNR or cell #367. And we are left with our state’s understaffed but dedicated warden force who are doing their best to protect the public’s invaluable resources.



Reflections on the Flowage Fishery

By Jim Kohl, Chair, Fish Management Committee

It's been nearly a hundred years since the dam on the Flambeau River was built to create this 14,000 acre body of water we enjoy today as the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake. I have been able to spend time fishing and exploring these waters for more than 50 of those years.

When I started fishing the flowage in 1967, I was here for the elusive musky. The flowage has always had a low-density musky population, with an above-average number of big fish, including some that have exceeded 50 pounds. Despite heavier fishing pressure, musky fishing during the past 20 years has been better than it was during the preceding 30 years, primarily because of the catch and release ethic that started to emerge in the 1980s. My pursuit of muskies did not prevent me, however, from enjoying some excellent walleye fishing--both open water and ice fishing--back then.

Most of my fishing on the TFF really started in 1972 when I bought a 1967 Ford Country Sedan station wagon. Back then, two people could sleep in the back of a full-size station wagon! At that time, if you stood at Fisherman's Landing and looked south toward the big water and east toward Shinebeck's point you would see 40 or 50 old dead trees sticking up as much as a dozen feet above the waterline, just across the old river channel from the landing. A few dozen of those stumps remain in the area, but all were sawed off at the waterline, during a low water period, eliminating the danger for snowmobilers. Those stumps served as protection for minnows, an important forage source for walleyes. There were very few smallmouth bass in the flowage at that time.

During the past 50 years, most of those dead trees were gradually lifted by the shifting winter ice, until they eventually lost contact with the bottom, and drifted to a nearby shoreline. At that time, there were bays in the flowage, especially in the big water to the south, where these horizontal floating stumps accumulated and created a layer you could nearly walk on, coming out 50 yards or more from shore. They offered tremendous cover for walleyes. Fishermen in those days would ease up to the edge of these



Jim Kohl with a trophy musky.
Photo credit Jim Kohl

log jams and drop a minnow or crawler alongside of or between the logs. Fishing was excellent. Some of those logs, the more buoyant ones, can still be seen adrift during high water periods. Most of this "wood" however, is gone now, having deteriorated along the shorelines.

The loss of wood is but one of many changes to take place in the flowage, which has, as its name suggests, never stood still. Different fish species have waxed and waned in numbers and popularity, posing ever-shifting challenges for the management of the fishery by biologists from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. While each species represents an important link in the food chain, including minnows, suckers, and crustaceans, the overall focus of the WDNR has been on gamefish species--walleyes, muskies, small mouth bass--and lake sturgeon. That

work has been complemented by a survey of forage species like cisco and a recent panfish assessment. But there can be no doubt that walleyes have held center stage as the most studied and most attentively managed species.

During the past 25 years, our association has worked with the WDNR on many cooperative ventures. Regarding fisheries projects, the most noteworthy partnership took place in the late nineties and early 2000s. The WDNR fish crib habitat project was started by the department in the late 1980's by then fisheries manager, Dennis Scholl. Shortly after, our association, under the encouragement of then president, Arlen Wanta, joined in partnership. The WDNR and members of our association built and placed over 400 wooden fish cribs throughout the flowage and Trude Lake. The idea was to replace some of the wood that was no longer in the basins and deeper channels, thereby increasing the protective habitat for forage species and young gamefish. Initially, when only a hundred of these cribs had been placed, in four or five areas, they were magnets for fish--especially crappies. Concern's emerged that the cribs concentrated the fish, and that these populations were negatively impacted by exploitation from fishermen with good GPS electronics who could easily locate the cribs. After placement of over 400 cribs the association and WDNR discontinued the



program.

While the crib project was the most visible partnership our association has undertaken with the WDNR, there have been many others. Our association has had a “voice,” a seat at the table as it were, with the WDNR when flowage-related research, surveys, and bag and size limit changes were being proposed. In the process our association has surveyed our membership on their priorities, and the results of those surveys were shared with the WDNR. Some of the current fisheries management plans were influenced by that input.

