

# Lake Lines

**Burnett County Lakes & Rivers Association**

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## Burnett County Shoreline Incentives

by Cheryl Clemens

### Program Innovations

Burnett County offers property tax credits and additional financial incentives for water-front property owners to restore and preserve a minimum 35-foot deep shoreline buffer of natural vegetation. The Shoreline Incentive Program is supported by grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Since the program began in 2000, over 42 miles of natural shoreline have been preserved on 601 parcels. Recent program innovations to encourage participation and stormwater management are highlighted below.

### Lake Association Events

Lake Association events increased interest in technical assistance site visits (the backbone of SIP program delivery) in 2007. The **Lipsett Lake Association** sponsored a three-hour native planting workshop on June 23, 2007. They invited lake residents to participate via their newsletter, and participants were offered on-site technical assistance to troubleshoot native planting concerns.

The **Big Wood Lake Association** scheduled site visits for landowners interested in learning more about reducing runoff from their property and planting native plants. The project consultant visited these ten landowners in two days of visits to Wood Lake.

The Big Wood Lake Association also sponsored an open house at the lake home of Jack and Susan Church. Jack talked about their open house at the annual meeting in early June, and the Lake Association sent out an invitation in late July. The August 3<sup>rd</sup> open house attracted over thirty lake residents who spoke with the Church's and county staff about the water quality practices they've installed. According to a lake association representative "This is probably one of the most effective activities our association has been involved with."

The Church's water quality projects started with a buffer zone that was required in 2004 when they decided to build onto their lake home. These water quality conscious owners then installed a rock trench to capture water from the roof and rain gardens to catch runoff water from a cul-de-sac behind their house. They did the work themselves. Both of their waterfront parcels are enrolled in the Shoreline Incentives Program. Their next project will be to convert their driveway to porous pavers. A second rock trench underneath a deck and a rain barrel will capture the remainder of the water from the roof following installation in 2008.

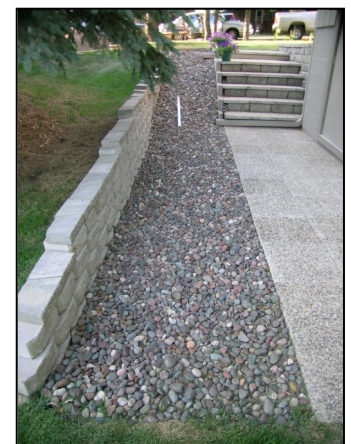
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**Black Chokeberry in  
Buffer Zone**



**Rock Trench Captures  
Roof Runoff Water**

## President's Column

# "It's Our Choice"

by Roger Noe

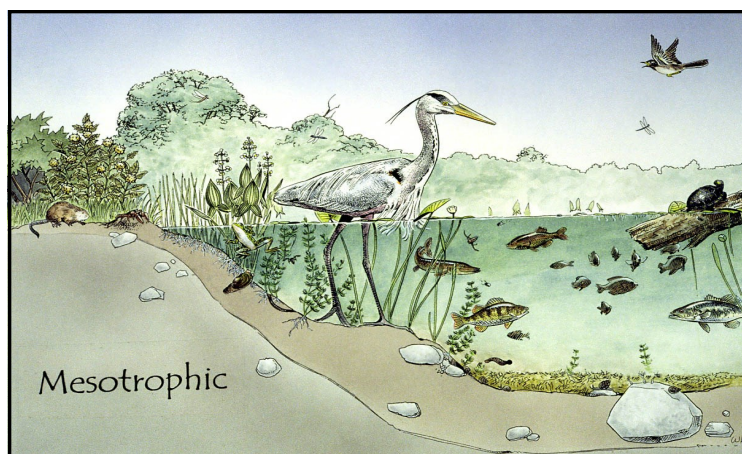
Some 50+ years ago, I hit the shores of North Sand Lake, thanks to my parents and Uncle Les. Traveling from Peoria, Illinois was like a three-day marathon to a place called Wisconsin where the roads were beautiful, the grass very green and the fish plentiful.

