Turtle Flambeau - Trude Lake

Property Owners' Association, Inc.

November, 1998
Volume 3 Number 2

Words from your president

— Paul Gottwald

I'd like to report on three items:

1. In our last newsletter I talked about attendance at meetings. Let me report that we had good attendance at our last Board of Director's meeting. We will again send announcements of board meetings to all members. I encourage you to attend.

2. We have attained "tax exempt status" from the IRS for our organization. What this means is we are exempt from paying taxes on our income.

3. I want to recognize the D.N.R. employees who so willingly contribute articles to our newsletter. They have always responded whenever we have asked for articles. So, a big THANK YOU.

If you ever have questions or comments about what we are doing — please give me a call or drop a note (PO box 631, Mercer, WI 54547, phone 583-4461). We need ideas, comments and participation from all members.

Water Quality Committee Joins DNR's Self-Help Lake Monitoring Program

— by Jim Leever

Arlen Wanta (Association Water Quality Committee chairman) accompanied by Jim Leever, began measuring dissolved oxygen levels and water clarity on the TFF as part of the DNR's Self-Help Lake Monitoring Program. This state-wide program is part of a DNR effort to learn more about Wisconsin's 14,927 lakes. We, of course, are most interested in "our lake." Our objective is to get into water quality testing on the TFF, and what better way than to join a program already set-up by the DNR. As a result of our testing efforts, the DNR will provide the Association with annual summaries of the data we collect. These summaries will be shared with our members through the newsletter.

Through this program, the Association hopes to expand to include additional tests of TFF water for the DNR, and to move forward on a plan for more comprehensive water analysis. Why all this concern for water quality? Because water supports all the things that make this area so special. Increased boating pressure, both on the TFF and its up-river neighboring lakes, together with development in the area, has brought changes all around us. Monitoring and maintaining the quality of the water is essential to the environmental health of our flowage and the wildlife it supports. We all have a stake in protecting it!

What's happening in the TF Scenic Waters Area

by Roger L. Jasinski
DNR Property Manager

Water Levels

It's been a beautiful summer and fall on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage — except for one thing — lack of rain. For the year we are 7.51 inches below normal. While the sunny dry weather has been great for outdoor recreation and it has kept the bug population down, it has been hard on our water levels.

On September 4, 1998, Chippewa and Flambeau Improvement Company notified us that even though they were releasing only the minimum required flow from the Turtle Dam, water levels on the Flowage were dropping at a rate that might make it necessary to drop below the four-foot maximum summer drawdown. A little rain slowed the rate at which water levels were dropping and as of October 7 the levels have only dropped to 1,568.2 feet Mean Sea Level (MSL). The summer minimum is 1,568.0 feet MSL.

Since October 7, the level has come up a little to 1,568.4 feet MSL. However, we definitely need significant rain if the Flowage is to be refilled by ice-up. The power company intends to continue to maintain the minimum outflow at the dam but the weather needs to cooperate. September was 2.19 inches below normal for rainfall and so far for October we are 0.76 inches below normal.

Water Quality

During a review of potential water quality monitoring sites, Water Quality Specialist Craig Roesler, identified the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage as a waterway for which we lacked background water quality data. He therefore did some water quality sampling this past summer.

Five sites were monitored monthly from May through September. The five sites included Trude Lake, Lake Bastine, Bonies Mound, Horseshoe, and the big water just south of the dam.

May samples were tested for calcium, chloride, chlorophyll, color, conductivity, pH, alkalinity, hardness, magnesium, total Kjeldahl nitrogen, total phosphorus, sulfate, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and Secchi depth. June through September samples were tested for total phosphorus, chlorophyll, color, Secchi depth, pH, temperature, and dissolved oxygen.

Complete results have not yet been received from the lab. A full report will be prepared this winter after all the results are back.

Enforcement

I want to thank the Property Owners Association for their help in getting the word out about laws against using receptacles at boat landings for household garbage. While we still had a few violations, the problem was much, much reduced from previous years!

One problem that still persists to some degree, is campers cutting trees for firewood. If you see or hear chain saws being used on DNR lands we would definitely appreciate a phone call. Sometimes the saw you hear might be our maintenance crew, but you never know when it might be someone illegally cutting your favorite tree across the lake!

Boat owners surveyed for no apparent reason . . .

