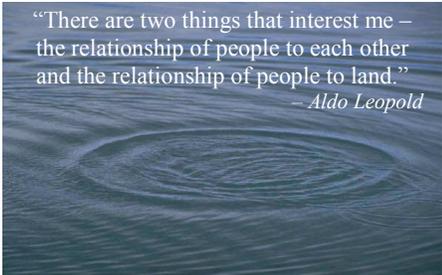


Priority Goals & Actions

Discovering Integrated Management & Partnership Opportunities

Projects and Partnerships to be discussed in this section:

- Dike 17 Dam Removal
- Elk Reintroduction
- Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau Basin Partnership Team
- Ho-Chunk Nation – Division of Natural Resources
- The General Public



The idea of partnership is not a foreign concept for most people. There are teams that work together to win games, committees that meet to get the job done, and groups of friends that see each other regularly for support and fun. Partnerships place everyone on equal footing and provide room for every voice in the group and even some space for those outside the group.

When the WDNR announced in its mission that people would be the priority, partnership is what was meant. This is especially true where the mission reads –

To work with people
to understand each other’s views
and carry out the public’s will.
And in this partnership
consider the future
and generations to follow.

In the WDNR, a special effort is being made to seek out such opportunities to work with others, both internally and externally. For example, a long-standing partnership between the WDNR and the Ho-Chunk Nation exists. Both benefit from the other in many ways.

In recent years, the WDNR prompted the formations of basin partnership teams across the state. Basin teams, including the one in the Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau River Basin, are taking on important projects that the WDNR itself does not have enough staff to complete. The benefits are not only to those on the partnership team, but to people across each basin and to the natural resources in them.

The most important partnership of all is that between the WDNR and the people of the basin. The WDNR holds both public and one-on-one meetings and works on projects with private landowners, businesses, and conservation organizations. In turn, the public provides valuable feedback, ideas, and a spirit of volunteerism that are always welcome.

Dike 17 Dam Removal

Around 1937, when the federal government was keeping America working, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built damming structures and planted trees in what is now the Dike 17 Wildlife Area. Dike 17, which naturally retains water because of its low gradient topography, is a 3700-acre marshy area on the eastern edge of the Black River State Forest. The two dozen damming structures enhance the naturally occurring habitat by providing more depth for geese and ducks and other birds like grouse and cranes.

When a stream's water is dammed, the water closest to the dam widens its bed to create a flowage. With the flow of water stopped, the creek upstream slows giving the sun more opportunity to warm the water. Wetland grasses begin to grow in and around the creek and flowage. The reproducing fish species change from fish that like swifter moving cool water and rocky bottoms to fish that thrive on slow, warm stream flows. The habitat changes and becomes ideal for waterfowl nesting and migration stops.

The Bureau of Wildlife Management manages areas like Dike 17 for waterfowl and other plants and animals for many reasons. Such large expanses of waterfowl habitat are becoming more and more scarce, and numerous rare species, like the Blanding's turtle and the double-crested cormorant, inhabit the wildlife area. The area also provides recreational opportunities in the form of hunting and some fishing, bird and wildlife watching, and wild rice gathering.

Many of the dams built by the CCC in the 1930s were earthen with control structures called "stop-log drop inlets." The stop-log drop inlets generally consist of a corrugated half-circle steel riser, extending four or more feet above the top of the discharge tube. Vertical steel slots along the edges of the riser and reaching down to the sill plate act as a channel to install boards. Stop logs are dropped in the channel to prevent water from spilling through. These impoundment structures have been maintained for years and continue to be maintained today.

Range Line Flowage Dam, impounding Town Line Creek near its juncture with Morrison Creek, has fallen into disrepair though. The original earthen berm, the spillway conveyance structure, and the headwalls, over the years, have weakened and become unsafe.

While most dams in Dike 17 can be repaired, the structure of the Range Line Flowage Dam is so weakened that it would need to be replaced. In addition, while most of the other dams collect water from nearby marshes, Range Line Dam stops a creek. The creek's quality can be improved – producing healthier, better-quality fish and a more natural channel – by the removal of the dam without losing a significant acreage of waterfowl habitat. Given the creek's potential and the cost effectiveness of dam removal in lieu of dam replacement, the decision was made to remove the dam and return Town Line Creek to its natural state (Stephenson, 2001).

