

Spring 2015

St. Croix/Eau Claire Headwaters Watershed Newsletter



A Partnership Between Citizens, Douglas County, WI DNR, UWS-LSRI, UW-Extension and Bayfield County

Watershed Project Begins Second Year

As we begin a new year, the St. Croix/Eau Claire Headwaters Watershed Project begins its second. The past year was a successful start to the project, with numerous educational events, training opportunities, and scientific surveys completed. These events included a “Learn About Your Lakes” series of talks, a “Rural Ditch Maintenance Workshop” for local towns and counties, and a “Turf Maintenance for Water Quality” workshop among others. Additionally, 17 homeowners in the watershed received a site visit to assess their shoreline property with more planned for 2015. During 2014, five committees have met to discuss areas of interest in the watershed, including Aquatic Invasive Species, land use, critical habitat, water quality, and fish passage. Each group has been developing plans for the coming year and will be providing input to assist in the development of a five year strategic plan slated for completion this July. Additional citizens are welcome to become involved with

one or more of the committees. If you would like to learn more, contact the Watershed Coordinator at (715) 394-8525. Local citizens play an important role in the success of the watershed project. They inform and guide work plans, assist in completing important scientific surveys, and serve as a local voice for issues affecting the watershed. Thank you to everyone who has given their time and expertise to this project!



Local citizens came together last September to monitor for invasive species in the St. Croix and Eau Claire Rivers. Photo by Carrie Sanda.



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Christian, 6, learns all about frogs and toads with John Haack, UW-Extension Natural Resources Educator, during “Learn About Your Lakes.” Photo by Cris Neff.



A preliminary and follow-up technical site visit on Upper Lake St. Croix for local property owners. Upper: Photo by Carrie Sanda, Left: Photo by Cameron Bertsch.

Callie, 4, meets a Great Horned Owl at “Learn About Your Lakes” wildlife talk with Chris Cold, WDNR Wildlife Technician. Photo by Carrie Sanda.



Special Points of Interest:

- The St. Croix River basin is home to four federally listed endangered mussel species: Winged Mapleleaf, Snuffbox, Higgin’s Eye Pearly Mussel, and Spectaclecase.
- Aquatic plants and fallen trees not only provide in-lake habitat for fish, frogs, turtles and birds; they also reduce the effects of shoreline erosion.

Eau Claire Lakes Canoe & Kayak Race - By Barb Romstad, Town of Barnes Tourism Committee

On July 11, 2015 the Town of Barnes is hosting a canoe and kayak race on its beautiful Eau Claire Chain of Lakes. The Vatten Paddlar – Canoe and Kayak Races consists of two races, one designed for experienced canoeists and kayakers, the other accommodating families and casual paddling enthusiasts.

The **10 mile Elite Race** involves a short segment of fast moving river through various obstacles. It includes two portages and is a great paddle for those with a higher skill level.

The **5 mile Lake to Lake Race** is perfect for individuals and families who want to enjoy the event in a shorter version. It includes one portage (assistance will be available for those requesting it.)

Over \$2000 will be awarded to winners and participants. Both races will have 3

entry categories: Tandem Canoe, Single Male Kayak and Single Female Kayak. Visit www.vattenpaddlar.com for more information and registration details.



Sediment Core Sampling: Pickerel, George, and the Eau Claire Lakes

In general, the St. Croix/Eau Claire Headwaters Watershed has excellent water quality. However, there are five lakes in the watershed: Pickerel, George, and



Paul Garrison and Pamela Toshner, WDNR, prepare to take a sediment sample on Middle Eau Claire Lake. Photo by Carrie Sanda.

Lower, Middle and Upper Eau Claire Lakes that either exceed or are close to exceeding the threshold for being listed as impaired due to elevated phosphorous levels. Elevated levels of phosphorous can lead to numerous problems, including nuisance algae blooms, fish kills, and excessive plant growth. In

order to better understand how current phosphorous levels compare with those prior to European settlement, the WDNR applied for a grant to compare dia-

toms in lake sediment samples from each time period. Diatoms are a type of algae with cell walls made of silica, which enables them to be highly resistant to degradation and are usually abundant, diverse, and well-preserved in sediments. They are good indicators of a lake's water quality because they are in direct contact with the water and are strongly affected by the chemical composition of their surroundings. Comparing the diatom community composition gives us insight into phosphorous levels. Sediment core samples were taken in the five lakes and the diatom communities were compared. Preliminary results show that Pickerel, George, and, Upper Eau Claire Lakes have experienced a small increase in phosphorus levels while Middle and Lower Eau Claire Lakes appear to be similar to historic levels.



