Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake

PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

Fall-Winter 2007

--- Our Lifeblood Is Water ---

By Jim Leever

I think it is safe to say that water is the lifeblood of the Northwoods, and is most definitely the lifeblood of the community that surrounds the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. Water is essential to the survival of animals and aquatic life, and provides the nutrients needed for plant life in the surrounding wetlands. It's where we fish, or sometimes just sit quietly and feel a spirit of renewal when we listen to the sounds of nature and rejoice in the beauty of our surroundings. As such, our water is something to be treasured and actively protected. This precious resource can be threatened in two ways: (1) poor quality and, as we're experiencing this year, (2) insufficient quantity (low water level). Our Association monitors both of these conditions, but in neither case do we have much control. However, through monitoring, we can identify and hope to prevent problems, and take steps to stop or at least minimize their affect.

••• Water Quality •••

Our Association has been monitoring water quality on the Flowage since 1998. We monitor monthly from May - October. This effort has allowed us to establish patterns for changes in temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO), water clarity, phosphorus and chlorophyll. From these data, we have determined that the levels of nutrients are currently at a safe and stable level; additional nutrients would be detrimental. An increase of nutrients would push the nutrient level up to a condition characterized by decreased clarity, high weed growth, and additional oxygen depletion. We must be vigilant, and although many contributing factors are out of our control, some are not. We can stop using fertilizers containing phosphorus that can run off into the water. We can avoid dumping yard waste in the water. We can also have our septic systems periodically tested to be sure they are in good working order and not discharging waste products into the water. For more information on the water quality monitoring, check the following web site and search for Turtle Flambeau Flowage.
http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/fhp/lakes/selfhelp/Reports/reportsbylake.asp?storet=263059

••• New DO Meter •••

Before leaving the topic of water testing, I should mention that we received our final installment from the State of Wisconsin on our grant for a new DO meter. We made our case on the importance of a state-of-the-art meter and the need for accuracy of test data on

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Inside this Issue

And More!

--- Fish Cribs Planned For Lake Ten Area ---

This winter volunteer crews will be working on the next group of fish cribs, using wood from a logging job near Lake Ten. The DNR has a harvest planned for that area, making it a convenient time and place for crib building. The association will be using about 8 cords of wood, building a total of 20 cribs. Work will begin in fall, when volunteers will drill the holes in the wood so that the cribs can be efficiently assembled in January. Getting to the wood this fall will be tricky, as low water means that travel by boat is limited. The group plans to drive to the site. Arnie Popp will be coordinating volunteers from the north shore of the flowage, while Kal Patzer works with folks from the Springstead side. The drilling should take a day. If you are interested in helping with fish crib assembly, please contact Arnie Popp, 715-476-0424, or Kal at 715-583-2274 or kjpatzer@centurytel.net. No date has been set for winter work as of yet.

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such a significant body of water. For the $1,000 meter, the State granted us $750. All this money has been received, and we began using the new meter this year. Our appreciation goes to the DNR and to the State for their support and help with the purchase of this vital piece of test equipment.

••• Water Quantity •••

As we enter fall 2007, it's easy to see that we have a serious water level problem. The last time I checked, we were about 5 feet below the High Water Mark, and we could go lower. We simply need more rain. The Turtle Dam operation is governed by a set of operating directives contained in a document called a "Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)." Under this agreement, 300 cubic feet of water per second (cfs) is considered the minimum flow rate. The directive also states that the summer drawdown should not exceed 4 feet. Under normal conditions these operating orders are not in conflict — inflows are sufficiently strong, the water level of the Flowage is sufficiently high, and the 300 cfs can be maintained. Under current conditions, however, having had 2 consecutive years of drought, and with inflows estimated to be less than 100 cfs, we are facing a situation where a more significant reduction in flow rate may be necessary. This reduction may be required to give us a buffer against an additional MOU directive that limits the winter drawdown to 8 feet. Prior to October, the dam was discharging 300 cfs. In early October the flow rate was lowered 225 cfs to help boost the water levels.