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) – a group, formed in 1933, of mostly young men used for a range of skilled and unskilled labor in parks and forests across the country.

Gradient – the slope of the land.

Flowage – impounded water similar to a lake.

Sill Plate – a concrete structure placed at the base of a stop-log riser providing a support beam for the placement of stop-log timbers.

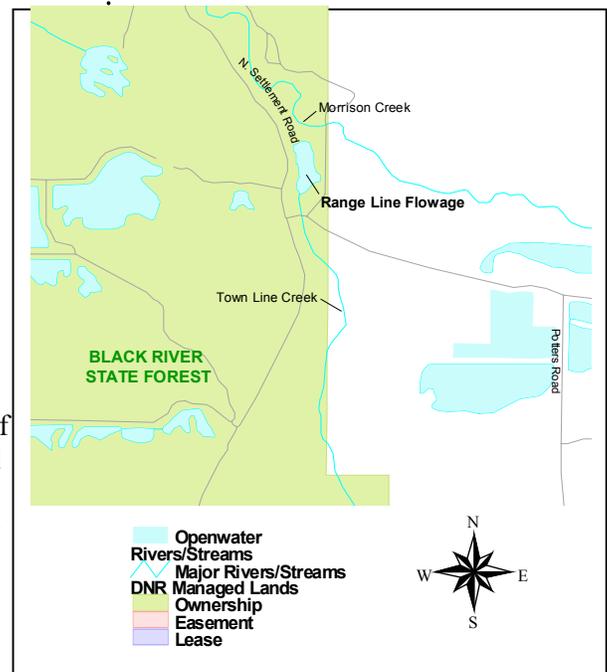


Figure 20 – Area Surrounding Range Line Flowage Dam in Jackson County

What the WDNR Is Doing

According to state law, if a dam poses a threat to public safety, it must be repaired or removed. In 1998, when the decision was made to remove the Range Line Dam, the dam had become unsafe.

The first step in the process of removing the dam was to draw down the impoundment. The impoundment was allowed to slowly drain through the dam structure by removal of the stop logs and return to the natural path of Town Line Creek, an already shallow, low gradient stream. Over the three years since this draw down, the channel has narrowed and deepened slightly. Its banks, previously covered with warm, essentially stagnant water, had time to re-vegetate, to prevent erosion and act as fish habitat when the dam is finally removed.

The partners in this process include:

- ➡ Bureau of Wildlife Management – funding the project.
- ➡ Bureau of Watershed Management – engineering the removal of the dam.
- ➡ Regional Field Services – completing the actual removal of the dam.

Currently, the Dam Safety Engineer is developing a plan for how the dam is to be removed, so as to create the least impact – streambank erosion and sedimentation – on areas downstream. When that plan is complete, the Regional Field Services crew will remove the earthen dam and the structures within it. The project is expected to be complete by fall, 2002.



The headwall of Range Line Flowage Dam is crumbling and the riser is rusty (*top*). On the other side of the dam, sinkholes are forming and wearing away the earthen structure (*bottom*).

What You Can Do

- ➡ *Who to contact:* Dam Safety Engineer or Wildlife Biologist, (715) 284-1400.
- ➡ Visit the Dike 17 Wildlife Area. Maps are available at the Black River Falls Service Center, 910 Highway 54 East.
- ➡ Witness the mating dance of the Sharp-tailed grouse. This can usually be seen before dawn during the month of April from the lookout tower at Dike 17.
- ➡ Volunteer to help with wildlife management activities in the Dike 17 Wildlife Area. Some projects you might be able to help with include:
 - Installation of goose nesting boxes
 - Assisting with track surveys and wolf howling
 - Helping with goose banding and releases
 - Counting breeding birds

About 2100 acres of the Dike 17 Wildlife Area are a wildlife refuge.

24 flowages create 1000 acres of waterfowl habitat in and around Dike 17.

Over 200 sandhill cranes have been known to gather at Dike 17 for their fall migration.

