



Dedicated to Preserving and Protecting the Eagle River Chain of Lakes, its Watershed and its Ecosystems

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President's Message

By Chuck Berg

Fall is off to a great start in the Northwoods. The Summer was terrific, with great weather and fun from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

We had a terrific turnout for our Annual Meeting and Picnic on July 30th at Braywood Resort.

Thank you to Molly and to your team! More than 200 people attended, and in addition to our regular invasive species, financial and membership reports, we had three informative speakers.

One of our concerned members gave an update on the status of Eagle and Voyageur Riparian discussions with the DNR regarding the development of the former Lake Forest Golf Course and the piers planned for the channel between the lakes. Many of our members have expressed concerns about the impact of this development on the health and safety of our waterways. A DNR hearing was held in early September regarding the planned piers, and a final decision on the pier application is expected by mid-November.

James Yach, the DNR Secretary's Director for Northern Wisconsin, represents 13 counties. He provided an update on the DNR's priorities for 2023-2024, including clean water and PFAS, youth initiatives and various coordination improvements. He also expressed his willingness to meet with ERCLA on an ongoing basis.

Vilas County Deputies Jason Molle and Matt Wilson discussed the activities of the Sheriff's Boat Patrol this season, their priorities and concerns. The deputies and James Yach made themselves available for individual questions and discussions with Riparians after the business portion of the meeting.

During the social and picnic that followed the meeting, several volunteers from other agencies and programs manned displays and distributed information regarding several topics, including bat monitoring, healthy lakes, boat safety, and public and K-12 programs at Trees for Tomorrow. ERCLA merchandise and our website were also on display. Thanks to everyone who did such a great job with this portion of the day. A special thanks to Judy Barr with RE/MAX Property Pros for the refreshments.

During the past year, two new Committees were established. One is to keep members informed about various proposals for regulation of hazardous wastes at local, county and state levels. The other is an Internal Audit Committee (IAC), filled by two non-board members with financial backgrounds. The IAC met with ERCLA's officers to understand our procedures and controls on contributions to and checks issued by ERCLA. They also examined receipts and documentation for a significant percentage of our transactions and reported to our Board that they found no exceptions to our reported financial statements.

There has been a lot going on at ERCLA so far in 2023. I hope you enjoy reading about those activities in the following pages.



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The Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association Inc. (ERCLA) is a non-profit, voluntary lake organization.

Our purpose is to maintain, protect and improve the quality of the lakes and connecting waterways from the Burnt Rollways Dam to Otter Rapids Dam on the Eagle River Chain of Lakes.

Formed in 2001, ERCLA is incorporated as a Non-Stock Corporation under Wisconsin law.

It is recognized as a public charity under Section 501 (c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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erclaonline@gmail.com

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Eagle Lake Report

By Christine O'Neil D'hondt, Eagle Lake Co-Captain

On June 15, 2023, Vilas County began implementing a user access fee for all vehicles accessing county parks and landings, including the Eagle Lake Boat Launch located on the North side of Eagle Lake. Many users of the boat landing are unaware of the new permits required to use the landing. Anyone who owns or rents property in Vilas County qualifies for a discounted annual resident membership. Permits can be purchased on site at the landing through a user's mobile device by following the instructions on the landing's posted signage. The new permits will support much needed upgrades and maintenance for the landing which has seen a significant amount of use in the last few years.

This Summer, the residents surrounding Eagle Lake Boat Launch have seen an influx of traffic – both vehicular and pedestrian around the boat landing. Individuals have not been following the no parking signs, causing congestion on the streets surrounding the boat landing. Residents are concerned because users are parking wherever they choose as well as driving too fast for the narrow roads. A proposal was brought to the Town of Washington to install additional no parking signs on and around the landing in order to reduce congestion. The proposal was approved at the August Township meeting and signs will be posted. Consideration was also given to engaging the Department of Transportation to reduce speed limits around the landing.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. As always, thank you to all the members for your continued support of ERCLA.

Yellow Birch Lake Report

By George Katich, Yellow Birch Lake Captain

Yellow Birch Lake includes all property owners on Yellow Birch Lake and on Eagle River from the T-Docks west to the Highway 45 Bridge.

The 20th Annual Yellow Birch Lake Picnic and Social event will be held on Saturday, July 13, 2024, from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. Details will be shared early next Summer.

Nine new owners purchased homes on Yellow Birch Lake in 2023. Two new homes are being built on vacant lots, and one home is being built where a previous home, severely damaged from the July 2021 storm, was torn down.

Jeff Long, owner of Dash Aquatic Services, LLC, reported 852 pounds of Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) was hand harvested on August 23rd, 24th and 28th in the northeast bay through Diver



Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH). The red buoy marks the diver's location as they hand pull the EWM by the root, using a suction tube that collects the EWM and allows water to return.

This year over 80% of lake homeowners are members of ERCLA. Whether you are a full-time or part-time resident, renting or selling your home, we need every property owner to be a member. It's up to all of us to continue to protect our water and shorelines to maintain our property values.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 847-309-4008. As always, thank you to all the members for your continued support of ERCLA.

