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Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA) News

P.O. Box 494 Eagle

WINTER 2016

NEWSLETTER DATE

Presidential Pebbles and Pearls

Happy New Year to all. Well 2015 certainly turned out to be a tough one for Vilas County lakes. We learned in May that language had been placed in the budget bill that would make it illegal for counties to have shoreland zoning more restrictive than the statewide minimums.

VCLRA, Wisconsin Lakes, hundreds of lake property owners, and dozens of lake associations fought this ill-advised budget language to no avail from the Joint Finance Committee in June to the Governor's signature in July.

Almost immediately, a repeal effort got underway. Lobbyists and lawyers were hired. A considerable amount of money was raised statewide. VCLRA donated \$1,000 to the effort. Thru the early to mid-fall a bill to be introduced into the legislature was being formulated. That task was completed in mid-November and will be introduced during the January 2016 session. This bill will not be a total repeal effort but will seek to roll back the worst aspects of the zoning language.

Through this entire effort, VCLRA has served as a conduit by passing on communications from our contacts in Madison and those leading this effort to our members and member associations. This will continue. It has never been more important to renew your VCLRA membership!

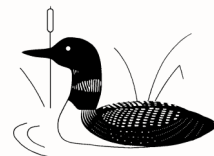
I've never been big on New Year's resolutions but I was thinking the other day that even though we're all about lakes and rivers; we need to spend a bit more time on terrestrial invasives. It would not take much effort to adopt a piece or section of road. It could be the road to the boat landing, or a road that goes by your lake. Some individuals and lake associations are already doing it. Consider doing this in 2016.

The North Central Counties Lakes Association Workshop is set for Nicolet College in Rhinelander on **June 10th, 2016**. A full agenda will be in the spring newsletter. **Save the date!** The annual lakes partnership convention is also set for Stevens Point from **March 31-April 2nd**.

Contained in this issue:

- A membership renewal form
- 2015 Clean Boats-Clean Waters Summary
- Info on the Shoreland Stewardship Initiative
- Benefits of Membership Summary
- Other Lakes Related Information

Steve Budnik
President VCLRA



2015 Clean Boats-Clean Waters Summary

With the 2015 Clean Boats Clean Waters season having come to a close, a summary of the Vilas County CBCW data was prepared from SWIMS as of 11/1. Nearly 11,000 hours of CBCW activity was reported at 42 landings ranging from as few as 3 total hours to more than 1000. The average number of boats observed per hour over the course of the summer ranged from 0.21 to 3.88.

			Confident Boater Understands AIS Prevention							
Total Hours	Total Boats observed	Total People Contacted	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
10826.949	17181	32474	14252	44%	4591	14%	194	1%	33	0%

