

Is the Drought Busted?

by John Haack, UWEX Educator for Natural Resources, St. Croix River Basin

After five years of below average precipitation in NW Wisconsin summer rains are welcome events. Rain fall at the Spooner Agricultural Research Station has been above average from June through August of this year. The woods and fields are green and puddles dot the landscape once again. So, in terms of a drought, most drought indexes say it is busted - at least for now. But with lake levels and ground water, the answer may be different depending on what type of lake you live on.



Clam Lake and similar lakes fed by rivers and impounded by dams are experiencing much higher water levels thanks to all the recent rains.

Groundwater levels are a not as quick to respond to recent rains and will take more time to replenish and, in turn, raise water levels on the ground water seepage lakes.



Des Moines Lake and similar groundwater seepage lakes have their water levels dependant mostly on ground water level. These lakes naturally fluctuate over the years as indicated by the lake level records for Des Moines Lake below (other area seepage lakes show very similar patterns of fluctuation).

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Message from the President by Roger Noe

"Movin On"

The change of seasons is upon us and all that goes with the preparation for fall and winter. The beautiful fall mornings are wonderful for reflection and all that goes with the outdoors in Burnett County Wisconsin. Having recently returned from a trip to Wyoming/Montana, etc., it was interesting to see various mandatory AIS check points along the highways set-up to screen "all watercraft" for aquatic invasive species being carried. Sometimes it is enlightening to know that you are not fighting the battle alone. Burnett County and the Burnett County Lakes & Rivers Association Inc. continue to create awareness of the issues important to the health of waters in Burnett County. The issues are numerous. Lakeshore habitat, the fishery, appropriate watercraft use, aquatic invasive species, storm water run-off, etc. - all play a part in managing our treasured natural water resources. The management of our water resources will continue to be a process for all of us.... property owners as well as trained specialists..... speaking of which...... were you able to purchase a Youth Journal this summer for your children or grandchildren? It is a wonderful publication produced by the University of Wisconsin - Extension which plants the seed of environmental concern in a child's mind. It is very user friendly, colorful and a nice link for children and their lake or river. If you would like to purchase a Youth Journal contact your lake liaison or a BCLRA board member. They are \$5.00 and well worth the price. Another hardbound book entitled "The Magic Goggles" was sponsored this summer by the BCLRA. This is a bedtime read for children and highlights the real world that lies beneath the surface water of our lakes. "The Magic Goggles" may be purchased through the UW Extension for \$8.00 which includes postage. The email address..... uwexlakes@uwsp.edu - click on "bookstore" or call 1-715-346-2116. You will enjoy reading with your children.

For the BCLRA, thanks to all of you for getting involved with your lake. Thanks for joining your lake association. Thanks for caring enough to give back to your lake that which it has given to you and your family.

Roger Noe

BCLRA President





Shallow Waters Run Deep

By Brad Morris, AIS Program Director, Burnett County LWCD

The core of life in all fresh water lakes is cradled in the shallow waters near shore. Much of a lake ecosystem depends on what happens in this shallow water. When parts of the lake, such as plants or wood, are removed from this shallow area, it is like removing a house in the neighborhood. The residents that once lived there can no longer return, and when enough homes are removed, and enough residents lost, the interactions that make the neighborhood a viable community cease, and the community fails. This is similar to what we see with our own human communities due to events like hurricanes or the mortgage crisis. A community of aquatic plants is part of what makes a healthy lake ecosystem. We are beginning to see aquatic plants in a new light, for their beauty and ability to protect and nourish a lake.

These plants are the binding thread in a watery tapestry of life.

- Aquatic plants create a thriving habitat for animals.
- Plant roots create networks that stabilize sediments at the water's edge.
- Plants are essential to the spawning success of many fish species.
- Plants provide refuge for near shore animals.
- Plants provide habitat for many non-game fish species that are often "invisible" to most people, but are important to the food chain.
- Plants photosynthesize, creating life-giving oxygen to the animals that live in the littoral (shallow water) zone.
- Submersed plants absorb phosphorus and nitrogen over their leaf surface and through their roots, making nutrients less available for nuisance algae.
- Native aquatic plants can limit aquatic invasive plant growth.
- Plants, fruits and tubers provide food for mammals, waterfowl, insects and fish.
- Plant beds provide cover and nesting for marsh birds, songbirds and waterfowl.

It is important to remember that plant communities can vary from lake to lake and from year to year. It is also important to realize that water levels in lakes fluctuate. During times when water levels are low, shoreline preservation is extremely important.



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Please remember... A natural, undisturbed shoreline provides numerous advantages such as: less algal blooms, protection against invasive plants, which result in higher property values. Freshwater resources are extremely valuable to everyone. We must be dedicated stewards of these resources in order to ensure success of the communities that live there now and for all our future generations.



