

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.

December 3, 2009

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Editor's Note: two email messages announced "DNR Digest"

By: Diane Brinson, Office of Communication

For the two previous issues of the "DNR Digest" on November 30 and November 19, readers have received two email messages announcing posting of the issue. We're not certain what caused this, but we're working on the problem.

We're hoping that the problem will have been resolved prior to posting today's "DNR Digest." If it hasn't, rest assured that we'll continue to pursue a resolution.


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VideoRay equips DNR to locate and ID underwater objects

By: Tom Wrasse, Northern Region

Since obtaining their first VideoRay three years ago, DNR conservation wardens have found themselves diving into a niche of specialized underwater investigation. Although not a primary role for the department, this technology has allowed wardens to lend a hand to local law enforcement agencies in recovering drowning victims. Equipped with a radiation detector, the VideoRay also successfully located mock radioactive material during two terrorist attack exercises.



DNR warden Tom Wrasse

WDNR Photo

[VideoRay](#) was established in 1999. DNR purchased its first remotely-operated micro-submarine equipped with cameras, sonar and tools to grab objects in 2006. The Bureau of Law Enforcement acquired a second VideoRay this year. The two units are meant to compliment each other and are stationed around the state to allow quicker response when the need arises.

I lead a team of warden operators who are excited about the role they're taking on with other agencies across the state. Our exposure to this incredible technology started off a bit slowly, but recent successful missions coupled with sophisticated training opportunities have sold the merits of this technology.

DNR has had the opportunity to work with local, county, state and federal agencies, as well as some private businesses because of the capabilities of the VideoRay. Realizing that it didn't do any good just placing this tool in storage, the department has assisted other agencies by providing resources necessary to achieve common goals.

DNR now plays active role in recoveries

With the VideoRay in hand, DNR now routinely responds to requests to assist local law enforcement to recover the bodies of drowning victims. Previously, we provided boats that transported other agencies' staffs as they dragged the bottoms of waterbodies to locate drowning victims.

DNR law enforcement's position is that it's providing just another tool from its toolbox. Just as drag lines, dive teams and side scan sonar are tools in recovering bodies, so is the VideoRay. While each can stand alone, they work best in conjunction with one another.

To date, DNR's VideoRay successfully has located drowning victims on three separate occasions, thus allowing dive teams to effortlessly make the recovery. Equipped with a sonar unit and other devices, the VideoRay glided onto target, made a positive visual identification and then held on target until the dive team arrived.

Valuable tool in Homeland Security terrorism work

During the spring and summer of 2009, DNR participated in two Homeland Security scenario training exercises hosted by the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs. In both terrorist attack exercises, the VideoRay was equipped with a radiation detector to locate and identify control sources of radioactive material placed in various locations within a ship's hull.



DNR purchased a VideoRay Pro 4, as pictured here
VideoRay, Inc. Photo

DNR deployed the VideoRay, which scanned the hull and in short order located the sources of radioactive material. Staff quickly relayed to proper authorities the location of the “bombs,” which were secured. Some heads turned on this one. While land-based detectors can indicate the presence of radioactive material, the VideoRay was able to pinpoint the exact location of that material. It wasn’t long and there was a crowd watching the VideoRay “do its thing.”

DNR can use VideoRay in many ways

Within the parameters of conservation work, DNR can use the VideoRay for port security, retrieval of evidence, locating illegal nets and traps, and documenting debris fields of boat accidents and water-based crime scenes. Law enforcement is working internally with several other DNR programs to assist with other water-based projects. Fisheries Management does survey work using divers and fixed-based cameras. The VideoRay can quickly and more economically do much of the same work.

With all of the issues related to aquatic invasive species, the VideoRay can be used to gather samples and document much of the research conducted. The Water Regulations program can have shoreline development documented from a point of view never thought of before. The only limitation is your imagination.