ERCLA Volunteers at Work

Recently, Shoreline Restoration Committee volunteers spent a few hours planting sedge grasses along a disabled veteran's shoreline on Catfish Lake.

The sedge grass will add a natural stabilization to his shoreline.

The ERCLA Shoreline Restoration Committee, led by Chairperson Marc Groth, is committed to helping ERCLA waterfront property owners work towards converting urbanized shorelines back to a more natural state.

If you're interested in having the Shoreline Restoration team visit you for an evaluation, email us at erclaonline@gmail.com or call Marc Groth at 847-951-1761.



Otter Lake Report

By Jody Voight, VP Operations & Otter Co-Captain

Hello to all our ERCLA members, I hope you enjoyed another busy Summer on the Eagle River Chain. My name is Jody Voight and over the last several years I have been ERCLA's Co-Captain on Otter Lake. At the July Membership Meeting, I was elected as your new Vice President of Operations.

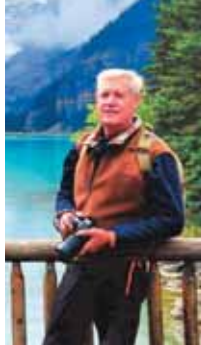
Going forward, I appreciate the significant shoes to fill and am excited to work with such an active and dedicated group of individuals. Many of you may have interacted with me and other volunteers within ERCLA on projects to monitor and protect our great natural resources. On Otter Lake, you may have seen me performing water clarity, chemical analysis, performing assessments of Eurasian Milfoil and invasive shoreline species or moving our Slow-No Wake buoys back into place.

More notably, if you saw someone over the last several years quietly going around your lakeshore in the dark each month, rest assured, I am monitoring Otter for native bat populations with an acoustical bat monitoring device for the DNR. Starting in 2006 and confirmed in Wisconsin in 2014, an invasive fungus from Europe called White Nose Syndrome (WNS) has negatively affected our local hibernating bat populations. Vilas County is fortunate to have one of the most active monitoring programs in the country, thanks to many volunteers, including local ERCLA members. Currently, Cranberry Lake (Steve Skora), Duck Lake (Marc Groth), Watersmeet Lake (Ed Bonack) and Otter Lake (myself) have active monitor participants joining hundreds of volunteers across the state.

WNS is now considered endemic in Wisconsin. Since the disease was first detected, at least 64 sites in 25 counties have been confirmed as WNS positive or WNS suspect. With bat numbers greatly reduced or non-existent at most underground hibernation sites, the site visits are being put on rotating two, five or ten-year schedules, depending on their original population size, level of disturbance and species diversity. Hibernacula survey datasets are compiled in WI Cave and Mine Catalog and the Natural Heritage Inventory database. This data will be used to search for trends in population stabilization and (hopefully) growth over the coming years.

If you have questions or would like to get involved as a volunteer, please feel free to contact me or Mariquita (Quita) Sheehan, Conservation Specialist, Vilas County Land and Water at 715-479-3655. Quita was a presenter at our Annual Members Meeting in July. It is her organizational skill and dedication to these activities that made the Vilas County Program so successful and impactful.

I look forward to seeing many of you on our lakes and at ERCLA activities in the coming year and appreciate your ongoing input and support.



Meet Steve Burr

By Steve Burr, Duck Lake Co-Captain

Hello. I am the Co-Captain of Duck Lake. My family and I have lived in Eagle River for the past 20 years. We moved to Duck Lake eight years ago, and have enjoyed every minute of it.



I believe the Lake Captains play an important role in developing partnerships and building a sense of community around the shared goal of preserving the natural beauty and resources of the Eagle River Chain of Lakes. It is my goal to help ensure that this system of lakes remains a healthy and vibrant ecosystem for future generations to enjoy.

Bat Monitoring on the Chain

By Jody Voight, VP Operations & Otter Co-Captain

WISCONSIN BATS *Myotis lucifugus*

Little brown bat

- **Cave bat**
- Roosts in trees, attics, buildings
- Hibernates in stable, humid conditions
- Status: **state threatened**



Photos by WI Bat Program

- The little brown bat is Wisconsin's most common bat and historically has been in North America.
- This species is especially associated with humans, often forming nursery colonies containing hundreds, sometimes thousands of individuals in buildings, attics and other man-made structures.
- Little brown *Myotis* forage over water where their diet consists of aquatic insects, mainly midges, mosquitoes, mayflies and caddisflies. They can catch up to 1,200 insects in one hour during peak feeding.
- Little brown bats form large clusters during hibernation in caves and prefer stable buffered temperatures and high humidity.

Meet Christine O'Neil D'hondt

By Christine O'Neil D'hondt, Eagle Lake Co-Captain

I joined ERCLA this year as an Eagle Lake Co-Captain. My family has had a home on the east side of Eagle Lake since 1965, when my grandfather was searching for somewhere that reminded him of the woods of Montana and ended up in Eagle River. He immediately recognized what made Eagle River special and thus began the O'Neil family's lifelong love of the Northwoods. Our home on Eagle Lake is now a fourth generation family spot. Spending all of my Summers on Eagle Lake since I was a young girl, Eagle River feels like home.

