

# VILAS COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ASSOCIATION

## SHORELAND STEWARDSHIP COVENANT INITIATIVE

### DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

#### **Reasoning:**

Through various partnerships in Vilas County and local initiatives, Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA) advocates for and promotes actions that seek to sustain healthy lakes and rivers, and shoreline habitats. These include efforts to decrease the impact of shoreland development/alteration on the long term sustainability of these dynamic and diverse lake and river ecosystems. To accomplish this goal, VCLRA seeks to make available to shoreland owners an opportunity to protect their natural or revegetated shoreland through a standardized shoreland stewardship covenant customized for Vilas County, and to recognize in public media and in property signage those owners (properties) who choose to take advantage of this option to protect their lake/river shoreland and thereby enhance the value of their property and guard the water quality and bio-system of their lake or stream for all the public to enjoy.

#### **Concept:**

To promote, support, and recognize individual shoreline owners wishing to include a provision in their property's deed that conserves to the extent of Wisconsin law (currently 30 years) a 35-foot or deeper shoreline habitat corridor for the width of their property, while reserving the right to create and sustain an access to the shore and a view corridor of the lake, each to the extent state and local shoreland zoning regulations permit.

Shoreland owners choosing to participating in this program would be provided with:

- An introductory document describing the program
- Copy of the legally appropriate shoreland stewardship covenant
- Cash for the cost of re-registration of the property's deed
- Permanent mountable sign for shore or roadside or placement on dwelling near entry, in recognition of the status of the property (if desired by owner)
- Recognition of the stewardship of the landowner through an article and photograph in local press and recognition at the annual Wisconsin Lakes Convention

VCLRA commitment:

- Prepare and submit the initial grant to launch the program.
- Prepare a letter of introduction describing the initiative for shoreland owners.
- Secure initial goal of 15 properties in 12 months (by June 2015) through distribution of an introductory letter and one-on-one meetings and/or a group meeting with interested landowners (contact list developed from personal friendships, shoreland restoration specialists, county land and water conservation office list of restored shorelands and interested landowners, Realtor offices, members of VCLRA, DNR retired and active employees, members of Wisconsin Lakes, parties interested in Northwoods Land Trust that have shorelines too short for this land trust, and via individual lake associations in Vilas County).
- Commit the VCLRA Blue Heron shoreland review committee along with either the Vilas County Conservationist or Lake Specialist to do the initial assessment of the proposed shoreland and follow up with periodic inspections (propose 3 to 5 years).

- Build, sustain, and pass forward a database of the enrolled properties.
- Since current WI law allows for a 30 year sunset on deed covenants, notify and work with owners to re-new covenants 25 years into their current covenant.
- Enlist graphic designer and firm for development of the brand design and production of recognition signage.
- Prepare a plan for recognition of each enrolled property owner and subsequent local press release
- Coordinate with Wisconsin Lakes and UW-Extension Lakes for an appropriate recognition of enrolled shoreland owners at the annual Wisconsin Lakes Convention
- At the conclusion of this initial project, provide a report to DNR and to Vilas County Land and Water Dept. summarizing the project's progress and offer suggestions that may improve the appeal and implementation of this program.

### **Collaborators & Resources:**

Carroll Schaal - WI DNR Section Head - shoreland initiative

Patrick Goggin - U.W.Ext. Lakes - statewide shoreland initiative & restoration field guide

Bryan Pierce - Northwoods Land Trust – consultant

Steven P. Lipowski – Ruder Ware (Wausau) – Legal Council – real estate specialist

Dawn Schmitt - Vilas County Zoning Department – will be consulted re: Vilas County Zoning

Carolyn Scholl - Vilas County Conservationist – Blue Heron Committee - consultant

Quita Sheehan - Vilas County Lakes Specialist – Blue Heron Committee - consultant

Steve Birkelman – (Berkelman Metalworks, Inc.) - design and production of recognition signage

### **Financial Support:**

VCLRA wishes support of a Small Scale Wisconsin Lake Planning Grant to:

- Pay for the preparation of the stewardship covenant by a Wisconsin attorney;
- Pay the re-registration fee on each deed for the landowner; and for
- Design and production of recognition signage, including the “branding” logo of this initiative.

### **Benefits:**

- Real Estate Value as tax base and for re-sale: Promoting the covenant as a positive feature of a shoreland property, as it sustains the real estate value and offers protection to the lake ecosystem.
- This initiative does not step beyond shoreland law already in place by state and county statute, yet time and again new buyers and long term shoreland residents "cut to the shore", simply because they do not seek education/information prior to cutting in the shoreland buffer, nor does the county zoning office have staff to "patrol" such actions until it is too late. This initiative then becomes another educational path through which participants lead by example and spread responsible shoreland stewardship.
- In addition, discovery of such a deed covenant during the title search process of a real estate sale, new owners will be introduced to current shoreland regulations.

### **Letters of Support:**

Requested from: Phelps Lakes Committee  
 Town of Washington Water Resources Committee  
 Wisconsin Lakes (M. Engleson, M. Knipper)

# VILAS COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ASSOCIATION

## **SHORELAND STEWARDSHIP COVENANT INITIATIVE**

Vilas County Land and Water Department (C. Scholl, Q. Sheehan)

Northwoods Land Trust (B. Pierce)

UW Ext – Lakes (P. Goggin)

Lac du Flambeau Natural Resources Dept. (G. Watkins)

Dr. Mike Meyer – DNR Shoreland Restoration consultant

Dr. Susan Knight – U.W. - aquatic plant specialist

M. Platner – VCLRA & Wisconsin Lakes past president & Vilas County  
private shoreland owner