

# Wisconsin Rivers

A Publication of the River Alliance of Wisconsin • Winter 2006 • Volume 12 • Issue 1

Everyone deserves healthy rivers

## The Ancient Music of Northern River Trails

By Gail Gilson Pierce



This marshy maze marks the entrance to the Bois Brule River. Photo courtesy of John Bates and Mary Burns.

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Wilderness music. It's a subtle thing, best heard when accompanied by the steady, rhythmic cadence of a canoe paddle slicing through a Northwoods river. To some it sounds like the rush of wind through the far-reaching white pine branches that guard the stream banks, or the wail of a common loon communicating his residency on a particular river stretch.

But to those who really listen, it's the echoing barter for trade goods at an ancient Ojibwa village located at the confluence of two northern streams, or the chansons of fur traders keeping their paddling rhythm with song. It's the sounds of commerce made possible as early as 10,000 years ago by the spider web of rivers and lakes interconnected to create the first "highways" that connected northern Wisconsin to the rest of the country.

Mary Burns and John Bates are northern Wisconsin naturalists and water trail historians who make their home on the shores of the Manitowish River, not far from an ancient portage trail. "Early American Indian tribes depended on the river

*"...of all the spots and places I have seen in my thirteen years of travels, this is the most horrid and sterile. The Portage road is truly that to heaven because it is narrow, full of over-turned trees, obstacles, thorns, and muskegs. Men who go over it loaded and are obliged to carry baggage over it certainly deserve to be called 'men'."*

-Francois Victor Malhiot, North West Fur Company

trail systems for quick and efficient travel," said Burns. "They spent the winter in one place and summer in another so they could best make use of available resources. They might hunt in one area, fish in another, and make maple syrup someplace else," she added.

Wisconsin's watery landscape is truly a gift from the glaciers, and perhaps nowhere is that felt more keenly than in the Northwoods, where even today, our economy is water-based. When the last glaciers retreated from this area, some 10,000 years ago, they left behind large chunks of ice at their receding edges. Over time, as the

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## Stream of Thought

# Suburbs on the Flowages

The real estate market, and not the stock market, is the place to be if you want some serious return on your investments these days. This is doubly true if the real estate you own has water on or near it. There are undeveloped lots on lakes in northern Wisconsin that are selling for the price of fully developed lots in the Milwaukee suburbs.

Hydro dam owners have held such watery real estate since they put those dams up, in many cases dating back to the 1930s. In the old days, as part of their obligation to the public for using the rivers that belong to all of us, the dam-owning utility companies would keep their so-called “project lands” undeveloped, even wild. In many cases, they provided recreational amenities such as boat landings, campgrounds and picnic sites. These dams are licensed by the federal government (the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission or FERC) and often times maintaining these lands in their natural state was a condition of re-licensing.

But those were the old days. It’s a new day, of utilities itching to divest themselves of “unproductive” but valuable assets, like developable land, to sweeten their financial position for a merger or takeover, and to take advantage of our insatiable appetite for water property. It’s a new day, with an attitude at both state and federal government that what’s good for business is simply good enough – never mind impacts on resources.

In Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula, we see a pattern, at least with one utility and perhaps more, to cash in on the real estate boom and exploit a much lighter regulatory hand. A few years ago, Green Bay-based Wisconsin Public Service Corp. (WPS) succeeded in selling 10,000 acres of its project lands lining the flowages of the dams it operates on the Peshtigo River. Most of it was sold to Wisconsin taxpayers as park land, and about 400 acres to private parties as individual lakeshore lots. (The River Alliance unsuccessfully challenged all these sales as a violation of WPS’s license to operate those dams. The Bush Administration’s FERC did not agree with us.)

Now WPS is at it again, proposing (through its subsidiary, the Upper Peninsula Power Co.) to sell off over 7,000 acres of land in the Ontonogan

River system that are not “project lands” directly on flowages but adjacent to them. The Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources, writing for several public and private agencies, sent an energetic critique of the scheme to FERC in early January (view it online at: [http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file\\_list.asp?accession\\_num=20060105-5052](http://elibrary.FERC.gov/idmws/file_list.asp?accession_num=20060105-5052)) outlining the myriad threats to resources, not to mention the potential violations of WPS’s licenses, that letting housing development into these areas may cause.

In the village of Biron, just north of Wisconsin Rapids on the Wisconsin River, circumstances are different, but the underlying issue is the same: selling off riverfront property which had been historically protected because of its proximity to a hydro dam. In the Biron case, the land is at least in the village limits where high-density development ought to go. But the developer has talked the county into rerouting a county road in order to give full river access to people who want to buy river shore lots. The developer has redesigned the plan to make what had been a county road corridor paralleling the river for several hundred yards into a recreational trail (as the River Alliance suggested in our motion to intervene in this project with FERC). But the plan also carves a marina out of the shore line, may fill in wetlands, and isn’t at all clear about public access to the county road-cum-river trail.