My husband, Chris, spends much of the year in Eagle River while our two boys, Brinton and Gunder, enjoy their Summers working at a local bar and restaurant. You can often see the O'Neil and D'hondt families on the lake water skiing, surfing, cruising in our vintage Correct Crafts or playing in the yard with our three Irish Terriers, King, Red and Breezy. When we're not in Eagle River, you can find us enjoying downhill skiing, snowshoeing and fly fishing in Big Sky, Montana.



Catfish Lake Report

By Steve Wagner, Catfish Lake Captain

Hello fellow Catfish Lake residents! I'd like to introduce myself as your new Catfish Lake Captain.

The first thing I'd like to do is thank Gary Conger for his five plus years of service as the Catfish Lake Captain.

Gary, thank you for your involvement, time and effort in supporting the ERCLA mission. We appreciate everything you do for ERCLA and Catfish.

My wife, Jean and I are both life-long residents of Wisconsin; born and raised in southeastern Wisconsin and the Green Bay area. We have had our place on Catfish Lake since 1996, and have enjoyed the natural beauty of the Chain as well as the wonderful neighbors that we have come to know over the years. I have enjoyed working with ERCLA as a Catfish Lake Co-Captain for the last three and a half years.

Our mission at ERCLA is quite basic, but well worth repeating: *The Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association is dedicated to preserving and protecting the Eagle River Chain of Lakes, its Watershed and Ecosystems.*

Please reach out to me with suggestions, questions and opportunities as they relate to ERCLA's mission.

Our primary goals for Catfish are to renew all past ERCLA members, as well as reach out to full-time or part-time residents who are not members. Help us reach your neighbors on Catfish Lake and pass on my contact information and save it for your future use: **262-444-8882**.

As Catfish Lake is one of the largest lakes on the Chain, we are looking for additional volunteers. There are plenty of options for involvement with numerous projects. I'm looking forward to meeting and hearing from everyone on Catfish. Thank you.

Watersmeet Lake Report

By Skip McCann, Watersmeet Lake Captain

Managing Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), predominantly Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM), is extremely important for the preservation of these beautiful waters we enjoy. The Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission coordinates AIS awareness, prevention and management efforts on the Chain.

The professional services of Onterra, LLC are used to survey and report where EWM (and other AIS) is located on the Chain. They conduct an early season survey in the Spring. ERCLA volunteers do a second survey later in the season and report the results to Onterra.

Onterra will have conducted a third survey in mid-September using the results from the prior two surveys as a helpful guide. These survey results, reported to the Commission, are used for future lake management decisions and funding efforts.

Watersmeet's EWM Peak-Biomass Survey was conducted on August 21st by volunteers Dan Newitt, Ed Bonack, Roger Rosenthal and myself. We took to the waters and completed the required annual survey. We used Onterra's Spring survey as a guide, and traveled by boat investigating all the shorelines from the Highway 45 bridge to the Highway 70 bridge including the entire Watersmeet Lake shoreline, parts of Mud Creek, Rice Creek and the Wisconsin River upstream of the lake.

Our results this year show some presence of EWM, but vastly improved from prior years.

ERCLA and its volunteers are committed in the fight against AIS and will continue to monitor and advise on prevention and management of all AIS.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Eagle River Chain of Lakes Shoreland Condition

By Marc Groth, Shoreline Restoration Chair and Duck Lake Captain

One of the most vulnerable areas of a lake's watershed is the immediate shoreland zone - from the water's edge to 35 feet from shore. A severe increase of pollutant loads and degradation of the important habitat occurs when this 35-foot buffer is unnaturally developed by the removal of natural vegetation, an increase of impervious surface area or other human practices are enacted.

Limiting these man-made effects on the lake is important in maintaining the quality of the lake's water.



The intrinsic value of natural shorelands is found in numerous forms. Vegetated shorelands prevent polluted runoff from entering lakes by filtering water or allowing it to slow to the point where particulates settle. The roots of shoreland plants stabilize the soil, thereby preventing shoreland erosion. Shorelands also provide habitat for both aquatic and terrestrial animal species. Many species rely on natural shorelands for all or part of their life cycle as a source of food, cover from predators and as a place to raise their young. Shorelands and the nearby shallow waters serve as spawning grounds for fish and nesting sites for birds. Between the abundant wildlife, the lush vegetation and the presence of native flowers, natural shorelands provide scenic beauty and a sense of tranquility. Therefore, the removal of vegetation and the inclusion of development reduces many forms of habitat for wildlife and some forms of development may provide habitat for less than desirable species.

All waterways within the Lower Eagle River Chain were surveyed to determine the extent of their development as part of ERCLA's Lake Management project. In general, developed shorelands are more stressful on a lake ecosystem, while benefits such as wildlife habitat and improved water quality arise from maintaining shoreland areas in a natural state.

The shorelands of the lakes within the Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes were categorized into these five categories:

Urbanized: This type of shoreland has essentially no natural habitat. Areas that are mowed or unnaturally landscaped to the water's edge and areas that are rip-rapped or include a seawall would be placed in this category.

