

DNR eDigest

Editor: [Diane Brinson](#), (608) 266-5215

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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.

July 2, 2009

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Dane County names Kurt Welke Waters Champion for 2009

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

The Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission recently recognized South Central Region fisheries biologist **Kurt Welke**, Fitchburg, as a "Dane County Waters Champion" for 2009.

The Dane County Waters Champion Awards are given annually in honor of individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions toward protecting and improving Dane County's water resources.



(Left to right) Dane County executive Kathleen Falk, Don Esposito, Jeanette Tierney (on behalf of Michael John Tierney), Kurt Welke, and Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission vice chair Lyle Updike,

Photo courtesy of Dane County

"Their work has made a positive impact on water quality as well as the scenic, economic, recreational and environmental value of those lakes and streams," said Sue Jones, County Watershed Management coordinator.

"If you love great fishing in Dane County, you have Kurt Welke to thank," she added. Among Welke's accomplishments:

- Helping prepare the Yahara Waterways Water Trail Guide;
- Advising on implementing the county's aquatic plant management program in a way that avoids fisheries impacts;
- Helping restore 52 miles of coldwater stream habitat;
- Implanting telemetry devices to allow for seasonal tracking and harvesting of carp on Lake Wingra;
- Assisting with the re-establishment of the Stewart Lake fishery in Mt. Horeb;
- Providing many educational opportunities for people to experience fish sampling on Dane County water bodies;
- Attending meetings and providing county water resource planners annual updates and suggestions on areas of concern relating to water quality.

"Kurt is one of those rare breeds of scientists...a great technical mind with the heart and soul of an activist," said Jones.

"If you've ever had the opportunity to hear one of his presentations, they are not only quite educational and understandable for just about any audience, a talent not all biologists possess, but are guaranteed to be entertaining as well," noted Jones.

The award was presented as part of the 15th annual "Take a Stake in the Lakes Days," June 6-21. The other award winners were Don Esposito, vice president of land acquisition and development for Veridian Homes; and Michael John Tierney, microbiologist and engineer.

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



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Legislation tracking and highlights come to the "Digest"

By: Paul Heinen, Office of the Secretary

This is the first "DNR Digest" standing story on the status of legislation relevant to the DNR. This story will run in each "Digest" when the legislature is in session. For a complete up-to-date report on Senate and Assembly bills introduced for fiscal years 2009-2011, go to [2009 Bill Tracker](#).

- The governor has signed the 2009-2011 Biennial Budget (Act 28). With passage of the budget, the legislature has gone home for the summer and will return on September 15.
- The bill to re-authorize the Green Tier program, SB 126, passed the Assembly on a voice vote, on June 25. It now awaits the governor's signature. The original legislation passed in 2004 sunset the program on July 1 of this year. Once the governor signs the bill into law, the Green Tier program will be permanent.
- The Assembly passed the Mentored Hunting Bill, SB 167, also called the Youth Hunting Bill. It awaits the governor's signature, as the Senate passed it earlier this month. This new legislation, which will allow 10 and 11-year-olds and new hunters to hunt with a mentor, is expected to increase the number of new hunters in Wisconsin.
- The Assembly Natural Resources Committee moved the Electronic Waste Recycling Bill, SB 107, out of committee on June 25. Because the Assembly went home before a final vote, it's expected that the vote will happen in September.
- AB 258, the Oil Filter recycling bill, passed both houses and awaits the governor's signature.

Footnote: *Paul Heinen is a policy initiative advisor for the Secretary's Office.*

Editor's Note: Contact "Digest" editor [Diane Brinson](#) with any comments on or questions about this standing story.



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Call out for volunteers for 2009 Wisconsin State Fair, August 6-16

Popular "Passport to Fun" returns for second year

Customer and Employee Assistance administrator **Vance Rayburn** shed a different, yet relevant, light when he supplemented Secretary **Matt Frank's** call for volunteers to work this year's State Fair: "In the midst of uncertainties with the economy, DNR budget cuts and the possibility of new assignments for some staff, comfort can sometimes be found in traditions. For more than 60 years, the Department of Natural Resources exhibit has been a popular destination for fairgoers."

