

DNR eDigest

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The Bureau of Education and Information's goal is to publish "The E-Digest" bi-weekly on paydays. The bureau will publish additional issues, as needed. Contact "E-Digest" editor Diane.Brinson@wisconsin.gov or at 608/266-5215 to submit stories, story ideas and photos that communicate internally the department's work, policies and issues that matter to DNR employees.

May 21, 2009

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Chris Spaight honored with Enforcement Officer's Torch Award

By: Jim Bishop, Northern Region

Conservation warden **Chris Spaight**, Grantsburg, has received the North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association's (NAWEOA) 2009 Torch Award for Region 5. This award recognizes a warden's excellence as a field conservation officer and outstanding work ethic on behalf of the warden service, the department and the citizens of Wisconsin.

"Chris deserves this award, not only for his many accomplishments these past years, but also because of his overall attitude in the field with the citizens he serves and working with his fellow officers," said DNR chief warden **Randy Stark**. Stark also thanked the NAWEOA for the award.

Retired officers established the award as a symbol of "Passing the Torch," to acknowledge the outstanding work of younger officers. NAWEOA presents the award annually, recognizing officers from each of its regions. Eligible officers must have no

more than five years experience and must demonstrate a genuine desire to protect the resource and develop professionally.



Warden Chris Spaight, recipient of the 2009 North American Wildlife Enforcement Officers Association's Torch Award.
WDNR Photo

Spaight covers the western half of Burnett County that borders on Minnesota. His supervisor, **Rick Rosen**, said this requires the Grantsburg warden to have a working knowledge of Minnesota DNR laws, as well as those of Wisconsin.

“Chris developed skills to protect resources and enforce game laws that are not often found in other areas of the state such as (those for) bear and bobcat hunting, tribal spearing and ceded territory issues, sharp-tail grouse and sturgeon enforcement,” Rosen said. He added that Spaight has handled a number of large fish and game cases, during his time with the DNR.

In one instance Spaight followed up on a citizen's complaint leading to the arrest of an individual for shooting trophy bucks with a crossbow from his vehicle.

Rosen said that along with covering his own area, Spaight volunteers for group checks and participates in team functions on and off duty. He has worked with the DNR law enforcement academy to assist with training new recruits and will complete course work as a field training officer this year.

Another area where Spaight has excelled is in search and rescue. Rosen said that because

of the training Spaight has taken, and the fact that he successfully has found a number of lost individuals, he's now being called upon to assist in search and rescue operations outside his area.

"He played a key role in finding a man missing for seven days in June of last year, and personally located a lost deer hunter last November," said Rosen.

The Burnett County warden also is well known locally and outside the area for teaching young people how to hunt turkey, bear, pheasants and other game. He has volunteered to work at a number of youth conservation days, shooting events, kinship programs and expos. Last year, Spaight traveled down state to Dodge County to participate in an event that involved over 1,000 young people. He also conducts "ride alongs" for possible candidates interested in a career as a conservation warden.

"I see Chris as a warden who has demonstrated initiative to expand his knowledge of job duties and who has had a positive impact in his community and state," Rosen added.

Footnote: *Jim Bishop is the Northern Region's public affairs manager.*



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Governor and Secretary Frank head up state's fishing opener

The excitement and fun were all there when Governor Jim Doyle, with DNR Secretary **Matt Frank**, kicked off the state's fishing opener on the [Chippewa Flowage](#) in the Northern Region (NOR). While the governor caught and released a perch, the two anglers pulled a trick on the photographers covering the event.

The duo's guide had a replica mount of the world's largest walleye under a tarp in his boat. Making believe the governor had a large fish on the line, Sec. Frank netted the mount on the back side of the boat and held it up. Camera clicking could be heard over the laughter of the media.



Gov. Doyle, (left) with help from Sec. Frank, (right) showed off the “world’s largest walleye” to photographers during the Governor’s Fishing Opener.
WDNR Photo

A few live fish were caught that day, too, including a 13-inch walleye reeled in by Department of Tourism Secretary Kelli Trumble, guided by NOR public affairs manager **Jim Bishop**.

