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

Driftwood

Spring/Summer 2015

New Flowage Walleye Regulations

By Zach Lawson, WDNR Fisheries Biologist

Recently there have been a lot of changes in regional walleye fishing regulations: both bag limits and size limits. Most lakes underwent a size-limit change of some sort. However, here on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage, we decided to keep the 'no-minimum' size limit, which seems to be socially preferred and biologically sustainable. Before making any decisions, we assessed the performance of the current size regulation over the last 40 years. After compiling all historic data on the TFF walleye population (1975 – present) we had a long-term record replete with signs of consistency and sustainability. The data suggested that the regulation in place was functioning well on the TFF.

All characteristics of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage favor walleye dominance. Anyone who has spent a day on the TFF knows that this system has low water clarity, vast stump fields, little vegetation, and endless rocky shorelines. This concoction of habitats is the perfect recipe for walleye success. The optical properties of the water are ideal for walleye feeding; the moderately complex woody habitat allows walleye to hide from predators yet effectively find enough food to eat; and the rocky shoreline provides abundant spawning habitat allowing for outstanding reproduction. Additionally, the primary forage base in the TFF is yellow perch, which thrive in similar habitats to walleye, tipping the scales in favor of walleye over their competitors. The physical habitat and fish community composition has allowed walleyes to remain king in the TFF fishery.

We keep close tabs on the TFF, monitoring the walleye fishery as often as possible to track population health and structure. We conduct electrofishing for walleye recruitment success every year, index fyke-netting every-other year (to monitor the sex-ratio of adults, size structure, and catch rate), and conduct a complete population estimate of the walleye population every decade. Methods used in these surveys have not changed much, so compiling data from these surveys would allow us to detect any large-scale changes in the population over time.

Since the first comprehensive fisheries survey of the TFF in 1975, the walleye fishery appears to have remained strong and relatively stable. There was a decrease in walleye numbers from 1975 (112,535) to 1989 (72,967), but since then they have stabilized around 55,000 individuals (or around 4 fish/acre). These densities are above average as compared to other naturally reproducing walleye populations in the state. More importantly, these densities continue to meet the objectives identified in the 2007 TFF Fishery Management Plan where stakeholders indicated a preference for a walleye population characterized by relatively high numbers of fish with an emphasis on numbers over size. This is exactly what we have in the TFF today.

Not only are the adult densities similar, but the size, number harvested, and size of harvested individuals are also similar.

Continued on Page 10

President's Letter

By Terry Daulton

Over the last few months, Wisconsin news has been full of talk about the state budget. Elected officials have been embroiled in heated debates over how tax dollars should be spent and what state programs best serve the needs of citizens. This debate has been particularly interesting to those of us who are concerned about natural resources and lakes.

With the media telling us our country is divided like never before, it is easy to become disillusioned with political leaders. I have noted over the past few years that many of us are even hesitant to talk about natural resources issues with neighbors, fearing that politics, with its rancor and discord, will creep into the conversation and prevent constructive discussion.

Our flowage association is not political, but where does politics leave off and public policy begin? What is the difference between politics and public policy? Perhaps most importantly, what are the responsibilities of citizens and lake associations in guiding natural resources policy? The word politics comes from the Greek word politicos which meant "of, for or relating to citizens". The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines politics as "activity in the affairs of parties which control, or seek to control government." Wikipedia defines public policy as "the principled guide to action taken by the administrative executive branches of the state ...Strong public policy should solve problems efficiently and effectively, serve justice, support governmental institutions and policies, and encourage active citizenship."

The much discussed 2015-17 state budget includes natural resources public policy that could have a significant impact on our state's natural resources and the ability of citizens to learn about and enjoy those resources into the future. In this article, I will argue that the budget is public policy, not politics, and as such should be fair game for our newsletter's discussion forum. I pose this discussion hoping to encourage all of us to learn more and participate more in our local, regional, and state civic life.

For those who are not familiar with the budget process, a quick primer. In Wisconsin, the state agencies put together their budget proposals; the governor sifts and winnows those documents, and presents the legislature with a proposed budget (usually in February). The joint finance committee takes up the budget, seeks public comments at hearings, and makes revisions. This version is passed to either the assembly or senate and is debated, changed and voted on. Then it passes to the other house for debate, changes and a vote. If there are differences in the two houses' versions, (and of course there usually are) they go to a conference committee and a compromise is hammered out. Then back to the houses for a simple yes or no vote. The new version goes back to the governor and he/she can make line item vetoes and edits. The legislature can override these changes with a 2/3 vote, but this is rare. Then the budget is signed, hopefully by July 1. However, sometimes this process takes until the following fall. Like they say, democracy is messy but it's the best we have!

This year, natural resources was in the spotlight with several highly controversial issues. The governor proposed making the Natural Resources Board advisory rather than having authority over DNR policy. This has been rejected by the joint finance committee. The budget also proposed a moratorium on funding for the Knowles Nelson Stewardship program until the year 2028 and called for significant cuts in DNR positions, targeting research scientists and educators. Cuts were also proposed to fisheries, wildlife and many other agency bureaus along with contracts that the state DNR awards partner organizations.

One such partnership slated to be cut was directed at the Wisconsin Lakes Program, which is the partnership between DNR, University of Wisconsin Extension, and Wisconsin Lakes. Wisconsin Lakes is an umbrella organization for lake associations across the state. Their role in the partnership is to review proposed public policy relating to lakes and provide information to the public and lake groups on whether the policy would be good or bad for lakes and why. They also assist counties with lake classification (zoning), and provide assistance and education to lake associations and groups. The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership has been seen as a model across the US and globally, and the cuts to the citizen component of the partnership would be significant.

