

the vermilion sportsman



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WALLEYE SLOT MODIFIED FOR 2012

Lake Vermilion will have a slightly different walleye regulation beginning in 2012. The new special regulation is an 18-26 inch protected slot, with one fish allowed over 26 inches, and a 4-fish bag limit. Previously the regulation had a 17-26 inch protected slot, with one fish allowed over 26 inches, and a 4-fish bag limit. The new regulation will go into effect on May 12, 2012.

The original special walleye regulation on Lake Vermilion was implemented in 2006 in response to increased fishing pressure and walleye harvest. Creel surveys in 2002 and 2003 documented the highest walleye harvest ever observed on Lake Vermilion, well above the harvest target for the lake. The goal of the special regulation was to reduce walleye harvest and maintain it near the harvest target. There was broad support within the angling community for the special walleye regulation. In fact, many anglers had been lobbying the DNR for a protected slot regulation for years. The special regulation included an evaluation period of 10 years, which is usually considered the minimum amount of time needed to evaluate the effectiveness of a regulation and document any changes in the fish community.

Because of angler concerns about the walleye size structure on West Vermilion, the DNR agreed to review the regulation earlier than originally planned and look at the possibility of modifying the protected slot to allow harvest of some larger fish. In recent years, the

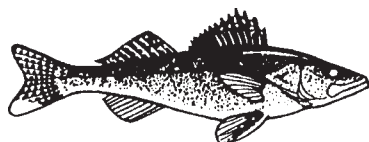
walleye population on West Vermilion has become dominated by large fish and anglers have had difficulty catching walleye under 17 inches to harvest. The size imbalance in the walleye population was caused by very strong year classes of walleye produced in 2002 and 2003, and mostly fair to poor reproduction since then. By 2009, most walleye from the strong 2002 and 2003 year classes had entered the protected slot, leaving relatively low numbers of walleye available for anglers

to harvest. It is unclear why walleye reproduction has been poor on West Vermilion in recent years. There have been good numbers of wild walleye fry produced and the lake is stocked annually, however survival of these fry has generally been poor. The walleye population on East Vermilion has remained

in a more normal state, although some of the same size structure issues have been noted in the Frazer Bay area.

While there have not been strong year classes of walleye produced in West Vermilion for several years, the walleye population there is still in reasonably good condition. The gill net catch of walleye in West Vermilion during assessment netting this fall was above the historic average. There were good numbers of keeper-sized fish sampled in the Niles Bay/Wolf Bay area, although anglers don't seem to be catching many of these fish for some reason. The catch of keeper-sized fish was not as good in the Wakemup Bay/Head of Lakes

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

Greetings friends and neighbors,

When you think about Lake Vermilion, what is the first thing that comes to mind? A beautiful sunset, quiet time on the dock, a big fish lost or caught, special times on the lake with family and friends, or perhaps simply the view of the lake from your window. Whatever the case, your thoughts likely drifted to some visual image that included the lake's surface.

However, what about the area below the lake's surface, the subsurface? Does it come to mind when we think about Vermilion? Probably not, since the subsurface, aside from the top few feet, is an area of the lake we cannot readily observe unless you are a trained scuba diver. Protecting this subsurface area, however, is where our organization devotes considerable effort each year both through water quality monitoring and through programs designed to keep aquatic invasive species from entering the lake. We do this because a healthy subsurface is paramount to our long term enjoyment of the surface of Lake Vermilion. To underscore the importance of this effort, consider the recent explosion of zebra mussels in Mille Lacs Lake. Based on DNR underwater surveys, zebra mussels, which were first discovered in Mille Lacs in 2005, have increased from an average of 14 per square foot in 2010 to an astounding 1,000 per square foot last summer. Unfortunately, once zebra mussels enter a lake, they can multiply rapidly and there is no effective way to remove or control them.

Board member Bob Wilson has organized an extensive program and a sizable group of volunteers in an attempt to keep zebra mussels and other invasive species out of Lake Vermilion. At the state level, the DNR is proposing several new legislative changes aimed at strengthening the existing laws for preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. You can help as well by becoming a volunteer boat inspector (call Bob at 218-753-5544) and by making absolutely sure that if your boat has been in an infested water body it is properly decontaminated before it enters Lake Vermilion.

The cover article in our last newsletter featured the loon migration study that is being conducted by the Upper Midwest Environmental Sciences Center (UMESC) of the U. S. Geological Survey under the leadership of Wildlife Research Biologist Kevin Kenow.

The exciting news is that Mr. Kenow has agreed to be the featured speaker at our Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 4th at Fortune Bay. The UMESC website shows that our three Lake Vermilion loons equipped with internal satellite transmitters have safely migrated to the Gulf of Mexico for the winter. The Vermilion loons are designated as V1, V3, and V4 on this site where you can track their migration southward.

HYPERLINK "http://www.umesc.usgs.gov/terrestrial/migratory_birds/loons/migrations.html" http://www.umesc.usgs.gov/terrestrial/migratory_birds/loons/migrations.html

Membership Coordinator Jeff Lovgren reports that membership growth continues to be very strong. New memberships (49) are well ahead of last year's record for this early in the year and renewals are solid with approximately 83% having renewed through January. We typically end up at about 95% renewals. Donations have also remained strong. Many thanks to each donor as these funds are vitally important to all our programs, including our campaign to protect Vermilion from aquatic invasive species.

In mid-December, the DNR announced their decision on the recently completed review of the walleye slot limit regulation on Lake Vermilion. The current protected slot of 17 to 26 inches which began in 2006 will be modified slightly to 18 to 26 inches beginning with the 2012 fishing opener. DNR Vermilion Large Lake Specialist Duane Williams has written an article for this issue of the newsletter explaining their rationale for this change in the slot limit regulation. First year survival of walleye fry continues to be a problem on the west end of the lake with no apparent easy solution. We have met informally with the DNR concerning this problem suggesting, among other things, that they consider stocking the larger fingerling size walleyes in the west end of the lake. The DNR, however, does not support this approach largely because it would alter the genetic makeup of the Vermilion walleye population besides being very costly.

As the winter winds down, think snow and spring rains as we badly need them to recharge the lake level and minimize the risk during the spring fire season.

Mel Hintz, President

Walleye Slot Modified

(Continued from front page)

area. As expected, the catch of large fish was well above average, particularly in the Wakemup Bay/Head of Lakes area. The gill net catch of walleye less than 12 inches was below average on West Vermilion, suggesting poor reproduction continues to be an issue.

Enacting special regulations is a lengthy and deliberate process spelled out in state statute. The process includes posting public accesses about a possible regulation change a year ahead of time, reviewing biological data, modeling the effects of potential regulations, soliciting public input, and conducting a public input meeting. Recommendations are made at the Area Fisheries level and then reviewed by Regional and St. Paul staff. Final approval is made by the DNR Commissioner.

A number of protected slot (PS) regulations were considered during the review process; including 17-21 in, 17-22 in, 18-22 in, 18-26 in, 20-26 in, and 22-26 in. The Fisheries Research unit modeled these potential regulations to see if they would still meet management goals, to keep harvest near the harvest target and maintain a healthy spawning stock. Based on the population modeling and biological review, the 18-26 in PS appears to meet management goals. The other slot regulations generally did not and would likely result in little benefit to the walleye population over statewide regulations.

A total of 120 comments were received during the public input process, including those from about 100

people who attended the public input meeting on Sept. 29, 2011. Of the comments received; 25% favored keeping the existing regulation, 70% favored modifying the regulation, and 5% favored dropping the regulation entirely. Of those offering specific recommendations; 41% favored a 20-26 in PS, 28% favored an 18-26 in PS, with the remainder favoring various other regulations. While a majority of comments favored the 20-26 in PS, this regulation would be little different than the statewide regulation in protecting the walleye population. There was also some interest in allowing harvest of one walleye in the current protected slot, however that regulation would also be no more effective than the statewide regulation and could result in over-harvest of walleye.

