

## BRWA Helps Reconnect Rivers at Two Road-Stream Crossings

BRWA's Culvert Project took a huge step forward this summer as we helped replace two culverts on important watershed streams. Fish in both streams—Montreal Creek in the Town of Anderson and a tributary (sometimes known as Tader Creek) to Eighteen Mile Creek in Grand View—are smiling. More habitat, more food, and more fish babies, we hope!

Thanks to funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and cooperation from Northland College, BRWA was able to partner with local agencies and road crews to fix the two road stream crossings this summer. Sites were selected based on data collected by BRWA volunteers and Northland College interns and meetings with township representatives.

"Our Culvert Program aims not only to fix as many sites as we can," says Michele Wheeler, BRWA Executive Director, "but also to encourage culvert installers to consider this new way of putting in pipes." Maintaining the connection between upstream and downstream portions of the river really benefits the fishery in the watershed, she says.

### Montreal Creek and County Line Road—Town of Anderson

This past August 4, BRWA, USFWS and Ashland County Land and Water conservation reps met with Iron County's Highway Department to install a new culvert where Montreal Creek crosses under County Line Road.

Although Montreal Creek is now considered a medium-quality trout water, it demonstrated a good population of brook trout during 1960s when surveys were conducted by the Department of Natural Resources. Maintaining access to high quality habitats is essential for fish population success. Preventing extra sediment from covering the feeding grounds and spawning habitats of fish is also important.

What made for a better crossing there? A bigger, longer pipe sunk down into the stream bed, farther down than you'd think. "Are you sure you want it that deep?" asked the excavator operator as he dug a trench for the new pipe.

And it was quite a bit deeper—two and a half feet deeper to be exact. Installing the pipe lower in the stream prevents sediment from backing up above the crossing, which artificially raises the creek bed upstream of the road, and makes for a bigger drop from one side of the road to the other. This, in turn, can increase water velocity through the pipe and create a drop at the outlet—both of which make trouble for fish trying to move upstream.

Unfortunately, high pipes are the norm throughout the basin.



Repaired culvert at Montreal Creek and County Line Road.

## Join us at the BRWA Picnic and Volunteer Award Ceremony

Please join us for a paddle and picnic on the White River on Saturday, September 20, 2008 to celebrate our successes and thank our volunteers.



We will gather at the landing on Bibon Road to launch boats for a short trip to the Mason Village Park where we will enjoy brats and hot dogs and whatever else you folks bring. We will provide shuttles back to the landing and if you don't have a canoe and want to paddle, please let us know and we will find one for you—call 715-682-2003.

Here are the details:

**2:00 p.m.:** put in boats at Bibon Road (turn west off Hwy 63 where County E goes east)

**4:00 p.m.:** Picnic at Mason Village Park (south end of Village of Mason). Brats and Hotdogs provided. Please bring a dish to pass and your own plates, utensils and beverages. ♦



Continued on page 3

## Serving the Town of Morse with BRWA Monitoring Expertise

By Michele Wheeler, BRWA Executive Director

The Town of Morse Vision: *While rural features will predominate, the Town of Morse shall be known for responsible, sustainable development. In all development, the community will balance economics, and ecological, social and cultural values to benefit the residents.*

All across the country, communities want to ensure that the next generation inherits a healthy vital place to live. And increasingly local citizens are getting involved in creating a vision for the place that they live in by answering questions like “What do we want life in our town to look like? How do we know what direction our community is headed in, and how can we feel comfortable that the decisions we make are leading us in the way we want to go?”

Recently, leaders in the Town of Morse requested BRWA's help in developing what they call “indicators of sustainability” to measure progress toward implementing goals in their newly-drafted Comprehensive Plan. Our role in this project is very much representative of how our organization operates. We work to provide a watershed perspective in local efforts by providing monitoring data that can support local decision making.

Indicators help towns know where they are going. An indicator is a small bit of information that shows a trend over time. Indicators are a way to get feedback about aspects of our communities in an organized way and are helpful in steering communities on their desired course. For each indicator, a criterion is the point at which decision making changes.

For example, the gas gauge in your car is an indicator of the



amount of fuel you have left. You mentally use a criterion to tell yourself when to refuel. Some people chose to refuel when they pass the half tank mark, others don't find it important until they reach a ¼ tank, or until the red light goes on.