I will never forget my first view of this beautiful lake the feeling it gave me. I had never seen this kind of beauty nor experienced this feeling of "WOW." To say the least, it was a lasting impression -- a lasting impression that brought the Noe family to northern Wisconsin.

Like all of life, things are changing in our northwoods. The change that comes is one which requires serious attention. Are you aware of the VHS fish virus? The Viral Hemorrhagic Septecemia Virus is a real threat to our fish population, as it can easily spread among fish based on mans' travels. The AIS (aquatic invasive plant species) issue in Wisconsin lakes, threatens the water quality for all. The Shoreline Restoration Initiative in Wisconsin has arrived for a reason. We are destroying our lake shorelines, which are the habitats for fish, frogs, turtles and forms of aquatic wildlife.

This list could go on indefinitely. The point is that, if we care about these places we call "The Lake," "The Cabin," or "The Land," we will pay attention to their needs. For what they have given to us, should we not give back to them?

Make it a point, this summer, to pay attention to the nature we love. Spend time with your children, grandchildren, etc., teaching them that this place called "The Cabin" is not a free ride. Pass on to them appropriate etiquette and knowledge required of all participants in our wonderful world of nature.



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# Revised VHS Rules For Boaters and Anglers

The following new laws apply to all anglers and boaters in Wisconsin:

- ☐ You must drain all water from boats, containers and fishing equipment when leaving any state waters, banks or shores, or entering Wisconsin over land. This does not apply to any drinking water or up to 2 gallons of water being used to hold minnows that can be legally transported.
- ☐ You may not transport any live fish or live fish eggs away from any state waters. There is an exception for minnows obtained from a Wisconsin bait dealer. These minnows may be transported away live and used again:
  - o On the same water, or
  - o On any other waters if no lake or river water, or other fish were added to their container.
- ☐ You may not use dead fish, fish eggs, or fish parts as bait. There are three exceptions:
  - o You may use dead fish, fish eggs, or fish parts as bait on any waters if they were preserved by a method that does not require freezing or refrigeration, or
  - o You may use unpreserved or just frozen dead fish, fish eggs or fish parts as bait on the water from which they were collected or on Lake Michigan or Green Bay (and connecting waters upstream to the first barrier impassible to fish), or
  - o Live minnows that die during a fishing trip may be used during that fishing trip (they may not be used on later trips unless you meet the two conditions above).
- ☐ You may not possess or use minnows for bait that are obtained outside of Wisconsin. This does not apply if the minnows were imported under a Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) permit, or if they were obtained from Iowa or Minnesota and are being used only “between the tracks” on the Mississippi River.

## Anglers who harvest wild bait for personal use

- ☐ VHS affected waters are closed to all minnow harvesting (currently these include Lake Michigan, Lake Superior, the Mississippi River, Lake Winnebago, Fox River from Lake Winnebago to Green Bay, and all connecting waters upstream to the first barrier impassible to fish). The only exception is that suckers (which are legally considered to be minnows also) can be taken but may not be transported away alive.
- ☐ On other waters, minnows may be taken for personal use but may not be transported alive away from the water, or by Wisconsin bait dealers under a DNR wild bait harvest permit.
- ☐ People who live on a lake or are vacationing at a resort may keep live bait in floating or submerged containers tethered to a dock or boat. Any unattended containers holding minnows or fish must be labeled with the owner’s name and address.





## Wildfires: What You Need to Know

by Fred Kruger

As a property owner in Burnett County, you live or recreate in one of the most hazardous areas in the State for wildland fires. Northwestern Wisconsin has a long history of large devastating wildland fires. Large or small, any wildfire can be a threat to you and your property and the threat is real!

To help protect you, your property and our natural resources here are some things you need to know.