The big picture here is this: it is all about the continued privatization of public waters. Yes, the land is private and land owners can do what they want. But what good is public water if the access is restricted? What additional pressure is put on fish and other wildlife from fragmenting these project lands? How much more polluted runoff ends up in the river? What happens when these hydro dams become too old or uneconomical to operate and should be removed – the best thing that could happen to the river, ecologically? Will the “lakeshore” home owners fight to save a dam that shouldn’t be there in order to maintain private access to a public water body?

As a society, we still need to worry about water quality and water quantity. But we also have to be vigilant about access to water as well.



Denny Caneff  
Executive Director

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## Policy Program

# Lawmakers Bash, Stormwater Mishmash, and "Where's the Cash?"

Lori Grant  
Policy Program Manager

### 2005, Get Thee Behind Us

It was a tough year on the environment and the beleaguered agency charged with protecting it.

During the state budget deliberations, we barely escaped cuts to the already woefully under-funded polluted runoff programs, even after a spate of manure-induced fish kills last spring. More recently, a number of bills undermining DNR rules still in the making have cropped up – draft rules governing piers and docks have generated the most legislative bile.

Now a Senate Select Committee is busy gathering stories on how DNR has gone overboard in enforcement of environmental rules. One state senator is defending a company whose violations of state law earned him one of the biggest fines ever levied a polluter in Wisconsin. Hmmm, could we be entering campaign season already?

On the bright(er) side, there was overwhelming support throughout the state for strong shoreland zoning, the standards for land development along rivers and lakes. DNR staff estimate that of the 15,000 comments they received, approximately 12,000 unequivocally called for rules actually stronger than those proposed by DNR. It remains to be seen when the rules, revised to reflect public input, will move forward to become law, but the strong showing of support cannot be ignored.

Despite the DNR-bashing and some legislators' hostility toward environmental protection, a couple of river-friendly initiatives are progressing –increasing protections for 40 of the northern Wisconsin's cleanest rivers by designating them "Outstanding" or "Exceptional Resource Waters," and naming two new state Wild Rivers. Both are in the works, and could be approved yet this year.

### Zeroing in on construction storm water

We've been focusing on improving controls and funding for reducing agricultural runoff into rivers. But it's clear that with all the urban development going on, construction site erosion and runoff are getting our attention. According to DNR's research, runoff from construction sites is the largest source of sediment pollution. On an average construction

site, 30 tons of sediment per acre erodes into nearby waterways. (A well managed corn field, by contrast, erodes two to five tons per acre.) In Dane County's Lake Mendota basin alone, 19% of the total phosphorus load and 23% of the sediment load to the lake comes from construction sites, comprising just .3% (that's point 3 per cent) of the land base in the basin.

After the rains began last fall, we started hearing from members about muddy rivers flowing off construction sites into streams, silting up fish spawning beds and turning clear trout streams to chocolate milk. They wanted to know what the rules were for controlling stormwater at construction sites, who to call to report problems, and how to prevent it from happening again. Once we began investigating in order to answer their questions, we realized the regulatory structure is murkier than a storm water pond.

### Who you gonna call?

The Department of Natural Resources is the only Wisconsin agency authorized by the federal Environmental Protection Agency to administer the stormwater runoff requirements of the Clean Water Act. The rules are adequate, but as with so many of DNR's responsibilities, there aren't enough staff to ensure compliance and to enforce the rules. In DNR's northern region, comprised of the 18 counties generally north of Highway 8, there is one – ONE – stormwater inspector. If a significant violation is discovered, the resulting paperwork means even less time in the field for the lone inspector.

Another twist is that even though DNR answers to EPA on stormwater control issues, DNR only oversees site preparation for residential projects and commercial subdivisions. Most building construction projects, including big-box developments from the initial groundbreaking to completion, are under the oversight of the Department of Commerce. "Oversight" might be too strong a term, however, as Commerce has ZERO stormwater inspectors! In many instances, basic construction inspection is delegated to local governments, but in any case, the inspectors who make sure the plumbing and electrical systems are up to code typically don't have a clue about stormwater control.

### Storming ahead

First, we intend to raise awareness about this sleeper issue – no one is minding the store. Placing all construction stormwater compliance and enforcement responsibilities under DNR without adequate staffing won't help, but increasing inspectors in both DNR and Commerce would be a step in the right direction. We will advocate for new construction fees to raise revenues for inspectors. Based on statewide housing and commercial building starts, a \$25 fee per new housing unit and a \$500 fee per new commercial building site would generate \$1.25 million per year to hire 10-15 construction site stormwater inspectors and educators.

Second, we will develop a toolkit to help citizens understand who's responsible for what, what a violation of stormwater requirements looks like, who they can contact depending upon the type of construction project, and what they can do locally to improve construction stormwater control. The toolkit will also be the basis for a training program

*Continues on page 7...*

## Champions, It's Time to Step Up

Every year, the River Alliance recognizes river and watershed protection work above and beyond the call of duty through our River Champion Awards. We welcome nominations from you, our members.