The theme for the 2009 DNR Park is Renewable Energy and Climate Change. DNR program displays at the State Fair

include information on fisheries, forestry, parks, recreation areas, law enforcement, wildlife, air management, science, the Great Lakes and invasive species, along with hunting and fishing license sales.

Rayburn's call to duty specifically seeks volunteers from his division to staff the second year of the "Passport to Fun" activity. The secretary also highlighted "Passport" activities in his invitation to all DNR employees to participate in the fair. The benefit in both invitations--fun connecting with customers and colleagues.



Financial specialist Lisa Stacey (second from left), Bureau of Science Services, stamped passports for the Office of Energy Exhibit, during the 2008 State Fair. The exhibit theme was "Energy Efficiency."

WDNR Photo

The "Passport to Fun" is geared toward children between the ages of six and 12. Young visitors to the DNR "park" begin their adventures at the Passport welcome station, where CAES staff hands out Explorer passports with instructions, as well as encouragement to visit the many program displays throughout the park. At each area, children (and their parents) learn about DNR programs, complete their "mission" and receive a stamp. At the end of their adventures, the kids bring the stamped passport back to the welcome station for certification and a small prize.

Based on feedback surveys, staff's helpful suggestions resulted in changes to staffing "Passport to Fun" during the busiest times of the day. There will be three shifts each day, and most shifts will include two people. The shifts are: 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

These hours provide an opportunity during the first half-hour to get acquainted with the exhibits, and there will be time before or after your shift to experience the rest of the Wisconsin State Fair.

Secretary calls State Fair the "best 11 days of the summer"

Many state agencies have exhibits at the State Fair, and this year marks 60 years for the DNR.

"People come to see us because they want to talk with us about the resources we manage on their behalf," said Sec. Frank. "It's 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."

The secretary called on all supervisors to support their employees' participation "in this important outreach effort." If your program doesn't have an exhibit, Frank encourages you to sign up online to help at the Information and Sales Desk. Beginning this year, Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP) will manage and staff the t-shirt printing tent. If you want to work the tent, email [Jody Weiler](mailto:Jody.Weiler@dnr.wisconsin.gov) at RSVP or call her at (414)220-8654.

As in previous years, state travel guidelines apply and covered expenses include an admission ticket (provided) and reimbursement for mileage, parking and meals.

In an effort to contain expenses, CAES employees won't be reimbursed for overnight stays. "For Madison staff, the Badger Bus provides a convenient ride directly to the fairgrounds," said Rayburn. "Also, the plan is to make information available for those who want to carpool."



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Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact honors regional employees

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Regions

Four DNR South Central Region forestry employees recently received fire prevention awards from the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact for working extensively with private landowners to lessen the risk of wild fires: forester-ranger **Cindy Kohles**, Boscobel; forestry technician (now retired) **Willard Dilley**; forester-ranger **Scott Lancaster** and forestry technician **Steve Williamson**, both stationed in Spring Green.

The Great Lakes Compact promotes effective prevention, pre-suppression and control of wild fires in the Great Lakes region of the U.S., as well as adjacent areas of Canada. Participating states are Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin and the provinces of Ontario and Manitoba.



Willard Dilley and Cindy Kohles (center) were flanked by Blair Anderson and Jolene Ackerman as they received their award plaque.

WDNR Photo

Kohles developed a project targeted at a residential area within a pine/scrub oak forest, where she and Dilley worked with community leaders and landowners to educate residents about the wildfire danger to homes built within the planted forest.

The two also conducted fire-prone property inspections and worked with a contractor to thin the pines and treat cut stumps with a Borax-type agent that kills the pathogen of Amnosum root rot, which is found in the area.

Pine harvesting was done on 39 properties covering 93 acres. Three tons of tires and 38 cubic yards of other discarded man-made fuels also were removed from the project area. After the harvest, the logging slash was chipped, shredded or removed from 46 properties.

The Great Lakes Compact Award received nominations for Kohles and Dilley in recognition of their contributions to DNR's "Pineland Fuels Mitigation Team."

Lancaster and Williamson conducted broad outreach to lessen risk of fires



Fire Management Section chief Blair Anderson (left) joined Steve Williamson, Scott Lancaster and Wildland Urban Interface coordinator Jolene Ackerman as they displayed their Compact Award.

