

Established 1983

Spring 2021

# The Big Chip News

## View from the Chair

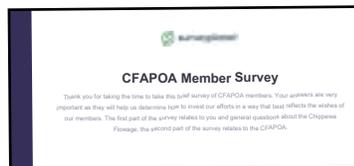
by Mike Gardner CFAPOA Chair

The Board of Directors has met monthly throughout the winter months in a virtual format. Directors have worked diligently to increase organizational capacity and our understanding of the members priorities.

We received input from the survey but also directly from members with a range of issues affecting the lake and its uses. The topics of shoreline erosion, boater safety and no wake zones consistently were brought to the table. Board members contacted partners, researched the latest available information, and attended trainings to make informed decisions.

We have had great contributions from and consultations with past Board members. I would like to recognize the continued service of Terry Moe, Connie Peterson,

and Barb Salomon and our partner organizations for their assistance these past months. I encourage you to meet and visit with any Board member this season to provide input and learn how you can assist with expanding our membership in support of the CFAPOA mission.



Spring Fling is cancelled. However, planning is underway for the Annual Summer Picnic. More information will be available after our May Board Meeting.

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You can find the CFAPOA Member Survey results Online at CFAPOA.org or by clicking the link below.

[Member Survey](#)

# Shoreline Living on the Flowage

by Tony Schubert

“AGGGH! #@\$#@!” Fred heard a wild cry from his neighbor’s yard. He rushed down toward the lake and saw his friend Elmer lying flat on his back in his yard.

“Are you alright, Elmer? What happened?”, asked Fred. “Yes I’m fine, I just slipped while I was fertilizing my grass. It is so wet down here by the lake that I slipped while pushing the spreader”, said Elmer. “Uh oh, you really look like a mess, what is that all over your backside?”, asked Fred. “OH NO!, It’s goose poop!” exclaimed Elmer. Elmer had this green, greasy, gross mess on his shirt and shorts. “I need to go up to the house and shower and get some clean clothes on again.” Elmer said. “Hey after you clean up why don’t you stop over for a beer?” asked Fred. “Thanks, but I don’t have time. I still have to mow this darn lawn, it’s going to rain tonight and we have to go back home tomorrow.” explained Elmer. “OK, See you later.” said Fred.

Elmer is struggling to keep up with his lawn. There are alternatives to a lawn on your lakeside that can beautify your lakeshore while easing the maintenance of your property. Many lake property owners are planting native plants on their shores as a way to improve the water quality, beauty, and natural habitat of their property.

Native plants are specific grasses, wildflowers and shrubs that naturally grow in our northern lake area. Landscaping with native plants helps filter out contaminants, such as lawn fertilizer and dog feces, before they run into the lake and cause weed and algae growth. Algae blooms suck oxygen from

our water, which hurts the fish population. Homeowners can plant native trees - or leave existing trees standing - as a means of holding in shorelines with their roots. There are plants that thrive well in partially wet areas and other plants that thrive better as you go upland away from shore. The flowage has a constantly moving shoreline, so choosing the right native plants can reduce erosion of our shorelines.

Grass lawns are fairly binary across the seasons. They are either green or brown. Native plants provide much more color and beauty across the seasons. In spring, an array of hazy green emerges with the new growth. In summer, wildflowers bloom with hues of yellow, orange, red, purple and pink. In fall, the colors soften to earthy colors of red, crimson and bronze. In winter you can still see the beige stalks above the snow.

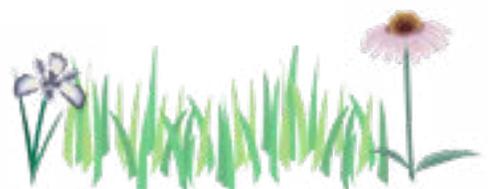
Canada geese are beautiful birds, but their droppings and turf-plucking ways can make a slimy mess of a lawn. If you plant a buffer strip of native plants along the shore, geese won’t want to pass through the buffer. They have a natural fear of upright vegetation - they think it provides cover for predators. Since they typically walk up shorelines to turf grass, the buffer will help keep them away from the rest of your lawn.

Yard maintenance is always a part of owning any real estate. Several of us have two homes, leaving us with twice the maintenance. Since our time up here is also limited, reducing maintenance can yield some real benefits to our health and well

being. Mowing grass along the lake shore is difficult. Often the grass is soggy, spongy and dangerous due to slopes. There is a natural transition zone between the uplands and the water. The lake really “wants” wetland plants to grow there. With a buffer strip of native plants you can give that stretch back to Mother Nature and let her do some of your yard work. Once established native plants require little maintenance. Pulling weeds from the buffer strip a few times a year is about all you will have to do. Native plants do not need fertilizing, mowing or watering. Putting in a buffer strip will give you less yard to mow every week.

Attracting wildlife is another great benefit provided by a buffer strip of native plants. Just watch the butterflies, hummingbirds, song birds, turtles, and frogs that will start visiting your yard. You may not need that bird feeder any more. The more buffer zone you add the more you will start noticing wildlife enjoying your yard. Even in the winter, the seed heads of plants can nourish chickadees, finches and cardinals.

Native plants are a great shoreline addition anywhere on the lake. You do not have to be replacing a lawn. Some of us have steep slopes down to the lake that are especially vulnerable to soil erosion. Proper use of native plants and other landscaping techniques can greatly help reduce soil erosion.



## *Getting Started with Native Plants*

You can buy native plants from Dragonfly Gardens in Amery. They have a great website that will show what type of natives they sell and also how to choose the correct type for your property. Depending on your property they have a "How to choose" tab which defines your Exposure to sun (Full sun, Part sun and shade or full shade): Soil type (sandy soil, loamy soil, or clay soil): and Moisture (Dry, Medium, Moist, or Wet).

For our area they make up four different collections (Butterfly, Prairie, Wetland, and Woodland) and people pre-order them. A "collection" is a tray of 32 plants--4 each of 8 different species. And the prices vary but they seem very reasonable. 32 plants along the shore line could possibly cover 32 feet of shoreline.

Flat prices can vary depending on what you buy, but you can get a flat for as little as \$60.00. So for less than \$100.00 you can probably get started with your native plantings. Contact them at:

### **Dragonfly Gardens**

491 State Hwy 46 Amery WI  
715 268-7660

[Dragonflygardens.net/native-plants/](http://Dragonflygardens.net/native-plants/)

If you have an interest in planting native species on your lot, let me know. You can email me at [tony@contractexchange.net](mailto:tony@contractexchange.net). I will save your email and if we get enough interest we may be able to arrange for a plant sale by Dragonfly here at the flowage.



