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

Driftwood

Fall/Winter 2014

Flowage Fish Welcome New Boss

By Mike Hittle

In mid-September, Zachary Lawson set up shop at the Mercer Ranger Station as the DNR's Fisheries Biologist, Iron and Ashland Counties. Zach inherits from Lawrence Eslinger, his predecessor, a small office filled to overflowing with data-stuffed file cabinets and a set of responsibilities that includes, among many other lakes and streams, the Turtle Flambeau Flowage.

A native of the Wausau area, Zach had his first exposure to the TFF in his high school years, when he often camped on flowage islands and fished for his favorite quarry, muskies. This passion for fishing was to shape his education as well. Zach graduated from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, with degrees in zoology, conservation biology, and geography. A few years later he set out in pursuit of a master's degree, also at the UW-Madison, in limnology and freshwater sciences--a program that approaches fisheries issues from the broad perspective of ecosystems. In the course of his studies, Zach has spent eight years working at the Trout Lake Station, operated by the university's Center for Limnology. His major research agenda focused on rainbow smelt, an invasive species that has found a home in Vilas County's Crystal Lake.

Zach Lawson and Paige Mieritz with Finny Friend

Zach was attracted to his new job by the opportunity to work "where the rubber meets the road." That is, as a researcher he had sometimes wondered what happened to scientific findings. Were they put to use by fisheries managers, or did they somehow slip between the cracks? As he gains experience in management, Zach hopes that he will be able to help bridge the gap between research and management.

The presence of the flowage also contributed to the lure of this position. Zach finds the flowage interesting in two ways. First, there are some intriguing issues to explore—the bass vs walleye controversy, the impacts of lake-level fluctuations, and changing patterns of land-use. Second, the flowage is, in his words, simply a "gem." It is in really good shape, with a sustainable walleye fishery, a solid population of sizeable bass, and a first–rate musky fishery. Although it is too soon for him to establish his agenda for the flowage, Zach said that it would not be the worst thing to learn what is "going right" on the flowage—that is to determine how the forage base, spawning habitat, and water quality have combined to make it such a healthy lake. That knowledge might establish a baseline, so that if conditions were to alter in the future, there would be a basis for science-based intervention. Whatever directions Zach's work on the flowage may eventually take, he looks forward to working with the association and with other interested local parties to maintain and enhance this outstanding fishery.

And what does Zach do when he's not at work? As the photo indicates, he fishes for, and catches, muskies, but he also likes to take walleyes through the ice and chase cold-water species with a fly rod. Autumn finds him hunting deer, ducks, and grouse. As he noted with a broad smile, the proximity of waters and woods in Iron and Ashland counties should make it easier to pursue his favorite pastimes.

President's Letter

By Terry Daulton

Margaret Mead is perhaps most famous for her quotation, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." I wholeheartedly support Ms. Mead's sentiment; however, during my time on the board of the TFFTLPOA I have occasionally wondered what she meant by a small group. In the case of our association, we may have had a bit more work than a small group of committed citizens could tackle without volunteer burnout. There are several reasons for somewhat dwindling volunteer numbers, ranging from lack of effective communication by committee chairs and the board, to increasing work loads as we add or expand projects, or, dare I mention, to the aging demographics of our membership. The folks who have helped out with our last few years of fish-crib building, loosestrife surveys, or water quality work will attest to the need for an expanded volunteer corps.

Based on the revised by-law committee descriptions which were adopted at our annual meeting in June, the board is now at work developing position descriptions, assigning committee chairs, and creating a structure to help committees track goals and accomplishments. We are also focusing on manageable workloads and making sure that a volunteer who steps forward does not get a life sentence of work on the same project.

The following committee chairs will be working with the board to move this process forward:

Membership and Nominating Committee – Sandy Gitzlaff
Water Quality Committee – Mike and Beth Myers
Invasives Committee – Diane O'Krongly
Water Level Committee – Jim Bohmann
Fish Management – Jeff Malison
Education and Communications – Mike Hittle

We expect to have the organizational work completed this fall. In the meantime, we are beginning to contact members who are currently on committees, or who have noted on the membership renewal forms an interest in serving on one. We believe that these newly energized committees will offer a more rewarding experience and will help us build leadership capacity in the organization. If you are interested in committee work and have not heard from us, please drop the chairs an email or give them a phone call. Believe me, they will be glad to hear from you!

We are hoping that our committees will come to embody the idea that Margaret Mead put forward, with each committee becoming a small group of dedicated and inspired members. So, keep your ears pealed for the phone and check your email inbox for a note from the association asking if you are interested in helping out. We hope you will want to join us in our work to enhance life on and around the TFSWA!

Recreational Use Member Survey Re-visited

Members recently received the summary document on our association recreational survey which was conducted this past summer. As you may recall, this survey was initiated in response to a proposal for an ATV trail through the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area linking the two sides of Popko Circle. We hope that in the long run these survey responses will be useful in a variety of planning venues which will benefit our members.

