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VCLRA.ORG

WINTER 2024 – 2025

THE President's message



As we begin a new year, I want to first express how grateful we are for your steadfast trust, collaboration and support of VCLRA as we celebrate another remarkable year.

We appreciate having you as an essential partner in the work of preserving our amazing Vilas lakes and rivers. With your committed involvement, we have been able to significantly strengthen and grow our efforts to protect our natural waters through our web outreach, initiatives and engagement activities. We are especially pleased to see significantly more family memberships and donations. We also have had steady growth in businesses participating in our *Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters* initiative.

This is all great news. Because whether you live, work or play in Vilas County, it's really our amazing waters that draw people here. Protecting our waters not only benefits the environment, but it helps ensure the continued economic vitality of the region. That's why it is so important to have the broader community engaged with our efforts. When we work together, our impact is amplified and our efforts are better aligned with our common goal to protect and cherish our beautiful waters for the high value and quality of life they provide. We look forward to continuing our collective efforts in 2025!

WE'RE MAKING CHANGES TO IMPROVE STEWARDSHIP OF OUR RESOURCES

Like many organizations, the higher costs of postage and printing have made it necessary to rethink traditional means of outreach. Over time, our website has become our primary means of engaging our community. Moreover, most folks prefer electronic over paper newsletters and notifications, plus join/renew or donate online. Beginning in 2025, we are streamlining our membership to make it simpler and easier to further automate and manage. Our old system was based on decades-old paper forms, which made it cumbersome to fully embrace automation.

We are also changing our budget year to match the calendar year, membership payments made in 2025 will be applied to 2025. Simple! Of course, if you want to make a payment and designate it for the next year, or if you renewed

Continued next page

late last year and want the fee applied to 2025, just let us know (email president@vclra.org). Finally, we are eliminating the mailing of print newsletters as a standard option, although we will continue to have printed newsletters available for exhibit booth activities and meetings, where handouts are invaluable. All members will receive notification of newsletters, blog articles and other news alerts via email. Again, let me know if you have a special need for a printed newsletter.

It's much more cost effective and efficient for us to make these changes, because we have highly automated the electronic distribution of information. Moreover, anyone can simply click a link to unsubscribe if they no longer wish to receive information from us, which eliminates our need to manually maintain the currency of our contacts.

We have worked hard to fully embrace advanced web technology for the highest level of functionality, performance and security. Be assured we use the highest level of information security available. Moreover, VCLRA does not store your payment details, and we will never disclose any information you provide us. You can view our recently update [privacy policy](#) on our website (ABOUT → PRIVACY POLICY) for details.

For your part, we encourage you to handle membership transactions online. This helps a lot by eliminating the need to manually enter information from paper forms (or decipher handwriting!), plus you can still use either a credit card or check for payment.

Again, get in touch if you have any questions or need any help with our updated approaches. Thanks in advance!

Best regards,



Tom Ewing
VCLRA president

Our new membership forms should be available online in the next few weeks. We encourage everyone to use our updated online membership — it saves us all time!

Visit: <https://vclra.org/join-or-renew/> or click the *JOIN & SUPPORT* button on our [home page](#).

You can still pay by check, as well as credit card, using online membership. To pay by check instead of credit card, include a copy of the emailed acknowledgement you receive after joining or renewing online with your check, or just write the name of your organization on the check memo field, and mail to: VCLRA, PO Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521. Questions? Email president@vclra.org, or call 630-985-8472.

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Coalition to Protect Wisconsin's Lakes from the Impact of Wakeboats Now Largest In Wisconsin's History



Five organizations formed *The Wakesports Reform Coalition (WRC)* just over five months ago to defend Wisconsin's lakes from the impact of wake-enhanced boating. The five founding members were: Wisconsin Lakes, Wisconsin's Green Fire, Lakes at Stake Wisconsin, Last Wilderness Alliance, and the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Shortly afterwards, Wisconsin Trout Unlimited, Yahara Fishing Club, Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association, and Walleyes for Tomorrow signed on with their support of the coalition and its goals. Now the effort has grown to 60 Wisconsin-based groups from all over the state — the largest coalition of its kind in Wisconsin's history.