Few things in nature are constant. The fish and wildlife that depend on the water provided by the Flambeau River can adjust to less than a constant flow of water, just as the fish and wildlife in the flowage can adjust to a low water level. The association is providing input to the DNR and Xcel on changes in flow rates and draw downs. My hope is that operating procedures will be revised to include a more carefully phased adjustment in flow rates that can respond to environmental conditions. Using this strategy as a planning base would allow a more measured and timely response to changing water conditions and would help reduce environmental impacts above and below the dam.

It is my view, however, that should the drought and draw downs continue and threaten the sustainability of the flowage, the drawdown should stop. At that critical point, the only water that should reasonably be sent through to the Dam, and into the river below, is the water coming into the flowage, the inflow, or what is called the "run of the river." We are partners with those around us, most particularly those below the Dam, and for the benefit of all we must share our waters. Nevertheless, there may come a time when all we have to share is the run of the river.

--- President's Letter ---

This has been quite a summer. We have all heard the sayings "Nothing stays the same", "We all grow older", "time does not stand still", "but life goes on".

Our area has changed a lot. The rain didn't come and neither did the snow – so our water levels are unusually low. Resorts have been sold and in many instances individual owners have bought the small cottages. A number of these have been remodeled and enlarged and are now being rented to help pay the costs of keeping a second home. Some single family cabins and homes have also been sold and are being rented out on a regular basis. While it is wonderful that these new visitors have a chance to experience our area, there have been some unintended problems caused by the absentee landowners. In the past, resort owners were able to educate guests on flowage etiquette. Without this continuity, folks are visiting our area without information on our water's need for quiet and respect.

This summer there were many occurrences of late night fireworks and unsafe boating. Many of those involved were staying in the rental homes. As the president of the Lake Association, I am making this situation known and hoping that we can correct these problems. We all want our area to maintain the beauty and quiet that we love. We can do this as a group, but communication is a key factor. We would like to work with absentee landowners to provide educational resources for their guests. We are reprinting our TFF Courtesy Code in this newsletter and hope that the information will be shared.

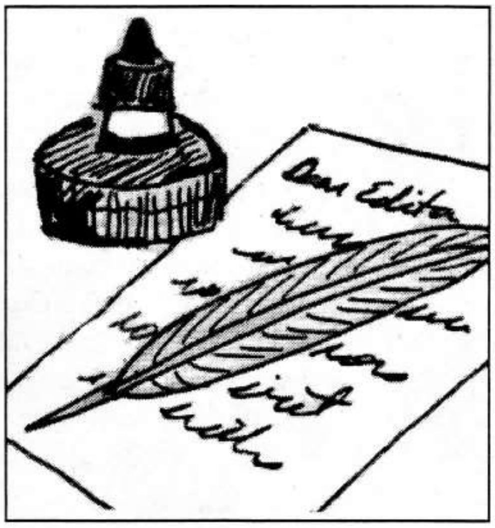
I'm also hoping we will see a lot of rain and tons of snow so our water levels will return to normal. Enjoy the coming holidays and I'm anxious to see many folks at our January Cabin Fever Party.

--- Docks, Trails, & Water Levels - Landing Updates ---

If you frequent Springstead Landing, you may notice that the docks have been extended 16 feet to allow for better access in low water conditions and that a water gauge has been installed to help boaters assess depths.

Fisherman's Landing Nature Trail is completed! If you haven't walked the trail between the landing and "turtle point", take an hour and you will not only enjoy the views but you might pick up a few flowage facts. In a cooperative effort with the University of Wisconsin-Extension, the DNR has completed a series of interpretative stops with great photos and interesting topics. The theme of the trail addresses changes to the flowage over time, from before the dam to current time. Stops cover topics such as history of the dam and logging era, to vernal pools, warblers, and fisheries. The loop trail is about 2 miles in length.

--- Flowage Historical Book Progresses ---



Association member and retired Laurence University professor Mike Hittle has started work on a history of the flowage. This summer he delved into interviews with flowage "old timers" and local history buffs. He was also working in the archives at the Iron County Historical Society and Mercer Historical Society. While the project is in its early stages, Mike is looking for names and contact information for people to interview and stories to include in the book. For more information on the project or to contact Mike, please email him at mmhittle@new.rr.com.