Drought/continued from Front Page

The US Geological Survey has continuously monitored groundwater levels since 1937 from a monitoring well locate in the village of Webster. The chart below shows how those groundwater levels fluctuate over time. When compared to rainfall records groundwater records have a delayed response, but eventually responds to increases in rain fall events. The Webster records represent the kind of historic ground water fluctuations that impact many of the county's groundwater seepage lakes.

You can check out groundwater levels in monitoring wells in Webster and across the region at: http://groundwaterwatch.usgs.gov/StateMaps/WI.html.

Fluctuating lake levels will continue to reflect our ever changing weather patterns and water levels on many of the counties groundwater seepage lakes will likely take several years to recover to what many lake owners consider normal levels.



Ground water data from Village of Webster well.



Rain Fall Records at the Spooner Ag. Research Station		
Date	Lake Level	
7-05-1940	92.95	
7-18-1970	95.48	
7-17-1973	96.25	
5-23-1974	96.66	
11-10-1976	94.29	
5-23-1977	94.47	
10-13-1977	94.51	
7-11-1979	95.77	
6- 1-1981	94.73	
5-23-1984	96.95	
5-29-1986	97.31	
6-30-1988	94.55	
10-29-1996	96-28	
8-21-1997	96.44	
10-31-2007	94.42	
9- 8-2010	93.79	



Protecting Your Family and Pets From Harmful Algal Blooms

Edited by Mike Kornmann, UWEX

We often hear how important it is to preserve water quality in our lakes. We think about how it supports wildlife or even the relationship to property values. There is another reason to take action on your property and lake to support clean water – human health.

What are algal blooms and when do they occur?

When environmental conditions are right, the algal population can grow quickly and a bloom can occur. A bloom is a sudden increase in algae cells in a certain area of water. Little wind, warm water, sunlight, and plentiful nutrients —especially phosphorus- all favor the chances that a bloom will occur. Warm weather patterns and large rain events that wash agricultural and residential fertilizers into the water can also jump start a bloom. In Wisconsin, blooms typically occur during the warm weather months between mid June and mid September. When blue-green algae are present, the algal scum can be a variety of colors such as fluorescent blue, green, white, red or brown. And more than one color may be present in the same bloom. It may look like thick paint floating on the water. Frequently, these blooms give off a foul odor.

How can blue green algae make me sick? There are many species of blue-green algae found in Wisconsin lakes and waters and certain species can produce toxins. Different species produce different toxins and many species produce more than one type. Each toxin can affect your health differently: neurotoxins affect your central nervous system, hepatotoxins cause liver damage and exposure to bloom material can affect your skin and gastrointestinal Consider using best management practices including natural shorelines, rain gardens, rain barrels, and using non-phosphorus based fertilizer (state and county law) when managing your lake shore property.

system. Your symptoms depend on which toxin and how much of it you are exposed to, and how you are exposed.

How can I can I be exposed to blue-green algae?

You can be exposed to blue-green algae by accidentally swallowing water with algal toxins, by skin contact with algae, and by inhaling aerosolized water droplets that contain algal toxins. Swallowing water poses the biggest risk of exposure to a large quantity of toxins and can lead to mental confusion, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, liver failure, paralysis, and possibly death. Skin contact with algae can cause a painful rash or blistering. As motor boats, waves, and other events splash water into the air, some water molecules get aerosolized and carried on the wind. Very small amounts of algal toxins can be inhaled by people in boats or on the shoreline of the lake. This can cause coughing, irritation of the nose and throat, watery eyes, runny nose, headache, and other allergy-like symptoms.

For More Information:

http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/eh/bluegreenalgae/ http://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/bluegreenalgae/ Source: Wisconsin Department of Health Services;Wisconsin DNR, Lake Tides Newsletter

Blue Green Algae Exposure Cases in Wisconsin (2009):

Adams County	4
Burnett County	1 (Canine)
Dane County	4
Dunn County	17
Oneida County	1 (Canine)
Racine County	1
Winnebago County	2

A blue-green algal bloom occurred during the summer of 2009 in Burnett County. A dog drank water with the algae and died.



Fall/Winter 2010

Protect Your Waterfront Home From Wild Fire Edited by Mike Kornmann, UWEX

Becoming firewise does not mean having to sacrifice your shoreline stability, water quality and wildlife habitat. Often times the greatest wildland fire protection you can offer your home is by removing the little things that can ignite such as the leaves, pine needles and other debris that collects on your roof, rain gutters, next to your foundation or under your deck. Keeping a regular maintenance schedule to remove dead, flammable, debris off your home and at least 3 to 5 feet away from your siding is a key Firewise Step. Keep these other strategies in mind and implement them when they don't conflict with your shoreland regulations.