- Ninety percent of the wildland fires in Burnett County are human caused with **debris burning** being the leading cause. Except for cooking or warming fires, burning permits are required for all outdoor burning. Permits are free and can be obtained from any DNR station or local Emergency Fire Warden.
- Burning without a permit or setting a fire and failing to extinguish it is illegal. Violating these laws can result in a citation.
- If your fire becomes a wildland fire you are responsible for all suppression costs and damages!
- All Burnett County ATV trails are closed from April 1st until the Friday before Memorial Day weekend because of the wildland fire hazard.
- It is inevitable that homes can and will be lost in wildland fires. History has shown that homes where the homeowner has taken responsibility to prepare their property to survive a fire are the ones who have a home to return to after a fire. There are many simple steps you can take to protect your home from wildfire. The most critical one is to keep your home and foundation completely free of fine flammable material such as leaves or pine needles. Waterfront landowners need to also be aware of State and County vegetation management restrictions.

For questions regarding fire restrictions, burning permits or general fire safety contact your nearest Wisconsin DNR Ranger Station

Webster – 866-2897

Grantsburg – 463-2897

Spooner – 635-2101

Minong – 466-2022

Additional information on all the above topics can also be found on the Wisconsin DNR forest fire web page:  
[www.dnr.state.wi.us/forestry/fire/](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/forestry/fire/)

## Dave Ferris named County Conservationist of the Year

For nearly 25 years, Dave Ferris has quietly worked as County Conservationist at Burnett County Land & Water Conservation Department, tirelessly developing lakeshore restoration practices, water shed protections programs and more, - all to keep Burnett County beautiful. Somehow, Ferris' accomplishments over the years were leaked throughout greater Wisconsin; and now, Ferris has been named County Conservationist of the Year by the Wisconsin Association of Land Conservationists Employees.

In the press release announcing the award, Ferris was touted as a strong and knowledgeable player in the natural resources and conservation arenas. He is a team player, willing to share information, understanding "the big picture," but acting locally, valuing and empowering co-workers and staff, delegating wisely and an all around outstanding conservationist.



# NR 115 Update

(original published in "Flood Plain & Shoreland Management Notes")

The revision of the 40-year-old shoreland management rules (NR 115) will be sent for final approval by the Natural Resources Board and the State Legislature this spring. This will conclude the five-plus years the Department of Natural Resources has spent developing alternatives for the rules that set minimum standards for shoreland development. The most recent draft received 8,945 comments about various aspects of the rule from 2,381 individuals. A comment summary and Departmental response highlight the changes made, including following two examples.

The impervious surface section received the most specific comments --half said parts were "too restrictive," one-third said they "support" and about one-fifth said they "oppose because too permissive." The most significant change is the addition of a relief valve for the 2% cap on impervious (hard) surface lot coverage. Development that meets specific conditions may be able to exceed the cap without applying for a variance.

During the public hearing process, many people misunderstood the lot size requirements. The 20,000 square footage and 100 foot width only applies to lots created in the future. There was also concern that a 100 foot width must be taken as the average of three measurements taken at the OHWM, building setback and another location on the lot within 300 feet of the water.

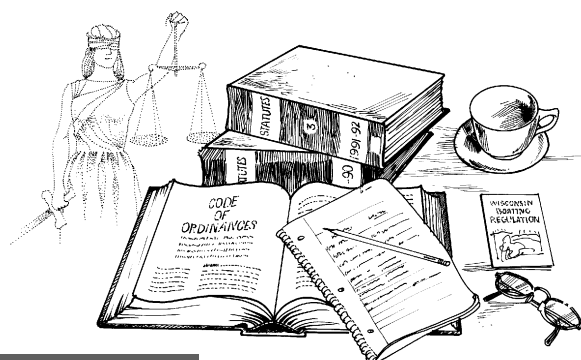
Comments raised a range of miscellaneous issues, such as concern that the rules are one-size-fits-all; support for revising the inflexible rules; concerns about implementation costs for property owners and counties; and feeling that short-term financial restraints should not override long-term environmental, social, economic benefits. Many of these issues are addressed in the code. For example, allowing counties to define locally which surfaces are impervious based on soils and the performance-based mitigation system offer opportunities for counties to fit the rules to local conditions. Rather than requiring buffer restoration as the only form of mitigation, counties may allow a number of options as long as they meet performance standards. Another example of flexibility is that counties are allowed to set their own multi-family dwelling, mobile home park and campground lot sizes.

