Turtle Flambeau Flowage - Trude Lake
PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

Spring/Summer **June, 2003**

Iron County Comprehensive Planning

Survey Results Summary

What will Iron County look like 20 years from now? What are implications of decisions made today without having some kind of vision of the future? Through development of a comprehensive plan, Iron County communities will have the means to make well-informed decisions about land use and other development related issues.

As part of the state mandated comprehensive planning process currently underway, the County, along with all 10 Townships, recently surveyed property owners about a variety of topics. The goal of the survey was to gather input and opinion from property owners regarding eight of the required elements in a comprehensive plan. Survey topics included:

- Trends and Visions
- Land Use and Community Character
- Transportation
- Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Housing
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation

Of the 6,624 surveys sent out almost 2,800 were returned. While space does not permit detailed discussion of all survey results, it is notable that 88.4% of respondents believed that "long range planning is needed to manage growth and preserve the quality of life in Iron County," and 87.9% of respondents believed that "the small town feeling of my community is worth preserving."

Complete results of the survey will be posted on the web site of the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) which is helping with the comprehensive planning process. The web address is:

www.nwrpc.com

When you get to the NWRPC site, click on "community development," then on "comprehensive planning," and finally click on "Iron County."

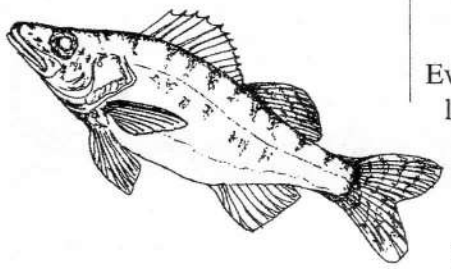
Also available is an e-mail update service that has been developed by Will Andresen of the Iron County UW-Extension office. If you would like to get email updates about the planning process, send Will an email requesting to be added to the list. His email address is:

will.andresen@ces.uwex.edu.

Walleye Watch - 2003

This spring, Association members again helped to protect spawning walleyes at Lake of the Falls County Park on the north end of the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. In it's 3rd year, volunteers in the *Walleye Watch* program work in a cooperative effort with the WDNR to safeguard walleyes when they are most vulnerable. Again this year a volunteer, Jim Gross, prevented poaching by asking questions of

several men who were trying to "hand catch" walleyes. As soon as



the question was asked, the "gentlemen" fled the area.

If you have never been to Lake of the Falls during the spawning run, you should try to make a trip to witness this remarkable activity. There is a viewing platform built over the water and with a bright flashlight you can literally see hundreds of the estimated 9,000 walleyes that use this prime spawning area.

The spawn usually starts shortly after ice-out on Lake of the Falls and normally lasts a week to 10 days.

Many thanks to the following volunteers who helped out this spring: Arlen Wanta, Terry Daulton and Jeff Wilson, Tom and Lynn Schlueter, Kalvin and Joyce Patzer, Tom Mowbray, Jim and Val Leever, Wally and Sally Dodge, Paul and Eileen Gottwald and Jim Gross.

If becoming a Walleye Watch volunteer interests you, please check the Walleye Watch box on the "volunteer" section of your membership renewal form, or call WDNR Warden Stuart Pfeiffer at the Mercer Ranger Station (715) 476-2240.

Keeping our Waters Clean

Tips from the Wisconsin Lakes Program

Every flush of a toilet, or rush down the gutter dumps something into our lakes. Storm sewers are unsafe disposal sites — water running into the sewers flushes oil and grease, garbage, animal and yard waste, chemicals, pesticides, toxic metals, salts and sediments directly into the lake. Even overburdened septic systems leak nutrient-rich pollutants into lakes. Take notice of your wastes — what they are, where they are going, and how to safely dispose of them. Here are some suggestions on dealing with disposal.