Other partner groups to receive cuts include environmental education facilities, county forests, river stewardship groups, land conservancies, and ATV and snowmobile associations, to name a few.

Other proposed policy that should concern lake enthusiasts are the cuts to science services in the DNR. At the time of this writing, of the 57 positions in the DNR who received pink slips this past month, 27 were positions in science services. Many of these people work in lake-related research. Nine of those positions are federally funded and have no impact

on the overall state budget. Other noteworthy proposals include elimination of DNR and UW Extension natural resource educators and cuts to state parks.

Consider for a moment where the Turtle Flambeau Flowage would be without the Stewardship Program. In 1990, Governor Tommy Thompson approved purchase of the flowage shorelines from Northern States Power, naming it a "crown jewel" of Wisconsin. The proposed budget halts all land acquisitions under this program until 2028, regardless of the merits or costs of the lands in question.

So what is the good news in this scenario? One aspect is that The University of Wisconsin-Extension part of the Lakes Program is relatively secure. Its funding comes from the motorboat gas tax and that underpinning law has not been changed. This tax also funds the lake planning and lake protection grant program (which supported association projects on the TFF and Trude Lake in the past). In addition, Chapter 33, the state statute that allows for establishment of lake districts is still on the books. This chapter allows for formation of Lake Districts in communities where lakes are threatened by major issues like invasive species or dam removals.

Another hopeful point is that in the 1980's there were similar cuts to lake management, so this belt tightening budget could be seen as part of a cycle in which funding might well increase in future years. Pat Goggin, at the Wisconsin Lakes Program, said "It is not as if the state is out of funds, it is simply a matter of championing your piece of the funding pot". Under this premise, if citizens feel that funding for natural resources is worthy of additional tax dollars, we must speak up. Consider how much conservation work could be funded by the dollars it takes for one mile of highway construction.

Have I answered the question of where politics ends and public policy begins? Maybe not, but I think we may all have a gut feeling about the difference. Our country is built on the idea that average citizens have a right to speak and be heard, and to have a say in how our communities and landscapes are managed. In his famous book, The Lorax, Dr. Suess created a furry green creature with a big mustache, who spoke for the trees when they had no voice. School children have learned to love the Lorax and his message "I speak for the trees". Lakes, rivers, and shorelines can't speak to the state legislature or natural resources agency leaders so I would suggest citizens must "speak for the lakes" and take up a stronger role as stewards for our shared natural resources

This funding cycle and controversy will pass. Loons will nest, walleye will be caught and the sunset over the flowage will continue to inspire. However, it may be time for all of us to stop being armchair quarterbacks and dive into public policy with truth, wisdom and courtesy as our guides.

Portage Provides a Circle Tour of the Flowage

This spring the new portage that was constructed between the flowage and Trude Lake makes it possible for paddlers to do a loop trip from Fisherman's Landing through Trude and Merkle Lakes. The portage route utilizes roads built for logging jobs. Forestry/fire technician, Chuck Norgren, carried out the project to fulfill training time needs on heavy equipment. The new portage crosses Popko Circle between Wilson lake and Trude Lake roads and is marked with canoe portage signs.

Iron County Lakes and Rivers Working on Shoreland Zoning Updates

Editor's Note - This summer the Iron County Comprehensive Planning/Zoning Department will begin a revision of the shoreland zoning ordinance to update the ordinance to meet changes in state law, NR 115. This update will be an opportunity to improve our ordinance to better meet the needs of citizens and natural resources. In preparation for this effort, the Iron County Lakes and Rivers Alliance (ICLRA) formed a nine person committee to do background research and come up with some initial recommendations for the county. Citizens will also have a chance to participate during the update process. The following is an exerpt from a larger document prepared by ICLRA for the zoning department. We have provided a summary here as a quick reference.

After comparing Iron County's current Shoreland Protection Ordinance (SPO) to that of other counties in the north and the statewide minimum standards as outlined in NR115, ICLRA is recommending improvements to the county's SPO. If adopted, these changes will work to protect the beauty of our shorelines, improve water clarity, protect property values, and improve the fishing. The recommendations are based upon successful practices being implemented in other counties in the north. Please keep in mind that landowners can seek a variance in a hardship case.

1. SHORELAND AND ISOLATED WETLANDS

Wetlands provide critical habitat for wildlife, water storage to prevent flooding and protect water quality, and recreational opportunities. Under NR115, shoreland wetland standards apply to all wetlands within the shoreland zone that are greater than 5 acres in size. Some counties have approved more stringent shoreland wetlands standards.

ICLRA Recommendations

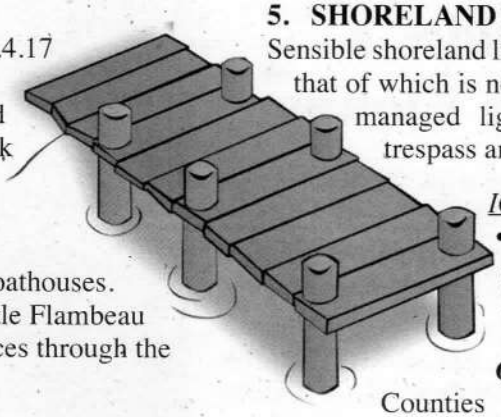
- Wetland Protection for ALL shoreland and isolated wetlands regardless their size (ex. Vilas County)
- Require a 35 foot setback from all wetlands

2. BUILDING SETBACKS

Building setbacks protect health and welfare, preserve natural beauty, reduce flooding and water pollution.