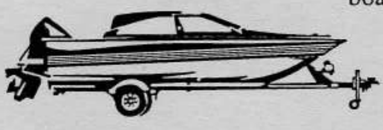
by
Roy Riverburg

Off-Kilter

Notes from the world of weird

In our continuing quest to leave no public opinion poll question unasked, we bring you a Boating magazine survey that says 13 percent of boat owners wouldn't jump overboard to save their spouse.

However, 25 percent would dive in to save a hat.



And 66 percent think women who like powerboats are prettier than women who like sailboats.

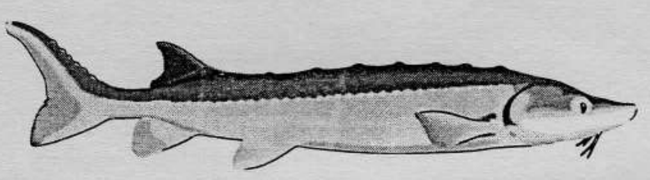
Another key finding: 28 percent of boaters say they would buy a cologne named after a fish.

Fisheries Management notes

by
Jeff Roth
Fisheries
Biologist

Lake Sturgeon Project Summary

In the late 1980's, the Mercer Fisheries Staff initiated a project to gain information on the status of lake sturgeon in the Flambeau Flowage. In 1990, an investigation of the Manitowish River fish population, which sturgeon were known to inhabit, was completed. Results of this base survey dictated the need for further investigation regarding the sturgeon population. In 1991, project funds allowed an in-depth radio telemetry study to commence. Four sturgeon were captured in the Baraboo area of the Flowage and tracked over the next 18 months. Based on what was learned from the movements of those fish, six additional fish were captured and implanted with radio transmitters. These fish were captured in the Benson Lake area on the Manitowish River and in the Flowage proper during 1993. Observations of these additional implants provided insight into the seasonal movements and behavior patterns of sturgeon in this system.



Sturgeon appear to utilize most areas of the Flowage on a seasonal basis. We have tracked fish in the Lake Ten and Rat Lake areas as well as the Baraboo region. We even monitored a fish moving downstream through the Flambeau dam. Spawning movements are triggered sometimes a year in advance of the actual spawning process. Fish migrate 20+ miles upstream through the Manitowish River and spawn upstream of Benson Lake. Although the spawning act occurs, we have no evidence that clearly indicates that reproduction is successful. This may be due, in part, to the unusually late time of year and associated warm water temperatures at which they spawn or high predation on eggs or fry in the river.

During the initial three-year study (1990-1993) period, a total of 32 sturgeon were captured and marked with an aluminum dorsal tag. This has facilitated identification of fish as we continue the study which was recently renewed this year. Telemetry technology has improved during the last few years which has allowed us to expand the battery life of the transmitters from 18 months up to 33 years. Project plans call for an additional 12 adults to be implanted to further our understanding of behavior and habitat needs while the ongoing sampling and marking of fish will enhance our knowledge, relative to the total number of the adult sturgeon in this population.

Increased knowledge of spawning movements has also enabled us to artificially culture young of the year sturgeon in 1994 and 1998. To date, a total of 113,000 fry, 11,877 fingerlings and 14,700 large fingerlings have been planted as a result of these efforts. Stocking took place at several locations which provided spawning-type habitat where these fish will hopefully imprint for future return as reproducing adults.

As our knowledge of sturgeon in this system expands and the appropriate management is implemented, I'm optimistic that the future of lake sturgeon in the Flambeau Flowage system will be secure over what is now considered a remnant population.

Wildlife Observations of the Less Common Critters

by
Bruce Bacon
Wildlife
Biologist
DNR, Mercer

Now that fall is here and many of you are spending more time in the woods, you are likely to encounter wildlife that normally we do not see very often. Our larger predators can be quite secretive. Other wildlife are so rare we seldom are in the right place at the right time to get a glimpse of them. Then there are the tiny creatures that may even be underfoot but hidden by vegetation, rocks, or woody debris.

What do you do if you see something you think is rare and unique? First, is it really rare or just the first time you have seen one? Moose, wolves, bobcats, pine martens, goshawks and trumpeter swans (especially with neck collar numbers) are rare enough to excite the local wildlife manager when he

Survey

Many of you are aware there has recently been a great deal of interest in development occurring on Wisconsin's shorelands. The following questions were posed to the Wisconsin Conservation Congress by the DNR's Bureau of Fish and Aquatic Habitat. The Department of Natural Resources would value your input on shoreland protection rules! The Department is working with legislators, WAL and other special interest groups to begin a dialogue on possible changes to shoreland rules (NR 115). If there is enough interest to pursue changes, the DNR will consider a public hearing process.