- Treat household cleaners, solvents and pesticides as hazardous waste — don't dump them down your drain. Keep abreast of changing disposal practices and learn to discard contaminants properly.
- Recycle motor oil and other acceptable auto wastes.
- If you live in an area where there are storm sewers, encourage street sweeping.
- Reduce or eliminate the use of pesticides or chemical fertilizers on your lawn and garden.
- Dispose of pet waste properly.
- Compost yard waste for use in your garden.
- Properly maintain your septic system.
- Pump regularly and have your system inspected every 2 years.
- Make sure all gray water drains into your septic system and never into the lake.
- Make sure your septic system is the right size for your household.
- Hire only quality contractors for septic maintenance or installation.
- Avoid using a garbage disposal — compost food wastes whenever practical.
- Avoid chemical products for your system that boast less frequent tank pumping — these products can add excess nutrients to the lake by liquefying more of the sludge.
- Be water wise — conserve water. Less wastewater will reach the lake and your system will operate efficiently for a longer period.

Lake Management Program, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. PUBL-WR-261 90. Your Lake and You. North American Lake Management Society

Presidents letter

Arlen Wanta

I wanted to share a few newsworthy highlights from the Association and hope that they will inspire you to get more involved in our group!

Last summer we continued our lake water-testing program, and will continue again this summer. We are finding that our water quality changes from month to month. However when comparing data for the same month each year the quality is nearly the same. With this baseline data established, we are now able to reduce the number of sampling sites. In the past, we covered almost 35 miles (GPS measure) to take our monthly water samples. This will now be reduced to about 5 miles with three samples collected.

Be sure to read the report on the crib building project elsewhere in this newsletter, and remember we may need volunteers again in February, 2004.

We helped the WDNR build two osprey nesting platforms last winter, one placed on an old tree in a bay northeast of Bonies Mound, and the Narrows between campsites A-1 and D-4. The second platform is in a small bay of Merkle Lake where osprey used to nest on a platform that collapsed. Please observe all nesting sites from a distance. The DNR is conducting an osprey study using a video camera at some of the nesting sites. The association donated $100.00 to the program. Bruce Bacon is heading up the study and will present a presentation at our annual meeting.

The purple loosestrife survey will be conducted again this summer. Call if you can help out. In addition to our loosestrife work, we are hoping to build a broader exotics species prevention program and are looking for creative people to form a committee. If you are interested in preventing species like Eurasian milfoil, rusty crayfish, zebra mussels, or other exotics from entering the flowage this would be a great committee for you.

The association is planning a workshop this summer to provide information on shoreland restoration. A shoreland restoration is designed to prevent erosion and re-establish a natural vegetation buffer. This in turn protects lake quality, enhances fish and wildlife habitat, and creates a more "wild" aesthetic on shores. MaryJo Gingras from the Iron County Land Conservation Department will coordinate the program. Information on cost sharing grants will be available. Watch for press releases on details of this program or contact MaryJo at (715) 682-7187.

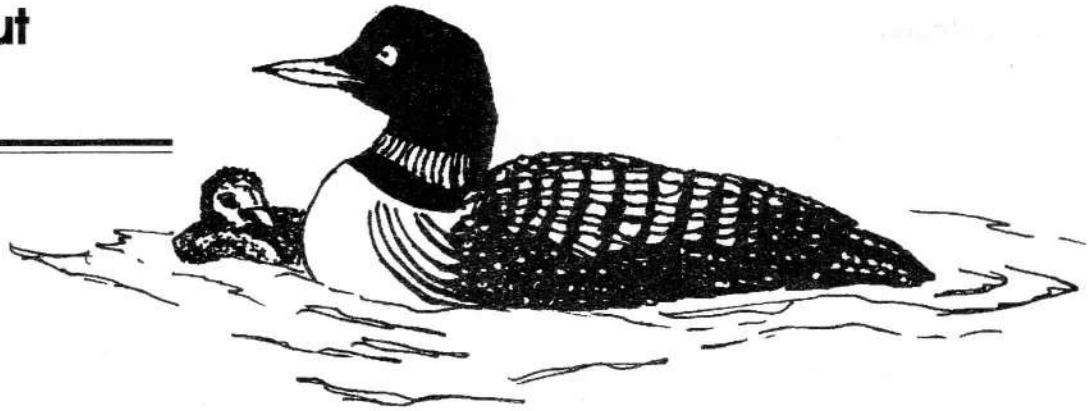
The last year saw a growth in our membership and several new neighbors around the lake. If they are your neighbors, please tell them about our association and encourage them to join. We welcome new members Steve Grams and Jim Smith to the membership.