- Deciduous trees, shrubs, and wildflowers are a great fire resistant option for maintaining your shoreland buffer. Grasses and evergreen shrubs such as junipers, red cedar, and young pine tend to be more flammable.
- Go native! Plans already adapted to Wisconsin's conditions are more likely to thrive here and need less maintenance than exotic landscape varieties.
- Prune trees so that the lowest branches are 6 to 10 feet high to prevent fire on the ground from spreading to the tree tops. This is especially important for the trees closest to buildings.

- Lawn located in close proximity of your home, should be kept mowed and raked.
- Rake fallen leaves and needles from your yard. Dispose of debris promptly burning should be your last alternative!
- Keep your gutters, eaves and roof clear of leaves and other debris.
- Use construction materials that are fire-resistant or non-combustible whenever possible.
- Clear away dead wood and dense vegetation 30 feet around your house.
- Move firewood 30 feet away from your house or attachment like fences or decks. If your shoreland regualtions don't permit this, move the stack as far away as possible; even 10 feet can make a difference.
- Talk to your neighbors about working together. Wildland fire doesn't understand property boundaries.

Source: Wisconsin DNR Publication – PUB –FR-419 2008. For more informationation visit: http://www.firewise.org

http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/fire/prevention/firewise/



Youth Lakeshore Field Journals Available

Youth Lakeshore Field Journal features fish, frogs, dragonflies and fun activities for kids to explore while spending time on Burnett County lakes and rivers. Kids will have fun learning and sharing while creating a cabin keepsake for years to come. Youth Journals make great gifts for kids and family cabins. Youth Journals are available for \$5 at the Siren General Store, Fort Folle Avoine Historical Park, Danbury Hardware and Ace Hardware in Webster.

Sponsored by: Burnett County Land and Water Conservation Dept., University of Wisconsin Extension and the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association



Area Nurseries Promoted Top Ten Native Plant Sales

Responding to the "Top Ten Native Plant" promotional coupons in Lakelines more than 250 lake shore owners redeemed coupons at cooperating nurseries over the summer. The coupons were sponsored by the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association with partial funding provided through a Department of Natural Resources lakes planning grant. Thanks to plant suppliers (Austin Lake Greenhouse, Grantsburg Family Foods, Wayne's Foods Plus (Webster and Danbury), and Wood River Nursery), for their support.

If you're interested in protecting water quality, providing healthy bird and butterfly habitat consider planting native plants, shrubs and trees along your shore. Contact Ann Lane at the Burnett County Land and Water Conservation office in Siren - 715-349-2186 to learn more or to schedule a "no-strings attached" shoreland site visit with an expert. Next spring remember to look for the top ten native plants at cooperating Burnett County nurseries.



LAKELINES

FALL/WINTER 2010

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Natural Shoreline Replaces Retaining Wall

by John Haack, UWEX Educator for Natural Resources

The retaining wall and old stairs were in need of repair and Steve Biros of Long Lake needed them fixed. He also wanted a more natural look along his shoreline. A few years after purchasing his lake property Steve contacted the Burnett County Land and Water Conservation office to learn more about the Shoreline Incentives Program. The Shoreline Incentives Program encourages landowners to maintain a natural shoreline by providing property tax rebates and cost sharing for planting. After a visit with Cheryl Clemens, a consulting shoreline restoration specialist, Steve decided to enroll in the program. Participation in the Shoreline Incentives Program provided many opportunities for Steve. The county brought in Conservation Specialist, Paul Cook to develop a slope repair plan and coordinate the wall removal and slope stabilization plan. Cheryl developed a planting plan. Working together with Steve, Paul and Cheryl developed plans to remove the retaining wall and address runoff and erosion issues that also addressed Steve's concerns about tall weedy looking plants.

The county Land and Water Conservation office provided cost share dollars to make the site stabilization more affordable. Steve helped out with keeping new plantings watered on his very sandy soils. He purchased an electric pump, a timer and some soaker hose so he could water the plants when he not able to be at the lake. The county coordinated a crew to plant the steep slope and after a few minor setbacks, the site is growing well and erosion is under control. Steve likes the look and so do the residents of Long Lake who toured the property during the August 20th shoreline restoration open house.

If you're interested in controlling a lake shore erosion issue or would like to get started with a few native plants call or e-mail Ann Lane at the Land and Water Conservation office (715-349-2186) (alane@burnettcounty.org) and schedule a free nostrings- attached site visit to find out more about shoreline cost sharing options, the Shoreline Incentive Program, erosion control tips and native plants.



Original Site



Retaining wall gone and crew planting native vegetation into the wooden fiber erosion control fabric on June 4, 201



Restored Site.