We are asking for your opinion on these five ideas to improve the statewide minimum standards for shoreland protection. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to the WDNR. Simply fold this page so that the mailing label is facing out, put a stamp on it and drop it in the mailbox. Please feel free to send any written comments, as well.

(1) Current standards prohibit "clear-cutting" of "trees and shrubbery" within 35 feet of the water, except for one 30-foot corridor for every 100 feet of frontage.

Do you favor eliminating loopholes so that no cutting, brushing, mowing, raking, or burning would be permitted within 35 feet of the water (to re-establish a buffer of native vegetation), except for one 30-foot viewing and access corridor per lot, and except for approved habitat restoration plans?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(2) Current standards allow lots in sewered subdivisions to be 65 feet wide and 10,000 square feet in area.

Do you favor eliminating the provision for smaller lots on sewered subdivision so that any new lot, whether sewered or not, would be required to be at least 100 feet wide and al least 20,000 square feet in area?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(3) Current standards "grandfather-in" nonconforming structures that existed closer to the water than 75 feet before the ordinance went into effect, but suggest a cumulative expansion/renovation cap equal to 50% of the assessed value of the structure.

To ease enforcement and tracking, do you favor replacing the cap based on assessed value with one based on square footage, and setting an absolute limit on how large a nonconforming structure can be?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(4) Current standards allow boathouses to be built directly on the water's edge, one of the few exceptions to the 75-foot setback requirement.

Do you favor requiring new boathouses (storage garages) to be at least 75 feet from the water?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(5) Current standards allow some new buildings to be placed less than 75 feet from the water, based on the average distance from the water surrounding buildings.

Do you favor eliminating this practice, so that all new buildings would be required to be at least 75 feet from the water?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Your assistance is important to all of us. Thank you.

Wildlife Observations

Continued from previous page

receives a sighting! Even the occasional cougar or mountain lion sighting is worth noting however unlikely it is that we have a natural population out there. While often it is a mistaken identity or less often a real cougar of unknown origin (an escaped or leased "pet"). We are still interested in hearing about these sightings. Wood and blandings turtles are worth reporting, being on Wisconsin's endangered and threatened species list. The 4-toed salamander is likely out there, but how many of you actually count the toes on the salamanders you encounter?

Somewhat secretive but relatively common critters include fisher, black bear, barred owls and broad-winged hawks. Their habits may be such that we do not have the opportunity to see them very often. This is especially true of nocturnal species. One of the most common woodland species out there is the redback salamander. How many have you seen lately? We do not need reports on these more common wildlife unless they are involved in some unusual circumstances.

Tracks are something that we can go out and look at and possibly verify a rare sighting. With all the "cougar" sightings across the state, it is interesting how the 100-pound-plus cats never leave any footprints in the snow that blankets our landscape for five months every year. If you do find the tracks of a rare critter you can photograph them with something in the picture for size reference. If so inclined, you can make a plaster cast of the track. You can also mark the location and cover the tracks with leaves or bark to protect them and report them to your local DNR folks. We can't always get out to look at the tracks, but when we can, we do try to.

Mistaken identity is more often than not the result of an investigation into a rare critter and/ or track investigation. At least three different times in my career I've run out to pick up a "hawk" only to find it was a ruffed grouse that hit a window. Another time, upon reaching the location of an abandoned "baby eagle" we found a young broad-winged hawk, about one-tenth the size an eaglet would have been. Another incident involved cougar tracks that were bear tracks. The list goes on. . . we still want to get the rare sightings, but don't be surprised if you get quizzed intensely as we try to make sure of what you've seen.

Another frustrating part of this business is the frequent inability to locate a track or dead critter because of poor directions. Mark the location with a rag or something that can be seen easily and give good directions. Measure the mileage to the nearest road intersection. What works best is when the observer meets us to show us what they have found.

Who do you report sightings to? If you are fortunate enough to see a rare critter you can contact me at 476-2646 or send a note to D.N.R., 3291 State House Circle, Mercer, WI 54547.