Shoreland Stewardship Covenant Update

SUCCESS! VCLRA's Roll Out of Vilas Shoreland Stewardship Initiative

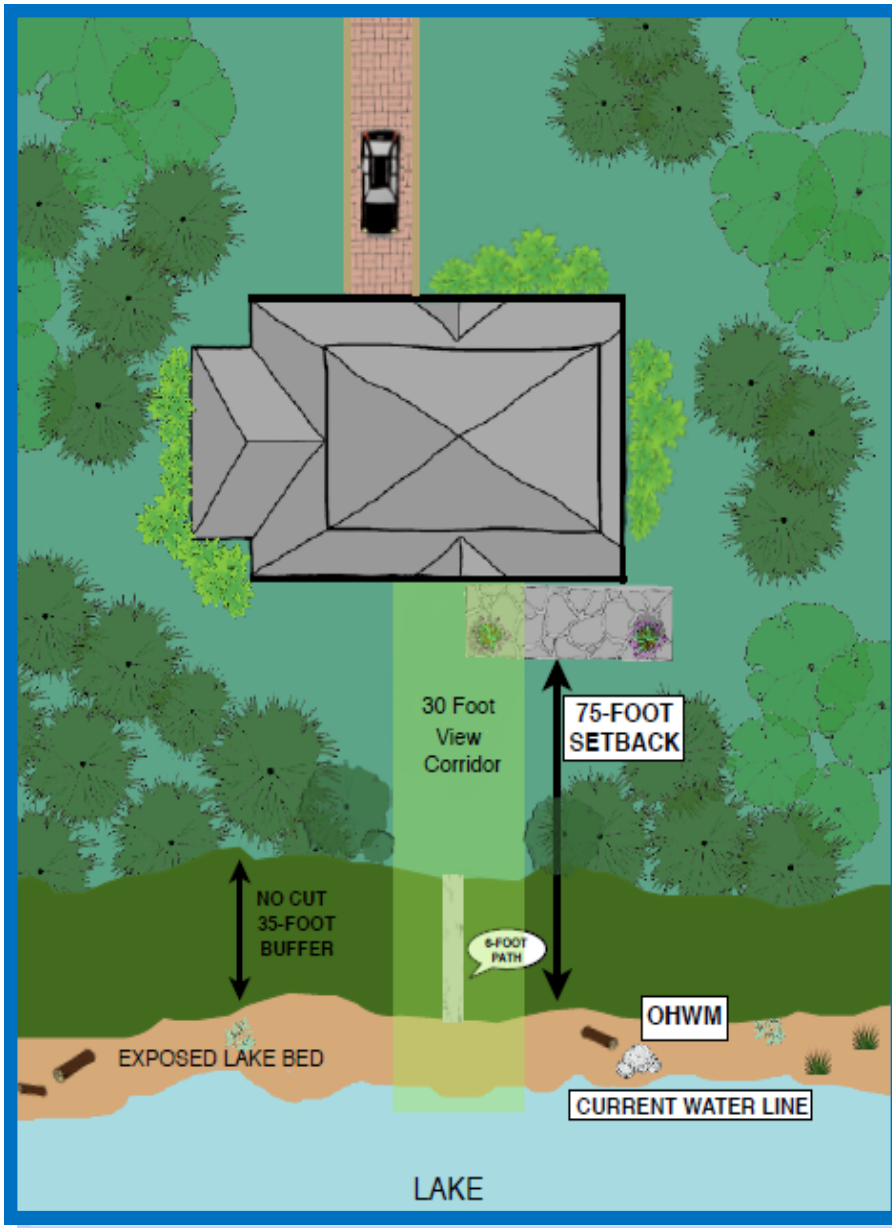
By: Sandy Gillum and Debby Soberg

VCLRA is pleased with the initial response of Vilas County shoreland owners, who adopted the Shoreland Stewardship Covenant on over 3300 feet of shoreline in just the few months this opportunity has been available in Vilas County.

Many lake and river shoreland property owners in Vilas County are aware of the importance of protecting shorelines from degradation and the ensuing loss of water quality and habitat for the array of dependent wildlife...from eagles and kingfishers, to frogs and turtles, to minnows to muskies. Natural resource professionals have published hundreds of research articles documenting the collective stress placed on the health of lakes and rivers by development on shorelines that exceed the carrying capacity of the particular waterbody.

The Shoreland Stewardship Initiative is an educational tool offered free by VCLRA that a shoreland owner can voluntarily use to protect what they have so carefully conserved and pass this knowledge on to the next owner. The Stewardship Initiative provides protection of your natural or revegetated shoreland through a Shoreland Stewardship Covenant, prepared by a licensed Wisconsin attorney, and customized specifically for shoreline properties in Vilas County.

The Vilas County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance was passed in May 1999 and amended in November



(Continued from pg. 2) 2009. If your property meets or exceeds the four minimum Vilas shoreland conditions described in these ordinances, your shoreland is eligible for protection in perpetuity.

The four conditions are:

- 1) 75 foot OHWM minimum set back: Article V: 5.1 B.
- 2) 35 foot minimum Shoreland Buffer: Article IX: 9.1 C.
- 3) 30 foot maximum width View Corridor: Article VIII: 8.3 B
- 4) 6 foot maximum width Pedestrian Access Path: Article V11: 7.3 A. 1. f.
(or)
4 foot maximum width Elevated Walkway (steep or wet slopes): Article VII: 7.3 A.2.c.

Copy of the covenant is available at the VCRLA website www.vclra.us. Once you have confirmed that your property meets the ordinance criteria and you have the information at hand to complete the form, the form can be notarized, and then taken to the Vilas County Register of Deeds for recording, where you pay a \$30 recording fee. The Register of Deeds will provide a receipt which verifies the recording. Your receipt should then be send to **VCLRA, Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521**, so that conserved shorelines can be tracked and owners presented with an 8" x 12" enameled oval metal mountable sign suitable for display at a location of the owner's choice.

Questions about the Shoreland Initiative can be directed to Debby Soberg 715-479-9316 or Rollie Alger 715-545-2711.