After considering all the biological data and public input, it was decided the 18-26 in protected slot was the best choice to allow some additional harvest while still meeting management goals for the lake. The walleye population and effects of the new regulation will continue to be monitored closely. If anyone has questions about the new walleye regulation or fish populations on Lake Vermilion, please feel free to contact me.

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SCLV Board Meetings are held monthly on the second Wednesday, and are open to all SCLV members. Check with a board member for time and location.

Revenue projections down; fee increase urgency up

State and federal revenue experts sent the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources troubling news at year's end. Expect less revenue, they said.

Key fund in critical condition

Minnesota's Game and Fish Fund is in dire condition. It is projected to "go negative" by as early as July 2013. This means the DNR will need to make significant cuts that affect the quantity and quality of hunting, fishing and natural resources law enforcement unless the State Legislature approves license fee increases during the 2012 session. Fee increases approved by the Legislature this spring will not provide significant cash flow until at least another year when 2013 fishing licenses go on sale.

How did this happen?

The primary reason is that hunting and fishing license fees have not increased since 2001. This is the longest period of time without a fee increase in more than 40 years. The Game and Fish Fund would have gone negative years ago had the DNR not implemented numerous cost-saving reductions and benefitted from an increase in federal aid revenue that peaked several years ago and is now in decline.

Why the heightened sense of urgency?

The situation has changed from last year for three rea-



Game and Fish Fund

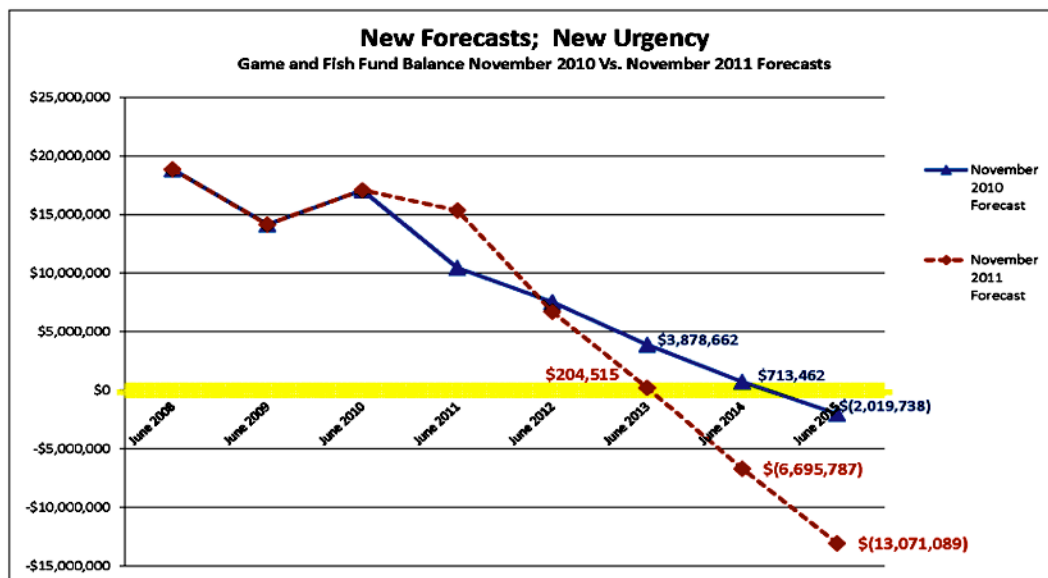
sons that total up to \$7.6 million in less revenue.

- The 20-day state government shutdown cost the Game and Fish Fund about \$2.2 million because hunting and fishing licenses could not be sold.
- Hunting and fishing license revenue is projected to be \$1.1 million less than previously predicted.
- A new federal budget forecast predicts a decline in revenue into the Game and Fish Fund from the Dingell-Johnson and Pittman-Robertson reimbursement programs. This forecast is \$4.3 million lower than the previous federal estimate.

Solution needed this session

Last year, the Minnesota DNR worked with citizens, business consultants and others to develop the best possible license fee initiative. The initiative increased the

cost of most licenses but discounted those for less avid hunters and anglers. The initiative also created several new license types based on the preferences of the modern hunter, angler and family. If the Legislature approves this proposal or something close to it in 2012, the Game and Fish Fund balance would return to a level that would enable the DNR to deliver the fish and wildlife management that citizens expect through 2017.



Recreation worth paying for!

LIVING WITH EAGLES II

by Mardy Jackson

As you may recall from the the last newsletter (November 2011), I told the story of my experience with a baby eagle born in the nest of a white pine 30 feet from my back yard. The eaglet was on my premises about ten days before he was hungry enough and strong enough to fly into the world on his own. When Marshall Helmberger, editor of the Timberjay, came out to photograph the eaglet, he discovered another baby in the nest. And so, my story of eaglet #2 begins.

One morning, a few days after the first eaglet left, I was about to jump (oh, I guess) into the shower when I remembered to check the outdoor temperature so while showering I could plan how to dress. My thermometer rests on a stand on a board separating my too large front windows facing the lake. You know how it is when you're familiar with a scene, you notice something different. I saw a black blob on my dock out front, and next to it stood a majestic bald eagle staring down the bay. Of course, the blob was an eaglet. Her wings were covering her like a shroud. I watched through the binoculars for forty-five minutes and no one moved a muscle. So I dashed back to the bathroom to take a quick shower and hurried back to the window. You guessed it. I missed her exciting take-off but was just in time to see her land on the dock next to the baby with a small walleye in her beak. Well shoot, the parent didn't do that for the first eaglet. I know that because I checked for the fish remains. The baby eagle had no more than finished eating the fish when she began her incessant chirping, begging her parent for more. The eaglet began that loud incessant chirping without taking a breath begging for more food so the eagle flew off and came back with another small walleye (I know they were walleyes because I cleaned up my dock later). This baby was really being coddled. So I wondered, if perhaps, she was injured or the mother had a spoiled brat on her hands.

I think of the first eaglet as the brother and the second eaglet as the sister because of the behavior of them both. The first eaglet seemed stronger and behaved by the rules

of nature. The brother would stand on the stump in my front yard next to the shore pleading for food while seeing the parents fly by with fish for his very demanding sister. It seemed that they felt that the brother could make it on his own where the sister may have been the weaker of the two. I felt sorry for him. He followed nature's course of events when he was pushed from the nest and was truly on his own from that time on. The sister didn't have to fend for herself as early.

A few days after being fed on the dock, she woke me up screeching for food while standing on the stump in the front yard. Would you believe, later that day the parent brought her another walleye.

The sister did more walking around the premises than her brother. She was very active. She'd hop down the steps to the dock urgently calling for more fish as she had successfully done in the past but, as far as I could see, she'd seen the last of the food from her parents. Frequently, she would sit on the bench down on my dock causing boaters to stop and watch her in amazement. She would hop up the steps to the top and turn, walking down the path to the boat house 150 feet away. My neighbor, to the right, called to tell me I had an eagle on my boathouse roof. (A baby eagle is larger than the parent so my neighbor was easily deceived.) Ah yes, the jig was up, this proved she could fly.

