



MINONG FLOWAGE ASSOCIATION

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**SUBJECT: Minong Flowage Stakeholders Meeting Minutes**

**Rev. B**

**Date:** November 10, 2016  
**Time:** 9:00am to ~ 11:00am  
**Location:** Spooner DNR's Conference room  
**Attendees:**

- Berutti, Tom Harris Energy Group
- Blumer, Dave Lake Education And Planning
- Burns, Lisa Washburn County
- Dallam, Frank DNR
- Harrington, Dan DNR
- Johnson, Wayne Minong Flowage Assoc.
- Maxwell, Dan Minong Flowage Assoc.
- McGrath, Joe Minong Flowage Assoc.
- Roberts, Craig DNR
- Scalzo, Frank Washburn County
- Slayton, Sarah St. Croix Tribal Center
- Toshner, Pamela DNR
- Phoned-in = none

**2016 Minong Flowage events and activities of note: Dan Maxwell**

- Dan gave a brief overview of notable events and activities relating to the Minong Flowage throughout 2016.

**2016 Regional events and activities of note: Pamela Toshner**

- Pamela gave a brief overview regarding the discovery of Zebra Mussels in Big McKenzie Lake! A property owner discovered them on his dock components when removing it for the season.
- The DNR is focusing a lot of effort into this issue.
- Tom Berutti noted that they have a "sister company" (KiserHydro.com) that offers a zinc-paint that repels Zebra Mussels. However, many of their hydro-plant operations use manual methods to remove Zebra Mussels when they become a hindrance to operations.

**2016 Minong Flowage Fish Survey: Craig Roberts**

- Craig presented preliminary observations garnered from this season's survey efforts in relation to the 2010 survey.
- It is important to note that the full report will be issued in 2017. A great deal of sample analysis, data recording and summary analysis will be completed as the winter season sets in.
- Walleye:
  - Population projection remained similar.
  - Average size decreased slightly.
  - Young-of-the-year walleye were abundant.
- Northern Pike
  - Size structure similar to other regional lakes.
  - Average length increase slightly.
- Largemouth Bass
  - Small sample size inhibits firm conclusions, but average size increased slightly.
- Smallmouth Bass
  - Small sample size inhibits firm conclusions, but average size remained similar.
  - Catch rate increased significantly.
- Bluegill
  - 6" fish and larger were more abundant.

- Recruitment still present.
- Muskellunge
  - One 44.3” fish caught in this spring’s nets.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> documented in the Minong Flowage, but several have been reported over the past few years. Some reported Muskellunge turned out to actually be Northern Pike.
  - This fish could possibly be a family remnant of a stocking program from decades past, or an illegal introduction from the general public.
- Crappie & Yellow Perch.
  - Low abundance.
- Common Carp.
  - 10 were noted throughout the season’s survey activity.
  - This is not an alarming occurrence because they are native to the lake, and not causing any known problems.
- General preliminary conclusion: Overall, the 2013 drawdown does not seem to have had any long-term effects on the fish population when compared to the 2010 survey data.

**2016 Aquatic Plant Survey: Dave Blumer**

- 2016 spring herbicide treatment in the DNR bay.
  - Application was uneventful.
  - Residual herbicide concentration data showed normal dissipation rates.
  - No EWM was evident in the fall plant survey.
- Wild rice beds, east of Smith’s bridge.
  - July flood conditions prevented growth of any harvestable crop.
  - Sarah Slayton will see if “fly-over” photos exist for general assessment and future reference.
- 2016 Fall Aquatic Plant Survey.
  - The presence of EWM is expanding in several areas of concern, but none are at an actionable size, or density.
- 2017 AIS expectations.
  - Presuming that the Spring 2017 plant survey renders similar results to the 2016 Fall survey, no EWM control action will be taken by the MFA in 2017.
  - Property owners who want proactive interdiction will be directed towards hand-removal efforts.
  - As a point of reference only, Dave presented an example of the most likely beds of note and an estimated cost to treat them with herbicide. The estimate to treat about 29 combined acres is \$17,700.
- 2018 AIS expectations.
  - Everyone is hesitant to predict what Mother Nature has in store for the lake.
  - It is assumed that current EWM locations will expand in size & density, and new locations will appear, but the rate of expansion is not predictable.
  - Using past EWM growth as a reference, it is assumed that EWM presence will achieve several hundred acres in the next few years.
- Ongoing AIS control tools discussions.
  - Herbicides usage.
    - Herbicide control remains as the most cost efficient and cost effective method of EWM control in some areas of the Minong Flowage, but it can’t physically be applied in broad regions of the northern end of the lake.
    - The DNR will continue to minimize the approval of herbicides due to a variety effectiveness and Return-On-Investment observations.
    - The St. Croix Tribe, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) remains opposed to the use of herbicides.
    - Many people in the general public remain opposed to the use of herbicides.
  - Mechanical and hand-removal methods do not appear to be viable options for the Minong Flowage due to a variety of effectiveness, safety and Return-On-Investment observations.
  - Winter drawdown pros & cons discussion.
    - Preliminary research indicates that a percentage of the property owners are opposed to the prospect of a winter drawdown due to actual ramifications of the 2013 summer & winter drawdown, as well as the unforeseen ramifications additional drawdowns could bring to property owners, the environment and the general public.
    - Preliminary research indicates that a percentage of the property owners are in favor of using winter drawdowns as a means of EWM control because no other viable option is known at this time and not controlling the spread of EWM would also have unforeseen ramifications to property owners, the environment and the general public.