If you have questions about or are interested in what the VideoRay may be able to do to support your program, email me, [Tom Wrasse](#), or call me at (715)358-9203.

Footnote: *Warden Tom Wrasse, Woodruff, is located in the Northern Region, where he literally has administrative responsibility for several thousand lakes that provide ample opportunity to deploy the VideoRay. He received an award from the VideoRay’s manufacturer for writing an article, upon which this “DNR Digest” story is based. The article will appear in a VideoRay publication and on its website.*



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Lake Delton fishery restoration gaining momentum

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

Walleyes average almost 10 inches

The restoration of Lake Delton’s once beached fishery is well underway, according to data collected recently via electro shocking by DNR biologists.

Fish populations are exploding and one particular species – walleye – is doing exceptionally well, noted **Scot Stewart**, fisheries program supervisor for the South Central Region (SCR). “What we found is simply amazing...there were fish everywhere, growing like crazy. It’s as if Mother Nature is trying to fill a void in the lake.”



In June, Lake Mills hatchery technician Jason Himebauch dipped out walleye fingerlings slated for stocking in Lake Delton.
WDNR Photo

The prime example is walleye, a prized gamefish, of which over 9,000 small fingerlings about 1.3 inches long were stocked on June 9, and now average almost 10 inches in length.

DNR fisheries staff boom shocked the 267-acre lake several weeks ago. The boom shocker sends out a 300 volt/14 amps pulsed electric current which temporarily stuns fish, causing them to float to the surface. There, biologists measure their length and observe their condition. Fish quickly recover from the brief stunning.

Other results show the average length of black crappie at almost four inches, largemouth bass at 5.65 inches, yellow perch at almost four inches and smallmouth bass at six inches.

2008 flooding drained lake's fishery into Wisconsin River

Heavy rain in June 2008 caused a catastrophic breach of Lake Delton at County Highway A resulting in total dewatering of the lake into the nearby Wisconsin River. The lake's fishery was either flushed into the river or left stranded on the lakebed.

Before the lake started refilling in December of last year, the department conducted a carp eradication project on the portion of Dell Creek flowing between upstream Mirror Lake and behind a coffer dam pool on the lakebed. Carp were removed because they compete with native fish species, destroy aquatic habitat, roil water and stir-up sediment, reducing water clarity.

Forage fish, stocked in the spring of 2009 after the lake refilled, served as a food base for such game fish as walleye and smallmouth bass, which DNR stocked during the early summer.

"We kept the stocking predator heavy with an eye towards those fish preying on any carp that migrated back into Lake Delton from Mirror Lake or that we missed with rotenone (fish toxicant) during the chemical treatment," explained Stewart.

Partnership brings fishery back, then some

Lake Delton area businesses and sports clubs deserve most of the credit for raising money to pay for restocking, said the fisheries program supervisor. Much of the local fundraising was coordinated by retired DNR fisheries biologist **Gordie Priegel**, who resides in Lake Delton.

Priegel retired in 1993, "but here we are 16 years later and Gordie is still managing fish. The Lake Delton fishery wouldn't be in the good shape it is now if it wasn't for Gordie," said Stewart.

Priegel, for his part, noted that local businesses and sports clubs contributed close to \$40,000 towards paying for fish stocking. This also includes \$5,000 in donations each from the Madison Fishing Expo and Walleye North American; \$16,000 for a boat, motor and trailer raffle coordinated by Walleye North American with

items provided by C & H of Lake Delton, Crestliner and Mercury Marine; and \$7,000 from Walleyes for Tomorrow. Area businessman Tom Diehl and DNR's Lake Mills Fish Hatchery also helped-out. According to Priegel, Gollon Bait & Fish Farm, Dodgeville, recently stocked 23,000 three-inch bluegills and 1,500 eight-inch channel catfish into Lake Delton.

Stewart predicts that largemouth and smallmouth bass, along with walleye in Lake Delton will reach their legal size limits of 14 inches and 15 inches, respectively, by fall 2011.