Elk Reintroduction

In states across the country, elk are being reintroduced into wild habitats where they were historically found two centuries ago. In Wisconsin, the last known wild elk is believed to have been killed around the year 1900. In 1998, the Jackson County Board of Supervisors made a formal request to have elk reintroduced in Jackson County.

The Board made this request for many reasons, including:

- ➡ To re-establish an animal once native to the area
- ➡ To increase tourism by providing opportunities to view elk
- ➡ To provide educational opportunities to visitors about elk and their relationship with their habitat.
- ➡ To provide opportunities for limited hunting of elk
- ➡ To provide opportunities for cooperation and partnerships between the public and private sector.

Before a decision was made though to reintroduce elk in the area, many concerns had to be answered. The public had concerns about elk-vehicle collisions. The agricultural community was concerned about crop damage. The impact of elk on the local habitat and compatibility of human activities with elk in the Black River area had to be considered.

In the *Black River Elk Herd Management Plan and Environmental Assessment*, the WDNR planned out every aspect of the reintroduction, monitoring, and management. They presented the overall support of the public and answered to the best of their ability the concerns raised by the public.

Management of the elk herd will work toward health of the herd in particular, but also toward the enhancement of tourism and limited hunting in the area. According to the management plan, when the herd population reaches about 150 elk, limited harvest of bulls will begin. When the population reaches its target management goals of around 390 animals, harvest of both cows and bulls will be permitted.

Compatibility of elk with human activities will be an on-going concern, and will be monitored closely, especially in the early years of the reintroduction. The elk will be monitored using radio collars and aerial surveys for things like population size and distribution, productivity, and survival. To prevent problems with habituated animals, the WDNR is pursuing legislation to regulate artificial feeding and baiting of elk. Animals that become habituated and display nuisance behavior near residential areas, roads, or trails, will be relocated.

Likewise, elk causing crop damage will be relocated or hazed whenever possible. If hazing or relocation is unsuccessful, the animal will be killed. The WDNR is seeking legislation to add elk to the list of species in the Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program when public hunting is initiated.



What the WDNR Is Doing

Beginning in 1998, when the Jackson County Board made their request to have elk reintroduced in the area, the WDNR has been holding public meetings both to disseminate information to the public and to gather public opinions about the issue. Meetings were held with the agricultural community in general, cranberry growers, neighboring counties, and external agencies like U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A biological assessment of potential impact by elk on Lupine, Karner blue butterflies, and other rare plants and animals in Central Wisconsin was completed.

Partners were identified throughout this process. Some of the leaders in the partnership supporting elk reintroduction are the Ho-Chunk Sovereign Nation, Jackson County Board, Jackson County Forestry Department, Jackson County Wildlife Fund, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and others. These partners have committed

financial resources, time, effort, and general support to the project.

With all of this information and support gathered together, WDNR staff presented a case for elk reintroduction in Jackson County to the Natural Resources Board of the WDNR in December 2001. It was proposed to release elk that had been monitored carefully for disease into the Black River State Forest. They would be allowed a 70 square mile core range located completely within the Black River State and Jackson County Forest land in Jackson County. A 250 square mile buffer range, on a mix of state and county forest land and Ho-Chunk Nation tribal lands, would be permitted for limited expansion of the herd.

The Natural Resources Board approved the reintroduction plan contingent upon

passage of legislation to include elk in the Wildlife Damage Abatement and Claims Program. No elk will be released in Jackson County until this legislation is passed. The WDNR is also required to conduct a five-year review to assess the herd’s compatibility with the area. With the Board’s approval, the WDNR is moving forward with the management plan as it was written in preparation for passage of the required legislation.

What You Can Do

- ➡ Check out the *Black River Elk Herd Management Plan and Environmental Assessment* online at <<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/elk/brfmngtplan.htm>>.
- ➡ Learn more about elk management in Wisconsin, including the elk reintroduction at Clam Lake, <<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/ELK/>>.
- ➡ Visit the Chequamegon National Forest to view the Clam Lake Elk Herd.