A Great Year For Purple Loosetrife Crop On The Turtle Flambeau Flowage

By Diane O'Krongly

Purple Loosestrife- so beautiful, yet so damaging. If only it were worth something. Thanks to all the volunteers who surveyed the 18 flowage routes and the Manitowish River this past summer. The low water made the search for plants very difficult. Many volunteers had to use binoculars to scan distant shorelines since their boats could get nowhere near the shore.

This year's search turned up one new location of plants and a luxurious crop of loosestrife at each previously known site. Grant Lake and Murray's Landing are still the highest areas of concern. The north end of the flowage had more plants than ever. I surveyed the area between the Turtle River and Sturgeon Bay often during the months of July and August, each time finding more plants to dig up. Mary Jo Gingras from the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department came and helped me dig up several large trash bags of plants late in July.

Gary and Kit Bogenshneider found many plants north of Big Island between Sturgeon Bay and Four Mile Creek. Those plants were removed in early August by Katie Zabar (DNR summer intern) and me. Mary Ann Brown removed many plants west of Four Mile Creek. Fortunately the plants stopped some where in Mary Ann's route because Judy and Dave Pierce found no plants in the area between Turtle Lake and the dam.

To my relief the reports from the other areas were coming in all clear. Finally good news… no loosestrife in the Trude Lake, the Big Water, Beaver Creek, south of Big Island, Horseshoe, or Blair lake. Unfortunately, in August, Dean and Deborah Garny took a second look at their route and found a previously unknown patch of about 20 plants in Horseshoe Lake. Bruce Bacon, DNR biologist, quickly removed these plants.

Joyce and Cal Patzer, and Rick Heinrtz get the award for dealing with the greatest number of plants on the flowage. They made numerous trips to Grant Lake area to dig plants, cut flower trips, and chemically treat plants. Not far from Grant Lake a

Fisheries Impacts of Drought & Drawdown In the Turtle Flambeau Flowage & River Systems

By Jeff Roth - Fisheries Biologist

Most folks are aware that we are experiencing drought conditions throughout northern Wisconsin, which has been apparent this past year with low lake and stream levels, sad looking gardens and dried grass backyards. But did you know that the onset of the rain deficit began three years prior? In fact, annual precipitation has been well below the average since 2003. The cumulative effect of successive years of below normal precipitation has created our current drought condition, which is now classified as "severe".

The standards by which we manage the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage water level and downstream river flows are specified in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Natural Resources and Xcel Energy. In general, that agreement states that a summer drawdown of up to 4 feet and a winter drawdown of up to 8 feet from the maximum pool level are allowable while maintaining a downstream flow of at least 300 cubic feet per second(cfs).

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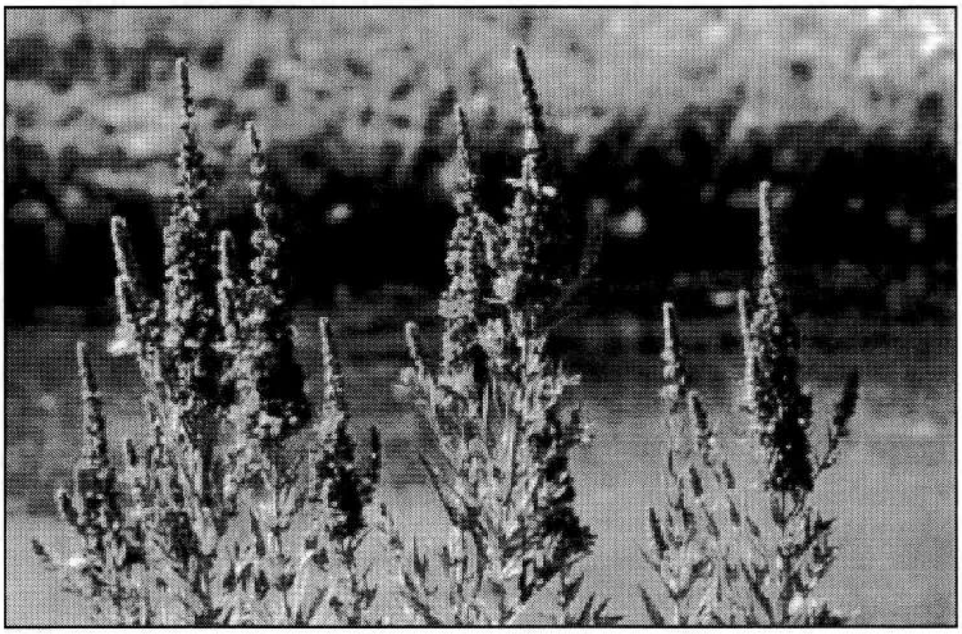
group of volunteers searching near Murray's Landing found additional plants.