We can get help from the Sawyer County Zoning and Conservation Dept. Kelly Nechuta works for the Land and Water Conservation Division. Her job is to help people get information about native plants. They have brochures about the different varieties of plants that can enhance our shoreline habitat and protect our shores from erosion. You can call Kelly at 715-638-3266 or email [kelly.nechuta@sawyercountygov.org](mailto:kelly.nechuta@sawyercountygov.org)

You can find their brochure at <https://www.sawyercountygov.org/209/Planting-Guide>

Kelly also recommends the book Bringing Nature Home by Douglas Tallamy as one of the most complete guides to shoreline enhancement.



If you want to do more with your shoreline, then you may want to get professional help. Natures Designs on County Rd B has done about a half dozen shoreline restoration projects on the flowage. Their website is [naturesdesignshayward.com](http://naturesdesignshayward.com) When you get into shoreline restorations that add rocks, steps and paths to shores that help stop erosion, you will probably need a permit from Sawyer County. Kathy Kisch 715 558-6061 would be glad to discuss your options.

Another source of information that I used in writing this article is the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership. They have a great website and nice color booklet that has great pictures of native plantings. Check out their Shoreline Living Booklet.

Some fun videos from the University of Wisconsin Extension Lakes are:

[Sebastian the Goose Encourages Natural Shorelines](#)



[Larry, the all-American Bullfrog](#)



[Natural Shorelines: Living in Harmony at the Water's Edge](#), by Michigan DNR



So as you get the spring itch to put something in the ground, take a look at your favorite view, the shoreline. It can be a great place to start planting to beautify, enhance habitat, stop erosion, and keep our lake clean for future generations.

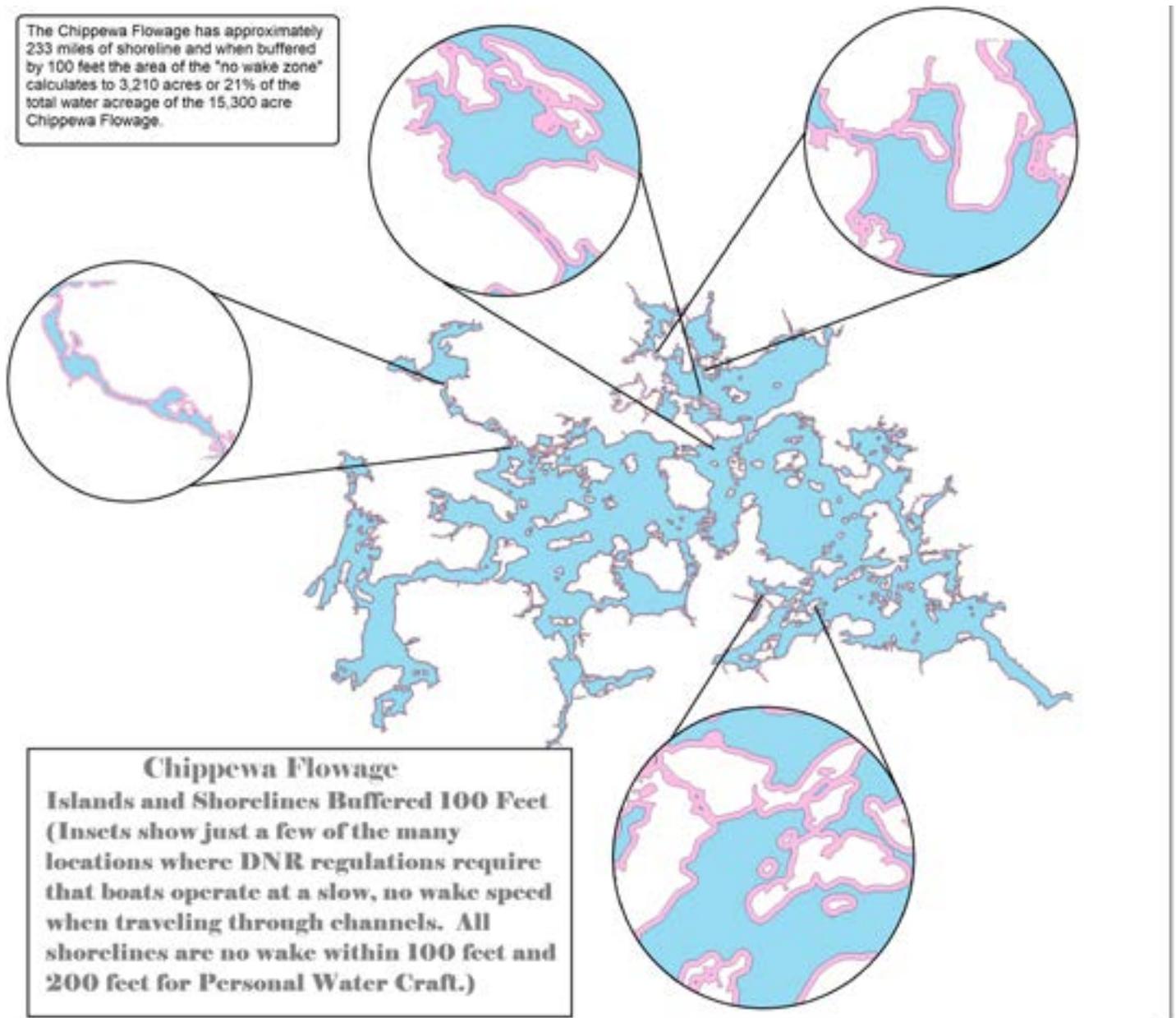
# Shoreline Erosion and Boat Traffic

CFAPOA is working to support members and actively address their concerns. In late 2020, membership responded to a survey that CFAPOA designed and sent out via email. Members listed and ranked their concerns in order of importance. A few of the top concerns were shoreline erosion and boat traffic. Since the dissemination of information is a primary function of CFAPOA, we assembled a map showing what the DNR regulated 100 foot water craft "Slow-No-Wake" zone looks like

on the Chippewa Flowage. Due to the numerous islands and complex 233 mile long shoreline, the 100 foot shoreline buffer totals 3,213 acres (21% of the Chippewa Flowage's total 15,300 acres) of surface water.

Regardless of whether slow, no wake buoys are present WDNR regulations require that boats travel at no wake speed when traveling within 100 feet of islands and main shoreline. Since it is often difficult to tell precisely when traveling through island corridors if the narrows is 200 feet or less,

CFAPOA recommends, if in doubt, to error on the conservative side and slow to no wake speed to help minimize shoreline erosion. Personal watercraft such as jet skis are required to slow to no wake speed within 200 feet of shoreline. For some examples of a few of the numerous narrow areas on the Chippewa Flowage please refer to the map that depicts the 100 foot shoreline buffer and includes inset maps depicting a few of the many areas that do require slow to no wake speed. CFAPOA appreciates your commitment to preserving the Chippewa Flowage.



# CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS

## *Spring Update for 2021*

Our lake, left alone would thrive!

It is us, the people who use her that bring the threats. Moving between waters introduces foreign 'invasive species'. Our need for speed erodes shorelines. Our powerful engines churn lake bottoms. Our desire for perfection in our lawns and gardens create unwanted runoff.

For the love of this lake, we shall strive for balance to protect her.

-DH

According to review of DNR data, Wisconsin sold 1,061,717 fishing licenses from March 1-June 30, up from 902,151 over the same period in 2019. The National Marine Manufacturers Association reports a 12 percent increase in sale of power boats in 2020 over 2019. This year we can expect an increase in both anglers and recreational boaters on the Flowage. After a year in hiatus due to COVID risks, our Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) program is in the process of being reestablished at our public boat launches. This program is our face to owners and operators of these watercrafts. Although we refer to our staff often as inspectors, their most important role is that of educator. Inspect and clean a person's boat and it is good for a day. Teach them how to inspect and clean themselves and hopefully they will do it for a lifetime! Education happens by our presence, our short conversations, our freebie handouts with our Clean Boats Clean Waters logo. As I write this I think of Jerry Smith, one of our original inspectors who passed away last year. Jerry always like to have the kids as well as their parents

listen to his message. He was generating young minds as effective educators/inspectors to keep an eye on the adults today and creating a story of lake protection for them to carry into the future.

In addition to our usual CBCW message and answering questions about the continuing Pike Improvement program, this year we will have our staff collect new data for the Lake Association on lake use. Fishing or pleasure? Size of boat and motor, etc. No personal identifiable information is ever collected thus keeping our visitors comfortable with the process.

This year we are having our challenges. As we all reawaken post COVID, resources in Sawyer county are in demand and job seekers are



in short supply. We need you more than ever! Become a volunteer or consider a role as paid inspector. Be an educator yourself to others. If you have guests moving watercraft from lake to lake, remind them to drain all water from bilges, ballast tanks and live wells.



Here again is our message:

## **BOATERS, PADDLERS AND ANGLERS**

- **INSPECT** your boat, trailer, and equipment.
- **REMOVE** any attached aquatic plants or animals (before launching, after loading and before transporting on a public highway).
- **DRAIN** all water from boats, motors, and all equipment.
- **NEVER MOVE** live fish away from a waterbody.
- **DISPOSE** of unwanted bait in the trash. BUY minnows from a Wisconsin bait dealer. You may take leftover minnows away from any state water and use them again on that same water. You may use leftover minnows on other waters only if no lake or river water or other fish were added to their container.

Your Clean Boats Clean Waters Co-Coordinator –

Diane Hulke and Barb Salomon

# 2020 Chippewa Flowage Loon Watch Report

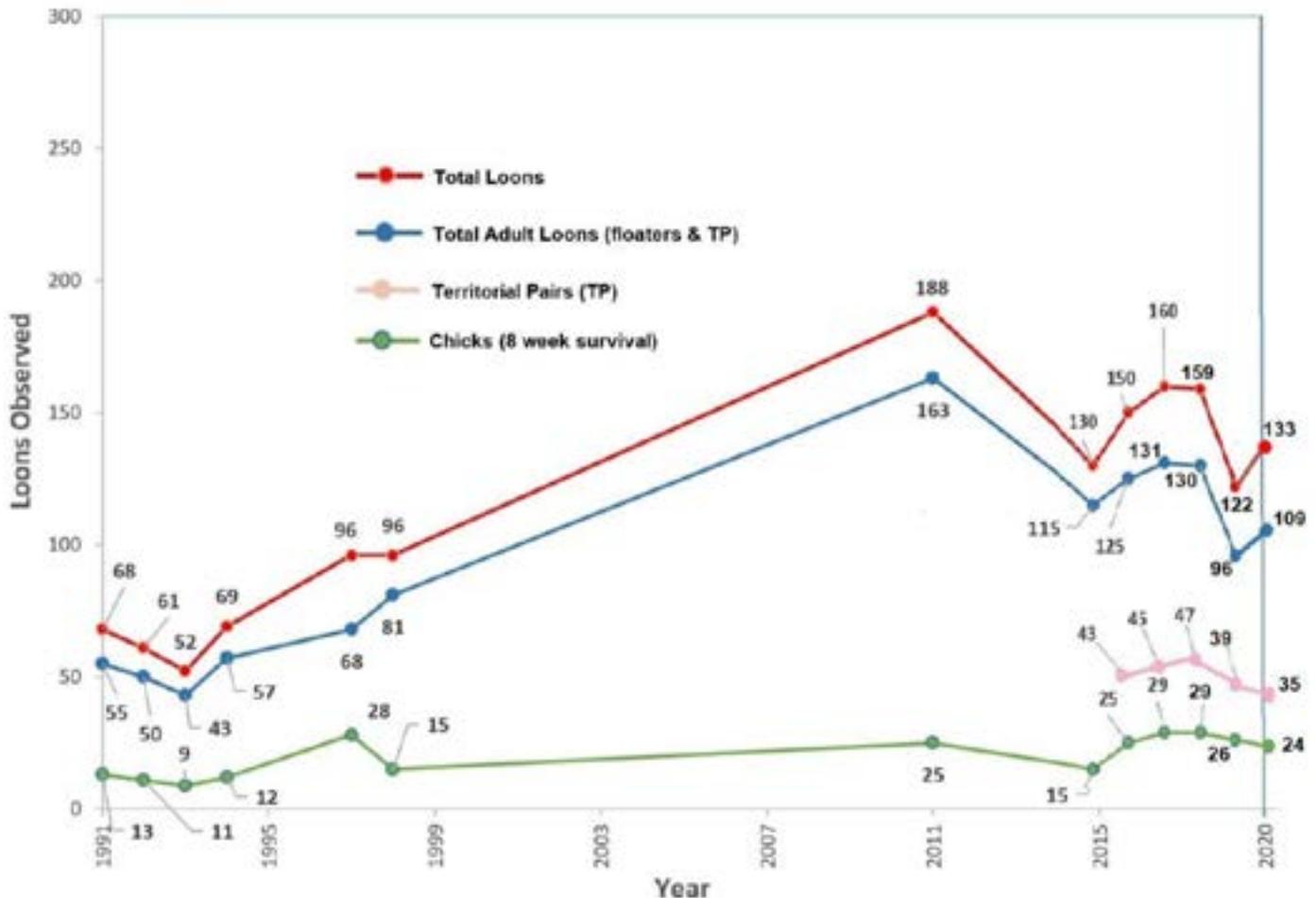
For six consecutive years the Chippewa Flowage Loon Ranger volunteers have observed, recorded and collectively submit loon observations to Northland College's LoonWatch program. LoonWatch is always appreciative of our efforts and extends a sincere thanks to each volunteer for their numerous loon monitoring hours as part of the Annual Lakes Monitoring Program.