VILAS COUNTY LAKES & RIVERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 494

Eagle River, WI 54521-0494

January 2016

Happy New Year!!

Just a reminder from the Vilas County Lakes & Rivers Association (VCLRA) that 2015 has come and gone, and it is now time to renew your membership for 2016. This past year has been a challenging one for the lakes of Vilas County, and 2016 promises more of the same.

This past year has been a difficult one with the shoreland zoning issue dominating the discussion. VCLRA has acted as an information conduit to our member organizations and individuals during this entire time. We will continue to work closely with our partner on the state level, Wisconsin Lakes (WL), and the folks in Madison leading the effort to repeal legislation passed in the 2015 state budget. Within the county, we have worked with many lake associations to bring greater awareness of the importance of the lake shoreline to overall lake quality. The **Shoreland Stewardship Program**, explained elsewhere in this issue, is off to a great start. **Blue Heron Awards** will again be presented in June.

Planning for the 2016 North Central Counties Lake Associations Workshop and annual meeting to be held at Nicolet College in Rhinelander are now under way. The workshop and meeting will take place on **Friday June 10, 2016**. Watch for the complete agenda in the spring newsletter. **Mark your calendars now** and plan to attend.

Elsewhere in this issue is a 2016 membership application/renewal form. Please complete it and submit with your remittance to the address above. Your continued support and membership helps protect the 1,300 plus lakes of Vilas County.

Also, please continue to check out the VCLRA website at www.vclra.us for a wide range of current and ever changing information.

Responsibly enjoy the beauty of our lakes and waterways. They truly do have something unique and exciting to offer, in each and every season of the year.

Best regards,

Steve Budnik

VCLRA President



Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

Preserving, protecting and enhancing our Vilas County lakes and waterways for present and future generations

Type of Membership:

☐ Individual/Family \$25 ☐ Lake Organization \$50 ☐ Associate/Supporting \$75

Section A: Individual/Family or Associate/Supporting Membership

Name(s) _____
 Permanent Mailing Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Email Address: _____ Ph _____
 Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No
 Wish to receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No
 Name of Lake of Residence: _____
 Name of Lake Organization (if established): _____
 Other affiliation (i.e. town chairman, county commissioner, etc.) _____

Section B: Lake Organization (Lake Associations and Districts) Membership

Please submit the names and contact information of organization officers/ board of directors/commissioners, each will receive the VCLRA newsletter. If person and contact information is the same as prior year write "NC" after name. Please indicate a **Key Contact Person**, ideally with email, this is used occasionally when legislative updates or call-to-actions occur.

Lake organization name _____
 Website _____
 Approximate number of individuals represented by lake organization _____

Please attach additional
board members, directors,
or commissioners, if needed.

President/Chairman

Name(s) _____
 Permanent Mailing Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Email Address _____

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No
 Name of Lake of Residence: _____
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

Secretary

Name(s) _____
 Permanent Mailing Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Email Address _____

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No
 Name of Lake of Residence: _____
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

Vice-President

Name(s) _____
 Permanent Mailing Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Email Address _____

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No
 Name of Lake of Residence: _____
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

Treasurer

Name(s) _____
 Permanent Mailing Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____
 Email Address _____

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No
 Name of Lake of Residence: _____
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

Please make checks payable to: Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA)
 Return completed form with annual dues before **June 1st** to: VCLRA; PO Box 494; Eagle River, WI 54521

The Lake and Property Owners Associations of:

Plum Lake • Black Oak Lake • Big Portage Lake • Three Lakes Chain • Found Lake • Big Sand Lake • Ballard/Irving/White Birch Lakes • Nelson Lake • Boulder Lake • Two Sisters Lake • Pelican Lake • Big Horsehead Lake • Eau Claire Lakes • Ike Walton Lake • Bayfield County Lakes Forum • Northwest Wisconsin Waters Consortium • Crab Lake • Long Lake • Big Bass Lake • Lake Katherine • Finger Lake • Eagle River Chain • Lake Owen • Upper St. Croix Lakes • Lac Courte Oreilles • North & South Twin Lakes • Carpenter Lake • White Sand Lake • Indian Lake • Manitowish Chain • Yellow Birch Lake • Hewitt Lake • Osprey Lake • Whitefish Lake • Diamond Lake • Hunter Lake • Lake Minnesuing • Lake Mildre • Red Lake • Armour Lake • Little Bass Lake • Slim Lake • Turtle Flambeau Flowage • Trude Lake • Chippewa flowage • Carlin Lake • Tainter/Menomina Lakes • Mildred/Clear Lakes • Papoose/ Rosalind Lakes • Spider Lake • Whitefish Lake

