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[New science ups odds of accurate aging of giant lake sturgeon](#)

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The end of the 2010 sturgeon spearing season finds that 82 of 1,820 of this ancient fish taken tipped the scales at 100 pounds or heavier, the largest at seven-feet and 212 pounds, a new Winnebago and state record lake sturgeon taken by spear. Ron Bruch, Upper Fox-Wolf Fisheries Work Unit supervisor, chalks it up to the century-old Winnebago System sturgeon management program. Management actions began in the late 1800s to protect the lake sturgeon stock in the Winnebago lakes and Wolf and upper Fox rivers. Following a harvest ban from 1915 to 1931, annual spearing seasons for sturgeon have been held on Lake Winnebago each winter, with the first modern season opened in 1932 as part of an economic relief bill passed during the Great Depression.

Over the decades, the size of the sturgeon population has grown, along with interest in the spear fishing. Due to innovative management and proactive public involvement, however, the fishery is stable and supports a current annual harvest of over 1,500 fish.

February 18 marked the end of this year's season on Lake Winnebago and the Upriver Lakes of Butte des Morts, Winneconne and Poygan – where a special annual lottery fishery was initiated in 2007.

The importance of data collected from Winnebago lakes



DNR Real Estate director Dick Steffes displayed the 87-pound, 65-inch female sturgeon that he took from Lake Poygan, near Oshkosh. His first, sturgeon spearing has been a long-held family tradition. It took Steffes 40 years to "get on board." Now, he has the bug.

WDNR Photo

DNR collects scores of data on harvested fish and spearers during the sturgeon spearing season. The department runs 11 registration stations around the Winnebago lakes. Spearers are required to register their fish the day they spear it, which provides the base of critical information Bruch and crew need to effectively manage the population and fishery.

One of the most critical bits of information collected is the age of the fish harvested. Bruch, his staff and several other colleagues recently completed research that showed these giants swimming our lakes and rivers are older than originally thought. On the Winnebago System, Bruch estimates that the largest fish they handle in harvest and population assessments are between 100 and 120 years old.

Historically, scientists counted rings shown in cross sections of the pectoral fin bone to estimate age. In 2009, however, Bruch's research led him to the conclusion that counting the number of marks on a sturgeon's inner ear bone accurately estimates its age, while the fin bones actually underestimate the age. This discovery led scientists around the world to begin re-thinking their age estimation procedures.

Despite the protection and intense management of the Winnebago sturgeon population over the years, the population still was overharvested due to both illegal poaching and legal harvesting. The population was actually at a critical low point in the mid-1960s, but 50 years later is fully recovered.

"These fish were exploited to the point where they were 'cropped off' faster than they could grow and live to a ripe old age," said Bruch. "Finally, these fish have an opportunity to experience their innate longevity." The percentage of big fish in the population has been steadily increasing over the last 15 years following implementation of new regulations designed to increase the number of large fish. "The big fish mean the management system is working. The fish now are starting to show more of their true size and age potential."

"Because we're now witnessing this trend, we're actually not sure how old they really can get. We think they can live to 150 years or more -- who knows? Maybe even 200 years."

DNR seeing bigger sturgeon for several reasons

Bruch attributes the larger and older sturgeon to a number of influences over the past 10 to 20 years including:

- Harvest control mechanisms DNR put in place in 1992, lowering the size limit to 36 inches.
- Instituting the harvest cap system, which limits the harvest to 5% or less of the available legal stock, and 20 other changes designed to increase the survival of adult female lake sturgeon. These females are the largest fish in the sturgeon population and account for up to 99% of the fish taken weighing at least 100 pounds.

- Strong hatches in the early 1900s also contributed to the greater number of larger fish.
- The sturgeon in the Winnebago System feed primarily on lake fly larvae and gizzard shad, which have been in abundant supply since 2006. The availability of these food sources can result in drastic fluctuations in weight, from one year to another.
- Overall, the fact that there are more big sturgeon can be attributed to DNR's long-running management program, designed to produce a stable sturgeon population comprised of adults a century or more in age.

No one really knows just how old or large these fish can get, but the current steps taken to manage them will tell the story in another 50 to 100 years, predicted Bruch.