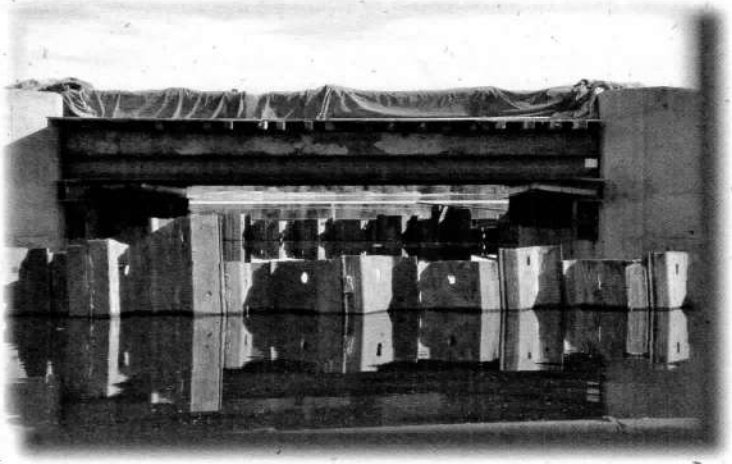
Here is the history on this somewhat controversial topic. In December of 2011 our board wrote a letter to the Town of Mercer opposing a proposal for an ATV trail which would cross the Scenic Waters lands. The association cited concerns relating to wetland and water quality protection, invasive species, and aesthetics, as well as consistency with the principles of the property's master plan. Subsequently we again wrote to the town in May of 2013 when a second proposal was put forward for either a trail across state land or an ATV route on Popko Circle. It should be noted that the association did not oppose the Popko Circle route proposal, but did suggest that decision-making on this issue be timed so that seasonal residents could express their views. The association board based its position on data from a previous survey of members (2008).

After the May 2013 meeting and subsequent opening of Popko Circle as a temporary route, we received a few communications from members suggesting that we were out of touch with the views of the membership on the trail issue. In response, we decided to initiate a recreational survey to better document and understand the views of our membership on the ATV trail. We also decided that as long as we were doing a survey, we might as well broaden questions to include other types of trails and some fishing topics.

Continued on page 9

Bridge Nearing Completion ... REALLY!

It is a pleasure (and, frankly, something of a surprise) to report that the long-planned and much delayed bridge that will provide a navigable link between the flowage and Trude Lake is now well on its way to completion. Environmental barriers have been put in place, pilings have been driven to support construction, and the approaches graded. Better yet, the bridge itself—including abutments, steel support beams, and deck are now in place. All this has been accomplished in spite of the fact that the anticipated autumnal low water levels did not materialize as a consequence of some extremely heavy September rains. While the high water may have complicated the process somewhat, it appears that the project is on target for completion this fall. The long-isolated residents of Trude Lake will soon be able to enjoy an additional 13,000 acres of wilderness.



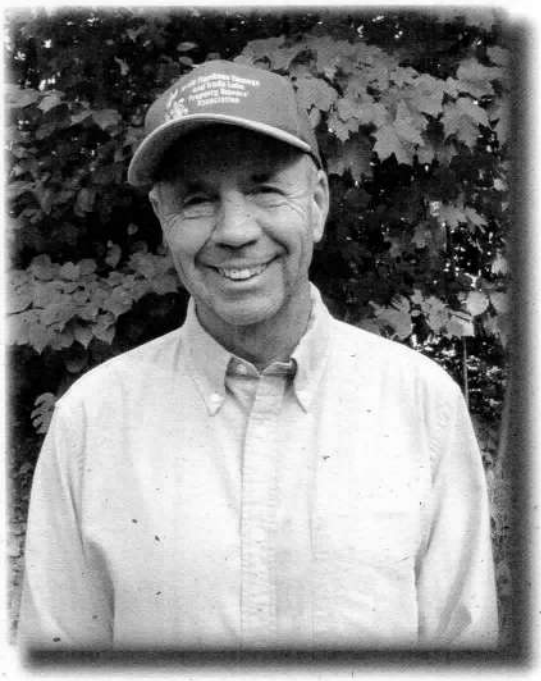
Trude Lake Visible Under New Bridge, But Access Blocked by Anti-Submarine Defenses

Directors' Profiles

On several instances in recent years, members of the association have expressed an interest in knowing more about the backgrounds and interests of members of the association's Board of Directors. We plan to run profiles of directors in each of the next three issues. We hope these profiles will give readers a better sense of those who lead the association. The first three profiles, randomly selected, follow here.

Jim Bohmann - Director

As a lifetime resident of Wisconsin, the allure of Up North has always been very strong, fueled no doubt by the numerous Hamm's "Land of Sky Blue Water" commercials of the 1960's. We built our Springstead (Town Line Lake) cabin in 1991 and became full time residents about 12 years ago.



Jim Bowman with Official Association Cap

I grew up in southern Wisconsin, and after graduating from Marquette University, initially worked as a CPA for a national public accounting firm. The majority of my professional career was devoted to working for a medium size public company in the financial services sector as its chief financial officer, among other responsibilities.