A friendly sunny in Beaugard Lake. Photo by Carrie Sanda.

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A view from below on Upper Ox Lake. Photo by Carrie Sanda.

Survey of Watershed Residents - Article contributed by John Haack, Natural Resources Educator, UW-Extension

Using and understanding lake science is key to building a plan to protect or restore lakes. This knowledge provides direction for taking future action that is well supported by scientific evidence. Frequently overlooked however, is the human equation (social science) that helps us understand the attitudes and knowledge of local citizens. Actual implementation of any kind of plan to protect or improve lakes relies on the willingness of citizens to both work on and implement the recom-



Lee Weisner takes a water sample on Middle Eau Claire Lake. Photo by Carrie Sanda.

mended actions. Later this year, you may be receiving a survey about issues within the Upper St. Croix/Eau Claire Headwaters Watershed. The survey aims to understand your attitudes, current actions, interest in specific practices, and what you see as barriers to taking specific actions. The survey is being coordinated by Kristin Floress, former assistant professor at UW-Stevens Point. The information gathered will be used by a group of citizens and local agency representatives working to develop a 5 year strategic plan for the watershed. If you receive a survey, please help our efforts by filling it out and returning it. Thank you!

Healthy Lakes: Funding and Best Practices for Lake Properties - Article contributed by Pamela Toshner, Lake Biologist, WDNR



Good news! There is funding available to install simple water quality and shoreland habitat best practices like rain gardens, native plantings, and fish sticks along lakeshores in our special watershed. The funding comes from a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership Grant that provides up to \$1000 per project. The projects are intended to be simple enough that they'd be applicable for the most typical lakeshore properties. The more

property owners who participate the bigger the benefit for our watershed! For more information, go to <http://tinyurl.com/healthylakes> or contact Carrie Sanda, Watershed Coordinator, for a site visit. An information session is also being planned for June 25th. Visit www.douglascounty.org/watershed for more information on the session.

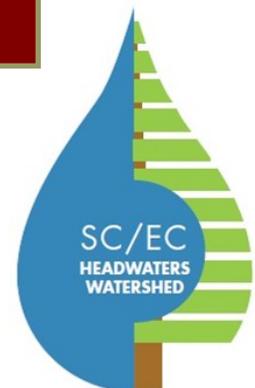
Replanting turf grass with native plants is one way landowners can reduce shoreline erosion. Photo by Carrie Sanda.



Watershed Logo Contest

This winter, the St. Croix/Eau Claire Headwaters Watershed Project worked with graphic design students at the University of Minnesota-Duluth to create a unique logo for the project. After hearing a presentation about the goals of the Watershed Project, the students worked diligently for weeks to come up with an array of logos that were narrowed down to six finalists. After a survey of the Watershed Steer-

ing Committee, Madison Young's submission was chosen to represent the project. Thanks to a generous donation by watershed resident Jim Heim, the entire class was treated to a pizza party during finals week as a thank you for all of their hard work. In the coming months Madison will work with her professor, Steve Bar-dolph, to put the finishing touches on the logo.



UMD student Madison Young's winning draft logo submission.

Choose to Protect Water Quality at Home, School, Church, the Office and in Your Community

- Use only phosphorous free fertilizers and cleaning products
- Restore shoreline buffers or stop mowing a strip along the lake edge
- Properly maintain septic systems
- Install rain barrels under downspouts
- Keep leaves and grass away from storm drains
- Minimize hard surfaces like roofs, sidewalks, driveways and parking areas
- Vegetate or cover bare soil to prevent erosion
- Plant native trees, shrubs, grasses and flowers or allow them to grow
- Compost yard and kitchen waste
- Infiltrate runoff using rain gardens, native vegetation or rock infiltration
- Leave aquatic vegetation and fallen trees in the water
- Consider restoring in-lake woody habitat
- Dispose of pet waste properly



Calendar of Events

Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Convention

<http://www.wisconsinlakes.org/>

April 23rd - 25th

Northern Native Plant Sale

<http://www.brcland.org/native-plant-preorders.html>

June 6th

Healthy Lakes Funding Information Session

www.douglascountywi.org/watershed

June 25th

Northwest Lakes Conference

<http://www.wisconsinlakes.org/>

June 26th

Eau Claire Chain of Lakes Paddle

www.vattenpaddlar.com

July 11th

Watershed Steering Committee Meetings

www.douglascountywi.org/watershed

Sept 17th, Dec 17th

