



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

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The Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association Inc., is a non-profit, voluntary lake organization whose 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, it is incorporated as a Non-Stock Corporation under Wisconsin law.

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

## President's Message

*By Chuck Berg, ERCLA President*



I love this time of year when the ice goes or is going. Boats will reappear soon, and the incredible enjoyment of our wonderful Chain of Lakes begins for at least another six months (the non-frozen season).

It's also the time when the ERCLA Board of Directors, its officers and volunteers begin gearing up for invasive species surveys and finalizing our 2025 plans for the on-going fight against Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM). The past two years in particular have seen much lower levels of rain and snow in Vilas County. Those conditions provide an environment where EWM can thrive, grow and spread. We saw that in 2024 and have had discussions with many Riparians about those conditions and what the Unified Lower Chain of Lakes Commission and ERCLA did about that situation.

As the EWM identification and fight season nears, we anticipate that there will likely be another burst of EWM growth in 2025. We are committed to deal with as much of the EWM as possible using our Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH) contractor as early as possible. We encourage Riparians to let us know when you spot EWM on your area of a lake or anywhere on the Chain.

I encourage you to read this entire newsletter. There are important updates on our lakes and volunteers as well as progress reports on our various initiatives designed to protect the health and safety of the Chain. As always, if you have questions, comments or concerns please contact me or any of our Board members.

## 2025 Update on the Chain's Aquatic Plant Management Plan

*By Marc Groth, ERCLA Executive Committee, Duck Lake Captain and ULERCLC Secretary*

**Background Information:** The Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes consists of ten lake basins located within the Wisconsin River Drainage Basin in Vilas and Oneida Counties. This system includes 62 miles of shoreline and over 3,500 acres of surface water. The non-native, invasive plant Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) was first documented in the Lower Eagle River Chain in 1992, and since 2001, various lake groups throughout the Chain have recognized the negative impacts the EWM population was imparting on the lakes.

In 2005, the Town of Washington successfully applied for multiple Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Lake Management Planning Grants to fund the development of an aquatic plant management plan for each of the Chain's lakes.

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## Aquatic Management Plan (Continued)

Understanding that the degradation of the Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes ecology and recreational impairment would be disastrous for the local and county economies, four municipalities including the Towns of Washington, Lincoln, and Cloverland and the City of Eagle River partnered to fund the completion of the aquatic plant management plans. It was realized that the Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes must be viewed as one system if AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) were to be effectively managed.

In 2006, following public discussion, the parties involved agreed to form a public and private partnership out of which a joint powers agreement was made forming the Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission (ULERCLC). The ULERCLC is a unique partnership and the first of its kind in the State of Wisconsin, consisting of representatives from each of the four municipalities bordering the Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes and from each of the ten main water bodies that comprise the Chain. The ULERCLC's primary concern was the impact EWM was having on the ecological stability of the Lower Eagle River Chain and the potential effects it could have on the Chain's fishery, aesthetics and the economic vitality of the area.

**The Plan:** The Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association (ERCLA) also understands the importance of the Eagle River Chain, not only in terms of local and state economies, but also its importance in the lives of people from the area and well beyond. ERCLA knows that when large-scale AIS management is conducted on a lake ecosystem, it is important to periodically assess the health of the native aquatic plant community and other components of the Chain's ecology as well. With this understanding, ERCLA elected to complete lake management plan updates for the ten lakes which was completed in 2019. A subsection of that plan, the Aquatic Management Plan, requires renewal every five years to meet WDNR requirements if ERCLA is to continue applying for future WDNR control grants. These WDNR control grants partially fund management of the Chain's EWM.

In 2025, ERCLA will apply to the WDNR for an Aquatic Plant Management grant which is due mid-November. If the management grant is approved, there will be a stakeholder piece to the execution of the plan, beginning in early 2026. Stakeholder participation is an important part of any management planning exercise. During this project, stakeholders are informed about the project and its results but they are also introduced to important concepts in lake ecology. The objective of this component in the planning process is to accommodate communication between the planners and the stakeholders. The communication is educational in nature, both in terms of the planners educating the stakeholders and vice-versa. The planners educate the stakeholders about the planning process, the functions of their lake ecosystem, their impact on the lake and what can realistically be expected regarding the management of the aquatic system. The stakeholders educate the planners through a survey by describing how they would like the lake to be, how they use the lake and how they would like to be involved in managing it.

**In Conclusion:** Eagle River Chain of Lakes Riparians (waterfront property owners) will receive regular updates regarding our Aquatic Plant Management Plan renewal process, including the stakeholder survey that will be distributed to Riparians and non-Riparians in 2026.

## Membership Report

*By Jody Voight, Vice President-Operations and Otter Lake Co-Captain*

2024 was an outstanding year of growth and support in regards to our membership. Thank you all for helping us reach 955 members, this translates to 54% of our waterfront property owners.

We are committed to working hard to keep you returning year after year. Word of mouth from you is our greatest resource to attract new members and confirm that we continue to address topics that are important to you. We appreciate all that you do to educate and inform your family, friends and neighbors about ERCLA.

Visit [ercla.org](https://ercla.org) for our ongoing projects and numerous resource links. Our goal is to reach 1,000 members and with our active board of volunteers, this goal is within our reach. As of April 15th, our 2025 membership is 800.

We now welcome new waterfront property owners and new neighbors more efficiently allowing us to share complimentary newsletters, membership forms, our mission statement and board contact information with each new owner. Watch for more information as we continue to develop this opportunity in the coming months.

If you have answered Yes to our Volunteer question on the membership form, we have you in our database. However, if you see a project or event that interests you, please reach out to us by calling your Lake Captain or email us at [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com).

An area where our organization is in search of additional support, is with these Bi-Annual newsletters. If you have a creative mind and are interested in making new friends, we would like to hear from you. If you would like to author an article or have ideas for future content that you feel would be of interest to our members, contact Teri Stecker at [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com).

