

NEWSLETTER ~ Fall 2025



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Working Together to Care for Our Waters

by Greg Holt, MWLA President

Once again, in 2025 members of the MWLA and the greater Manitowish Waters community have demonstrated how precious and important our waters are to us.

Before the boating season began, ~70 folks attended an informational meeting in April relative to the status of Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) in our lakes. During the summer, community members attended aquatic invasive species (AIS) and Clean Boats/Clean Waters training sessions. Members further educated themselves by reading MWLA newsletters and emails sent out to our contacts. Attendees at the July MWLA Annual Meeting offered opinions and expressed concerns. Opinions and questions continue to come to the MWLA through our website and via email at info@mwlakes.com.

Members of the MWLA and the greater community generously contributed to fund raising efforts for multiple needs. The Save The Chain campaign to control EWM raised over \$190,000.

In addition to previous on-going citizen water monitoring efforts, individuals have now volunteered to monitor for zebra mussels.

Community members have contributed to the local conversation regarding wake surfing by attending town meetings. 135 community members responded to the MWLA survey soliciting opinions on recreation priorities, AIS knowledge and possible AIS control efforts. Town officials and members of the Lac du Flambeau Band of the Chippewa Indians joined MWLA Board of Directors to form a committee to develop a comprehensive 5-year plan to address Eurasian watermilfoil as part of our overall lake management plan.

To further facilitate your efforts to care for our waters, the MWLA was awarded two State of Wisconsin lake planning grants in 2025. In addition to grants that the Discovery Center is applying for, the MWLA is in the process of applying for 8 additional 2026 state grants for lake planning and AIS and EWM control. The cost shares for many of these grants will be funded through the generosity of your contributions.

A membership campaign will start in the upcoming months to solicit your friends and neighbors to join you in protecting, maintaining and enhancing our waters. Caring for our waters will benefit from the involvement of an increased proportion of our community.

Your concern, contributions and activism make it possible for us to strive toward an extremely difficult goal—to leave these waters as quality waters for future generations. Keep up the good work—our waters are worth it.

Are You Fertilizing More Than Your Lawn?



The MWLA Board has received several questions and complaints about fertilizers from lawns entering our lakes.

Fertilizers harm Wisconsin lakes by releasing excessive phosphorus and nitrogen into waterways, ending to rapid algae growth known as algal blooms. These blooms deplete oxygen, kill fish, and produce toxins harmful to humans and pets. Wisconsin has a statewide ban on using phosphorus in fertilizers for lawns.

Although phosphorus is an essential nutrient for plants, when too much of it makes its way into our lakes, it promotes the rapid growth of excess plants and algae and decreases water clarity, often turning lakes green. Decaying algae also depletes oxygen in the water making it difficult for fish to survive.

If your soil is short on nutrients, avoid fertilizers that contain phosphorus, especially if you have grass or plants near lakes. Most lawns and gardens already contain adequate - and often excessive - amounts of phosphorus. One study in Dane County of 236 lawns found that the average available soil phosphorus concentration was approximately four times higher than needed to maintain a healthy lawn.

You can also plant natural vegetation with buffer zones around shorelines to help filter off nutrients from lawns and gardens. Consider also expanding the natural areas on your waterfront lot and in the water. The trees, shrubs and plants not only create privacy for the homeowner and lake user but also act as a noise buffer. A useful website for exploring natural planting and available funding is: www.healthylakeswi.com

Remember when you fertilize near your lake, you may be fertilizing more than just your lawn!

Adapted from:

Protecting Your Waterfront Investment: 10 Shoreland Stewardship Practices” by Extension Lakes, available for purchase or download at: www.uwsp.edu/uwexlakes and The Shorelands Stewardship Series: Protecting and Restoring Shorelands, UW Wisconsin Extension and partners. Available online at www.learningsotre.uwex.edu and from the DNR Service Centers.

MWLA Rest Lake Property Update: Never too Young to be a Land Steward

By Angela Dombrowicki, MWLA Vice President



On a fall day this year after the water has receded, you may see Mike Ullrich and his two six-year-old twin sons, Baxter and Oliver, picking up debris from the MWLA's property on Rest Lake.