ICLRA Recommendations

- Remove the "permanent" in Section 9.4.17 (A)(1). "All ~~permanent~~ structures, except piers and boat hoists shall be set back seventy-five (75) feet from the ordinary high water mark of navigable waters."
- Do not allow the construction of new boathouses.
- Consider special protection of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and other outstanding resources through the creation of an overlay district.



3. SETBACK AVERAGING

Where an existing development exists, the shoreland setback for a principal structure may be reduced to the average shoreland setback of the principal structure on each adjacent lot, but not reduced to less than 40 feet from the ordinary high water mark. Many counties have chosen not to allow setback averaging.

ICLRA Recommendations

- Do not allow setback averaging (ex. Vilas County)

4. SHORELAND BUFFER PROTECTION AREAS

Natural vegetation abutting lakes and streams protects scenic beauty, controls erosion, provides wildlife and fish habitat, and reduces the flow of effluents and nutrients into the water.. According to NR115, the county must designate buffers, a minimum of 35 feet inland where the removal of vegetation is prohibited with exceptions such as viewing access corridors (VAC). The combined width of all VACs on a riparian parcel may not exceed the lesser of 30 percent of the shoreline frontage or 200 feet.

ICLRA Recommendations

- For clearer meaning refer to "shoreland buffer protection area" as "vegetation and wildlife protection area" or "water and wildlife protection zone."
- Increase minimum "vegetation and wildlife protection area" width to 50 feet inland
- Allow only one viewing area corridor per developed lot. A "filtered view" would be preferable rather than a clear cut.

5. SHORELAND LIGHTING

Sensible shoreland lighting prevents unnessary light beyond that of which is needed for safety. Excessive and poorly managed light results in hazardous glare, light trespass and sky glow.

ICLRA Recommendations

- Shoreland Lighting Ordinance requiring shielded lights to prevent light trespass

6. IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Counties must establish impervious surface standards to protect water quality and fish and wildlife habitat and protect against water pollution. Iron County's

Continued on Page 8

Phenology: Recording Nature's Timetable

By Chad Mcgrath

Years ago a writing instructor told me I should never start a story or article with a word definition. So, now that I have started this piece with his admonition, I can define phenology: periodic biological phenomena that are correlated with climatic conditions. More simply, it is the event datebook of the natural world: Robin, "tweet you on April 2nd. Mosquito, "bite you on May 18th. Morel, "pop out of the ground on June 5th.

Planning this newsletter, we thought readers might be interested in some of the local, Turtle-Flambeau Flowage dates and events in nature's appointment book. Remember, these events are either a date that is arrived at via averaging past dates for an event, or sometimes a single date chosen because it was exceptional due to it being early or late.

On April 14 of this year, the phoebes returned to my house. For the last eight years there has been a phoebe nest under our house eave. The distinctive call is one of the first signs of warming days around my place. The more common harbinger of spring, the robin, is precocious, apt to show up very early, or in some cases not leave at all. Less common here in the north are magnolia trees. But mine burst its first bloom this year on April 29th.

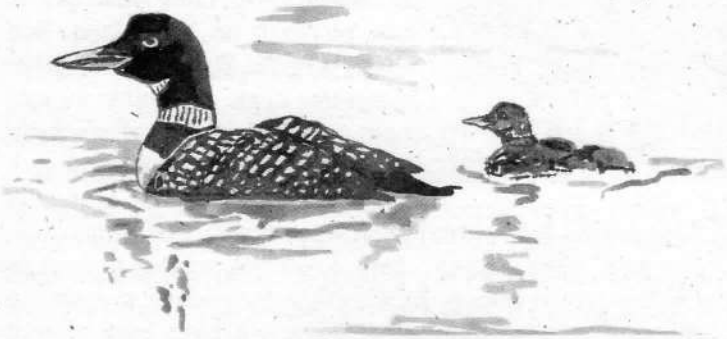


Illustration by Terry Daulton

Here on Fawn Lake in Springstead, as most other lakes in the north, one of the true icons of spring is the arrival of the common loon. It's not unusual for folks who reside lakeside to keep a record (a phenology) of spring loon arrival. Loons almost literally push the lake ice away, they follow so closely behind its melting. This year there was a loon on Fawn Lake on April 16th, about four days after most of the ice had melted.

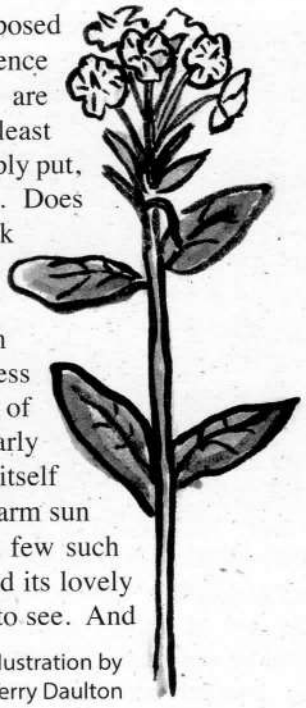


Illustration by Terry Daulton

Daily meteorological (as opposed to climate) events often influence phenological events. They are not perfectly related, but at least seemingly correlated. More simply put, it's like the chicken and the egg. Does Mrs. Robin have an internal clock driving her north, or does the latest snowstorm change her plans? Does that tulip leaf push its way out of the ground regardless the weather? The answer is: sort of both. In the case of the tulip, early in the spring it will wait, show itself until there's an opening, until warm sun creates warm air. And given a few such days the tulip will hold itself and its lovely flower up above the soil for all to see. And then, here in the north, cold wind and air blows in from Canada and at a temperature of about 25 degrees for a few hours, usually overnight, the flower's stem freezes and by the following afternoon there lies a lovely bloom, sadly touching the ground, prostrate and doomed to rot.