A friend and I were watching her cross the front yard and my friend said, "Honestly, she reminds me of a hussy who picks up her skirts and goes busily on her way." This was easy to imagine because she would swing her wings from the elbow to the wrist back and forth with each step, her head in the air. She really seemed to have an attitude. My good neighbors, Jack and Lois, whose cabin is on the other side of my boathouse were very tolerant of the incessant barking for food from the roof of the boathouse. Very often she would strut down the path to the boathouse, as the roof top was one of her favorite places.

On another occasion, my friend Keith called because the eaglet was walking all around the yard and he was con-

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Photo courtesy of J. Brian Woolsey©

Living with Eagles II... *(Continued from page 5)*

cerned that the eaglet would be attacked by a predator and shouldn't we call the DNR? I told him I recently found she could fly if she was in danger because she had flown to the boathouse roof.

The weekend after the 4th of July, my grandson Brian, his wife Deb, and their two little girls came up for the weekend along with my daughter Kim. After the initial excitement of the eaglet wore down, everyone became preoccupied with their own activities. It was especially good that Brian was out in the canoe with the little girls when this happened. Deb and I went into the cabin to get the camera to take a picture of the eaglet because it had flown on top of the wood pile. The wood pile was only ten feet from the house so when Deb and I went out the door with the camera to get some shots of the eagle on top of the wood pile she flew onto the hood of Brian's new car. Oh boy! Glancing at Brian in the canoe, we were assured he did not see the eagle on his hood. Fearing she would scratch the hood with her talons, we shooed her off, only to have her jump on the hood of Kimmy's car parked alongside Brian's. Now we had to shoo her off the hood of Kimmy's car. The eaglet

flew to the beginning of the driveway, turned around and fully opened her wings and with a whoosh, flew across the yard and disappeared over the shoreline. And this was the second eaglet's maiden flight.

However, that was not the last that we saw of her. Oh no, that rascal had the audacity to fly up into the nest and start begging to be fed, finding it difficult to find the food herself. In a neighboring white pine, the parent frequently sat watching for unsuspecting prey. No mistaking the parent's view of that action, she let out the loudest, angriest retort to that lazy eaglet. And with that, the eaglet immediately flew out of the nest and was heard no more.

Needless to say, the whole adventure of the two baby eagles temporarily living in my yard was an unforgettable experience. I learned so much from these two, but true or false, I believe individual eagles have different and definite personalities. I'll need to wait until nesting season next year to know if this is a once in lifetime experience. I can hardly wait.

LAKE VERMILION NORTHERN PIKE

Numerous shallow bays, weed edges and rock structures hold a solid northern population on Lake Vermilion

The Northern Pike, also known as a snake, slimer, waterwolf, etc., is one of the most exciting fish to catch. Filleted properly, the smaller pike under 24 inches, make excellent table fare and are often preferred over walleye. If you are looking for action, northern pikes are generally cooperative in keeping your rod bent no matter what the conditions. I've heard Doug Strange, editor in chief of In-Fisherman magazine, say, "A 40 inch northern pike anywhere (in the country) is a real trophy!" I agree and you couldn't find a better lake to catch one than Vermilion.



trolling. Hopefully some of these tactics will help you put that 40-inch plus pike in the net! Please release these big fish, as they tend to hover around being 20 years old or more. Take a nice photo with measurements and have a replica made. Don't be surprised if you hook into a muskie or other species of fish while following these tactics.

Hang on and have fun!
Billy Rosner, Board Member

Early in the season from opener until about mid June, casting in-line spinners and shallow running minnow baits in muddy bays with cabbage is hard to beat. As weed growth peaks through August, use fish spinnerbaits and larger in-line bucktails over deeper weeds and weed edges. As weeds begin to die in September, key in on green weed beds and rocky points, casting crankbaits, big bucktails and try some

NOTE: The fishery has been improved in recent years by the application of a special regulation in 2003. All northern pike from 24" to 36" are protected. Three fish under 24" or two fish under 24" and one over 36" may be kept. The result is an improved size structure in the northern population. Currently, the average northern sampled in DNR test netting is nearly 27", with larger northern pikes into the mid 30s and 40s very possible.

“Invasive Species”

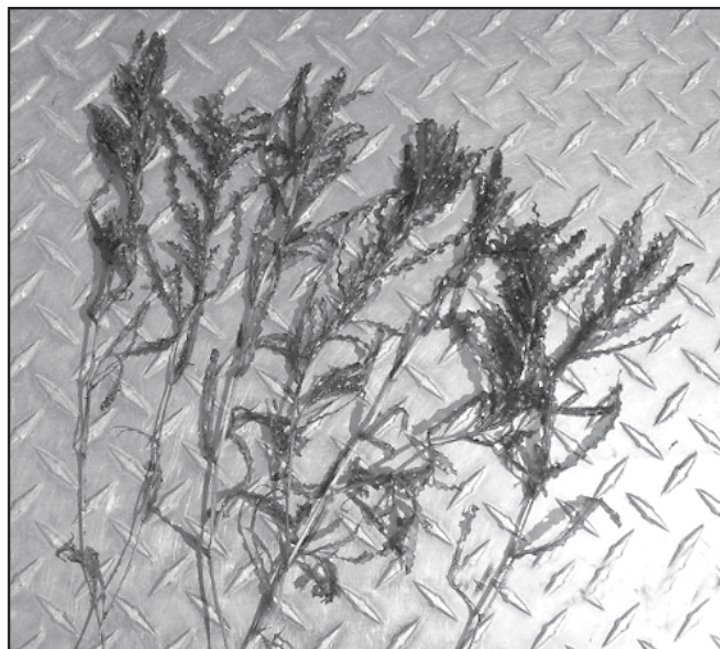
by Bob Wilson



A Lake Vegetation Management Plan (LVMP)

Have you had any sort of emergency lately, the kind where planning ahead would have saved you a lot of trouble or even bodily harm? Do you have a flashlight in the car with good batteries, air in the spare, and a first-aid kit where the bandages weren't stuck together? How about a smoke detector or carbon monoxide detector in your house? Where is this leading, you might ask?

Your Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion (SCLV) recently took a "plan ahead" step that will save time, if the need arises, to chemically or mechanically treat invasive weeds in Lake Vermilion such as Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) and Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM). In past articles I have mentioned that we currently have a minor amount of CLP in Stuntz Bay and in Everett Bay, perhaps other bays as well. The potential problem with these two weeds is that they can take over entire bays



Curly Leaf Pondweed

and lakes interfering with boating, fishing and swimming and casting a dense blanket of vegetation over the entire water surface. In the case of Vermilion, the CLP does not seem to be spreading in these two bays at this time, but we and the DNR are keeping an eye on it. Should it eventually have to be treated with chemicals to keep it under control, there are certain protocols and procedures specified by the DNR that must be followed. The first step in this "plan ahead" sequence of events is to create a document called a "Lake Vegetation Management Plan." In our case, Mr. Richard Rezanka, our DNR AIS specialist in Grand Rapids, MN, was the author. The Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion signed on to be the lead organization to implement the procedures specified and be accountable for identifying the treatment locations, acreages and submitting permit applications as needed to the DNR. Once a permit has been approved, a professional, commercial applicator would have to be hired to perform the necessary work. Funding for this control effort would probably have to come from a combination of sources; perhaps the local government unit, the nearby landowners, a DNR grant and the SCLV to the extent possible. Treatments are not inexpensive and may run \$300 an acre with usually more than one treatment in a season necessary for effective management.

To relieve some possible concerns of our readers, it is well worth mentioning that written permission for the control of this noxious vegetation must be obtained from each landowner wishing control if the offshore treatment comes within 150 feet of their shoreline. Organizing and

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Invasive Species... Continued from Page 7

obtaining the cooperation of the landowners will also be one of the tasks of the SCLV. All in all, this is a significant and potentially time consuming responsibility for a volunteer organization, but our Board Members have decided there is no other organization or governmental unit around the lake, to our knowledge, either equipped or willing to do it.

