

Eagle River Chain of Lakes Association, Inc
Annual Membership Meeting Minutes
July 28, 2024
Eagle Waters Resort, Eagle River, WI

At 11:03 AM the meeting was called to order by President Chuck Berg followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Quorum was verified by Secretary Teri Stecker. The full attendance list of 200 people, is on file with ERCLA.

President Chuck Berg introduced the current Board of Directors and thanked them all for their volunteer service and commitment to ERCLA. He gave a brief description of how the meeting will proceed and highlighted the educational tabletop presenters and their locations. His overview of the past year included increased membership numbers and an increasing roster of active volunteers supporting our various initiatives.

President Chuck Berg introduced Larry Springer, ERCLA member and Deerskin River property owner for a brief update on the build-up of silt issues affecting travel and wildlife habitat on the river. Since 2001 silt has accumulated from the WI DNR's removal of an earthen dam. Funds from the Town of Washington and ERCLA were raised to perform a kayak reconnaissance of the river with InterFluve from Lodi WI. The results of that trip will be released in the fall when the next step will be determined.

Secretary Teri Stecker presented the minutes from the 2023 Annual Meeting. A motion to waive the reading of the minutes and approve them as presented in the handout was made and seconded by Michael Queoff and Marc Groth. Motion carried unanimously.

Vice President Jody Voight introduced our first keynote speaker, James Yach, WI DNR Secretary's Director of the Northern Region. The 2024 CREEL fish survey he spoke about at last year's annual meeting was delayed until spring 2025 and it's a high priority of the DNR. This survey will be for the entire Eagle River chain and include interviews with boat landing participants asking harvesting info, personal interests and fishing result questions.

James talked about permanent shoreline structures and large pier extensions requests are on the rise. Both of these types of requests need WI DNR permits. James' third subject explained the Surface Water Grant Funding system, which the Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission participates in, on behalf of our Chain. Municipalities, Tribes, Lake Associations, etc apply for grant money to assist in planning and management programs. The money comes from \$6,500,000 of gas excise tax and boat registration tax funds. About \$4,000,000 is used to fight EWM statewide, \$1,200,000 for Lake Management plans, \$285,000 for river segments and dollars also go into the Clean Boat/Clean Water program. A question from the audience, does the DNR have any oversight of dilapidated structures on the water? Yes, their responsibility extends to these structures but it is the landowners responsibility for addressing the permitting process.

Vice President Jody Voight introduced our next keynote speaker, Vilas County Sheriff Deputy and the County's Recreational Officer, Jason Molle. Jason reminded the audience that the Boat Patrol program was not ERCLA's personal patrol on the chain of lakes. It is and will remain the Vilas County Sheriff Boat Patrol. He stated the Department is down ¼ of deputies needed to be at full staffing, however 5 new deputies were hired and are in the 6 week training program. Since Memorial Day they have spent 17 days on patrol.

50 tickets and 41 warnings were issued with most of the violations continuing to be: jetski within 100' of a pier or another watercraft; slow no wake speeds; no lifetime boat certification card and no registration decals on watercraft. Jason shared that there is a nighttime presence on the chain from 10pm to 4am and until 10pm on occasion and they have an unmarked patrol boat on the chain, too. To report incidents or concerns, call the Sheriff department's non emergency # 715-479-4441.

Jody Voight, Nomination Committee Chair and Vice President-Operations, presented the Nominees for a two (2) year Board of Director term. They are: Director-Teri Stecker; Director-Dave Cyrtmus; Director-Scott Peterson; Catfish Lake Captain-Steve Wagner; Eagle Lake Captain Tom Batterman; Otter Lake Captain-Dave Mueller; Voyageur Lake Captain-Mark Slonski and Yellow Birch Lake Captain-George Katich. With no further nominations from the floor, a motion was made and seconded by Bill Marshall and Jeff Emmerich to approve the nominees as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Treasurer Dave Cyrtmus presented the Year End 2023 financial statements from the handouts. Interest income and donations gave us a \$15,150.57 increase in gross income compared to 2022. Expenses were lower than 2022 by \$2,100.31. The balance sheet comparison reflects the increase of \$44,732. Funds are split between Peoples State Bank and a Schwab Account to avoid bank funds being in excess of the FDIC protected limit of \$250,000. All funds are reviewed annually by ERCLA's audit finance committee and all taxes and filings for WI Department of Revenue are prepared by the independent accounting firm of Kerber Rose. A motion to approve the Treasurer's report was made and seconded by Dave Mueller and Steve Skora. Motion carried unanimously.

