

The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership



A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is the Earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature.

-Henry David Thoreau



Since its genesis in the early 1970s, the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership has been recognized as a national model of collaboration. Three groups form the core of this team: the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) supplies the technical expertise and regulatory authority; the University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEX) builds linkages among stakeholders and provides supporting educational materials and programs; and local lake people are the third group, represented by the Wisconsin Association of Lakes (WAL). Citizen volunteers from around the state - lake organizations, property owners, and local governments - provide the political will and hard work to accomplish watershed restoration and lake protection goals. We are all concerned with the future of our lakes, and have joined together in active cooperation and conscientious planning for lake protection. The Partnership belongs to everyone concerned with the future of our state's waters. Individuals, business partners, small groups and large organizations have all rolled up their sleeves to lend a hand.

The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership is a statewide, multi-faceted effort. If it has to do with lakes, the "Lakes Partnership" is probably involved. Partnership activities include citizen volunteer monitoring, research, youth and adult training and education, aquatic plant protection, pollution prevention, invasive species education, water recreation planning, land and water regulation, and community assistance grants.

Protecting in Partnership Our Legacy of Lakes

Protecting In Partnership

Learning about Lakes

Sound information is the most important tool a lake organization can have. The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership develops and distributes informational and educational materials including the quarterly newsletters, *Lake Tides* from UWEX and *The Lake Connection* from WAL. In collaboration with partners, UWEX writes and publishes a wide selection of fact sheets, educational CDs and books to assist lake communities in gaining needed information about lake stewardship. Fact sheets and books such as *Life on the Edge*, *Through the Looking Glass* and *How's the Water* are available from county Extension, WDNR or WAL. To help you connect with over 600 lake organizations and related businesses, a directory called *The Lake List* is maintained by UWEX on their web site.

Serving & Celebrating Lake Communities

The Partnership works to preserve and protect our state's lakes. WAL and UWEX assist concerned communities to form lake organizations that help keep our lakes healthy. We encourage the creation of Water Trails, an idea that brings communities together to identify and share unique historical, cultural, geological, recreational and ecological features of their water body and its surrounding area. The Partnership and other sponsoring groups also join forces to bring people concerned with our lakes and waters together at the annual Wisconsin Lakes Convention. This event is the largest gathering of its kind in the United States, and provides an opportunity for dedicated volunteers, agencies, universities, experts and policy makers to learn, share and celebrate Wisconsin's lakes.

The Lake Leaders Institute

Since its genesis in 1996, the Lake Leaders Institute has evolved into a remarkable testament to the talent and hard work of those who have participated. Participants have committed to this opportunity to share, study and better understand each other while honing their leadership skills. Graduates of the Institute benefit themselves and their communities by connecting with those responsible for Wisconsin's lake and water management, and by learning more about aquatic ecology, water law and lake management.

Lake Monitoring

The Self-Help Lakes Monitoring (SHLM) program, led by WDNR, is a grass-roots example of teamwork among individuals concerned with Wisconsin's lakes. Over 1000 volunteers monitor more than 650 lakes. Some volunteers have been gathering data from these lakes for as long as 15 years. The goal is to promote public understanding of lake ecology while building a quality information database on a large number of lakes. Volunteers are equipped and trained in various techniques to collect data ranging from frog populations to water quality. SHLM information is critical in guiding the future of Wisconsin's 15,000 lakes. WDNR also carries on long-term monitoring and data collection on 50 inland lakes, tracking changes as they occur.

Aquatic Ecology

Lake organizations and individuals can find advice on subjects ranging from Aquatic plants to Zebra mussels. WDNR lake coordinators, UWEX, UW-Stevens Point Center for Watershed Education staff, specialists and other professionals locate and interpret water quality data and offer strategies to protect natural environments and recreational opportunities. These local experts with statewide and national perspectives can assist in better understanding our lakes, their ecological and physical characteristics, and how to lessen our impact on them.