In 1975, the WDNR estimated the walleye population in the flowage to be around 125,000. Today, those estimates are around 35,000. So there were far more fish back then, and the average size was also larger than today. There are many factors that are responsible for this. In 1975, fishing electronics were basically flasher style locators from either Lowrance, or Allied Electronics (Humminbird). Most of us fished out of 14 foot aluminum boats with 10 HP outboards. We actually used oars a lot! Not so today.

Pressure on the walleye population from improved boats and fishing tackle certainly has impacted the success of hook and line anglers during the past 45 years. In 1975 the estimated adult walleye density was 7.9 fish per acre. As recently as 2009, densities were estimated at 4.1 per acre.

Another factor impacting the walleye population includes tribal harvest. Tribal harvest in the ceded territory started in the 1980s. In recent years, tribal harvest from the flowage has generally ranged from 2,500 to 5,000 fish annually. It should be noted that the size structure of the fish harvested by the tribes closely aligns with the size structure of fish harvested by anglers. Also of note, the tribal harvest is considerably smaller than the hook and line harvest.

Additionally, habitat changes, like loss of woody habitat, have surely played a role in the declining walleye population. But other possible explanations, including competition from other species, have not survived scrutiny. Competition from smallmouth bass has had limited impact on walleyes. Both species have coexisted in hundreds of lakes in the United States and Canada for over 100 years. The flowage is a very low-density musky fishery, and it has been stable for the 50 years I have fished here. So muskies can't be seen as contributing to the declining walleye population.

While there are valid concerns about aquatic invasive species, such as Eurasian water milfoil and curly-leaf pond weed, none has yet had an impact on the flowage fishery or water quality. But, in time, I believe we will be impacted by both.

The TFFTLPOA regularly monitors key areas of the flowage for water quality and there have been no significant discoveries of water quality changes or concerns.

It's most likely, then, that the declining walleye population is due to fishing and spearing harvests! Similar declines have been noted on other important walleye fisheries: the nearby Minocqua Chain; Lac View Desert; Lac Des Mille Lacs and Rainy Lakes in Minnesota; and

several large Canadian lakes. To combat declining walleye numbers Canadian provinces like Ontario offer nonresident anglers a less expensive “conservation” license. This license is designed to reduce the number of fish that visiting anglers can harvest. It is primarily designed so anglers will only harvest that which they can eat during their visit. Other lakes have been designated as “consumption only” lakes. These programs will help insure a long-term sustainable fishery.

Most of these declines in walleye numbers are being addressed with studies and data collection, followed by restrictive regulation changes, in some cases zero bag limits for specified periods of time. In the case of lakes that addressed these declines many years ago, walleye populations rebounded significantly. Rainy Lake is a classic example. Its history shows that over-exploitation of the walleye population can occur in a lake as large as 227,000 acres—and that appropriate measures can help to restore that population.

Beginning in 2015, the WDNR and Zach Lawson, then Iron County Fisheries Biologist, determined that the no-minimum size limit would not result in a sustainable high quality walleye fishery. Lawson took the lead in developing and securing the approval of more restrictive walleye regulations: no walleyes under 12 inches could be kept, and only one fish greater than 15 inches could be kept, per angler, as part of a three fish bag limit. The goals were to reduce harvest in general, and specifically reduce harvest of spawning females. It's likely the regulation changes have been beneficial, but future surveys will be necessary to determine if that's true. Unfortunately, the Covid 19 pandemic negatively impacted the WDNR's population data collections in 2020.

Because walleyes are highly sought after for fish fries, it is understandable why more restrictive regulations would be challenged by many. But, ultimately, without adequate protection, I fear the walleye population will be over-harvested and fishing will cease to be productive.