I know that when coming to the lake for a short weekend or vacation, it's hard to break away and attend a meeting. However, we have interesting discussions and sure want to have you attend. We need your ideas and we need you!

If any member has a suggestion or a question please call any officer or director. We want your input to help make our association effective. I want to thank all the folks that helped throughout the past year and hope that this letter will spark your interest in working with us on one or more of our exciting projects.

Editors Note: Historians have a way of describing periods in human history with catchy names like the Bronze Age, the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution. These names seem to capture an essential element of that time on the planet. If I were to think of our time I might call it the "Volunteer Age." Almost every organization or business is seeking civic-minded volunteers and touting the virtues of community involvement. As I read Arlen's letter for this issue of the newsletter, it struck me that unlike many organizations, we have an attraction few volunteer seekers can claim – our work is fun! Most people would leap at the chance to take a boat ride and look for pretty purple flowers (purple loosestrife), or wonder at a marvel of nature like the walleye run at Lake of the Falls. In his letter, Arlen shares some new volunteer opportunities in the Walleye Watch article on Page 1 and 2) that you won't want to miss. So join the "Volunteer Age" and give us a call!

Stressed-out Loons?



Study to Include Flowage Birds

If you have ever watched a loon peacefully preening its feathers or floating serenely on the surface of a glassy lake the last thing you would imagine is stress. For most people, the lonely wail or tremolo of the loon evokes memories of days at the lake, calm starry nights - relief from the day-to-day worries of work, emails, telephone messages and hectic schedules. But for a loon pair, life on the lakes of northern Wisconsin is not always easy. They face many threats during the mating and nesting season, from storm waves that wash over nests, to eagles and raccoons that predate their eggs. Even other loons can pose threats, if non-breeders attempt to break a pair bond and take over loon territories. Obviously, these threats are centuries old and loons evolved mechanisms to survive. However, in recent years new stressors have been introduced into the loon's carefully balanced existence that may threaten long-term population health.

This summer, the Turtle Flambeau Flowage is being included in a study examining the effects of multiple stressors on loon populations. While loons face many natural stressors such as food availability, predators, weather, and quality of nest sites; this study is attempting to isolate the effects of human-caused stress from three factors: mercury exposure, habitat alterations and human disturbance.

The study is being conducted by the WDNR with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency. Dr. Michael Meyer is in charge of the three-year study, which is now in its second season. Each year a different random sample of lakes is selected from Iron, Vilas, Oneida, Lincoln, Langlade, Price, and Forest Counties. The goal is to first establish a population estimate for loons that would represent all types of lakes in the region. Adult population size, survival, reproduction and chick survival will all be measured. Then the effects of the three stressors will be measured and models will be developed to estimate their impacts. The broad goal of the project is to improve predictions of loon population dynamics in regions where they are impacted by multiple stressors. In this way the work done here in Wisconsin could be used to assess loon populations in other parts of the continent. Results of the study may be used to refine regulations on mercury emissions from power plants and other industrial sources, as well as provide guidance for shoreline development, boating and other human uses on lakes.

This project may also provide us with another in-depth look at loons on the flowage. As one of the largest and least developed water bodies in the state, the flowage is a unique study site. Twenty to thirty loon pairs claim the flowage as their breeding territories each summer, and scores of birds use its waters during late summer and migrations. Two biologists (Jeff Wilson and Terry Daulton) will be working on the flowage this season, documenting nest locations and chick production as well as looking for color banded birds. Over 2000 adult loons and chicks have been banded in Wisconsin and observations of these leg bands can provide important information on loon movements and longevity.