"The coalition's organic growth is a testament to how many Wisconsinites care deeply about protecting our lakes and rivers. Something must be done to preserve these treasures for generations to come. The coalition now represents thousands of Wisconsinites that have made this a top priority," stated Cody Kamrowski, Executive Director, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation.

The group aims to establish minimum state standards for enhanced wake activity that includes retaining existing local control," said Last Wilderness Alliance board member Jeff Meessmann. Studies have shown the outsized impact this type of boating has inflicted on Wisconsin's waterways. The coalition will utilize all

available resources, including these studies, to help guide their efforts. [A study prepared by Wisconsin's Green Fire](#) references over 230 scientific investigations to substantiate how wake boats affect the health of a lake.

Local governments and lake associations have also begun to address the damage done by wake enhanced boating. This past year [dozens of towns have passed prohibitions](#) on the wake enhanced activity.

The continually expanding coalition represents Wisconsin fishing experts/enthusiasts, advocates for local control, lake property landowners, sailors, those concerned with spreading invasive species, and others. All are concerned about the devastating impacts of wake-enhanced boating on Wisconsin's glacial lakes and other waterways.

The coalition will be active in the upcoming Legislative Session beginning in January 2025. As of this time, we are still waiting for legislation to be introduced. In the meantime, continue to contact your legislators to reinforce the importance of meaningful standards to protect our beautiful waters, shorelands and lake users from the impacts of wakesports. 

Media Contact: Steve Lyons, (608) 220-7478



Northwoods Land Trust Climate Conservation Solutions Initiative


THE CLIMATE CONSERVATION SOLUTIONS INITIATIVE AIMS TO ACCELERATE THE PACE OF CONSERVATION IN NORTHERN WISCONSIN THROUGH RAISING AWARENESS AND SUPPORT OF NATURAL SOLUTIONS TO OUR CHANGING CLIMATE. NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS INCLUDE CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF FORESTS, WETLANDS, GRASSLANDS AND SHORELANDS. LAND CONSERVATION IS A TOOL THAT OFFERS REAL HOPE. LAND THAT IS LEFT IN ITS NATURAL STATE WILL HELP LESSEN CLIMATE RELATED IMPACTS AND BUILD RESILIENCE TO WEATHER EXTREMES.

Warming winters and more severe storms already are impacting the northern forests, wetlands and lakes. Consider the future. What would the Northwoods be like without maple syrup, wild rice, ice fishing, snowmobiling, working forests, calling loons, plentiful walleye and clean, clear waters?

The Northwoods' economy, culture and identity are tied to its natural resources and recreational opportunities which are now threatened. Land conservation is a proven, nature-based solution to address the impacts of climate change. More land needs to be set aside today to leave a meaningful legacy for tomorrow.

PROTECTED NATURAL LANDS GIVE BACK TO US

Forests and wetlands help lessen the impacts of more frequent extreme storms by holding water where it falls, keeping our communities safer during flooding and droughts. By trapping and storing carbon, they reduce the concentration of the greenhouse gas in the atmosphere and ease the severity of climate change. Preserving forests and wetlands and the corridors between them help animals and plants adapt to increased variability in seasonal temperature and precipitation.

Maintaining natural lake and river shorelands will help keep our waters clean even as more and more precipitation falls in fast, heavy downpours. Trees, shrubs, native grasses and wildflowers absorb rain and block the flow of water off lawns and roadways. Without that line of defense, storm runoff would carry soil, fertilizers and other pollutants to waters. The excess nutrients would spur algae blooms, increase water temperatures and degrade water quality. 

