



# From the Headwaters

## Northern River News



### From the Northern Office

It's one thing to hear the spring peepers in spring. But it's an entirely different experience to *feel* their calls. It's primeval really, and nothing else aligns my own life with nature's rhythms like this pulsing, frantic, over-the-top shoreline chorus.

It starts innocently enough with a few half-hearted "peeps" when the days and nights start to consistently stay above 50 degrees or so, and builds to a mind-numbing crescendo when springs temperatures hit daily highs of 60 or more.

That's when you can - if you allow yourself - *feel* the intensity of their calls. Males project their voices in an all-important competition to attract females. Unreceptive females add their own "dissonance" to the chorus when they are not yet ready for the advances of males.

If you stand on a well-vegetated shoreline at the height of "frog season" you'll feel a pounding in your temples, a quickening of your pulse, and a beating in your very soul that can only be explained by this incredible will to ensure species success.

Last spring a man called my office and lamented that he no longer heard many "peepers" on his shoreline in the spring. After some discussion, he shared with me the fact that he had mowed his lawn down to the water, and applied pesticides to get rid of the annoying mosquitoes that chased him indoors each night. He hadn't yet made the connection between good habitat, abundant food and healthy amphibian populations.

That connection is vital to feeling the ancient rhythm of a spring frog chorus...and ensuring the same life-affirming experiences for future generations.

*"To anyone who has spent a winter in the north and known the weeks when the mercury stays below zero, the first hint of spring is a major event. You must live up north to understand it. You cannot just come up for it as you might go to Florida for the sunshine and the surf. To appreciate it, you must wait for it a long time, hope and dream about it, and go through considerable enduring."*

*- Sigurd Olson from Wilderness Days*

### Make a Date with an Up North River!

There's no better way to appreciate the beauty of our northern rivers, than getting on, along or in them. We hope you'll plan to join us for one or several of our northern river events in 2007. Contact Gail Gilson Pierce at [gpierce@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:gpierce@wisconsinrivers.org) or 715-479-7530 or visit [www.wisconsinriver.org/events](http://www.wisconsinriver.org/events) if you'd like more information.

#### ***Breakfast in the Marsh - Friday, May 4***

We'll team up with the Lac du Flambeau tribal water resources staff for breakfast and a leisurely stroll through Powell Marsh as it wakes up for the spring. Learn about the importance of wetlands to water quality, tribal connections to water and wetland resources, and simply delight in the morning energy of a Wisconsin wetland.

**Cost:** Suggested donation of \$10/person includes hike and breakfast.

#### ***Paddle the Totogatic to the Namekagon - Friday, June 15***

The Totogatic is a river in northwestern Wisconsin that is pristine and still relatively "wild" - with most of the land along its shore in public ownership. The Namekagon is part of the St. Croix National Wild and Scenic Riverway system. Join local river experts John Haack, Kathy Bartilson, Ed Slaminski and Jim Cahow as they team up with River Alliance staff to lead you on a relaxing and reflective paddle to learn more about the ecology, biology and history of these special rivers.

**Cost:** \$50/person includes all day river tour, snacks and picnic.

#### ***2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Paddle the Pike - Friday, June 29***

The Pike is one of only three officially designated "Wisconsin Wild Rivers" and offers one of the finest paddling experiences in the state! River Alliance staff will team up with two river historians who know the Pike intimately - Harry Ambrose and Bill Beverly. They'll share their stories and unique perspectives as we paddle past rocky outcroppings, waterfalls and unspoiled shorelines.

**Cost:** \$50/person includes all day river tour, snacks and barbecue dinner.

#### ***Paddle the West Fork of the Chippewa River - Friday, July 20***

Join Lac Courte Oreilles tribal water experts for a multi-faceted look at the West Fork of the Chippewa River. You'll learn about tribal cultural history as it relates to the river, wildlife, aquatic plants - including wild rice and aquatic invasive species - and the science of monitoring water quality. This program is free. Participants must provide their own snacks and beverages.

#### ***Dinner on the Trout - Saturday, August 4***

Join noted northwoods naturalist John Bates and fiber artist Mary Burns for a paddle and dinner along the scenic and pristine Trout River. Mary and John are gifted naturalists, avid water trail historians and authors that make their home on the shores of a northern river. The Trout's gentle current, shallow waters and abundant wildlife provide an easy-going, beautiful northwoods day on the water.

**Cost:** \$150/person recommended donation, which includes guided river tour, snacks and dinner. **Note that this program is our annual fundraising event to support the Northern Office of the River Alliance.**

#### ***Wild River Ramble to La Salle Falls - Friday, August 17***

Florence County may just have the best kept waterfall secret in the state! And it also has two of Wisconsin's only three officially designated "Wild Rivers." Stu Boren, DNR forester and wild river historian will join us to lead this unforgettable hike into LaSalle Falls on the Pine River. As the river drops dramatically over a 22 foot chasm between rock outcroppings, you'll be mesmerized by the power of the river, the beauty of the surrounding forest, and the history that makes the area rich.