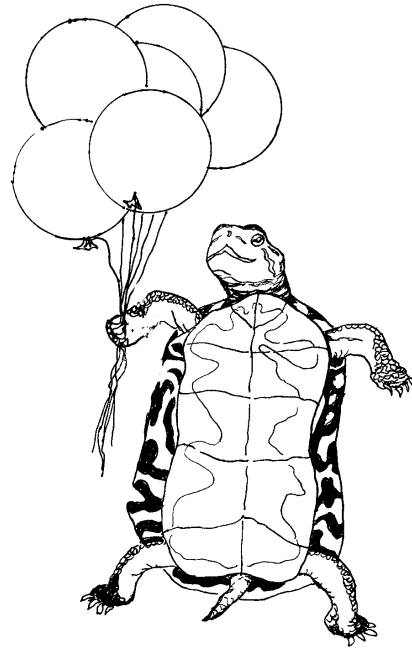
While I applaud the recent TFF walleye regulation changes, I am quite certain that more restrictive measures will be taken in the future to guarantee a sustainable quality fishery! I am hopeful the TFFTLPOA will play a role in those changes.

If you would like more detailed information on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake walleye fishery, I encourage you to read the following WDNR report: *“The History of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage Walleye: Maintaining a Sustainable Fishery Through a No-Minimum Length Limit.”* Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Fish Management Report No. 155, January 2015. By Lawrence Eslinger, Fisheries Biologist —Woodruff and Zach Lawson, Fisheries Biologist — Mercer.

In addition to the information in the above report, you can find dozens of other reports on the WDNR website if you search Turtle-Flambeau Flowage.



25 Years - People, Projects and Progress



2017 Purple Loosestrife Volunteer Day.
Photo by Terry Daulton



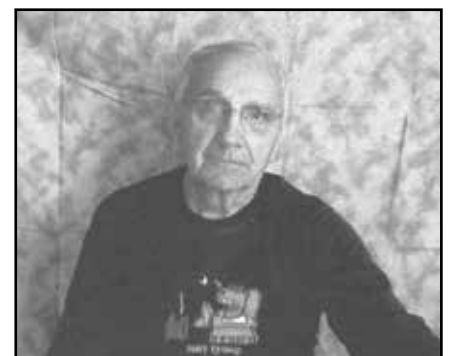
2007 USGS Plant Crew.
Photo by Terry Daulton



*Second Association President,
Arlen Wanta.*



*Association Chef, Arnie Popp,
serving up lunch.*
Photo by Terry Daulton



Founding President, Paul Gottwald.





Legislator Janet Bewley visits the flowage.

Photo by Mike Hittle



Fourth President, Jeff Malison.

Photo by Jeff Malison



Third President, Maryann Brown.



Newsletter team.



Fifth President, Randy Schubert.



Long term board member and treasurer, Tom Mowbray.



Third President, Terry Daulton.

Photo by Jeff Wilson



Water Quality training with WDNR.

Photo by Terry Daulton





Summer water levels during drought, 2007.
Photo by Terry Daulton



2011 Fish Cribs ready for placement.
Photo by Terry Daulton



2018 work day.
Photo by Zach Wilson



Volunteer crew touring with Janet Bewley.
Photo by Mike Hittle



2010 tornado damage.
Photo by Terry Daulton



Mel Yeakle working on fish cribs.



Fishery research.
Photo by WDNR



Toil on the Turtle

By Jenna Malinowski, WDNR Wildlife Biologist



Jenna Malinowski
Photo credit, Terry Daulton

Wildlife staff will be busy this summer working on multiple projects throughout the county and in particular on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage (TFF). Although some projects have been put on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions, we do plan to conduct as much work on the flowage as we can.

In 1980, WDNR staff began annual loon/waterfowl surveys on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage. In 1990 the survey was shifted to once every five years, and in 1995 other bird and mammal observations were added to the survey. These data are valuable as baseline information and were used in documentation needed for supporting state purchase of the property. Over the years wildlife staff have used these data to drive management objectives and will continue to do so in the future. Because of Covid-19 restrictions, the 2020 survey has been put on hold until 2022.