Developed-Unnatural: This category includes shorelands that have been developed, but only have small remnants of natural habitat yet intact. A property with many trees, but no remaining understory or herbaceous layer or a property that has left a small (less than 30 feet), natural buffer in place, but has urbanized the areas behind the buffer would be included in this category.

Developed-Semi-Natural: This is a developed shoreland that is mostly in a natural state. Developed properties that have left much of the natural habitat in place, but have added gathering areas, small beaches, etc., within those natural areas would likely fall into this category as well as any urbanized shoreland that was restored.

Developed-Natural: This category includes shorelands that are developed property, but essentially no modifications to the natural habitat have been made. Developed properties that have maintained the natural habitat and only added a path leading to a single pier would fall into this category.

Natural/Undeveloped: This category includes shorelands in a natural, undisturbed state.

The lakes within the Lower Eagle River Chain have portions of their shorelands that fall under all five of the assessment categories. Per our 2019 lake management plan the lake shoreline was categorized as

- Natural/Undeveloped and Developed-Natural ranged from 64% on Scattering Rice to 23% on Catfish. Chain-wide: 30 miles or 46% of shoreline was delineated in these two categories.
- Unnatural or Urbanized range was 50% on Duck Lake to 11% on Watersmeet. Chain-wide: 18 miles or 28% of the total shoreline is Developed-Unnatural or Urbanized.
- Developed-Semi-Natural is delineated to the remaining 17 miles or 26% of the shoreline.

Shoreland Condition Report continued on the next page.

Shoreland Report - Continued

Nearly one out of every three miles of shoreline in the Lower Eagle River Chain has a high degree of development with little to no natural habitat.

The high degree of shoreland development is likely one of the largest stressors to the Chain's ecosystem as nearly 30% of natural shoreland habitat has been lost. These developed shorelands are our focus areas for restoration, as they do not provide any benefit to and may harm the lakes.

Fortunately, nearly 50% of the Chain's shoreline still contains little to no development with most or all of the natural habitat still intact. These natural shorelines provide the most benefit to the lakes in terms of habitat and water quality protection and should be left in their natural state if possible.

While producing a completely natural shoreland is ideal for a lake ecosystem, it is not always practical from a Riparian property owner's perspective. However, property owners can take small steps in ensuring their property's impact upon the lake is minimal.

Placing lawns on flat areas with minimal slope or in areas that do not terminate at the lake's edge is one way to reduce the amount of runoff a lake receives from a developed site. Allowing tree falls and other natural habitat features to remain along a shoreline may result not only in reducing shoreline erosion but creating wildlife habitat too.

The ERCLA Shoreline Restoration team is committed to helping ERCLA Riparians work towards converting as much of the 28% of the urbanized shorelines back to a natural state as possible.

We can help write Healthy Lakes Grants for homeowners who have an interest in implementing any of the five Healthy Lakes best practice projects:

- Fish Sticks
- Diversion
- Infiltration
- Rain Garden
- Native Plantings

We are writing three Healthy Lakes Grants for fellow Riparians with the hope that approval and implementation is ready for Spring 2024. Details regarding these projects and others will appear in future newsletters.

If you're interested in having the Shoreline Restoration team visit your shoreline for evaluation, email us at erclaonline@gmail.com or call Marc Groth at 847-951-1761.

Sheriff's Boat Patrol Report

By ERCLA Communications Committee

On Sunday, July 30th, Deputy Jason Molle, Recreational Officer and Deputy Matt Wilson, School Liaison Officer, with the Vilas County Sheriff Department were keynote speakers at our Annual Membership meeting at Braywood.

Jason highlighted changes in the funding arrangement of the Chain's Boat Patrol. Previously, the U.S. Coast Guard Fund, administered by Wisconsin DNR, paid 75% of the annual Boat Patrol expense. Recently, their reimbursement was reduced to 69%. The remaining 31% was evenly divided between ERCLA, the city of Eagle River, and the towns of Cloverland, Lincoln and Washington. Our share this year is \$1,579.62.

Boat Patrol officers concentrate on education and safety when encountering the boating public, but citations are issued when warranted. The specifics from their activities in Vilas County as of August 25, 2023, were 413 hours of patrol with six reported accidents, 22 reported complaints, 31 citations and 43 written warnings.

The most common citations on the Chain:

- Operating a PWC greater than Slow-No Wake within 100 feet of another boat or PWC
- Violation of Slow-No Wake Zone
- Operating a PWC greater than Slow-No Wake within 200 feet of shoreline
- No registration decals or numbers on the vessel
- Raised deck riding or on the gunwales
- No Boater's Safety Certificate

Required Wisconsin Boat Safety Certificate:

Everyone born on or after January 1, 1989, must complete a boater's safety course and keep proof of completion of course while operating a vessel.

This also applies if you rent or borrow any motorized watercraft. The certificate can be a paper copy or a picture on a cell phone. It doesn't matter what state you are from; you need proof of your safety certificate. Minimum age to operate a motorboat or PWC in Wisconsin is 12 years old.