The Vilas, Oneida, Polk, Douglas, Iron, Washburn, and Watersmeet Lakes and Rivers Associations • Town of Winchester • Sawyer County Lakes forum

The Northwest Area Wisconsin Land And Water Conservation Association (representing land and water departments from 11 counties) and dedicated individuals too numerous to mention

November 24, 2015

All,

We have a bill! It is now in its 4th draft, each representing a week of time. The proposed legislation is now being fine-tuned in meetings with sponsors and this process will continue for another two to three weeks. This bill will then be given a number and introduced prior or at the next floor session in January. I must tell you that for me, a non-political person, this was a new experience for me. “The birthing of an elephant” is a phrase that comes to mind.

If you have been gone, you should know that the fall floor session was consumed with infighting. “They weren’t getting along” (senate and assembly) was a phrase I heard often. What was finally resolved for the people of Wisconsin was limited. The Assembly and Senate finally (and only) agreed on how to limit accountability of legislators by dissolving the Government Accountability Board (GAB) and reforming it with a new governing board made up of political appointments and two reserve judges. The best we can say is that it is over.

The provisions of the bill being proposed will mitigate some of the damage done by Act 55. It is NOT a repeal. I am aware that it is everyone’s first choice. It is mine too. I am told repeal is absolutely not politically possible. As it is now written, the draft legislation would address our issues as follows:

1. Set backs

Grandfather pre-existing local ordinances that imposed longer setbacks and that were in place at the time of the effective date of the state budget act.

2. Lot size

Grandfather pre-existing lot size ordinances that regulated land division more restrictively than NR115.

3. Nonconforming Structure Vertical Expansions

Instead of providing that any nonconforming structure may be expanded to a total height of up to 35 feet, allow vertical expansion of any part of the structure up to the maximum height of the structure (fill-in vertical expansion), and allow additional vertical expansion above the existing height to replace a flat or minimally pitched roof with a new pitched roof.

4. Buffer Zones

Establish a viewing corridor maximum total width of a certain distance. Under current law a viewing corridor may be 35 feet wide per 100 feet of frontage and may run consecutively. Require that NR115 and County shoreland zoning ordinances place lots with an established buffer zone in at least 65% of the area between the OHWM and a 35-foot setback into a more permissive category under any applicable impervious surfaces standard.

(Continued from pg. 7) I have requested that the residential lighting issue also be addressed but it has received minimal discussion and I have not heard anything about it. I did not understand why that was of such importance that it was included in the budget bill amendment and am trying to find out what is behind that. If anyone is aware of current problems with regard to shoreland residential lighting regulation, please let me know. In general, our view is that the state has no standards and that local government is the only one prepared to handle the issue if it arises.

Again, our bill is headed to the January floor session. This is the final floor period of the current Legislative Session and is scheduled to run from January 12 to April 7, 2016. When it has been introduced, we will be asking for everyone to re-contact their legislators to ask them to support this very reasonable revision to the unreasonable changes in act 55.

I will be sending the bill itself as soon as it is given a number, which we hope will be in the next two weeks. Thank you for your patience and support. We will keep you updated.

Wisconsin Shoreland Initiative.

A. John Richter

The Waters and the Economy of Vilas County

By: Quita Sheehan

Vilas County is one of the wettest counties in Wisconsin due to our geography and geologic history. Due to the effect of past glaciers, one third of the Vilas County landscape is either open water or wetlands. In fact, we have more acres of wetlands (121,258) than open water (lakes and streams – 102,276). These make up 18.5% and 15.6% of the land base respectively, (or 34% of the 654,000 acres of the County).

In Vilas County, we all know how lucky we are to have the huge variety of lakes we enjoy (1320+ lakes). We have lakes that are big and small, deep and shallow, and drainage or seepage lakes. We enjoy slow meandering streams and fast moving trout creeks. However, unless you are a hunter or a birder, you're probably less likely to spend an afternoon in one of the many wetlands we are blessed with. There are large bogs and muskegs, patches of swamps between uplands and open water, and throughout our forests, ephemeral wetlands and ponds that are only apparent for a few weeks in spring – but are a vitally important part of our natural world.