My wife (Sandy) and I enjoy many outdoor activities that our local environment has to offer. High on the list of such items are fishing (anything that bites) as well as deer and bird hunting. I particularly appreciate the solitude found during the deer archery season – even when the freezer remains empty. During the summer months, I spend a fair amount of time on the golf course; however, I chose not to group this hobby with the previously mentioned outdoor activities identified as enjoyable.

Starting in 2007, it was very apparent that our ability to enjoy fishing was seriously hampered by extremely low water levels. These low water levels were caused by a variety of reasons, including noncompliance with the Memorandum of Understanding that governs water levels and outflows. At that time, I joined our association's board with the primary focus of addressing this water mismanagement. Working as an association, with the help of the WDNR, we have made meaningful progress in addressing our water-level concerns. Even so, there is still work to be done.

It has been my privilege to be a member of our association and to have been elected to our board.

Diane O'Krongly - Director

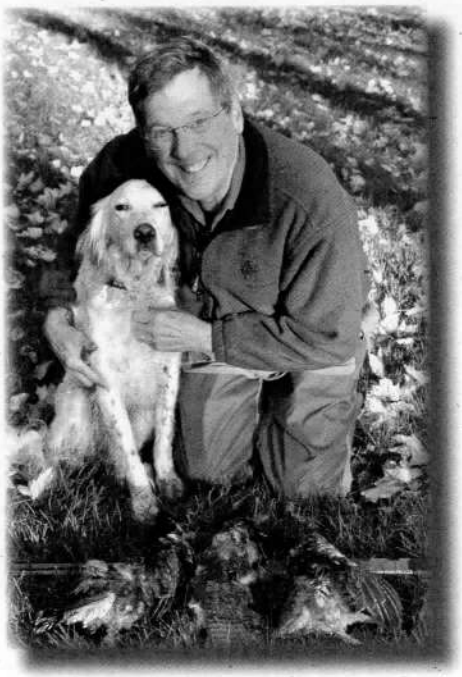
I have lived on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage (TFF) for 18 years. My husband, Jeff, and I moved here from Hurley. Before that we lived in Milwaukee. I teach eighth to twelfth grade students various science courses at the Hurley K12 School.

Jeff and I owned a cottage on Long Lake in Iron County before we moved north, so we had a pretty good sense of the kinds of activities available in the area. We enjoy the outdoors: fishing in our boat, ice fishing with vintage snowmobiles, running, hiking, biking, snowshoeing, kayaking, nature viewing, camping, and sailing. Being a science teacher I know that all parts of an ecosystem are connected to each other. While living in Hurley, we recognized the TFF as a place that fit our lifestyle. We believed that the master plan would ensure that the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area would be protected and retain it wilderness appeal. That's why we moved from Hurley to the flowage.

Diane O'Krongly Kayaks the Flowage

During the years I have been on the TFFTLPOA Board of Directors, including my years of service as Vice President, I have been actively involved in activities to protect the flowage's wilderness nature. I have taken classes to identify aquatic invasive species and have coordinated purple loosestrife surveys and workdays. Along the same lines, I have participated in native plant surveys. Other activities include writing articles for Driftwood, building fish cribs with my students from Hurley, attending conferences about Wisconsin lakes, and organizing a Cabin Fever party for the members of the association.

One year when I was teaching Physical Science I had a small class of all boys. Most of them were avid fishermen. So during a unit on simple machines I decided to have the students design tip-ups or tip-downs that incorporated multiple simple machines in their design. I also thought it would be a good opportunity for the students to do a service learning project while testing out their tip-ups/tip-downs. The association was scheduled to build fish cribs near Donner's Bay Resort. On the day of the crib building, the students set up their tip-ups or tip-downs and monitored them while helping association volunteers and WDNR workers build cribs. I think we built around 20 to 25 cribs that day, had a good meal at Donner's Bay Resort, and even caught a good size northern with one of the student-made tip-ups.



Mike Hittle with Bede

Mike Hittle - Director

I first encountered the Wisconsin northwoods when, as an eleven-year old boy from Indianapolis, I spent a family vacation on Big St. Germain Lake. Muskies, walleyes and northerns quickly replaced pumpkinseeds and rock bass in my fish-crazed brain, and an enduring love for the area was born. Years later, after my studies at Brown and Harvard universities, I returned to Wisconsin on a full-time basis as a member of the history department at Lawrence University in Appleton. I served eight of my thirty five years at Lawrence as the dean of the faculty—a post with a broad portfolio of administrative responsibilities. For a handful of years, I was also an officer of a closely held family corporation.

In 1972, my wife, Marcia, and I purchased a lot on the flowage on Kimmear Road. With our two sons, we camped on the property for six years, during which time we built a road, cleared a cabin site, and had the shell of a cabin erected for us. Thanks to the combined labors of the entire family, the cabin interior was completed in just 20 years. Had there been no walleyes or muskies to catch or ruffed grouse and deer to hunt, we might have gotten the job done a lot sooner, but then one does have priorities.