Invasive species management will take place at Big Island, the Little Turtle Flowage, and boat landings

around the TFF. Wildlife staff will be targeting spotted knapweed, sweet clover, reed canary grass, invasive cattail, and other identified invasive plants. Staff will place warning signs at entrances of each location for a 24-hour period when herbicides are used. Cattail at the Little Turtle Flowage will be mowed during a three-day period after the wild rice growing season. Lastly, wildlife staff has committed a week to pull or chemically treat purple loosestrife within the flowage and along the Manitowish River in August.

A trail improvement is in the works at Deadhorse Grouse Management Area. Since the southernmost trail is often inundated by water, parks and wildlife staff have identified a separate “trail” to maintain. In 2020 the trail was cleared by a forestry mower and cleaned up by ICORE volunteers in 2021. Forestry staff will be bulldozing the final section, and clean-up and seeding will follow. The timber sale further east will be completed by the spring of 2022 with clean-up to follow along the trail and decking area.

This spring parks staff, forestry staff, and MECCA members assisted wildlife staff in planting 200 red and burr oaks on the Little Turtle Flowage. Parks and wildlife staff continue to water the trees and will be scheduling a date to place tree shelters and supports to individual trees. Trees are 3-8 feet tall and are looking great!

Lastly, wildlife staff secured funding from the Natural Resources Foundation to enhance waterfowl habitat and safety on the TFF. Fish staff have placed buoys and signage to reduce wake in areas of concern. Reducing wake in these areas will increase safety of users, reduce shoreline erosion, and improve walleye spawning conditions. Wildlife staff will begin habitat work later this summer on islands where waterfowl nesting conditions have been negatively impacted by woody vegetation or lack of grassy vegetation. Clearing and/or seeding of these islands with native grasses and forbs should improve nesting conditions and augment brood production.

Please feel free to call with questions, concerns, or if you’re interested in volunteering for the wildlife program in the future. Jenna Malinowski: 715-562-0017.



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Or, the board might undertake a strategic planning effort to creatively consider ways to be more relevant and effective. Those who have worked on planning might shudder at the idea of SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, but let's at least consider the more positive of these planning efforts – opportunities.

Opportunities exist in a number of directions. For example, electronic communications are increasingly the go-to method for citizens to learn about natural resources and engage in their community. Our association could leap forward into the Twitter sphere, and evaluate which electronic tools would be most effective for our group. If this idea gives you a queasy stomach, consider another aspect of electronic communications. As internet access improves in Iron and Price Counties we are seeing an influx of new owners who may be working from home and taking advantage of the rural lifestyle. How might the association create programs to attract these new residents?

On the natural resources end, invasives like curly-leaved pondweed, now found in the Turtle River watershed, or Eurasian milfoil or garlic mustard found elsewhere in Iron County pose a higher threat than in the past. As more visitors are attracted to our waters, we might consider installing boat-washing stations at landings to help prevent the spread of invasives to the flowage and other area lakes. The presence of such stations might also strengthen our partnerships with other lake associations in our watersheds. Climate change may have increasing effects on fisheries, water clarity, and water quality, but we could do some planning to prepare adaptation and resilience strategies.

Towns are looking to prepare for changing conditions, from installing and expanding culverts and channeling storm water runoff to installing solar panels. Perhaps there are opportunities we could seek to help our communities work towards a zero carbon future.

An important milestone to note is the upcoming revision of the WDNR Scenic Waters Area master plan. The property has been re-assigned to the state park system; and in the next two years, the original master plan for the flowage will be revised, incorporating new ideas on recreational facilities and focus. One of our founding members, Maryann Brown, was on the first master plan committee. Our association has an opportunity to play an important role in this next planning effort.

So, it's almost time for cake! Before you blow out the candles one more plug.