Northwoods Land Trust is partnering with [Gathering Waters](#) and the [Land Trust Alliance](#) to demonstrate that land conservation is climate action. Find educational resources and links to other climate programs in Wisconsin and beyond at northwoodslandtrust.org/climate.

The [Northwoods Land Trust](#) permanently conserves natural shorelands, woodlands and other natural resources of the Northwoods of Wisconsin to benefit present and future generations.

MEDIA CONTACT:

If you want to permanently protect land to combat climate change, call (715) 479-2490 or email nwlt@northwoodslandtrust.org.

Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association Announces the 2024 Blue Heron Awards

Reported by Susan Knight, VCLRA

The Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA) is pleased to present a Blue Heron Stewardship Award to two families this year, the Ward Family on Carpenter Lake and the Marshall family on Catfish Lake. The Blue Heron Award recognizes lake property owners who champion strong lake stewardship



principles in the development and use of their waterfront property to minimize environmental impacts. VCLRA makes these annual awards to generate awareness and educate lake property owners on the importance of shoreland stewardship by showcasing excellence in lake-friendly waterfront development.

Recognized properties serve as an example to other lake property owners of the varied ways lakeshore properties can be developed to minimize shoreline disruption and the importance of shoreline biodiversity to the overall health of their lake. Selection is based on scoring well on criteria covering five areas of a lake property that can impact lake health: driveway and parking areas, structures and septic areas, yard and recreation areas, shoreline area and an entire lot overview.

The Ward family has an incredible property on Carpenter Lake. When water levels were high a few years back they



Clockwise from top left:


Bill Marshall views his natural shoreline on Catfish Lake.

The Wards pose on their Carpenter Lake property, whose shoreland was extensively replanted with native vegetation.

Susan Knight presents Blue Heron awards to Bill Marshall and Karen Ward at VCLRA's annual meeting.

decided to take the extraordinary step of relocating their home about 400' from the shore, nestling into a steep hill. In the process of moving the home, the equipment disturbed much of the shoreland but the homeowners have revegetated the expansive shoreland area with native plants.

The Marshall Family on Catfish Lake also earned our Blue Heron Award. Aside from a small boathouse, the entire shoreland area is naturally vegetated with a pine overstory. Their dock and swim areas are minimal and inconspicuous. The Marshalls serve as an excellent model for their neighbors as to how to create an attractive and natural landscape along the lake.

Congratulations to the Marshalls and Wards! They have our heartfelt thanks for their exceptional stewardship and for serving as a wonderful example for others. 

Be part of a grand tradition!

Do you know someone who makes a conscious effort to preserve an outstanding natural shoreline? **We want to recognize them for their effort!**

To obtain more information about the Blue Heron Shoreline Stewardship Award program, or to make a nomination using our online form or a print-and-mail form, visit <https://vclra.org/blue-heron-program/>. Susan Knight can be reached by email at seknight@wisc.edu, or by phone at 715-892-7104.



Carolyn Scholl Retires as Vilas County Conservationist



By Cathy Higley and Mariquita Sheehan

Carolyn Scholl has retired as the Vilas County Conservationist effective January 2, 2025. Her career at the Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department spanned over 20 years of service.


Carolyn started as the county Lake Specialist around 2002, tackling many lake issues of the time, including controversies with jet skis. She notably facilitated the formation of the Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association and the Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission. Ultimately Carolyn took on the role of County Conservationist.

Her work on Land and Water is notable for her advocacy for state policy that reflects Vilas County's needs. She also was very engaged assisting groups with lake association and lake district formation. In her later years she shifted her focus to watershed protection. In fact, she spent the last 5 years of her career working towards a watershed protection plan at a small-scale watershed level, one of the first efforts in Wisconsin. This work paved the way for future staff to undertake similar, focused efforts to help protect water quality in Vilas County.