Below is a graph of historic loon observations including the latest 2020 results. Unlike northeastern Wisconsin the Chippewa Flowage appears to be in a stable population period. According to LoonWatch Coordinator Erica LaMoine, large bodies of water like the Chippewa Flowage have not observed a decline like smaller lakes have.

Some of our volunteer's observations include territorial pairs, floaters (unpaired loons), loon nests, chicks, and chicks that survive through August. Chicks that survive to August have a very high survival rate while prior to August they fall prey to eagles, large fish, turtles and raccoons. In addition, this past spring's dense black fly population drove many nesting loons off nests which then leads to unhatched eggs.

LoonWatch also advocates that we fisherpersons try to stay 200 feet away from nesting loons. Close boating near nest sites can also cause loons to abandon their nests. On a positive note you may occasionally notice a floating platform on the Big Chip. Thanks to a grant from Xcel Energy our loon rangers constructed

eight artificial nesting platforms (ANP's) of which this past spring 3 of the 8 were occupied by nesting loons which successfully hatched chicks. The purpose for these ANP's is to help loons successfully nest since our water body is a reservoir with fluctuating water levels which can flood near water edge loon nests. We look forward to another year of loon observations on the beautiful Chippewa Flowage.



## Adopt-A-Shoreline Volunteers

Name	East	West
<b>"Needs Adoption"</b>	<b>T</b>	
Ron & Jan Bergman		1
Mike & Lynn Muench	M	
Lisa Costa		12, 13
Gary & Lind Crank		3, 5
Tony DeJoode	T	
LCO Conservation Dept.	H, I, Z	
Jim & Marion Dier	S	
Alan & Lynda Fish		8, 17
Whitley and Donna Gilbertson		2, 18
<b>"Needs Adoption"</b>		<b>10</b>
Gary & Mary Lou Hosler, Roman Rowen	U	
Chris & Patti Jeffords		4
Jerry & Nancy Johnson		6, 9
Larry & Sharon Kirby		10, 14
Roger & Kathy Kisch	W	
Wayne and Sharon Koening		7, 14
Rob and Rebecca Nesse	J	
<b>Brian and Sara Priestler</b>	<b>O</b>	
Terry and Kay Moe	A2	
Rick & Linda Olson	R	
Tony & Laurie Schubert	T	
Dave Carland Family and Friends	X	
Don & Sue Reinardy	E1-2	
Steve & Jane Richardson	W	
<b>"Needs Adoption"</b>		<b>15, 16</b>
Barb Salomon & Connie Peterson	T	
Terry & Debra Wall	D	
Darrell & Jean Welihert	E1-2	
Greg and Amy Sanders		11
Mike & Phyllis Gardner	Q	
Gage Muench	P	
Dennis Clagett	Y	
Linda Treland	A1	



# Invasive Species Update

by Dennis Clagett



**CURLY-LEAF  
PONDWEED  
(POTAMOGETON  
CRISPUS)**

*A perennial, submerged aquatic herb that is native to Eurasia. Tolerates fresh or slightly brackish water and can grow in shallow, deep, still or flowing water.*

[dnr.wisconsin.gov](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov)

Spring is the perfect time to talk about another invasive species that makes occasional appearances in the Chippewa flowage: Curly-leaf pondweed (CLP), last noticed about 5 years ago on the rock bar west of the bridge, also just south of that in the bay close to CC. This is a sneaky invader that is very noticeable in the spring, when it grows the fastest. This is the best time to find it. Get a sample and contact me (715-462-4814), and I will come to you if needed. Pull some up with a bucktail or anchor, put it in a baggie with some water. The plant is reddish brown to light green and around June has flower stalks that will reach the surface, but in about 2 weeks these will break down. The remaining seeds (turions) sprout in late summer; they may over-winter, ready for early next spring, but may not survive freezing. So, we need to keep a handle on this plant. Other nearby lakes did not and have to buy \$100,000 harvesters to keep it in check. Our recent pre-freeze-up-habitat drawdowns may also play a part, and I am working on that.

This is a good place to mention you folks that had thick infestations of Eurasian watermilfoil last year, specifically in south Chief Lake bays.

I need your input as to how effective last fall's drawdown was. This was discussed at the recent Partners Meeting, so you guys are on that agenda! A good time to contact me would be when we have our Annual Meeting in August.

Now to our Adopt-A-Shoreline program and its volunteers: This year we will be missing long-time east side Adopt-A-Shoreline volunteers Brenda and John Dettloff. For many years they took great care of sections Z & I. Also retiring from the program are Steve and Louise Paulson, who looked after section H for years and knew the Moonshine Bog well. Joining the program will be the LCO Conservation Department. They have adopted three sections: H, I, & Z. Welcome! New board member Tony Schubert and wife Laurie have adopted section T. Tony is also part of the Shoreline Protection and Water Safety Committees and will be keeping an eye on the Chief River/Musky Bay area. Our Beetle bio-control program will be employed this year but with a somewhat limited range. Please consider: Volunteers are always needed and you can contact me with questions at 715-462-4814.

# Spring Fisheries Committee Update

by Terry Wall

It was around this time a year ago that we began to hear about local event cancellations due to the Pandemic. Last year's cancellations included the Governors fishing opener, the Treeland Walleye Challenge and Musky Fest to name a few. Things look much brighter this year with most events scheduled to return. Spring has come early bringing an early ice out and an opportunity to get our yard work finished before the opening weekend of the fishing season.

Back on February 25th the DNR conducted an Online fisheries forum to convey information about the lakes and rivers in Sawyer county. Max Wolter, our local DNR fisheries biologist, hosted the forum providing those attending via zoom with an update on what did and didn't happen last year as well as an update on our local lakes and rivers. Due to COVID restrictions

the DNR canceled the normal spring surveys and musky stocking. Later in the season they were able to conduct the fall shocking surveys and Walleye stocking. The fall shocking surveys are important and are used to determine survival rates and numbers of fish hatched in the spring. The surveys reflect the natural recruitment of fish in a particular lake and drive the stocking program. I am happy to report that the Chip is one of the lakes that has maintained a steady natural reproduction of Walleyes going as far back as 2014. While many lakes are scheduled for stocking the Chip is not on the list for this year primarily because we have had good natural reproduction the past few years. One important factor that has contributed to this is the habitat drawdown which is done to control invasive weeds and improve spawning habitat as well

as manage spring and early summer water levels. The annual drawdown has become an important tool in managing habitat on the flowage. I have included a slide from the forum presentation which shows the increase in natural reproduction of Walleye for years following a habitat drawdown. A notable exception to this was 2015 which was a dry spring and the flowage didn't refill as quickly as normal. As the chart shows some years were better than others but overall the drawdowns appear to be beneficial to the Walleye population. Another point worth mentioning, according to Max and DNR data, lakes that are stocked generally have one-third less adult walleye per acre than lakes with natural reproduction. The Wisconsin DNR is stocking more than 800,000 extended growth walleyes in Wisconsin lakes each year. Local stocking is a partnered effort by the