During the 2020-21 Covid outbreak it was a challenge to meet and discuss the important work of the association. But we learned some lessons, not the least of which is how to use online technology. As we begin to contemplate safely gathering again we might embark on an adventure together, looking to our past accomplishments and discussing our goals for the future. We can reach out to new residents and visitors, new partners, use new technology, and create new programs that meet the association's mission as well as engaging the hearts and minds of those who love the flowage. For best results, we will need to hear from all our members and share the effort and the fun of working together for a common good.

So Happy Birthday TFFTL POA! May you have many returns of the day. Let's blow out those candles, take a bite of something sweet and make a TFFTL POA bucket list for the next 25 years.

Happy Summer Everyone

By Zach Wilson, Iron County Land and Water Conservation Specialist



*Purple loosestrife work crew,
Photo credit, ICLWCD*

These are exciting times. Summer!! Renewal, Resurrection, and Rejuvenation. I do not know about you but this spring the word rejuvenation hit home a little more to me than in years past. To say the least, last year was a bit crazy and unpredictable. Thankfully, regardless of our human issues with a pandemic, mother nature still moves on with its primal rituals; the loons are back and already sitting on eggs, the walleyes are done spawning and my little Phoebe has returned to nest under the porch again.

Springs' rebirth and renewal also prompts me to renew my commitment to the wonderful volunteers of Iron County. I would like to thank you both for