Connect to the ["Winnebago System Sturgeon Spearing Season 2010"](#) on the DNR's website for more details on the just-completed season. Also, view the ["Video: Life, Legend, Legacy...Wisconsin's Lake Sturgeon."](#) for the history of Wisconsin's "world class" preservation program.

Central Wisconsin media covering the sturgeon story

- Channel 2 WBAY serving Green Bay and the communities of the Fox River Valley covered the fish stories and interviewed Bruch the day before the close of this year's season. Listen to ["Sturgeon Stories are Telling for DNR"](#) to hear what this fish manager and an angler think about the success of the harvest.
- A Next Age News video ["Sturgeon Spearing Kicks Off in Oshkosh"](#) features Bruch answering questions about how to spear a sturgeon.



Warden Jeremy Peery recipient of prestigious Haskell Noyes Award

By: Randy Stark, Bureau of Law Enforcement

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Conservation warden **Jeremy Peery**, Ladysmith, has been named the "Haskell Noyes Award" recipient for 2009. He has been stationed in Rusk County for 10 years, over the last several as the only warden in this county. Peery will receive the coveted award watch at a ceremony yet to be announced.

Since arriving in Rusk County in 1999, Jeremy has earned public respect for his work ethic, public involvement and enforcement program. Jeremy has worked to build a law enforcement program that balances enforcement and community needs, while exceeding expectations in many other facets of a warden's duties.



Jeremy Peery (left) and warden Kyle Kosin with a deer shot illegally by a non-resident using a resident license during the 2008 deer season.

WDNR Photo

Criteria for earning the Haskell Noyes award include superior service in the areas of overall law enforcement, attitude, investigations, community relationships, public relations, teamwork and criminal justice relationships, among others. The award includes a gold pocket watch with an inscription stating that

it is a Conservation Warden Efficiency Award for "Faithful and Able Service" to the state. Jeremy maintains a consistently effective enforcement program that requires that he hone a diverse array of skills. For example, the ability to conduct and manage investigations involving multiple subjects and several violations hinge on a warden's investigative skills, organizational abilities, communication skills, report writing and the ability to leverage community relationships. In one case, Jeremy demonstrated his ability to convert one piece of information into a case spanning a couple years of violating. Upon receiving a tip that a hunter allegedly had shot a deer by shining a spotlight on the animal, the investigation led to further violations involving numerous deer. Today, civil and criminal charges are pending, said Perry's supervisor **Casey Krueger**, Tomahawk.

Community involvement led to special hunts for ill youngsters and veterans

Jeremy has built a strong community program throughout the county. Perhaps the most emotionally moving program involves youths fighting life-threatening illnesses. Jeremy organized a special hunt first in 2005, and again in 2009. These hunts for two special youth enabled them to enjoy "a hunt of a lifetime." Those taking part included a young woman from Hayward who suffered a brain tumor and a stroke when she was 11 years old. The other was a young man from Tennessee who is battling Hodgkin's Disease. The three-day program saw both hunters succeed in shooting animals.

Jeremy also co-hosted the first-ever hunt in Rusk County for veterans who were disabled serving our country. The four veterans, with mentors, were able to hunt on the Flambeau Mining Company property south of Ladysmith, where they harvested six deer.

The other outdoor programs Jeremy is involved with are many and varied. He annually volunteers for the "Shop-With-a-Cop" program with the Rusk County sheriff's, providing money for less fortunate children so they can purchase Christmas gifts for themselves and their families.

Among Jeremy's other services are serving as a field-training officer and background investigator, working with warden recruits. He also works with other Rusk County law enforcement agencies who consider him "one of their own."

The history behind the Haskell Noyes Award

For most of his adult life, Haskell Noyes (1886-1948) was a successful and prominent member of the Milwaukee business community and its attendant civic circles. He helped organize the Milwaukee chapter of the Izaak Walton League, which advocated fish limits and deer seasons in the early 1920s.

Noyes personally presented the first award to famed warden Ernie Swift in 1930 and continued making these presentations until his death. Today, a member of the Noyes family presents the gold watch award each year.