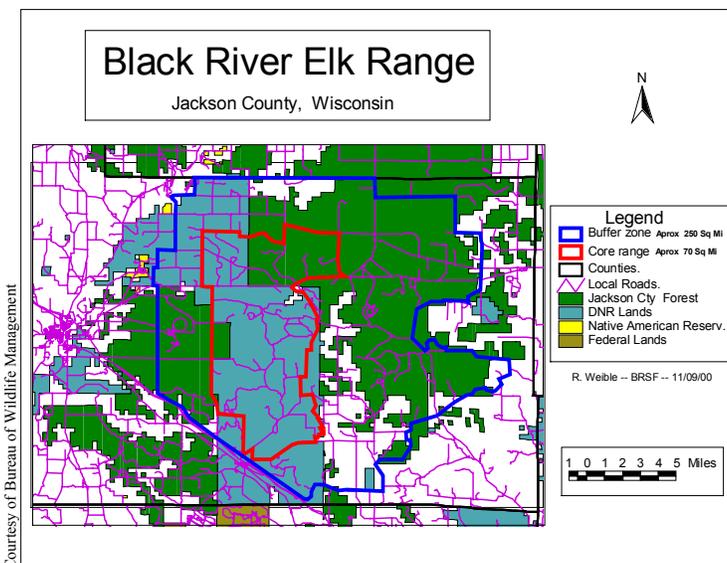


Figure 21 – Black River Elk Range

The Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau Basin Partnership

In 1998, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources began forming GMU Partnerships as a way to help “continue the cultural shift in department thinking and engage the public to focus on ecosystems and on managing and protecting the resource on that scale” (WDNR, 1998). The WDNR planned to bring together a diverse group of individuals and organizations in each GMU to focus on the needs of the basin. The broad base of resources and interests to draw on in working toward the health of local natural resources becomes the real advantage of such a group.

While the idea was disseminated from the Central Office in Madison, each GMU partnership was to have its own set of priorities and ways of working specific to the partners in the group and the needs in the basin. This allowed each partnership team the freedom to set their own goals and missions as well as establishing their own ways of achieving those goals and missions. Partnerships were given the opportunity to decide for themselves how to run meetings, how to structure the group itself or whether to structure it at all, how often to meet, and more that would make each group unique.

Initially, the WDNR office and the Basin Educator from the University of Wisconsin Extension Office in each basin take a leading role in the partnership groups. The two offices provide support to the partnership by planning and facilitating meetings as well as producing meeting minutes, notices, and other resources. Over time, the idea is that the partnership will become self-sufficient in its goals and organization and the WDNR will appear as nothing more than another member of the team.

The Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau Basin Partnership Team has met monthly since March 2001. Membership has fluctuated somewhat, but the core group has slowly been forming itself and relationships continue to develop. Partners are gradually learning about the resources available to them through the other agencies and organizations.

In the first few months after the group formed, the partners focused on decisions about how to structure meetings and the group itself. With co-chairpersons leading the group and the Basin Educator facilitating meetings, the partnership moved on to identifying issues in the basin and discussing what they could do together to improve the state of the basin. They agreed that a major component of every project they would work on would be education about what they were working on, about natural resources, and about ecological practices.

With an extensive list of issues and potential issues in hand, the group voted on what projects to work on. During the decision-making process, they kept in mind that there would be long-term and short-term projects and that whatever they chose, they wanted to be sure that they could make a difference. They selected three projects – two long-term and one short-term.

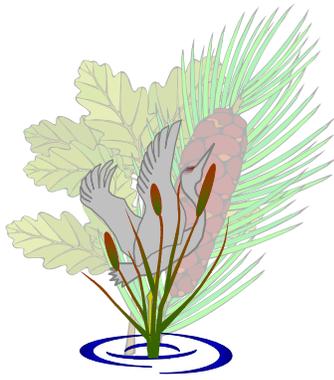
GMU (Geographical Management Unit) – a division of state land that allows for consistent management of the watersheds within its boundaries (for example, the Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau GMU, the Lower Chippewa GMU or the Upper Chippewa GMU).

Basin Educator – an employee of the University of Wisconsin Extension (UWEX) responsible for educating the public about natural resources in the county and local basin(s).