In the summer of 2022, the MWLA acquired property on Rest Lake from the estate of Mark E. Leistikow, a longtime local resident and historian, who died in October 2020 at the age of 89. Mark left his estate to a conservation organization so that it could be returned to its natural state, free of buildings and improvements, and preserved forever.

Mike was friendly with Mark Leistikow and helped him out with repairs on his property. They also fished together in Canada. Mike grew up remembering summers in Manitowish Waters on Alder Lake. He and his family moved to Manitowish Waters permanently in 2019. Mike has recently become the manager of Dietz's in Manitowish Waters. His wife, Alyssa, a nurse at North Lakeland Elementary School, also helps with cleanup on the Rest Lake Property.

You may wonder why someone would want to clean up property they do not own? The Ulrich's want to assist in the preservation of the Rest Lake property as they believed Mark Leistikow intended. They also want to provide an example and opportunity for their sons to participate in a worthwhile project that helps conserve the beautiful Northwoods which has become their home. As part of their clean-up efforts, they remove mostly glass and metal that was buried on the property in the 1940's and 1950's but has resurfaced when the water recedes in the spring and fall.

So, if you see Mike and his family picking up debris on the MWLA's Rest Lake property this fall or next spring, remember to thank them for their efforts at making Manitowish Waters a more natural and beautiful place.

“Save the Chain” Update

By Mike McKeon, Save the Chain Chair

Now that the campaign has wrapped up its commission and raised over \$190,000 to fight Eurasian (EWM), let's talk about where we are at and what the future holds.

The campaign concluded on July 5th, and with direction from the Manitowish Waters Lakes Association (MWLA), our partners at the North Lakeland Discovery Center and our independent contractors such as Onterra and Aquatic Plant Management, the dollars raised are now being put to work to combat the EWM infestation in our chain.



These monies are being put to work in many different ways. Crews from the North Lakeland Discovery Center and private contractors have been out on the water all summer mapping and harvesting individual plants and colonies of Eurasian watermilfoil in order to control and help limit the spread of this invasive species. To date we have had positive results in removing the Eurasian watermilfoil plants and colonies that thus far have been detected during surveying in Little Star, Spider, Stone, Fawn, and Sturgeon Lakes and the Manitowish River between Stone and Rest Lake. These removal efforts will help minimize further populations and ongoing efforts will need to continue to keep the populations in check. No plants were found in Wild Rice, Rest, Alder, Clear, Benson, Vance or Island Lake. Removal efforts have continued in the heaviest infested waters of Manitowish Lake and the Trout River between Alder Lake and Manitowish Lake. As of the end of July, over 1,850 cubic feet of EWM were removed by Aquatic Plant Management, with additional removal done by the Woods and Waters staff of the North Lakeland Discovery Center. Statistics for August and September are not yet compiled.

The monies raised by the campaign have also allowed us to apply for State of Wisconsin grants exclusively for the control and removal of Eurasian water milfoil, with the raised money providing the required cost shares for multiple grants. As part of the process, the EWM committee and the MWLA developed a survey that was shared community-wide and helped to prepare a draft multi-year plan to battle the infestation. This plan has provided for a 21-day public comment period and has been shared with the Department of Natural Resources for review. Much progress has been made that could not have been accomplished without the support of those who have donated and those that have worked hard to get the urgency of our message out to the public.

So what does the future hold and where do we go from here? While the “Save the Chain Campaign” concluded July 5th, this doesn't mean that we've won the battle and have things under control. This will be a fight that goes on for many years and public support for the efforts needed to fight EWM must continue or we will lose everything we've gained to date. Whether the Save the Chain campaign continues in some other form or another fundraising initiative effort comes forward, it's imperative to understand that we must continue to raise funds in order to accomplish our goals of protecting our chain from EWM. The MWLA will continue to raise funds through its website for all types of AIS initiatives, including EWM. Please consider becoming a MWLA member if you are not one already because this is where the best, most recent information on our efforts to protect our lakes will be found (through their periodic mailings and their website, mwllakes.com).

Stay tuned ...we promise to be good stewards of the money raised and it will be put to good use in protecting what we love!