After retirement, I joined the TFF&TL POA. I served as secretary of the board for five years, and I am co-editor, with Terry Daulton, of Driftwood. I try to bring to my work for the association an approach to the natural world in keeping with the kinds of conservationist notions endorsed by Teddy Roosevelt and Aldo Leopold. That is, I believe we should thoughtfully conserve our resources so that they may be available for use and appreciation not only for ourselves, but also for generations to come. With the endorsement and encouragement of the association board, I have also undertaken to write a history of the flowage, a bigger—but way more interesting—project than I ever imagined.

Shoreline Restoration Moves Ahead

By Chris Paulik, Property Manager, TFSWA

Although spring was late in arriving, causing us to lag behind with a feeling of never catching up, we did manage to get some projects completed on the TFF this summer, thanks to generous volunteer help and to financial support from the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. We started our summer's work by restoring shoreline at several campsites around the Turtle Flambeau Flowage. We re-planted three sites (R13, R26, and F14) and restored site R11 with a couple of stone steps and plantings. We were ably assisted on these projects by students from Mercer Charter School who worked under the guidance of Zach Wilson, charter school educator, and Heather Palmquist, from the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department. The kids gained valuable experience in teamwork and learned the importance of maintaining shoreline and preventing erosion. They were able to mix fun with work by camping out overnight at one of the group sites--enjoying a campfire and the usual s'mores.

Campsite F8 Before Restoration

In addition to these four campsites, we also restored shoreline on campsite F8 (Hotdog Island). Originally we were going to try and tackle this with the students; but upon closer inspection, we realized that hiring professionals would be money well spent. With a generous donation from the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, I was able to hire Brent Hanson from Hanson's Garden Village in Rhinelander to perform the work on site F8. For this project to be feasible we needed a barge to transport rock and topsoil to the site, and we needed the water level on the flowage to drop at least one and a half feet. Thankfully, late August provided the window of opportunity. The flowage dropped two feet and Doug Reed (a flowage resident) was available with his barge. Brent and his crew were able to complete the work just before the major rains arrived in early September. (See the photos of one of two restored areas at that campsite.)

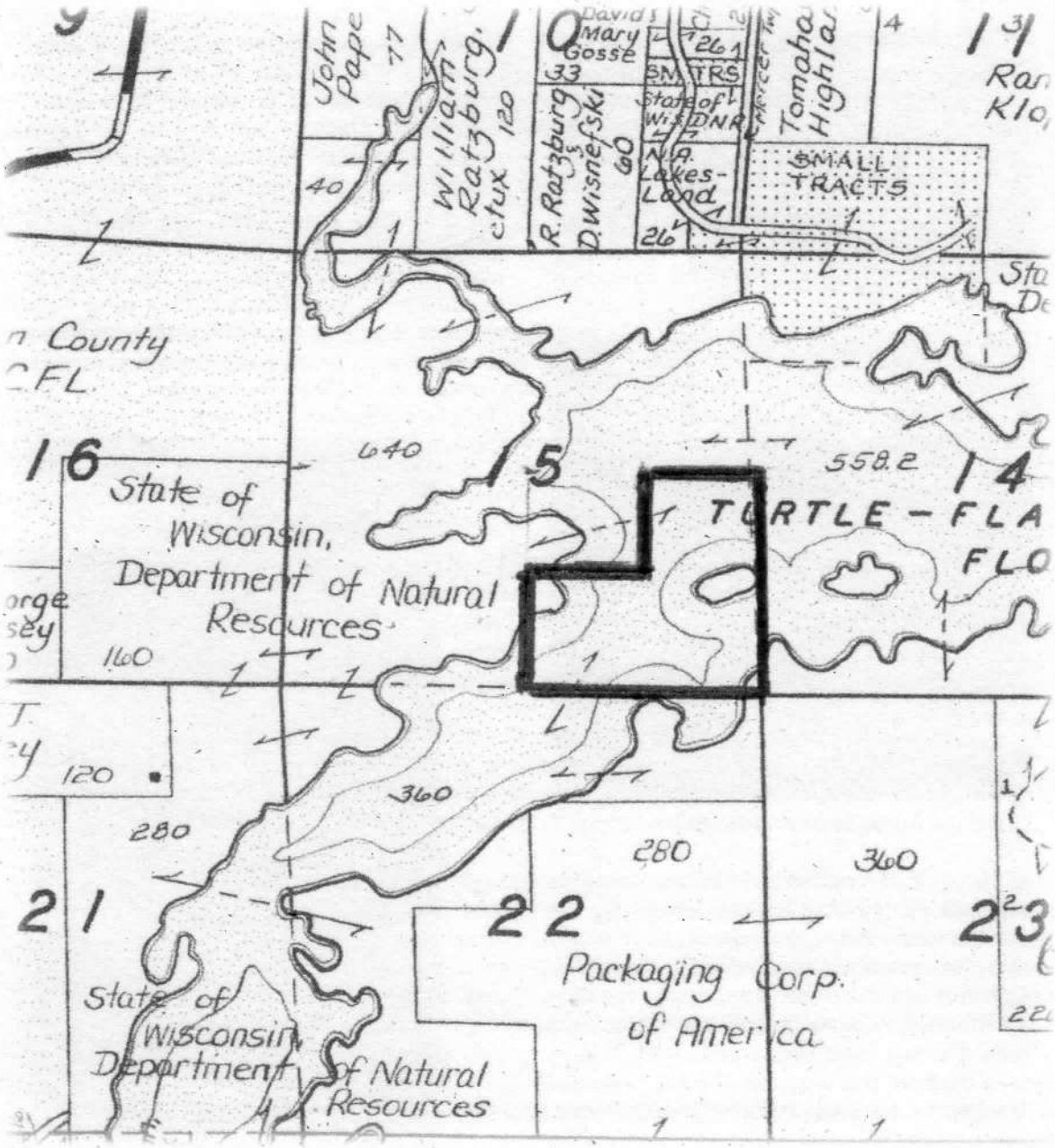
The Natural Resources Foundation also provided funding to purchase metal "You are Here" signs for the hiking/ski trail on the Little Turtle Flowage. Every fall while out mowing the trails, we run into folks who are confused about where they are and unsure how to return to the parking lot. Hopefully folks will find the new signs useful.