Murray's Landing is near the inflow point of the Manitowish River, an area of great concern. A large contingent of workers from the DNR, and the Northern Highland Forest surveyed the Manitowish River starting at Highway 51. This group covered sixteen miles of the river by canoe and removed five pick-up truck loads of plants.

Next year volunteers will be needed in great numbers to help identify and dig plants. Without volunteers we will not be able to save the flowage and adjoining waters from potential habitat loss caused by large masses of purple loosestrife. Myself, Mary Burns and John Bates, who live on the Manitowish River, are already planning to raise beetles that eat only purple loosestrife plants. Plans are to release beetles in some of the most affected area on the flowage and Manitowish River.



Thanks to all this year's volunteer not named above. Your efforts are very important to the health of the Flowage water.

- Geoff and Elodie Bacci
- Jim and Sandy Bohman
- Scott and Kathy Kaufman
- Deb and Woody Woodbury
- Blair, Elizabeth, and son Piotrowski
- Bill and Sally Stewart
- James and Mary Kohl
- Jim Mucci
- Frank and Liz Kilgore
- Jim and Val Leever
- Connie and Mel Yeakle
- Jeff Wilson

Fisheries Impacts...

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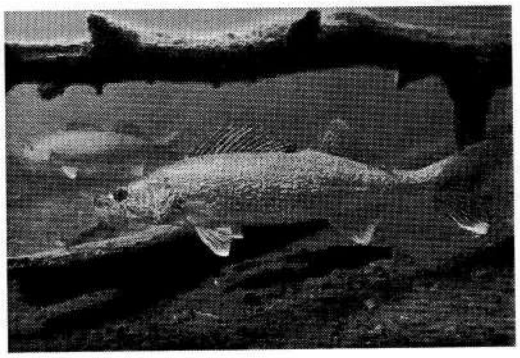
When in a "crisis" period as we are in now, the Department and dam owner may temporarily modify the MOU to protect the associated fish and wildlife values in both the flowage and the upstream and downstream rivers. Recently an agreement has been reached to modify standards that will reduce the outlet flow to 225 cfs, thereby slowing the flowage drawdown while still protecting the river fish and wildlife populations. Specifically, at that discharge rate, the quantity and quality of pools in the river that provide living area for adult fish will be available, shallow water nursery habitat necessary for juvenile fish to survive will be maintained, and the food producing habitat essential for all fish species will be accessible.



Early predictions of this year's maximum winter drawdown, considering a discharge rate of 225 cfs, indicate the flowage should gradually begin refilling throughout the winter months with no appreciable reductions in water level. These predictions assume similar weather conditions will prevail as seen last winter. In the event flowage levels drop to near or below the maximum as specified in the agreement, localized fish kills are possible. Such was the case during the winter of 1995-96 when the flowage levels dropped to 7.5 feet below the maximum pool level. A moderate fish kill occurred just prior to ice-out in 1996 in the Horseshoe area of the flowage. This prompted an evaluation to determine the extent of the fish kill. Catch rates of walleye during the 1997 survey found no change in the Horseshoe spawning population. Furthermore, results of a follow-up telemetry study showed that although there is a resident walleye population in the Horseshoe area, most of the adult fish migrate from Horseshoe into other areas of the flowage annually. The impacts of that winterkill on other fish species was likely insignificant based observations at that time. There has been no record of winterkills in any other parts of the flowage.

For now, let's hope for average or above average water contributions in any form, a mild winter in terms of ice depth and early ice-out to prevent winter kill, and an abundance of snow to recharge water levels for the spring spawning season.