The Domestication of Wisconsin's Shorelands

by Paul Cunningham

Taken from *Lake Tides* Volume 23 No. 4 Fall, 1998

*Recently, an EPA-funded study on the effectiveness of Wisconsin's Shoreland Zoning standards (*Wisconsin administrative code *NR 115) in meeting its statutory objectives was completed. This article and enclosed survey reflect actions taken as a result of that study.*

NR 115 . . . What is it?

Wisconsin's Shoreland Management Program (NR 115) is a partnership between state and local government. The Program requires development near navigable lakes and streams to meet statewide minimum standards. Shoreland zoning jurisdiction lies within 1,000 feet of the shore of lakes, ponds and flowages, within 300 feet of rivers and streams, and within floodplains. Counties must adopt ordinances which meet or exceed the minimum state standards. The administrative rules which implement the state shoreland program were developed in the late 1960s. They are based on a combination of the best available scientific information, best professional judgement, and the feasibility of implementation at that time. The rules for lot width minimums, restrictions on vegetative cutting, and building setback distance create a buffer intended to minimize disturbances to water resources and preserve the natural beauty of our lakes, rivers, and streams. With the exception of the wetland protection provisions added in the early 1980s, the rules have essentially remained unchanged.

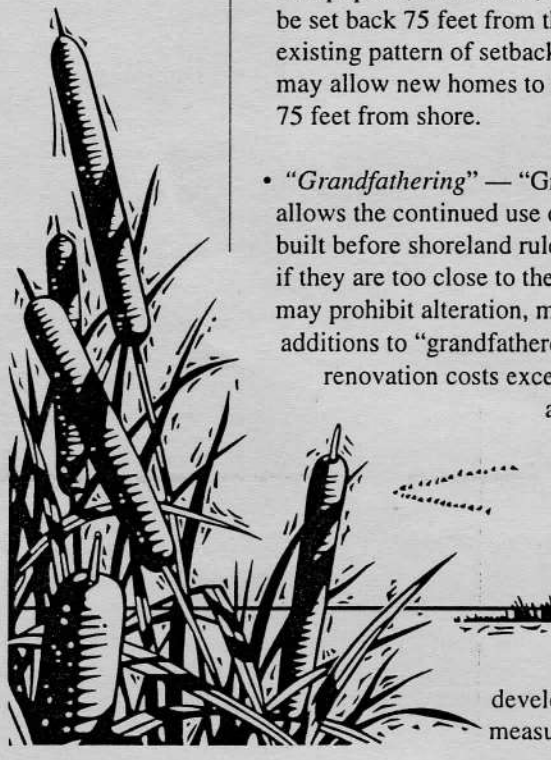
Current development trends pose major challenges to the shoreland management program. Waterfront development is booming in northern Wisconsin, with property values increasing up to 400% for some counties. In southeastern Wisconsin, most lakes larger than 10 acres have totally developed shorelines;

much of the development took place before shoreland zoning rules went into effect. Homeowners and visitors seek out lakes and rivers as places to enjoy natural beauty in a quiet setting, yet the sheer number of users and owners can create conflicts and put pressure on limited resources. The scarcity of prime waterfront lands means that areas once passed over for residential development, because they were too steep, too wet, or too rocky, are now being developed.

Key Standards

Four major aspects of the rules are designed to control density of development and create a protective buffer of vegetation along public waterways.

- *Lot size* — Sewered lots must have a minimum average width of 65 feet and a minimum area of 10,000 square feet. Lots not served by a public sanitary sewer must have a minimum average width of 100 feet and a minimum area of 20,000 square feet.
- *Buffer Strip* — Clear-cutting of trees and shrubs is not allowed in the strip of land from the shore to a point 35 feet inland, except for a 30-foot-wide path down to the water.
- *Setbacks* — All buildings and structures, except piers, boat hoists, and boat houses must be set back 75 feet from the shore. When an existing pattern of setbacks exists, counties may allow new homes to be built closer than 75 feet from shore.
- *"Grandfathering"* — "Grandfathering" homes allows the continued use of homes that were built before shoreland rules were enacted, even if they are too close to the water. The county may prohibit alteration, major repairs, or additions to "grandfathered" homes if the renovation costs exceed one-half the assessed value.



Are the rules working?