**Cost:** \$10/person includes guided hike and snack.

#### ***Hike the St. Croix/Bois Brule Portage Trail - Friday, Sept. 28***

The St. Croix/Bois Brule Trail is one of the most historically significant of Wisconsin. From it, early Indians, traders and explorers could travel from Lake Superior to the Mississippi River and on...it literally opened the way for expansion from the Great Lakes to the rest of a growing nation. Join Dave Thorson, a noted hydrologist and forester from the area along with River Alliance staff for this hike back in time, to learn more about the natural, cultural and glacial history of this significant northwoods trail.

**Cost:** \$10/person includes guided hike and snack.

## Northern Water Trails to be Featured in New Guide

We're proud to announce that the River Alliance has received two Coastal Management grants for 2007 - 2008. One will focus on the Root River in southeastern Wisconsin, while the other will allow us to produce a print and web-based guide called *Northern Water Trails to the Big Lakes*.

The water trails guide will highlight 10 Great Lakes tributaries in the six northern coastal counties - Ashland, Iron, Bayfield, Douglas, Marinette and Oconto - for their ecological, recreational, cultural and tourism values.

This won't be a paddling guide, but rather a valuable resource that gives an up-close look at each river. At the same time, the guide will include information for tourists seeking a quality river experience, and will promote the understanding that healthy Great Lakes tributaries are good for the Great Lakes environment, *and* good for the local economy.

We're excited about partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Tourism; UW-Extension; the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute; and local tourism, conservation and economic development representatives to develop and distribute this guide.

## Proposed ATV Trails in the Northern Highland- American Legion State Forest

A task force was formed in 2006 to determine if appropriate ATV trail options exist in the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest (NHAL), and if so, where those trails might be established.

The task force has now developed options for the Department of Natural Resources, who will in turn present them to

the Natural Resources Board in the next few months.

We have some concerns. One of the proposed trails would cross the Manitowish River, highly valued by paddlers, at a wayside that is also a popular canoe and kayak put-in point. We fear that ATV use in this area will conflict with well-established uses by other recreationists and that some ATV users will opt to cross through the river itself at that point rather than using the bridge.

The proposed trail would also come within 400 feet of a remote, undeveloped camping area with five lakes called the Bittersweet Prong Wilderness.

Some of the proposed trails use existing logging roads. At first glance, this may seem like a good idea, but inappropriate use of logging roads by ATVs also causes conflict when ATVs leave the roads, drive over culverts and through streams and wetlands. This is an expense in time and money for logging contractors who have to repair the roads before

continuing their work, and it degrades water resources.

We urge the development of a statewide trails plan to determine the most appropriate locations for ATV trails and trail connectors where sensitive water resources would not risk degradation and where user conflict would be minimal.

Finally, we understand the need for economic development opportunities in the north, and realize that that additional ATV trails could attract more tourists to the area. But we fear it could be at the expense of the many tourists who travel to the NHAL every year to fish, camp, hike, bike and paddle. Will we lose them, as they seek quieter places that still offer a true "northwoods experience?"

### For more information visit:

[http://dnr.wi.gov/master\\_planning/nhal/](http://dnr.wi.gov/master_planning/nhal/).

To submit comments to the Natural Resources Board contact Laurie Ross at 608-267-7420 or [Laurie.Ross@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Laurie.Ross@wisconsin.gov).

## Wild River Music

By Bill Beverly

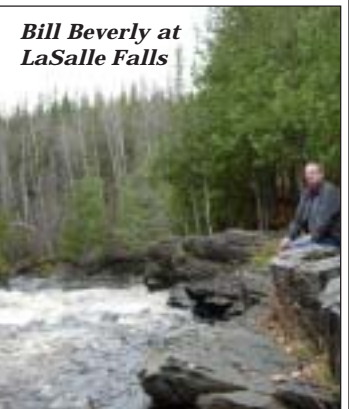
Have you ever listened to ice form on a river? Sometime in the '70s, on the Friday after Thanksgiving, a small group of diehards, me included, were canoeing on the stretch of the Pine River above Chipmunk Rapids. It was cold...cold enough for ice to form on the paddles when we pulled them out of the water. But, the river was still open.

There was 6" of snow on the ground and on some rocks in the river. There was ice on other rocks where the snow had been washed off. In the quiet, still water, along the river's edges and in the eddies, there was a thin film of ice forming.

When pieces of this fragile ice film broke away from larger pieces by occasional wave action, the ice pieces floated downstream into the faster water. When they collided with each other, they made a delicate musical tone, very similar to the distant ringing of sleigh bells.

It took us some time to figure out where the ringing was coming from. We were very lucky to be on the water at a time when all the conditions to make this happen came together. It was either good timing or good luck!

*Special note: The Pine River is one of Wisconsin's three officially designated "Wild Rivers." For information on the Pine and its other "wild sister" the Pople, contact the Wild Rivers Interpretive Center at 888-889-0049.*



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Everyone deserves healthy rivers.