- The Chippewa Flowage (and other Wisconsin reservoirs) has been using regular winter drawdowns as a key tool in its power production program. Their efforts and experiences can offer valuable insights to the pros & cons of the EWM control issue.
- North American Hydro, a component of Harris Energy Group (HarrisEnergyGroup.com) leases the dam's power production from Washburn County. Tom Berutti is President & CEO of Harris Energy Group.
  - Harris has no physical or philosophical issues with the concept of a winter drawdown, but would certainly want to review all proposals and plans.
  - Their organization seeks to be good stewards of the resource and the general public whenever possible.
  - Roughly half (\$25,000) of their annual revenue (\$50,000) for this dam is produced in March, April, May, & June (winter runoff of the regional watershed produces high water flow volume, which dictates the rate of power production).
  - The issue of lost revenue would need to be clearly delineated, but they would work with us to make a viable plan. Since a relatively small portion of their annual revenue comes from the winter months, the financial impact may not be as great as we once presumed.
  - There are assorted additional costs to be considered such as facility heating, consulting costs, tax impacts, etc.
- Washburn County owns the dam.
  - At this point in time, they have no physical or philosophical issues with the concept of a winter drawdown, but would certainly want to review all proposals and plans.
  - Their organization seeks to be good stewards of the resource and the general public whenever possible.
  - Other regional reservoirs that have variable water levels do generate some comments of concern from the general public regarding environmental issues.
  - A proposed winter drawdown would require a formal Public Hearing that follows established legal protocols.
- The DNR regulates water quality and water management activity.
  - At this point in time, they have no physical or philosophical issues with the concept of a winter drawdown, but would certainly want to review all proposals and plans.
  - Their organization seeks to be good stewards of the resource and the general public whenever possible.
  - They are strongly encouraging the investigation of using a winter drawdown as the primary means of controlling EWM.
  - They are the ultimate authority on approving, or disapproving the use of a winter drawdown.
- The St. Croix Chippewa organization has direct and indirect authority over activity that involves the management of the Minong Flowage.
  - At this point in time, they have no physical or philosophical issues with the concept of a winter drawdown, but would certainly want to review all proposals and plans.
  - Their organization seeks to be good stewards of the resource and the general public whenever possible.
- The Minong Flowage Association manages the assorted events and issues of the Minong Flowage.
  - At this point in time, they have no physical or philosophical issues with the concept of a winter drawdown, but it is tasked with developing and managing all proposals and plans (timing, finance, environmental impacts, etc.).
  - Their organization seeks to be good stewards of the resource and the general public whenever possible.
  - The task of managing such a project is formidable and time consuming. Probably beyond the resources of an unpaid volunteer. We are researching options to develop the proposed research, and a possible proposal, through the use of DNR grant funds.
- Dan Maxwell, the President of the Minong Flowage Association, has drafted this document.
  - At this point in time, I have no physical or philosophical issues with the concept of a winter drawdown. The MFA board of directors and I are tasked with developing and managing all proposals and plans that are in the best interests of the property owners and surrounding community.
  - I seek to be a good steward of the resource and the general public whenever possible.
  - I believe that EWM will have expanded beyond "nuisance levels" as early as the summer of 2018, but certainly within a year or two after 2018. It will choke navigation

channels, effect fish populations, effect water quality, effect recreational activity and property values. It will also threaten other regional water bodies. “Let it grow” will not be a realistic option.

- At that point in time, we are likely to only have three options. “Let it grow”, limited use of herbicides, or a winter drawdown. The DNR is unlikely to approve the use of herbicides until the concept of a winter drawdown is thoroughly vetted.
- Therefore, we are proceeding with evaluation of winter drawdowns and intend to have a general summary presented at the MFA’s Annual Meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017.
- Note the time consuming nature of this evaluation, and the current growth rate expectations for EWM, dictates that a winter drawdown in 2017/2018 is very unlikely.