Aquatic Plant Management

Aquatic plant management (APM) is a major issue and expense for many lake communities. APM programs help people develop plans, identify aquatic plants and understand the role of plants in the aquatic ecosystem. Working together, lake organizations implement plans which may include strategies to prevent the spread of exotic plants such as Eurasian water milfoil. WDNR has a special role in aquatic plant management and is responsible for the regulation of chemical control of nuisance plants and algae, plant harvesting and plant transportation. You can learn more about the permitting process and treatment supervision from WDNR APM staff in each WDNR region.

Our Legacy of Lakes

Aquatic Invasives

Aquatic invasives of many types ranging from rusty crayfish to Eurasian water milfoil are a great concern and an ecological and economic burden to many communities. Programs of the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership help people learn more about these plants and animals.

Together we monitor their spread while developing management plans and techniques to deal with them.

Water Law

The water is a place where public and private rights meet. Dispute resolution and mediation skills play a growing role in bringing diverse interests together. Communities and individuals need assistance and guidance in interpreting the many laws that have an effect on our waters and our organizations. The Partnership assists and educates people who have questions about Wisconsin's laws. Areas of concern include the Public Trust Doctrine, zoning laws, lake district law, pier, dock and navigation law and much more.

Youth Education Initiatives

The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership provides resources for youth educators; after all, tomorrow belongs to the young. Young people gain the skills and motivation to become active leaders in the protection of their lake communities. The Partnership is involved in many efforts to raise awareness of water issues among our future generations. Adopt-A-Lake is a K-12 UWEX environmental education effort designed to bring lake organizations and youth educators together to provide young people with an interdisciplinary understanding of lake dynamics and issues through action projects.

The Partnership is also part of an international K-12 environmental art and poetry program, River of Words (ROW), created to promote watershed awareness, literacy and the arts. The goal of ROW in Wisconsin is to foster appreciation and knowledge of Wisconsin's water resources through artistic expression.

Grants

A major goal of lake grants is to develop strong state/local partnerships, which can lead to more effective watershed protection and lake management. WDNR provides funding for lake communities across the state to collect and analyze information needed to plan for the protection and restoration of lakes. These grants also help lake communities with the purchase of sensitive areas around lakes, the development of ordinances to protect lakes, wetland and shoreland restoration, and other management activities. There are several additional funding opportunities through WDNR including grants for the prevention and control of aquatic invasive species, improving public boating facilities, and nonpoint source pollution control.

New Knowledge and Future Trends

An eye toward the future, new knowledge and good planning are important components of a solid program. WDNR and UWEX undertake scientific and social research and demonstration projects. These include studying the consequences of invasive species, fisheries and human impacts on lake ecosystems.



The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership



It's easy to fall in love with Wisconsin's lakes...

Lakes are central to our communities and to our state's economy. Whether you appreciate the refreshing atmosphere, enjoy the challenges of water recreation or just like relaxing, lakes hold the solutions to many of our "natural needs."

We are seeing changes in our lakes...

Wisconsin's lakes are under stress on many fronts. Some changes are good but others may be detrimental to the creatures living in and near the water. These changes may be occurring faster than we can discover creative solutions. Exotic species, transported into our lakes by humans, compete with native plants and animals. Construction site erosion and poor land use practices may cause contamination and nutrient enrichment of our waters. The increasing demand to use our waters can lead to unsafe conditions and a frustrating experience on the water. So what can we do?

People of Wisconsin are making a difference...

Good things are happening. People from around the state are pitching in to restore shorelines, remove invasive species, bring back natural habitat, improve water quality and make the water recreational experience fun. The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership works in cooperation among county Extension educators, area WDNR staff and lake organizations to assist decision makers and citizens in accomplishing their stewardship goals. This process of public participation and learning helps to develop informed decisions that promote healthy lake ecosystems and communities. Our state coordinators and specialists help with water law, aquatic ecology, conflict situations, youth education, monitoring and many other lake issues. Our experts, with local, state and national perspectives, share experiences and assist in finding management options. Visit any of the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership websites or contact these organizations to find out more.

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