Agencies, Organizations, and Interests Represented in the BBT Partnership

(See Acknowledgments for complete list of partners)

- Chamber of Commerce
- County government
- Cranberry producers
- Farming
- Forestry industry
- Ho-Chunk Nation
- Lumber industry
- Mining industry
- Mississippi River Conservancy
- River Country Resource Conservation & Development
- Sierra Club
- University of Wisconsin Extension
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Farm Land Conservancy



The Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau
Basin Partnership

What the Partnership Is Doing

Smart Growth Project – short-term

Smart Growth is a state-required land use planning program that every county, city, and township must complete by the year 2010. Smart Growth gives communities the opportunity to look into the future and develop a plan to prevent conflicts in land use, protect high quality lands and natural resources, and protect public safety. Because not many communities know much about the Smart Growth program, the partnership team organized an informational meeting to discuss the importance of participating in the program and how to get financial assistance for land use planning.

Economic Impact Study Project – long-term

Citizens of Jackson County have wondered for a long time what the impact of tourism is on the county’s economy, especially with relation to the amount of public land found there. The partnership wants to know too and is currently researching the best way to conduct an economic impact study of tourism in Jackson County. With this study, they hope to help explain the value of public land to the economy as well as to use the study to help local businesses (and potential future businesses) capture more from the tourism coming into the area.

Lower Black River Project – long-term

The Lower Black River Project is expected to take the longest of any of the projects the partnership is currently taking on. The group agreed that they wanted to protect the lower Black River, but are still deep in the stages of finding out what can be done, other ways that rivers have been protected, and what means would be the best to use to protect this particular river. The partners expect to take their time with this project, because it will require so much public input and will potentially effect so many people living in the area of the Black River. They want to take the time to find what will be a good solution for everyone in protecting the lower Black River.

Each of these, as mentioned earlier, will have an educational component so the public can learn more about and participate in the projects too. More projects are expected to follow as these are completed.

What You Can Do

- ➡ Who to contact to learn more about any of these activities: UW-Extension, Basin Educator, (715) 284-4257.
- ➡ Get involved in the partnership if you are interested in the team or in a particular project.
- ➡ Attend meetings as an observer if you want to find out more about what the partnership is doing.
- ➡ Add your name to the mailing list to receive the quarterly newsletter of the Black-Buffalo-Trempealeau Basin Partnership, *The Ripple Effect*.

The Ho-Chunk Nation—Division of Natural Resources

The Ho-Chunk Nation, by purchasing land, currently owns about 13,000 acres of land in Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska. Ho-Chunk land can be found in five major areas located in parts of twenty counties in Wisconsin. In BBT, approximately 3000 acres belong to the Nation (Brown, 2001).

The Ho-Chunk Division of Natural Resources has been operating for ten years, and currently has a staff of twenty-one people. These people work on a wide variety of projects related to agricultural and other land-based uses and preservation of the heritage of the people through management of the land. Some of these projects are:

- ➔ Bison project – they raise bison as part of their history of hunting the animals, and for the health of their people (bison meat is leaner and healthier than beef).
- ➔ Elk Rearing Project – they raise elk in a natural, though fenced in, setting, because elk are native to this area and therefore another part of their hunting heritage.
- ➔ Reintroduction of native grasses and birds to prairies.

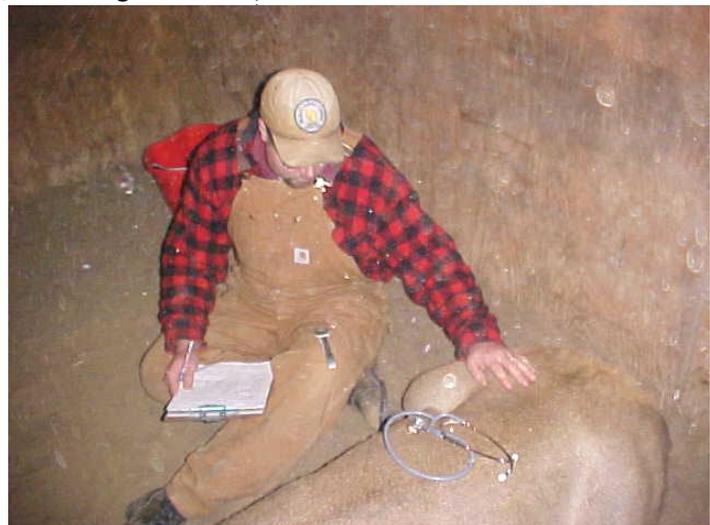
All of these projects work toward heritage preservation, and also provide ample opportunities for education. The Ho-Chunk build educational trails through their prairies, forests, and wetlands. They provide youth programs for the Nation, and also offer courses like wolf awareness to their people.