Of course we hope that our flowage loons will show little stress from human made causes. Boaters can help by reducing boat wakes around known nests and giving loon families some space. Homeowners can work to maintain natural shorelines and protect wetland areas loons often use for nesting. Activities like water-skiing and jetski use

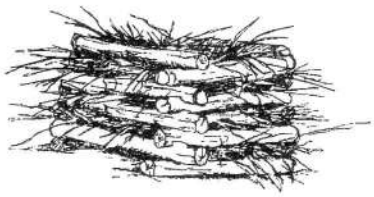
Continued on Page 5, Column 3

Fish Futures

This past year, the decline in the stock market has been big news and many would-be investors were looking for safe havens for their hard earned assets. Fishing has often been thought of as an occupation which requires a good measure of luck; however, in recent months some anglers might argue that its a safer bet than the Dow Jones. For the second year in a row, the association is working to improve TFF fishing dividends by teaming up with the WDNR on a habitat enhancement project.

You may recall that in 2002, 32 fish cribs were placed in the Townline Lake section of the flowage. This February, the WDNR and association volunteers constructed 54 more cribs. The eight-foot square cribs were constructed from fresh cut maple and yellow birch logs and were stuffed with green hard wood brush. They were then weighted down with cement blocks and were tied to the shore in approximately six feet of water. After ice-out they sank and will eventually be towed out to 10-15 feet depth and dropped in place. They will be in groups, with each crib 50-75 feet apart.

The association and Iron County Wisconsin Conservation Corps provided labor on the construction of cribs. The WDNR provided equipment and materials. The WDNR Mercer office organized a workday, and women from Shenebeck's Point served chili, hot drinks, and cookies. The association had a crew of people from the north and south sides, along with some permanent and seasonal homeowners. While we may have gone home with sore backs, we certainly had a sense of accomplishment.



Most of the cribs built this winter will be set in the area from Grassy Island to Eagle's Nest. Five experimental cribs were placed in Baraboo. These cribs were filled with different materials to test fish preferences.

Association Makes Long-Term Investments!

What return will be seen on this investment? Already some success has been noted on last year's cribs. In the fall, fish were found around the cribs and fishermen seemed pleased with the project. As the goal of the project is to increase fish habitat, not specifically provide new fishing "hot spots," markers or floats at crib locations will be removed.

So where is the future of our fish investment strategy? The WDNR may have funding to continue this project next year, however with current state budget issues priorities may shift. One alternative suggested to the association board was to consider heading up an adopt-a-crib program to fund additional materials for 2004. It was also suggested that we evaluate the impacts of the cribs prior to planning additional work.

Like any good investment strategy, we hope that our cribs will pay off in big fish dividends. The key is to keep our portfolio in balance and prudently reinvest in habitat, water quality and sound fishery management. If you have thoughts on the fish crib project, please contact the association board with your ideas!

Continued from Page 4

should be restricted in areas near loon nests and families. If you see a loon nest or loon family with chicks you can contact the biologists at (715) 476-3530 to share your data. If you see a bird with color leg bands, you can record the color combination and which leg each color is on (for example red over silver, left leg).

So this summer when you are feeling stressed out and you need a little relaxation on the flowage, you might take a few minutes to ponder our loons. Hopefully, the results of this study will show that human methods of relaxation and stress relief do not increase the anxieties of our loon families and that the Turtle Flambeau Flowage has a promising future as prime loon habitat.

Dam Issues

Rest Lake Dam

Many people think of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage as a wild and remote system, a lake with many moods from the vast open "big water" to the intimate bays and shallow backwaters of the "voluntary quiet area" near Bonies Mound. Yet, those who live on, or boat the flowage are strongly aware that it is a lake dominated by water level fluctuations – a human-built lake where natural cycles are blended with the practical needs of those downstream. The dam controls how big our beaches are in late summer, how high the stumps and rock bars extend, and how our ice behaves in the spring. We take all these changes in stride.