Most people think of wetlands as mosquito factories and can't imagine why we shouldn't drain them or fill them in and make the land more "useful". They don't realize how productive and important wetlands are for life in the Northwoods. Just a few notable functions of wetlands are as nature's supermarkets, natural banks or sponges, and as nature's kidneys.

Wetlands are the most productive habitat types in terms of food, protection, and reproduction of wildlife and fish. Wetlands associated with lakes and streams operate as nurseries for fish. Because of the abundant insect life in wetlands, many birds of many species depend on wetlands to feed and raise their young and keep their species going. (Incidentally, of the many species of mosquitos that reside in our wetlands, none are the species that carry West Nile Virus or other human diseases). Even the ephemeral wetlands (little depressions in our forests that collect melting snow and rainwater in spring), are vital breeding habitat for frogs and salamanders. Those critters, especially the salamanders, are at the bottom of the food pyramid in the forests. Every critter that eats another critter, is fed either directly or indirectly by a salamander.

Vilas County is at the top of the watershed for 4 river basins that get their start here. (The rivers are the Wisconsin, Brule, Turtle-Flambeau, and the South Branch of the Presque Isle). Our streams and some of our lakes flow directly into these rivers, but all of the water originally comes from precipitation: the rain and snow



An ephemeral wetland pond.

(Continued from pg. 8) that may, or not, fall in Vilas County. Wetlands help infiltrate that rain and snow into our groundwater and into the lakes and streams. Wetlands act like sponges, soaking up water and slowly releasing it downstream over time. In years of drought (no rain or snow) there is no other source of water for our flowing lakes and streams. If it weren't for our wetlands and groundwater we'd have to import water during really bad droughts.

One of the most documented functions of wetlands is as nature's kidneys. Wetlands can improve water quality by increasing water clarity and removing chemicals such as nitrogen. In fact, in communities less fortunate than ours, where water quality is a concern, natural and reconstructed wetlands are used to clean waste water of pollutants and nutrients. If a community had to build a water treatment plant to provide these same services it would cost thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of dollars to do what wetlands do for free.

In Vilas County we are lucky that we still have most of our wetlands intact and functioning well, providing these services as supermarket, bank, and kidneys, doing their part to keep our water quality good. Much of our economy is dependent on good water quality.

Water quality affects the property values of waterfront property, and studies across the US have shown that when water quality diminishes property values decline. A 2013 study in Vilas County calculated that 77% of the taxable property in the county is located on water. Healthy property values are important for healthy realty and construction businesses here, as well as healthy county and municipal budgets.

Good water quality is what draws tourists to swim, boat, and fish in Vilas County lakes and streams. Anytime water quality in a water body diminishes, tourists go elsewhere. That means good water quality is important to all the tourism related business in the County and there are a lot. In 2013, Vilas County had the highest per capita direct spending by visitors compared to Oneida, Forest and Iron Counties. Vilas County was the 3rd highest in per capita direct visitor spending in the state that year.

At a more basic level, every person in this county gets their drinking water from a well into the ground water. Due to the fact that the predominant use of our uplands is forest management, and the fact that we still have most of our wetlands intact and functioning well – our groundwater quality is very good. (Based on 2011 study of water testing in 140 wells in Vilas County by the VCL&WCD).

With careful management of our uplands (including shorelands) and appropriate protection of our wetlands, we will maintain the good water quality of our very wet county: a good investment in both our quality of life and in our economy.

Mark your Calendar

March 30-April 1, 2016 The 2016 Wisconsin Lakes Conference in Stevens Point, WI. Registration @www.uwsp.edu/uwexplakes usually starts around February 1st.

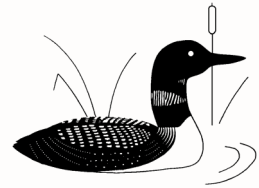
April 25, 2016 VCLRA Board Meeting at the St Germain Community Bldg. at 9am.

June 10, 2016 North Central Counties Lake Associations Workshop at Nicolet College in Rhinelander, WI. Contact Steve Budnik at [715-686-7852/skbudnik@centurytel.net](tel:715-686-7852) or Bob Martini at [715-282-5896/bobmartini@charter.net](tel:715-282-5896) for more information.

Join VCLRA Today! Forget to Renew?

See membership form inside this issue or go to our website at www.vclra.us and print the membership form.

Your support helps protect the lakes!



Lake County Journal

Volume 22 Issue 1 Winter 2016

Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association, Inc.

PO Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521

Website: www.vclra.us

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