We have spent enough time discussing early spring and its attendant events. How about late spring and summer, about the time of year when this newsletter hits the mailbox. According to Terry Daulton, our local and regional authority on all things loon, the first loon eggs hatch in mid-May and into early June, about the same time the bog laurel and bog rosemary come into bloom.

June is when the more showy flowers start to show up. Black-eyed Susan and blue flag iris bloom in mid-June, hawkweed a little earlier. Also in June, spiderwort, some orchids, and fruit trees are blooming.

The TFF&TLPOA web page has a phenology page. However, I find only three entries, all a couple of years old. After speaking with a number of people who live on the flowage, I find not many people keep phenological records. If you're interested, why not make some observations and report them on the web page this year?

Time for me to head outside and see what's happening. The red maples are almost ready to bloom.

Lake Bastine Osprey Get Housing Assist

If you boat around the Lake Bastine area of the flowage you have probably enjoyed the view of osprey fishing or the sound of an irritated adult osprey chipping at you should your boat pass too close to its nest on "Dee's Island." For many years, the tree-top nest of the Bastine pair has set in the top of a white pine on the west shore of the biggest island in Bastine. Like many of the historical nesting sites on the flowage, this nest was built on an artificial nest platform which was installed by the DNR during the time when osprey were listed as a threatened species in Wisconsin. This past winter, the nest tree blew down in a storm.

During the 1980-and 90's, DNR wildlife staff John Olson and Jeff Wilson maintained a number of artificial platforms on the flowage and area lakes. At one time over 22 pairs of osprey nested on the flowage and Trude Lake. The DNR has banded ten adult birds and just over 500 chicks from osprey nests with the goal of tracking their survival and return each year. (Osprey migrate each winter as far away as South America). However, osprey numbers have been on the decline and only three chicks have ever been observed returning to their natal areas. Four chicks have returned elsewhere in the region, but ten mortalities have been observed in South America. Statewide ospreys are doing well, and are no longer listed as a threatened species. However, on the flowage, the frequent sight and sounds of osprey are not as common.

Osprey delivers building material to Lake Bastine nest. A new home, but already being remodeled.

Possible reasons for the decline in osprey numbers include poor health in nestlings, which appear to have low weights compared to nestlings in other parts of the state. This might in part be due to the dark stained waters making fishing harder for the osprey that rely on sighting fish in the water. In addition, over the years, the bald eagle population has increased, and many traditional osprey territories on the flowage have been taken over by eagles. Eagles begin nesting earlier than osprey and can lay claim to the best housing before osprey return to the breeding grounds.

The remaining osprey are often harassed by eagles, and have had reduced success in raising young. Eagles chase the osprey, steal their catches, and in general keep the osprey busy defending their nests instead of hunting for prey. The decline may be due to the fact that the improved housing (artificial platforms) made the neighborhood too good, drawing osprey into an increased competition with eagles. Jeff Wilson believes that placing platforms on smaller adjacent lakes and beaver ponds may help reduce conflict and bring back the numbers of nesting pairs.

So, back to the state of osprey housing on Bastine. In March, the Turtle Flambeau Association (business association) contacted Wilson, alerting him to the fact that the osprey nest tree in Bastine had fallen. They offered to fund a replacement should a suitable alternative tree be found. Wilson contacted the DNR wildlife biologist at Mercer, Sam Jonas, and they planned a field trip to scout a location. Retired DNR biologist, Bruce Bacon, and tree climber, Ben Farmer also assisted with the project.

In March, the crew installed a new platform on the island, and as of April the osprey were active incubating eggs. The birds took to their new and improved platform and hopes are high for chicks.

This project has spurred interest in creating additional "off-flowage" nesting sites. Sam Jonas has written a grant to the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology seeking support for the work. In addition, other donations have been offered by private individuals and groups. TFF&TLPOA has been approached with the idea of providing funding and have requested further information once grant funds have been clarified.

So, if you are boating in the Bastine area this summer, make sure you bring binoculars and check the new improved osprey platform. Other flowage nests are usually found on Trude Lake, at Deadhorse Lake, and at Grant Creek near Murrray's Landing.

Profiles of Board Members

In the last issue, we began a series of profiles of members of the association's Board of Directors. The second installment of that series follows.

Tom Mowbray, Treasurer

As I child I grew up taking family vacations and chasing walleyes, bass and panfish on Lake Namekagon, near Cable Wisconsin. Ever since, I dreamed of having my own "up-north" place. In 1998 I was able to fulfill that dream when I retired and purchased a home near Springstead Landing on the TFF. I have been a full-time Springstead resident since 1999.

Beneath the looming Springstead ore dock, Tom Mowbray smiles approvingly at a fabulous smallie.

Like many others, I am a transplant to the northwoods. I grew up in southern Wisconsin and graduated from UW-Whitewater. My business career was in the retail industry, initially in suburban Chicago, after which I moved to Janesville to work in the home office of a chain of retail "farm-stores." My duties varied greatly over the years, ending as Executive-VP with oversight responsibility for many administrative functions of the business (HR, IT, Accounting/Finance, Risk Management, etc.).