In addition, the LVMP also includes a whole lake plant survey conducted in the recent past by St. Louis County, citizen volunteers including the SCLV and DNR Fisheries. Plants in the survey were identified as emergent, floating leaf, or rooted submerged plants. This entire plan will be in effect from January 1, 2012, to December 31, 2016. We hope we don't need to use it.

It's also important for you to know an individual can apply for a permit to remove native aquatic vegetation without any contact with the SCLV. You could employ the chemical or mechanical treatment of choice if it fits DNR specified parameters. There are limits to the area that can be treated in front of your place and it will be necessary to contact the DNR in advance of your plans to understand what is allowable, how you can go about it and how to submit a permit application.

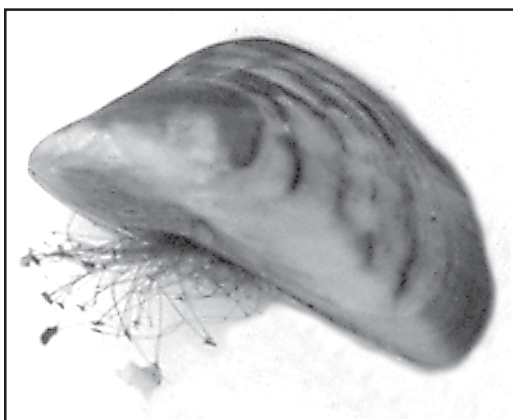
Of course there could be CLP or EWM hiding in some Vermilion bay that has yet to be discovered. This spring after "ice out," the SCLV will make it a point to visit more of our weedy bays for a closer examination. Rusty crayfish have eaten many of the weeds in Vermilion so the task will not be as great as it once was. CLP grows under the ice. As a result, it is one of the first weeds to appear in the spring. You can help by checking around your lake location and let us know if you have spotted any. It usually dies back around July and essentially disappears from view. Check early in the spring. See the picture included in this article for an ID of what to look for. Duane Williams, DNR Tower, and I pulled the weeds from Everett Bay in 2008. Notice the leaves have a curly, twisted look. They are not hard to spot either on or just under the surface. If you see this plant, call me or the Tower DNR. You may save your bay or a large piece of the lake from a big problem if we can get early identification.

Boat Inspections 2012

The SCLV will again conduct boat inspections this coming season. Once again they will be scheduled around the summer holidays and the "opening of fishing" when more boat traffic and visitors are expected. If you are unfamiliar with this activity, but would like to help along with the rest of our volunteers, please let me know. In addition, we are purchasing, via a grant, the services of official DNR boat inspectors for 516 hours of work at our public ramps, at a cost to the club of \$4,000. Between our volunteers and the services of the DNR, we hope to spread the word that having a clean boat before launching in Vermilion is absolutely essential to keeping invaders out.

MN DNR invasive species news you might have missed!

The Minnesota DNR is starting a more aggressive campaign to stop the spread of Invasive Species starting this coming spring and summer. Last season, 18% of boaters checked by conservation officers were in violation of the laws. The officers issued 840 citations and warnings. As a result of this large number of apparently uninformed or careless boaters, we can expect warnings to come to an end. Fines are \$50 and up.



Zebra Mussel

For the first time, motorists towing boats on our highways will occasionally be told to pull into a check station staffed by conservation officers and DNR boat inspectors. Boats that fail inspections will be sent to a nearby decontamination area to be high pressure washed with hot water. There should be 23 of these decontamination units spread throughout the state this summer concentrated particularly around lakes and areas where zebra mussels have already taken hold. Additionally, the DNR plans to work with major fishing tournaments held in zebra mussel infested waters demonstrating inspections and decontaminating the boats leaving the ramps as necessary.

At a recent “roundtable” meeting in St. Paul, DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr said, “Invasive Species will be the No. 1 issue for us, probably for the next several decades.”

We do have a fighting chance to save Lake Vermilion from invasive predators. Let’s everybody get involved to the extent possible.

Reminders — If you see Curly Leaf Pondweed in any other bays except Stuntz and Everett where it already exists, let the Sportsmen’s Club know. If you see Chinese Mystery Snails in a place other than Spring Bay, let the Sportsmen’s Club know (see the November 2011 Issue for more information on Mystery Snails). Want to help with “boat inspections” this summer? Call me. Bob Wilson 218-753-5544. Thanks.



Chinese Mystery Snails



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WATER LEVELS ON LAKE VERMILION NEAR RECORD LOW

Beginning in the late summer months of 2011 Sportsmen's Club board members began receiving calls and e-mails regarding the relatively low water levels in Lake Vermilion. Boaters were "finding" rocks with their lower units in areas of the lake where they have always navigated without any problem. Many of us were also having trouble getting our boats to float off of our boat lifts by the end of the season. We even received a number of calls from Club members inquiring if the lake was so low because water might be running out under the dam. As you can see from the accompanying recent photo of the Vermilion Dam, that is not the case. The lake is definitely reaching record low levels, however. The Official Lowest Level recorded was 1356.07 ft. and the automated gauge site recorded a level, as of February 6, 2012, of 1356.60 ft. I, therefore, felt it would be interesting

and helpful to our members if we provided some detailed information on lake level and precipitation data and a historical perspective on the topic. To accomplish that, I called on Amy J. Loiselle, Eveleth Area Hydrologist, MN DNR Ecological & Water Resources Division. She was kind enough to contact other DNR specialists and secure data and graphs on Lake Vermilion water levels. We thank Greg Spoden, MN DNR, State Climatologist, and Sandy Fecht, Database Mgt. Hydrologist. It should be noted that these data and records are available because of the dedicated, interested volunteers who take these lake level readings and measure / record precipitation. The following information, data, graphs and links are provided for your information and use.

Dale Lundblad - Board Member

Lake Vermilion lake levels and precipitation information — Amy Loiselle February 3, 2012

Lake level data from Lake Finder (MN DNR web site):

The period of record is 10/3/1950 to 11/20/2011:

(Recorded data is in feet above sea level. Datum: NGVD 1929)

Highest Level Recorded: 1359.32 ft (5/17/2008)

Recorded Range Difference: 3.25 ft

Lowest Level Recorded: 1356.07 ft (11/16/1976)

Average Water Level: 1357.40 ft

Ordinary High Water Level (OHWL) elevation: 1358.4 ft

Outlet elevation: 1356.6 ft

The ordinary high water level (OHWL) is the boundary of water basins (lakes), and streams, and wetlands) and is an elevation delineating the highest water level that has been maintained for a long enough period of time to leave evidence upon the landscape, commonly the point where the natural vegetation changes from predominantly aquatic to predominantly terrestrial.

Lake Finder:

Current data is primarily from two volunteer gage readers as per description below.

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/showlevel.html?id=69037800>

(MN DNR web site: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/index.html>)

Lake Vermilion Outlet:

Current data from automated continuous gage as per description below.

http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/csg/site_report.html?mode=getsitereport&site=73050001

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/csg/index.html>

Automated gage. Until 1988 MN DNR received continuous lake level readings taken by mechanical monitoring system located at the Tower end of the lake and operated by U.S. Geological Survey. This station was eliminated due to reduced funding.

Since then several volunteer lake level readers have monitored one of the 6 or so lake level gages that were located around the lake. Unfortunately several of these gage plates have been removed during construction projects. More recently, in the past several years, two volunteer gage readers have been active. In addition, in 2006 MN DNR installed continuous automated real-time water level gage system on Lake Vermilion upstream of the outlet dam in cooperation with Vermilion Dam Lodge Resort and owner Ed Tausk.