This past June 24, BRWA representatives joined the Town of Morse and UW Extension to begin the indicator development process. BRWA representatives Michele Wheeler and Matt Hudson provided an overview of why indicators are important and the key elements in developing indicators. Then the approximately 30 local residents of Morse broke into small groups to identify community values and assets as a first step in the process.

The next meeting of the indicator development team will focus on sustainable forestry management. On Sept. 18 at 6:00 at the Morse Town Hall, a panel of regional forestry experts will discuss the types of things they look at when assessing sustainable forestry management. The panel includes: Dick Bolen, Gogebic County Forestry; Terry Peters, Terrence Peters Logging Company; Chris Huffman, Ashland County Forest Administrator; and Jim Meeker, Northland College. Breakout sessions will allow the audience to begin to identify indicators that would be useful in assessing forestry management as it affects the future economic, ecological, social and cultural values of the Town.

Permanent or part-time residents or land owners in the Town are especially encouraged to attend. However, the meeting is open to all in this region who may be interested in the process and outcomes as it relates to the wider community, and to persons who have expertise that may be helpful in the process. ♦

## Water Quality Monitoring Update

By Bob Rice

In July I was hired as the new Volunteer Coordinator for the water quality monitoring programs of the Bad River Watershed Association. My job is to keep track of our water quality monitors and make sure they have the supplies they need. When not working for the Bad River Watershed Association, I own and operate the Residenz Bed & Breakfast in Ashland, with my wife of 16 years, Reba. We moved to Ashland after many years of urban dwelling in Chicago and Minneapolis when we bought the B&B in 2003. Moving to northern Wisconsin has been great for both of us, and we have been delighted to see it become “home” as quickly as it has.



It's been a great first couple of months getting to know the “ins and outs” of monitoring, and getting to know many of the people who so faithfully go out each month to sample chemical and bacterial levels and pick through the rocks and river bottom looking for macro-invertebrates. I've really enjoyed getting to see a little bit of what many of you observe and enjoy while you're at your sites, which I've learned from conversations and swapping emails, and by entering data from your observation sheets.

We don't really have awards for how people fill out the data sheets, but I'd have to say that if we did, April Stone-Dahl and Karen Danielsen get the award for transporting me to their stream in each data sheet. Reading the observations section of the data sheets has been a great window into seeing how much many of you enjoy your time in the river. We are energetically putting into place

a way to take all the data that gets recorded and return it to each of you so that you will know the value of the monthly commitment that you make.

It's also been really fun to start doing lab work after not really doing any for the 20 plus years I've been out of school. Earlier

*Continued on page 3*

## Reconnecting Rivers *(Continued from page 1)*

According to BRWA inventory data, more than 90 percent of crossings inventoried are set above the stream bed. With over 1,000 crossings throughout the basin, the cumulative potential to isolate fish and damage their habitats is significant.

### **Tributary to Eighteen Mile Creek and S. Sweden Road—Town of Grand View**

At the second installation site of the summer, a six-inch drop blocks fish from traveling upstream. Removing this barrier on this Class I trout stream that drains to 18 Mile Creek will open up two miles of upstream cold water habitat.

But will the fish use the new culvert? A key part of BRWA Culvert Program is monitoring to determine if new installations are successful in removing fish barriers. BRWA/NC intern Adrien Roth and USFWS biologists Frank Stone and Ted Koehler checked out the fish in the stream on July 15, before the new culvert went in. They used a backpack electrofisher that delivers an electrical charge to the water, which temporarily stuns the fish. The crew inched their way upstream with the shocker, looking for trout. All trout sampled were given a separate fin clip to identify if they were found upstream or downstream of the existing pipe. All fish were released below the existing structure.

The crew will sample again after the new pipe is installed, scheduled for the beginning of September. "If we find downstream-marked fish upstream of the new culvert, we know that the project was successful," says Ted Koehler, USFWS biologist.

Determining exactly how restored stream segments benefits fish is a complex project. So this fall BRWA and partner USFWS will host a monitoring workshop to bring together regional experts in fisheries and sediment delivery to streams. The workshop will focus on developing protocols that ensure the necessary monitoring data is collected.