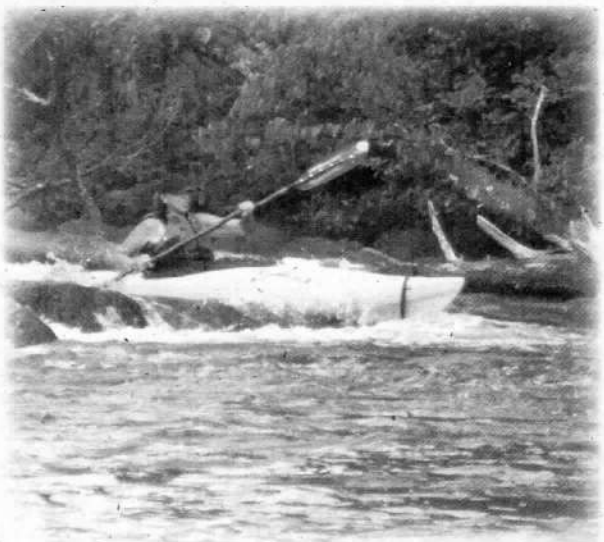
My time in Springstead has been enjoyable and busy. In addition to lots of fishing, I volunteered with town government in Sherman where I was Chair of the Land Use Planning Committee and Chair of the Sherman Planning Commission. I helped to start a Medical First Responders group in Sherman where I am the Secretary-Treasurer, and I also chaired the Iron County Lakes Alliance for 2 years.

Shortly after I moved north, long-time members, Jim and Val Leever, got me involved in the association. I have served on the Board since 2000, first as a director and then as treasurer since 2005. I have many great memories of association projects, including helping to build fish-cribs, working with Jim Bohmann on water-level issues, cruising TFF shorelines looking for purple loosestrife and helping with the "walleye-watch" at Lake-of-the Falls County Park in the spring.

Over the years I have been fortunate to work alongside many talented people who are very committed to the both the association and to the TFF area in general. I feel lucky to live in such a special place and encourage everyone to continue caring about the TFSWA and all the wonderful things it has to offer.

Sandy Gitzlaff, Director

I was first introduced to the flowage in 1975 when my parents (Earl & Dorothy Gitzlaff) bought Al's Place which was later called Fort Flambeau. I was in college at the time and it was "decided" I would be helping at the resort. That summer I learned many things: 1) you put warm clothes in the back of the closet--not away; 2) leeches and night crawlers come in bulk; 3) mixing gas for our former speed boat was more enjoyable than mixing gas for a fleet of fishing boats; 4) life was easier after I learned to use two wringer washers simultaneously; 5) Earl had a head start on gender equality as it didn't make a difference what sex you were when it came to fish guts, garbage, and clogged sewer lines; 6) I hated large bells--Earl went from a crew of 200+ to a crew of five, and each of us had our own special ring.



Sandy Gitzlaff, northwoods character in training, between a rock and a hard place.

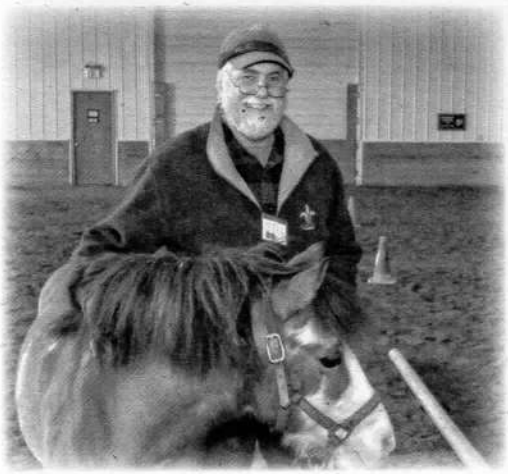
What I have with the flowage is history. I was lucky enough to know the legends and characters. We were taken under many a wing. My children learned how to fish, navigate, and respect an awesome body of water from the best. We have witnessed line drive winds, tornados, the disappearance of logs jams, change in water color, GPS keeping people from getting lost, the beginning of spear fishing, high water, low water, the purchase of the flowage (the dedication was at our resort), fish surveys launched by us, etc. etc. etc. Even with changes that have occurred and ones that will

continue to come, the flowage is unique and beautiful.

Now this is VERY frightening. Definitely more for me than anyone else. With each passing year, I am becoming more entrenched in the oldie status. The upside is maybe then I will become a character. When my grandchildren were born, they became the fourth generation of Gitzlaff's to enjoy this body of water.

Oh, I almost forgot. My activities are: kayaking (rapids being most enjoyable), floating on inflatable rafts, gardening, hiking, snowshoeing, pickleball, biking, throwing tennis balls in the water for my dog, reading, and sitting on my adirondack chair with organic green tea watching the sun and moon rise while listening to the sounds of the water.

Bill Stewart, Secretary



Bill Stewart thanks a favorite therapy pony.

Bill and Sally have visited the flowage since the late 1970's when best friends bought a home near the Springstead Landing. They became frequent guests there during all seasons and fell in love with being on the flowage. They purchased their home on Simmons Road in 1998, joining four of Bill's teaching colleagues who already owned homes in Springstead. Bill and Sally enjoy being in their flowage home through the summer and intermittently the rest of the year. Their children and grandchildren love the home and life on the flowage too.