Gypsy Moth Numbers on the Increase in Iron County

In the past, Iron County has been in the lucky group of Wisconsin counties where gypsy moths were relatively rare. This year, however, perhaps aided by the hot dry weather, the numbers of this invasive forest pest are on the rise. As of early October, 3,987 gypsy moths had been captured in traps in Iron County, compared to 298 last year at this time. A number of these moths were captured on the flowage. The Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) oversees the gypsy moth monitoring program and stated that they have seen higher numbers of moths throughout the state.

What is the problem with gypsy moths? In areas where their numbers are high they can have an effect on many trees. They feed on oaks, crabapple, linden, willow, birch, aspen, and more than 250 other species of trees. The caterpillars hatch in May and feed through early July, often defoliating trees.

Like many invasive species, the gypsy moth was brought to North America with good intentions. In 1869, they were introduced in Massachusetts in an effort to breed a hardy silkworm. They have done well here because they can withstand cold weather, lack natural predators, and feed on a wide range of trees.

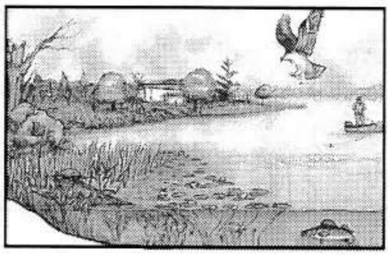
More Than Leaves Are Turning...

By MaryJo Gingras; Iron County Land Conservation Department

We typically associate fall with the changes that occur outdoors, such as the variety of leaf color, first frost, bird migration, harvest of fall fruit and vegetables, and more. However, there is a subtle change that takes place within our lakes that often goes unnoticed.

Lakes experience a drastic seasonal change in water chemistry. Unlike a shallow pond, which usually has a relatively uniform temperature throughout, a deep lake has a warm surface layer in the summer and a colder layer below. As the surface temperature increases above 4° Celsius, it becomes lighter than the cold water below it. This layer of warmer water floats on the surface and is called the epilimnoin. The surface layer does not mix with the cold bottom layer called the hypolimnion. The thermocline separates the two.

Wind circulates and aerates the surface water but does not thoroughly mix it. Surface water is full of oxygen but the nutrients stay on the lake bottom. The water near the bottom is deficient in oxygen at this time.



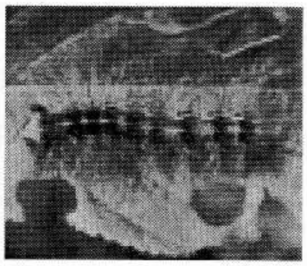
By fall, conditions begin to change and the tables turn. Air temperature and sunlight decrease, causing the water to cool. As the surface water cools to below 4° C, it becomes heavier and displaces the water beneath it. This disrupts the stable stratification (layers) formed during summer.

Fall winds mix the lake throughout, recharging nutrients and oxygen. This is referred to as fall turnover (also called overturn).

During winter, surface water begins to cool. It becomes lighter and stays on top. Now, the warmest water in the lake is on the bottom! [You may wonder how warm summer surface water and cool winter surface water can both be lighter than water underneath it. Water above 4° C and below it are less dense than water at exactly 4° C. As it warms and cools, its density changes, thus causing turnover.]

In spring, when surface waters warm, a spring turnover occurs. Oxygen and nutrients are recharged. As air and water temperature increase, the lake stratifies, and the cycle continues.

Gypsy moths can be mistaken for a number of other species including eastern and forest tent caterpillars, fall web worms, and white marked tussock moth. The gypsy caterpillars have five pairs of blue dots followed by six pairs of red dots down the back.



The life cycle of the moth includes four stages. The eggs are laid in late summer and the larva develop over winter in the egg. In May the larvae hatch and begin to feed. When the larva is fully grown, it forms a pupa that eventually hatches into the adult moth.

What can be done to reduce the spread of gypsy moth? The DNR and DATCP conduct large scale control programs in affected areas. Citizens can help slow the spread of these moths by reporting sightings. We can also avoid spreading moths through firewood transportation. Like the emerald ash borer, gypsy moths can lay eggs on wood. Unlike the ash borer, gypsy moths also lay eggs on cars, campers, outdoor furniture or toys. Learn to identify the egg masses and carefully check your equipment.