Yet, how many of us consider that we are actually part of a larger water control system that begins upstream. The TFF draws water from a watershed covering much of Iron and Vilas Counties. The water that reaches the flowage is by no means "pristine" having passed through a landscape dotted with homes, roads, commercial cranberry marshes and even towns.

This summer, an issue is being explored which could have long-term impacts on upstream aquatic habitats and water level fluctuations. Flowage enthusiasts may wish to extend their conservation thinking and assist our upstream neighbors in discussing and resolving management options for the Rest Lake Dam.

For those who are not familiar with the Rest Lake Dam, take a drive through downtown Manitowish Waters. Just as you leave the business district heading north, stop at the roadside park and walk out on the bridge which spans the dam. On the upstream side are the calm waters of Rest Lake – a part of the Manitowish Chain. Cross the bridge and you can hear the tumbling waters of the Manitowish River as it flows across the dam. Upstream, the Rest Lake Dam impounds ten natural lakes covering 4,200 acres. The drainage area is 243 square miles, which translates to about 12.9% of the total Flambeau River drainage area. Originally built as a logging dam in 1887, the Rest Lake Dam now serves as a reservoir and is under the jurisdiction of the WDNR. Its main purpose is to impound water for the Manitowish Chain.

From the dam, the Manitowish River flows 14 miles before it joins the Bear River and becomes the North Fork of the Flambeau River, eventually entering the Turtle Flambeau Flowage at Murray's Landing. The Manitowish River is considered an Exceptional Resource Water and much of its shores are within a designated wilderness of the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest.

So what is there to discuss about the dam's management? The WDNR has identified a number of resource issues affected by current water level management. One critical issue is the apparent inability of sturgeon to reproduce. Sturgeons migrate from the TFF up the Manitowish River to spawn, and require specific conditions to succeed. At present there are concerns on spring flow rate, water temperature, and predation on young fry by rusty crayfish (an exotic species) and redhorse suckers. In addition, concerns have been posed about aquatic communities in both the chain and river. In lakes, large winter drawdowns are known to cause loss of aquatic plant communities, reptiles and amphibians and other aquatic species. In rivers, natural systems have seasonal fluctuations that the current system may not address. At present, the flow has been managed with several key concerns: maintaining summer lake levels in the chain for boaters and recreation, dropping levels in fall to protect docks and structures from ice damage, and to maintain a minimum flow rate in the river.

Currently the WDNR is working to bring together interested citizens to consider alternatives. They would like to put together a plan to enhance sturgeon reproduction, protect critical habitats and work with landowner and recreational concerns. Critical issues include:

- The minimum flow rate may not be high enough to protect wildlife and recreation values downstream.
- Ramping rates (flow) in spring and fall result in major short term flow changes, and cause downstream flooding.
- The winter draw down of 3.6 feet was designed to protect shoreline structures but may prevent establishment of aquatic plants in the chain.

"So what?" you ask. In answer we could suggest that as part of a connected system, what happens at the Rest Lake Dam has impacts on downstream waters such as the TFF. Additionally, working with our upstream neighbors on this issue may build relationships that allow us to address other concerns such as runoff from storm sewers, spread of exotic species, and non-point source pollution from lawns and roads. In the long run, perhaps the most important reason to participate in this process is to get to know our upstream neighbors and strengthen the community of people who care about the Turtle Flambeau, the Manitowish River and the Manitowish Chain. Lastly, the issues facing the Rest Lake Dam may not be that different from issues we could face here on the Turtle Flambeau. Perhaps by working and learning together we may gain an understanding of ways to better manage our human-built flowages, so they function like the "wild" ecosystems we want them to be.

For more information on this topic or upcoming public discussions, contact either Bob Martini or Jim Kreetlow of the Rhinelander WDNR at (715) 365-8947.