"We want to ensure that we're collecting the right data to help us improve projects in the future," says Pam Dryer, USFWS biologist. "There have been many replacements throughout the basin," she says. "As a result, there is a unique opportunity to learn about the effect of replacements on a watershed scale over time." ♦



**A research crew uses a backpack electrofisher to sample the fish population in the tributary to Eighteen Mile Creek.**



**Success! A brook trout taken from the tributary. All sampled fish were returned to the creek.**

## Another Award for BRWA!



The Lake Superior Binational Program chose BRWA as a recipient of their fifth annual Environmental Stewardship Award in the "organization" category for the United States!

BRWA joined seven other winners in the United States and three from Canada. Awards were given in six categories: Youth, Adult Individual, Industry, Business, Municipality, and Organization.

These awards are supported by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Great Lakes National Program Office and by funding from Environment Canada.

BRWA volunteers will accept the award at the annual picnic on September 20 (see story on page 1). ♦

## Three new culverts for 2009

In partnership with USFWS, BRWA will help replace two additional crossings next summer. Sites will be selected this fall, so township officials with knowledge of candidate sites should contact BRWA Executive Director Michele Wheeler at 715-682-2003 as soon as possible. A third replacement will be done through the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, a long-time partner of our organization. We're chipping away at the problem, a little at a time....

## Intern Report

By *Adrien Roth*

This summer, I worked as the Bad River Watershed Association's Culvert Program Intern. Coming into this job, I never imagined that something like a culvert would have such wide implications. Culverts are not just important so that cars can drive over streams (which had always been my selfish, human-based assumption of their primary purpose), but they're crucial to the transportation of fish, macroinvertebrates, and even vegetation at road intersections.

I've learned that historically, maybe not as much thought has gone into culvert installation as there should have been, and the culverts are now faced with such problems as embankment erosion, sedimentation, and large drops to the stream from the culvert. All of these problems can hinder fish passage and lead to populations of fish that are isolated from other populations.

This summer, I worked with volunteers to assess culverts and determine their condition, and pin-point areas of concern. It was a lot of work to get everything organized and underway,



**Adrien Roth, at right, doing fieldwork with BRWA Director Michele Wheeler and USFWS Biologist Frank Stone.**

but it was well worth it, and the volunteers themselves are largely to thank. The willingness of people in this community to help out and donate their time really stood out to me, and it's something that deserves to be acknowledged, especially in the summer months when everyone is much busier than normal with projects of their own, and especially considering the rising price of gas.

This project is a long, ongoing one, which presents challenges, but also tremendous opportunities for improvement the infrastructure and communication in local communities. At

the same time, many different groups of people are being educated on the work of BRWA, and about the watershed in general. The networking that occurs with the work of BRWA is excellent.

As a junior in the Geoscience and Geographic Information Systems programs at Northland College, this internship was an excellent opportunity to make the concepts I've learned in the classroom

come to life and become realistic. Hands-on experiences like these are extremely beneficial to students like me, and I'm very grateful to have worked with BRWA. I would like to thank Tom Fitz and Bruce Goetz—two outstanding professors and mentors of mine—for telling me about this opportunity. I would also like to thank Michele Wheeler for being such an excellent boss, and for doing such great things with BRWA, and also the volunteers for making my job fun and interesting. Finally, I'm impressed with BRWA and all of the things they accomplish in this region. ♦

## Water Quality Monitoring *(Continued from page 2)*

this month I had to repeat the dissolved oxygen test a couple of times because of not reading the directions carefully enough. Tracey Ledder and Michele Wheeler have been patiently training me and a good number of new volunteers in on the processes of the different monitoring programs.

Joining the already great group of people doing water quality monitoring, we've seen new commitments from Krista Bloomquist, Neill Wilson and Erica Rosenfeld, T. Jay and Kathy Jones, Charlene Herron-Jordan, Jill Peters, and Ulli Kastens. Each of the new volunteers is busy getting trained in so that they can start monitoring in September.

We also recently had a macro-invertebrate identification time at Northland College. Andy Goyke, Tracey Ledder, Ellie Ledder, Karen Danielsen, Charlene Herron Jordan, Neill Wilson and Erica Rosenfeld, Mike Klump, Mike Stobbe and Tom Lund came for the evening. Thanks to Andy Goyke and Northland College for letting us use the lab.