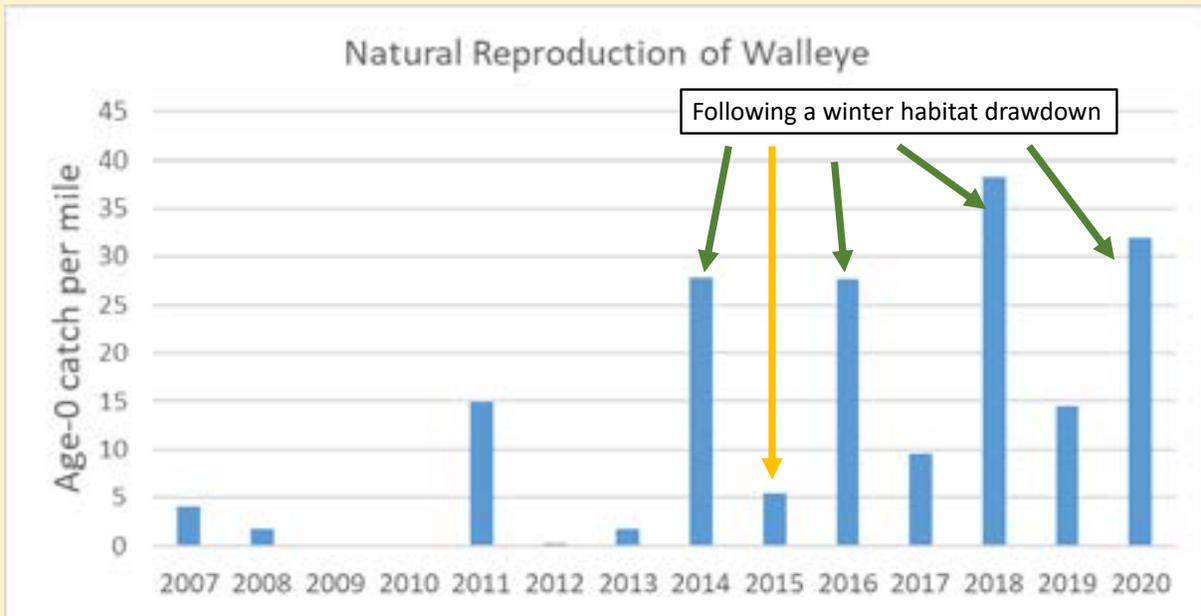


## Netting Survey

Photos from the DNR netting survey April 6-9, 2021.



# Impact of drawdowns – Chip age-0 figure



DNR, tribal hatcheries and private groups like Walleyes for Northwest Wisconsin and resort and property associations. The CFAPOA supports these efforts by partner groups and to that point the CFAPOA board has donated \$1000.00 to the LCO hatchery to help feed the fingerlings raised at the LCO hatchery this summer. We may not have a need for stocking this year but goodwill goes a long way toward cementing strong relationships for the future.

I hope all our members were able to take part in the Conservation Congress spring hearings which took place on April 12. One proposal of interest is a change to the panfish bag limit on the Chippewa flowage from 25 per day to 10 per day. Max said this change is expected to impact about 20% of panfish angling trips. The meeting was again conducted Online with a 72 hour period to complete the questionnaire.

Two years ago the DNR along with support from the LCFRA

and CFAPOA conducted the Pike Improvement Project to reduce the number of smaller pike in the flowage. The purpose of the project was to improve the fishery for other species and create a more favorable environment for the fishery overall. With a goal of removing 10,000 small pike, anglers were encouraged to harvest pike 24 inches and under. While not meeting the goal, over 7000 small pike were removed and utilized by anglers and the local food shelf that year. Cash prizes were awarded to anglers who registered the most fish as an incentive to participate in the project.

The DNR and the LCFRA have announced that the PIP is on again for 2021. Once again the CFAPOA is offering our support in the form of prize money for the contestants. Rules are the same and more information can be found on the Chippewa Flowage web page. [www.chippewaflowage.com](http://www.chippewaflowage.com) Our lake is hosting a number of fishing tournaments during the month of

May where they expect Pike to be caught and donated to the PIP. The resort association has issued a call for a few volunteers to help clean fish during these events. If you are handy with a fillet knife and don't mind giving a few hours of your time you can volunteer by contacting Barb Czarnecki. Email her at [prcent@centurytel.net](mailto:prcent@centurytel.net) I'm sure they will welcome any help they can get from our members.

**“While many lakes are scheduled for stocking the Chip is not on the list for this year primarily because we have had good natural reproduction the past few years.”**

# Q&A with Max Wolter

by Brian Priester

Welcome to what I hope will become a regular newsletter feature -- Q&A with folks from around the Flowage. For our inaugural feature I'm very excited to visit with Max Wolter, Fisheries Biologist for the Wisconsin DNR.

Thanks for taking the time to answer a few questions for our members Max. We did a survey of our members in December and the results show that our members are very interested and concerned about the fishery. I know they'll appreciate your answers to these questions.

**1 How long have you been with the DNR? Tell us a little about your role. Are you responsible for other lakes as well?**

I have been with DNR since 2012 as the fisheries biologist for Sawyer County. I have management responsibilities for all lakes and rivers in the County, with the exception of the Flambeau River State Forest. I lead a 3-person fisheries team to complete surveys, habitat work, make stocking requests, approve permits, hold youth fishing and education events, and more.

**2 In the results of our survey, more members said fishing has gotten worse (47%) in the last five years than gotten better (17%), 36% said fishing is about the same. Do your more scientific ways of measuring fish population (shocking and such) agree with that? What other thoughts do you have on this finding?**

I don't find this terribly surprising. We get the same general response when we ask questions of this type elsewhere. I'd be interested in drilling down a little deeper with

Flowage anglers in the future. What species are you seeing changes for? What aspect of the fishery is not working for you, are you not catching what you want? Are you having to throw back fish because of limits? In other words, there's a lot of ways for people to be dissatisfied, and it's helpful to understand it more thoroughly. We do have a creel survey coming up in the next couple years. That will give us a scientific estimate of angler catch and harvest for all the important species. That can be compared to previous creel surveys completed in 2011 and other years to tell us more about how the angling experience is changing.

