

September 29, 2025

To: Minong Flowage Association Board Members

From: Steve Johnson, MFA Board Member and Lake Management Committee Chair

RE: Summary of DNR tour of the Minong Flowage

On August 8, 2025 MFA Board Members Steve Johnson and John Rozman and DNR Lake Biologist, Ben Schleppenbach toured the Minong Flowage. Steve extended an invitation to Ben to tour the Minong Flowage and discuss its lake management history.

Background/Ben Schleppenbach:

Ben started his job with the DNR in December of last year and is responsible for 5 counties in NW Wisconsin. (Note that at one time each county had a dedicated lake biologist in the department). This was Ben's first opportunity to be on the Minong Flowage. The tour started in Serenity Bay, going first up to the wild rice beds east of Smith Bridge and then touring south to the dam, noting all areas of milfoil including the channel to Pogo's and the bay just north of the bridge on T.

During the tour, we discussed past management activities and history, the current situation, the DNR's approach to lake management and possible ways to proceed. There were no new revelations as a result of the conversation, mostly reaffirmations of what we had already been made aware of. Ben did state that the DNR hopefully would be better prepared to process future herbicide applications, stating that application processing and many denials for this year was influenced by staffing issues and new personnel. It was unclear if that means there could be a higher probability of the MFA being awarded permits. Ben could not commit that we would receive permits but encouraged us apply.

Summary of key talking points:

- The DNR prefers to see management actions that are expected to have a 3-to-5-year impact. i.e. annual herbicide treatments are discouraged, especially when applied to the same area of a body of water.
- GLIFWC and individual tribal bands do not approve of the use of herbicide treatments of any kind on lakes in the ceded territories. Any permits the DNR grants are done in spite of the tribal position.
- The existence of wild rice on a managed body of water remains the special case when the DNR is approving herbicide permits, receiving extra scrutiny and fewer permits, if any. Ben was impressed with the Minong Flowage wild rice beds during the tour. We emphasized to Ben that with one exception all past treatments have

been downstream of the rice beds. (The exception was at the request of the St Croix Tribal request where 3 acres were treated east of Smith Bridge). Post treatment studies and surveys have shown no changes to wild rice directly related to treatments. Water flow studies were conducted in Serenity Bay and North Basin, verifying flow remained away from rice beds. Unfortunately, this information is not predictive of whether the WDNR will have a positive response to a herbicide application.

- ProcellaCor will not be approved as an herbicide used on bodies of water with wild rice. This is one situation where the DNR will not contradict tribal policy. Ben mentioned recent data on its impact on wild rice but did not provide specifics. The DNR does not seem to be as positive about the results of use of ProcellaCor as what has been shared with us from lakes allowed to make applications of it.
- Harvester use was discussed, and Ben seemed to prefer this mode vs herbicide but also acknowledged the “stumpy” nature of the flowage would be a limiting factor. He said he could work with us in further analysis of harvesting approaches.
- As the tour concluded Ben indicated he felt that our strongest management tool and the one most consistent with DNR thoughts is the use of periodic drawdowns. Besides having an impact on EWM (in shallow water at a minimum), he commented about drawdowns having other positives in regard to lake health. He referred to the Chippewa Flowage which he stated is drawn down every other year. He said he could provide us with more information on the Chippewa Flowage drawdowns, their purpose and results. I told him of the local issues associated with drawdowns based upon our sample of one winter only drawdown, specifically opposition from Cranberry Lake, and also the effect of mild winters reducing desired effectiveness. DNR participation should be considered in future local discussions of drawdowns on the Minong Flowage.
- Ben stated that herbicide permit applications receive more consideration if they are addressing navigational issues. He suggested the MFA take that into consideration with any herbicide permit applications being considered. Areas that come to mind are the DNR landing area, south and east shoreline of Serenity Bay, portions of North Bay, the bay on the west side of the entrance up to Pogo’s, and the NE corner of the bay across from the county park. The DNR would consider each area individually when considering a permit.
- Ben stated the DNR preferred to review, and issue permits with knowledge the funds necessary are either approved or already in place because of the work necessary for

the DNR to administer the approved funding. We indicated to him it is much easier to raise the funds necessary for management when the MFA can tell our members and property owners we have permits and an approved plan requiring the funds. It is the chicken and egg scenario.

- Ben reviewed with us the DNR policy allowing property owners to clear a 30 ft. section of shoreline to reach navigable waters without permit. He admitted that extending that into the lake 450 feet as would be necessary in Serenity Bay may be extensive interpretation of the policy. We believe this applies only to manual removal of EWM, not private use of herbicide but will attempt to verify with Ben.

After Ben left we discussed how best to proceed:

1. After we have bed mapping results from 8/19 survey, we will consider generating herbicide permit requests for 2026 for navigation impact areas and submit them this fall in advance of grant approval.
2. Proceed with a new grant request, covering spring herbicide for identified navigation impact areas, harvesting of a navigation lane in Serenity Bay next summer (assumes herbicide is denied), and planning for a drawdown to address whole lake reduction of EWM the winter of 2026/27.
3. Follow up with Ben on additional info he said he could provide.
4. Engage the DNR in future discussions on drawdowns and other management options that likely will occur with Cranberry Lake and town governments.