Bill and Sally grew up in the northern suburbs of Chicago, earned BS and MS degrees from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and returned to Illinois to work. In June of 2000 Bill retired from New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois after 34 years as a social studies teacher and track and cross country coach. Bill has been active as an adult in Boy Scouting since 1983, and serves on leader training staffs, the Council Camp Assessment Team, and is a member of his Council's "Emeritus Board." In 1987, through the Sister Cities program of Wilmette, Illinois, Bill and an Australian Teacher from Mona Vale, Australia established a student exchange program which will end this summer after 25 years. 196 students and 12 teachers have been exchanged between New Trier High School and Pittwater High School in Mona Vale. In addition, Bill volunteers as a leader, side walker and groom at Equestrian Connection, a barn in Lake Forest, Illinois, that provides equestrian therapy to special needs populations. Sally serves there as an instructor, field trip leader and volunteer as well.

In Springstead, Bill enjoys fishing. He and Sally paddle around in kayaks or canoes, search for purple loose strife, enjoy pontoon boat rides, campfires, and golf with family and friends, and find new ways to improve the house.

Bill is currently in his second term on the association board and serves as secretary. He and Sally just became part of the water-quality testing program on the flowage this spring.

Iron County Shoreland Zoning

Continued from Page 4

SPO currently makes no mention of impervious surfaces. ICLRA wishes to work with Zoning staff to determine what is best for our county.

7. MITIGATION

A mitigation plan is required for the expansion of nonconforming structures, replacement/relocation of nonconforming structures, and exceeding maximum impervious surfaces standards. There is no mention of mitigation in Iron County's SPO. ICLRA wishes to work with Zoning staff to determine what is best for our county.

8. LANDOWNER CONSULTATION AND SITE INSPECTIONS

NR115 does not require a minimum number of landowner consultations or site visits. Site visits enable staff to prescribe mitigation measures possibly saving the landowner time and money. At a bare minimum, a septic inspection should be required on all riparian lots prior to sale.

9. STAFF AND RESOURCE NEEDS

A strong ordinance is only as good as the staff and resources available to educate the public and implement the ordinance. The county has limited resources. Many counties seek a Lake Planning Grant from the DNR to help fund Zoning Department and the Land and Water Department in conducting on site consultations, mitigation monitoring and public outreach (ex. Langlade/Lincoln). Counties also incorporate the cost of site visits into the permit fee structure (ex. Langlade).

If you are interested in following this public policy as it is updated, please contact the Iron County Planning and Zoning Department at www.ironcounty.gov

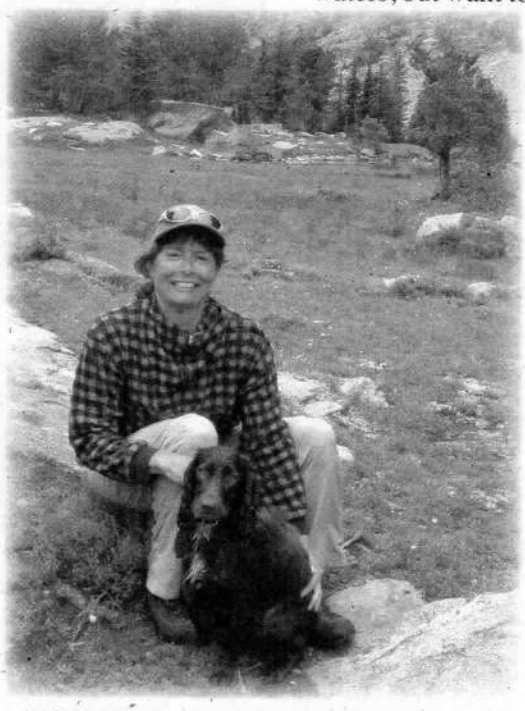
Paulik Picks Preferred Path

By Mike Hittle

In April of this year, Christine Paulik, Property Manager of the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area and long-time presence at the Mercer Ranger Station, retired from the Wisconsin WDNR and headed back to her beloved woods—this time as a forestry consultant.

Chris came to Mercer in July of 1991 to serve as a forester. Initially, she split her attention between public and privately held lands; but soon her portfolio of state lands occupied her full time. These included the Hay Creek-Hoffman Lake Wildlife Area, the Underwood, scattered parcels near the Bad River, and, of course, the TFSWA—an area that totaled some 42,000 acres.

Following the state's purchase of the flowage, Chris undertook fieldwork to establish baseline data about forest resources in the newly created scenic area. That information in turn figured into the creation of the forestry section of the Master Plan for the TFSWA. As she puts it, "I had the luxury of setting goals for the Master Plan," which means, in effect, that the landscape of the flowage area will bear the stamp of her work well into the future.



Chris Paulik and Gert pause to take in some Big Sky country.

In August of 2009, Chris became Property Manager of the TFSWA pursuant to the retirement of the previous holder of the position, Roger Jasinski. Her intimate knowledge of the area was to serve her well in the following summer, when devastating tornadic winds ripped across the flowage. Chris helped to supervise the rescue of campers, assessed damages to campsites, located places for new ones, and worked tirelessly to get the facility back up to speed in a remarkably short time.

One long-range consequence of her involvement in the aftermath of the tornado was a commitment to campsite restoration—particularly those sites suffering from severe erosion. For Chris, this program, which is ongoing, was one of the highpoints of her five and a half years as Property Manager. One might also add, speaking of highlights, Chris's creation of a portage trail between Trude Lake and a northerly arm of the eastern part of the flowage. One suspects this will quickly become known as the Paulik Portage, though she is too modest to make that suggestion.