Many comments raised issues outside the scope of what the DNR is capable of changing. The biggest concern was that the law does not apply to all development in incorporated areas of the state. Only the State Legislature is empowered to change this through legislation. Concern was also expressed over agricultural runoff impacts on water. The State has separate regulations that address the distinct impacts from shoreland development and agricultural runoff.

The new rules and supporting information will be available on the website listed below once the final rule is submitted to the Natural Resources Board. If the Board approves the proposed changes, they will be sent to the Wisconsin State Legislature for its review and possible modifications. There may be an opportunity to appear before the Board and testify in front of the Legislature if hearings on the code are held. Once passed into law, counties will have two years to bring their shoreland ordinances into compliance and begin requiring property owners to follow the revised standards, which aim to protect clean water, healthy habitat and natural scenic beauty.

The documents referred to above can be found at:  
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/news.htm>

For further information, contact:  
Toni Herkert at (608)261-0161 or  
[Toni.Herkert@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:Toni.Herkert@Wisconsin.gov)



## 2008 NWLC Registration Form

Name(s)\* \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Lake Organization \_\_\_\_\_

\*Submit names and addresses for each registrant.

**Conference Registration Fee:**

The conference registration fee is \$45.00 per person (youth 18 & under are free), and includes buffet breakfast, lunch, materials and admission to the afternoon performance of the Big Top Chautauqua Wild Woods and Waters musical.

Plan to attend Big Top Show ☐Vegetarian Meal ☐

No. Attending: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$45 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Youth 18 & under**Indicate Thursday Workshops You Plan to Attend**

- ☐ Guiding Glacial Lakes Partnership (no fee)  
☐ AIS Monit. & Boat Inspec. \_\_\_\_\_ x \$25 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ NW Wis. Water Consortium (no fee)  
☐ Grant & Rave (no fee)  
☐ BBQ & Social Hour \_\_\_\_\_ x \$15 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

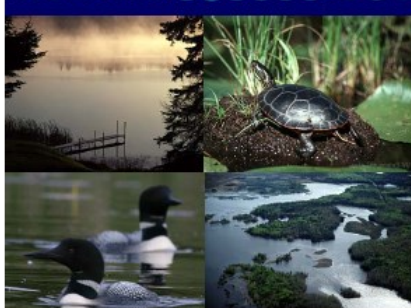
**Registration Deadline: Saturday, June 14, 2008****Mail registration form with payment to:**

Wisconsin Association of Lakes  
 4513 Vernon Blvd., Suite 101  
 Madison, WI 53075-4964

or for credit card payments only  
 fax to (608) 661-4314.

# 2008 Northwest Wisconsin

## Lakes Conference



Photos courtesy of "UW-Extension Lakes Program"

**Friday, June 20, 2008****7:30 am to 5:00 pm**

**Telemark Resort &  
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**Thursday, June 19, 2008 Preconference Workshops**

- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>9:00 am - 12:00 pm</b> | Guiding the Direction of the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership - Pat Rivers, MDNR (no fee)                       |
| <b>9:00 am - 12:00 pm</b> | Aquatic Invasive Species Monitoring - Laura Herman, UWEX   |
| <b>12:00 pm</b>           | Lunch  |
| <b>1:00 - 4:30 pm</b>     | Clean Boats, Clean Waters Boat Inspection - Erin Henegar, UWEX   |
| <b>1:00 - 4:00 pm</b>     | NW Wis. Water Resource Consortium - Waldo Asp, Sawyer Co. Lakes Forum (no fee)                                   |
| <b>1:00 - 4:30 pm</b>     | Grant & Rave: Lake Grant Workshop with Example Projects - WDNR Staff with Citizen & Consulting Partners (no fee) |
| <b>4:30 - 7:00 pm</b>     | BBQ, Social Hour & Music by Erin O'Brien - Telemark Resort (\$15 fee)  |

**2008 Northwest Wisconsin Lakes Conference****Friday, June 20, 2008 - Telemark Resort & Convention Center, Cable, WI****AGENDA**

- |   |                 |   |
|---|-----------------|---|
|  | <b>7:30 am</b>  | Registration, Buffet Breakfast & Exhibits   |
|   | <b>8:45 am</b>  | Welcome & Opening Remarks - Earl Cook, WAL and Washburn Co. Lakes & Rivers Assoc. and MaryJo Gingras, Iron Co. Land Conservation  |
|   | <b>8:55 am</b>  | Death by VHS - Lucas Stiemann, Siren School Student   |
|   | <b>9:00 am</b>  | The Impacts of Climate Change on Wis.'s Lakes & Streams- John Magnuson, UW-Madison Center for Limnology                           |
|  | <b>10:00 am</b> | <b>Session I</b>  |
|   |                 | • An Update on the VHS Virus and Other Threats Posed by Aquatic Invasive Species - Ron Johnson, UWEX and Erin Henegar, UWEX       |
|   |                 | • Legislative Update - Tami Jackson, WAL  |
|   |                 | • Lake Science 101 - Tim Asplund, WDNR and Pamela Toshner, WDNR   |
|   |                 | • Beautiful Shoreline Buffers - Sarah Boles, Northern Native Plantscapes  |
|  | <b>11:30 am</b> | <b>Session II</b>   |
|   |                 | • The Nuts and Bolts of Fish Stocking - Scott Toshner, WDNR   |
|   |                 | • The Pros, Cons and How-To's of Recreational Lake Use Ordinances - Rick Stadelman, Wisconsin Towns Assoc. and Chris Wunrow, WDNR |
|   |                 | • Lakes in the Landscape - John Magnuson, UW-Madison Center for Limnology   |
|   |                 | • Communication That Works - Dorothy Lagerroos, Northland College   |
|   | <b>12:30 pm</b> | <b>Luncheon</b>   |
|   | <b>1:30 pm</b>  | <b>Session III</b>  |
|   |                 | • 101 Ways to Help Birds - Laura Erickson, Ornithologist and Author   |
|   |                 | • Why Are My Taxes So High? - Doug Kurtzweil, Property Tax Assessor   |
|   |                 | • Basic Principles of Wetland Protection - Erin O'Brien, Wisconsin Wetlands Association   |
|   |                 | • Aquatic Plant Management Planning - A Primer - Cheryl Clemens, Harmony Environmental Consulting                                 |
|  | <b>3:00 pm</b>  | Wild Woods and Waters Musical Performance - Lake Superior Big Top Chautauqua  |
|   | <b>5:00 pm</b>  | Adjourn   |



For more information or to register, contact the Wisconsin Association of Lakes at 1-800-542-5253 in Wis. or (608) 661-4313 or [www.wisconsinlakes.org](http://www.wisconsinlakes.org). Planning Committee contact: John Haack, [john.haack@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:john.haack@ces.uwex.edu) or (715) 635-7406.



