

Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Guard Program

**Partners In Protection Of A
Precious Natural Resource**

Goals For The Sturgeon Guard Program

- **Reduction Of Illegal Harvest Of Sturgeon**
- **Increase Public Education and Awareness of the Lake Sturgeon**
- **Support For Department Sturgeon Protection Efforts**
- **Raise Awareness Of The Public In Issues Affecting The Entire Wolf River System**

Lake Winnebago Sturgeon

- **The Lake Sturgeon Is The Species Of Sturgeon Found In The Lake Winnebago System**
- **The Lake Winnebago System Includes Lake Winnebago, The Upper River Lakes, Upper Fox River, Wolf River, Embarrass River, And Little Wolf River**

Movements of Lake Sturgeon

- **The Spawning Population Of Lake Sturgeon Migrate Out Of Lake Winnebago In The Fall Prior To The Spring They Are To Spawn In. Most Overwinter In Deep Sections Of The River**
- **1/2 Of The Male Population And 1/4 of The Female Population Leave Lake Winnebago**
- **The Majority Of The Fish Migrate Up The Wolf River. The Rest Travel Into The Upper Fox River**
- **Once In The Wolf River Some Then Swim Up The Little Wolf Or The Embarrass River**

Negative Pressures On All Sturgeon Species World Wide

- **Illegal World Wide Trade in All Species of Sturgeon Especially For Caviar**
- **Large Population Declines Due To Destruction of Spawning Habitat, Dams, Pollution and Illegal Harvest**
- **Political Turmoil Reducing or Eliminating Protection Programs By Nations**
- **Lack of Awareness By The Public On Their Contributions To The Impacts On Sturgeon Through Purchase of Caviar Obtained Through Illegal Harvest**
- **Limited Knowledge By Natural Resources Agencies Of Species Needs**
- **Sturgeon Are Long Lived But Late Maturing Fish So Negative Impacts On Their Population Are Very Difficult To Overcome**

Wisconsin's Response To Protection Of The Lake Sturgeon

- **It Is Illegal To Sell/Buy/Trade Lake Sturgeon Roe Or Meat. No Commercial Trade Is Available Resulting In No Legal Means To Profit From Sturgeon. \$ = Illegal Harvest Profiting.**
- **Through Pollution Laws, Controlling Development Along Waterways To Minimize Negative Impacts and Allowing Placement Of Erosion Controls Like Rip Rap When Needed Spawning Sites Are Protected and Expanded.**
- **Wisconsin Citizens Have Always Led The Nation In Demanding Their Elected Officials & Government Agencies Protect Natural Resources and Species Like Lake Sturgeon.**
- **Conservation Groups Such As Sturgeon For Tomorrow and Shadows On The Wolf Have Partnered With The Wis DNR In Protection and Research. The Public Assists Through Efforts Such As The Sturgeon Guard Program.**
- **The Wis DNR Leads The World In Sturgeon Research And Host Educational Efforts For Biologists From Around The World**

Distances Traveled By Sturgeon

- **Travel Up Stream In Each Of The River Systems Is Limited By Dams.**
- **Historically Lake Sturgeon Traveled Up The Wolf River To Water Falls On The Menominee Indian Nation Land.**
- **The Construction Of The Shawano Paper Mill Dam In Shawano Halted The Migration To This Point**
- **Distances From The Main Street Bridge In Oshkosh**
 - **Manawa Dam On Little Wolf River: 82 Miles**
 - **Pella Dam On Embarrass River: 110 Miles**
 - **Shawano Dam On Wolf River: 125 Miles**

Spawning Habitat

- **Lake Sturgeon Prefer To Spawn On Rock Outcroppings On The Outside Bends Of Rivers**
- **The Outside Bend Of The River Allows An Upwelling Of Current**
- **It Appears That The Sturgeon Prefer Newer Rock Of A Size Used For Rip Rap Projects**

Spawning Habitat

- **Rock Rip Rap Is Allowed To Be Placed By Landowners In Areas Where Excessive Erosion By River Current Has Occurred And Placement Of Rock Is Determined To Be The Best Method Available To Reduce Future Erosion.**
- **With The Increase In Rock Rip Rap Activity There Is An Increase In Spawning Locations. The Rip Rap Is Placed In The Same Areas That Produce The Upwelling Current Preferred By Sturgeon To Spawn.**
- **Rock Is Also The Preferred Spawning Substrate.**
- **The Warden Force Works Cooperatively With Landowners To Establish Areas Where Guards Can Be Placed If Sturgeon Spawning Activity Occurs.**