Think of a local organization (friends group, land trust), or private business (farm, factory or other), or a public employee or elected public official that is doing exemplary work to protect flowing waters as part of their efforts as a volunteer or professional.

We grant the awards at our Spring Confluence, held this year in the Rotunda Room of the Overture Center, in Madison, April 22.

To nominate a River Champion, go to [www.wisconsinrivers.org/champions06](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/champions06)

## Acting Locally

# Protected by Persistence

How a local group raised \$3 million to protect an open space in Middleton

Jay Kreinitz

Local Group Assistance Program -  
Assistant Manager

Sally Kefer is one tough conservationist.

“She’s has a fierce determinism,” says Brian Butler, president of the Friends of Pheasant Branch. It’s a good thing too, since that determination has helped Sally and the rest of the Friends group successfully raise \$3 million to preserve one of the last open spaces in the Dane County community of Middleton. Originally slated for development, this land will now be restored and protected for future generations. If development had occurred, about 2 million gallons of stormwater runoff could have been routed to Lake Mendota via the conservancy marsh and creek.

It was only at the 11th hour, in this most recent push to protect the 19.27 acre parcel of land, that they finally achieved victory. On the day the option to purchase would have expired, the Friends group received \$100,000 from the Madison Community Foundation, and \$20,000 from a private donor, making the Friends’ \$3 million purchase a reality (The Capital Times, 12/07/05).

Over the last few years, the Friends group both gained and lost significant ground on their quest to raise this substantial amount of money.

“It’s been a long road,” says Sally. “The group had some pretty honest moments in the last few years,” referring to the group’s attempt to weigh partial development vs. no development options for the land. A few times, a partial development option was within reach of the group’s reach, but “several board members and advisors held firm to the goal of no development,” says Sally. “As the trails were improved by the City of Middleton in the past year, and more visitors came to use the land each day, the groundswell of public support continued to grow as did financial contributions from citizens, businesses and local foundations.”

Reflecting on the Friends’ success, Brian Butler stated in a press release that the group’s fundraising efforts had “exceeded our own expectations and set a new precedent in mustering public support for open space and watershed protection in our area.”



Susan Gruber, left, Emil Haney, Jim O'Brien, and Sally Kefer. River Alliance photo.

### A “How-to” for Grassroots Fundraising

A recently elected board member, Emil Haney, learned as much on this project as he ever did in his professional life working for natural resource protection in developing countries. Emil and the rest of the group learned invaluable lessons in grassroots organizing and fundraising as a result of this project.

“It was only through garnering wide support from the community that we finally achieved success,” says Emil. A community fundraiser was initiated in July of 2004 which has raised \$328,000 to date. Without that show of public support, the Dane County Board and the Middleton City Council may not have endorsed the conservation purchase. The Dane County Conservation Fund contributed \$865,000 to the project and the City of Middleton, \$300,000.

By knocking on doors, talking with neighbors, condo associations, social organizations, businesses, and looking to anyone and everyone who would help, the group gathered the support they needed to win. Even the staunchest members of their group hesitated at first about asking for the money that they needed for success. But in the end, the group realized that building public support, finding funding for protecting natural areas, and organizing their volunteer group to support a sustainable future for conservancy and lake protection is nothing to be shy about.

“We eventually developed our message well for what we wanted to do,” says Emil. He encourages other groups to “not lose sight of long term goals, and push on when the effort seems too hard. Though you don’t want to burn bridges that may be valuable down the road, don’t be afraid to put the pressure on in key places when it matters. Keep your members on board and active by involving them in the work you’re doing.” It takes a lot of effort to organize people to help with projects, but it’s what grassroots conservation is all about.

“Clarity about the importance of the project, relating it to the livability of the community and its environmental goals gives people ownership,” says Sally. “Keep all potential funders and interested community groups informed about the good and the bad news as a project progresses.”

FOPB board members agree that it was a team effort with a talented and committed board and the tremendous level of community support that brought project success. There’s still a lot of work to do, following the closing on January 31, 2006, including developing and implementing a restoration plan for the land over the next few years.

Visit [www.pheasantbranch.org](http://www.pheasantbranch.org) for updates about the Highland Way project and to learn about other FOPB organization activities.

*Friends of Wisconsin State Parks/River Alliance of Wisconsin*

# Conservation in Common: Actions and Strategies to Protect Your Rivers, Parks and Trails



Don't miss this chance to connect with other citizens who are working to protect, restore and enhance Wisconsin's rivers, parks and trails. Join us at one of these two events, and:

- Learn from your peers around the state.
- Attend hands-on seminars and workshops to build your conservation skills and strengthen your organization.
- Enjoy the camaraderie of your fellow land and river enthusiasts.
- Welcome new members to our growing community of grassroots conservationists.
- Enjoy live music, guided hikes and much more!