WDNR Photo

Forester-ranger Scott Lancaster and forestry technician Steve Williamson also received recognition for working extensively with private landowners to lessen the risk of wild fires through education and a timber sale. They too were nominated for the award because of their contributions to DNR's "Pineland Fuels Mitigation Team."

Lancaster developed a plan to reduce fuel load in a 240-residence community within a 450-acre pine plantation by educating residents about the risk of wild fire when living within a pine plantation. He convinced them to lessen the hazard by agreeing to be a part of a community-wide timber sale.

Lancaster and Williamson worked with the local fire department to conduct fire-prone property assessments. They conducted a broad public outreach effort, established guidelines for a timber sale, signed-up residents, hired a consulting forester and oversaw tree removal on 67 properties covering 155 acres.

The project also improved after-cutting aesthetics by providing for the removal, transport and chipping of logging slash and treating cut stumps, as did Kohles and Dilley, with a Borax-type agent that kills the pathogen of root rot.

Footnote: Greg Matthews is South Central Region's public affairs manager.

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Volunteer to collect important deer herd population data

By: Brian Dhuey, Bureau of Science Services

When DNR employees volunteer to collect summer deer observations (per Manual Code 2310.5), they're playing an important role in estimating deer population levels throughout the state, which then contribute to making fall hunting predictions and assessing herd health.

Each year since 1960, DNR employees have been asked to report the location, deer type and number of fawns seen from dawn to dusk during July, August and September. Wildlife and Forestry Section staff compile this data, which then is used to predict upcoming fall hunting seasons, discern herd productivity, and monitor herd health.



Reporting sightings will help with fall hunting predictions, herd productivity and health.

WDNR Photo

To view previous deer survey reports, go to ["Wisconsin Wildlife Surveys."](#)

The Wildlife and Forestry Section again is asking for your assistance in collecting these data. No special effort is needed. Just record the deer you see from dawn to dusk while you perform your regular work duties. At the end of each month, send your observations to the Wildlife Surveys Group. Your data will be used to estimate deer productivity throughout the state, so the department can make more accurate estimates of the population. Every observation helps.

Instructions on performing the survey, a data sheet to record your observations, and guidance on reporting your sightings, can be found at the ["Bureau of Wildlife Management"](#) homepage.

Before including survey work in your work day, be sure to obtain approval from your supervisor.

Email any questions or comments you have about this survey and request for volunteers to me, [Brian Dhuey](#) or call me at (608)221-6342. Thanks to all those who have contributed in the past and will contribute to these essential surveys in the future.

Footnote: *Brian Dhuey is a research scientist and the wildlife surveys coordinator in the Wildlife and Forestry Research Section.*

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Poynette-based forestry technician earns Smokey award

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

South Central Region forestry technician **Brooke Hushagen** recently received a 2009 Smokey Bear National Award from the U.S. Forest Service.



Smokey recently helped distribute bags with forest fire prevention information at the Poynette Piggly Wiggly. Pictured from left: Cheryl Lytle, Wisconsin Grocers Association; DNR's Brooke Hushagen; Bob Saftig, Poynette Piggly Wiggly owner/manager; Smokey Bear; and Heather Tompkins, assistant store manager.

WDNR Photo

The certificate recognized Hushagen, based at the Poynette Service Center since 2000, for "Outstanding Public Service in Wildfire Protection."

Forestry team leader **Aaron Young**, Poynette, nominated Hushagen for her efforts to get forest fire prevention information into the hands of the general public via cloth tote bags distributed at grocery stores and small businesses. Since the project began four years ago, 20,000 tote bags have been given out in 16 communities, 13 townships and six counties in south central Wisconsin.

"Increased home building is taking place in areas that were historically recreational properties and it's important that we reach those homeowners who reside in areas designated as the wildland/urban interface," said Young.

For her part, Hushagen noted that "I have seen those (tote bags) used many times in the community these past four years, and I take pride in that. I think it is worthwhile to keep this project going so community members can have a useful fire prevention tool to hold onto that reminds them to be safe with fire year-round."