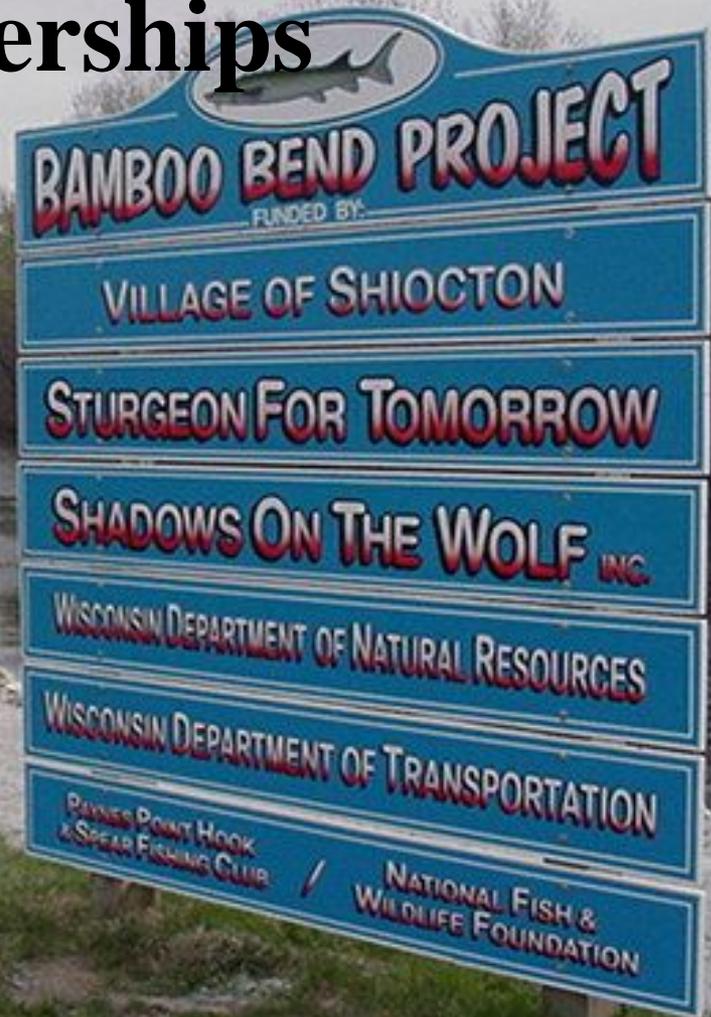
Spawning Sites

- **As New Rip Rap Sites are placed in the River They Are Diagrammed By The Field Warden On Spawning Site Maps**
- **There are >54 Sites Currently Documented**
- **Several Of These Sites Include Multiple Areas Of Spawning Habitat**

Sturgeon Spawning Site



Bamboo Bend Expansion Partnerships



Illegal Harvest Of Sturgeon

- **There Is A Long History Of Illegal Harvest Of Sturgeon On The Wolf River**
- **With The Construction of The Shawano Paper Company Dam Sturgeon Concentrated There**
- **The Removal Of Sturgeon From The River Was Not Always Illegal**

Illegal Harvest Of Sturgeon

- **Sturgeon Were Removed From Below the Shawano Dam and Used For Fertilizer In Area Fields**
- **Sturgeon Were Also Removed From The River and Sold For Their Flesh and Roe**

Wardens With Illegal Setlines & Caught Sturgeon



Wardens With Setline Drag, Seized Illegal Setlines And Illegally Snagged Sturgeon



Undercover Wardens Mid 1940's With Seized Illegal Sturgeon



Losses Of Sturgeon Today

- **Illegal Harvest During the Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Spearing Season**
- **Sturgeon Caught But Not Released By Hook and Line Anglers During The Walleye Fish Run**
- **Illegal Snag Lines**
- **Caught But Not Released On Legal Setlines During The Setline Season**

What Is The Sturgeon Guard Program?

- **The Program Is A Combination Of Intelligence Gathering, Deployment of Personnel, and Deterrence**
- **The Information Gathering is Done By Wardens Assigned To The Sturgeon Camp & Fisheries Staff Checking Spawning Sites. All Information @ Spawning Activity Is Reported To The Sturgeon Camp Coordinator**

What Is The Sturgeon Guard Program?

- **Using This Information The Wardens and The Sturgeon Camp Coordinator Set Up A Priority List Of Sites**
- **Available Guards Are Then Assigned To The Sites For Their 12 Hour Shift**
- **Rover Wardens Travel Throughout The River Systems. Sites With Guards Are Checked To Support The Guards. Sites Without Guards Are Checked For Spawning Activity**

History Of The Sturgeon Guard Program

- **Initially The Protection Of The Spawning Sturgeon Fell Completely On The Wisconsin Warden Force**
- **The Sturgeon Guard Program Was Begun In The Mid 1970's Involving Department Of Natural Resources Personnel**
- **In 1988 The Sturgeon Guard Program Was Opened To Volunteers From The Public**