Association Sponsors Shoreland Restoration Workshop

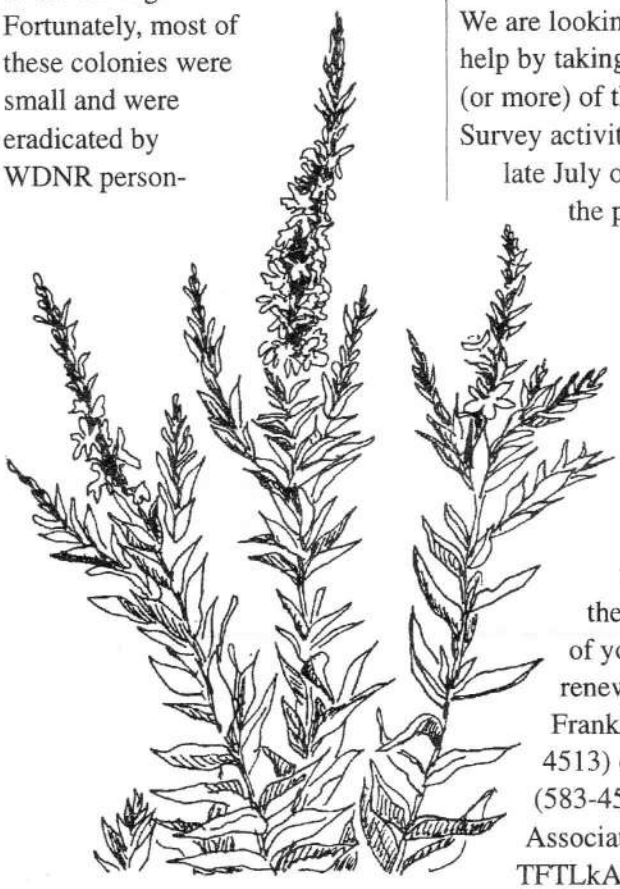
If you are interested in learning more about shoreland restoration keep tuned in for information on our upcoming workshop on that topic (see "President's Letter on Page 3). We hope to have site visits to share restoration methods, show criteria used to determine when a restoration is needed, and explore cost-sharing opportunities. The Iron County Land Conservation Department's MaryJo Gingras will coordinate our session. For more information contact MaryJo at (715) 682-7187.

Purple Loosestrife Survey - Volunteers

As we have done for the past nine or ten years, the association will again conduct a purple loosestrife survey this summer. Purple loosestrife is considered a very aggressive invasive exotic species which, if allowed to go unchecked, will displace native vegetation and overrun wetland areas.

Purple loosestrife plants grow to over 6 feet high and produce more than two million seeds a year, with seed survival up to 70%. Seeds are viable in soil for many years and seeds submerged in water can live for almost 20 months. Most seeds fall near the parent plant, but water, animals, boats, and humans can transport seed long distances. Plants may be several years old before they begin flowering. It is difficult to locate non-flowering plants, so monitoring for new invasions is best done during the flowering period in mid-summer.

In each of the past few years, association volunteers have found loosestrife colonies in many areas of the flowage. Fortunately, most of these colonies were small and were eradicated by WDNR personnel. Bruce Bacon, of the Mercer WDNR office, feels the flowage area is very fortunate not to have large infestations of loosestrife, and credits association volunteers with helping to keep this invasive exotic at bay.



We are looking for volunteers to help by taking responsibility for one (or more) of the 15 survey routes. Survey activity will take place in late July or early August when the purple loosestrife is flowering and most visible, and most routes only take 3-4 hours to complete.

If you can spare a few hours to help with this important project, please check the loosestrife box on the "volunteer" section of your membership renewal form; contact Frank/Liz Kilgore (583-4513) or Tom Mowbray (583-4523); or email the Association at: TFTLkAssoc@aol.com.

Fisherman's Landing and Interpretive Trail

If you passed Fisherman's Landing this spring you probably noticed the large piles of dirt, construction signs, and erosion control measures. Work at the landing is scheduled to be completed by mid-June. If you drop by the landing by boat or car, you may also want to check out the new Nature/Interpretive Trail which winds through mature forests along the shore of the flowage from Fisherman's Landing to Blaire Lake. The trail will be surfaced by the end of June.