A quick note about the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin: they are a statewide tax-exempt, non-profit organization that supports state and local conservation programs and conservation endowments. They manage a donor-advised endowment fund for the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area and have provided funding from it for a number of projects on the property. They are not associated directly with the DNR, but they have helped fund DNR projects. I'm sure we will continue tapping into their grant program to accomplish other projects on the TFSWA.

Campsite F8 After Restoration

Ezra's Parcel

When engaged in their favorite pastimes, flowage anglers have a lot on their minds, such as bait, beauty, bites, beer, and bugs, to name but a few things. And so they can reasonably be excused for not thinking about who once owned the land on which their jigs are bouncing. That said, there are some interesting historical connections that can be made, some of which are worth a moment's contemplation. Ever fish in the vicinity of Pink Rock on the Turtle part of the flowage? Did your thoughts immediately turn to Cornell University, in Ithaca, New York? They should have. For Ezra Cornell, the founder of that university, once owned a 120 acre parcel (marked on this map) that includes the site of the Pink Rock. Profits from the sale of the timber on that land, as well as from the sale of the land itself, helped to finance that well known land-grant university.



Iron County Plat Book

386 N.Y. 453

Examined

The United States of America,

To all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

Whereas, In pursuance of the Act of Congress, approved July 2, 1862, entitled "An Act Donating Public Lands to the several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the benefit of Agriculture and the Mechanic Arts," there has been deposited in the GENERAL LAND OFFICE Scrip No. 2387, for one quarter section of Land, in favor of the State of New York, duly assigned by the proper authority of the said State to Ezra Cornell,

with evidence that the same has been located upon the East Half of the South East quarter of and the South West quarter of the South East quarter of Section fifteen, in Township forty two North of Range two East in the district of lands subject to Sale at Stevens Point Wisconsin: Containing, One hundred and twenty acres according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General:

Now Know Ye, That there is therefore granted by the UNITED STATES unto the said Ezra Cornell as assignee as aforesaid and to his heirs the tract of Land above described: To have and to hold the said tract of Land, with the appurtenances thereof, unto the said Ezra Cornell as assignee as aforesaid and to his heirs and assigns forever.

In Testimony Whereof, I, Ulysses S. Grant, President of the United States of America, have caused these Letters to be made Patent, and the SEAL OF THE GENERAL LAND OFFICE to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the fifth day of August, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty nine and of the Independence of the United States the ninety fourth

L.S.

By the President: U. S. Grant

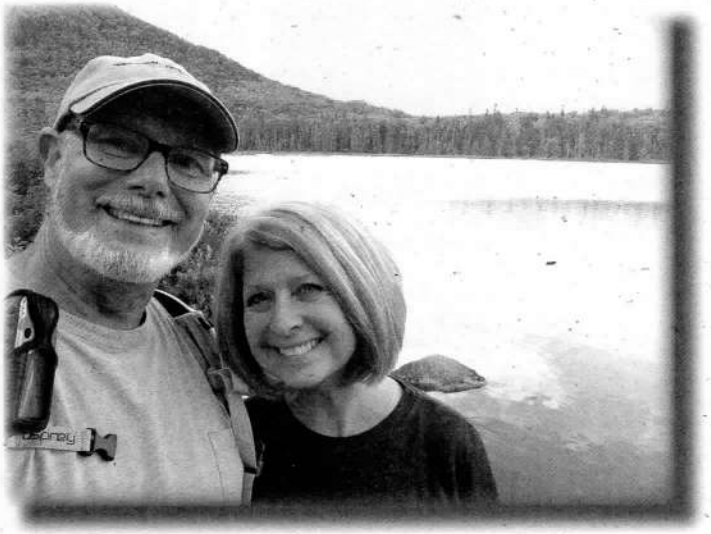
By M. Burnett, Secy.