FALL/WINTER 2010

One Big Basin: Only You Can Protect It

Deb Ryun, Executive Director, St.Croix River Association

We all impact the water, either through direct or indirect contact. We all live in a watershed (the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place). There are 24 major watersheds that make up the St. Croix Basin. The St. Croix Basin is rich in water resources, hundreds of miles of streams and thousands of lakes. The St. Croix River begins at St. Croix Lake near Solon Springs, where it flows 160 miles until it joins the Mississippi River at Prescott, Wisconsin.

The St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, one of the eight original National Wild and Scenic Rivers including the Namekagon River in Wisconsin and the upper portion of the St. Croix, was established in 1968. The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway was added in 1972. This park is one of the most biologically diverse national parks of the Midwest. The river includes rich shoreline areas, originating in a region of northern spruce and pine, and flows southwesterly through hardwood forests and prairie, eventually joining the Mississippi River. The river supports 95 fish species, beaver, muskrat, and otters. Eagles, osprey, and ducks nest along the river. Insects, 41 species of fresh water mussels, and hundreds of other species of plants and animals make the St. Croix their home.

he St. Croix River forms part of the boundary between Wisconsin and Minnesota. The watershed covers approximately 7,760 square miles and extends from near Mille Lacs Lake in Minnesota on the west to near Cable, Wisconsin, on the east.

Over time, threats to our wild and scenic river have shifted. Changes in land use have caused degradation of water quality throughout the watershed, including an increase in phosphorous levels. There is loss of scenic character and direct environmental impacts of urban development. Invasive species drive out native plants and fish in lakes and rivers. Insulation of people, particularly young people in our communities, from the natural world results in lost opportunities for young people to learn about the value of the natural world and their role as caretakers of this place.



There's been an erosion of private and public financial and political support for resource protection and restoration, increasingly critical as global, regional and local economies decline and unemployment in the region increases.

I work for the St. Croix River Association (SCRA), which was established in 1911 as a grassroots effort, linked to the St. Croix River itself. Starting as an informal organization, it grew out of the basic, direct interests of people living along the banks of this border river. SCRA has evolved from an informal organization of mostly river valley residents, into a formal nonprofit organization advocating for conservation throughout the watershed. Our mission is to protect, restore and celebrate the St. Croix River and its watershed. We work in partnership with others to encourage land conservation, water quality protection, river corridor and watershed stewardship, and not to be forgotten or overlooked, celebration. We live, work and play in the St. Croix River watershed because we love this place, and we celebrate that love at every opportunity.

Interested in ways to protect your watershed?

Visit www.stcroixriverassociation.org and click on the No "P" in our River link.

Critters for Kids

by Christian W. Cold - Wildlife Technician, WI DNR - Ladysmith

The Common Loon (Gavia immer)

What is a loon?

A loon is a large (goose-sized) black and white water-bird that can dive and swim strongly underwater. It is a powerful flier, but a poor walker. Its familiar (and very popular) voice is a series of hoots, yodels, tremolos and wails. It is a favorite bird for many people in the north woods.

Where do loons live?

During the summer, loons live on freshwater lakes, rivers and deep marshes, especially where the water is clear and a good fishery exists. Loons prefer wild places which are a good distance away from noisy people. They spend the winter off-shore in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic Ocean.

What do they eat?

Loons prefer small fish (less than 8 inches)....especially perch and minnows of all kinds. They will also eat frogs, crayfish and large aquatic insect larvae.

What eats them?

Very few critters would attempt to make a meal out of a loon. A loon will defend itself vigorously by stabbing with its powerful bill. Loons are sometimes killed by very hungry (desperate) bald eagles. Loon chicks that stray away from their parents are sometimes taken by large fish (pike and muskies) or snapping turtles.

How long can they live?

A 30 year-old loon is a rare, old bird! Most loons are lucky to reach ten years.

Are loons destructive to fish or other wildlife?

Loons eat fish (like we do) but they are seldom found in largeenough numbers to cause damage to fish populations. Many of the fish they eat are species (kinds) that we would not choose to eat, anyway.



Are loons good to eat?

No.....their flesh is probably tough and chewy and tastes very fishy. Besides, like most birds, loons are fully-protected by law.

Are loons dangerous to humans?

No....unless you attempt to hold one. A loon gave me a nasty wound when it jabbed me in the chin while I was holding it for a picture. I will never hold a loon close to my face again!

Are loons having problems?

Loons sometimes eat fish that have lead jigs and sinkers in their bodies. Even a tiny amount of lead will make a loon very sick. In fact, most loons, who swallow lead fishing tackle, will die.

Did you know?

You can learn more about loons by contacting the following organization:

Project Loon Watch Northland College, Ashland, WI

Email: Loonwatch@northland.edu



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