- *Water Quality* — Recent trends in shoreland development have had measurable impacts on water quality, particularly due to increased runoff and poor vegetation management practices. Phosphorus and sediment entering our lakes has greatly increased with recent suburban-style developments occurring around lakes.
- *Loss of shoreland vegetation* — Clearing trees and shrubs eliminates protective buffer strips along waterways. Studies show that understory trees and shrubs are reduced to very low levels along developed shorelines.
- *Loss of shallow water habitat* — Studies show that increased development can reduce critical shallow water habitat. For example, clearing live, dying, and dead shoreline trees and shrubs eliminates a source of habitat that would otherwise fall into the water. These "tree-falls" can provide habitat for many years to come.
- *Loss of aquatic plants* — Removing plants eliminates valuable habitat for a whole host of critters, like fish and frogs. Recent information shows that green frogs and their habitat would be essentially eliminated from lakes developed to their maximum under the current rule (52 homes per mile of shoreline).
- *Loss of songbirds* — Songbird surveys show that development has altered species composition of birds. The impact is greatest on the less common songbirds that migrate to the tropics. Some of these neotropical migrants are of special concern due to their recent population declines. The common suburban-style birds like blue jays, crows, goldfinches, and grackles were more abundant on developed lakes. The current rule permits habitat alteration and this affects birds. Large-scale lakeshore habitat changes will place some of our less common songbirds at a greater risk.

What are the problems with the current rules?

The greatest weaknesses identified in the rules are clauses that are difficult to interpret and enforce, forming loopholes that frustrate the intent of the law.

- *Loopholes in the no clear-cut rule* — The intent was to create a 35-foot buffer around waters. However, if one tree is left standing and the rest is lawn, the owner is in compliance with the letter of the law.

Wisconsin's Shorelands

- *Exemptions to the 75-foot setback*
  "Grandfathered" homes — To be fair to folks who built homes before the rules went into effect, the rule "grandfathers" in existing structures that are too close to shore. The rule sets restrictions on expanding them. Unfortunately, the rules for how much expansion is permitted are based on cumbersome formulas involving the assessed value of the structure, and the process is poorly understood by the public. As a result, limits on expansion are either poorly enforced or when they are enforced, are extremely controversial.

- *Setback averaging* — The rule allows for new homes to be built at the average "setback," where there is an existing "pattern of development." But the rule didn't anticipate lakes or rivers entirely surrounded by year-round homes. Setback averaging has a "leap-frog" effect, allowing construction of new homes to avoid the 75-foot setback rule.

Continued

- *Boathouses* — Boathouses are exempt from setback requirements. While this may have made sense in the days of heavy wooden boats, today's lightweight aluminum and fiberglass craft can more easily be stored away from the shore during the off-season. Many boathouses are not used for storing boats but have become a way of legally building a structure on the immediate shoreline.

- *Small lots in sewered subdivisions* — Many of the problems from development come from runoff, not sewage. Just the presence of buildings and pavement where there used to be trees, grasses and shrubs can have some drastic effects on the water. Smaller lot sizes and widths in sewered subdivisions increase the overall loss of shoreland and near-shore habitat. With that in mind, trading sewers for more lakeshore homes is a poor deal for our waters. Over half the counties in the state already have larger lot sizes for sewered subdivisions.

So, that's the story on shoreland zoning. We have some decisions to make that need to balance the opportunities of today's society against the possibilities of tomorrow's.

We seem to be slowly but surely losing the very things that draw us to our lakes and rivers. Many folks concerned about the future of Wisconsin's waters believe there is a window of opportunity to revise the shoreland protection rules so our legacy of lakes and rivers may be carried on.

Purple Loosestrife Update

by Jeff Wilson

1998 Survey

The second annual purple loosestrife survey was conducted from August 1 to August 15.

Purple loosestrife is a beautiful flowering plant that originated in Asia and was brought to this country as an ornamental flower. Unfortunately, since purple loosestrife has no natural insect predators in this country and little competition from native plants, it can easily spread and overtake wetland areas. The result can mean the elimination of natural native aquatic plants that wildlife depend on being replaced with a monotype of purple loosestrife.

A purple loosestrife-dominated wetland supports little wildlife as few wildlife species feed on loosestrife or use it as nesting material. Waterfowl such as ducks, geese, swans, bittern, grebe, black terns, and furbearers such as muskrat will be reduced in population numbers after loosestrife takes over a wetland.

Small numbers of purple loosestrife have been found on the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage since 1985. This year's survey found plants in the Baraboo Lake bed area and on the Turtle River channel below the mouth of Little Turtle River. All plants were removed or herbicide was used.

Plants were also found in Lake of the Falls and in the Manitowish River near Highway 47. These two sites are inlet sources to the TFF so the threat persists.