*"The array of people here, their commitment and energy was awesome. I feel energized and hopeful. The variety of activities was broad with plenty of depth."*

*"This was a great learning and motivating experience. I knew you existed but I wasn't aware of the level of commitment and excitement that your organization pulled together."*

*"I want to thank all of you for organizing the 2002 watershed event. Being new to 'river work,' it was an eye-opening experience for me."*

*-2002 conference participants*

## Conference Highlights

- **Internet Tools for Natural Resource Protection Seminar** – Learn to use free, easy-to-use online tools to find important natural resources information and to create customize maps to meet your needs.
- **Communicating Effectively About Conservation Seminar** – Learn to convey your organization's message to your target audience through an effective communications strategy. Learn about the key steps to developing a successful communications campaign and begin putting them into practice to meet your organization's conservation goals.
- **Special Musical Performance: Erin O'Brien** – Come hear this award-winning musician, described as "a new and welcome voice on the folk music scene" by Madison's Capital Times.
- **And many sessions on techniques for river and land protection, outreach, fundraising, organizational capacity-building and more!**
- **Developing New Leaders for Your Organization Seminar** – Identify new ways to recruit volunteers and build new leaders using your organization's existing projects. You will leave the session with a plan for your upcoming projects that is designed to grow your volunteer base.
- **Rhythms of Our Rivers** – Join us for this celebration of the human connection to local waters and their surrounding landscapes. Tell us what inspires you. In turn, your ideas will provide the inspiration for a collection of original songs showcasing the energy, emotion, and urgency that influences local water conservation.

We want to recognize our conference cosponsors, whose support makes *Conservation in Common* possible:

Black Earth Creek Watershed Association, Community Conservation, Gathering Waters Conservancy, Midwest Environmental Advocates, Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, Plover River Alliance, Polk County Assn of Lakes & Rivers, Trout Unlimited-Wisconsin State Council, Valley Stewardship Network, South Fork Flambeau River Watershed Association, and the Washburn County Lakes & Rivers Association. Other supporters include the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Patrick Engineering, Inc.

**SAVE THE DATE** **March 31-April 1<sup>st</sup> • Camp Matawa**  
(Northern Kettle Moraine State Forest)

**April 28-29<sup>th</sup> • Holiday Acres Resort**  
(4 mi. east of Rhinelander)

## Wisconsin's Northern River Trails Continues from cover...



Today this sign marks the historic Bois Brule - St. Croix portage. Photo courtesy of John Bates and Mary Burns.

ice chunks melted, they left depressions on the landscape that filled with rain or groundwater, forming lakes. Glaciers also helped create watershed divides and the rivers that define them. Because rivers often flow into lakes, northern Wisconsin is rich in interconnected water routes – routes that facilitated travel across the northern region, and beyond.

### Liquid Highways

“From the Bois Brule River in northwestern Wisconsin, it was just a two mile portage to St. Croix Lake and the headwaters of the St. Croix River, and from there it was easily onward to the Mississippi,” Bates said. “Or, early travelers could follow the Flambeau Trail to the Chippewa River or to the Manitowish and then to the Wisconsin. From there they could make their way to Lac Vieux Desert, on to the Brule and Menominee Rivers and right into Lake Michigan,” he added.

Evidence of long distance travel and trade is supported through finding copper from Michigan’s Upper Peninsula in Louisiana, and Wisconsin archaeological sites containing sea shells from the Gulf Coast, obsidian from Wyoming and pipestone from western Minnesota.

Significant Indian village sites sprang up at nearly every major water confluence in the region, including one on Trout Lake in Vilas County where the Trout River leaves the lake. Archaeological reports from the early 1900s documented the presence of burial mounds and evidence of agriculture. These villages also served as major commerce centers beginning in the mid 1600s, when voyageurs arrived



Northern Wisconsin is connected to the rest of the country through an extensive spider web of interconnected rivers and lakes. Photo courtesy of John Bates and Mary Burns.

in the north country bringing trade goods to Indian villages in exchange for furs to support an insatiable fashion demand in Europe. In fact, a Hudson Bay Trading Post was located very close to the Trout Lake village.

Traveling these water highways was difficult, because eventually travelers had to portage overland to get to the next body of water. The natives knew the portage routes intimately, and often acted as guides for European traders and explorers.

“Portage distances were measured in ‘pauses,’ or rests taken on the overland trails between water,” Burns said. “If the terrain was difficult, the pauses were closer together.”

### Of Paddles and Men

Burns and Bates have done extensive research using journals of early explorers to get a feel for the hardships travelers faced when they had to carry their goods overland between water routes. Bates chuckled as he recounted the trials of Francois Victor Malhiot, an early agent for the North West Fur Company. Malhiot complained terribly of the 45-mile portage called the Flambeau Trail. The trail crossed the watershed divide which separates the Mississippi River and Great Lakes Basins, a popular travel route.

*“...of all the spots and places I have seen in my thirteen years of travels, this is the most horrid and sterile. The Portage road is truly that to heaven because it is narrow, full of over-turned trees, obstacles, thorns, and muskegs. Men who go over it loaded and are obliged to carry baggage over it certainly deserve to be called ‘men’.”*

Bates added, “Travel over the Flambeau Trail was

a 120-pause portage. It could take a week or more to walk depending on the trail’s condition, the load carried, and how motivated the travelers were.”