Association Logo in the Works

After much debate and consideration, the association is looking to adopt a logo featuring an outline of the flowage with an eagle superimposed on the outline. The logo will also have the association name. We expect to use the logo on our publications and to create patches which can be used on hats or other garments. Thanks to everyone who participated in this process!

To Recycle or not to Recycle -

Have you found yourself leaving your flowage home after a weekend or long vacation and wondering how to get rid of those pesky recyclables and garbage? Perhaps you have been confused by the myriad of disposal options offered by each municipality. We thought a brief summary of recycling and solid waste options would help keep the flowage area clean and assist area residents in recycling as much solid waste as possible. Also, please remember that there is a fine for putting any household refuse in dumpsters at the boat landings.

- The Garbage Question

Sherman Township

Where: Town Garage on Highway 182
Hours: Wednesday, Noon to 4:00pm; Saturday, 9:00am to 4:00pm
Information: Garbage bags are $2.00 each and may be purchased at the dumpsite or Springstead Trading Post. Only orange dump bags are accepted. Recycling is free. Newspapaers must be tied in parcels. Glass and metal cans must be clean. Cans must have labels removed. Plastics (only pop bottles, milk jugs, and detergent bottles) must be washed with caps removed. Large white items are accepted Labor Day weekend.

Park Falls

Where: Dump Station on Case Avenue, .06 miles from Highway 182
Hours: Monday through Friday, 9:00am to 4:00pm and Saturday, 8:00am to Noon.
Information: $2.00 per bag or $.04 per pound. There is a charge for recycling. They will take large items such as hot water heaters, refrigerators, old sofas, etc. Check for charge amount.

Minocqua

Where: Trigs Recycling, behind Trigs grocery store
Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm; Saturday 8:00am to 4:00pm; Sunday, 8:00am to 2:00pm.
Information: $2.00 per bag, 30-gallon, 30-pound limit per bag. Recycling is free, but aluminum, tin, plastic, and glass must be cleaned, with caps removed, and must be separated.

Mercer

Where: Off Highway J by the ballpark
Hours: Wednesday, 7:30am to 11:30am; Saturday, 7:30am to 11:30am.
Information: Recycling is free. All cans and bottles must be washed and have caps removed. Only plastic pop bottles, milk jugs and detergent bottles accepted, caps removed. Garbage bags can be purchased at the Mercer gas stations with Superior Waste dumpsters.

Community Calendar

Sunday, June 28, 2003

Mercer Community Wide Rummage Sale - 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Wednesday, July 2, 2003

Sparks Bake Sale and Flea Market - Town of Sherman Fire Station. Highway 182, Springstead - 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Thursday, July 31, 2003 through Sunday, August 3, 2003

Park Falls 51st Annual Flambeau-Rama, Highway 13

Saturday, August 2, 2003 through Sunday, August 3, 2003

North Lakeland Discovery Center, Manitowish River Fest. For information call (715) 543-2085

Wednesday, August 6, 2003

9:00am - 4:00pm. Mercer Loon Day Craft Fair

Friday, August 8, 2003

North Lakeland Discovery Center, Turtle Flambeau Flowage Birchbark Canoe Trip, four-hour guided trip from Murray's Landing to Springstead. Cost: $20.00 per person. For information call: (715) 543-2085.

Saturday, August 9, 2003

12:00 Noon - 6:00pm. Town of Sherman Fire Department Corn Roast. Highway 182, Springstead.

Sunday, August 10, 2003

Turtle Flambeau Assoc. Annual Pig Roast - Midway Bar, Butternut. For information call Molly: (715) 769-3680.

Saturday, August 30, 2003

Musky Rodeo, Donner's Bay Resort on Turtle Flambeau Flowage. Three-day musky fishing tournament - "Catch and Release." For information call Darrell Fohr at (715)-476-2555.

Turtle Flambeau-Trude Lake Property Owner's Association

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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 the members and the general public.

TURTLE FLAMBEAU - TRUDE LAKE
PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

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