Footnote: *Randy Stark is DNR's chief warden and director of the Bureau of Law Enforcement.*



Hearings set on major change in permitting livestock operations

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Switch to standardized water protection permits to free up time for inspections

DNR has set for hearings a change in the way permits are issued to large livestock operations in the state, with the goal of freeing up staff time "for compliance and inspections." Referred to as "general permits," these standardized permits would protect water without writing individual permits.

"Wisconsin has among the most rigorous permitting standards in the nation right now, and our proposed general permits have the same requirements," said Gordon Stevenson, chief of the Runoff Management Section in the Bureau of Watershed Management.

"Wisconsin has been the last state to use individual permits for large-scale livestock operations. Through adoption of general permits, we will be better able to make the most of our available time to protect public health and Wisconsin's lakes, rivers and groundwater," said Stevenson.

Read the entire news release posted on February 19 entitled ["Public hearings set on water protection permits for large livestock operations."](#)

To get even more information regarding this proposal, email [Gordon Stevenson](#) or call him at (608)267-

2759. You also can contact [Russ Rasmussen](#), Watershed Management Bureau director, or you can reach him at (608)267-7651.



Bureau of Finance releases 2010 purchasing deadlines

By: Jane Launderville, Bureau of Finance

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It's time again to finalize year-end projects as the Bureau of Finance announces the purchasing deadlines for fiscal year 2010, which ends on June 30.

To ensure that the Finance staff can complete all the necessary procurement steps, e.g. bids, requests for proposals, purchase orders, etc. by the Department of Administration's deadlines, the bureau has established the following cut-off dates. These are the latest dates to submit purchasing or printing requisitions. Finance encourages you to submit requests as early as possible.

Purchasing requisitions cut-off dates

- Materials and services costing **over \$25,000** are due in the Bureau of Finance by March 12, 2010.
- Materials and services costing **under \$25,000** are due in the Bureau of Finance by April 23, 2010.

Printing services requisitions cut-off dates

- Printing services bids **over \$25,000** are due in the Bureau of Finance by March 19, 2010.
- Printing services bids **under \$25,000** are due in the Bureau of Finance by April 9, 2010.
- Printing services that can be purchased off a contract, **regardless of the dollar amount**, are due in the Bureau of Finance by April 30, 2010.

You can contact one of the [central office purchasing agents](#) with any questions regarding these cut-off dates.

Development, grants, aids and other encumbrances for FY2010

The Bureau of Finance must receive all development, grants and aids requisitions, as well as any other amounts to be encumbered in FY2010, no later than May 7, 2010.

Submitting fiscal year 2011 purchase requisitions

Beginning May 3, 2010, you may submit purchase requisitions needed for July 1, 2010 to ensure uninterrupted operations. You also can send to Finance those orders needed in July or August. Be sure to allow sufficient lead time to conduct any required procurement steps, e.g. bids or requests for proposals, to ensure sufficient time to issue the purchase orders on July 1. **It's important that you clearly indicate on the purchase requisition that the order is for FY2011.**

You also can find these deadlines at "[Fiscal Year-End Cut-Off Dates for Purchase Orders and Printing Services](#)" on the Bureau of Finance webpage.

Footnote: *Jane Launderville is the Purchasing and General Accounting Section chief in the Bureau of Finance.*



Clean energy and climate bill could impact natural resource professionals

By: Tom Hauge, Bureau of Wildlife Management

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Public sector and non-governmental natural resources experts will join teleconference.

A teleconference for wildlife and natural resource managers, scientists, professors and students is scheduled for Thursday afternoon, March 4, to discuss the potential impact of bills before Congress on clean energy and climate change on natural resource management. DNR wildlife and fisheries experts have been invited to sit in on the call to learn what they should know about these bills.

Last spring, a clean energy and climate bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives. A bi-partisan effort now is underway to craft a clean energy and climate bill in the U.S. Senate.

As natural resource managers, we're already learning how climate change is impacting wildlife and habitat

in our country. The House bill would provide \$1.7 billion annually to protect our wildlife and natural resources by creating thousands of jobs.