The side by side monitoring programs done in partnership

with Bad River Natural Resources has been going well. Many thanks to Ed Kolodjeski of the BRNRD for his flexibility in organizing his schedule to meet up with volunteers from the BRWA to make the side-by-side monitoring successful. In August we did side by side monitoring at Vaughn Creek a Curry Road, Twenty Mile Creek at Camp 8, Bad River at Highway 2, and Long Lake Branch. In September we will be doing side-by-side monitoring on the Marengo at Riemer Road, Vaughn Creek at Curry Road, and Twenty Mile Creek at North Sweden Road. To evaluate the consistency and quality of our monitoring, we've been shipping the side by side samples to Northern Labs in Crandon.

I'm looking forward to meeting many of you and hope to see you at the BRWA outing on September 20 in Mason. If you need any new supplies for your kits or want to make suggestions or give feedback about how monitoring is going, you can contact me at 715 682-2425 or email me at [theresidencz@centurytel.net](mailto:theresidencz@centurytel.net). ♦

# Thank You!

*Thanks to our contributors, funders, and volunteers:* U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Erv Soulier, Terry Peters National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

*Thanks to our volunteer culvert inspectors:* On July 10, 2008 BRWA hosted a training for BRWA culvert inspectors as part of our culvert inventory program. New volunteers learned about how rivers change over time and how road crossings affect those rivers. Their observations will be used to select priority sites for remediation in 2009.

*Thanks to:* Dane Bonk, Tracey Ledder, Mike Pero, Tom Fratt, Ulli Cords and Hans Kastens, Charlene Herron-Jordan, Tana Turonie, Deb Dade, Thomas Wyse, Steve Baumgardner, Sandy Bourbeau, Neil Paulson, Lee Newman, Tom Fitz, Jack Wichita, and Bobbi Rongstad.

*Thanks to our Water Quality Volunteers:* Tracey Ledder, Dane Bonk, Joan Elias, Mike Klump, Mike Stobbe, Tom Lund Karen Danielsen, Leslie Kolesar, RaeAnn Maday, April Stone Dahl, Jack Wichita, Roland Wolff, Tana Turonie, Colleen Matula, Naomi Tillison, Darienne McNamara, Suzy Sanders, Tracey Ledder, Morris Lewis, Thomas Wyse, Bob Rice, Jill Peters, Krista Bloomquist, T Jay and Kathy Jones, Neill Wilson and Erica Rosenfeld, and Charlene Herron-Jordan.

## October 7 Program to Highlight Marengo River Sub-Watershed

The first in a series of programs on the natural and human history of a specific sub-watershed in the Bad River basin will be held October 7 at Four Corners Bar (on County E in Bayfield County) starting at 6:30 p.m.

Each program in the series will focus on such questions “What major changes have occurred in the region in the last 50 years?” and “What do these changes mean for us today?”

The first program will focus on fisheries, forests, agriculture and water quality in the Marengo subwatershed. Speakers include Dave Zepczyk, owner of the Four Corners Bar and long-time resident, DNR fisheries expert Jeff Roth, local farmer Dave Nortinen, and UW-Extension Ag agent Jason Fishbach. Tracey Ledder from BRWA will discuss water quality issues. ♦

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**September 12-13:**

Leafy Spurge Field days: To date, populations of leafy spurge (an invasive plant) are small and localized, so containing these areas will be essential to keep them from spreading further. Contact Michele at 682-2003 to help get rid of these plants. Lunch is provided for those who pre-register.

**September 18:**

Indicators Development meeting in the town of Morse. Refreshments at 5:30, meeting starts at 6:00 (see page 2).

**September 20:**

BRWA annual picnic (see page 1)

**October 7:**

“Focus on the Marengo” Program and BRWA board meeting.

## Support the work of BRWA

If you live in the Bad River watershed, you're automatically a member of the Bad River Watershed Association. Consider enhancing your membership by making a financial donation to help support our work.

\$100    Your name \_\_\_\_\_

\$ 50    Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\$ 25    \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_    \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and/or email: \_\_\_\_\_

Clip this form and send with your tax-deductible check to:

Bad River Watershed Association  
422 Third Street West, Suite #105  
Ashland, Wisconsin 54806

Thank you!



*Address Service Requested*



## **Fall 2008 Watershed Waves**



**The latest on culverts...**

**...and all the other  
news from your**

## **PADDLE & PICNIC!**

Join us at the annual BRWA Picnic to celebrate the watershed in the best way we know how—by paddling and eating!

**Saturday, September 20, 2008**  
Mason Village Park on the White River  
2:00 p.m.: Start paddling  
4:00 p.m.: Start eating

*See page 1 of this issue for more details.*