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# take me to the RIVER

by Mary Pardee  
UW-Extension

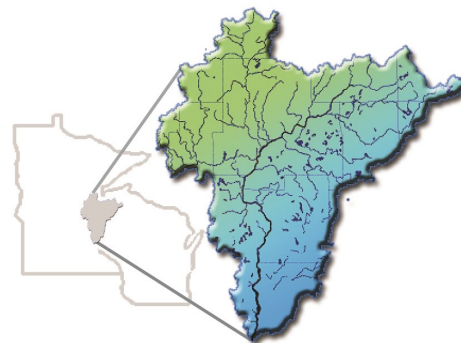
2008 marks the 40th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Thanks to the efforts of Senators Gaylord Nelson and Walter Mondale, our St. Croix River and its largest tributary, the Namekagon, were included as two of the original rivers protected under this significant legislation.

Together, the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers form the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, a thin ribbon of protection that today is 252 miles in length. Managed by the National Park Service with the assistance and cooperation of the states of Wisconsin and Minnesota, as well as counties and local communities, the Riverway today is a living testament to Congress' vision to preserve rivers for the benefit of future generations.

To commemorate the 40th anniversary of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, the National Park Service and University of Wisconsin-Extension are teaming up to create opportunities for people to celebrate this watershed and its rivers that belong to all of us.

## Service-Learning Projects

Youth throughout the watershed will take part in service-learning projects designed to protect, maintain or restore the health of the St. Croix watershed. They will learn about the Riverway as they forge a connection to their waters and a future of stewardship. Projects such as riparian restorations, water quality monitoring, storm drain stenciling and river clean-ups will be highlighted on the Take Me to the River website. Each one of these youth-driven projects, whether small or large, connects to local streams, larger tributaries, the St. Croix, the Mississippi, the Gulf of Mexico...our local waters reach the world.



## St. Croix Sojourn

Natural resource personnel from various agencies throughout the watershed will join together for two weeks this spring to paddle the entire length of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, sharing their knowledge and passion for the river along the way. The public is invited to participate, too. Public paddle trips led by National Park Service rangers are scheduled for:

Sunday, June 1, 4 pm-7 pm - Earl to Trego (Namekagon River) 4.0 miles  
 Saturday, June 7, 9 am-Noon - Soderbeck Landing to Hwy 70 (St. Croix River) 3.9 miles  
 Tuesday, June 10, 5 pm-8 pm - Osceola Landing to William O'Brien State Park (St. Croix River) 10.0 miles

Outreach programs featuring local natural and cultural resource professionals will take place at the following landings:

Sunday, June 1, 5 pm-8 pm - Namekagon River Visitors Center, Trego, WI (Hwy 63)  
 Saturday, June 7, 10 am-1 pm - St. Croix River Marshland Visitors Center, Hwy. 70 (MN side of river between Grantsburg and Pine City)  
 Tuesday, June 10, 6 pm-9 pm - William O'Brien State Park, Marine-on-St. Croix, MN (12 miles north of Stillwater on State Highway 95)

## Big Top Chautauqua

Warren Nelson's musical talent is teaming up with Take Me to the River to present a multi-media show, "Wild Woods and Water," at various venues, including at the Northwest Lakes Conference at Telemark Resort on June 20.

For these and other events and celebrations relating to the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, see the Take Me to the River website at [www.wildrivers40.org](http://www.wildrivers40.org)



(continued from page 1)

The **Johnson Lake Association** also sponsored a Saturday event in August where lake residents could meet County Conservationist, Dave Ferris, and discuss potential water quality projects. An infrared aerial flight had previously identified lack of shoreline vegetation and hard surfaces that resulted in runoff as the likely cause of declining lake water quality in Johnson Lake. Ten follow-up visits to address these concerns resulted after this meeting.

Several property owners on Johnson Lake began the process of investigating water quality solutions earlier in the summer. These neighbors along the northwest shore of the lake were concerned about the impact of runoff from their properties. By late in the fall of 2007, three owners restored over 3800 square feet of native vegetation and infiltration practices were installed on two properties. Three parcels were also enrolled in the Shoreline Incentives Program.