Following are the participants scheduled to be on the 45-minute teleconference:

- *Michael Hutchins*: executive director of the Wildlife Society
- *Ron Regan*: executive director of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and former commissioner of Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department
- *Steve Williams*: director of the Wildlife Management Institute and former director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- *Jim Martin*: chair of the board of the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership and former fisheries director with the Oregon Division of Fish and Wildlife

The Wildlife Society, American Fisheries Society, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, and National Wildlife Federation will host the conference.

Footnote: *Tom Hauge is director of the Bureau of Wildlife Management.*



Trout Unlimited council recognized Rob Herman with a special award

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The State Council of Trout Unlimited (TU) recently recognized the work of Rob Herman, Black River Falls, with a "Special Appreciation DNR Personnel Award."



Bill Heart,(right) chair of the Trout Unlimited State Council, presented the "Special Appreciation" award to Rob Herman.

WDNR Photo

Herman is a heavy equipment operator on the West Central Region's field operations team, within the Fisheries Management program. He has worked for the department since January 1995.

"Rob has organized and forged many partnerships with local sportsmen clubs and school groups, enabling completion of many stream habitat restoration projects in Trempealeau, Jackson and Buffalo counties," said Trout Unlimited.

"It's all about the partners and working with people who want to make fishing better," said Herman.

Herman is credited with investing considerable personal time in leveraging funds and volunteer hours from many sources, including the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Trout Unlimited and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, as well as local rod and gun clubs and school groups.

"Rob is very dedicated to trout habitat restoration and his success is documented in many amazing photos depicting before-and-after conditions on streambanks and trout habitat," added TU.



Central office raises funds to help Kou Xiong bring donor to U.S.

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A central office book and bake sale on February 23 raised about \$1,100 to help West Central Region's Kou Xiong bring a family friend to Wisconsin from Thailand to donate a kidney to save his life. Total donations equal about \$8,300--so close to the \$10,000 needed.



West Central Region Hmong liaison Kou Xiong awaits the arrival of a friend from Thailand to receive a new kidney.

WDNR Photo

The sale and other employee contributions have brought DNR's total donation to \$4,330. Xiong's family held a benefit that raised approximately \$4,000, for a grand total of about \$8,300.

You can read about what's behind all of this good will in the January 28 "Digest" story "[Call goes out to help West Central's Kou Xiong with transplant.](#)"

To close the gap by raising the additional \$1,700 so Xiong's family can pay the donor's expenses, send donations to Xiong's supervisor Jackie Frase. She can be reached by phone at (715)839-3714 and by mail at DNR, P.O. Box 4001, Eau Claire WI 54702. Checks should be made out to "Kou's Transplant Fund."



Use Employee Reimbursement Account funds, or lose them

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This is a reminder that the deadline for using funds remaining in your 2009 Employee Reimbursement Account (ERA) is fast approaching. Eligible medical and/or dependent care expenses must be incurred by March 15, 2010, to be reimbursed from your remaining 2009 funds.

Remember, you must submit claims for medical expenses using 2009 money to the Fringe Benefits Management Company (FBMA) via a paper claim form by April 15, 2010. Any money left in your ERA account after the April 15 deadline will be forfeited. Be sure to submit your claims and enjoy the tax savings before it's too late.

You can find an ERA [Account Claim Form](#) on the Employee Trust Fund Internet site. If you have

any questions, contact FBMC Customer Care at 1(800)342-8017, Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. CST.



Clean energy jobs bills now head for committee votes

By: Paul Heinen, Office of the Secretary

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Following are highlights for the most recent floor sessions for the State Assembly and Senate. Go to the ["2010 Bill Tracker"](#) for a complete status report on DNR-related bills and laws.

Latest highlights:

- The Senate Select Committee on Clean Energy and the Assembly Special Committee on Clean Energy have concluded their hearings on **SB 540** (Spencer Black) and **AB 649** (Mark Miller), which together will create the Clean Energy Jobs Act. The next step is for the committees to vote on their respective bills.
- The Assembly Tourism Committee passed **AB 599** (Dean Kaufert), which makes the 55 mph nighttime speed limit for snowmobiles permanent. It now goes to the full Assembly for a vote.
- The Senate Natural Resources Committee passed **SB 406** (Jim Holperin), altering how snowmobile registrations are paid and increasing funding for DNR law enforcement. Next stop, the Joint Committee on Finance.
- **NR 52**, the Stewardship access rule now is before the Senate Environment Committee and the Assembly Natural Resources Committee. The committees have yet to schedule hearing dates.

