

FINAL REPORT

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TOWN OF MINONG LAKE FAIR 2011

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On Behalf Of
The Town of Minong

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Background

Minong township, in northern Washburn County, contains 20 lakes which receive heavy recreational use and host high-value lakeshore real estate. The Minong lakes face numerous challenges to their integrity, These include shoreline development, water quality degradation, multi-use conflicts, and aquatic invasive species, most notably Eurasian watermilfoil. Lake users are often poorly informed concerning these threats to the health of our lakes. Perhaps even more frequently, they are unaware of options and laws to ensure lake health and the sustainability of their fish and wildlife resources as well as their own safe use of these waters.

The Minong Town Lake Fair was conceived as a means to help rectify these deficiencies. The first one-day Lake Fair was held July 25, 2009 on the grounds of the Minong Town Hall. It was very successful, with total attendance of nearly 1,000 people, twice the anticipated number. On the basis of that response, a second Lake Fair was planned and conducted on Saturday, July 23, 2011 at the same location. The Fair (LF2) had four objectives: 1) raise public awareness of issues that affect lake health and enjoyment; 2) share practical information on the care and protection of lakes; 3) enhance appreciation of lake ecosystems; and 4) foster social interactions leading to collaboration to address lake riparian and watershed needs.

The second Lake Fair was again sponsored by Town of Minong Board of Supervisors and was conducted by the Minong Town Lake Committee. The MTLC consists of two members from each of the town's six lake associations. Pamela Toshner, DNR Lakes Coordinator, and Lisa Burns, Washburn County AIS Coordinator, served as advisors.

With the benefit of the experience gained with the first lake fair, the MTLC formed five subcommittees to plan and conduct LF2. Planning began in Fall 2010 and intensified through Spring 2011.

Preparations for the Fair

Committee actions and activities included:

Program: The final program is summarized in the tri-fold advertising brochure (Figures 1A and 1B) and consisted of the following components:

- a. Presentations - Seven relatively short talks in the morning with a 1-hr presentation (by John Haack) after lunch. Speakers were available at tables and booths throughout the day. We did this because attendees, who typically did not stay for all presentations, would have opportunities to interact with the speakers and their materials. A highlight here was the raptor tent, where folks could observe close-up a variety of birds of prey all day.
- b. Exhibits (Booths) - On a variety of subjects, from CBCW and AIS to wood carving.
- c. Free Lunch - Featuring an encore pig roast by Skip Fiedler, former town chairman. Lunch included chips, beans, potato salad, and desert, in addition to barbecued pork. Music was provided by a local band, "Second Time Around"
- d. Kids Educational Activities - Nine "hands on" activities, all with an aquatic theme and geared for children from toddlers to high school. Activities were supervised by educators assisted by Girl Scout Troop 4525 and students from the National Honor Society and the new Environmental Charter program at Northwoods School.

- e. Vendors – Four local businesses displayed their wares, renting exhibit space from the MTLC.

Advertising: The Fair was widely advertised with the *NorthwoodsShopper* as the primary commercial source. Small “save the date” adds ran for 6 weeks, followed by a detailed quarter-page ad the week prior to the Fair, and a “Thank You” add of the same size following the Fair. A large ad was also placed in the *Spooner Advocate* prior to the Fair. The MTLC also generated a poster(8 1/2”x11” version of the brochure title page) for display at local businesses and distributed almost 1,000 of the tri-fold brochures (Figs. 1A and 1B)to individuals. Four large signs announcing the Fair date and location were placed at strategic, high-traffic locations around the township. Finally, a large banner was displayed on the corner of Hwy 77 and County Road I.

Logistics and Design: - Three large tents (two 20’x30’ and one 20’x40’) were rented and several smaller ones borrowed to accommodate speakers and booths (i.e. at tables). Approximately 25 tables and 220 chairs were borrowed from local churches, town halls, and businesses for the occasion. Four portable toilets were also rented. All of these were set up on the grounds Friday July 22. Parking areas were delineated in the airport field across Nancy Lake Road from the town hall. The town constable and ambulance were present during the Fair. See Figure 1B for a map of locations for various components. A watchman was hired to guard the premises Friday night. Following the Fair’s end at 3 p.m. Saturday, all tents, tables, chairs, etc were taken down and removed by 6p.m. Trash was deposited in a Town truck for disposal.

Food: The free (but donations accepted) lunch was served up in the town hall by a team of 20 volunteers. Coffee and donuts were also provided gratis in the morning,

Finances: The DNR Lake Planning grant was the primary source of funds for LF2. Other sources included contributions from local merchants and vendors, lunch cash donations, and proceeds from a 50:50 raffle. We also received a small Besadny grant to aid with some expenses.

Response

Weather Event – At 9 a.m. Saturday, as the Fair was opening, the town hall grounds was struck by a thunderstorm accompanied by winds of 40 mph. Rain continued for almost 2 hours. Tents were struck, and volunteers acted quickly to move events indoors until the storm dissipated. The first several presentations were held in the town hall to an audience of ~100 people. By 11 a.m., events were again moved out doors for the remainder of the day. Chairs and tables were dried off and the tents raised. More folks arrived as the skies cleared. The large rented tents sustained considerable damage, later billed at \$400 by the rental company.

Attendance and Effort - Attendance was clearly hurt by the weather, but a surprisingly large number of people eventually showed up. A total of 450 lunches were served,

compared to 676 at LF1 in 2009. Using that as a benchmark, we estimated that attendance was about 2/3 of the 2009 estimate (~1,000) or about 650 people. Most attendees were either from the area of seasonal visitors. More than 60 volunteers contributed ~ 500 hours to make this Minong Town Lake Fair a success.

Evaluation and Feedback- We had no formal means to evaluate the actual experience and perception of attendees. Our volunteers received many compliments, but no complaints were registered, even during the storm. Outside presentations were very well attended, with audience questions indicating their interest and desire for more knowledge. All kids' activities were constantly busy following the storm. Some people who visited the lake association, NGO, and resource agency booths expressed the desire to get more involved in lake and stream issues. Overall, the second Fair appeared to meet its objectives of raising public awareness, providing practical information, enhancing knowledge of lake ecosystems, and providing opportunities for involvement in lake stewardship.

Recommendations

Recommendations to improve future Lake Fairs were discussed at a follow-up meeting of the MTLC the week following the Fair. These are:

1. Events of this nature should either be held indoors or at a location where they can all be accommodated indoors in the event of dismal weather. The Northwoods School would be such a location; the Minong Town Hall is far too small for the needs of an event of this size. If the rain on July 23 had been an all-day soaker, this Lake Fair would have been severely compromised, despite all the effort and expenses that went into making it a success.
2. Consideration should be given to purchasing tents rather than renting them. The MTLC paid \$770 for tent rental plus ~ \$400 for storm damages. Tent ownership would be cost effective if they were used for multiple events. They could be made available to other groups on a rental basis.
3. The MTLC should consult with other groups that host similar events for fresh ideas.

Acknowledgements

The total number of volunteers and contributors to the Minong Town Lake Fair is too large to thank here. However, we are especially grateful to our speakers who gave of their time and expertise: Karen VonHuene and Earl Cook of Wisconsin Lakes, the Watsons (Loon Watch), Patrick Goggin and John Haack of UWEX, Kathy Bartilson of the DNR, and the folks of the Raptor Education Group. Thanks also to DNR biologists Jameson Wendland and Gary Dunsmore for providing materials for kids' activities.

Figure Captions

Figures A and 1B: Six panels of trifold brochure. Last two panels are map of physical layout of the 2011 Lake Fair.