J. V. Brango, Recorder of the General Land Office.

Ezra Cornell's (Good) Deed

The Best Job in the North Woods

This article is written by Mike and Beth Myers; who have accepted the position of co-chairs for the water quality committee. Mike and Beth live in the Sportsman's Landing area of the flowage (sort of near the dam). They have taken the reins of the committee and are doing a a great job coordinating our volunteer efforts. Thanks to Mike and Beth for their leadership!



Mike and Beth Myers

8/20/2014: "The lake was very calm, glassy. Sky was overcast. A pair of loons with twin chicks was nearby. A little bit of pollen or algae floated in the water. Water has receded about 18" in the last few weeks."

Sounds like a naturalist's journal entry, right? Well, in a way, it is. Jean Burns is just one of the TFF-TL water quality volunteer samplers. By recording her visual observations and impressions while doing her testing, we can form a better picture of the health of our lakes, beyond the quantitative measurements and chemical samples she gathers. These visual observations can answer questions such as, "Do we have abundant wildlife?" Or, "Are there algae blooms that make the lake less pleasant to spend time on?"

Seven sites are monitored on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake. Volunteers who take the samples are:
Trude Lake- Jean Burns and Jeff and Leanne Malison
TFF- Baraboo Deep Hole- Jim Leever and Bill and Sally Stewart
TFF- Murrays- Chris Paulik and Heather Palmquist
TFF- Big Water-Todd and Becky Jirou and Heather Palmquist
TFF- Lake Bastine-Jim Blum
TFF- Townline Lake-Heather Palmquist
TFF- Turtle Inlet-Kit and Gary Bogenschneider and Diane O'Krongly

Water clarity, temperature, chlorophyll (suspended algae) and phosphorus (fertility) levels are recorded at various times from ice out in the spring through early fall. Samples are collected and mailed to the state lab for analysis. The information is entered into a database maintained by the DNR, from which reports and graphs are generated. Gathered over the years, in some locations as far back as 1998, this information indicates whether our lakes are maintaining their health or deteriorating in some way. The data is available at WDNR SWIMS database at: www.dnr.wi.gov/lakes/clmn/

In general, the water on the TFF and Trude Lake has poor to fair clarity readings because of the tannins (brown color) and the amount of algae in the water. As drainage or impoundment lakes, there is significant surface water inflow that brings nutrients and sediments with it. The lakes have a large biomass, (the plants and animals living in the lakes), because of the abundance of nutrients. You might not be able to see the bottom of the lake, but there should be lots of fish hiding there!

The good news is the clarity and amounts of chlorophyll and phosphorus have stayed in relatively the same range since testing began. (See Comparison Chart for 2011 and 2014 data.) If trends develop that suggest deterioration, we can request help from the state to understand what has changed and what can be done to keep our lakes safe and healthy.

Our volunteers are our neighbors. Make sure you thank them for their efforts and dedication, especially Jim Leever. After 17 years as a volunteer, Jim's moving out of the area. He's trained Bill and Sally Stewart as his replacements. We will miss you, Jim!

To understand the comparison chart, here are some definitions for water quality novices.

- Secchi disc – measures water clarity
- Phosphorous – indicates nutrients
- Chlorophyll – measures the amount of algae in the water
- Trophic Index – gives an overall indication of lake health
- Trophic Level – shows where a lake stands from clear and nutrient low to highly productive
- Mesotrophic - moderately nutrient rich and productive
- Eutrophic – extremely nutrient rich and productive
- Oligotrophic- low nutrients, clear and low productivity.

Comparison Chart for 2011 and 2014 Data

Average Water Quality Data by Location Turtle Flambeau Flowage-Trude Lake: 2011 and 2014

Location	Year	Secchi (foot)	Phosphorous (mg/liter)	Chlorophyll (mg/liter)	Trophic Index	Color	Trophic Level
Trude Lake	2011	8.45	17	3.9	45	Clear/Brown	Mesotrophic
	2014	8.38	16.7	3.7	45	Clear/Brown	Mesotrophic
Murrays Landing	2011	3.5	22	2.4	41	Clear/Brown	Mesotrophic
	2014	5	20	2.7	42	Clear/Brown	Mesotrophic
Turtle River	2011	5.45	21.5	6.8	49	Clear/Yellow	Mesotrophic
	2014	4.75	24.5	4.9	47	Clear/Yellow	Mesotrophic
Baraboo	2011	4.75	28.5	10.2	52	Murky/Brown	Eutrophic
	2014	4.13	29.1	9.3	52	Clear/Brown	Eutrophic
Bastine	2011	7.06	17	8.2	51	Murky/Brown	Eutrophic
	2014	5.5	22.6	8.6	51	Clear/Brown	Eutrophic
Big Water	2011	4.58	26.5	11.8	53	Murky/Brown	Eutrophic
	2014	4.56	23.6	13.7	55	Murky/Brown	Eutrophic
Townline	2011	4.13	36.5	10	52	Clear/Yellow	Eutrophic
	2014	3.75	31.6	8.4	51	Clear/Blue	Eutrophic

Recreational Use Survey *Cont'd. from page 2*

We asked Jim Leever, a retired professional survey developer and analyst, to help us create an unbiased survey and tabulate the data. Jim has been a long-standing member of the association and has been involved in two previous member surveys. We wanted to insure that as the recreation issues arise we had the best possible information on our members' views.