**3 Let's talk a little about stocking. Our members really support stocking fish. This seems like a very straightforward proposition that everyone can get behind. Do you stock fish every year? If so which species?**

We stock muskies about every third year. There was a period of time not long ago that we were also stocking walleye every other year because they were really struggling to reproduce on their own. However, walleye are now reproducing very successfully and stocking is not needed to sustain that fishery. Even the muskellunge stocking is "supplemental" as there is some muskellunge reproduction happening naturally. The musky stocking is intended to increase the population density to improve angling success, but even without stocking, muskellunge would likely persist. We have not stocked other species, and in general it is very uncommon to stock anything other than those two species for reasons I will hit on later. To summarize

my general thoughts on stocking: it's popular and very easy to get people excited about funding it, but most people don't understand that stocking is for broken lakes. The best fisheries are not stocked (think Winnebago, Green Bay, or the entirety of Canada for walleye). We want to be a lake that doesn't need to get stocked.

**4 Can one stock too many fish or is it always a function of dollars? I hope that makes sense. Another way to ask is, are you ever in a situation where you say, "I wouldn't stock any more musky (or walleye) this year, even if I had more money."**

One can absolutely stock too many fish, but I think the more common issue is stocking too often or in places where it is not needed. Both walleye and muskellunge fisheries supported by natural reproduction tend to have 2-3x higher density of adult fish than those supported by stocking. Stocking is not nearly as efficient as what mother nature can do when the conditions are right (therefor, stocking should be reserved for lakes with poor conditions for reproduction). When we stock on top of a natural reproducing population, we risk overrunning the food supply and both the stocked and natural fish can starve. There are also genetic concerns. So, as soon as we see enough natural reproduction happening, we want to avoid stocking. That can be an unpopular position. People can't see little natural born walleye or muskies coming up in a lake, compared to seeing the big stocking truck show up. It's a challenge to educate people on these things so I am glad you are asking the questions.

**5 Do you ever stock crappie, or is it always walleye and musky?**

We do not stock crappie, and it's not something I would

recommend. Consider this, each female crappie produces an average of at least 10,000 eggs annually. There are hundreds of thousands of crappie in the flowage (we know this from creel surveys). Let's say we have 100,000 spawning female crappie in the flowage (almost certainly a conservative estimate). That's 1 billion eggs being laid each and every year. Mother Nature is running a much more efficient and cost-effective restocking program than we could ever run. If adult crappie abundance is not where we want it to be, we need to look at other factors like the conditions contributing to survival of young crappie or harvest of adult crappie.

## **6 Can having too many of one kind of fish negatively impact another?**

Abundance of one species (whether those fish are the result of stocking or natural reproduction) can definitely have impacts on other species. We knew that as walleye reproduction started to increase again it would lead to less panfish, as walleye are a very effective and abundant predator of panfish. So there is a trade off there. The same is likely true for pike impacting abundance of musky and maybe other species like yellow perch. We can try to balance the fishery in certain ways, but there are always these trade-offs, and there really is no scenario where we can "have it all" (abundant walleye, abundant panfish with big size, lots of muskies and muskies with big size, etc.). The best analogy I have found is carrots in a garden. You can have lots of tiny carrots if you plant a lot of seeds, or you can have a smaller number of really big carrots if you plant more sparsely. Either way, it's about the same biomass of carrots.

## **7 Can a group like ours (or Muskies Inc. or Walleyes for North-**

## **west Wisconsin) stock fish in the Chip without the DNR permission? What about the LCO?**

A stocking permit is required for any fish to be stocked into public waters of the state. We work with the LCO fisheries biologist to coordinate stocking each year.

## **8 I have a Chippewa Flowage brochure from the late 1930s that says 753,870 muskies were stocked in 1938 and an incredible 27.5 million walleyes were "again" stocked "this season." How has stocking changed over the years?**

Over the years, stocking, especially for walleye, has shifted from putting out millions of tiny fry to now using larger fingerlings that are 6-7 inches in length. Fry stocking is very cheap and you can raise tons of them because you don't have to spend money to feed them or find space to rear them. We basically take the eggs back to the hatchery, hatch them in jars, and then return them to the lake almost immediately. The survival of those fry would be less than 1%. This was just common practice in the past, even in lakes that probably didn't need it. Now, we see even lower survival with fry stocking, so we have switched to more commonly stocking larger fingerlings that are raised in the hatchery all summer to a size where they can avoid more predators. Raising fish to that size is much more expensive. Similar changes have happened with musky.

## **9 Anecdotally, I hear people say they catch a lot of 14" Walleye - just under keeper size. Any theories on why that might be?**

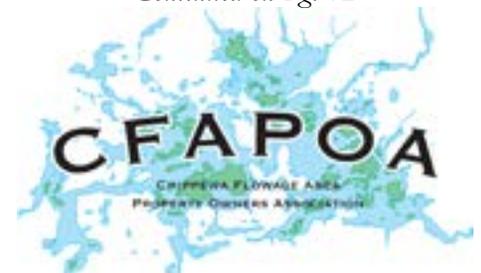
This is very common when minimum length limits are used and fishing pressure is high. While it might be frustrating, at times, it is not a sign of a broken population or a bad regulation.

We have been looking at walleye growth rates almost annually since the 15 inch minimum length limit was applied in 2015. Both males and females are crossing that 15 inches size in 4-6 years, which is average. One thing that may be happening is 14-inch fish are getting "recycled", where they might be caught and released by anglers several times within a year. 15-inch walleye only get caught once, and then the show's over for them. That's not to say that we are going with this particular regulation forever. We've been more conservative over the last few years because of the fairly recent decline in reproduction, which was really concerning. But if we can continue to have strong reproduction and build up the population again different regulations may be more appropriate than what we have now. That will be especially true if we wind up with enough walleye that they are competing for food and growth slows down.

## **10 I've heard northern pike described as an invasive species on the Chip. Some people laugh at that notion. What are the facts?**

Northern pike are native to many watersheds in northern Wisconsin, but historical records show that the Upper Chippewa River was not one of them. This was an area where muskellunge were the sole esocid species. Northern pike were introduced into Bear Lake on the East Fork of the Chippewa River, for what reason I don't know. It was only a matter of time before they made their way down

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and got established in the Chip. Similar introductions (sometimes by DNR, sometimes illegally by the public) were made into most other watersheds. Some happened relatively recently (we believe pike were put into Spider Chain sometime in the 90s by someone).