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



Grassland birds and prairies subjects of upcoming landowner workshops

By: Greg Matthews, South Central Region

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Landowner workshops will be part of the four-day "Making It Home Film Festival" in Dodgeville on March 13. Grassland birds, groundwater and prairies will be among the topics included during the free workshops.



The bobolink is just one of the many inhabitants of Wisconsin's grasslands and prairies.

WDNR Photo

The festival, March 11-14, will screen films from around the world that explore the powerful connections between land and people. Visit the ["Making It Home"](#) website for more information.

In conjunction with the festival, one of its sponsors, the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, will conduct

three land management workshops on Saturday morning at nearby [Folklore Village](#), 3210 County Highway BB, east of Dodgeville.

Times, topics and speakers for the three 45-minute workshops:

- **Grassland Birds:** 8:30 a.m., DNR research scientist **Dave Sample**
- **Groundwater and Geology of Southwest Wisconsin:** 9:30 a.m., Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey hydrogeologist Madeline Gotkonitz
- **Prairie Restoration:** 10:30 a.m., DNR and “The Prairie Enthusiasts” research scientist **Rich Henderson**.

The workshops, like the entire “Making It Home Film Festival,” are free. Pre-registration for the landowner workshops is required, however. Register by calling Katie Abbot, with the Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, at (608)935-2791 ext. 134.

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



Employee Trust Funds to survey health insurance satisfaction

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The Department of Employee Trust Funds (ETF) has contracted with Synovate, a consumer-based research firm, to conduct a health insurance satisfaction survey of a sample of insured participants. The survey results will be published in the health plan report card included in the 2011 “It’s Your Choice Decision Guide” booklets and will be considered during health plan premium negotiations.

Active State of Wisconsin employees for whom ETF has a worksite email address, will receive an email invitation to complete the survey. Other selected employees will receive a survey letter in the mail inviting them to complete the survey on the Internet. Synovate will follow up with a printed mail version of the survey for non-respondents. Synovate expected to mail/email the first round of survey invitations by this week, February 22-26.

The Office of State Employment Relations (OSER) has approved the use of a limited amount of work time for employees to complete the survey during scheduled work hours, without loss of pay. Employees need to choose a time to complete the survey that doesn’t interfere with work duties. Any time employees spend participating in the survey beyond scheduled work hours will be on their own time. No overtime compensation is authorized. The survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete.



Regional roundtables lead up to Sustainable Communities Forum

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Event of Interest: *Face real-world challenges and create strong, equitable and sustainable communities*
The University of Wisconsin-Extension invites you to take part in its March 25-26 “Sustainable Communities Forum.” The first day will be spent developing content, with the second day focusing on writing policy recommendations to support sustainable communities. Case studies will include sustainable communities in Wisconsin and Kansas.

Speaking to the gathering will be David Morris, from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance/New Rules Project; Michael Dombeck, of UW-Stevens Point’s Global Conservation program and former chief of the US Forest Service; and Satya Rhodes-Conway, with the Center on Wisconsin Strategy.

In advance of the forum, participants will attend roundtables throughout the state, where they’ll “connect with sustainability experts, share ideas from and for your own community and craft policy recommendations to support community sustainability throughout Wisconsin.”

For details on the free “Sustainable Communities Roundtables,” go to the [“Sustainable Communities Public Policy Forum”](#) website.

Register for the public policy forum

The forum will be held at the LEED-certified UW-Fox Valley Communication Arts Center, in Menasha. The policy recommendations that come out of this event are intended to help communities and the state create a sustainable future. A publication, "Building Sustainable Communities in Wisconsin: Opportunities and Challenges Moving Forward" will be compiled following the forum.

You'll also find registration and program information at the ["Sustainable Communities Public Policy Forum"](#) website.