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



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Northern Region staff pitched in at outdoor youth expo

By: Jim Bishop, Northern Region

One of the greatest shows of Northern Region (NOR) staff in recent memory converged on the Taylor County Fair grounds on May 29 for the second annual Taylor County Outdoor Youth Expo. The NOR administrator, five wardens, three foresters, two fisheries and four wildlife management employees were among the 116 volunteers from 29 organizations.

About 325 youths from Taylor and Price counties attended the event, organized and hosted by the Taylor County Sportsman's Club.



(Left to right) Wardens Jason Bayer and Scott Bowe taught expo participants shooting skills and safe gun handling at the shooting station.

WDNR Photo

Those attending participated in 22 activities from archery to wilderness first aid. They shot guns, learned how to shock fish, watched wild bird programs, sat in a fire control bulldozer, built fires, cast rods and trained dogs. While each kid brought along a bag lunch, some programs taught campfire cooking and according to Taylor County conservation warden **Nick Nice**, Medford, "it looked like everyone was eating well and having fun."

Nice, along with fellow wardens **Casey Krueger**, Tomahawk; **Rick Peters**, Merrill; **Dan Michels**, Park Falls; and **Jason Bayer**, Phillips, spent the day at the BB gun station teaching shooting skills and safe gun handling. The station consisted of 15 shooting stalls, each one supervised by an adult mentor. Every youth shot at least 15 BBs at a target that they were allowed to take home with them.

On the fisheries end, kids made fish print t-shirts with the help of fisheries biologist **Jeff Scheirer**, Park Falls. Making the shirts helped their owners identify fish species they'd printed on them. Nearby, fisheries technician **Kendal Liebzeit**, also stationed at Park Falls, used an electrofishing boat and fyke net to explain how that equipment is used to determine fish populations on state waters.

At the forestry site, excited youth pumped water from back cans like mad trying to put out a simulated fire. Assisting the young wildfire fighters were forester **Scott Mueller**, Medford, and Northern Region director **John Gozdziwski**. Close by, forester **Scott Lindow**, Medford, explained fire fighting tactics. While a smiling 5th grader sat high in a bulldozer plow unit, forester **Mike Knipfel**, Medford, talked about how the machine is used during a real wildfire.



Private lands forester Scott Mueller (in yellow shirt) watched as a couple of youngsters tried their hand at hitting the hole with water from a back can at the firefighting exhibit.

WDNR Photo

The guy with the hawk on his arm was wildlife technician **Chris Cold**, Ladysmith, who told his young transfixed audience about the need for these predators in nature. He, along with Ladysmith wildlife biologist **Mark Schmidt** and wildlife technicians **Weston Schmidt** and **Jay Wanner** talked about wildlife identification and management.

The department's management and safety themes were put to the test as elsewhere on the grounds kids popped out of ground blinds in a simulated goose hunt complete with dogs that retrieved a decoy. The program was courtesy of Norse Retrievers. The youth also participated in programs put on by the Ruffed Grouse Society, the Chequamegon Bird Club, the U.S. Department of Agriculture animal live trappers and many more.

"What a way for kids to spend a day 'in school' learning about the environment, natural resources and outdoor recreation activities," said Gozdziwski. "And the word we got is the club is planning a bigger event next year."

For another look at the program go to the ["Taylor County Sportman's Club 2009 Youth Outdoor Expo Photo Gallery"](#)

website.

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



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New long-term care Insurance available at a group discount

John Hancock recently introduced a new long-term care insurance plan that's available to state employees at a sponsored group discount. If you're interested in learning more about this insurance plan, review the online brochure "[Senior Care Insurance Services.](#)"

In addition to this new plan, there are several other long-term care plans currently offered to state employees. Go to Department of Employee Trust Funds' "[Long-Term Care Insurance](#)" webpage for basic information about these plans. As always, carefully review the benefits of each plan before selecting the policy that best fits your needs.



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New look to rare species and natural community webpages

By: Drew Feldkirchner, Bureau of Endangered Resources

You may notice a completely new look and organization to rare species and natural community information on the DNR website. In response to staff and external partners' requests, the Bureau of Endangered Resources (ER) has restructured all of its species and community pages to make them easier to find and use. Maps, photos and other information have been added, and the pages will continue to grow in number as new information is developed.