**11 As an organization we are supporters of the Pike Improvement Project. Were you happy with the program in 2019? Realistically, how many pike would need to be removed to have a positive impact on the rest of the fishery? How does removing pike improve the fishery?**

In 2019 we set a goal of 10,000 pike. That was based on some basic statistics (# pike removed per acre of lake) from a similar project we did on LCO. The concept is simple (think carrots again): less pike means more food to go around for those that remain, which leads to better growth. In LCO, we saw great results and we've been observing better pike size and improved musky survival ever since. The hope was that we could apply that same strategy on the Chip. In 2019, we did not hit our 10k goal. And unfortunately, with COVID we did not survey in spring 2020 to see if the pike population had changed in either abundance or size structure. We hope to do that survey in spring 2021 and we can update people at that time.

**12 Our members ranked fish importance as: Walleye, Crappie, Muskie, Panfish, Smallmouth, Northern Pike and Largemouth.**

**Anything surprising to you in those results?**

No surprise whatsoever, and in fact, that is almost the EXACT same order as when we asked people to rank these species when we created the fisheries management plan for the Flowage back in the mid-2000s. So, it shows me that these preferences are pretty fixed through time. This is the prioritization we use when faced with a management decision. For example, we might pursue a management action that benefits walleye, even if it might hurt panfish a bit (drawdowns).

**13 Our survey revealed that most of our members think disregard of lake regulations - like ignoring no wake areas - are a serious issue on the Chip. Does that impact the fishery?**

It could, but those linkages can be hard to see directly. A consistent conservation and ecosystem (everything is connected) mentality to recreating on the flowage will help prevent some issues that may currently be "unseen" by these kinds of practices.

**14 With COVID this year it seemed there were a lot more people on the lake fishing, including ice fishing this winter. Any thoughts on the impact that will have on the fishery?**

That's been a hot question, and some of our researchers statewide have been looking into it. I'll have to report back on their results. But from my perspective, more people fishing is a good thing. It was a safe and fun thing to do in 2020, and maybe some of those families that tried out fishing will now be hooked for life. Regulations can always be adjusted to reflect higher pressure if it's shown that there is a need and desire to do so.

**15 Speaking of ice fishing, I've heard people say that the fish get really concentrated in the winter, making them easier to catch.**

**How do you think opening up ice fishing a few years back has impacted the fishery?**

Unfortunately, we don't have creel statistics on ice fishing, so it's hard for me to say anything too definitive on this subject. But I can use some of the statistics we do have available to make some inferences. In our last creel (2011) we estimated about 57,000 crappie were harvested in just the month of May (spawning). To equal that amount of ice harvest in the winter, we'd need to see 76 anglers harvesting their full limit every single day of the month. I fish the flowage a lot in the winter, and there are some busy days, but I don't believe the amount of pressure gets this high. Also, the anglers who are there are not always limiting out. In other words, the math suggests that the bulk of the harvest is happening in open water when there are many more anglers fishing. I am hoping we can do a winter creel in the future to give us more data on the winter fishery. If none of this alleviates your concerns, read on for discussion about panfish limits.

**16 Most people noticed a lot more boat traffic on the lake in 2020. Do you have any metrics that measure fishing pressure or lake usage overall?**

Not for the Chip specifically, but we do have creels on other lakes that might give us some answers here. I will have to report back on that.

**17 The drawdown got a lot of attention this year. Do you support habitat drawdowns? Why or why not?**

I do. Habitat drawdowns are a very powerful tool in our toolbox. I recognize the controversy, but I think the benefits are worth it. I have been very vocal about the need to use these drawdowns judiciously (i.e. don't do it every year "just because") and that we need to have a clear process for making that

recommendation to Xcel Energy and then communicating that to the public. We also need to find effective ways to get input from flowage users. CFAPOA has representation on that partner group, but other users don't have a direct voice. I think we've made strides, but there are still ways we can improve the process.

**18 Can you name a few of the biggest threats and challenges to the Chippewa Flowage fishery in the future? What keeps you up at night?**

Climate change. We're already on the southern edge of the walleye's natural range. Warmer water is bad for their long-term outlook. It's also going to mean smaller muskies. With unchecked climate change the future of fisheries in the Midwest looks better for bass and panfish than walleye. Heck, it's possible you'll even see catfish become a bigger part of the Flowage fishery a few decades from now. Maybe some people are ok with that outlook, but a lot of people will be disappointed to hear that some of the iconic species are in the crosshairs. And this is not something that "might" happen sometime down the road. Walleye recruitment has been steadily cycling down for the last 20 years. Similar patterns are happening in other waterbodies across the Midwest. Professionally, I feel like this is an important thing to talk about. But it's also really tough, because it's not something we can attack directly at the local level.

**19 Are there any new fishing regulations being discussed for the Chip that you'd like to comment on?**

Yes. There is a proposal on this year's Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring hearings that relates directly to the flowage. It asks the

public if they support reducing the panfish daily bag limit from 25 to 10 (possession limit would remain the same). Reduced panfish bag limits have been shown to be successful in improving panfish size in many scenarios, and they can also help spread harvest more evenly throughout the year (as opposed to most of the harvest happening when fish are most vulnerable, like spawning). In the case of the Chip, we estimate that dropping the bag limit to 10 would reduce panfish harvest by about 20% annually. This is because most panfish anglers are harvesting less than 10 panfish already, on a given day (yes, I know, if you are a good angler or scrolling through people's stringer photos on Facebook that can be hard to believe, but those are the stats from our creel surveys). The WCC Spring Hearings are all Online now, so you can participate from anywhere. April 12!

**20 Are there other DNR initiatives or goals on the horizon that will impact the Chip that you think our members should be aware of?**

Between the 2021 Pike Improvement Project, our big creel survey that's coming up in a year or two, and PIT tagged musky stocking, there is already a lot happening! We will see what kinds of new projects come together in the near future.

**21 Do you support placing more cribs in the Chip?**

I support people catching fish, and I think cribs can help with that. I've been known to sit over a crib myself when fish are otherwise hard to find. So from that standpoint I think there are benefits. Overall though, I don't think cribs address any major fisheries issues and I don't expect that adding cribs will change the dynamics of the fishery.

**22 As an organization, what can we do to help you improve the**

**fishery? You know we have limited funds, but if we do a better job of raising funds in the future what would you like to see? Is it as simple as money for stocking or is there something else we can do?**

Thanks for this question and thanks for all the great partnership we've had with CFAPOA over the years. I know I can always come to you when there is a need. That said, it's really hard finding manageable and impactful projects! Here are a few ideas that range from moderately expensive to free that people can do right now. Most of these are ideas for individuals, but maybe CFAPOA could help amplify the message. First, consider selective harvest. In a nutshell, that involved taking some of the more abundant sizes of fish that you like to harvest and not just taking the "top end" of the size structure. Anglers seem to have adopted this pretty well for walleye, but there are real benefits to applying the same practice to panfish, pike, and even largemouth bass. If we can start thinking more in terms of "eaters" being medium-sized we could see nice improvements in the fishery that would happen without highly restrictive regulations. Next, all property owners in the watershed can help water quality and making the system more resilient by minimizing impervious surfaces or planting rain gardens (get that water soaking in!), planting or maintaining native vegetation along shorelines, minimizing or even abandoning use of pesticides or fertilizers, and keeping wood and rock in the water along your shoreline. Once you've incorporated those things into your

*Continued on Pg. 14*



## Largest Species (in inches)

Species	Ever Seen	Last 10 years
Walleye .....	30.5 .....	30.0
Musky .....	52.0 .....	51.0
Crappie .....	14.0 .....	12.6
Smallmouth* .....	20.5 .....	19.5
Northern Pike.....	38.5 .....	38.0
Bluegill.....	10.5 .....	8.8
Largemouth.....	21.0 .....	21.0

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lifestyle and angling habits, amplify your impact by spreading that message to others.