Information Desired if You Witness a Violation:

Thorough details will assist the Deputies in assessing problems and locations.

Call dispatch at **715-479-4441** - or - file an anonymous report online and upload photos or videos to - https://www.tip411.com/tips/new?alert_group_id=3737.

2023 Annual Membership Meeting Recap

By Teri Stecker, Secretary

There were 210 attendees at the Annual Membership Meeting and Summer Picnic at Braywood on July 30th. James Yach, Wisconsin DNR's Secretary's Director for the Northern Region, was a keynote speaker and shared that the DNR's top five priorities are:

- Build and enhance relationships with numerous environmental and legislative groups, local lake associations, commissions and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress.
- Make clean water and PFAS a priority.
- Protecting our natural resources should not be a partisan issue. Their team will work with all sides of the legislative aisle and the public.
- Encourage youth activities in fishing, hunting and all other outdoor activities to build future generations' usage and encourage them to be good stewards of Wisconsin's resources.
- Bring together Fire Response, EMTs, Patrol Officers (water and land), state parks and land trust management groups so everyone can work to solve problems. Refer to the article on page 6 for Jason Molle and Matt Wilson's Keynote Speaker presentation message.



During the business meeting, members elected seven directors to a two-year term, and approved the 2022 year-end financial report and 2022 annual meeting minutes. The assembly heard reports from Dave Mueller, AIS Coordinator, and Marc Groth, Shoreline Restoration Committee Chair. Jody Voight, VP Operations, spoke on membership and buoys. The meeting adjourned and all enjoyed a picnic lunch.

Buoy Report

By Jody Voight, VP Operations & Otter Co-Captain

It has been another busy Summer on the Eagle River Chain, and the evaluations and discussions around Slow-No Wake (SNW) buoys continues to be an active point of discussion.

In 2023 a number of evaluations were done to ensure the Chain remains a safe and enjoyable Summer destination for those who visit and those who call it home. Additional SNW buoys were added from below the Hwy 45 bridge to the Eagle River city limit as a pilot program that will be evaluated again next year. The channels between Voyageur and Eagle Lake, Watersmeet into the River, and Catfish into Cranberry were all reviewed by the local DNR Warden to assess if additional buoys were needed.

As a result of these meetings, the channel along the sandy swim area of Catfish, past the Hwy 70 bridge, will receive several new red and green channel markers to help boaters navigate this area and safely define the channel where boaters congregate to enjoy the sandy swimming area.

Additionally, 25 new lights and reinforced cages were added to our SNW buoys to make them more durable and safer for navigation. An evaluation of all 110 buoys on the Chain was completed to get an inventory of buoys that are nearing the end of their useful life and need to be replaced.

The town of Washington manages and maintains the buoy program for the Chain with assistance from ERCLA, as it is a very labor-intensive program. In 2023, similar to prior years, ERCLA contributed \$5,000 to Washington's buoy fund to ensure safety on our Chain.

The topic of buoys continues to be debated with differing points of view that vary greatly depending on if you are a visitor for an action-packed weekend, a resident attempting to enjoy the solitude of the lake, a kayaker, paddleboarder, fisherman or pulling a tube or skier. Our waterways are utilized by diverse individuals that, by definition, have equal rights in Wisconsin to utilize its lakes as a public resource. The key and common element is the need to keep our waterways safe.

As our lakes continue to get busier and individuals come north to enjoy our beautiful Chain, we continue to rely on everyone to help keep our waterways safe and enjoyable. So please keep the emails and phone calls coming - we need to hear from you.



Clean Boats/Clean Waters

Do You Know? Wisconsin invasive species law prohibits the transport of aquatic plants. Before leaving the boat launch, conducting the following actions is required by Wisconsin law: Inspect and remove aquatic plants and animals from boats and equipment, and to drain all water from boats and equipment.

To Educate Boaters, ERCLA contracts with the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department to provide Clean Boats/Clean Waters inspection services. Carolyn Schaars, a local resident studying Environmental Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a Limited Term Employee with the Conservation Department. This Summer, Carolyn performed complimentary boat inspections and handed out educational and informative brochures on how to prevent the spread of invasive species at Eagle, Catfish and Yellow Birch boat landings.

Why? Aquatic plants and animals can easily attach to boats and equipment or become entangled in motors and fishing lines and then be moved to another lake. Many organisms such as the spiny water flea or invasive plant fragments are easily transported in water from one lake to the next. If live bait comes in contact with water that contains AIS, the bait or water within the container can carry Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) and be transported to another waterbody.

ERCLA also coordinates volunteers for additional boat inspections to complement the hours from the County. Consider donating your time to support this worthwhile program. Training programs for new boat inspectors and coordinating the volunteer efforts are done locally by Vilas County and ERCLA. Contact us at erclaonline@gmail.com for information.

Remember as you move from lake to lake: **“Clean, Drain and Drive.”**



Carolyn Schaars, local resident, performs complimentary Clean Boat/Clean Waters inspections on behalf of ERCLA.