The 17 survey routes will be surveyed again next year between July 31 to August 15. Survey participants are needed, so please mark your 1999 calendars today. A route takes between 1 to 2 hours to complete. Sign-up sheets, route maps, and information packets will be available at next summer's meeting or you can call Paul Gottwald at 715-583-4461 for sign-up and information.

Many valuable wetlands in southern Wisconsin have been lost to purple loosestrife. Our counterpart, the Chippewa Flowage near Hayward, has a severe problem with it. Our Association's effort, in cooperation with the DNR, can prevent a problem from occurring.

Thanks to everyone who cooperated in this year's survey. It's important we continue the effort next year.

Purple Loosestrife Update

(Continued)

The following information was taken from the Northwest Herald, the newspaper of McHenry County, Illinois. The article was written by Dean Weaver of the Herald staff.

Beetles get busy fighting nuisance weed's purple reign

Foreign, plant-eating beetles have not received much in the way of good press lately.

Grabbing most of the attention has been the Asian long-horned beetle, which has been boring its way through the beloved hardwoods of several Chicago neighborhoods.

But lost in all the beetlephobia has been a little brown beetle named galerucella, which is smaller than a lady bug.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources officials are praying the leaf-eating weevil will save collar-county wetlands because it gnaws on purple loosestrife, a European weed over-running northern Illinois wetlands.

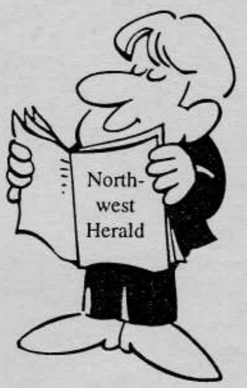
Since 1994, there have been slightly more than 1 million beetles raised and released into state wetlands. About 250,000 of the beetles have been released at 19 marshes in McHenry County. Only Lake County has had more beetles released with 341,250.

The beetles originally are from Europe and have been raised in the United States to combat the weed. Other states, such as New York, Michigan and Minnesota, also have been raising and releasing the beetle to kill the plants that thrive in the wet marshlands of the northern United States and southern Canada.

Illinois released 1,000 beetles into the county in 1994. This year, about 106,000 will be released.

"There have been many wetlands compromised and some severely," said Robert Wiedenmann, an associate professor at the University of Illinois at Champaign and a specialist in biology control.

Those wetlands include Weingart Road sedge meadow near McHenry, several areas along Chain O'Lakes and the Fox River, Moraine Hills State Park and even areas where new homes have been built, such as Woods Creek in Crystal Lake.



"Our concern is the plant could spread to other housing developments and city parks," Wiedenmann said.

Although the loosestrife plant is admired for the dozens of purple flowers that can be seen on the tip of its wiry stem during July and August, it is choking out the cattails and other native plants in Illinois' marshy meadows.

The beauty of the plant, also known as lythrum, makes it popular among gardeners. State officials, however, have banned the sale of loosestrife in Illinois.

Still, a nonreproducing variety of the plant continues to be sold.

"Very few insects feed on loosestrife and when they go so do the yellow-headed and red-headed blackbirds, the marsh wrens, dragonflies and muskrats," Wiedenmann said.

Although loosestrife has been a problem in the county for a decade, Wiedenmann said it is getting worse. The plant lives through fires, floods and herbicide sprayings. The beetle may be the only effective way to control the plant.

"The beetles feed on the plant and stop it from flowering, which stops it from producing seed," Wiedenmann said. The beetles do not feed on other plants.

The loosestrife problem has grabbed the attention of the McHenry County Conservation District officials and Crystal Lake City Council members.

Wiedenmann said the conservation district has released 10,000 of the beetles raised by the Department of Natural Resources. Crystal Lake also is considering ways to combat the plant.

"It may get to the point that we may want an ordinance requiring developers to make sure their land was free of purple loosestrife," Crystal Lake council member Tom Hayden said. "Right now, there are areas in the city where it is getting bad like along Huntley Road near Wedgewood."

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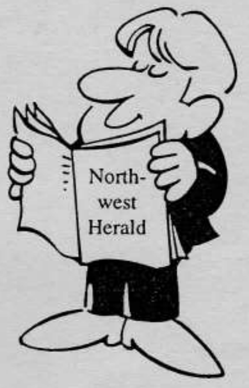

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Happy Thanksgiving

Turtle Flambeau - Trude Lake

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