### Stormwater Infiltration Practices

Buffers of native shoreline vegetation do not always completely capture runoff water and contain erosion from waterfront lots, especially along very steep slopes. Stormwater practices are used to redirect runoff water to a location where it can soak into the soil. Burnett County uses rock trenches, infiltration areas dug into the sand, underground and surface infiltration pits, and rain gardens as practices to capture and soak in runoff water.

Working with a local landscaper, the project consultant examined water flow and designed methods that would fit on the sites and work for the landowners. One owner, Jim Dixon, had learned through the lake association that runoff was a concern on Johnson Lake. He agreed that a berm to discourage water flow to a steep slope to the lake along with two infiltration pits to capture water were important to complete. The landscaper designed one pit to fit beneath a deck (but away from the foundation of the house). He constructed the second pit with rain gutter connections underground to minimize maintenance.

### Contractors Add Value

Experienced, thoughtful landscapers are critical for the success of the Shoreline Incentives Program. Chuck Brookshaw, with Rivers North Contracting, quickly took over project design, once he learned the basics.

He worked with the project consultant, Cheryl Clemens, and owners Bob and Karen Wagner, just a few docks down to correct their even more severe runoff problems. Here water comes not only from their house and land, but from a neighbor's large garage as well. The neighbor's runoff and some from their own driveway is now captured by an excavated infiltration area and a berm created below a parking area and above the drive to the house.

Chuck also constructed a rain garden near an existing garden and an underground pit in an area where foot traffic made a surface garden impractical.



**Infiltration Pit Dug to Capture  
Roof Runoff Water**



**Infiltration Pit  
Under Construction**



**Berm Keeps Water from  
Eroding the Slope to the Lake**

# New Aquatic Invasive Species Ordinance Created- All Watercraft Affected

by Fred Kruger

This article concerns anyone who operates a watercraft that they regularly put into and take out of our county lakes. There is a new ordinance in Burnett County, that makes it illegal to have plant or live invasive critters on your watercraft or trailer, when launching or transporting.

Our county board has realized the dire consequences of not protecting our lakes and rivers. If exotic fish or plants get into our lakes, they can destroy the game fish that we enjoy catching, cause massive weed beds that boats and swimmers cannot move through, sterilize lakes so that nothing grows there, and they can create massive stinky, mid summer algae blooms. The end result is the loss of property values near our lakes and a general loss of tourism that the lakes bring to the county. Trying to remove these exotics, once they establish themselves in our waterways is a very costly endeavor for the state and local property owners, if possible at all.

In 2007, five of our county lakes embarked on a program to stop the transfer of invasive plants from to our lakes. The program installed video cameras at the boat ramps on Yellow, Johnson, Mud Hen, Big Wood, and Lake 26, that recorded watercraft launches and allowed the reviewer to search for plants on the trailer/watercraft. These devices worked very well and last fall, about a dozen violations were recorded. If you read the Burnett County Newspapers, you probably have read about this program. However, when reporting these violations to DNR, we discovered the need to improve the state's statutory language. This spring the Burnett County Board has enacted an ordinance that will make it illegal for people to have plants or aquatic animals (e.g. snails/mussels) attached to your watercraft or trailer when launching or when that unit is on any public road in the county. A violation of the new county ordinance will charge the offender with a county ordinance citation of \$154.50 and increase with multiple violations. The DNR is currently in the process of implementing a similar statewide rule (NR 40) for probable adoption in 2009.

Sheriff Roland is enthusiastically supporting this enforcement program. The county will use citations to stop the infections of our Burnett County waters this summer. Watercraft owners have been given many opportunities to educate themselves on the problem and the prevention measures. Media notices will continue this summer to educate the population. Radio announcements will address out of state watercraft owners but we encourage you to spread the word to anyone coming to the county with their watercraft toys. Advise them we are serious about keeping these aquatic invasive species out of our clean county waters.