For more information on gypsy moths, you can visit the following web sites.

http://www.uwex.edu/ces/gypsymoth/homeowners.cfm

http://datcp.state.wi.us/arm/environment/insects/gypsy-moth/maps/na.jsp

1-800-642-6684

--- Wisconsin Water Levels: Down The Drain ---

By MaryJo Gingras; Iron County Land Conservation Department

The old saying "You don't appreciate what you have until it's gone" was very evident this summer when I tried to canoe to my favorite fishing hole but had to drag the canoe over the once-shallow inlet to the "undisclosed location."

Lately there has been increased conversation among lake property owners and lake users about low water levels in northern and central Wisconsin lakes. In our region, the seepage lakes (lakes with no inlet streams that are replenished only by groundwater) and flowages have been affected the greatest. Our low water levels are not as severe as those in the Central Sands area, including parts of Adams, Marquette, Portage, and Waushara Counties. This region is particularly susceptible to low water levels due to the combination of very sandy soil, lake types, weather, and human water use.

Low water levels tend to be more common on seepage lakes because they are replenished only by groundwater. If the water table is low due to lack of rain or snow precipitation, lake levels will be affected. The range of fluctuation in seepage lakes is often greater than other lakes because they have a limited supply of groundwater to replenish them. Lakes that have inflow from streams have more water to replenish them.

Another contributing factor to water levels is topography. Water flows one way or the other on the landscape, from high to low elevations, depending on where it lands. The divide is the highest point (like a hilltop) and is where the water divides and flows in different directions.

Groundwater operates the same way. A groundwater divide can be thought of as an underground hilltop, where the groundwater flows in different directions. Lakes close to the high point in the groundwater have a small area to draw water from. Some lakes in Central WI are located close to a groundwater divide. Therefore, they are more susceptible to fluctuations when a lack of precipitation lowers the water

Groundwater levels also fluctuate based on the amount of precipitation that falls on the land. Recent dry summers and lack of snow are magnifying the normal fluctuations. The Department of Natural Resources has reported that "preliminary information suggests water levels may be at a 50-year low in some lakes." Many scientists believe that global climate change is altering weather patterns, which can ultimately affects water levels.

Pumping of groundwater is a major factor that affects the water table and, consequently, lake levels. A 1970's study revealed that groundwater levels in Central WI dropped 1 foot due to irrigation. Combined with drought and a double in irrigation, it was predicted the water level could drop as much as 5 feet.

The Central Sands Region contains the highest density of high capacity wells in the state, with about 2,100 wells. High capacity wells draw more than 100,000 gallons of groundwater a day. Irrigation, by far, draws the largest amount of groundwater in the region, although industries and municipalities also draw large amounts.

In 2003 Wisconsin enacted the Groundwater Protection Law to place restrictions on high capacity wells. Are these rules enough to balance our demand for water from outstripping natures ability to replenish it? These rules apply only to Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs), such as trout streams, and Exceptional Resource Waters (ERWs). There are no lakes classified as ERWs in Wisconsin and only 97 lakes and 6 flowages are designated as ORWs. 99% of Wisconsin's 15,000 lakes are NOT protected under the current law! The legislature is currently reviewing future groundwater management needs in our state. For more information log on to www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/gac/index.htm.

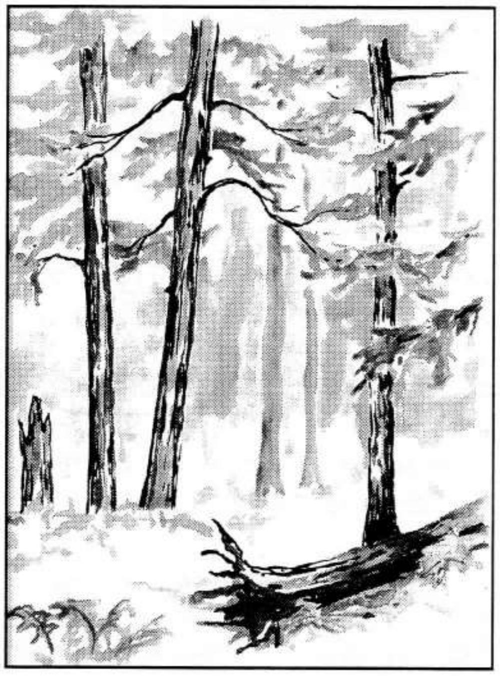
--- Climate Change & Northern Forests ---

By Terry Daulton

In our last newsletter we shared current research findings on how climate change may affect lake ecosystems. In this article we summarize information on how the forested shorelines of the flowage may be impacted by the increasing levels of greenhouse gases.

