



From the Headwaters

Northern River News



A Word from the Northern Office

A few days ago, I was near the Wisconsin River where it flows out of Eagle River. The wind was howling and spitting snow in my face. Still, one hearty loon was calling from the river - seemingly unaffected by the weather.

It's tempting here to try to analyze what it was trying to communicate, or to give human emotion to that primeval call.

The truth is, I don't know why the loon was calling. But I do know that it would be difficult for me to live in a place that didn't have loons.

Here in the north, we are sustained economically and emotionally by the health of our natural resources.

For us, clear and clean water, good fishing and a daily dose of solitude is why we live here...and it's why the loons - and tourists - keep coming back each spring.

There's no doubt that water-related issues can be heated here in the north. We are always mindful of the challenge to promote economic development while protecting the resources that make the north "the north."

But the loon cares nothing about these challenges., and neither does the river. Both are part of an ancient seasonal rhythm that will go on longer than any of us. It's our responsibility to make sure they do.



A historic bridge crosses the Totogatic River in northwestern Wisconsin. Photo by Ed Slaminski, Wis. DNR.

Local Groups Spotlight Upper St. Croix Watershed Alliance

There's a lot of energy in Douglas County. That's where the Upper St. Croix Lake Association, the Friends of the St. Croix Headwaters and the Gordon/St. Croix Flowage Association have each been very involved in monitoring and protecting the waters of the St. Croix Watershed.

Now these three groups have joined forces to work together on projects of watershed-wide significance.

Under the guidance of St. Croix Basin Educator, John Haack, the groups have formed the Upper St. Croix Watershed Alliance. Their combined energy will be used to focus on:

- *Monitoring for water quality*
- *Phosphorus levels and aquatic vegetation*
- *Road run-off and faulty culverts*
- *Water Levels*
- *Old septic systems*
- *Cranberry operations in the area*
- *Producing a model of how land use and water quality are related*

Other partners in the alliance are UW-Stevens Point Center for Watershed Science and Education, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the River Alliance.

For more information on this watershed working group visit www.uscwa.org

A Passion for Rivers

What's *your* home river?

Chances are, just thinking of it takes you back there. What would your life have been like without that river?

We'd love to hear about your home river...or one that's special to you. Log on at www.wisconsinrivers.org and go to "River Words" or e-mail us at:

wisrivers@wisconsinrivers.org

River Profile The Pike

Like a good fishing hole, the Pike River is a very well-kept secret. It gets its start in the far northwest corner of Marinette County and travels eastward for 61 miles where it empties into the Menominee River.

The river was designated and protected as one of Wisconsin's first, and only, Wild Rivers in 1965.

The Pike is defined by its pristine water punctuated by small riffles and rapids, dramatic rocky cliffs, canyons and huge white pines.

It's also known for its incredible series of waterfalls that bring the river tumbling downhill through a dramatic, and winding course.

Four Foot Falls, Eighteen Foot Falls, Twelve Foot Falls, Dave's Falls and Bull Falls are some of the most impressive.

If you've never paddled the Pike, you owe yourself a trip. We recommend the stretch from just below Dave's Falls on Highway 141 near Amberg, WI to the Highway K bridge, just six river miles downstream. You'll only need to portage around Bull Falls, and the rest of the way is suitable for even novices with its gentle series of riffles and small rapids.

Rivers Management Rusk County Takes Lead on Conservation-Friendly Culverts

We drive over them every day. In fact, we rarely take note of them...unless they fail. Heavy rains in the past year have shown us what happens when culverts are too small or installed incorrectly. And avid anglers also understand the consequences of a culvert that does not provide safe fish passage. *(more)*

The Rusk County Land and Water Conservation Department has been setting the standard for conservation-friendly culverts here in the north. They recently took the River Alliance staff on a culvert tour.

County conservation staff Paula Carow, Art Kunstmann and Mike Zimmer explained that what makes their approach to culvert installation innovative is that they work closely with their county highway department to calculate the size of culvert needed based on the area, drainage patterns and land use of the associated watershed.

Culverts are sized to handle a 100+-year rain event, which means that wash-out and road closures are rare in Rusk County.

The county conservation staff also provides technical assistance in culvert placement, and works with the local school district to enlist students as volunteers to place rocks and other protective "structure" for fish passing through the culvert.

While the "the culverts of Rusk County" didn't evoke the same sense of romanticism as *The Bridges of Madison County*, we learned a lot about good and bad culvert installations, and how that affects water quality in our northern rivers.



This culvert is sized to effectively handle a heavy rainfall drained from a large watershed.

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Spotlight on Policy

Northern River Segments Named Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recently added 83 segments on 44 rivers to the state's top list of high quality waters, giving them extra protection from degradation.

The segments added to this prestigious list are located in 16 northern counties, and add about 1,100 river miles to the current list of 2,800 river miles of Outstanding Resource Waters and 3,965 river miles of Exceptional Resource Waters.

These latest designations came as a result of a petition from 45 conservation groups, led by the River Alliance and Midwest Environmental Advocates.

What these designations mean is that these waters will receive increased protection from wastewater discharge, high capacity wells and shoreline alterations and activities requiring permits will undergo a more rigorous review process, so that water quality will not be degraded as a result.

A full listing of Wisconsin's Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters - including the new segments - is available on the Outstanding Resource Waters page of the DNR web site.

River Stories

Bev Engstrom

Bev Engstrom thinks a lot about the future, but she doesn't worry about it any more. That's because she just signed a conservation easement to protect 50 acres of northern Wisconsin River shoreland that's been in her family for 111 years.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a non-profit land conservation organization - usually called a land trust or conservancy - to protect the land in accordance with the landowner's wishes... forever.

Bev can still sell her property, but the conservation easement - and the restrictions she outlined - go with it. "Not a day goes by that I don't smile from the peace of mind that comes from protecting this land for the future," she said.

To learn more about conservation options and land trusts visit www.gatheringwaters.org.

Northern Tribal News

Northern Tribes Seek Permission to Set Water Quality Standards

Last fall the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa applied to the EPA to gain permission to establish water quality standards on their reservation. Recently the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe followed suit.

The intent of the applications is to allow the two tribes to establish water quality standards within reservation boundaries.

If granted, the tribes would be limited to determining the most appropriate uses for reservation lakes, rivers and wetlands, and developing criteria to protect those uses. The draft of these proposed uses and criteria would then go back to the public for further comment.

Much of the misunderstanding about the application is regarding the state's role in water management on reservation lands.

"The Clean Water Act specifies that either the EPA or the tribe must establish water quality standards on tribal lands... the state has no jurisdiction on reservations to set water quality standards for point source discharges or to issue water quality certifications for wetland fills," explained Gretchen Watkins, water resource specialist for the Lac du Flambeau Tribe.

If approved, the tribes have committed to gathering public input on their proposed water quality standards, to ensure that area communities have an opportunity to be partners in the process.



Bev Engstrom has protected her Wisconsin River shoreland with a conservation easement.