Precipitation (ppt) records:

<http://climate.umn.edu/mapClim2007/MNlocApp.asp>

<http://climate.umn.edu/wetland/>

<http://climate.umn.edu/doc/historical.htm>

MN Climatology Working Group

“Drought Conditions” January 26, 2012 update: see- http://climate.umn.edu/doc/journal/drought_2011.htm

See both this “Drought Conditions” update and the precipitation (ppt) records. Note that the 2011 annual ppt total falls below the historical 10th percentile. Note also the preponderance of below-average annual ppt totals during the last decade, tempered significantly by wet years in 2001 and 2007, as per Greg Spoden, MN DNR Climatologist.

From late July, 2011 to late November, 2011 Lake Vermilion area is about 5 to 7-inches below normal ppt, which is the mean annual ppt for the period 1981-2010 is 28.9-inches. (6-inches is about 21-percent of the mean.)

Lake system quality is dependent on the quality of the land at the waters edge. Remember to plan all shoreland projects prior to construction. And during the planning phase, check MN DNR web site (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/index.html>) and St. Louis County Planning & Development web site (<http://www.stlouiscountymn.gov/>) and (<http://stlouiscountymn.gov/LANDPROPERTY/BuildingZoning/LandUseBuilding/LandAlteration.aspx>) or Greenwood Township Planning and Zoning (<http://greenwoodtownshipmn.com/joom/planning-and-zoning>), if at all possible. And IF it's not possible to use the internet, then contact MN DNR Area Hydrologist (218-744-7450, ext. 222) and St. Louis County planners (218-749-7103) or Greenwood Township Planning Director (218-780-9060) directly to discuss your project and how to minimize disturbance to the valuable shoreline habitat that is the basis of a high quality lake system (i.e., fish populations, etc ...).