But adversity breeds resourcefulness, so early water travelers stashed canoes all over the region to avoid having to carry them across portage trails. In fact, they were often filled with trade goods and sunk to create underwater caches. This proved an effective way of preserving and hiding nonperishable goods and equipment, and protecting boats from weather damage and thieves.

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The Turtle Portage was part of the Bad River canoe trail system that connected Lake Superior with the Mississippi. Photo courtesy of John Bates and Mary Burns.

*Continues from previous page...*

Today these water trails are, in some cases, still used for commerce, and all still provide opportunity for solitude and quiet travel. The overland portage routes are mostly grown over and known to only a few dedicated historians. But the wilderness music composed during this rich cultural period still exists, for anyone who cares to listen.

“Whenever I paddle the Manitowish, the Bear, the Trout or the Wisconsin – especially on a foggy morning – I can almost imagine coming around a bend and hearing voyageur songs or seeing a dug-out canoe because these rivers are still so pristine and isolated. I have this amazing sense of being in a timeless place,” Bates concluded.

“I care about these ancient water trails because knowing about them preserves a link to our past and honors our history,” Burns added. “It’s good to belong to the same membership of travelers as those who went before us.”



A modest rock marks the historically significant Bois Brule - St. Croix portage where early explorer Henry Schoolcraft passed through in 1820. Photo courtesy of John Bates and Mary Burns.

*Special Note: Today a small, but dedicated group of Wisconsin historians are doing all they can to document the existence of these early water trails and create accurate maps. Marshfield social studies teacher Jim Bokern has compiled an extensive collection of historical maps, early journal entries and his own research on water trails of the Lake Superior Region. To access this material visit [www.marshfield.k12.wi.us/socsci/discovery/bokern](http://www.marshfield.k12.wi.us/socsci/discovery/bokern). Mary Burns and John Bates may be contacted at [manitowish@centurytel.net](mailto:manitowish@centurytel.net).*

## Lawmakers Bash

### *Continues from page 3..*

River Alliance will offer later in the year, hopefully in time for next fall’s rains.

Midwest Environmental Advocates is also preparing a detailed stormwater control toolkit with a focus on tracking big-box developments. Together, we want to make sure this issue gets the attention it deserves.

## Piloting Citizen Water Monitoring

### Frank Fetter

After years of calls to more systematically use citizen-gathered water quality data, the River Alliance and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) are working to make it happen.

This year a number of volunteer grass roots watershed organizations and school groups will participate in a pilot project to determine if citizen monitors can accurately and consistently collect stream data using DNR’s protocols, and if the resulting data will be of sufficient quality for the agency to use it to make decisions about how those streams are managed.

I coordinate this effort to ensure the pilot project is a success and advance the understanding and support of current citizen monitoring activities throughout Wisconsin.

The pilot project involves training groups representing all five DNR regions in collecting data on five baseline stream parameters: dissolved oxygen (DO), pH, air and water temperature, and turbidity. Pilot groups will be trained to perform this moni-

toring using the same methods WDNR staff use. The resulting data will be entered into the DNR’s Surface Water Integrated Monitoring System (SWIMS), the database being developed to house all of the WDNR’s water monitoring data. If all goes as planned, the volunteer-gathered data will meet the same quality standards as data gathered by DNR staff.

There are already many groups doing water monitoring. Most of them are involved in one or both of the two statewide monitoring programs, Self-Help Lake Monitoring (for lakes), and Water Action Volunteers (for streams). However, some go above and beyond the requirements of these programs; clearly, it’s becoming increasingly obvious that there is a much wider network of citizen monitoring than anyone thought. There is no one place to find these groups, identify their monitoring activities, or reach their data. The River Alliance recognizes that better understanding this issue, and working to help identify, connect and support these groups and their varied monitoring efforts, is crucial.

One task is to identify and select local groups to participate in the project, and catalogue as many groups doing monitoring as we can find. We hope to have the pilot groups selected by early February. If you think your group might be interested in participating in the pilot, or if your group is doing monitoring outside the two existing programs, please email me at [ffetter@wisconsinrivers.org](mailto:ffetter@wisconsinrivers.org) or [frank.fetter@dnr.state.wi.us](mailto:frank.fetter@dnr.state.wi.us).

## You're Invited!

### “Wisconsin: A River Paddler’s Perspective” - A Visual Presentation

Rick Kark, a retired physician, avid paddler and River Alliance member, has paddled over 266 rivers in Wisconsin, in all of the state’s counties. His slide show touches on the flora, fauna, history and especially the geology of our state. Come and appreciate the natural features and immense variety of Wisconsin’s rivers. Great therapy for the ice-locked canoeist!

Join us **Sunday, February 26**, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Urban Ecology Center, 1500 East Park Place, Milwaukee. For more information, call 414-964-8505. Free, donations welcome.