Under a clear blue sky and moderate winds it was just a nice day to be out on the water, Bishop said. “We fished in a remote area of the flowage with few homes with a getting-away-from-it-all-feeling,” he said.

Wisconsin Indian Head Tourism Country, Inc. sponsored the Governor’s Fishing Opener event. Invited anglers included Wisconsin and out of state writers, state legislators, members of the governor’s cabinet, and others from the region.

Various department staffs assist Indian Head Country each year, depending on the event location. At the Friday evening banquet, area fisheries supervisor **Dave Neuswanger** gave an overview to the anglers of the flowage’s fishery and conditions. Sharing the podium was NOR regional warden supervisor, **Dave Zebro**, who talked about the dangers of aquatic invasive species (AIS) and the need to keep boats clean. He also provided game fish size and bag limits on the flowage.

All attendees received a sample of lead-free sinkers to promote their use in reducing lead in the environment and wildlife.



With secretaries Kelli Trumble and Matt Frank, Gov. Jim Doyle and Governor’s Opener emcee Debra Murray looking on, Dave Zebro provided the 300 attendees an overview of fishing regulations on the

Chippewa Flowage. To Zebro's left is Dave Neuswanger, who talked about the flowage's fishery.
WDNR Photo

During registration in Hayward on Friday afternoon, flowage manager **Neal Kephart**, talked to anglers about the 15,000-acre waterway and what it has to offer anglers and other recreationists. He handed out the department's new "[The Chippewa Flowage](#)" [brochure](#) containing a [map](#) of the flowage that had arrived in his office just a few days before the opener.

Nearby, handing out information on AIS and showing samples of plant and animal exotics was Law Enforcement water guard **John Preuss**. NOR director **John Gozdzialski** was on hand at many of the programs. He provided information on many other issues the department deals with in northern Wisconsin. It also was an opportunity for the director to meet with local tribal and county officials and state legislators who attended the event.

Bishop met with visiting media representatives and set up interviews with department and other state officials. Bishop serves as the liaison between the event organizers and state staff involved with the opener. Because Indian Head was short on guides this year, Bishop was tapped to provide his boat and expertise on Saturday.

Ensuring the Governor and his crew got on the water safely, conservation wardens **Jonathan Hagen** and **Tom Heisler** provided law enforcement assistance. Heisler normally patrols the flowage as part of his work area, especially on the water's busiest day – the opening of the fishing season.


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Warden Lawhern once again president of hunter education group

By: Joanne M. Haas, Office of Communication

For the second time in his 20-year career with the Department of Natural Resources, hunter education administrator **Tim Lawhern** has been elected president of the [International Hunter Education Association \(IHEA\)](#) .

“It is significant for Wisconsin,” Lawhern said of his unanimous re-election to lead the 60-year-old association. “It shows we’ve had a tremendously respected program (in Wisconsin) with good oversight and leadership since day one.”

A Tennessee native hired as a DNR game warden before being named hunter education administrator in 1994, Lawhern is the only member of the international association to be elected president twice. IHEA is the professional association for 67 state and provincial

wildlife conservation agencies, including New Zealand, Peru, Australia, South Africa, Mexico, Canada and the United States, with 70,000 volunteer instructors.



DNR warden Tim Lawhern, once again tapped to head the International Hunter Education Association.
WDNR Photo

Included among its varied list of duties, the Denver-based international association develops curriculum standards and training methods; hosts a national academy for hunting incident investigations; and, runs an academy for conservation law enforcement administrators.

The two biggest challenges Lawhern wants to tackle during his new two-year term involve revamping the association's communications practices and adopting standards for hunter education for basic and advanced training to be used worldwide.

"The worldwide trend of youth involvement (in hunting) is down," Lawhern said, adding the association must revamp its communications to involve social networking and other electronic methods to reach today's youth. "We will focus on communications and relationship-building."