Surveys were mailed to all 181 members in early July 2014, with 134 completed surveys returned by August 25th. This is a return rate of 74%. The full report of survey data can be found on our website www.tfftl.org under the News heading.

Here are the survey results in a nutshell. The first part of the survey asked general questions about the members, and about a variety of recreational activities. Thirty nine percent of responses came from full-time residents who vote locally, 61% were from seasonal members. Seventy five percent of respondents have owned local property more than 10 years. Top responses to why property was purchased were fishing, scenic beauty, peace and tranquility and wildlife. When asked about their top 5 recreational activities in the TFSWA, fishing, boating, hiking/walking, hunting, and canoeing/kayaking were top responses. Noise and wetland damage were top concerns if new trails were proposed, followed by dust, trespass, and overcrowding. ATV trails created the highest level of concern.

In order to tease out more detail on attitudes to ATV trails, we added some specific ATV questions. We asked all respondents for their views on ATV use in general. Top responses were concerns about environmental (16%) and aesthetic impacts (15%) and concerns that ATV's would stray from designated trails/routes (15%). In the middle of responses were those who enjoyed ATV riding (8%), used ATV's ice fishing (7%) or work (7%) and those who had safety concerns regarding ATV's(7%). Five percent of respondents indicated they wanted to access local businesses via ATV and 4% of respondent indicated they wanted more ATV trails.

Of those respondents who use ATVs, 72% have property that borders on or has direct access to a current ATV route or trail. More than 70% said that ATV routes in Iron County were good or excellent, and 67% rated ATV trails as good or excellent. It was also interesting to note that more than one-half of those responding as ATV users did not indicate they wanted more ATV trails.

Eighty percent of respondents supported the association continuing to oppose development of new ATV Trails inside the TFSWA. This support was geographically widespread, with Lake Bastine being the only area with less than 75% support for the association position. In addition, a little over half of respondents who are current

Continued on Page 11

Birch

By Chad McGrath

Have you ever seen a white birch forest? White trunks, dappled with horizontal black streaks and patches, reach upward as one. And while they all reach toward the sky, there are no two that do so in the same way, at the same angle, with the same twists and bends and crooks. Each has found its own path skyward, forged its own place in the canopy. Most will be the same age because a pure stand of white birch likely started after a fire or other catastrophe wiped the landscape clean of trees. They raced with one another for a place in the northern sun. Many didn't make it: crowded out by brothers and sister and aunts and uncles. But those that did are marvelous examples of Nature's propensity for uniformity in the midst of diversity.

White Birch Illuminated by Low Autumn Sun

Have you ever touched a white birch? The bark on the same tree may be as smooth as writing paper and as rough as sandpaper. Most larger trees, bigger than 10 inches in diameter, will have hunks of bark that hang from the trunk, old skin, replaced by new as the tree expands its girth. The new patches will be smooth and very white, mostly free of the horizontal stripes that develop as the bark ages. Have you ever listened to white birch? Their leaves interpret the wind. They whisper softly on a sweet summer night; and they warn us, rush us, to shelter during storms. But white birch and wind make sound another way. When there's a stiff breeze, large pieces of bark that hang off the trunks of bigger trees can slap loudly against their trunks, startling campers in their tents.

Have you ever seen leafless, dead limbs on a white birch? The topmost branches can fall victim to the bronze birch borer, an insect whose larva girdle the tree and kill everything above them. But loss of a limb or even an entire top does not necessarily mean death. Often the tree will continue growing, losing its crown, but forming a new one over time from lower branches reaching upward.

Have you ever tasted birch syrup? In the far north, where sugar maple trees don't flourish or even grow at all, places such as Alaska, locals can still make sweet syrup. While certainly not maple flavored, birch syrup is sweet and has been compared to honey in flavor.

Have you ever tasted yellow birch buds? When crushed, the buds have the fragrance and taste of wintergreen. Branchlets and buds, dipped in water and tapped on a sauna heat source, give off a fragrance that can enhance the sauna experience. Or, the same branchlets can be used as switches to lightly flagellate the skin. Birch masochism.

Have you ever written on birch bark? Apparently early Native Americans used charcoal as their writing instruments. Chalk also works and can make wonderful rainbow effects on nature's natural parchment.

Have you ever sawn green birch wood? Whether coarsely or finely cut, the sawdust, almost wet to the touch, emits an unmistakable fragrance, a fresh, slightly sweet smell.