Members Q & A

By ERCLA Executive Committee

What is a Lake Captain?

Prior to 2018, each lake had a separate Association, governed by officers and a board, to run their individual lake affairs. With the merger to one entity, ERCLA created a new board to govern all 10 lakes. In addition to other Directors, one representative from each of the 10 bodies of water is elected to the Board to represent all Riparians. We encourage you to contact your Lake Captain, and we include a list of current Officers, Lake Captains and Co-Captains in our newsletters and it is on our website ercla.org.

Examples of Lake Captain Responsibilities:

- Actively participate in Board of Directors, Annual Membership and Committee Meetings.
- Represent and communicate with your waterfront property owners on association business.
- Maintain and enhance the lake’s social fabric and camaraderie.
- Add Co-Captain(s) to assist with duties - no Board voting powers are allowed (Wisconsin state statutes).
- Encourage property owners to join ERCLA and keep ERCLA signs current and in good repair.
- Identify members on your lake who are willing volunteers or will report on issues of interest.
 - ⇒ Cooperate with SECCHI disc drop process to measure your water clarity.
 - ⇒ Survey and monitor shoreline for invasive species.
 - ⇒ Coordinate chemistry readings, if applicable, for your lake or river.
 - ⇒ Participate in peak season biomass surveys, as needed.

Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) - Fall 2023 Status

By Dave Mueller, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator



Individual plant

How are the weeds doing? Short answer – too good actually! Aquatic plant growth this year significantly exceeded the growth of the previous four to five years. Factors leading to improved plant growth include lower precipitation, more sunlight and slightly lower lake levels. Volunteers taking SECCHI readings reported clearer water in 2023.

The Early Season AIS Survey in early July detected a greater presence of Eurasian Watermilfoil. As a result, the Commission (Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission) increased the number of EWM hand harvest days from 10 to 15.



2/3 of the total harvested from DASH in August 2023

The EagleRiverChainCommission.org website provides interesting and useful information.

You can regularly check the Commission’s Individual Lake Reports at EagleRiverChainCommission.org/lake-reports.html. These maps are updated by Onterra throughout the year.

Aerators - Do's and Don'ts

By ERCLA's Shoreline Restoration Committee

When boating season is over, many choose to aerate their permanent piers, docks and other structures. It is important to determine if DNR or other permitting at the local, county or federal level is necessary. As a rule of thumb, additional DNR permits are required if you are placing a structure in the water or disturbing the lake or river bottom. Applicants are responsible for checking with local county zoning staff to seek applicable county permits.

Aerator systems typically require placing a single base or tubular structure on the lakebed to push air through the water column so that water is continually moving, avoiding stagnant water flow conditions and ice buildup. This can adversely impact other Riparian owners and members of the public by pushing ice elsewhere on the lake, causing larger ice problems downstream.

It's important to know that ice management systems **cannot** impact the ice on your neighbor's property, nor can they create **unsafe ice conditions** for ice skaters, fishermen, snowmobilers, etc. If ice holes are created, they must be marked with a barricade, a visual warning system or both, as outlined in this article: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/waterways/documents/aeratorfactsheet.pdf>.

This link is also available on our website at - ercla.org/resources.

Although the DNR does not advocate for aerators, a permit is not required to install or maintain these devices so long as **ALL** the following conditions are met:

- The aerator is attached to a legal structure that has either received a permit or is exempt from needing a permit.
- The mixing action does not disturb the lake bottom.
- The aerator does not cause problems for lake users or neighbors; and
- All ice holes created are clearly barricaded and/or marked.

If one of the above factors cannot be met, WDNR requires a miscellaneous structure permit for the system installation. Additionally, in some cases, the owner may be required to install a **snow curtain** to limit the water mixing to their Riparian zone to avoid unsafe ice conditions for neighbors or the public.

2023 Northland Pines Scholarship

By ERCLA Executive Committee

We are proud to announce Sophia Simac is the 2023 recipient of our \$1,500 scholarship. Marc Groth presented Sophia her award at the annual Scholarship event in May.



Sophia was accepted to the College of Letters and Science Honors Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a major in Conservation Biology. Her plan after receiving her bachelor's degree is to attend graduate school. Her three career goals are to help end corporate pollution, to educate the public in hopes to help families make cleaner, healthier choices for the environment, and to help endangered species return and thrive in threatened ecosystems.

Some of her high school club activities included: Founding member of NP All American Kids Club, Co-Founder and member of the SOARS Explore Arts Club, Lighting Technician and Designer in NP School Musical program, Lead Live Streaming Technician of NP Live Streaming program and a member of the NP National Honor Society. Sophia was enrolled in the School of Options and Applied Research (SOARS) program, and was a member of the Core Biology and Monitoring Aquaponics Challenge team and a participant in their Forensic Investigation Team at Nicolet College Competition Day.

Outside of school, Sophia was on the Planning Committee for Community Forest Fest at Trees for Tomorrow and regularly participated in the Wisconsin DNR's Frog and Toad survey program.

ERCLA congratulates Sophia and wishes good luck with her plans.