Reciprocity will be one of the benefits of worldwide standards for training. That means a student who completes the course in Peru will be recognized under Wisconsin hunting education requirements.

One big reason Lawhern was asked by IHEA members to seek the office for a second time is the fact that there are 5,000 volunteer hunter education instructors in Wisconsin. One of those volunteers congratulated him on his new term: "I wanted to take a moment and congratulate you personally on the second election as president of the HEA," said Richard Landes. "Your efforts have certainly paid off and I am honored as a HE Instructor here in Wisconsin to volunteer under such leadership. Outstanding job! My sincerest wishes for success!"

"I'm blessed to have the greatest and largest volunteer instructor corps for hunter education in the world," Lawhern said.

Footnote: *Joanne M. Haas is the public affairs manager assigned to work with the Division of Enforcement.*


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Cherokee Marsh in Madison area proclaimed a “Wetland Gem”

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

About 100 people, including DNR Secretary **Matt Frank**, gathered on a small hill overlooking Cherokee Marsh on May 18 to celebrate the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) announcement declaring the marsh among Wisconsin’s 100 “Wetland Gems.”

“Wetland Gems” are high-quality habitats that represent the wetland riches found in marshes, swamps, bogs, fens and more, that historically made up nearly a quarter of Wisconsin’s landscape. Critically important to Wisconsin’s biodiversity, these natural treasures also provide our communities with valuable functions and services, including recreational and educational opportunities.



Cherokee Marsh and the Yahara River served as backdrops as Secretary Matt Frank addressed about 100 people amidst calls of Sandhill cranes as the Wisconsin Wetlands Association (WWA) announced designation of the marsh as a “Wetland Gem.” Standing to the right of the Secretary are WWA executive director Becky Abel and chief-of-staff for the Dane County executive, Topf Wells.

WDNR Photo

Since the early 1800s, nearly half of Wisconsin’s 10-million acres of wetlands have been drained or filled to make way for land uses such as agriculture, forestry, and urban and suburban development. A large portion of the five million remaining acres have been altered and degraded.

The “Wetland Gems” list builds upon the results of extensive conservation planning that identified critical habitats, threats and conservation actions to protect the state’s natural communities, species and special places. These include The Nature Conservancy’s

Ecoregional Plans; the Wisconsin Important Bird Areas Project; and DNR's Land Legacy report, Wildlife Action Plan, State Natural Areas program and the Coastal Wetlands Assessment Report.

WWA executive director Becky Abel especially thanked agency conservation biologists **Randy Hoffman** and **Eric Epstein**, both of the Bureau of Endangered Resources, for their contributions of time and expertise.

DNR wholly or in part owns 68 of the 100 sites on behalf of Wisconsin citizens, with 74 sites designated state natural areas.

Several of the sites on the "Wetland Gems" list are important not only at the statewide level, but also internationally. In a special announcement during the "Wetland Gems" event, Tex Hawkins, watershed biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, said that the Upper Mississippi River Wetlands has just been officially designated a Wetland of International Importance under the International Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

This designation brings to two the number of Wetlands of International Importance in Wisconsin. Horicon Marsh received the same designation in 1990.

More information on the WWA and the "Wisconsin Wetland Gems" project can be found at the [WWA](#) website. Click on the homepage link "Statewide Wetlands Check List" to read more about Cherokee Marsh.

Footnote: *Greg Matthews is the public affairs manager for the South Central Region.*


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Hmong outdoorsmen ride along on warden's sturgeon guard duty

Share a common passion for our natural resources

On Sunday, April 26, Yia Thao, Jerry Yang and Chia "Peter" Yang of Green Bay, accompanied conservation warden **Byron Goetsch**, Green Bay, for a good portion of his "rover duty" shift for the Wolf River System Sturgeon Guard program. The four met at Sturgeon Camp north of Shiocton for a briefing on camp operations, then headed out to check the various sturgeon spawning sites and talk with volunteer guards.