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) End of Field Season Update

By Abby Vogt, Woods and Water Director, North Lakeland Discovery Center

The North Lakeland Discovery Center (NLDC) Woods and Water team had a wonderful group of six seasonal staff members that worked very hard this field season. Janelle, Koen, Lily, and Luke finished their time with NLDC in August. Katie will be here until the beginning of October and Sabrina will be here until the end of October. I would like to thank all our seasonal staff members for their hard work and dedication this summer.

Eurasian Watermilfoil Update

NLDC has completed their days out on the chain removing Eurasian Watermilfoil. Aquatic Plant Management Inc have also spent ten days on the Lower Trout River and Manitowish Lake removing EWM through DASH Harvesting. They also spent a few days hand pulling in the bay on Manitowish near Little Star Lake and hand pulling in targeted areas in Spider Lake.

Onterra has completed late season AIS surveys on lakes that have had EWM control this year. These areas are Manitowish, Upper and Lower Trout River, Spider, Fawn and Stone Lakes. These surveys will help better understand the extent of the EWM populations after control in 2025.

Quagga and Zebra Mussel Update

This summer, for the first time NLDC began quagga and zebra mussel monitoring on the lakes. Volunteers have bricks hanging bricks attached to their docks, which they check every month for signs of mussels. September will be the last month this year for volunteers to check their bricks. Many volunteers have reached out to inform NLDC that they have not found any mussels on their brick, which is very good news.

AIS Early Detection Surveys

This year there were seven lakes on the chain that had AIS early detection surveys completed on them. The lakes were Benson, Clear, Island, Little Star, Manitowish, Spider and Sturgeon. These surveys consist of five target sites where 15 minutes are spent snorkeling and throwing a rake/viewing the shoreline for invasives. If the lake has a boat landing, 30 minutes are spent snorkeling and searching the shoreline for AIS. During the AISED survey on Sturgeon Lake, one EWM plant was found and pulled. This is the first time that EWM has been found past the dam. No other EWM was found on Sturgeon Lake, but monitoring will continue in the future to find any other populations of EWM.

Purple Loosestrife Update

Purple loosestrife surveys were completed on all lakes this year. Many lakes do not have any purple loosestrife, but the ones that do are Clear, Fawn, Island, Rest, Stone, Sturgeon and Wild Rice. Many of these locations had beetles released on them for biocontrol and others were removed through digging and seedhead clipping. This year over 1,000 beetles this year. These beetles only eat purple loosestrife and do a great job helping to manage populations

Staff Changes at the North Lakeland Discovery Center



Abby Vogt: I graduated from the University of Montana in 2022 with a B.A. in Environmental Studies and B.S. in Sustainability, Science and Practice. In 2022, I was a Seasonal Lake Technician for the Discovery Center. Following my time as a seasonal staff member, I worked as the coordinator for Timberland Invasives Partnership, focusing on terrestrial invasive species in Northeast Wisconsin for two and a half years. I am passionate about aquatic and terrestrial invasive species and native plants in our Northwoods. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, kayaking, snowboarding, and pressing plants. I am excited to be back working with the Woods and Water program and look forward to growing the program and working with property owners on restoration activities.



Lydia Dobberstein: I'm excited to serve as NLDC's AIS Coordinator to share my passion for protecting and caring for our lakes and rivers with the Manitowish Waters community. I recently earned my B.S. in Wildlife Ecology and Resource Management at UW-Stevens Point, with an emphasis in water resources. My career has taken me through many facets of the field of ecology including conservation biology, aquatic invertebrate research, lake management, habitat restoration, and fieldwork in a variety of locations. Now, I'm thrilled to dive back into the world of water as there is no better place to do it. I also love to kayak, ski, travel, and volunteer with the Red Cross, and am on a quest to visit every national park.

Water Safety Patrol Report

By Dan Perry, Manitowish Waters Boat Patrol Administrator

As the boating season in Manitowish Waters winds down, the boat patrol has reported

the following totals for the 2025 season:

Verbal warnings issued: 351

Written warnings issued: 100

Citations issued: 36

Vessel assists to boaters: 16

Boat traffic appeared to be fairly normal and consistent with previous years.

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