The Cerulean Warbler is among Wisconsin's threatened species

Work on these pages began prior to the department's [2009 Web Redesign Project](#). As a result of the redesign project, the DNR website has an improved search engine powered by Google, making finding species easier than ever using the search box at the top of every DNR webpage.

These redesigned pages provide users with a central place to easily find information about rare species and natural communities on the "[Wisconsin Natural Heritage Inventory Working List.](#)" Also, users of the "[NHI Portal](#)" conducting screening now will be able to access these pages directly from their portal search results by clicking on the species or community name.

With over 1,000 species on the NHI Working List, developing additional content will be a long-term project, so only limited information is available for many species now. Staff is developing comprehensive guidance, however, for a select set of high-priority animals. More detailed information already is available for all of the rare plants, as well as the threatened and endangered animals.

Check out the new "[Animals, Plants and Natural Communities](#)" pages when you get a chance and feel free to send suggestions, comments, problems, or additional links and photos to me, Drew Feldkirchner.

Footnote: *Drew Feldkirchner, Division of Forestry's liaison to Endangered Resources.*



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“Public Enemies” film includes scenes from Mirror Lake State Park

By: Luthien Niland, Bureau of Parks and Recreation

On most any given day at Mirror Lake State Park you won't see gunfights and car chases, but for several evenings in late April and early May 2008, these were common occurrences.

“During the day, the park proceeded as normal. Around five or six o'clock at night, however, the cars started rolling in, people began appearing everywhere, and bright lights lit up the area.” This scene, as described by **Paul Zajackowski**, property manager for Mirror Lake State Park, is what happened when a film crew decided his park would be the perfect place to film night scenes for the movie “Public Enemies.” The true story of legendary Depression-era bank robber John Dillinger, starring Johnny Depp and Christian Bale, the movie opened in theaters nationwide on July 1.



Period cars from the 1930s lined the entrance to Mirror Lake State Park during shooting of “Public Enemies.”

WDNR Photo

Upon agreeing to host some of the filming, Zajackowski had three priorities: to ensure the safety of all park visitors, the film crew and DNR staff; to avoid disrupting the normal park activities; and to protect the park's natural resources.

Lake Kegonsa, Governor Nelson, Governor Dodge and Devil's Lake staffs pitched in to let every park visitor know what would be occurring during their visit, from gunshots and noisy generators, to increased foot and vehicle traffic, to bright lights throughout the night. The Friends of Mirror Lake lent their pontoon boat to the crew and helped set up some scenes.

Fern Dell Road was used for a car chase scene and shootout. And, although the set was closed off while scenes were filmed at the park, hikers along the Echo Rock Trail will recognize the hilly terrain if they see the movie.

Go to [“Public Enemies’ at Mirror Lake State Park”](#) to read more about the filming. At the bottom of the webpage, click on “Wisconsin's Gangster Tour” for more information on the movie and the gangsters who found Wisconsin an attractive place when “on the run.”

Footnote: *Luthien Niland is parks specialist with the Bureau of Parks and Recreation.*

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MacKenzie Environmental Education Center to host skills day

By: Ruth Ann Lee, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Fun for all ages--families welcome!

The MacKenzie Environmental Education Center will host a free public Outdoor Skills Day and Prairie Interpretative Tour on Saturday July 11. Those attending can learn or polish up outdoor fishing, archery, cooking and shooting skills, or enjoy an interpretative tour of the prairie.

The day begins at 9 a.m., running until 2 p.m. The tour will head out at 10 a.m. There will be a concession stand open throughout the day.



A Wisconsin Wildlife Federation member led an activity during a family nature hike at the MacKenzie Center.
Wisconsin Wildlife Federation Photo

The MacKenzie Environmental Education Center operates under a partnership comprised of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, the Friends of the MacKenzie Center and the DNR.

For more information on this fun and educational day at the MacKenzie Center, call (608)635-8105. The center is located two miles east of Poynette on County Road CS, just 20 miles north of Madison. To learn more about this popular education center, visit the "[MacKenzie Environmental Education Center](#)" website.

Footnote: *Ruth Ann Lee is the lead educator for the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation and its Education Committee chair.*



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More information on this topic: **Editor: Diane Brinson**, (608) 266-5215

Questions or comments about Intranet Website: [DNR Webmaster](#)

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