See Graphs on Pages 12-13

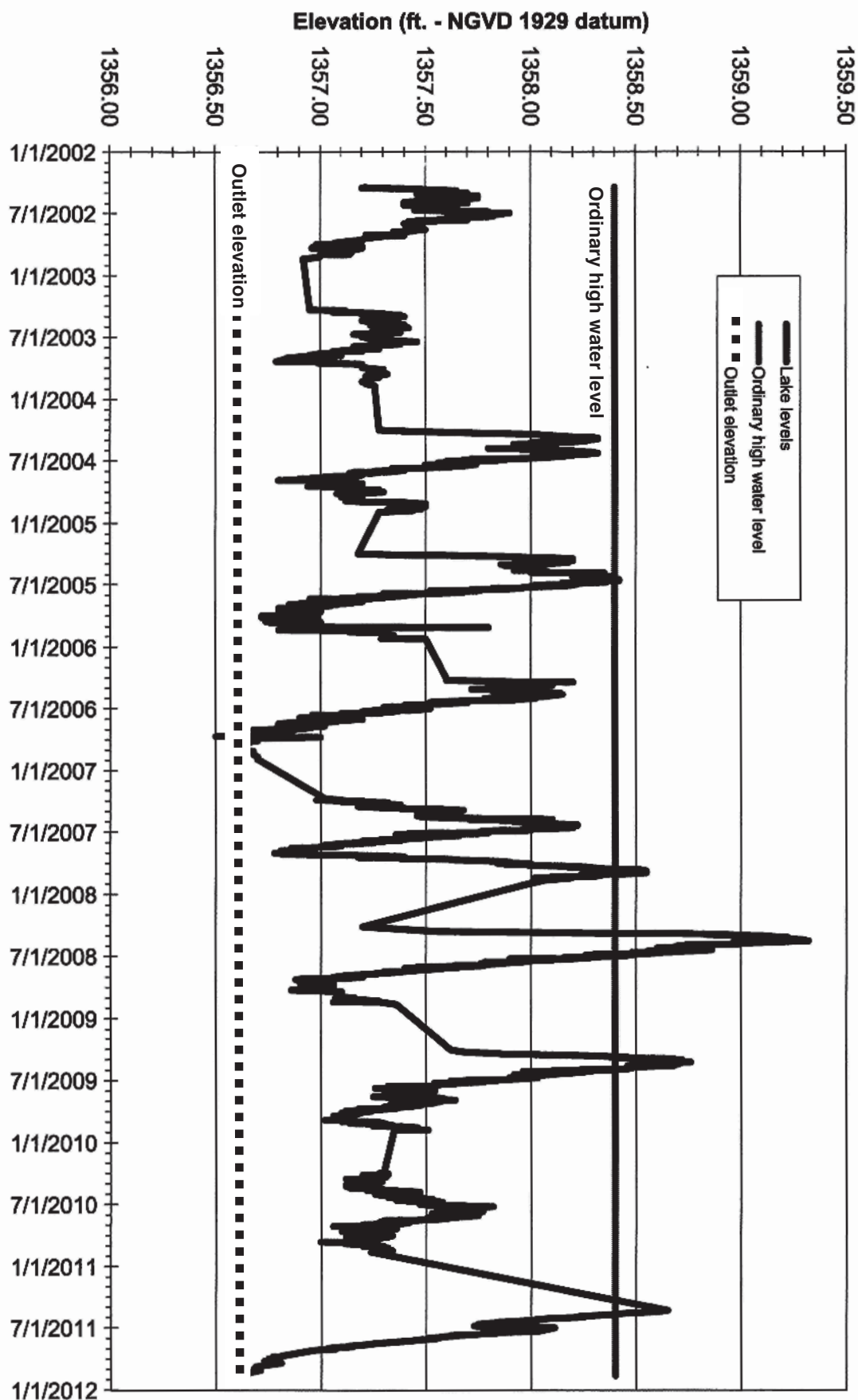


Vermilion Dam — showing riverbed below. February 7, 2012

Vermillion Lake (69-0378), St. Louis County

Reported Lake Levels 2002 - 2011

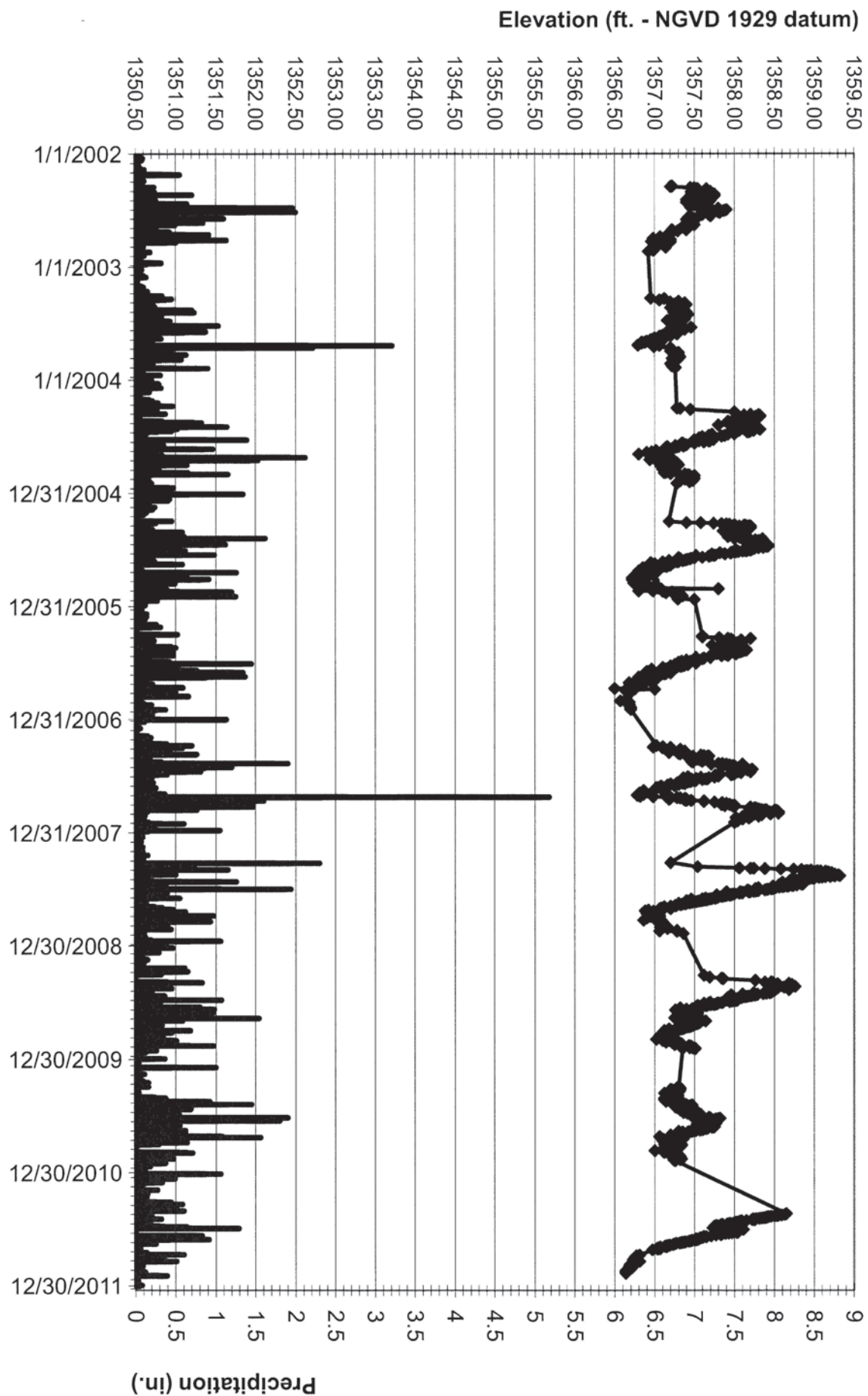
DNR Ecological & Water Resources Lake Level MN Monitoring Program



Vermillion Lake (69-0378), St. Louis County

Reported Lake Levels & Daily Precipitation 2002 - 2011

Data from DNR Eco/Waters Lake Level MN Monitoring Program and State Climatology Program



The Good Old Days on Lake Vermilion

More Memories by Frank Franson

The Swanson family would stay at Grand View Resort on Lake Vermilion for a couple of weeks or so during the middle of the summer. The cabin had a rock fireplace and a big picture window that looked out at the channel between the north shore and Hinsdale Island.

Early in the summer of 1948, I went into the cabin to hook up the water system and check things out. I was greeted by a drake mallard duck who started flying around the living room. I opened both doors wide open and tried to chase him out one of them. He had a mind of his own and decided to fly out through the picture window. The glass must have been old and brittle because he shattered the window and kept on flying! He had left behind his "calling cards" all over the living room carpet. I had that to clean up besides the shattered glass. The only way the duck could have gotten into the cabin was down the fireplace chimney. Jesse Swanson made sure that I put a screen on top of the chimney before I left in the fall.

The septic system for the resort consisted of a big "two holer" on top of the hill where the dining room was also located. The hill was a good-sized mound of glacial deposited gravel and was a good location for the outhouse. One day two young men who had just gotten to the resort asked me where the "john" was. I told them there was nobody by the name of John staying there. They had to explain to this "hick from the sticks" what "john" was. I had never heard that expression before. I told them, "Oh you mean the two-holer" and told them where it was. They looked at me kind of funny like and went up the hill to it.

One summer during the hot "dog days" of August, 12 young men in their early 20s came to the resort for two weeks. After the two weeks' vacation, they had to make a major decision that would affect the rest of their lives. They were studying to become Catholic priests and had to decide if they were going to continue that and become priests. I didn't have to have a degree in psychology to sense that they had a lot on their minds.

We all know how fishing can be at that time of the year. One day one of the 12 told me that he sure would like to catch any kind of a fish. I dug up some worms and told him to come with me. There was a cabin away from the rest of the resort called the "honeymoon cabin." It was on a high cliff on the west edge of the resort property and had a boat-house next to the shore. There were always sunfish inside it around the cribs. The water was shallow and you could easily see the fish. As soon as he put a worm in the water, he had a "sunny." He kept on catching them and was having the time of his life!

I had things to do and left him there. When I saw him later, he gave me \$2 and told me not to tell anybody else about the boathouse. He did tell a friend of his and the two of them spent most of their vacation in the boathouse watching and catching the fish. One day an 8-lb. northern came nosing around the cribs. Catching that fish made their vacation!

When the group left they gave me a \$20 bill. That was half my monthly salary and was much appreciated by me. I never did hear anything about how many of the group decided to become priests.

The Dangers of Late Fall Fishing

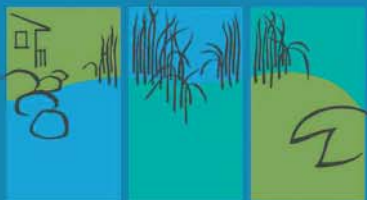
Running a resort carries many responsibilities when it comes to your guests. One of which is to pay attention when guests don't return to the resort after being out on the lake fishing. When that happens, your first course of action is to interview the other members of their party and see if there is reason for concern. In most cases you find out the missing party elected to stay out fishing later or if they did have problems will use their cell phone to call others in their party or find help from a cabin owner or another boat in the area. In most cases you find your guests prefer to get help on their own and not call the resort in a panic which may expose them to embarrassment. So there lies this fine line as a resort owner, when to get worried and start taking action when someone does not return. The story I am about to share happened last November and almost turned tragic. This is also a case where I should have crossed that fine line and went out looking.

The time was mid-November; water temps were in the low 40s just prior to freeze-up. Many of the hard core muskie fishermen know this a prime time of the year to catch a monster sized muskie. Our resort had about 20 fishermen in camp. The days are short in November so most of the fishermen get out at daylight around 7 a.m. and fish until just after dark around 6 p.m. Our Lodge has a game room that overlooks the main dock, so as the boats come in to park at the end of the day, the fishermen usually stop in to warm up, relax and share their stories. We always pay attention to what boats have come back and which are still out. Fishing late fall is so different than fishing in summer, for after-dark temps drop, usually well below freezing, and it's a time of the year... the lake is very quiet... many seasonal lake homes are closed for the winter. So if you get in trouble on the lake there are not a lot of people around to help. That week we

(Continued on Page 18)

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From Shore to Shore

www.shorelandmanagement.org

A publication of the Shoreland Education Team, dedicated to educating Minnesota citizens about shoreland management to improve water quality, habitat, and aesthetics of our lakes and rivers.

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION

Education for Local Officials: Their Roles in Protecting and Improving Watersheds

Doug Malchow, University of Minnesota Extension, 507-280-5575, malch002@umn.edu

Local leaders from Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine counties attended workshops in September to learn more about their roles in protecting and improving water quality in their area. Elected and appointed officials representing townships, small cities, counties, watershed districts, and lake associations participated in a workshop titled "The Link Between Clean Water and Land Use" in Mora and Hinckley. During the presentations, University of Minnesota Extension Educators discussed the benefits of a healthy watershed, watershed dynamics, sources of nonpoint pollution, impacts of the pollution on water bodies, strategies for coping with runoff which carries the pollutants, and the roles of the local leaders in implementing those strategies. The workshop was delivered as part of the NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials) program. In addition to the presentation, the 41 attendees took part in the Watershed Game, an interactive watershed planning exercise to achieve a clean water goal for the community. The Watershed Game is an interactive tool that helps individuals understand the connection between land use and water quality. Participants learned how land uses impact water and natural resources, discussed a variety of best management practices (BMPs), and learned how their choices as leaders can prevent adverse impacts. In playing the game, participants applied plans, practices, and policies that were discussed during the NEMO presentation that could help improve water quality in streams, lakes, and rivers in the real world.