Footnote: *Greg Matthews, South Central Region's public affairs manager, covered this story and took photos.*



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Raising awareness of invasive aquatics wins Emmy Award

By: Discover Mediaworks

A coalition of organizations, including the DNR, helped create and air an episode of "Into the Outdoors," a popular children's educational television series broadcast throughout Wisconsin. That episode, "Derailing Aquatic Hitchhikers," has won an Emmy award, television's highest honor, from the Chicago/Midwest Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

"Youth is an important audience that we sometimes overlook with our aquatic invasive species prevention message. This video helps us reach that audience in a fun and engaging way," said **Christal Campbell**, aquatic invasives education specialist in the Bureau of Watershed Management.

"Derailing Aquatic Hitchhikers" is a vivid and engaging lesson for youngsters about the threat that invasive species pose to Wisconsin's lakes, waterways and natural resources. Produced by Discover Mediaworks, Inc., in conjunction with organizations whose members contributed professional expertise and sponsorship support to the program, the episode is part of a joint initiative to raise awareness about the problem of invasive species. In addition to DNR, the following organizations participated:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission
- Wisconsin Counties Association

The Emmy was presented on November 7, at the Academy's 51st annual awards ceremony in Chicago.

"We are honored to share this award with each of these organizations and the individuals who helped us create 'Derailing Aquatic Hitchhikers,'" said Mark Rose, chief executive officer of Discover Mediaworks and the co-executive producer of "Into the Outdoors."

"We were able to produce such a high-quality show because of their partnership and contributions, and because of our shared commitment to educating people about the need to protect Wisconsin's beautiful natural resources."

This is the sixth time "Into the Outdoors" has won an Emmy in the major category of "Outstanding Achievement in Children's Teen Program or Series." The series has been nominated every year since it premiered in 2001. "Into the Outdoors" airs in markets throughout Wisconsin and in neighboring states. Learn more about the "[Derailing Aquatic Invasives](#)" program on the "Into the Outdoors" website.

Footnote: *This story is based primarily on a news release issued by Discover Mediaworks.*



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Disabled veterans take up guns for special hunt

By: *Jim Bishop, Northern Region*

Four disabled military veterans from Wisconsin got a call this fall to again pick up their rifles. This time it was to hunt deer on a special program organized by Safe Hunters of Tomorrow (SHOT), assisted by local conservation warden **Jeremy Peery**, stationed in Ladysmith.

The hunt on October 9-10, took place on the land that was once an open pit mine known as the Flambeau Mining Company project, a few miles south of Ladysmith.



Proud hunters displayed their deer after the October disabled hunt near Ladysmith. Warden Jeremy Peery is at the far left in the first row.

WDNR Photo

SHOT members organized the hunt, made the calls to the veterans and got permission to hunt on the land owned by Kennecott Mining. The veterans represented most of the branches of the military that saw action in Korea, Vietnam and Iraq, and included a father-son team.

With SHOT members guiding them, the veterans took to the field after meeting up with Peery at the Ladysmith ranger station, located on the edge of the property. The station once housed the mining office.

Peery said that by the second day, four bucks and two does had been harvested.

“Overall, it was a very successful hunt and the guys had a great time,” said Peery. This was the first time such a hunt was held in the area, and Peery is unsure whether SHOT is planning to do another one. If they do, Peery said he would be there to assist, again.

“While we owe many thanks to many people who organized this hunt,” Peery added, our real thanks go to the men and women of our armed forces. Without their sacrifices, we would not have the freedoms we cherish today.”

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



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Legislature in recess until January, but hearings continue

By: *Paul Heinen, Secretary's Office*

On November 5, the Wisconsin legislature closed its 2009 floor session. Until it resumes on January 19, the legislature will continue to hold hearings and meetings, but there will be no floor votes. The “DNR Digest” will continue to provide updates on this work.