***Don't forget to add our email address to your contact file to avoid spam interference.***

## 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 Highway 45 Bridge.

In 2024, there were three new homeowners on Yellow Birch Lake. Thus far in 2025, we have three new homeowners and three properties for sale that I am aware of at the time this article is written.

This Summer there will be hand removal of Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) from the Northeast Bay of Yellow Birch Lake with diver assisted suction harvesting. According to my records, since 2018, there has been 4,081 pounds (wet weight) of EWM harvested from this bay. There was a great article in our 2024 Fall Newsletter on EWM management and you can access this article and past newsletters on our website [ercla.org](http://ercla.org) under the "News" tab.

We will not be having our annual Yellow Birch Lake picnic and social gathering in 2025 due to scheduling conflicts. We plan to bring the picnic and social gathering back in Summer 2026.

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 the property values on the Chain.

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.

## Scattering Rice Lake and Deerskin River Report

*By Liz Roskopf, Scattering Rice Lake and Deerskin River Captain*

This Winter several Riparians wrote to our State Representatives asking if they would assist us with the silt issues we have in the Deerskin River. As of now, the State Representatives are aware of our situation and will have budget discussions about this problem. It will likely take a few months before we hear anything from the State Legislature.

In the meantime, if you would like to clean up your shoreline for boat access or a swimming area, please email the WDNR at [dnrwmpublicinquiry@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dnrwmpublicinquiry@wisconsin.gov). You may be eligible to remove materials from the river bed for a quick fix; but due to river currents the silt will return. Visit this WDNR site for your dredging options [dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/dredging](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Waterways/dredging).

Spring is here and we are all eager to get our watercrafts in the water. Please be careful out there and be mindful of your neighbors. Remember to take advantage of our Pink Bucket program to help gather EWM (Eurasian Watermilfoil) fragments so they can be disposed of properly.

I would also like to welcome our new members and if you have any questions, please feel free to call me direct or email [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com).

## 2025 Buoys and Safety on the Chain

*By Jody Voight, Vice President-Operations and Otter Lake Co-Captain*

We hope that everyone has acclimated to the Slow No Wake (SNW) buoys and that a balance has been reached between safety and navigation throughout our Chain. ERCLA assists with placement, removal, maintenance and an annual monetary contribution to the buoy program. Decisions regarding additions, removal of buoys and the location of each are managed between the City of Eagle River, local townships and the WDNR.

New lights, reinforced cages and replacement buoys will be added this Spring to ensure the continued safe navigation across our Chain. The reinforcement activities appear to have been beneficial, however, we continue to see numerous buoys damaged or lost and lights and cages broken. Please help us monitor the buoys by contacting a board member or by email to [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com) if you notice misplaced or damaged buoys. We rely on every one of you to help keep our waterways safe and enjoyable. You will certainly appreciate the buoys the next time you navigate the Chain after dark.

This past Fall, I had an opportunity to work with Washington Township staff to have a hands-on experience with 110 buoys on our Chain. This activity involved the removal, pressure washing and inventory of each buoy. Personally, I would like to send a big Thank You to the Town of Washington personnel for managing and maintaining this program. Considering that these activities occur in early Spring and late Fall, potentially during less than favorable weather conditions, the efficiency, hard work and dedication they contribute to keep our Chain safe, is outstanding. I will gladly accept their challenge again this year if invited back to help. It was rewarding to see how well ERCLA's annual monetary contribution to Washington Township's buoy program is utilized in assuring safety on our waterways.

As more individuals come north to enjoy our beautiful lake system, please follow the SNW regulations that protect the fragile ecosystem and keep the emails and phone calls coming, we want to hear from you.



## ERCLA MERCHANDISE

Fellow ERCLA members can further support our wonderful lake association by buying from our online merchandise catalog.

**We also have new items. Show your ERCLA pride and buy now!**

**Visit our website at [ercla.org/apparel](http://ercla.org/apparel)**

**We now  
offer shipping  
for a nominal  
cost.**





## Watersmeet Lake Report

By Skip (Hugh) McCann, Watersmeet Lake Captain

Hello neighbors. I am writing this on January 31, 2025 and thinking of Spring. Though the Winters here can be enjoyable with so many activities available, if you're like me, February brings a little cabin fever and thoughts of getting out on our beautiful waters again. As Winter fades and the days get longer, we eagerly await Spring boating and fishing season. Here are some helpful hints and checklist items you can do now to ensure a rewarding first day on the water.

### Boats and Trailers:

- Check all registration documentation papers, including boat trailers and number decals are affixed. Renew expiring registrations, licenses and insurance.
- Review federal, state and local boating regulations.
- Review owners' manuals and ensure any recommended scheduled maintenance is up to date on your motors and equipment. Personal note: check and replace the water pump impeller. Most warranties require replacement on a regular basis (1-3 years).
- Inspect trailer tires, clean and charge all batteries.
- Inspect wiring and hoses for any wear, cracks or corrosion. Grease all fittings on the engine and tilt mechanism. Check expiration dates of fire extinguishers and flares.
- Check operation of bilge pump, auto switch, alarms, navigation/running lights and all other electronics. Check fish-finder transducers for proper positioning.
- Lubricate canvas snaps, zippers, and tie downs with some snap and zipper lubricant.
- Inspect upholstery and repair any cuts or cracks. Apply vinyl conditioner and protector and inspect your life jackets and ensure you have proper sizes for all riders.
- Check and stow anchors, ropes, dock lines, store a handheld air horn or whistle and check and replenish first aid kits.

### Fishing:

- Wipe down all rods to remove dirt and debris, check for cracks, bent guides, loose reel seats. Replace old fishing line with new and use reel oil to lubricate parts.
- Empty your tackle box and reorganize. Sharpen all hooks. Sort your bait and lures to your target species. Inspect your tools and clean or replace pliers, knives, etc.
- Check your landing nets for holes. Replenish and upgrade supply of plastic baits, jigs, hooks, weights, bobbers and lures.
- Update software on fish-finder and GPS units. Review all local fishing rules and regulations.

