

WISCONSIN LAKE MANAGEMENT PLANNING GRANT - FINAL WRITTEN REPORT

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Introduction:

In December of 1995, the Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association received a Lake Planning Grant to help fund the Northwoods Lake Fair. The Lake Fair is a one-day event designed to provide education to waterfront property owners on a wide range of water resource issues. The Fair was held on June 22, 1996.

The Lake Fair was planned and staffed by volunteers from local lake associations, community organizations, government agencies and the Wisconsin Conservation Corps, to name just a few. It was sponsored by the WI Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Association of Lakes, Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce, local businesses, UW-Extension Lakes Management Program - Stevens Point, UW-Extension offices in Oneida, Vilas and Forest Counties, County Land Conservation Departments and many others (see attached brochure for a complete list of sponsors and contributors).

The theme for the 1996 Lake Fair was "Sharing the Waters." The theme included our relationships and interactions, on the water and in the shoreland zone, with both man and nature. Speakers at the Fair were asked to frame their presentations around this theme.

Goals:

The Northwoods Lake Fair was held on June 22nd, 1996 and attracted over 1500 visitors to the educational seminars, displays, and demonstrations. The project goal of the Lake Fair was to provide educational resources on a wide range of lake and water resource issues, some of which are listed below:

- Shoreline Development
- Shoreland Landscaping
- User Conflict
- Lake Organization
- Loons
- Water Craft Safety
- Tournament Fishing

Lake Fair Programs:

As is evident from the attached Lake Fair brochure, a wide range of educational programs were conducted. I have outlined below a few of the programs and their specific content:

Lake Associations: They Really Work! Bob Korth, UW-Extension Lake Management Specialist discussed how lake associations can take a more active role in managing their local lakes. He shared a broad range of different activities that associations across the state are involved with, and assisted participants develop new ideas and activities for local associations and property owners.

Sharing the Water Today & Tomorrow. Dan Small, host Outdoor WI, editor of WI Outdoor News, Conservation Communicator of the year (1986). Dan's presentation included some observations on the state of WI's inland fishery and the impact of multiple-use recreation on the resource, including projections from current trends and challenges that lie ahead.

Living in the Riparian Zone. Dean Premo - Ecological Consultant with White Water Inc. Dean focused on the sensitive area where land and water meet. These fragile ecosystems have tremendous biological importance with high species diversity and productivity. Dr. Premo's presentation highlighted some of the ecological functions and values of riparian areas and offered ideas of how ecologically informed development can be conducted in, and near, these special places.

Formula for Fishing Success; Cast a Level Wind Reel. Tom Newbauer, a regular guest on Outdoor WI and licensed guide and fishing instructor, conducted two informative programs on understanding fish habitat and casting techniques. Newbauer works full-time "educating people about the art of fishing."

Michelle Ethun representing the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute, Ashland, presented information on **Loon Watch**. Participants learned about these magical birds and how to become a "loon ranger," one of a network of volunteers who monitor loons on their lakes.

John G. (Gozdzialski), water regulation and zoning supervisor of the new Northern District DNR spoke on behalf the latest **DNR Northern Lake Initiatives**. His presentation discussed the many natural qualities that are recognized by many people – all wanting to enjoy the Northwoods experience. John discussed the resulting development along our sensitive lake shores and how to achieve a balance between development and resource protection and who should be responsible for that balance. John was originally scheduled to conduct a program at the outdoor classroom, but instead presented his information through the DNR booth in the exhibitor tent.

WCC Demos (fish cribs, half-log shelters, bird and bat houses). Hands-on demonstrations and work stations were conducted where both kids and adults constructed their own wood duck boxes. Participants were also treated to demonstrations on the construction and placement of fish cribs and half-log shelters.

Courtesy Boat Equipment Inspections and Water Ski Safety. Ron Luehrs, Coast Guard Auxiliary, conducted free courtesy marine examinations. The exams were designed to promote boater safety through recommendations on appropriate equipment to meet safety standards. The Hodag Water Ski Club conducted water ski safety demonstrations that included safe ski techniques and hand signals for safety.

Several other programs were conducted including:

- Water Quality Demonstrations - participants learned to sample for water clarity and dissolved oxygen.
- Shoreland Stabilization & Restoration - participants learned appropriate landscape techniques for the riparian zone.
- Kids Fishing Program - school aged children navigated through six hands-on learning stations including boating safety, knot tying, fish ID, habitats, casting and baits.
- Basics of Kayaking - children and adults received hands-on instruction on the safe handling of kayaks and canoes.
- Youth Activities - youth of all ages were invited to participate in several programs including t-shirt painting, youth water education booth and trout pond fishing.

In addition to the many programs and demonstrations, Fair goers could also gather information from the large variety of resource professionals located in the Exhibitor Tent. Representatives from the Oneida County Planning and Zoning office, the DNR, the Sigurd Olson Institute and the Minocqua Priority Watershed Project are just a few of the forty exhibitors that were present at the Fair. (See the attached brochure for a complete list of exhibitors.)

Outcomes and Results:

The Lake Fair attracted over 1500 people interested in lake management and water quality issues. A survey of Lake Fair participants indicated that roughly half of the fair-goers owned or rented waterfront property on over 50 lakes. (See the attached survey results.)

Participants to the Fair came from as far away as Kentucky, Florida, Washington and Arizona. Over one-third of the participants came for specific educational activities. The remainder attended the Fair for general information. Most fair-goers spent at least two hours at the fair.

Many suggestions were gathered to improve or add to future Lake Fairs. Over 75 specific responses were given by participants when asked "what they learned at the lake fair that they expect to use or apply." Some of the responses include:

- "A wealth of information to be explored through publications picked up"
- "Conservation of wetlands"
- "Oneida County regulations"
- "DNR's lake program"
- "There are a lot of people available to help with any lake problem"
- "Shoreline protection"
- "Removing exotic plants and weeds from boat and trailer"
- "Information on non-conforming structures," etc.

Participants were also asked to share other comments and suggestions. Many positive comments were received as to the overall quality of the fair to individual participants. In general, most participants found the Fair to offer high-quality education in an entertaining and enjoyable environment.

Conclusion:

The fourth annual, 1996 Northwoods Lake Fair was an exceptional event that met the objectives and goals of the Lake Fair Planning Committee, and the requirements of the Lake Planning Grant. The Committee has already conducted a meeting to review the Fair and to make suggestions for future Lake Fairs. Results of the Fair will also be shared with the Oneida County Agriculture and Extension Committee, the County Lake Association and the general public.

The Planning Committee stated its continued support for this type of general water quality educational program. In fact, county lake associations from Oneida, Vilas and Forest counties have agreed to explore taking over the Lake Fair organizational responsibilities. The Committee also discussed that other, more specific water education programs may be offered in addition to future lake fairs.

The Lake Fair is a fine example of private and public entities working together to conserve and preserve the natural resources of northern Wisconsin. Through the education and awareness building of the Lake Fair, residents and visitors alike have expanded their knowledge of several important water resource issues.