Have you ever cut birch for firewood only to have it rot? It's a hard lesson, learned from experience, that birch firewood must be split because its bark is so effective at holding in moisture. Holding moisture out is why a birch bark canoe floats. More than one novice woodcutter has laid up a fine stack of birch wood only to find after a couple of years that it's useless.

Have you ever split birch? The same miraculous bark that holds in moisture and floats, and that can serve as writing paper, also is tough enough to hold a hunk of split wood together. An accomplished woodsman can set a large chunk of birch wood on end and then split it into 5 or 6 pieces without having to touch the original piece again: split pieces held neatly together and upright by the bark.

Have you ever started a fire with birch bark? There is no better fire starter. The paper-like outside layer, which often hangs from birch trunks like a ragged sock, burns quickly, even when plucked directly off a tree. The inner bark layer is the perfect kindling but needs some drying to be most effective. Can you say "Pyromania"?

Have you ever seen a giant yellow birch? Big yellow birch, often found growing in association with hemlock, can be 4 and up to 6 feet in diameter. There is nothing quite like

Continued on page 11

Recreational Use Survey *Cont'd. from page 9*

ATV users support the association continuing to oppose development of new ATV trails inside the TFSWA.

Our goal in conducting this survey was to make sure that we had a sound understanding of member opinions as new trails in the area are proposed. When board members take positions for the association, we seek to reflect the views of the majority of our members, insofar as those views are consistent with our mission, and not our personal views or the views of individual members. We continue to participate in a committee that is examining the ATV trail proposal at Popko Circle. It is likely that an amendment or revision of the DNR Master Plan would be required for approval of such a trail This would include public comment at a statewide level. For the Popko Circle trail, the ball is in the court of the Dusty Loon ATV club. They need to make a formal proposal to the DNR for a trail—a proposal that includes a map of the proposed route, a statement on the purpose for the trail, letters showing that private land owners on adjacent lands have denied requests, and potentially a linkage to other ATV trail systems. At the last meeting, a potential route was identified which follows Popko Circle East to Hadley Brush Pit Rd, crosses Iron County Forest land and small amount of private land, before running across state land on the north side of the TFSWA. This route has the advantage of relatively few wetlands or river/stream crossings. Private land permission has yet to be obtained. Further discussion identified potential links to other trails following the power line right-of-ways on FF or going up through the Black Lakes to Russell Brothers Road. This potential route is still in preliminary planning stage. Those with interest in details could contact the Dusty Loons for more information. If you have questions about new trails in the TFSWA you can contact Chris Paulik at the DNR. Should this proposal move forward there would be opportunities for public input during permit review and/or master plan revisions.

It was also clarified at this meeting that ATV routes (which are located on existing roads) are not just for local access (as was stated at a Mercer Town Board meeting). The Iron County Forestry Department clarified that it is not possible to regulate who can use a route once it is open. Also, should an ATV trail be developed, it is likely that Popko would need to remain open for ATV use as access from landowners would still be needed.

A spin off result of these meetings is the potential for a broader discussion on recreational trail development in southern Iron County. The association board is hoping our survey will be useful in this broader discussion, helping to inform any planning efforts on the interests and concerns of flowage property owners regarding recreation. Should this broader discussion occur, it could result in more linked bicycle trails, canoe routes, motorized trails, or novel new trails such as winter bikes or birding trails. It could also prevent development of more divisive user conflicts.
We would like to thank the members for taking the time to fill out the surveys. If you would like additional copies of the detail responses, please contact us.

Birch *Continued*

hiking in a thick, dark hemlock woods and spying the trunk of a massive yellow birch looming ahead along the trail. Large reddish-gray plates of bark protect the lower trunk, and as your eyes move up the tree, the bark looks more reddish and more shredded, like fringe on a buckskin coat. Hulking limbs, whose size would make them admirable lawn trees, spread out from the trunk, often 40 feet up the tree.

Have you ever seen a white birch seed or a yellow birch nutlet? White birch produce a prolific amount of seed. Each tree grows thousands of pendulous, cylindrical seed packets about the diameter of a pencil and the length of a small little finger. A type of catkin, they are green at first, ripen to a golden brown and disintegrate as each seed detaches from a central string. In a good seed year, small drifts of seed accumulate on the ground, blown by summer winds. Yellow birch have a similar kind of seed, but arranged in what looks like a small evergreen cone, similar in size and shape to that of a hemlock.

Have you ever seen the leafless, uppermost branches of a white birch pressed against the clear blue sky of late October? It's a glorious sight: a fan of branches narrowing to a thousand little reddish-brown twigs and buds brushing the sky gently as they move in the breeze.

Birch are fascinating, trees, well worthy of study. And here in the Northwoods we have millions of subjects. Tomorrow, take a little time out and study a birch. Go to it, touch it, look up at it, listen to it, smell it. Get close and see what you learn.

TFF-TL POA
PO Box 631
Mercer, WI 54547

Driftwood

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

— 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.

Published Twice Annually

If you would like to contact the Association electronically, please visit our website www.tfftl.org and search under "Board Members-DNR Contacts"