I hope this helps, and if nothing else, it gives you some things to do so you can be ready for the season ahead. Visit your local marinas and bait shops for any help and supplies you may need. Cheers to another safe and enjoyable year on the water.



## Clean Boats/Clean Waters Program Update

By Dave Mueller, Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator and Otter Lake Captain

Clean Boats/Clean Waters (CB/CW) is a WDNR sponsored program. Boat inspectors help perform boat and trailer checks, hand out informational brochures and educate boaters on how to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. The WDNR maintains a statewide database, which contains tallies of information tracked at boat landings. The UW-Extension Lakes conducts training for new boat inspectors and coordinates local inspection efforts.

ERCLA contracts with the Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Department to provide 24 hours of CB/CW inspection services during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July week. The contract includes an additional 12 hours of inspections to be done during other heavy use days. A Limited Term Employee from Land and Water will do the inspections at the public boat landings at Eagle Lake County Park, Braywood on Catfish and the T-Docks on Yellow Birch.

Additionally, ERCLA will have volunteer CB/CW inspections throughout the Summer. Consider donating time to support this worthwhile program. For more information contact Marc Groth at 847-951-1761, Dave Mueller at 715-297-6636 or email [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com).

Visit our website Projects-Aquatic Invasive Species page for more information at [ercla.org](http://ercla.org).

**As you move your boat from lake to lake this Summer remember: Clean, Drain and Drive**



## Voyageur Lake Report “The weeds are too thick by our dock”

By Mark Slonski, Voyageur Lake Captain

**What is up with all of these weeds?** With a mild Winter and lack of abundant snow cover we could see an overabundance of weeds this Summer. We appreciate the benefits that the native aquatic plants offer to the lake and the environment, but they can become bothersome when you want to wade into the lake in front of your home and enjoy a refreshing swim. You think, why are these weeds so bad this year?

**How do they help me?** They clean the waters by absorbing nitrogen and phosphorus runoff that stimulate algae blooms and make it better than you think! The plant beds stabilize lake and river bottoms and reduce shoreline erosion by reducing the effect of waves and current. You benefit from improved water clarity, increased food and cover habitat for fish and prevent the intrusion of invasive species.

**What can we do as Individuals?** Property owners can create a healthy lake environment by reducing lawn fertilizers, nutrients and sediments that spill into the lakes from our yards that increase the aquatic plant's growth spurt. You can create filtration or diversion practices that reduce runoff or plant native grasses and wildflowers along the shoreline. To create a strategic plan for your property, contact us for a consultation with ERCLA volunteers and visit [ercla.org/projects/other-projects](https://ercla.org/projects/other-projects).

**But I do not want so many by my shoreline!** The WDNR understands your need to access your boat lift, dock and swim areas. Property owners can cull the overabundance of plants with the proper techniques. A permit is not required to remove aquatic plants from an area less than 30 feet measured along the shoreline.

**What does our Association provide?** ERCLA also educates members and the public through our Citizens Testing & Monitoring Network, Clean Boats/Clean Waters, Pink Bucket programs and ERCLA's Aquatic Invasive Species: [ercla.org/projects/aquatic-invasive-species](https://ercla.org/projects/aquatic-invasive-species).

**Voyageur's AIS Forecast:** The July 2024 AIS survey map shows higher incidents of EWM growth in four of the five categories (Highly Scattered, Scattered, Dominant and Highly Dominant). Voyageur is on the list for Hand Harvesting by the DASH divers this Summer. Visit our AIS Survey maps at [eagleriverchaincommission.org/lake-reports.html](https://eagleriverchaincommission.org/lake-reports.html)

## Northland Pines High School Ice Fishing Team

By Marc Groth, Duck Lake Captain and Pines Ice Fishing Club Advisor

The Northland Pines High School Ice Fishing Team just finished their third season. Kevin Schweer and Marc Groth are Club Advisors, and the team is a member of the non-profit Wisconsin Interscholastic Fishing Association (WIFA) which consists of over 120 high schools throughout the State of Wisconsin. WIFA is committed to the education, conservation and management of natural resources while building an understanding of aquatic ecosystems and sciences. Their two primary goals are to get students involved in the outdoors and for them to become future ambassadors of the sport through the foundation of spirited competition.

Last year's 2023-2024 team fished Catfish Lake in the virtual state tournament and finished 42nd against 95 other teams. This year, our 15 student anglers competed in four WIFA tournaments; three virtual and in the fourth tournament, held on Minocqua Lake, they competed against eight other schools.

On January 11th, the Pines team won 1st place in Altoona High School's "Catch Em All" tournament. It's the first ever tournament win for the Northland Pines Ice Fishing Team.

ERCLA congratulates the Northland Pines Ice Anglers for a successful 2024-2025 campaign and their commitment to aquatic education, conservation and outdoor fun.



## ERCLA DECALS

These decals can be used by Condominium Unit Owners on patio doors and windows in lieu of a Lake Sign or on all your watercraft and vehicle windshields.

For a small supply, contact your Lake Captain, Co-Captain or email us at [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com)





## Activities Happening on Our Lakes - WDNR Angler Creel Survey



*By Jody Voight, Vice President-Operations and Otter Lake Co-Captain*

This Summer you may observe and interact with a significant project being conducted across our Eagle River Chain for creel surveying. This is a great opportunity to support an initiative that aligns well with ERCLA's Charter to Protect and Preserve the Chain of Lakes.