In addition to the presentation and The Watershed Game, participants were afforded the opportunity to discuss as a group some of the key issues and barriers that exist to improving water quality in their areas. Those discussions led many in attendance to discuss how townships, cities, counties, and others need to work together to protect water quality in their area and downstream.

Evaluations showed that attendees learned about topics ranging from the need for clean water, impacts of pollutants on the beneficial uses of water resources, the impact of development on water resources, and the importance of planning.



One participant commented after the workshop that additional local staff "could use this workshop. It was not only educational, but also fun!" Overall, 96% of the attendees indicated they left the workshops with either a "very high" or "good" understanding of the importance of clean water and the need to keep pollutants out of lakes, rivers, and streams.

NEMO workshops are available in several formats including presentations, but also field exercises, educational tours, and "NEMO on the Water" where leaders attend training on specific water resources.

"NEMO on the Water" are waterborne workshops where participants get first-hand observation opportunities to view and discuss how shoreline and adjacent land use practices can support healthy water resources. "Across the Land" workshops utilize buses to transport local leaders to specific land use types where they can walk and talk about those uses and their impacts on water quality.

If you are interested in bringing a NEMO workshop to your area, please contact Doug Malchow, Extension Educator, at 507-280-5575 or malch002@umn.edu. For additional information about NEMO please visit www.northlandnemo.org.

*From Shore to Shore, Issue 107
January - February 2012*

WATERS' KEEPER, THE CHIEF

*If you have
yet to see him,
it is worth the
ride
North to Niles
Bay and her
rocky hillside*

*Look care-
fully, among
the pines, and
there astride
a bronze
horse
A command-
ing man, a
moment of
being, a quiet
force*

*He surveys
the reaches of
the bay across
to the wooded
distant land
A guardian of
the creator's
gifts given us,
with such a
generous
hand*



*Draw closer now and what is that you see?
A glistening in his eye, morning dew or a tear can it be?*

*Now listen close, and you will hear him cry out in his silent way,
"Respect this gift as your time here is but for a short stay"*

*The message is clear, "be kind, be kind to this verdant land"
"Do not bring strange things our waters cannot stand"*

*As these silent words ring-out, they resonate deep within
Take care, oh take care of our lake, all people of Vermilion*

By Tom Aro

Plenty of Fish in the Sea?

Nick Phelps, U of M Aquaculture Research and Extension, 612-624-7450, phelp083@umn.edu

Is it time to retire the old adage: there are plenty of fish in the sea? Well, with a finite number of fish and rapidly increasing pressures — maybe so. We have made significant progress in recent years, but many of the world's fish populations remain at risk. Overfishing, environmental contamination, invasive species, and exotic diseases are a few of the significant pressures our fish face.

All of these factors affect Minnesota's fish populations, too. However, as you have undoubtedly heard through this and other publications, there is hope! Minnesota has some of the best minds in the fields of water resources, ecosystem health, and conservation working to alleviate these pressures. One particular topic receiving increased attention is aquaculture. Safe, sustainable fish production is essential to supplement natural production and maintain healthy fish populations. Fish populations in Minnesota supply food, recreation, and ecosystem stability, and are an important part of the economy. Aquaculture helps ensure that supply meets growing demands.

Since 1970, global aquaculture production has increased at a rate of 9.2% per year, compared to 2.8% for terrestrial meat production and 1.4% for capture fisheries. This rise in production now supplies 38% of the world's fish — a significant contribution! In Minnesota, state and private aquaculture has operated for more than 100 years and has primarily been focused on supplementing natural production for recreational improvement. Production numbers in 2009 were staggering, with more than 265-million walleye (mainly fry), 1.4-million trout/salmon,



Nick Phelps examines minnows from a Minnesota fish farm at the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. Routine inspections are critical to monitor population health and identify emerging diseases.

and 35,100 muskies stocked into Minnesota lakes and rivers. Minnesota also produces some food fish, with about 1-million pounds of tilapia sold each year, as well as 30 other species of fish, leeches (100,000+ pounds!), and turtles. Our state leads the nation in walleye, muskie, and leech production, and ranks second for baitfish.

In addition to traditional aquaculture, a growing demand for locally grown and sustainable food fish has increased interest in aquaponics — a plant/fish production system. These indoor systems can range in size from a small living room aquarium to a Minneapolis warehouse. Large scale, these systems have shown promise with several businesses currently in operation selling a variety of leafy greens along with yellow perch, tilapia, and rainbow trout.

To sustain recreational pressures,

and meet the demand for locally grown, sustainable food sources, aquaculture is essential. This is evident by the increased collaboration and investment between the University of MN Extension, Minnesota Sea Grant, University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, private aquaculture associations, Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association, Minnesota Board of Animal Health, and other stakeholders. These groups are working to alleviate some of the pressures facing our fish populations by supporting aquaculture in our state.

So no, don't retire that old adage yet, but perhaps change it to: There are plenty of fish in the aquaculture pond!

*From Shore to Shore, Issue 107
January - February 2012*

The Dangers of Late Fall Fishing... *(Continued from page 14)*

had one fisherman who preferred to fish alone. All the fishermen in camp that week were veteran muskie fishermen very familiar to fishing in late fall. On this one particular day the temps had really dropped as a front moved in late in the afternoon. As darkness approached, the wind was blowing strong, 20-25 mph with snow flying. As the boats all returned that night I noticed one boat was not back by 6:30 p.m. It was the boat with the fisherman who fishes alone. I noticed the other fishermen he was sharing a cabin with had already returned and were in the Lodge watching a game. I brought it to their attention that their friend was not back. They reported they were aware of it as they were fishing near him about 10 miles from the resort. They said as they were heading in they stopped to talk to him. He reported he was going to stay out late and troll back to the resort vs fighting the strong winds running back under full power and getting wet from the freezing rain/snow. His friends assured me he was fine, had a heater, GPS, warm clothes and loves staying out late as he does when they fish in summer together. I accepted this, but inside I was still a little concerned.

At 9:30 p.m. that boat still had not returned. I was getting pretty worried so I went up to their cabin to see if the others in his party were also getting concerned. They were playing cards. I asked if they had heard from the missing fisherman. They assured me to go to bed for they know him well and said they have been fishing with him for years and were not concerned at that point. They would be staying up late and he had his cell phone to call them if he ran into problems. They also said it is not uncommon for him to stay out all night.

The next morning I got up early expecting to see the missing boat on the dock. It was not there. At that point I was overwhelmed with a feeling that something terrible had happened. I also was feeling very guilty for not following my instincts and staying up until that fisherman was back on the dock. The other members of their party were also shocked he had not returned, and jumped into their boat to search. I stayed at the resort and prepared to call St. Louis County Rescue Squad/911 to report a missing person. I allowed enough time for the other boat to return to the last place they had seen him on the lake. They called me 20 minutes after they left the dock. "We found his boat up on the rocks at the wash, but can't get close enough to see if he is in the boat due to the wind" ... then we lost our cell phone connection. It took them 5 minutes to call me back (which seemed like hours) as I was thinking the worst. When they called back they said, "We have him...he was slumped down in the boat and we could not see him at first...but he is OK, alert, very cold and shivering. His boat was half filled with water and severely damaged hung up on the rocks."

