

April 2014



Lake Winnebago Winter Conditions

The US Army Corps of Engineers has been monitoring ice and snow conditions across Lake Winnebago this past winter. The unusually cold winter has created an average ice thickness of over 30" on the lake. Some ice fishermen reported ice thickness exceeding 36".

The National Weather Service is expecting above average spring runoff in our area because of the above normal snowpack.

The USACE has altered the drawdown target to 1 ft. for the Oshkosh datum in anticipation of higher spring flows. The lower target datum will reduce flood potential along the shoreline, but lowering it will have little to no impact on tributary streams and rivers.

The NWS is predicting a high probability that the Wolf River will exceed minor flood stage this spring. Historically, record floods have occurred in spring due to ice jams, heavy rain and snow melt occurring simultaneously.

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Next LWQIA Meeting:
Wed., May 7, 2014
7 p.m.
FDL City/County Building

Clean Sweep

The collection of hazardous household and chemical waste will occur:

Sat., May 3 9 a.m. to Noon
County Fairgrounds Expo Building

It is open to all Fond du Lac County residents, farms, school districts, and businesses.

A list of accepted items can be found at <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu/cleansweep>.

The site also explains how to dispose of other items that are not accepted.

Proper handling of these materials offers a safe method to rid one's home and prevents waste from entering our rivers, lakes and streams.

Initiated by LWQIA, the Clean Waters coalition is made up of many interested people and organizations from around the area with a goal of improving the harmful runoff that is polluting the Lake Winnebago and its watershed through awareness and education.

Learn more about the project and find helpful links by going to their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/lakewinnebagocleanwatersproject



Find us at www.lwqia.org

Lake Sturgeon

The lake sturgeon found in Lake Winnebago, is one of about 20 species of sturgeon in the world. The fish is unique because it can grow up to 400 lbs. and have a length of 9 ft. The largest lake sturgeon ever tagged on Lake Winnebago happened in 2012. It was a 125-year-old female weighing 240 lbs. and measuring 87.5 inches long.

They range from the Great Lakes, as far west as Lake Winnipeg, east to the St. Lawrence River freshwater limit and south to Alabama and Mississippi. Many locations where they can be found were formed when the glaciers retreated from North America at the end of the last ice age.

Lake sturgeon migrate to their spawning grounds between late April and early June and prefer to spawn in shallow rocky areas along river banks. A favorite spot to view spawning sturgeon is Bamboo Bend just west of Shiocton, Wis.

Spawning is dependent on water temperature and flow. When water flow is high and water temperatures rise slowly, spawning begins when water temp. reach 53°F. In contrast, during seasons of low water flow and more rapid temperature rise, spawning does not begin until water temp. reaches 58°F.

Males arrive at the spawning sites before the females, cruising in groups of eight or more, often so close to the surface that their tails, backs or snouts are out of the water.

Spawning begins as soon as sexually ready females enter the group. The males swim alongside the female, against the current, vigorously thrashing their tails as they release sperm and the female drops her eggs. The fertilized eggs, each about 1/8 inch in diameter, are sticky and cling to rocks and other solid materials on the river bottom until they hatch. One female lake sturgeon can lay 50,000 to 700,000 eggs in a single season.

Depending on the water temperature, eggs hatch in 5 to 8 days. In 12 to 14 days, the fry are 1 inch long and have fully developed mouths and barbels.

A female lake sturgeon reaches sexual maturity when she is 24 to 26 years and will spawn once every 4 to 6 years. Males mature at about 15 years. Most males spawn every other year, while some do every year.

Lake sturgeon grow larger and live longer than any other fish in Wisconsin. Females live longer than males. The life expectancy for a male sturgeon is 55 years while the life expectancy of a female is 150 years. This is not necessarily true in Lake Winnebago.

The diet of lake sturgeon includes crayfish, snails, bug larvae and invertebrates. Their primary predator is humans.

Often referred to as the dinosaur fish, lake sturgeon date back some 200 million years. In Wisconsin it is illegal to sell the skin and eggs of lake sturgeon.

Reference: Numerous Internet Sites

Shoreland Restoration: A Growing Solution

A helpful video put out by Lincoln County Planning & Zoning provides information about the benefits of vegetated shoreland buffers and a step-by-step guide to establishing a shoreland buffer on your property. <http://youtu.be/p3z0ZTB87NM>

HISTORIC NEWS OF LAKE WINNEBAGO

On April 4, 1911 a flock of about 500 trumpeter swans appear on the lake.

During April 1897 paper mills tried to have Congress approve adding 18" or 24" sluice boards on Menasha dam. That would have flooded all the lumber mills in Fond du Lac and Oshkosh, as well as thousands of acres. Shoreline summer homes would have been wiped out by spring floods.

On April 18, 1922 Lake Winnebago was at the highest in history flood stage.

On March 29, 1919 Lake Winnebago was clear of ice. The earliest since 1888. [Note: The record was beaten on February 29, 2000]

Source: FDL library card file of local newspaper stories on microfilm and shared by Tom Grebe.