As the climate changes, plant and animal ranges will also change. Many northern forest plants may decline or be eliminated from the region, while new species may move in from the south. However, tree movements are limited by factors such as seed dispersal, natural disturbances like wind and fire, and the time required for long-lived species like trees to germinate, grow and reproduce. Much of our forest is fragmented, with fewer areas of continuous forest cover. This fragmentation compounds the problem. Imagine how difficult it is for trees to colonize across a landscape dotted with farms, urban areas, and already established forests. The overall impact of climate change may be a profound reduction in species diversity over hundreds of years.

White spruce, balsam fir, red pine, jack pine and paper birch will likely disappear from the region. The new conditions may favor species such as oak and other hardwoods, but



they may be slow to migrate north. If the climate dries significantly, our northern forests may become oak savannahs.

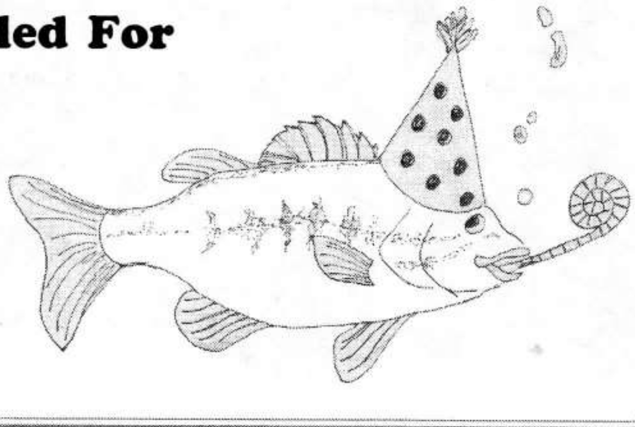
Wildlife species that depend on these habitats will have to respond. Already, we are seeing some impacts of climate change on wildlife.

Birds such as spruce grouse, white-throated sparrow, winter wren, grey jay and Connecticut warbler may decline with loss of jack pine and black spruce/tamarack habitats. Wetland birds that nest in low areas may be impacted by mid-season spike floods or changes in the timing of spring melt. In Upper Michigan and Minnesota species like Canada lynx may also decline as boreal forests move north. Amphibians that depend on spring pools and wetlands may also suffer if rainfall becomes less regular.

Some wildlife species that thrive in more moderate climates will benefit. These might include white-tailed deer, raccoon, and skunk and birds such as cardinals, orioles, kingbird and chickadees and wild turkeys. Some of our least favorite Northwoods denizens, the mosquito and tick, may profit as well, along with diseases they carry such as West Nile virus and Lyme disease.

Cabin Fever Party Scheduled For January 19

Mark your calendar, January 19 at 5 pm will be the 3rd annual TFF association pot luck and party. Look for more details in a separate mailing – but keep the date free if you want to win "fabulous prizes", catch up on ice-fishing news, or just visit with flowage neighbors.



--- TFF Water Levels & Flow Regime ---

With water levels being extremely low for the second straight year, it's a good time to go over some frequently asked questions about TFF water levels and operations at the TFF dam, and to let members know what the Association is doing to combat low water issues in the future.

1). How are water levels on the TFF managed ?

TFF water levels and discharge flow from the TFF dam are managed by terms of a 1990 "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) between WI-DNR and the Chippewa and Flambeau Improvement Company (CFIC). Xcel Energy is the majority owner of CFIC. Major Principles of the MOU call for drawndowns of up to 4' in the summer and up to 8' in the winter. The draw-down level is measured using a gauge at the TFF dam, and 1572' is considered normal full-pool for the TFF. In addition, the MOU calls for a minimum of 300 cubic feet per second (cfs) to be discharged from the TFF dam at all times year around.