Photojournalist Jill Wunrow of WBAY TV, Green Bay, met up with them in New London, where she interviewed Yia and Goetsch about the ride along. From there, Wunrow followed the group to a spawning site to the west, where she shot some additional video of the men checking on the sturgeon and talking with the public. After

another short interview, she departed and the foursome moved on to the Shawano Dam, where they watched fisheries biologists capture and tag sturgeon.



Yia Thao observed up close the activities of sturgeon during his ride along with warden Byron Goetsch. WDNR Photo

“We had some excellent conversation on a variety of subjects throughout the day and it was obvious that Yia, Jerry and Peter enjoyed this opportunity,” said Goetsch. “They shared with me their excitement over the chance to participate and said they would encourage participation by others (from Hmong community) next year.”

“They let me know that they planned on going back to the Hmong community to share information about the sturgeon and the work being done to protect and manage this unique resource.”

Goetsch reported that Thao was so excited that when he dropped him off at camp, he told Goetsch that he was going right home to pick up his family and return so they also could see these fish.

“During the interview with Jill Wunrow, I shared several personal points with her,” said Goetsch:

- “I told her that it was great to see the level of interest from the Hmong community in learning more about the sturgeon and in participating in the sturgeon guard program.
- “We have a great deal of public support for programs like the sturgeon guard, and we especially appreciate the volunteers who come out to assist us with this effort.
- “That over the years, I have learned a great deal about the Hmong community. I’ve come to appreciate their culture and the level of passion and interest that they have for the outdoors and our natural resources.
- “Despite our individual differences, it is more important than ever that we all work together and stay focused on the challenging conservation issues that we face now and will face in the future.”

With spring weather comes “Bike to Work Week,” June 8-12

By: Mitch Nussbaum, Bureau of Technology Services

Now that spring is here, and we can expect (or at least hope for) perfect biking weather in Wisconsin, it's time to start thinking about “Bike to Work Week” in Wisconsin and “Bike to Work Day” in the central office. This year, the Bike Federation of Wisconsin has moved “Bike to Work Week” in Milwaukee and Madison from May to June. Most DNR activities have moved, too.

Biking to work, instead of driving, is a good way to save money, reduce your impact on the environment, and stay healthy and active. For DNR employees rides, commuting challenges, and other activities around the state give us a chance to celebrate biking while enjoying the company of our co-workers.



Riders can encounter any number of obstacles while biking along the shores of Lake Monona on John Nolen Drive. These geese seem not-the-least-bit concerned about those traveling on two wheels.
WDNR Photo

In the central office, the eleventh annual “Bike to Work Day Ride” is scheduled for Wednesday, June 10; rain date will be June 11. DNR employees and other interested bike commuters will ride downtown from the south, southwest, west, north and east sides of Madison, converging on GEF Plaza at 7:45 a.m. for free refreshments and free bike tune-ups courtesy of Machinery Row Bicycles. Secretary **Matt Frank** and members of his staff are planning to take part in this ride, along with dozens of other DNR employees.

Maps and schedules for the ride are available online at [“Bike to Work Week June 8-12, 2009,”](#) and will be posted around GEF 2.

Central office riders from certain bureaus and offices have challenged themselves to bike, walk or ride the bus more, and drive less. They're recording the driving miles saved this summer, with prizes for the winners of the challenges.

South Central Region (SCR) headquarters also has organized a commuting challenge. During "Bike to Work Week," SCR staff will commute together in the

morning from the west side, and enjoy a group ride and picnic lunch along the Capital City Trail.

West Central Region (WCR) had a bike-to-work ride and breakfast for 30, including regional director **Scott Humrickhouse**, on May 12. Fifty-four are participating in WCR's "Gas-Free Challenge," which runs through October 30.

Northeast Region is promoting "Bike to Work Week" for the first time this year, with brown bag sessions on routes, safety and bike maintenance, with breakfast and other incentives for bike commuters.