Another way to remember their heritage is through recording significant sites. They map many of the sites that have been kept in the memories and stories of the elders for hundreds of years, like burial grounds, mounds, trails, village and farm sites, and marker trees.

With 13,000 acres of land and so many projects, it is a huge task for 21 people, but for them it is worth it. They know, however, that they too must depend on partnerships to get the work done.

The partnership between the Ho-Chunk DNR and the WDNR took a big step forward late in 1999 when the issue of elk recovery first came up. Both partners began to educate the public about elk and the possibility of releasing a number of the animals in the area, and worked hard to pull together support for the program. The support, though not unanimous throughout the community, has been overwhelmingly positive. In December 2001, the WDNR Natural Resources Board (NRB) voted to approve the release of elk in the BBT basin.

With such a program to kick off the partnership, several other projects have followed. Together, they worked with bears, eagles, and wolf preservation, and all of these bring the partnership to where it is today.



Courtesy of Michele Kasler

A staff member from the USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (APHIS) monitors the vital signs of an anesthetized elk during immobilization training with members of the WDNR and the Ho-Chunk Nation.

What the WDNR Is Doing

Wild Rice Seeding

The WDNR and the Ho-Chunk DNR are re-seeding certain local wetlands with wild rice. They traveled to Rhinelander and Eagle River to collect rice seed from wetlands in that area and brought the seeds back to the BBT. Then, with the help of federal agencies, the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association, and Ducks Unlimited, they seeded 60 acres of Ho-Chunk land in Necedah and 2 acres of Whitetail Flowage in the Dike 17 Wildlife Area. This rice will hopefully replant itself on these sites annually and provide a natural food base for waterfowl and wildlife.

Wolf Recovery Program

Wolves are an integral part of the natural food chain in the basin, but for a time were in serious danger of becoming extinct. The WDNR and the Ho-Chunk DNR made a resolution to assist in the recovery of wild wolf packs in this area. As part of this resolution, the partners attach radio collars on nearby packs to track them and learn more about their habits in natural surroundings. Also, classes about wolves will be offered to increase awareness of these wild mammals.

Furbearer Surveys

Together, the WDNR and the Ho-Chunk DNR work on counting and tracking furbearers in the area. They conduct track surveys and howling surveys to get a more accurate idea of wolf population numbers and where they are. Also, to help maintain viable populations that are neither under- nor over-harvested, they conduct surveys of fisher, bobcat, mink, coyote, fox, and rabbit.

Elk Recovery Resolution

Elk are a native species that were extirpated from Wisconsin around the year 1900. Because the NRB passed the Elk Recovery Resolution, the Ho-Chunk DNR and the WDNR will, in years to come, release about 35-50 elk at Squaw Mound, in Jackson County. The partners will track the progress of these elk and learn more about their habits in the wild. In the meantime, wildlife staff members of each agency have been practicing working with elk, using the elk kept by the Ho-Chunk Nation. Now that the Resolution has passed, the partners will be ready to assist in the recovery of elk in Wisconsin.

What You Can Do

→ Who to contact: WDNR Wildlife Biologist, (715) 284-1400 or Ho-Chunk DNR Director, (715) 284-2771.

→ Learn more about the following subjects:

Ho-Chunk Division of Natural Resources – <<http://www.ho-chunknation.com>>.

Wolf Recovery Program – <<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/er/publications/wolfplan/toc.htm>>

Elk Recovery Program – <<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/wildlife/ELK/>>

The General Public

People work together and help each other every day, in the workplace, in shopping centers, at home. They exchange information, help one another make good decisions, and share experiences. Every day is filled with short and long term partnerships. When we accept help from others and offer our own, everyone comes out ahead.