The [“2009 Bill Tracker”](#) contains a final status report on DNR-related Senate and Assembly bills introduced for fiscal years 2009-2011.

Bills introduced

- Sen. Russell Decker has introduced **SB 396**, allowing an angler fishing with another disabled angler to troll for fish.

- Sen. Jim Holperin has introduced **SB 401**, requiring that DNR offer a one-day fishing license.
- **SB 406**, which Sen. Holperin also introduced, makes a number of changes to the Snowmobile Funding and Enforcement Laws.
- Sen. Robert Jauch introduced **SB 408**, a companion bill to Rep. Mary Hubler's **AB 531**, which exempts the owner of Managed Forest Law lands from paying withdrawal taxes if the land is used for a public safety communications tower.
- Rep. Amy Sue Vruwink introduced **AB 595**, which would require DNR to issue a Class B disabled permit to terminally ill persons who wish to hunt.

Bills recently in hearings

- The Assembly Forestry Committee held a hearing on four bills dealing with changes to the Managed Forest law.
- The Assembly Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on **AB 372**, Rep. Louis Molepske's bill to eliminate the prohibition on DNR regulation of household waste.
- Rep. Donald Friske's bill **AB 431**, to exempt lake associations from paying permit fees, was heard and no vote was taken.

Bill to be enacted

- The shoreland rule NR 115 won't be heard by either the Assembly Natural Resources Committee or the Senate Transportation, Tourism, Forestry and Natural Resources Committee. It will become law as soon as the rule can be published.

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

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Reconstruction of bottom withdrawal pipe done at Devil's Lake

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

Work completed recently on repositioning a water withdrawal pipe at Devil's Lake State Park to improve water quality and alleviate flooding to an even greater degree.

The mile-long, 20-inch diameter pipe was constructed in 2002 as a siphon system to withdraw phosphorus-rich bottom water from this popular and unique Sauk County lake.



DNR limnologist Dick Lathrop pointed out the new flow valve to be installed in the withdrawal pipe.

WDNR Photo

Through fall 2008, about 5,500 tons of phosphorus had been removed by annual bottom withdrawals, primarily

during September and early October. By estimating that one pound of phosphorus produces 500 pounds of algae (wet weight), “these withdrawals represent over three million pounds of algae that **weren’t** produced in the lake,” noted Bureau of Science Services limnologist **Dick Lathrop**, Madison.

Certain algae are also the food source of snails, some species of which serve as the intermediate hosts for the swimmer’s itch parasite. Beginning in the mid-1980s, Devil’s Lake has had a history of swimmer’s itch problems, so much so that signs posted at beaches alerted bathers to the risk. Since the onset of phosphorus removal, however, local scuba divers report that snail densities have drastically declined in the lake, along with a reduction of algae growing on rocks and near-shore bottom sediments, according to Lathrop.

Besides benefitting the lake’s water quality and reducing the threat of swimmer’s itch, the pipe system was used in 2002, 2004 and from April 2008 to February 2009 to alleviate flooding. Some of the flooding, particularly in 1993, caused massive damage and dangerous conditions downstream.

So, to use the bottom withdrawal pipe as a more “proactive tool” for preventing extremely high water levels in Devil’s Lake, the siphon pipe system was converted to a gravity feed system by lowering the pipe’s high-point elevation on land, explained Lathrop.



Scenic Devil’s Lake bluff served as a backdrop to reconstruction of the bottom withdrawal pipe.

WDNR Photo

This entailed digging-up the pipe and re-trenching it about 4.6 feet lower at its highest point and inserting another flow valve in the pipe.

“This work was especially important as the siphon had a vacuum leak, which required constant maintenance to keep the pipe at its maximum flow rate,” said Lathrop.

“The pipe reconstruction eliminated the vacuum leak problem and will allow the gravity feed pipe system to be easily turned on and run at its maximum flow rate whenever water levels exceed the Ordinary High Water Mark, because the pipe’s highest point now is below the surface level of the lake,” he added.