South Central Region headquarters bike riders posed with their well-used bikes following last year's challenge.

WDNR Photo

Options available for you to get involved, on or off a bike

If you'd like to participate in bike-to-work activities at DNR, you can:

- **Bike to work.** Join a bike-to-work ride or challenge if your worksite has one. Or, simply commute by bike.
- **Volunteer to help.** Central office needs volunteers to sit at registration tables and to help run "Bike to Work Day" activities. These jobs require a commitment of an hour or less. If you can volunteer, contact [Lisie Kitchel](#).

Take pictures. The DNR "Bike to Work" website includes two photo galleries:

- **A virtual bike to work ride gallery** of pictures from around the state of DNR people biking to work. If your worksite has organized bike activities, take a picture and send it in. If you bike to work alone, have someone take your picture and send it in. The pictures will be posted on our website.
- **A wildlife and scenery gallery.** Part of the pleasure of biking to work is that you go slowly enough to enjoy your surroundings. Some of us see loons, cranes or hawks on our bike rides to work. If you see interesting sites on your commute, take a picture and send it in.

If you have pictures, send them to [Bonnie Gruber](#).

For details on biking to work in Madison and around Wisconsin, check out the [“Bike to Work Week”](#) webpage.

Footnote: *Mitch Nussbaum is an information systems specialist.*


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Students spend Earth Day on erosion control along flowage

By: Jim Bishop, Northern Region

A section of shoreline on the Chippewa Flowage is now protected against wind and wave erosion thanks to a Hayward 8th grade teacher who was looking for an Earth Day project for her students. The teacher contacted the DNR, which quickly found resources, staff and area citizens to meet the class’s needs. The results were remarkable.

“Every now and then a group of dedicated employees gets together on their own initiative with little formal planning to do some really good work alongside some of the great people we serve,” said area fisheries supervisor **Dave Nueswanger**, Hayward, after the project was completed.



Under the watchful eyes of a member of the property owners association, Hayward students hauled a “mattress” to the streambank to protect against erosion.

WDNR Photo

DNR forester **Terryl Buchman**, who had been contacted by the teacher, called flowage manager **Neal Kephart** who needed a bank erosion control project on the waterway. He told staff what was needed for erosion control, and they set plans into action.

Buchman cut aspen and birch saplings from his own land and used them for making “mattresses,” which the students hauled to the streambank. Once in place, white pine

branches from a tree removed near the DNR office in Hayward were weaved into the mattresses. DNR fisheries operations crews had placed boulders and rocks at the toe of the bank this past winter to break wave energy.

Seven members of the Chippewa Flowage Area Property Owners Association, including both fish committee co-chairs, got involved.

“These guys stepped up on very short notice to help supervise the kids and provide the lunch and snacks required to fuel energetic teenagers,” said Neuswanger. “Much enjoyed that day were 150 cookies made by Marlen Kaiser, wife of association director John Kaiser.

Dave Kafura, DNR water regulation and zoning specialist, worked alongside the students and gave them an overview of the importance of their project to the resource.

“Those kids were great to work with, and they had fun too,” Kafura said. “They really got into making the mattress frames and hauling them into place. The students took great pride in weaving the smaller branches into the frames and filling in the voids with the pine branches. The finished product blends in great with the natural surroundings and hopefully will stabilize a significant erosion problem.”

Footnote: *Jim Bishop is the Northern Region’s public affairs manager.*


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Sign up to work at this year’s State Fair, August 6 to 16

As sure as there will be cream puffs and pig races, the DNR once again will be a “stand out” part of the Wisconsin State Fair. Signup has begun to work during this 60th anniversary of the department’s presence at the fair. The theme for the 2009 DNR State Fair Park is “Renewable Energy and Climate Change.”



At the 2008 State Fair, Havenwoods State Forest naturalist Paul Vandermeus showed DNR exhibit visitors a fox snake used to educate the public on Wisconsin wildlife.