Origins of Earth Day, environmental movement come to life on new website

By: Gaylord Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies

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Event of interest: Exhibits and conferences to celebrate 40 years of environmental activism

A new website, ["Gaylord Nelson and Earth Day: The Making of the Modern Environmental Movement,"](#) tells the story of Earth Day founder and former Wisconsin governor Gaylord Nelson and how his idea, conceived as a "national teach-in on the environment," became a historic turning point.

A cooperative venture of the Nelson Institute, the Wisconsin Historical Society and the Nelson family, the website contains more than 200 webpages with more than 500 original documents, images, quotes, video clips and media from Nelson's three terms as a U.S. senator from Wisconsin and his subsequent work as counselor of The Wilderness Society. The documents are from the Wisconsin Historical Society's extensive collection of papers donated by the former senator 20 years ago.



When Gaylord Nelson was Wisconsin governor (1958-1962), one of his chief priorities was to create a mechanism by which the state could protect land from unrestrained development.

Photo from the archives of the Wisconsin Historical Society

"'Gaylord Nelson and Earth Day' is a remarkable resource for teachers, students, scholars and citizens wanting to learn more about the values, people, ideas and social movements that have come to shape the changing landscape of American environmentalism," said Gregg Mitman, interim director of the [Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies](#) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"Gaylord Nelson is today best remembered as the father of Earth Day, but his political career offers a wider and more revealing window on the transformation of American environmental politics during the middle decades of the 20th century," said UW-Madison environmental historian William Cronon. "Anyone interested in Nelson or the history of environmentalism will want to explore this site, which also offers a treasure trove of online documents as a model for how archival materials can be made more widely available over the web."

"Earth Day at 40" marked with exhibits and April conference

The Wisconsin Historical Society also plans two special exhibits beginning in March: one about Gaylord Nelson and Earth Day, at the Wisconsin Historical Museum in downtown Madison; the other about Gaylord

Nelson's life and career, at the Society's headquarters on the UW-Madison campus. The Nelson Institute will mark the anniversary with a public conference, "Earth Day at 40: Valuing Wisconsin's Environmental Traditions, Past, Present and Future," April 20-21 at Madison's Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center. Confirmed speakers include environmental advocate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., author Margaret Atwood, and Wilderness Society president William Meadows. For further details about the website, go to ["Gaylord Nelson and Earth Day, the making of the modern environmental movement."](#)

Information, images and other resources to help the media cover the 40th anniversary of Earth Day are available on the website at ["Background information for the media."](#)

For information about the historical exhibits and April conference, visit ["40th anniversary of Earth Day events."](#)

For additional information, contact:

- Interim director of the Nelson Institute, [Gregg Mitman](#), (608)265-5296.
- Environmental historian, [William Cronon](#), (608)265-6023.
- Public information manager, [Tom Sinclair](#), (608) 263-5599



State park visitation shows an upward trend nationwide

By: DNR "The Parks Shorts" newsletter

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In September 2009, non-partisan think tank Resources for the Future released a report titled "The State of the Great Outdoors: America's Parks, Public Lands, and Recreation Resources." Data gathered on current trends in demand for outdoor resources and open space revealed that state parks fare better than national recreational venues when it comes to numbers of visitations.



Wisconsin Explorer is designed for kids visiting state parks, forests, trails and recreation areas. Participants earn this patch by completing the program.

WDNR Photo

The section "Demand for Outdoor Recreation" addresses the problem of declining outdoor time for kids and assesses rates of visits to national parks, Forest Service lands, national wildlife refuges, and other public lands. The overall findings were that rates of visits are declining for federal lands and remaining constant for state parks, as a whole.

Urban park visitation is actually on the rise, however. According to the report, this trend suggests that if kids have more access to local parks, they'll be more likely to spend time outdoors.

Data gathered since 1960 was used to compile visitation rates and compare across public lands. Survey methods and data sets were different or incomplete for certain parks, however, making proper comparison difficult. Read the report's recommendation for acquiring more complete data on park visitations in the full

report ["The State of the Great Outdoors."](#)

Footnote: *The Bureau of Parks and Recreation posts "The Parks Shorts" newsletter weekly for state parks staff.*



North America's environmental film fest coming to Madison

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Event of Interest: *Films feature farming's effects on the Mississippi River and picnicking bugs.*

This year's "Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival On Tour" will feature a slate of short films from stories of watershed restoration, to the impact of agriculture on rivers, to the challenges of being a picnicking bug! Hosted by the River Alliance of Wisconsin, the festival will take place at the Majestic Theatre in Madison on March 9.