Co-sponsored by Friends of Milwaukee’s Rivers and the Urban Ecology Center.

### Wild Rivers 40th Anniversary Celebration

Mark your calendars for the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the designation of Wisconsin’s first Wild Rivers. Join us **Saturday, May 20, 2006** from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Wild Rivers Interpretive Center in Florence, Wisconsin for a day of inspirational speakers, river stories, art exhibits and family programs!

# 2005 Annual Report

Rebecca Power, Board Chair

During a backpacking trip near Cliff Dwellings National Monument in western New Mexico, along one of the Gila River forks, I stood across the river from a lone cliff dwelling, a short day's hike from the Monument. I imagined that I could feel the people that used to live there, sharing the river's whisperings of time gone by, and time yet to come. I imagined it as those ancient inhabitants' "home river," and I felt then that the river was a thing my whole being could count on.



In 2005, there was a river in Wisconsin that many counted on for its wild places and rich fishing holes. Deer and the willows on its banks counted on it for a cool summer drink. Trout and stoneflies counted on for their very lives. And one day, a part of that river dried up.

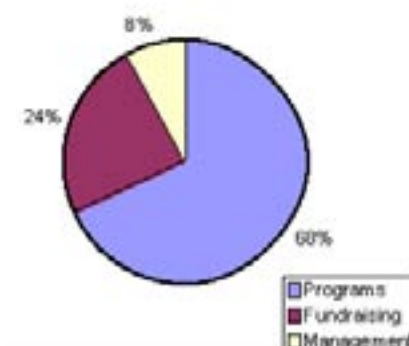
What you can count on from the River Alliance is that every day, we stand between rivers and actions that put them at risk. You can count on us to provide you with information, training, and advice. You can count on us to be a voice for rivers in the Capitol halls, the Governor's office, and with agencies and organizations that impact Wisconsin waters. You can count on us to help you protect or restore what should be one of the certainties in life – clean, healthy, fishable, swimmable, free-flowing waters.

To that end, the River Alliance has achieved several milestones in 2005:

- We opened a northern office with steady and capable Gail Gilson Pierce at the helm to better support river advocates in northern Wisconsin.
- We helped six new local river groups get started, including the Friends of the Little Plover, part of which dried up for a short time this summer. We provided customized one-on-one trainings for seven other groups statewide, and provided organizational development training - basic survival training - for nine other groups.

- We helped with the efforts of northern Wisconsin citizens to get state Wild Rivers designation for the St. Croix Headwaters and Totogatic River. Governor Doyle made it a priority as part of his "Conserve Wisconsin" agenda.
- We advanced a petition for outstanding and exceptional resource waters to where the DNR selected 40 from our "Top 100" to propose for this added protection.
- Two big victories include the removal of Kenosha Country Club Dam (Pike River, Kenosha County) and the three Spitzer Dams on Millhome Creek in Manitowoc County.
- We advanced a breakthrough process to determine where dams have the greatest ecological impact and to communicate with dam owners in major drainage basins throughout the state about their options.
- We challenged the arrangement between DNR and the utility that runs the St. Croix Falls dam so that the dam's impacts on endangered species are more closely monitored.

EXPENSES DISTRIBUTION 2005



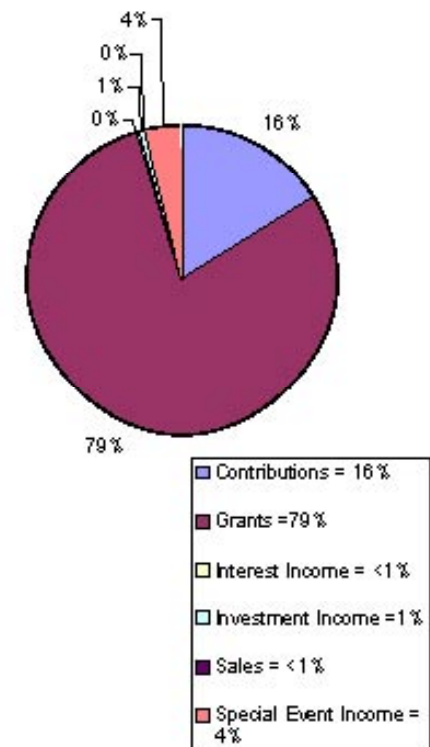


- In partnership with the DNR, we launched a citizen water monitoring pilot project that will gather more and better data on certain waterways and improve the river classification process that protects rivers.

Every one of you has a river you count on to be there for you and your children's children to come. The River Alliance will continue to be an organization you can count on, but like rivers, we need your help to continue providing the services you value. Thank you for all you've done in 2005 for Wisconsin's rivers. Please consider what you'd like to do in 2006 and contact a River Alliance staff or board member today. We'd love to help you help your favorite river in any way we can.