ERCLA's scholarship fund was established a number of years ago. We welcome the opportunity to assist students with conservation and environmental studies and hope they come back to the Northwoods to successfully pursue their passions and their careers. Scholarships are awarded in one payment to the educational institution upon verification of enrollment.

ERCLA Logo Window Decals

As a reminder, we have free ERCLA logo decals for our members. You can place them on your boat, car, a window or patio door at your home or business. What better way to show you proudly support and are dedicated to preserving and protecting the Eagle River Chain of Lakes, its watershed, and its ecosystems!

Many of you have also asked for ERCLA signage for your dock. You may purchase extra lake sign(s) at cost. Contact any Director, Lake Captain or email us at erclaonline@gmail.com.



Thank You to Our Membership Meeting Participants and Speakers

By the ERCLA Board of Directors

On Sunday, July 30th, ERCLA members met with educational presenters during the Summer Picnic portion of the Annual Membership Meeting at Braywood.

Our sincere thanks to all representatives that spent their day off with us:

- Bat Monitoring on the Chain - **Quita Sheehan**, Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department
- Trees for Tomorrow's public and K-12 programs with **Cheryl Todea**, Executive Director
- Boat Safety & Regulations - **Dennis Schultz**, U.S. Power Boat Squadron
- ERCLA's merchandise and website - **Kim Swisher**, Owner, Kim Swisher Communications
- Advocacy, Education, Conservation - **Tom Ewing**, President of Vilas County Lakes & Rivers Association
- **Sergeant Jonas Moermond** - Great Lakes Indian, Fish & Wildlife Commission.
- Keynote Speakers: **James Yach**, DNR Secretary's Northern Region Director and **Jason Molle** and **Matt Wilson**, Deputies with Vilas County Sheriff's Department.



Thank you to our Sponsors:

- **RE/MAX Property Pros**
- **Braywood**

How Do We Know if We Have EWM Around Our Docks?

By ERCLA Lake Captains

Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) crowds out native plants, reducing biodiversity, diminishes fish habitat and negatively impacts wetland habitats. Dense mats form near the surface. They entangle boat propellers and interfere with swimming and fishing. As a result, EWM can adversely affect our personal enjoyment of our shoreline and our property values as it affects our local tourist-dependent economy.



Healthy Native plant - Northern Watermilfoil

In general, healthy native aquatic plant communities help prevent the establishment of invasive non-native plants. Not all milfoils found in the Chain are invasive or bad for the health of the waterways; there are beneficial native milfoils, too.

Native Northern Watermilfoil has fewer than 10 leaf segments on each side of the leaf axis and has stouter stems.

Invasive Eurasian Watermilfoil has 14 or more leaf segments on each side of the leaf axis and leaves are in groups of four. They are limp out of the water and appear reddish; their flowers are small, yellow and four-parted.



Eradicate - Invasive Eurasian Watermilfoil

The DNR understands your need to access your boat lift, dock and swimming areas and allows you, as the homeowner, to cull the overabundance of plants by your docks.

If you suspect you have an abundance of invasive EWM, please contact us at erclaonline@gmail.com.

We Have 20,000 Facebook Followers!

THANK YOU! We are so grateful to have exceeded 20,000 followers on our Facebook Page.

There were 4,376 followers in January 2020, when ERCLA consolidated its communications needs with a local communications company, Kim Swisher Communications, LLC.

A sincere thank you to Kim Swisher and her team, who assist us with public and community relations, digital communication and marketing including social media management, Constant Contact email communications, website design and maintenance and for creating these bi-annual newsletters. It has been a pleasure to partner with this team of professionals.

Thank you to our Facebook family for your interest in our mission to preserve and protect the Eagle River Chain of Lakes, its Watershed, and its Ecosystems.

To our Members and Volunteers: Thank You! We couldn't perform our many tasks without you!

Help us reach our next milestone and follow us at [Facebook.com/EagleRiverChain](https://www.facebook.com/EagleRiverChain).



ERCLA Lake Captains and Board Members Contact List

Lake Captains	Name	Phone	Co-Captains	Name	Phone
Catfish	Steve Wagner	(262) 444-8882	Catfish	Opening Available	
Cranberry	Michael Queoff	(262) 707-4214	Cranberry	John Haunfelder	(262) 442-4016
Duck	Marc Groth	(847) 951-1761	Duck	Steve Burr	(715) 891-6100
Eagle	Tom Batterman	(715) 409-6768	Eagle	Christine D'hondt	(773) 551-8721
Otter	Dave Mueller	(715) 297-6636	Otter	Jody Voight	(262) 287-4521
Lynx	Bil Krostue	(920) 470-3522	Scattering Rice	Alan Queoff	(715) 617-2476
Scattering Rice	Liz Roskopf	(715) 216-3838	Scattering Rice	Mark Brenner	(815) 298-8582
Voyageur	Teri Stecker	(920) 428-6743	Voyageur	Mark Slonik	(715) 891-2650
Yellow Birch	George Katich	(847) 309-4008	Yellow Birch	Bill Morgan	(847) 254-9623
Watersmeet	Hugh (Skip) McCann	(847) 274-9792	Watersmeet	Dan Newitt	(715) 891-0549
			Watersmeet	Roger Rosenthal	(847) 812-4903
			Watersmeet	Steve Dalbec	(847) 409-1500