Sturgeon Camp Personnel

- **Guard Volunteers: Sit At Spawning Sites For 12 Hour Shifts**
- **Wardens : Assigned From Throughout the Region To Work As Rovers And Assist Camp Coordinator**
- **Sturgeon Camp Coordinator Develops Plan For Guard Placement and Information Gathering Needs**
- **Camp Caterer: Prepares Meals For Everyone Working Out Of The Sturgeon Camp**

Law Enforcement: Warden Force

- **Rovers Check On Stationed Guards and Sites Without Guards**
- **Patrols Area By Land and Also By Boat**
- **Contacts Anglers and Suspicious Persons On River**
- **Coordinates With DNR Pilots For Aerial Observation Needs**
- **Investigates Complaints**
- **Media Contacts and Interviews**

Fisheries

- Conducts Sturgeon Monitoring Activities
- This Research Is Instrumental In The Management Of The Lake Winnebago Sturgeon Population And Is Used As A Model For Other Agencies For Their Own Management Programs.
- Provides Sturgeon Camp Coordinator With Spawning Activity Update

Fisheries

- Provides Information About The Stage Of The Spawning Run
- Through Their Monitoring Activities on the River Banks The Public Receives Direct Education About The Lake Sturgeon

Funding Sources For Camp

- Sturgeon Spearing License Funds Are Deposited Into A Dedicated Account To Fund Management And Protection Efforts.
- Part Of These Funds Were Used For The Upgrades To The Sturgeon Camp Headquarters
- Sturgeon For Tomorrow Annually Donate Funds To Pay For The Camp Caterer, Sturgeon Guard Hats And The Groceries Used For The Guard Meals.

Sturgeon Guards

- Volunteers Come From Throughout The Community
 - General Public
 - College Students
 - Sturgeon For Tomorrow Members
 - Other Conservation Organization Members
 - School Groups
 - Boy Scout Troops
 - Girl Scout Troops

Sturgeon Guards

■ Supplies Provided

- Meals
- Lodging
- Sack Lunches
- Hat- Design Changes Every Year
- Cellphone If Needed
- Experience & Memories To Last A Life Time

Spawning Site Map



Shiocton Warden

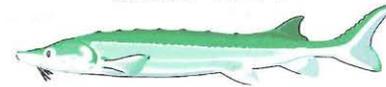
This rock pile is commonly used by fish on their way to other rock piles. Generally the fish will "cruise" that area and then proceed to some other rock pile. Large number of fish and site-seers at this location.

Popular Public Viewing Area

Brochure courtesy of Oshkosh Correctional Institution's Valleyview School Desktop Publishing Department as a community service training project.



Sturgeon Rock Pile Site #27



Lake Sturgeon

A giant among Wisconsin's inland fresh water fishes, the bottom-dwelling lake sturgeon is a living fossil - a relic from the Middle Ages of fish evolution. This ancient species made its first appearance about 100,000,000 years ago, just about the time that the dinosaurs made their abrupt exit from Earth's ever-changing stage. Today the lake sturgeon retains many primitive characteristics that have been lost or modified in other modern-day fish.

The lake sturgeon is listed as a rare species in the United States. Wisconsin, however, is fortunate to have the best naturally reproducing lake sturgeon population in the world. The species has watch status in Wisconsin, and it is under special observation by DNR fisheries Biologist and Conservation Wardens.

DNR Media Staff

- **Develops Media Releases About The Spawning Run**
- **Has Lists Of Media Contacts For Contacts By Department Staff**

Sturgeon For Tomorrow

- Created in 1977 To Promote The Conservation Of Lake Sturgeon On The Lake Winnebago System
- SFT Members Volunteer For Guard Duty And Assists Fisheries In Their Monitoring Efforts
- SFT Provides Monetary Support That Purchases Sturgeon Guard Hats and Camp Cook Services
- SFT Provides Monetary Support For Fisheries Activities

2012 Sturgeon For Tomorrow Executive Committee



Local Communities

- The River Communities Now Welcome The Influx Of The Public Coming to View The Spawning Sturgeon
- Some Communities Have Improved The Public Viewing Sites and Have Begun To Offer Services Like Food Stands

Menominee Nation Sturgeon Reestablishment Efforts

- Tribal Biologists, DNR Fisheries Staff, DNR Warden Force and Sturgeon For Tomorrow Have Been Working Together to Bring Sturgeon Back To Their Ancestral Range
- Sturgeon Have Been Relocated To The Tribal Grounds Of The Wolf River For Their Sturgeon Festival In The Spring
- Beginning in 2011 Male and Female Sturgeon Have Been Radio Tagged And Relocated To The Wolf River Below Keshena Falls Attempting To Have The Fish Take Year Round Residence In This Area
- A Menominee Tribal Sturgeon Guard Program Is Being Developed To Protect The Sturgeon and Bring Public Awareness To The Reestablishment Program.