Jody Voight, Vice President-Operations discussed current membership is at 907 as of today. We expect over 935 by year end and the breakdown by lake is in the handouts. Jody thanked everyone for their continued support and for speaking to friends, neighbors and extended family members, encouraging everyone to join.

The Buoy report, given by Jody Voight-Vice President, shared that a donation from ERCLA for \$5,000 will be presented to the Town of Washington at one of their fall town meetings. Funds are specifically earmarked for the buoy program. The town manages and maintains all buoys throughout the chain. ERCLA provides volunteer assistance where and when needed at the direction of the town, as the maintenance process is very labor intensive. The WI DNR determines location and GPS markings for every buoy in the state. The City of Eagle River's 2023 pilot program for additional slow no wake buoys to the eastern city limits is now a permanent ruling, per the City Council's spring meetings. For additional safety and a clear delineation, the Town of Washington added additional channel markers along the sandbar/swim area on Catfish Lake just south of the Highway 70 bridge. Additionally, the Town of Lincoln added Eagle River Slow No Wake buoys before entering Watersmeet Lake. Jody stressed that the waterways are utilized by a diverse group of individuals that share equal rights to this vital WI public resource, with many differing points of view on this subject.

Shoreland Restoration Chair, Marc Groth reported that three (3) projects have received grant commitments from WI DNR for up to \$1,000 reimbursements on two rain gardens and one native planting of over 160 plants in a 350 sq ft area along the shoreline. These projects are in different degrees of progress with completion expected before October 1st. Another native plant project consisting of weeding, clearing and planting of over 340 plants, was coordinated with Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department (VCL&W), the City of Eagle River and ERCLA volunteers. Plants were placed along the shore at the Yellow Birch Lake T-Docks boat landing. These plants will beautify, increase pollination and improve erosion control at the landing. These projects also give ERCLA accountability when competing for state grants offered by the WI DNR. Lastly, you may notice volunteers in small boats close to your shoreline this summer searching for invasive shoreland plants.

In June, ERCLA volunteers survey for Yellow Iris and in August, they survey for Purple and Yellow Loosestrife, Knotweed and Phragmites. The survey results are shared with VCL&W for further analysis and confirmation of species.

Dave Mueller, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator and Treasurer of Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission(ULERCLC) presented the Lakes report. Our chain is in the monitoring phase in the fight against Invasive Aquatic Species (AIS). Three separate surveys are done throughout the summer months, **First**, an early season AIS survey by Onterra LLC, a professional lake management company, was completed July 11th. **Second**, ERCLA volunteers perform a peak season biomass EWM (European WaterMilfoil) survey in mid to late August. **Lastly**, a 2024 late season peak biomass EWM survey will be done by Onterra in September. Survey maps are posted on the Commission website: www.eagleriverchaincommission.org/lake-reports A professional firm, DASH Aquatic Services LLC hand harvested EWM on the chain throughout the summer. 2024 primary and secondary sites were on Catfish, Watersmeet and Yellow Birch. Clean Boats/Clean Waters inspections are offered at various boat landings totaling 24 hours during the July 4th holiday week and an additional 12 hours this summer. These inspections educate boaters, check for invasive species and promote clean, drain and drive duties when moving from lake to lake.

ERCLA is a participant in the WI DNR statewide program, Citizen Lake Monitoring Network, to monitor the health of the chain. Water samples from Watersmeet, Scattering Rice and Cranberry Lake are sent to UW-Stevens Point laboratories for analysis and record keeping. These three lakes are chosen as their source of water comes from other bodies of water (Wisconsin River, Deerskin River and the Three Lake Chain). Lastly, the Unified Lower Eagle River Chain of Lakes Commission (ULERCLC) will apply for a WI DNR Lake Planning Grant for its 2025 planning activities and a WI DNR hand harvesting grant for the next three years, 2025-2028. Results of these requests will be in our spring 2025 Newsletter.

President Chuck Berg answered questions in the Open Forum: (1) Do you need a permit to add rocks to your shoreline? The WI DNR has very specific rules for exemptions from permits and rules for requiring permits. See the DNR website for particulars on both of these requirements, as respects to your shoreline. (2) What do we do if we see invasive species? Contact any board member or email us at erclaonline@gmail.com (3) Lake Forest Development changed its mind on the pier permitting application. Does this mean they must reapply? Short answer is yes, if they want to pursue piers beyond what is allowed as a landowner.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn by Dave Cyrtmus and Michael Queoff. Motion carried.

12:42 PM Meeting Adjourned.

Minutes prepared by
Secretary Teri Stecker