<b>Utilities</b>	<b>87.08</b>
<b>Pass-through expenses</b>	<b>11,487.26</b>
<b>Board Expense</b>	<b>1,278.74</b>
<b>Direct Mail</b>	<b>28,210.24</b>
<b>Dues &amp; Contributions</b>	<b>2,722.70</b>
<b>Fees</b>	<b>60,187.49</b>
<b>Insurance</b>	<b>2,591.84</b>
<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>3,840.14</b>
<b>Office Equip Exp</b>	<b>9,084.40</b>
<b>Office Expenses</b>	<b>10,442.60</b>
<b>Other Exp</b>	<b>1,257.99</b>
<b>Telecommunications</b>	<b>7,126.28</b>
<b>Postage</b>	<b>11,096.60</b>
<b>Printing</b>	<b>10,140.47</b>
<b>Publications</b>	<b>56.00</b>
<b>Rent Paid</b>	<b>25,606.74</b>
<b>Special Event Expense</b>	<b>7,834.12</b>
<b>Supplies</b>	<b>3,578.57</b>
<b>Travel</b>	<b>11,568.13</b>
<b>Web &amp; E-mail</b>	<b>1,211.41</b>
<b>Professional Development</b>	<b>1,129.00</b>
<b>Payroll Expenses</b>	<b>362,089.75</b>
	<b>572,627.55</b>

#### INCOME DISTRIBUTION 2005



#### Funders

- The Beldon Fund
- The Brico Fund
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Environmental Support Center
- Hydropower Reform Coalition
- Inter-fluve
- The Joyce Foundation
- The Lux Foundation
- George and Miriam Martin Foundation
- The McKnight Foundation
- Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
- Steven J. Miller Foundation
- Norcross Foundation
- Patagonia
- Patrick Engineering, Inc.
- River Network
- Rutabaga
- Wisconsin Coastal Management Program
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- ... and our over 2,200 member donors

“Donations from individuals, businesses and organizations keep your rivers healthy for all. We'll be recognizing these donors in an upcoming special mailing. Thanks!”

## Dams Program

# Everything You Wanted to Know About Dams But Were Afraid to Click

GIS data bases make it easy to learn more about dams and how they affect rivers

Helen Sarakinos  
Dams Program Manager

### Ecological Assessment of dams in the Chippewa and Lake Superior Basins

The River Alliance has partnered with Patrick Engineering to complete a GIS-based comprehensive assessment of the relative ecological impact of the dams in the Lake Superior and Chippewa River basins of Wisconsin. Almost 650 dams were included in the assessment. A Fall 2004 Wisconsin Rivers article [www.wisconsinrivers.org/documents/newsletter/NL.Fall.2004.Web.pdf](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/documents/newsletter/NL.Fall.2004.Web.pdf) described the prioritization approach that River Alliance has developed to (which we have already developed for the Lake Michigan basin) evaluate the impacts of dams based on criteria such as fisheries, endangered and threatened species, water quality and location in the watershed.

We simultaneously launched dam owner awareness campaigns in both watersheds to educate owners on their responsibilities and inform them about the option of dam removal. To date, over 35 responses have been received from landowners in these waters seeking to know about the impact a dam may have on their stream or looking for more information on their options.

While decisions about dam management, repair and removal are by their nature very site-specific, this assessment is a valuable “first-cut” look at some of the important ecological impacts that must be weighed against the benefits of a dam when making an informed decision about the management of dams and rivers in the state.

The project was made possible with the support of the McKnight

Foundation, the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, and DNR Environmental Damage Compensation Awards Account.

### Take a Tour of Wisconsin Dams on the Information Superhighway

Coming soon to a computer near you: the River Alliance will launch a GIS-based website where you will be able to find out basic information about dams in the state – their name, ID number, river, size and other features, as well as assessment data for dams in the Great Lakes and Chippewa River basins. This will be some of the most comprehensive information available to the public on dams in their watershed or home rivers. We’ll announce the launch of this site via our (re-christened) email newsletter, “Word On The Stream,” so keep an eye out over the next couple of months!

### US Supreme Court to hear Clean Water Act challenge in February

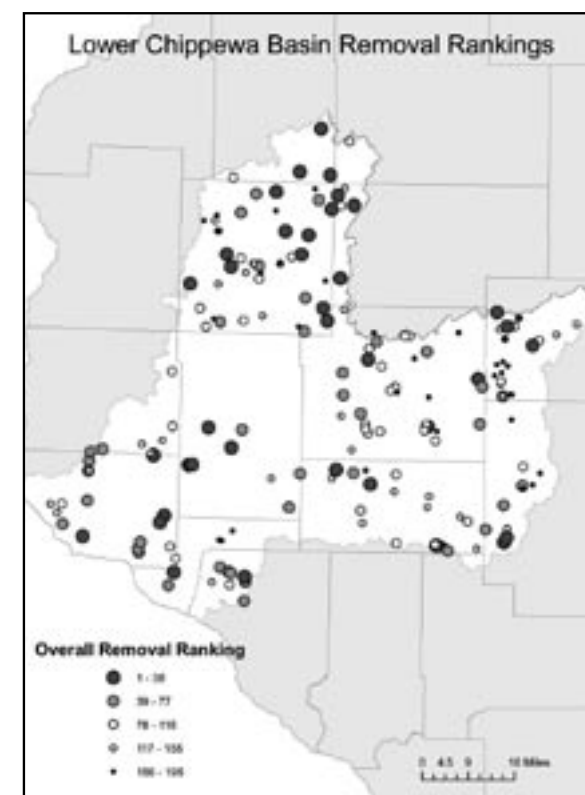
On February 21, the U.S. Supreme Court will begin hearing arguments in the case of S.D. Warren v. Maine Board of Environmental Protection – a case that, if successful, could strip away a state’s authority to set basic conditions of operations for hydro-