In addition to the Major Principles the MOU has five Modifications for operation of the dam. The modifications are: 1). CFIC is supposed to refill the TFF to 1571.5' by April 20th or within one week after ice-out, whichever is later, without lowering flow below 300 cfs (in normal conditions). 2). CFIC is not to increase or decrease flow by more than 300 cfs per day. 3). CFIC is not to decrease flow from its level on April 10th until June 10th, unless it is apparent that refilling the TFF to 1571.5' may not otherwise occur. 4). CFIC and WI-DNR are to cooperate and make minor adjustments to TFF dam operation where possible. 5). In times of extreme high or low precipitation, CFIC and WI-DNR are at consult before deviating from the terms of the MOU.

2) What are actual TFF water levels – historically and the last 2 years?

Over the past 23 years Xcel Energy has kept very good records which show:

- **Winter Drawdown** - average 4.1'; maximum was 7.7' (1997); minimum was 1.6' (1988)
- **Summer Drawdown** – average 3.1'; maximum was 5.1' (2007); minimum was 2.0' (1990)
- **Spring Pond Level** – Per the MOU, water level should be at 1571.5 in late April. Over the past 23 years spring pool averaged 1571.7'; maximum was 1572.5 (1985); minimum was 1570.05 (1987)
- **Fall Operations** – Normally fall water level rise from their summertime lows. Over the past 23 years fall high water levels averaged 1570.9'; maximum was 1572.2' (1985); minimum was 1568.5' (1989)

Over the past 2 years we have started the year lower than what is called for in the MOU. In 2006 spring pond level was .8' short of full pool and this year we were 1.45' short of full pool. Summer drawdown was 3.95' in 2006 and was 5.05' in 2007. Fall 2006 water levels did not rise as usual and pond level going into last winter was more than 2' below average.

3) Why water levels have been so low over the past 2 years

The primary reason for water levels over the past couple years is that the TFF drainage is in Severe Drought. Using National Weather Service (NWS) data for 2005, 2006 and 2007 to date (October 6th) we are 35" - 40" of precipitation below normal (http://water.weather.gov/). A second reason that water levels were low this year is that we started off almost 18" below normal last spring. Further complications arose with a very dry summer and a decision by WI-DNR and Xcel in July to continue 300 cfs outflow discharge despite inflows in the 80-100 cfs range. By mid-August the 4' maximum summer drawdown level was exceeded and water levels continued to drop, bottoming out just over 5' down in late September.

The good news is that we have had over 5" of rain in the past 2 weeks and, in late September, WI-DNR and Xcel consulted again and finally decided to reduce discharge at the TFF dam to 225 cfs rather than just over 300 cfs. These two factors have brought water levels up about 6" as October 6, 2007.

4) What does the future hold for TFF water levels ?

Over the past few months the Association has been meeting with WI-DNR and other interested parties to express our concerns about low water levels. For the short term, our goal is to have TFF water level up to normal by next spring. The recent reduction in discharge was the first step, now it is up to WI-DNR and Xcel officials to manage discharge over the winter so that water level rise to 1571.5' by April 20th as required by the MOU.

On a long term basis, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has ordered Xcel to license the TFF dam. Xcel, after fighting the licensing in court for several years, has applied to amend the FERC license for their Big Falls operation (near Ladysmith) to include the TFF dam. The Association hopes to work cooperatively with both FERC and WI-DNR during the licensing process and will make suggestions to revise several parts of the MOU. We believe over the past 17 years that both advances in environmental science and a better understanding of impacts of various water levels and flows justify the to update the MOU before it becomes part the FERC license for the next 30-40 years.

Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake

PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 631 - Mercer, WI 54547

Editor – Terry Daulton

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Directors – Bill Bayer, Terry Daulton, Paul Gottwald, Diane O'Krongly, & Joyce Patzer

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If you would like to contact the association by email, please note the new address!
TFTLkAssoc@hotmail.com

--- 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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PROPERTY OWNERS' ASSOCIATION, INC.
P.O. Box 631 - Mercer, WI 54547