Officers	Name	Phone
President	Chuck Berg	(312) 927-3365
VP Operations	Jody Voight	(262) 287-4521
AIS Coordinator	Dave Mueller	(715) 297-6636
Secretary	Teri Stecker	(920) 428-6743
Treasurer	Dave Cyrtmus	(715) 218-2956
Director At Large	Bill Lochte	(715) 477-1999

Members Helping Members

By ERCLA Lake Captains

After very strong winds on July 27, 2023, an ERCLA Member noticed his Sirocco Stand Up Windsurfing Board was missing from his pier and shoreline.

He contacted his Yellow Birch Lake Captain to see if there was a way ERCLA could help. This photo and details about the missing Board, along with the Member's contact information, were emailed to all Yellow Birch Lake Members using ERCLA's email program Constant Contact.



Within 24 hours, a Member contacted us to share that the board had been found floating along her shoreline. The owner was very appreciative to have his board returned.

During a windstorm in July 2021, several ERCLA Members on Catfish Lake lost items from their piers or shoreline. The same procedure was used, and the majority of items were found and returned to the owners.

Thank you to everyone for helping each other.



ERCLA
PO Box 1821
Eagle River, WI 54521

Lake Management 2023 Results and 2024 Planning Meeting

On Wednesday, November 15th at 7:00 pm, representatives from Onterra, LLC, who provide lake management planning services, will release the 2023 Eagle River Chainwide Lake Management results and the 2024 plans.

This meeting is open to the public and impacts every waterfront property owner on the Chain. The town of Washington will host this session at 2301 Town Hall Rd, Eagle River. ERCLA representatives and Commission members will be in attendance.

Get Your Official ERCLA Merchandise

By Dave Cyrtnus, Treasurer

Our online store is now open! ERCLA merchandise is available for purchase on the ERCLA website. Just click on "Apparel" on the home page to place your order.

All products currently available come in a variety of colors including short and long-sleeved t-shirts, hooded sweatshirts and a variety of hats. All shirts have a printed ERCLA logo on the front and a map of the Chain on the back. The hats have an embroidered ERCLA logo.

After you select all your items, you will be directed to PayPal for payment. This triggers an email to ERCLA that an order has been placed. Orders will then be sent to our vendor. When the product is ready (2 to 3 weeks), you will receive an email from erclastore@gmail.com to arrange local pick up or delivery. We are not shipping any orders at this time, but may add this feature in the future.

Log on today and place your order! Just in time for Christmas gifts! ercla.org/apparel





Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association, Inc
P.O. Box 1821, Eagle River, WI 54521
erclaonline@gmail.com

Northwoods Land Trust Provides Shoreland Protection Tools

By Carol Marshall, Catfish Lake Resident and ERCLA Member

The Northwoods Land Trust (NWLT), based in Eagle River, permanently conserves natural shorelands, woodlands and other natural resources to benefit present and future generations in Vilas, Oneida, Forest, Florence, Iron, Price and Langlade Counties. Community-based conservation with a nonprofit land trust like NWLT is local, voluntary and permanent. Landowners protect the land they love and provide greater public benefits in the form of clean water and air, wildlife habitat and scenic beauty.

What is the work of NWLT: In 2001, NWLT formed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization when lake property owners expressed a need for permanent conservation options for private landowners. Protection of ecological functions in non-impaired watersheds through permanent land and shoreline protection is the basis of NWLT's work.

Today, over 15,000 acres of land is protected in northern Wisconsin by NWLT. These lands include nearly 100 private conservation easements, as well as 28 conservation areas that NWLT owns and manages that are open to the public year-round. Natural forested areas and undeveloped shorelines play a big part in maintaining water quality and wildlife/fish habitats long-term. Moreover, protecting more land today will reduce the need to restore degraded water resources tomorrow.

A priority of NWLT is to assist landowners to conserve sizable properties, or smaller parcels with extensive natural shoreline, to protect our world-class water resources. Private landowners hold the key to preserving remaining natural shoreland areas. Both of the following conservation examples are considered qualified charitable contributions by the IRS; typically there are tax benefits available.

Conservation easement is a binding land protection agreement between a landowner and the land trust to permanently protect a property's natural characteristics. The easement is the legal document that is forever tied to the property's deed, so future owners are obligated to the terms. The land remains private, and it can be managed and developed to the extent specified in the easement. In most cases, 500 feet or more of undeveloped shoreline is required. Inland properties (40+ acres) are also of interest to NWLT as they protect the health of the watershed.

Land gift as nature preserve: Another approach landowners may consider is gifting land outright to become a nature preserve that is owned and managed by the land trust.

Two local examples of conserved lands owned by NWLT include the Camp 12 Lake Nature Preserve and the Deerskin River Preserve. If you are interested in permanently conserving property, contact NWLT at 715-479-2490 or visit their website: www.northwoodslandtrust.org