Every year, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) conducts a number of surveys across Northern Wisconsin that evaluate angler fishing pressure and catch and harvest over a nine-month time period. These surveys are referred to as angler creel surveys. Creel surveys are conducted by "creel clerks" who work all weekend days, most holidays and randomly selected weekdays. Creel clerk responsibilities are to interview anglers at the conclusion of the anglers' fishing trips, and to make periodic counts on the number of anglers fishing the lake at a given time. As part of the interview process with anglers, clerks collect information on the amount of time anglers fished, what fish species

they targeted, what they caught and harvested and other information related to the anglers fishing trip. Creel clerks will also record biological data on angler-harvested fish such as species and length.

The information gained through angler creel surveys is useful for evaluating current management strategies (e.g., length and bag limit restrictions, stocking), and to determine if revising those strategies is appropriate relative to the goals and objectives for the fishery.

WDNR is seeking "cooperators" to help conduct these angler creel surveys. Each creel clerk is equipped with a boat to aid in reaching anglers to conduct interviews. "Cooperators" are needed to provide a location to moor the creel clerk's boat; preferably dock space to safely tie up the boat to when not in use. This Summer you will be seeing one of the WDNR boats moored at my dock on Otter Lake to help support this initiative.

The WDNR greatly appreciates angler cooperation with their creel surveys, as well as the volunteer "cooperators" on Catfish, Cranberry, Eagle and Otter Lakes.

Angler creel survey reports will be completed after the survey data is analyzed, and those reports will be made available online at [dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/north/trtycrslrvys.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/fishing/north/trtycrslrvys.html). The survey data collected this Summer will be in our Fall Newsletter.

If you would like more information about the angler creel survey or want to help with the survey by offering to be a "cooperator", please call Fisheries Biologist Mark Love at 715-525-2914.

## Pink Buckets - You Can Help Stop the Spread of AIS

*By the ERCLA Aquatic Invasive Species Team (AIS)*

Last Spring ERCLA volunteers refreshed the "Pink Bucket" program with a thorough cleaning of materials, new buckets, storage bins and signage. Hopefully many of you have noticed these bins at our boat landings, however you may not have an appreciation of just why they are there.

Everyone using any of the eight public boat landings on the Chain are encouraged to take a bucket along during their time on the water to collect loose, surface weeds you encounter. Upon your return to the landing, use the bucket for all weeds removed from your boat and trailer, dispose of the plant material in the proper trash receptacle and return the pink bucket to our bin.



Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) spread from other bodies of water or can be further distributed within our Chain during water related activities such as: fishing, boating, tubing, skiing, etc. or the simple act of putting boats in and out the water at our landings. Fragments broken off of existing plants can be transported or float to other locations in our ecosystem, eventually these fragments take root, new plants are established and more of our Chain will be negatively impacted by new growth.

Pink Buckets is one of many programs that ERCLA established to control AIS and protect and preserve our ecosystem. Other programs like Clean Boats/Clean Waters (CB/CW), Diver Assisted Hand Harvesting (DASH) and a comprehensive aquatic plant management plan help manage invasives. These programs are also advantageous in securing state and federal grants that allow us to manage the health of the Eagle River Chain.

ERCLA is proud to have implemented Pink Buckets as an alternative to new plants spreading throughout our Chain. We do ask that you return the bucket to the bin after you are done so the opportunity for others to use them continues. Thank you in advance for your assistance.

# 2025 Eurasian Watermilfoil Program

By Dave Mueller, ERCLA AIS Coordinator and Commission Treasurer



2025 marks the 19th year of the fight against Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) in the Eagle River Chain of Lakes. Our program is in maintenance mode with the goal to keep EWM at a low level.

The program is administered by the United Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission (ULERCLC). Formed under a Wisconsin joint powers agreement, it consists of one elected member from the City of Eagle River, the Towns of Cloverland, Lincoln and Washington and the private sector is represented by volunteers from ERCLA.

Part I of the program is to quantitatively measure the presence of EWM. We use the professional services of Onterra LLC to survey and report on how much EWM is in the Chain.

Part II is to selectively remove EWM through diver assisted suction harvesting (DASH). Areas in Catfish Lake, Cranberry Lake, Voyageur, Yellow Birch Lake and Watersmeet Lake are dense enough to qualify for hand harvesting and a local professional diving company, DASH, LLC provides this service.

Grant funds from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) were again secured this year through an Aquatic Invasive Species Established Population Control Grant. **This three-year grant for \$150,000 will be used to cover 65% of project costs.** Our expense

summary for 2025 is noted in the table to the right. These costs will be shared by WDNR grant funds, the four municipalities, Commission treasury funds and the private sector represented by ERCLA.

## EWM 2025 Project Expense Summary Estimate

Hand Pull	\$37,860
Onterra	\$26,845
CB/CW	<u>\$900</u>
Total	\$65,605

# Historical View of EWM program results from 2007 to 2024

By ERCLA Executive Committee

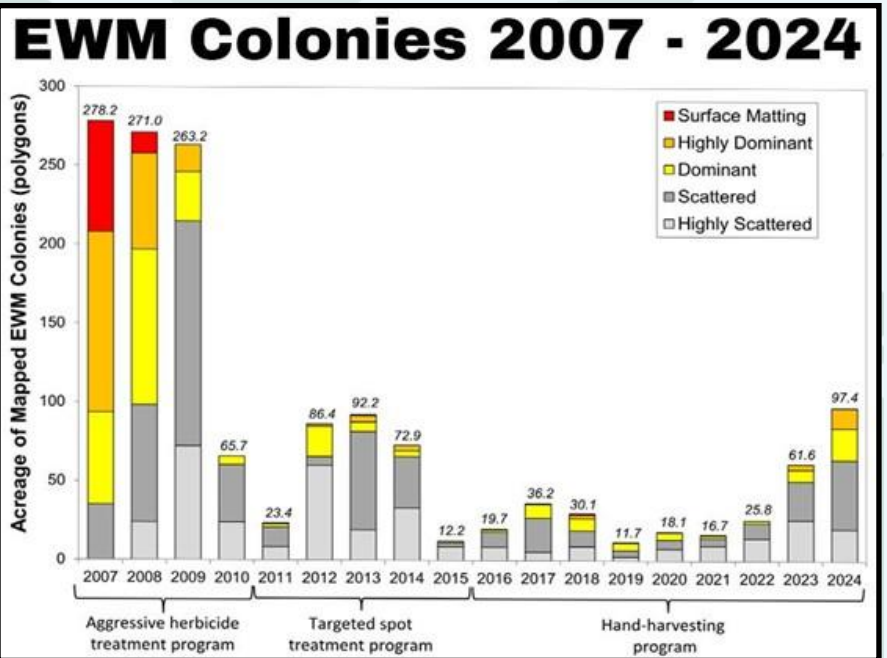
Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) treatment on the Eagle River Chain has been extremely successful in terms of controlling the density and occurrence of EWM as referenced in the chart below. Note the elimination of red (surface matting) in the years since 2008. Those of us that have been on the Chain for over 20 years remember the red category in our history very well.