In spite of efforts by Chris and her predecessor to upgrade launching and camping facilities, within the framework of the Master Plan, use of campsites seems to be declining. Chris can remember only one weekend—and that an opening weekend-- during her stint as Property Manager when all 60 sites were occupied. Indeed, last fourth of July, when the weather was good, if a bit cool, she and Warden Meade had a hard time finding six campers. Explanations for this decline likely involve changing patterns of recreation, work, and family life. The most consistent group of campers seems to be those who hope some day to take on the boundary waters, but want to try the flowage first to get a true measure of their skills and level of enthusiasm.

Chris feels that there are two, essentially interrelated challenges facing the flowage property. First, there is the ongoing need to manage people: that is to make sure that they are not negatively impacting the resource by indifference to the fragility and vulnerability of some natural settings. That concern applies as much to those who would seek to expand ATV use into the TFSWA as to those who think it cool to slide down an eroding island bank. Secondly, the flowage needs a full-time warden who can be a regular presence on the flowage throughout the camping season. There will always be a need, she argues, for someone with law enforcement credentials to deal with such issues as over-numbering, noise, messing up campsites and the like. Temporary appointees, Chris says, are expensive to hire and to train, and often leave for other posts just when they are experienced enough to do the job well.

Graciously, Chris mentioned working with the TFF&TLPOA, Inc. as one of the highlights of her job. "Honestly, they're a great partner." For sure, the feeling is mutual. Chris has promptly responded to our concerns, patiently provided reliable information in a world of rumor, contributed often and well to our newsletter, and has been a candid friend and true partner in our endeavors. We wish her all the best as she picks up her measuring stick, can of blue spray paint, and notebook, and heads out amongst Iron County's trees, "who" as she was quick to remind me with a twinkle in her eye, "do not talk back."

Iron County Conservation Projects

By Zach Wilson

Spring has sprung in Iron County and each spring the Iron County Land and Water Conservation Department gears up for a very busy field season. Over the years, the Department has received several grants to help fund projects dealing with land and water conservation. This year they will be working under the Wisconsin DNR's (WDNR) Lakes Protection Grant, WDNR Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring Grant, which is in partnership with Xcel energy, and the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake Property Owners Association. Also, this year the Department has received a Natural Resource Foundation Grant which will allow the Department to expand its monitoring efforts for aquatic invasive species from the Turtle Flambeau Flowage to area watershed lakes, focusing on the Springstead area. Starting Memorial Day week three summer staff will be posted at boat landings on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage and Trude Lake, conducting boat inspections and collecting data on general Aquatic Invasive Species awareness through the Clean Boats Clean Waters program. Two days a week this same staff is also tasked with monitoring for invasive species on the flowage and on area lakes near the flowage.

You may see our dedicated summer staff sitting at a boat landing or slowly boating along the shore line, throwing a rake with a line attached to it to pull in aquatic plants and look for invasives. Please take a moment and thank them for monitoring our lakes and for doing their part in keeping the lakes of Iron County healthy.

Citizen Lake Monitoring for aquatic invasive species and general water quality monitoring on Iron County lakes has been a successful program for many years. With nearly 100 trained and dedicated volunteers, Iron County citizens will be surveying around 30 lakes on a weekly basis throughout the field season.

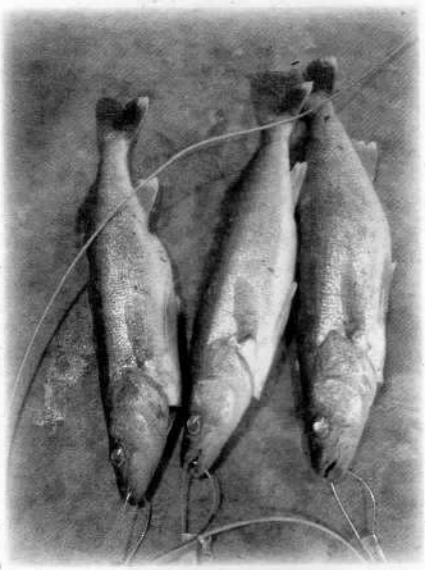
In addition, to monitoring our lakes and rivers the Land and Water Conservation Department also hosts a summer lecture series called "Conservation on Tap" hosted at "The Pines" in Mercer. This year's topics include Iron County Ospreys, Wisconsin's Bats, Our Beloved Common Loon, Turtle Flambeau Flowage History, and Moose on the Loose in Iron County.

If you would like to be a Citizen Lake Monitoring Volunteer, host a training session for your lake association, or get involved with becoming a Healthy Lakes and River Advocate, please contact our Department at 715-561-2234. For a more detailed list of our Departments programs and a calendar of events, check out our website at http://ironcountylcd.org/.

Zach Wilson is the new Conservation Specialist at the Iron County Land & Water Conservation. He comes to this position with a strong background in environmental education and natural resources management. He was staff naturalist at North Lakeland Discovery Center for 12 years and a forest ecologist for the Board of Comissioners of Public Lands. He can be reached at (715) 561-2234 or zach@ironcountywi.org • http://ironcountylcd.org

New Flowage Walleye Regulations

Continued from page 1



The average size of all adults observed in our netting surveys over the last 40 years consistently ranged from 13.8"-14.6". With a high-density walleye fishery where the average fish is 13"-14", you can count on some walleyes going home! And, annually, between 10% to 20% are taken home by anglers (up to 35% harvest is considered 'safe-harvest'). The average size of these harvested walleyes (from 1992-2009) range between 13.6"-14.6." These numbers are all indicative of a sustainable harvest fishery.

