

RE: DNR visits Big Sand Lake

At the recent Northwest Lakes Association meeting in Spooner, an invitation was extended to Pamela Toshner, the DNR officer responsible for managing our lake and specifically issues surrounding invasive plants or water species. The date of August 30 was set for a conversation and pontoon ride around our lake. Pamela also invited Craig Roberts, the DNR fishery Biologist responsible for your lake. Dennis Loots, BSLA President and Jim Cobb, BSLA Director hosted the meeting.

Initially we outlined the current BSLA and the fact the two former lake associations had merged. Pamela was very positive about the merger indicating in the past it was difficult to know who to talk to regarding lake issues.

During the pontoon tour Pamela was very pleased that so many of you cabin owners had retained native planting on shore and in the water. She was also surprised by how much of our shoreline was not heavily developed. This compliments the St Croix Chippewa who have not extensively altered the lake shore on their property. Also of help was the undeveloped Pavlicek property in the NE corner of the lake along with the conversion of the Wagner Campground to 6 or so lots.

It had been reported but not validated that our lake had purple loosestrife. During the tour we observed purple loosestrife on approximately 5 properties on the north side of the lake. The purple loosestrife was not extensive and can be easily controlled by pulling the plant out or using an herbicide, provided the herbicide did not get sprayed in the water. BSLA is contacting the 5 or so property owners asking for their attention to the issue.

Regarding fishing, Craig provided us a copy of the Big Sand Lake DNR report as of [June 2012 Fish Survey](#) and the [2009-2010 Creel Survey Report](#). Both reports are now on our web site.

While the St Croix Tribe has stocked walleye in the lake in the past, the DNR will no longer participate due to the poor reproduction rate of the fish. Our lake lacks the underwater structure and the lakes average depth is insufficient to have walleyes reproduce and thrive. Craig stated that if we were going to stock walleye we should only use the 6-9" fish as walleye fry just gets eaten by the bass. We talked about efforts to grow larger northern. Craig indicated that the size of the average northern in Burnett County is 24" or less. As the Sand Lake Observer has noted, our best hope is to release all northern that are caught over 20" in size and keep as many bass as possible. Overall, our lake has a sustainable population of bass, perch, blue gills, and variety of sun fish such as black crappie and pumpkin seed

Craig and Pamela both thought that fish sticks could be of benefit to our lake and that is something the DNR could help with funding. Discussion with potential property owners would be required. Pamela can also assist with state grants for those residents that would like to establish a 35x8 foot buffer on their shoreline.

Pamela and Craig both have a working relationship with the St Croix Tribe and they offered to help set up a 4-way meeting between the DNR, BSLA, Burnett County Lakes and River Association and the St Croix Chippewa Tribe. Given current levels of activity at the Tribe, the target is November.

Pamela left with a “to do” list covering such items as:

- She will talk with the St Croix Tribe regarding the water testing that they do as results are not being published or provided to the DNR
- She suggested we may want to submit a grant request for Clean Boats/Clean Waters grant for doing boat inspections at the Public Landing. She suggested a one-year grant so as to determine the extent of activity at the landing.
- Trimming the branches at the Public Boat landing to assist sail boat owners

BSLA left with the following:

- Do research on how certain shoreline plantings to prevent geese from going on our lawns.

Prepared by:

Dennis Loots, President BSLA

Jim Cobb, Director of BSLA