Over the course of the EWM management program from 2007 to 2021, EWM acreage was reduced from 278.2 acres in 2007 to a low of 11.7 acres by 2019. There was a total of 97.4 acres of EWM in 2024.

The past two years have seen an increase in highly dominant and dominant acreage and weather patterns played a significant role in this EWM production compared to 2021 and 2022. Several surveys (by professionals and ERCLA volunteers) are performed during each growing season to locate and map active colonies. Lastly, we have no plans to use herbicide as a control measure.

The Eagle River Chain consists of 10 lakes, over 3,500 acres and over 60 miles of shoreline. For new members and those wanting to learn more about this important program, please visit:

- Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission website's home page at [eagleriverchaincommission.org](http://eagleriverchaincommission.org)
- Link to individual lake reports at [eagleriverchaincommission.org/lake-reports.html](http://eagleriverchaincommission.org/lake-reports.html)





## ERCLA Board of Directors Sends Special Thank You to Extraordinary Volunteer

In every volunteer driven organization such as ERCLA, success is achieved by the combined efforts of everyone involved. However, there are individuals within a successful organization that go above and beyond in their contributions to support and guide the growth of that organization. **Marc Groth** is the perfect example of one of those individuals that ERCLA would like to recognize. Marc's list of activities and accomplishments with ERCLA are impressive, however he goes well beyond just ERCLA in a quest to make his community a better place.

### Marc supports and leaves his mark on numerous organizations within our community:

- Northland Pines High School Wellness Center substitute, an Advisor for Bass & Ice Fishing Clubs, and a volunteer coach for the varsity baseball team
- Has monitored loons the last 14 years on Duck Lake for Northland Colleges' LoonWatch Annual Lakes Monitoring Program
- Participates in local musky tournaments and Tuesday Night Musky League
- Volunteer and member of Eagle River Chamber of Commerce and St. Peter's Church Annex
- Secretarial position for Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission
- WDNR's Bat Monitoring program's Duck Lake volunteer and Marc recruited others to perform bat monitoring on Otter Lake, Cranberry Lake and the Wisconsin River
- As a Citizen for Monitoring Lakes Network, he regularly tests water clarity on Duck Lake

### Some ERCLA accomplishments:

- Duck Lake Captain, Shoreland Restoration Committee Chair, Coordinator for the WDNR Healthy Lakes Best Practices Grant Reimbursement Program, Team Leader on Aquatic Plant Management Plan 2025 Update, Project Leader on Shoreland Native Planting to protect a Disabled Veteran's shoreland and the T-Docks shoreland native planting upgrade
- Committee involvement past and present including Executive, Communication, Membership, Newsletter publication, Annual Membership Meeting, Pink Buckets rehabilitation project, Clean Boats/Clean Waters inspections and coordinator for the aquatic and shoreland invasive species surveys ERCLA conducts annually across the entire Chain

In addition to Marc's participation and leadership on these projects and committees, he always finds time to support everyone both within and outside of ERCLA. Marc leads by example, his open and inviting approach and willingness to support numerous initiatives has resulted in the recruitment of many others. Marc was my introduction (Jody Voight, VP-Operations) to ERCLA and many other opportunities. The ERCLA organization is fortunate to have Marc's participation as such an active and dedicated member and would like to take this opportunity to recognize him and say **Thank You**.



**Marc Groth**

## ERCLA Presents Three \$1,000 Grant Reimbursement Checks

By Marc Groth, ERCLA Shoreline Restoration Coordinator

Marc Groth recently presented three \$1,000 grant reimbursement checks to ERCLA members and Eagle River Chain of Lakes homeowners. The Schulzes and the Rabelhofers each received \$1,000 on January 18<sup>th</sup>, and the Petersons received their \$1,000 on February 17<sup>th</sup>.



**The Rabelhofers**

All three completed a 2024 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Healthy Lakes and Rivers best practices project and each one earned this grant reimbursement. ERCLA sponsored each project and in November 2023, Marc Groth submitted all the necessary WDNR paperwork on their behalf. All three projects were approved in March 2024 and completed last Summer and early Fall.

The Schulzes added a Native Planting to their shoreline on the Wisconsin River. Native Plantings improve wildlife habitat, natural beauty, privacy and decrease runoff.

The Rabelhofers added a rain garden to their shoreline on the Wisconsin River and the Petersons added a rain garden to their Cranberry Lake shoreline. Rain Gardens create wildlife habitat and natural beauty while capturing and cleaning runoff.

ERCLA is interested in helping more ERCLA property owners participate in the WDNR Healthy Lakes and Rivers best practices grant reimbursement program and would enjoy hearing from and working with you. We also make personal visits to your location to discuss which of the Healthy Lakes and Rivers best practices fits best with your shoreline issues.