The event will feature seven films from the 2010 festival. Highlighting the screening will be "Big River." From the makers of "King Corn," this film investigates the impact an acre of corn has had on the residents and a community down the Mississippi River. In a journey that extends from the American heartland to the Gulf of Mexico, two men trade their combine for a canoe and set out to see the bigger world their little acre of corn has touched.

The film lineup also includes:

- "Get Up, Stand Up," a celebration of the little known art of whitewater surfing;
- "Ascending the Giants," which follows two tree-climbing enthusiasts as they attempt to find and climb Oregon's largest Sitka Spruce trees;
- "Secret Life of Paper," considers the environmental impact of that most basic of everyday products, paper;
- "The New Species," a hilarious stop-motion animated short from Latvia which follows a family of picnicking bugs that encounters a determined collector; and
- "Garbage Angels," winner of Best Canadian Short at the Planet in Focus International Environmental Film and Video Festival;
- "A Simple Question: the Story of S.T.R.A.W." This inspiring story follows a fourth grade class project in the Stemple Creek Watershed of northern California that, over the last 17 years, has restored more than 20 miles of habitat while galvanizing a community.

Majestic Theatre doors will open at 6 p.m. on March 9. There will be a post-screening party beginning around 9:30 p.m. Tickets for the screening only will be \$10. A \$25 ticket will get you into the screening and the party, as well as a one-year membership to the River Alliance. Buy tickets at either Madison-area Fontana Sports locations, the River Alliance office, online at ["Brown Paper Tickets"](#) or at the theater box office the day of the event.

The [Majestic Theatre](#), 115 King St., is kitty corner from the Department of Natural Resources building (GEF 2).

The Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival was started by the watershed advocacy group, the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) in 2003. The festival's namesake celebrates achieving Wild and Scenic status for 39 miles of the South Yuba River in 1999. SYRCL celebrated their eighth annual event last month. The three-day event in California featured more than 125 award-winning films and included speakers, celebrities and activists who bring a human face to environmental issues.

For more information, email [David Pausch](#) at the River Alliance or call him at (608)257-2424 ext. 114.



The Grasslands Bioenergy Symposium: "The Wisconsin Challenge"

By: R. Chris Welch, Bureau of Science Services

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Wisconsin grasslands are important areas in that they support water, soil and wildlife resources protection. They're also potential sources of biomass for bioenergy. Many important questions regarding development of cellulosic biomass markets in Wisconsin held the attention of those attending the "Wisconsin Grasslands Bioenergy Symposium" on February 16.



At the February 16 symposium, DNR's David Sample discussed how grassland bioenergy development in Wisconsin will affect grassland systems.

WDNR Photo

Hosted by the Agricultural Ecosystems Research Group (AERG) at the Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison, the symposium stimulated discussion on critical issues related to perennial non-woody bioenergy production.

The symposium agenda included presentations related to the future of energy in Wisconsin and the state's conservation needs; ecosystem services of grassland bioenergy systems; grass monocultures and diverse grasslands; economic and policy influences on grassland systems; and the next steps to address research, outreach and policy needs.

More than 120 participants attended the event, including academic researchers and students, public agency natural resource professionals, private sector environmental consultants, nonprofit organization representatives, landowners and managers and others.

All of the presentations were recorded and are available in the DNR's Mediasite catalog under "[Energy.](#)" AERG is a Wisconsin-based consortium of researchers, outreach and policy experts, educators and practitioners (e.g., farmers) interested in whole-system approaches to pressing agro-environmental challenges of our time. **David Sample**, scientist with the DNR Wildlife and Forestry Research section; and Christine Ribic, Forest and Wildlife Ecology at the UW-Madison, supervise the AERG's work researching the intersection of wildlife ecology, agriculture, economics, energy production and policy.

Learn more about AERG at the UW's [Forest and Wildlife Ecology](#) website.

Footnote: *Chris Welch is science communications manager in the Science Information Services Section.*