Perhaps most importantly, we tend to see high recruitment in our fall electrofishing surveys. Like any highly productive walleye fishery, we see 'ups' and 'downs' in the number of baby walleye out on the TFF in the fall, but the 'downs' in these cycles merely provide growing room for the next year class of walleyes. This high recruitment rate is a function of the expansive rocky shoreline available throughout the flowage and ideal cover for hiding and feeding during their first summer of life.

After compiling all of this historic data, it was clear that the TFF walleye population has functioned as a sustainable fishery for decades, and has a stable foundation going forward. Two primary factors hold the key to the future of the TFF walleye population: the favorable walleye habitat and the high recruitment rates. As long as there are no large-scale habitat changes (e.g., invasion of Eurasian watermilfoil), and as long as recruitment rates continue as in years past, the TFF should support a productive walleye fishery regulated under a 'no-minimum' size limit. Of course, we will continue to monitor these population characteristics closely to be on the leading edge of any changes that may occur. For now, I encourage everyone to get out there and enjoy the outstanding walleye fishery right here at our fingertips!

Natural Resources Foundation Funds Projects on TFF

Did you know that the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin has a grant program specifically designated for projects on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage? Funded by an anonymous donor, the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area Fund has given out more than $20,000 since it was established in 2006. This year the NRF has disbursed funds to three key conservation projects aimed at protecting and enhancing this special place: campsite restoration; basic research, and combatting aquatic invasive species.

This year's NRF agenda, in greater detail, is as follows:
Campsite Lakeshore Restoration ($1,035): This project intends to restore eroded shoreline at several of the campsites on the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area, some of which are severely eroded. The DNR will work with students at the Mercer Environmental Tourism Charter School to restore one site.

Seed Availability Research ($1,500): University of Wisconsin-Madison zoology graduate student Jennifer Chandler is leading a project that is looking at the relationship between predator species, their prey and the abundance of seeds their prey feed on. Two of the study sites are located within the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area and will help inform forest management by understanding how complex interactions between species such as wolves, coyotes, foxes, and rodents can impact tree growth.

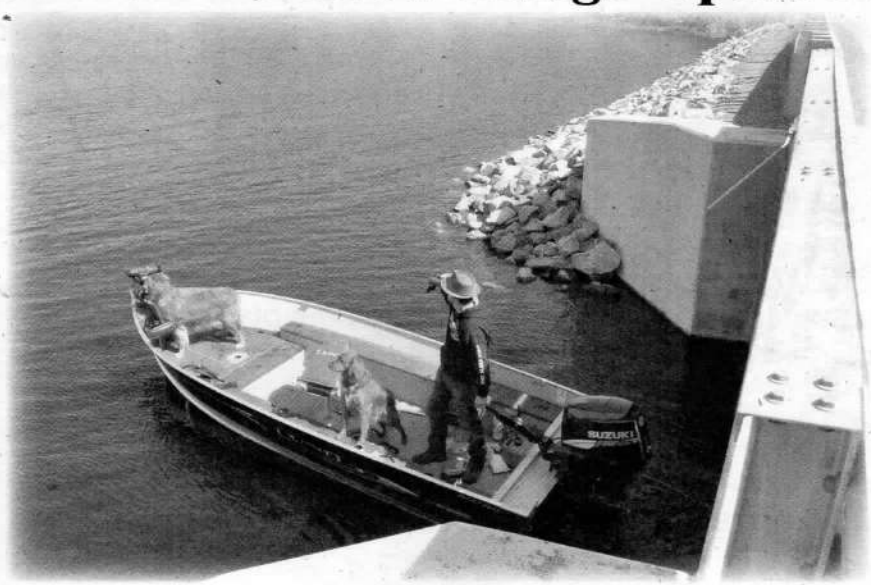
Invasive Species Monitoring ($3,000): With this grant, the Iron County Land & Water Conservation Department will be able to expand its aquatic invasive species education and monitoring efforts. For the past four years, staff has focused on survey work and boat inspections on the Turtle Flambeau Flowage itself, but they have not been able to do much invasive species monitoring work across the rest of the watershed. Such broader monitoring may help prevent the spread of invasive species.

The Foundation announces donor-advised competitive grants, including the Turtle Flambeau Scenic Waters Area Fund, in December of each year. Interested organizations can ask for more information on how to apply by emailing *grants@wisconservation.org*.

"By providing funding to the groups doing the on-the-ground conservation work, we're helping to ensure generations will be able to enjoy this legacy land well into the future," said Ruth Oppedahl, executive director of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. "The Turtle Flambeau Flowage is one of Wisconsin's most beloved and important natural areas—and we aim to help keep it that way. We hope this endowment inspires others to consider establishing endowments for places they cherish."

The Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin works with donors to set-up permanent endowments for places dear to them. These endowments benefit 68 places in Wisconsin, including the Turtle Flambeau Flowage, Brule River, Devil's Lake State Park, Cherokee Marsh, Lower Wisconsin River, Parfrey's Glen and other public lands, as well as organizations such as the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks. Learn more at *www.wisconservation.org*. In 2014, the Foundation provided more than $140,000 to the DNR for work on public lands management and rare and endangered species.

New Bridge Opens New World



Unidentified explorer and associates, believed to be members of the Trude Lake Society for Exploration and Annexation, scout huge body of water lying to the west.

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"