If you would like more information email [erclonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclonline@gmail.com) or call Marc at 847-951-1761



**The Schulzes**



**The Petersons**



## Personal Perspective on a 2024 Shoreline Restoration Project

*By Patricia and Scott Peterson, Cranberry Lake ERCLA Members*

We bought our 1772 Meta Lake Road home on Cranberry Lake in late 2016, well meaning but woefully ignorant about what good stewardship meant as an owner. Most glaring was the existing 40 feet of beach with a swath of green lawn on our 150 feet of frontage. A perfect funnel for direct runoff to enter the lake without filtering. Fortunately, the rest of our shoreline was undisturbed with old growth trees.

We wanted to learn more about how to care for our property to benefit nature and lake health, so we read clean lakes literature, talked to the WDNR and Vilas County and attended a Clean Waters seminar in Boulder Junction. Then, through our membership in ERCLA and Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association, we learned we could mitigate our issues with a berm and rain garden on the beach. We walked our property with Quita Sheehan, Vilas County Land and Water Conservationist and Marc Groth, ERCLA Shoreland Restoration Coordinator to discuss steps for the rain garden. We hired a local contractor to design the garden, choose plants and provide the labor.



Marc and Quita brought us up to speed regarding the WDNR Healthy Lakes and Rivers program that provides reimbursement grants up to \$1,000. Following grant requirements, ERCLA stepped in to sponsor our project and we promised to install our rain garden, take steps to mitigate runoff, provide measurements and commit to maintaining it for 10 years. Marc Groth handled all the paperwork for the grant application, which the WDNR approved in March of 2024, then handled the reimbursement process last Fall. A \$1,000 check from ERCLA was delivered to us this past February.

Our rain garden encompassed about 580 square feet, roughly the size of our beach. A berm was built with soil bags and backfilled with soil. Native grasses and flowers were planted. We had some issues with deer on the first planting and would recommend using some kind of temporary fencing for a year to allow plants to take root. We did not want to provide a buffet for a pack of deer! In time, as the plants take root, the soil bags will compost and with the grass, the bank will be solid. The total cost of our project was \$6,625. We will be adding additional plants this Spring, putting up some temporary protective fencing and spraying with deer repellent this Summer.

The grant through ERCLA was a welcomed contribution to our efforts and much appreciated. We encourage anyone interested in seeing our project to swing by our place on Cranberry Lake. We also would be happy to discuss our specific project with other lake owners interested in shoreline restoration. Marc Groth is the "go to" resource for the WDNR Healthy Lakes and Rivers program. We think in time, the berm will be beautiful with natural plants and we are glad to have made a small contribution to improve our Chain's water quality.

## Our Native Planting Healthy Lakes Project - Phase I

*By Charlie and Denise Schulz, Wisconsin River ERCLA Members*



My husband and I read about the Healthy Lakes grant in the ERCLA newsletter. Having previously discussed doing something to our shoreline to restore it or at least prevent further erosion, the grant sounded like an option for us. So, we contacted Marc Groth from ERCLA to get additional information.

Marc and Dave Mueller came out to our house to look at the shoreline and answer questions about the grant. Both Marc and Dave provided suggestions regarding site work that could be done, explained how native plantings could be used, and suggested area landscapers that could provide additional direction.

We met with several landscapers, decided on one, and came up with a plan. From there Marc Groth took over. He worked closely with the WDNR to ensure our project met the standards of the grant, completed all the paperwork and kept us up to date on the grant process.

After we received grant approval, we worked with the landscaper to complete the work. Once the work was completed, Marc submitted the necessary materials to the WDNR to request grant payment. Although the process was long, approximately one and a half years from start

to finish, it was not difficult. Marc was an amazing resource that did most of the work for us, making the process stress free.

What we completed was just Phase 1. We anticipate completing at least two more phases and plan to apply for the Healthy Lakes grant again given our positive experience.

## Our Personal Experience with WDNR Healthy Lakes & Rivers

*By Bill and Traci Rabelhofer, Wisconsin River ERCLA Members*

Fellow ERCLA Members,

At our 2023 annual Summer meeting, we heard about the opportunity to receive a WDNR Healthy Lakes Grant to upgrade and beautify properties while protecting our precious Chain of Lakes shoreline.

We contacted Marc Groth, ERCLA Shoreland Restoration Chair, and WDNR Healthy Lakes Coordinator to begin a discussion of the various ways we could satisfy the grant requirements such as a rain garden, fish sticks and native planting. We also met with Quita Sheehan, Vilas County Land and Water Conservation Specialist for her expert advice on the variety of plant species for our chosen rain garden and native plants' location.

Doing the work ourselves, the cost was minimal and when the project was completed, we received the \$1,000 grant. The project was both rewarding and enjoyable knowing we contributed and did our part to preserve our shoreline. Marc provided guidance during the project and completed all the required WDNR paperwork for the grant money.

ERCLA members, please consider collaborating with Marc Groth to protect your slice of heaven in God's Country. Our family and their families will benefit for years to come.



## Free Vessel Safety Check Program

*By Commander Dennis D. Schultz, AP  
Central Wisconsin Sail & Power Squadron*

The most cautious boaters can sometimes experience unexpected problems on the water. That's why the U.S. Coast Guard recommends all recreational boaters, including personal watercraft and paddle sport users, take advantage of their free Vessel Safety Check (VSC) program every year.

**What's In it For Me?** Boats that pass the examination are awarded a distinctive VSC Decal that alerts the law-enforcement agencies that your boat was found to be in full compliance with all Federal and State boating laws. Frequently, such agencies will not detain or board boats displaying a current-year decal that are otherwise operating safely.

**What If I Don't Pass?** If your boat does not pass, no report is filed. Instead, you are provided a written report that aids you in correcting any discrepancies noted.

**Why Do This?** In a word – safety. You are left with the peace of mind that your boat meets minimum safety standards and that in an emergency, you will have the necessary equipment to save lives and summon help. Finally, your insurance rates may be lowered – check with your agent.