They transported the fisherman back to the Lodge. We had a vehicle waiting, with the heat turned all the way up, to run him up to his cabin. After we got him back and he got out of his wet clothes, covered himself in blankets and sipped

some warm coffee, he started warming up and shared his story. Which included that he had engine trouble, the strong west winds blew him up against the rocks and he could not do anything but stay in the boat for it was now stuck on the rocks getting slammed all night by 2- to 3-foot waves blowing across Wak-Em-Up Bay. His cell phone would not get service and he could not get out of the boat for he was stuck up on a shelf which was 100 feet from shore. He took his rain coat and covered himself the best he could and simply waited for help. He ended up spending 12 hours in that boat full of water getting pounded by wind. Amazingly, even though he was wet, hypothermia had not set in due to his portable heater and the shelter he made out of his raincoat. Once we were certain he was OK and did not need further medical attention we went back to recover his boat off the rocks once the wind died down.

We found the pounding from the wind had virtually destroyed the hull of his fiberglass boat. We could not see under the hull well so we hooked a long tow rope on the bow and starting pulling it to the nearest shoreline on the mainland. As we got the boat near shore the outboard was almost completely under water from all the water in the hull. We had another boat stop and between five of us we were able to get all the equipment out, bail it out enough so it was at the normal water line and prepare it for towing to the nearest public landing. We were extremely lucky to get the boat to the landing without sinking it, for after we got the boat on the trailer we realized how large the holes were in the hull.

This story demonstrates how dangerous it can be to fish during the cold water period of late fall, especially as night approaches. It really shows how important it is to take as many safety precautions as possible when fishing this time of the year. I think it's safe to say everyone involved in this incident will have a whole new respect for fishing in the late fall period.

Here are few things that may have prevented this incident from happening :

1. Take a cell phone and make sure you have service coverage.
2. Let people know when you plan on returning and when to go out looking when you don't return.
3. Dress like you are going to spend the night in the boat.
4. Keep a strong spotlight in the boat.
5. Take warm liquids and food in the boat.
6. Try to avoid fishing alone.
7. Invest in right clothing — suggestions: Mustang Survival Suit (Coast Guard Approved PFD) <http://www.mustangsurvival.com/recreational/classic-flotation-suit>.
8. Consider purchase of a portable heater.
9. Carry a tarp in your compartment which could be used as shelter.

Ed Tausk - Vermilion Dam Lodge

Sportsmen's Club Volunteers Assist Elves with Santa's Logistics Base

"We got the first call on December 20th," said Mel Hintz, Sportsmen's Club president. "Due to the lack of early-season snow, Santa needed to relocate his Midwest logistics base. He said he had used the Lake Vermilion ice north of Pine Island in 1890 and asked our help to use the same area again in 2011."

The north side of Pine Island, Chief Elf Vermi explained in an email, was an ideal location. The night navigation lights maintained by the Sportsmen's Club marked a good east-west ice runway with few pressure ridges. An unidentified secluded bay and no winter residents in the area provided privacy.

Board member Dale Lundblad organized the pre-event work. During the four days before Christmas Eve, Sportsmen's Club volunteers moved two round hay bales, donated by an excited landowner along Hwy 115 near Cook, to the logistics base for reindeer feed. Vermilion Barging provided the over-sized toboggan and tracked tow vehicle for the trip. The Club also brought in an LP-heated stock tank to water the reindeer.

The elves were somewhat easier to accommodate. "All they requested were 50 dozen homemade cookies and 20 gallons of skim milk," said Alberta Whitenack, who recruited the cookie-making crew. Club volunteers also set up a small hospitality tent in case it was snowing on Christmas Eve.

All was in place by late afternoon Christmas Eve. The running lights of a freighter sleigh carrying the advance elf team appeared right at sundown. Eight Sportsmen's Club volunteers stayed out of the way as the sleigh came in from the west, made a survey pass over the runway, executed a 180-degree turn and landed into the wind. Without a word, a crew of about 20 elves unloaded and set up a huge warehouse tent. Two elves operated what looked like a snowmobile trail groomer pulled by reindeer to smooth the ice runway. They set out two Coleman lanterns to mark each end. Volunteers offered hay to the reindeer, but the elves seemed too busy for milk and cookies.

As the first sleigh took off, one could see a steady stream of running lights in the east from freighter sleighs loaded with millions of presents. Each landed, was unloaded and took off again at 3-minute intervals. Volunteers hurriedly fed the reindeer. The elves had some milk and cookies whenever there was a short break. They seemed to go for krumkake and cardamom cookies first – maybe they were a Scandinavian crew. They didn't use the hospitality tent much. It wasn't snowing and, anyway, they seemed to like sitting on the snow drifts made by the groomer.

After a couple hours, the freighter sleighs had filled the warehouse tent. Only then did Club volunteers have their first glimpse of the classic red delivery sleigh, Santa and Rudolph. The delivery sleigh was smaller and much faster than the freighters. The elves knew exactly what Santa needed for the next batch of deliveries and quickly filled the sleigh. Santa and his reindeer paused for milk, cookies and hay, but only for a minute or two before they were off again.

This scene repeated an uncountable number of times until about 2:00 am. By then the warehouse tent was empty and Santa was making deliveries from his West Coast logistics base. The elves fed the reindeer, stowed the tent, and loaded the groomer into a freighter sleigh for the trip north. With their primary mission complete, the elves worked steadily but with less urgency. They polished off the last of the cookies and milk, and, after some hugs, autographs and handshakes, they were off.

As the sun came up, Club volunteers took down the hospitality tent and spread the rest of the hay in the woods for local deer. Two snowmobilers – the only ones seen all night – observed from a distance, no doubt mystified by a group of people camping out on Christmas Eve.

The Sportsmen's Club received a thank-you email from Chief Elf Vermi in early January. He expressed his appreciation for the work our volunteers did that evening. He also praised the Lake Vermilion location as superior to the Midwest logistics base Santa had been using. Elf Vermi asked if the Club would be willing to support their operation same time next year. How can one say "No" to Santa?

Thanks to all our volunteers who did 14-days of prep work in just four days and to those who stayed Christmas Eve night with the elves and reindeer.

If you would like to volunteer in 2012 for this or any other Sportsmen's Club activity, please contact volunteer coordinator Renee Aro (218-753-2129, reneearo@me.com) or any other board member.



Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion, Inc.

Jeff Lovgren, Member Records • P.O. Box 696 • Tower MN 55790
lovgren@frontiernet.net • (218) 753-2413

Membership year runs from Jan 1st through Dec 31st

☐ 2012 New Member ☐ 2012 Renewal

Membership level

☐ \$10.00 Individual ☐ \$20.00 Family
☐ \$15.00 Couple ☐ \$50.00 Business or Organization

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Spouse Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email (optional) _____

Phone (optional) _____

Please clip or copy this form and send to the address above.

Become a Member

Join those who love Lake Vermilion as much as you do. Help us continue the many activities you've just read about.

Not sure? Check us out at our website www.sportsmensclublakevermilion.org. We're pretty sure you'll like our vision for the future and the work we have under way now to make Lake Vermilion even better.

Please use the form on this page or the form on our website. Make checks payable to the "Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion." The Sportsmen's Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Join us as we work to improve this great lake. Together we can have an even bigger impact!

Membership Renewal for 2012

In early December 2011, you received a letter requesting that you renew your membership for 2012.

Please check your dues status and contact information shown in that letter. Your dues status is also shown on this newsletter label. Please let us know of any errors.

HELP US MAKE A BEAUTIFUL LAKE EVEN BETTER!



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