WDNR Photo

Also returning to the State Fair this summer will be the highly successful “Passport to Fun.” Bureau of Education and Information staff has designed and printed "passports" just right for kids ages six to 12. The passport will direct children and their families to the various displays, where they’ll work with DNR employees on a simple and fun activity related to their programs. Each passport will be stamped as a child completes activities. The passport then is redeemed for a small prize.

You can sign-up to work at the fair by going to the DNR [“State Fair Participation”](#) Intranet page. Programs are responsible for their employees’ travel expenses.

Secretary **Matt Frank** in a recent email encouraged all supervisors to “support their employees in this important outreach effort. Staff from programs that do not typically have an exhibit may sign up online to help at the Information and Sales Desk.”

One of the most popular stops along the path winding its way around the DNR park is the t-shirt printing area, in front of the Aldo Leopold Theater. Beginning this year, long-time partners with the department, Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP), will staff and manage the t-shirt printing. You’ll need to contact [Jody Weiler](#) if you’d like to volunteer for a stint in the t-shirt tent. If you prefer to call Weiler, her number is (414)220-8654

Sec. Frank referred to the fair as “the best 11 days” of the summer, and “...great

opportunity for us to connect with the citizens we serve!”

“Many state agencies have exhibits at the fair, and the Department of Natural Resources has been there for over 60 years. People come to see us because they want to talk with us about the resources we manage on their behalf,” said Frank. “It is also an opportunity for us to share ideas with citizens on how they can help protect and sustain the quality of our air, land, water, fish and wildlife, and involve them as partners in taking care of our resources.”

This year’s theme of “Renewable Energy and Climate Change,” will be fun and engaging, as well as a way to connect the DNR programs participating in this year’s fair, said Frank.


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Work • Play • Earth Day volunteers made cleanup a big success

By: Luthien Niland, Bureau of Parks and Recreation

The 2009 “Work • Play • Earth Day “ volunteer events, the first of their kind, were a wonderful success! The goal was to bring together people of all ages from around the state to enjoy a day in the outdoors while readying their local parks, forests and trails for the busy summer season.



Perrot State Park manager Lois Larson and volunteers planted seedlings in the park.
WDNR Photo

Because of inclement weather, the first work day on April 25 was cancelled. The following weekend, however, about 100 volunteers enjoyed the sunny spring weather on May 2. They rolled up their sleeves at Hartman Creek State Park, Kettle Moraine State Forest- Northern Unit and Lake Wissota State Park, contributing over 500 hours digging up Japanese barberry, raking campsites and picnic areas, building trails and much more.

Another 100 people braved the cold and rainy weather on May 9, and pitched in at Copper Falls, Buckhorn and Perrot State Parks. These energetic and generous workers brought the number of volunteer “person hours” to a grand total of 1,000, saving the state park system approximately \$9,000 in seasonal labor costs.

Read about the efforts of these hardworking private citizens and government employees at the ["Friends of Wisconsin State Parks"](#) website.

Central office employees pitched in, too

Several Bureau of Parks and Recreation central office employees gave of their time, strong backs and determination, joining parks staffs and volunteers at: Hartman Creek, **Luthien Niland**; Lake Wissota: **Peter Biermeier**; Kettle Moraine: **Brigit Brown**; Perrot: **Joe Warren**; and Copper Falls: **Kate Zurlo-Cuva**.

Photos document hard work at state parks

- In the group photo taken at Lake Wissota State Park, Peter Biermeier is on the far left and park manager **Scott Erickson** is on the far right.
- In the Copper Falls group picture, property supervisor **Ben Bergey** and park ranger **Chuck Gretzlock** stood in the back of the group.
- In the group shot taken at Kettle Moraine-Northern Unit, the park's assistant supervisor **Jason Quast** is second from the left.

Footnote: *Luthien Niland is the Bureau of Parks and Recreation's liaison to the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks.*


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