And remember, no vessel is too large or too small to be safe and in compliance. Your family, friends, and fellow boaters will thank you!

**SAFETY ON THE WATER IS UP TO YOU!**

If you would like to schedule a Vessel Safety Check contact me at [cwsafeboating@gmail.com](mailto:cwsafeboating@gmail.com), or email [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com) and they will contact me on your behalf.



**LET'S MAKE THIS A SAFE BOATING SEASON**  
**BOAT SAFELY AND PROTECT OUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND VISITORS.**

Protect our shoreline by following the proper Slow, No Wake Speed in all no wake areas and slow down in congested thoroughfares. Please share the informational inserts with family members, neighbors, visitors, renters or anyone who will be enjoying the Eagle River Chain of Lakes.

**VILAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S LAW ENFORCEMENT WILL PATROL THE CHAIN THIS BOATING SEASON.**



## Member Q & A

By Teri Stecker, Secretary and Membership Chairperson

### Online Membership Portal Ease of Use? Please accept our apology - Dues vs Donations and PayPal explained

In February, there was a disconnect between our 2025 ERCLA dues short form letter to renewing members and the instructions on [ercla.org](http://ercla.org) membership page. It confused those paying online and has since been updated. Our "short form" dues letter alleviates the need to repeat all the same contact information every single year. Unfortunately, we may have shortened the letter a little too much.

Per our bylaws, annual membership begins every January 1st. If you access the website membership page to pay dues, PayPal Account holders use a yellow PayPal button and Guests use a separate white debit/credit card button. What was less clear to our online users is that *both* of these buttons take you to *PayPal's Business Portal for ERCLA*.

- Inside our PayPal business portal, the payment buttons read Donate or Donation, instead of Dues
- PayPal does not allow editing of the Donate and Donation wording, thus the disconnect
- Regardless of the amount paid, \$60 is recorded as membership and remaining funds are donation

In 2020, we selected PayPal because of their preferred rates for Charitable, Tax Exempt non-profits like ERCLA. Their processing fees are significantly less than other online payment programs. Be assured we strive to make online membership easy for everyone as we do save time, labor and personnel when you use our online system. I personally want to thank each of you for paying your dues in the first quarter of the year as this allows us to turn our attention to other important projects.

### We receive your emails - why do we get mailed forms too?

Our membership forms ask for the same vital information each year due to privacy laws. We need permission to use your email address, so each year we ask if it's ok to correspond by email and if it's ok to email our Newsletters.

Five days after emails are sent, we receive a report of unopened email addresses. Since we want every member to receive our membership forms and newsletters, if you were on the unopened list, you'll receive a mailed copy of the appropriate form(s). We'd prefer you receive two copies of our materials, rather than none at all. We also recommend you add [erclaonline@gmail.com](mailto:erclaonline@gmail.com) to your contact file to keep our newsletters out of spam.

Lastly, on many occasions your work emails will block newsletters and you will not receive it. If we are notified of the block, we will mail the newsletter to you as well.

## Board of Directors and Lake Captains Contact List

Lake Captains	Name	Phone
Catfish	Steve Wagner	262-444-8882
Cranberry	Michael Queoff	262-707-4214
Duck	Marc Groth	847-951-1761
Eagle	Tom Batterman	715-409-6768
Lynx	Bill Krostue	920-470-3522
Otter	Dave Mueller	715-297-6636
Voyageur	Mark Slonski	708-738-5925
Yellow Birch	George Katich	847-309-4008
Scattering Rice	Liz Roskopf	715-216-3838
Watersmeet	Skip (Hugh) McCann	847-274-9792

Officers	Name	Phone
President	Chuck Berg	312-927-3365
Vice President-Finance	Scott Peterson	847-848-4142
Vice President-Operations	Jody Voight	262-287-4521
Treasurer	Dave Cyrtnus	715-218-2956
Secretary	Teri Stecker	920-428-6743
AIS Coordinator	Dave Mueller	715-297-6636
Shoreline Restoration	Marc Groth	847-951-1761
Director at Large	Bill Lochte	715-477-1999

Co-Captains	Name	Phone
Catfish	Steve Skora	847-293-4393
Cranberry	John Haunfelder	262-442-4016
Duck	Stephen Burr	715-891-6100
Eagle	Christine D'hondt	773-551-8721
Otter	Jody Voight	262-287-4521
Voyageur	Lynn Kenning	715-891-2560
Yellow Birch	Bill Morgan	847-254-9623
Scattering Rice	Alan Queoff	715-617-2476
Scattering Rice	Mark Brenner	815-298-8582
Watersmeet	Dan Newitt	715-891-0549
Watersmeet	Roger Rosenthal	847-812-4903
Watersmeet	Steve Dalbec	847-409-1500





ERCLA  
PO Box 1821  
Eagle River, WI 54521

**SAVE  
THE DATE!**



## ERCLA's Annual Membership Meeting

**Scheduled for  
Sunday, July 27, 2025**

The agenda will include election of directors, current financial position, invasive species update, member concerns, a guest speaker and more.

*A FORMAL INVITE WILL BE EMAILED AND MAILED IN JUNE.*



# BOAT SAFE and BE RESPONSIBLE KNOW the LAW

Excerpts from Wisconsin State Laws and Requirements Handbook\*\*

Produced as a courtesy by Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association, Inc. [www.ercla.org](http://www.ercla.org)

Report violations to Vilas County Sheriff's Department Non-Emergency at (715) 479-4441.