Carolyn will be missed by many professionals and volunteers in the lakes community. She demonstrated a true passion for conservation and worked diligently to represent the needs of Vilas County. She was good-natured and respectful towards others, which made her easy to work with. She also was an effective leader and strategic thinker, which allowed her to guide the department priorities in the Vilas County Land & Water Resource Management Plan over her last decade of work, an accomplishment she wrapped up before retiring.

Carolyn no-doubt is already enjoying well-earned leisure time at home, visiting her children, planning travel and devoting more time to her lake consultant business.

The County Conservationist position has been filled by Al Wirt, a 15-year veteran of the WI DNR's water resources program.

We look forward to working with Al to conserve the land and water resources of Vilas County! 

PRESERVING LAKES & RIVERS OF NORTHERN WISCONSIN:

A proactive approach for long term sustainability

by Len Larsen

Alma-Moon Lake District (AMLD) has developed a comprehensive approach to sustainability of the Alma-Moon Lake water ecosystem. A key element is the proactive collaborative role of governance, lake associations/districts, environmental organizations and users. The products of this activity are available for other governance and lake organizations that may benefit from the experiences of AMLD.

The Alma-Moon Lake District of St. Germain has completed and submitted its NOVA Ecological Study on [Shoreland Assessment and Critical Habitat Mapping Report](#) to the WDNR and their lake districts residents. The goal of this project is to inform the Alma-Moon Lake District (AMLD) leadership and lake property owners of the important ecological features of the Alma-Moon Lake water ecosystem.



Photo courtesy Len Larsen


This comprehensive study has given the lake commissioners 14 action items to pursue that have broadened their Comprehensive Lake Management Plan. Examples include buffer zone protection and shoreland improvements, littoral zone sensitivity awareness, erosion control, critical habitat site protection, fishery habitat planning, etc.

As a result of this two-year journey, Len Larsen, AMLD chairman, has developed an educational power point entitled [Preserving our lakes & rivers: The proactive collaborative role of governance, lake associations/districts, environmental organizations and users](#). This 50-minute presentation defines the scope of this project and the positive impacts we can all be working towards that will guarantee protection of our pristine water ecosystems, and economic viability for future generations. The

key to success will be a cohesive and cooperative approach by all interested parties.

The comprehensive Nova Shoreland Assessment and Critical Habitat Mapping (NOVA Report), and the educational power point are available on the Alma Moon Lake

District website at <http://www.almamoonlake.org/nova-report/>. These are available for viewing or downloading for any organizations, governance groups, lake association or district that are interested.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact Len Larsen at moonlake7814@gmail.com, or call 715-891-7927. 

VCLRA Resources

Our news and article blog can be viewed at <https://vclra.org/articles/>. Subscribe for news alerts from our VCLRA homepage or at <https://vclra.org/subscribe/> to be notified automatically by email when new content is posted.

Our bi-annual newsletters can be found at <https://vclra.org/newsletter-archive/>.

View our initiatives at <https://vclra.org/initiatives/>.

Mark your Calendar

VCLRA booth exhibit venues are marked with an asterisk(*). Some events may not have firm dates as of this publication, so check online for updates.

2025 Wisconsin Lakes & Rivers Conference, March 26-28, 2025, Stevens Point. Visit <https://wisconsinwaterweek.org/home/lakes-and-rivers-convention/> for information.

June 14, 2025: Lakes Fest* in Lac du Flambeau, WI. Contact Celeste Hockings at 715-588-4163 or Chockings@ldftribe.com for more information.

July 11, 2025: Northwoods Six-County Lakes & Rivers Conference & VCLRA Annual meeting*. Visit vclra.org, or contact Tom Ewing, president@vclra.org, for more information.

October 4, 2025: Cran-a-rama* in Manitowish Waters, WI. See manitowishwaters.org for more information.

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

We're stronger together!

Support us with your membership online at <https://vclra.org/join-or-renew/> using check or credit card.
Let's work together to protect Vilas County's waters well into the future.



Remember to re new your membership!

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