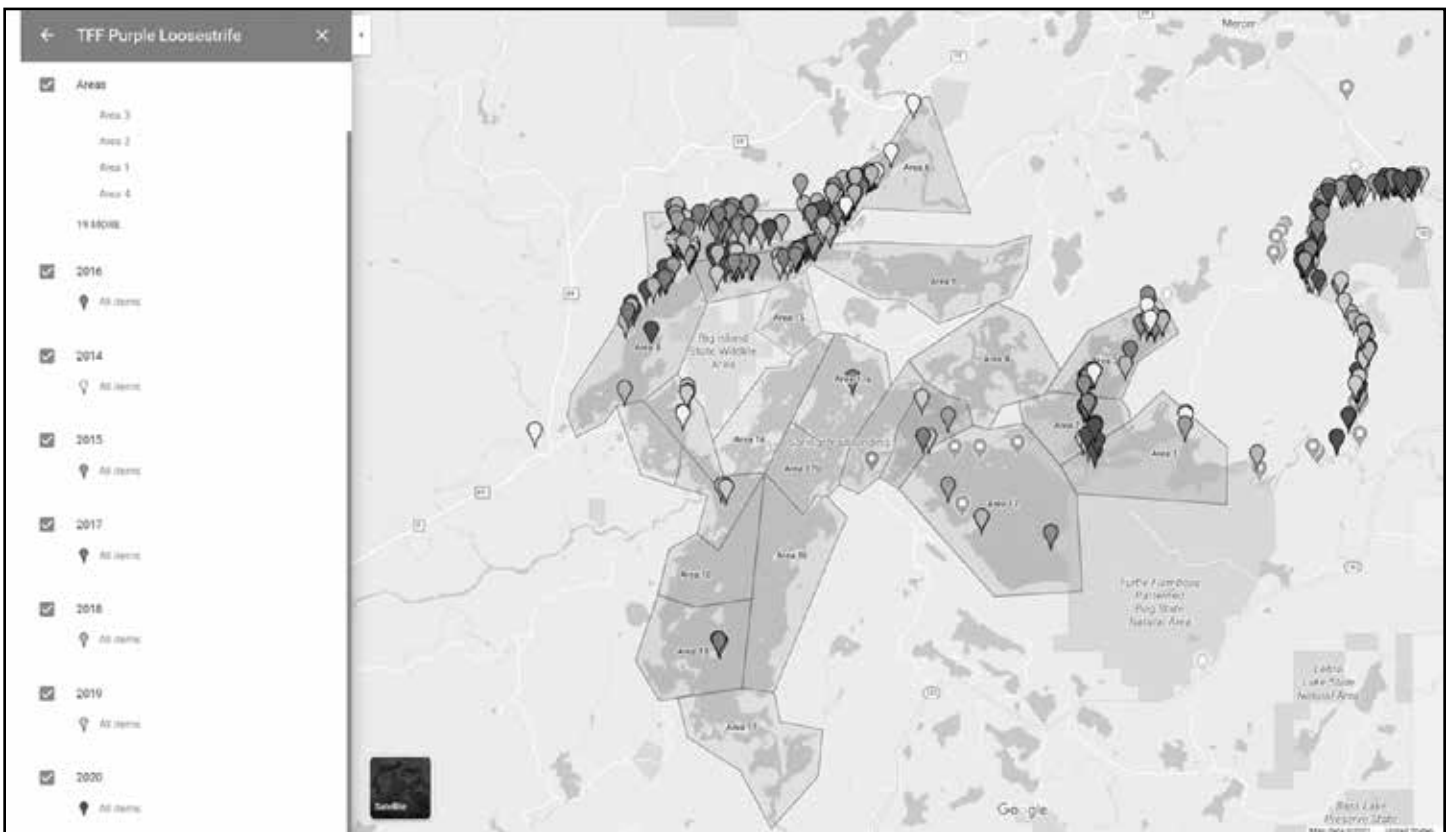


your interest in Iron County’s land and water resources and for your time and service in monitoring invasive species and water quality. When looking back through the records, I noted that we have been monitoring water quality on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake at the six US Geological Survey designated sites for over 12 years now (with earlier year’s tracking fewer sites for the waterbody). Keeping long-term records of biological data is extremely important for documenting ecosystem changes; and lately, it sure seems like we have had our fair share of erratic weather: early ice outs, late ice outs, warming water temps, cooling water temps.... These long-term data help us determine the difference between natural change and change that might be caused by humans. Consistent data collection over time also helps us see patterns and react to or correct any activities that might be effecting adverse change. When dealing with new populations of invasive species, it is this reaction time that can make or break our efforts to control a species. Take for example the many years of purple loosestrife control on the flowage: 22 years give or take a year or two. I remember hearing my father talk about when purple loosestrife first showed up on the flowage in the early 1990s: “If I had known how bad it would get, I would have spent more time at controlling that small population on the Manitowish River near the Ding-a-ling.” Oh--how hindsight is 20/20. This does not mean all our efforts were futile, but it does underscore the importance of education, understanding the threats to ecosystems, and long-term data collection.

Since 2015 Randy Payne and I have been collecting more detailed purple loosestrife data and mapping it. Though our monitoring and control methods have changed a bit over the years, we are starting to see our efforts to control this species pay dividends. I have said this many times over: dealing with aquatic invasive species is not a sprint but rather a long-distance jog.

While last year’s Covid -19 pandemic sure put a wrench in our monitoring efforts, this year the program is back in full swing. Volunteers collecting water quality should be trained and have all the equipment needed to continue collecting samples. Volunteers ready to monitor and pull purple loosestrife should communicate with Randy Payne and sign up for further instruction. In addition, we will continue to monitor aquatic invasive species on the flowage and conduct watercraft inspections through the Clean Boats Clean Waters program. We are excited to announce that we have hired four new summer staff with financial support from the County Conservation Department, Wisconsin DNR’s Lake Monitoring and Protection Network Grant, and Excel Energy.

We think that it is important to maintain a line of communication with our volunteers and be there if anyone has any questions or concerns. Iron County has roughly 494 lakes and 222 named rivers; without volunteers like you, it would be impossible to monitor the health of our lakes and rivers.



Purple loosestrife locations. ICLWCD





Driftwood

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

EDITORS: Terry Daulton/Mike Hittle
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SECRETARY: Todd Jirous

TREASURER: Tom Mowbray

DIRECTORS: Jean Burns/Mike Hittle/
Ed Hryciuk/Jim Kohl/Diane O'Krongly

— *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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www.tfftl.org and search under "CONTACT US"