It is the same with the WDNR. The only way staff members can protect the environment, water supplies, and the land – all of our natural resources – is to participate in honest give and take with the public. But the WDNR's role is greater than the usual balance of partnership. It is one of service.

Serving a group of people can be a type of partnership. The WDNR provides an easy-to-access place for citizens to obtain permits for things like building and excavating and learn about state regulations on permitted activities. By providing licenses for things like hunting, the WDNR can monitor activities and make sure that there are plenty of opportunities for all to enjoy. By providing information to the public about the state of our natural resources, the WDNR helps to build a knowledgeable partnership of citizens and citizen groups. And by keeping the public involved in all of this through public meetings and public review, the WDNR hopes to strengthen this partnership as well as work toward a common goal of ecological integrity for the betterment of all.

A WDNR Fisheries Management stream restoration project on 3 miles of Pine Creek, a clear hard water tributary to the Buffalo River, will begin in the summer of 2002. The project on the Class I brook trout stream is intended to correct problems with sedimentation, lack of in stream cover, severe erosion, and water level fluctuations and flooding due to beaver activity.

The WDNR has discussed the project with landowners who may be affected by the project and found that they are in favor of restoration and willing to accommodate work crews. The work will involve installation of numerous bank structures for overhead cover, riprapping to stabilize banks and cover structures, placing brush bundles, current deflectors and grade controls where needed, and creating spawning areas. Beaver controls will be implemented across the basin as well. Additionally, to increase accessibility to the public, the WDNR will be constructing an unimproved parking area.

Many public organizations interested in the biological, aesthetic, and recreational aspects of the stream will be involved. Local conservation clubs and Trout Unlimited have donated funds to supplement WDNR purchase of equipment and materials needed for the project. Members of these groups, including the local schools, have expressed interest in site tours and assisting with restoration work activities. When completed, not only will improvements to the overall health of the stream be realized, but the project will have provided educational opportunities, exposure to functions of the WDNR, increased respect for Wisconsin natural resources, and a sense of accomplishment for all those involved (Hatleli, 2002).

What the WDNR Is Doing

There are typically three ways that the WDNR and the public come together to meet common goals in working with natural resources. The first way is that the WDNR goes to the public and collaborates with private citizens and landowners, as well as agencies and organizations. On these projects:

- ➡ Waterway and Wetland Permitting staff could work with a snowmobile club on how best to construct a bridge across a stream without damaging habitat or water quality.
- ➡ Forestry staff could assist a landowner in developing a forestry plan.
- ➡ Animal Waste Specialists could help a farmer plan ways to protect surface water from wastes.

In these cases, the staff member brings knowledge of working with natural resources and the regulations that protect them and the citizen or group provides knowledge of the specific resources being discussed and they can cooperate to develop a plan.

The WDNR also holds public meetings and hearings. In this way, the public has the opportunity to gain information, express their concerns, and discuss options for a variety of projects around the state. Issues discussed at the meetings or hearings can be anything from mercury emission levels by coal-burning power plants to the spreading of manure by large agricultural operations.

Finally, quite possibly the most effective means of bringing the WDNR together with the public is the public coming to the WDNR. With so many people in the basin and in the state, it would be impossible for WDNR staff members to visit every home to find out what individual concerns may be or what the public's expectations may be. The WDNR needs to hear from an active, informed public or it cannot be successful in protecting, restoring, or enhancing the basin's natural resources to serve that public's recreational, safety, or land and water quality needs.

What You Can Do

- ➡ Become an active public partner:
 - Contact your local WDNR office to express your views and opinions.
 - Attend public meetings or hearings. For a schedule of meetings and hearings, visit <<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/news/hearmeet.html>>.
 - Learn about the issues so you can help support natural resources with an informed opinion. A great deal of information can be found at <<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us>>.
 - Volunteer in an area of natural resources work that interests you and learn more about it in the process. See page 96 for information on just a few volunteer opportunities in the basin.
 - Get out and enjoy Wisconsin's natural resources. They belong to all of us – together!

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