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

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Check home address to assure you receive W-2 form on time

By: Betty McWilliams, Bureau of Human Resources

When you rip into your paycheck or paycheck stub envelope this week, take a few seconds to assure that the Bureau of Human Resources is using your correct home address.

The most important reason for doing this is to assure that you receive your W-2 tax form(s) in a timely manner. Your W-2 will be mailed first class to the address printed on your paychecks. An incorrect address can delay getting this important document into your hands for use in preparing your 2009 tax returns.

If you need to update your address, log onto the [WebRTS System](#) using the same password that you use to access your time report. Click on “Change Personal Information,” located near the lower right corner of the

["Main Menu."](#)

Footnote: *Betty McWilliams is a payroll and benefits specialist.*



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West Central Region rode and walked more than 25,000 miles

By: Ed Culhane, West Central Region

"Gas Free Challenge" saved 1,285 gallons

The green, carbon-free bike riders and walkers of DNR's West Central Region (WCR) congratulate their colleagues in South Central Region (SCR) for another successful "Bike/Walk 15,000 Challenge" with 41 participants walking or riding more than 16,500 miles in lieu of firing up their gas guzzlers.



Just a small handful of West Central Region gas-free riders, from left: Paul Laliberte, Bob Sloan, Erin and Beth Norquist, Pat Oldenburg, Mike Wenzholz, Bruce Neeb, Sonny Zentner and Ed Culhane. Beth's daughter Erin doesn't actually work for DNR, but she's a big believer in saving the planet.

WDNR Photo

WCR's 60 "Gas Free Challenge" riders bike a slightly shorter season, 27 weeks compared to South Central's eight months. These 60 rolled gas free for 25,690 miles this year, saving 1,285 gallons of gas and \$3,597 in fuel costs. That equates to 12.4 tons of carbon dioxide that wasn't released into the atmosphere.

Organizers weren't able to calculate how many pounds of fat these riders burned off, but estimate that if it was piled a foot deep on a football field it would be really gross.

There's a hard-core group, less than a half dozen, who ride bikes through the winter; that number might climb this year, organizers said. Winter riding calls for studded tires, heavily greased gears and the inability to feel pain.

WCR riders made pledge challenges and raised \$412 for food pantries in the region. Noting that SCR raised \$864 for charitable causes, WCR organizers promised to have new and creative pledge ideas ready for the 2010 "Gas Free Challenge."

Not that we're competitive or anything.

WCR's 2009 bikers and walkers: Randy Schott, Sonny Zentner, Jim Storandt, Carrie Olson, Tim Allen, Jennifer Boice, Bill Evans, Steve Grant, Jim Boettcher, Greg Edge, Ellen Gundrum, Mike Miller, Britt Searles, Ashley Gray, Jake Thompson, Dave Osier, Chris Widstrand, Dorie Bell, Michele Windsor, Kate Girsch, Noriko Katzmark, Judy Hayducsko, Erin Endsley, Dave Rozeboom, Mike Ross, Cindy Thomas, Jodi Stormoen, Gina Keenan, Debbie Konkel, Steve Janowiak, Dennis Hutchison, Lisa Gutknecht, Justine Hasz, Eric Zenz, Peter Bakken, John Schwingel, Beth Norquist, Bruce Neeb, Dave Matheys, Paul La Liberte, Will Stites, Austin Felts, Terri Wilson, Dan Baumann, Matt Slater, Gary Schluter, Ed Culhane, Rebecca Mouw, Cameron Bump, Terry Dukerschein, Cindy Koperski, Pat Murphy, Steve Edge, Mike Wenzholz, Don Kissinger, Mae Willkom, Karen Blodgett, Melissa Gillaume Cappaert, Jim Webster and Brad Henderson

Footnote: *Ed Culhane is the West Central Region's public affairs manager.*



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