## General Boating Requirements

- Operators who were born on or after January 1, 1989, and who are 16 years of age or older may operate a motorboat only if they have completed a boating safety course and carry the certificate at all times. Those born before January 1, 1989, are exempt from the required boating safety course.
- All boats must have one wearable life jacket for each person.
  - Children under the age of 13 must wear a life jacket at all times.
- Boats over 16 feet must have one throwable lifesaving device immediately available.
- It is illegal to operate a boat with a person riding on the bow, deck, transom, seat backs or gunwale of the boat.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel within any area marked off, or set aside as a prohibited area or a swim area or to weave through congested waterway traffic.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel at a distance from other vessels or at a speed that exceeds safe and reasonable limits given the waterway traffic, marked speed limits, weather and other boating conditions.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel while under the influence of an intoxicant or controlled substance or have a blood alcohol level of 0.08% or greater.
- It is illegal to operate a vessel at greater than "Slow, No Wake Speed" within 100 feet of shoreline, docks, rafts, piers, swimmers or restricted areas.



### \* Definition for "Slow, No Wake Speed"

Slow, No Wake Speed means a speed at which a vessel moves as slowly as possible while still maintaining steering control. Slow down gradually as you approach a No Wake area and speed up gradually as you leave a No Wake area. This makes it safer for other vessels in the area, helps keep the buoys from being damaged and protects our shorelines.

## Requirements Specific to Personal Watercraft (PWCs) - Sunrise to Sunset Only

- Operators must be at least 12 years old and have completed an approved boating safety course. Those born before January 1, 1989 are exempt from the required boating safety course.
- Every person must wear an approved life jacket.
- Maneuvers that endanger people or property including chasing, harassing, or disturbing wildlife are prohibited.
- It is illegal to jump a wake with a PWC within 100 feet of another vessel.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC within 100 feet of a vessel towing a person on skis, inner tube, or wakeboard or other devices; or to operate within 100 feet of a tow rope or person being towed.
- It is illegal to operate a PWC at greater than "Slow, No Wake Speed" within 100 feet of a dock, pier, raft or restricted area; and within 200 feet of any shore. Same definition as above for "Slow, No Wake Speed" applies for all PWCs.

## Requirements for Towing Skiers, Wakeboarders and other Devices - Sunrise to Sunset Only

- Do not come within 100 feet of other vessels, persons in water, swimming area or public boat landing.
- Must have a competent person on board to act as an observer or the vessel must be equipped with a wide-angle rearview mirror. PWCs need to be able to accommodate three people. Observer must be on board and in position to see person being towed or PWC is equipped with a wide angle rearview mirror.

\*\* Refer to 2025 Handbook of Wisconsin Boating Laws and Responsibilities for a complete list of laws including all age restrictions to operate a motorboat or PWC and options to complete the boating safety course at: <https://widnr.widen.net/s/0vw8hwrae3>



# DO YOU RENT

## A PONTOON BOAT, SKI BOAT OR JET SKI

### FOR A DAY, A WEEKEND OR A WEEK?

#### Are you compliant with the required Wisconsin Course for Temporary Boat Operators?

This course is for Wisconsin residents and visitors who do not possess a valid boating education certificate, but who wish to rent a boat or personal watercraft to operate on Wisconsin waters.

#### TEMPORARY BOATING CERTIFICATE REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be 16 years of age or older
- Rent or lease a motorboat or personal watercraft from a licensed watercraft rental agent
- The certificate is valid until the end of the calendar year in which it is issued
- Can only be used by the person to whom it was issued
- Use only to operate a watercraft which is rented or leased by the holder of the certificate

The course covers all the information you'll need to know to receive your temporary boating certificate. The entire course can be taken on a smartphone, tablet or computer. Using interactive animations, realistic illustrations and video, the course covers Wisconsin legal requirements, navigation rules, safe personal watercraft operation, casting off, docking and more.



Upon completing the course you will be issued a temporary boating certificate, allowing you to legally rent a boat or PWC in Wisconsin for that calendar year.

To get a **Lifetime** WI Boating Safety Education Certificate see other side of this Newsletter Insert and visit: <https://www.boat-ed.com/wisconsin/>

To sign up for this boat rental \$10 course,  
visit WDNR website: <https://www.boat-ed.com/wisconsinrental/>



# Who is required to pass a WISCONSIN BOATER SAFETY COURSE and hold a Lifetime Education Certificate?



*Per the Vilas County Boat Patrol Officers, this subject receives the most warnings and citations on our waterways and it's the most misunderstood by the boating public.*

**ANSWER:** ALL operators born on or after January 1, 1989, must pass the WI Boater Safety Course and hold the Lifetime Boater Education Certificate to operate a motorboat or personal watercraft (PWC) in WI.

*Are you and your family members in compliance?  
Don't be caught out on the lakes and rivers without certification.  
Sign up now and be ready for this boating season.*

## WI DNR - WI BOATING RULES & REGULATIONS - Who may operate a motorboat (Excerpt)

### A person 10 or 11 years old may operate a motorboat only if:

- They are accompanied by a parent, a guardian or a person at least 18 years old who is designated by the parent or guardian **AND** the parent, guardian or designated adult holds a valid boating safety certificate **OR** was born before January 1, 1989.

### A person 12-15 years old may operate a motorboat only if:

- They have completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the WI DNR.  
**OR**
- They are accompanied by a parent, guardian or a person at least 18 years old who is designated by the parent or guardian **AND** the parent, guardian or designated adult holds a valid boating safety certificate **OR** was born before January 1, 1989.

### A person who was born on or after January 1, 1989, and who is 16 years of age or older may operate a motorboat only if:

- They have completed a boating safety course that is accepted by the WI DNR.  
**OR**
- They are accompanied by another person in the motorboat who is at least 18 years of age **AND** that person holds a valid boating safety certificate **OR** was born before January 1, 1989.

**COURSE INFORMATION:** Instruction focuses on navigation, laws, ethics, personal safety and the proper use of boats. **Cost: \$10.00** in a traditional classroom **OR \$29.95 - \$54.95** online.

**To search for a recreational safety education course near you visit:**  
<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/Education/OutdoorSkills/safetyEducation>

*Retain this insert and share it with neighbors, family, friends and renters.*