Simple steps: CLEAN ALL mud, plant matter, and animal matter from your watercraft and its trailer. CHECK EVERYTHING since a 2 inch piece of milfoil can infect our waters. DRAIN EVERY BIT OF WATER from your bilge, fish tanks, and engine cooling system before leaving the launch site.

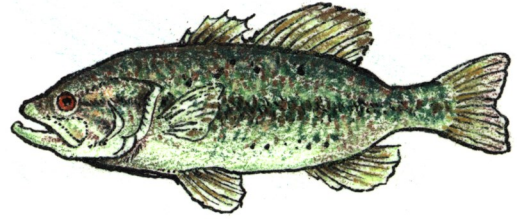
Burnett County will have personnel at many boat launch sites this summer. If you have plants on you watercraft or trailer, you will be given a citation. For further information look at INVASIVE SPECIES at the DNR web site

[www.dnr.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dnr.wisconsin.gov) When you get to the invasives site search for key word "aquatic".



# Bass Challenge Biologists in Northwest

“Largemouth bass have always been the most abundant gamefish in the Northwest” says Spooner Fisheries Biologist, Larry Damman, “but populations exploded after size limits went into effect in 1989.” After just a few years, catch rates in shocker surveys tripled. Angler catch rates of 0.25 bass per hour used to be considered good. Now creel surveys indicate that angler catch rates are typically over 1 bass per hour but most are undersize. Voluntary catch and release also played a big part in improving bass populations, by “recycling” the legal size bass.



largemouth bass

The difficulty with higher populations is maintaining a good forage base. Without ample forage, growth suffers, and the ultimate size bass reach in a life span is reduced. “It’s taking two years longer for largemouth to reach the 14 inch minimum size than it did before,” says Heath Benike, Fisheries Biologist at Barron, “and growth rates after they reach legal size are declining too.” “The bigger bass out there now grew up in the past when growth rates were better,” says Damman. Maintaining the size quality anglers have come to expect is going to be difficult. The young bass coming up now will be lucky to reach much more than the 14 inch minimum size limit within a life time.

Forage abundance impacts the entire fish community. Natural recruitment and stocking success has declined in many northwestern walleye fisheries. Abundant bass may be preying too heavily on natural and stocked walleye fingerlings or just out competing walleye for the forage they need.

So far, the problems have been mostly confined to northwest Wisconsin where natural habitat conditions allowed bass to thrive even before protective regulations. “We may need to take a break from bass size limits in several western counties to give forage and other species a chance to recover,” says Damman. Several lakes in Burnett County already have had their size limit reduced to zero inches in an effort to increase growth rates. They are Johnson, Big McKenzie, and Middle McKenzie.

## **Bass Resolution Passed at Conservation Congress Hearing**

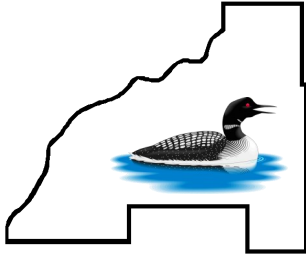
The Great Northwest Bass Restoration Initiative Resolution, submitted from the floor by a citizen recommends that the Conservation Congress work with the Department of Natural Resources to change the size limit for bass in Burnett County. The hearing took place at the Burnett County Government Center on April 14, 2008. The resolution states that the Conservation Congress and Department of Natural Resources take action to correct this situation by introducing a rule change reducing the bass size limit from 14 inches to zero inches on all lakes located whole or in part in Burnett County. A similar resolution was passed in Washburn County. The proposal would not affect bag limits or bass management zone boundaries. With a positive vote of 22-2, the question now will be on the 2009 spring conservation hearing ballot. Residents and nonresidents can vote at the hearings. Fishermen have had great concern about the bass fishery in Burnett County and northwest Wisconsin for many years. The passage of this resolution starts the process of getting the rule changed. If passed in 2009, the Natural Resources Board would then vote on the change. If passed by the board, the rule would not go into effect until the spring of 2010. For more information contact Larry Damman, WI DNR.



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