electric dams on state waters. Since the 1970s, states have used their authority under the federal Clean Water Act to mitigate for harmful impacts of hydroelectric dams on water quality of rivers. This authority to set operating conditions has resulted in achieving a sustainable balance of power generation and water quality protection on many of Wisconsin’s rivers, including the Wisconsin, Menominee and Chippewa Rivers, to name a few.

Wisconsin’s Attorney General has joined 36 other states in filing a “friend of the court” brief supporting the state of Maine’s right to regulate dams on its rivers. For more information, please visit American Rivers’ webpage: [www.wisconsinrivers.org/amrivers](http://www.wisconsinrivers.org/amrivers)

### Wisconsin Women Dam Experts “Battle” it Out!

River Alliance’s Helen Sarakinos and University of Wisconsin-Madison



professor Emily Stanley are featured in a point-counterpoint discussion of dam removal in the Fall 2005 issue of the Great Lakes Commission Newsletter. View an online PDF of the article at: [www.glc.org/advisor/05/perspectives\\_fall05.pdf](http://www.glc.org/advisor/05/perspectives_fall05.pdf)

## Towering Over the Landscape

Sauk County Board Approves Tower in Lower Wisconsin Riverway



A national treasure, located here in Wisconsin's own Sauk County, will forever change. The Sauk County Board voted to build a communications tower in one of Wisconsin's most pristine riverine viewsheds. The tower, which will be visible from the Lower Wisconsin River, was approved despite public opposition and alternative proposals.

The Sauk County Board and others argued that the tower is necessary for a public safety communications network. However, Mark Cupp, director of the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway Board, had offered several alternatives to the approved construction site. "It's not public safety versus scenery," Cupp said. "It's about more thoughtful site planning." Unfortunately, those alternatives were ignored.

Stating numerous times at the December County Board meeting when the tower siting was approved that "not one person has come out against this tower," many Sauk County Board members overlooked a signed petition, resource agency staff suggestions, conservation groups,



Lower Wisconsin Scenic Riverway. Photos are provided by Timm Zumm.

and concerned local citizens, and the Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources.

"The Department is particularly concerned about construction of new communications towers in areas where the State has made significant investments to preserve scenic and natural beauty as the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway," said DNR Secretary Scott Hassett.

Construction will begin soon.

## Weidman, McMonagle Join River Alliance Board; Farewell to Power and Berry

The changing of the guard on the River Alliance Board of Directors means we offer a hearty "Welcome" and a heartfelt "Farewell" to four fine people.

We welcome **Jeff Weidman**, of Verona, who has worked in the outdoor industry since he was 15 years old, from selling goods on the store floor to independent sales representative, partner in a nine state sales firm, and finally co-owner of Rutabaga Paddlesports, the Madison-based purveyor of kayaks and canoes and related goods, and sponsor of the Canoe-copia paddlesports show.

Jeff has served on the board of directors for the Outdoor Industry Association for the last three years and is a member of its executive committee. Jeff's personal interests are cycling, sailing, and paddling in the summer months and skiing in the winter months. Jeff also volunteers as a wilderness guide and coordinator for Big City Mountaineers at-risk teen program in the Midwest region. His non outdoor hobbies include his border collie, Jenny, and a passion for the acoustic guitar. Jeff and his wife Judy will be celebrating their 25th wedding anniversary this coming June.

We also welcome **Rick McMonagle**, a resident of rural Pierce County and a long-time watershed activist. He was the first executive director of the St. Paul-based Friends of the Mississippi River, and for eight years served as executive director of the Kinnickinnic River Land Trust. His leadership of that group led to its receiving a "River Champion Award for the Decade" for a local watershed group.

Rick hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the city of three rivers, including the Allegheny, which he grew to know and love as a boy. He is a published poet and he likes to hunt, fish, boat, backpack, cross-county ski and grow tomatoes. He is married to Babette Lightner and has two daughters.



We bid a fond farewell to Bill Berry of Stevens Point, whose wit and wisdom, knowledge of the conservation world, and old journalist's sense of comforting the afflicted and afflicting the comfortable will be missed. And farewell to Rebecca Power, who ably chaired the board the past two years and brought (and will continue to bring) her considerable water policy expertise and generous spirit to the benefit of the organization.

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## *Wisconsin Rivers*