### **23** Just for fun. What's the biggest fish of each species you've seen on the Chip?

Oh, this is a fun one! Here's what I did: I pulled the biggest fish we (DNR) have EVER seen in a survey for each species, and then I also pulled biggest in the last 10 years. Something to get people excited as we look ahead to the 2021 fishing season.

\* if you're surprised by the rarity of 20" smallmouth in the flowage, I'm with you. The habitat seems great and we get lots of 20's in many other nearby waters (including some of the lakes along the East Fork). It's a mystery to me why there are not more 20's

## Membership Update

*by Patty Swaffield, Membership Chair*

### *Welcome New Members*

- Alex & Mercedie Bement
- Angie Bowe
- Brad & Michele Donaghue
- Ryan & Jennifer Gaveske\*
- John & Jennifer Hoehn
- Jeff & Connie Kloes
- Jean Landon\*\*
- Jon & Peggy LeBlanc\*\*
- Mike & Emily Leuthner
- Jeff & Wanda Lomprey\*
- Joe Reker
- James & Erin Roche\*
- Pete & Sarah Ross\*\*
- Bill & Sylvia Nasla Whealon\*\*

\* Contributor

\*\* Steward

### *Contributor*

- Eric & Susan Berg
- Tom & Joan Booth Jr.
- Mike Chernohorsky
- Bill & Mary Dixon
- James & Shirley Dolezal
- Eleanore Dzialo
- Dean & Kristin Elmer
- Sharyn Gunderson
- Bruce & Diane Johnson
- Brian & Jen Lemke
- Jeremy & Shayna Reichert
- Don & Sue Reinardy
- James & Erin Roche
- Brad & Becky Sanderson
- Kevin & Barbara Whelan

### *Steward*

- Gary & Holly Becker
- Gasper & Rita Ficarrotta
- Bryan & Kristen Mock
- Connie & Barb Salomon Peterson
- Gary & Sandy Reynolds
- Jason & Mary Speros
- Peter & Alexis Suttle
- Paul & Dawn Tweed

### *Lifetime*

- Joe & Lora Garceau

### *Membership Levels*

**\$25:** Individual/Property | **\$26 to \$124:** Contributor – newsletter recognition. | **\$125 to \$999:** Steward – newsletter recognition and a gift. | **\$1000 and up:** Lifetime Conservationist – newsletter recognition, a gift, and lifetime membership.

# Chippewa Storage Reservoir Forecast

**Elevation as of March 10, 2021:** 1305.15 ft.

**Season<sup>1</sup>:** Spring 2021

**Typical Maximum Spring Full Elevation:** 1313.0 ft.

**2021 Projected Spring Full Elevation Range:** 1312.0 – 1312.5 ft.

## Comments

- The operation of the Chippewa Reservoir Dam this past fall/winter was similar to past years where an earlier fall and deeper (8 ft.) winter drawdown were performed. Xcel Energy has been working since 2006 with a number of stakeholders representing various interests on the Chippewa Reservoir to better manage the reservoir and surrounding lands. Those stakeholders, collectively known as the Partners Group, include: the Wisconsin DNR, U.S. Forest Service, LCO tribe, Chippewa Flowage Property Owners Association, Lake Chippewa Flowage Resort Association and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.
- The Partner's Group had expressed a desire to implement an early pre-freeze fall drawdown (5 ft.) followed by an additional 3 ft. during the winter (total of 8 ft.). The intent of the deeper drawdown was to decrease the amount of aquatic vegetation, including Eurasian water milfoil, which benefits walleye populations in the reservoir. The success of prior winter drawdowns has been well documented and the decision was made to perform a similar drawdown again this past fall/winter.
- The winter low elevation of 1305.10 ft. was reached on March 8, 2021 and the refill will begin thereafter with an expected increase in flows from snowmelt and rainfall. The expected date of refill is unknown as it will depend on how weather events impact inflowing rivers. Once the reservoir refills, it will be maintained at approximately 1312.5 ft. into the early summer period.
- Conditions in the watershed were wet leading into the winter season. Although the snowpack from this past winter was below normal, the wet conditions in the watershed combined with anticipated snowmelt and spring rains should refill the reservoir in a timely fashion.
- Discharge from the dam will be maintained slightly above the minimum flow requirement (250 cfs) throughout the spring season until the reservoir refills. At that point, outflow from the dam will be approximately equal to inflows into the reservoir.
- Xcel Energy will monitor reservoir levels, discharge and rainfall throughout the spring to ensure water levels are maintained. Discharge from the dam will be adjusted as necessary during the spring period to maintain the reservoir near the target elevation.

For information on current reservoir level and discharge from the Chippewa Reservoir dam, please go to the following link:  
<https://my.xcelenergy.com/s/state-selector?return=%2Fs%2Fenergy-portfolio%2Fhydro>

### <sup>1</sup> Definitions of Seasons of the Year for Operating the Chippewa Storage Reservoir:

Winter: December 1 – March 31  
Spring: April 1 – June 1  
Summer: June 2 – September 30  
Fall: October 1 – November 30

**CHIPPEWA FLOWAGE AREA PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION**  
**PO BOX 555**  
**HAYWARD, WI 54843-0555**

**ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED**

**CFAPOA** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, formed to generally promote, encourage and foster the interests of all property owners. Its major objectives are: to keep the Chippewa Flowage area clean and safe for all people; to protect the environment; to provide a forum for the collection and exchange of ideas; to support acquisition of land for protection and conservation; and to pursue any other lawful objectives that may benefit this pristine lake, its wetlands, wildlife and tributaries.

**MARK YOUR  
CALENDAR**

**BOARD MEETINGS  
AND EVENTS**

May 6, 2021  
June 3, 2021  
July 1, 2021

Board meetings are currently held at 6:00 p.m. virtually on Zoom. Visitors are welcome to join. Contact Mike Gardner at [mgardner@northflow.net](mailto:mgardner@northflow.net)

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