

Iron River PIKE CHAIN OF LAKES Association Inc.

Promoting the sustainable management of the Pike Chain

November 2012

Oak leaves carpet the ground, temperatures barely reach the 40s, but the lakes in the Pike Chain remain blue and clear. It couldn't be more beautiful. Many property owners are not around to enjoy the quiet beauty of fall. However, it is a great time to reflect on how much we enjoy the lakes. It is also a good time to think about what we can do to sustain them for generations to come-this is the purpose of the Iron River Pike Chain of Lakes Association Inc. (PCLA). The PCLA provides everyone the opportunity to work together to sustain our lakes.

The Fight Against AIS Continues: Our efforts have focused on stopping the spread of eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) and preventing other Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) from becoming established. Thanks to our members, financial donors and volunteers we have been generally successful. Yet, the lakes remain vulnerable. EWM has been found in Eagle Lake and small patches are becoming evident throughout Millicent. The boater education and inspection program at Twin Bear Park has been effective. However, the landings at Hydes and at the Iron River Town Landing are not regularly monitored which increases the likelihood that other species for which no control measures exist will become established. The lakes, property values and the Iron River area would all suffer.

The PCLA Board has been working to maintain our present efforts and to assess ideas that could reduce vulnerability. One idea supported by the Board is to establish a 4 year, **Pike Chain Defense Project**. This special project would provide the staff needed to dampen the spread of EWM through hand removal, develop other methods such as spot treatment of small EWM beds, and provide monitoring at the two smaller boat landings that would help to determine what should be done long-term. The project would involve the services of a person primarily during the summer months who is retained through the Town or a University Intern Program. Priority would be given to individuals with appropriate skills and an interest in sustaining the Pike Chain.

One of the major limitations of our EWM control program is that we are not permitted nor can we afford to bring in a professional to treat small patches. Therefore, by the time these small patches become large enough to treat, the plant has spread to other areas. Treatment is generally not permitted on small areas because it is difficult to keep the chemical on the plants long enough to kill them. The Gilmore Lake Association is addressing this problem by having several of their members become licensed applicators through a UW-Extension training program. Their lake association will purchase the chemical that their licensed volunteers will safely apply within very limiting WI DNR protocols. Members of the PCLA Board have discussed having the person supported through the **Pike Chain Defense Project** assist with our future licensed volunteer applicators in designing and deploying retaining structures to increase efficiency, reduce cost and the amount of chemical applied.

Fisheries Changes Are a Growing Issue: Although the WI DNR Pike Chain Fishery

Survey Report has not been completed, we know that walleye abundance has drastically declined while largemouth bass abundance has expanded within the Pike Chain and throughout lakes in Northern Wisconsin. Thousands of anglers have expressed anger about the situation. Our PCLA fishery committee has met once to discuss the issue. Some members have suggested that increased harvesting of largemouth bass and stocking of catchable size walleyes should be implemented soon. However, it is unlikely that much will change in the near future. There are just too many lakes for the agency to stock. The question of why walleyes have sharply declined has not been answered. The WI DNR recently received a \$175,000 grant to study the situation. The study will help to increase understanding and identify appropriate management. Our committee will continue to meet once the report for the Pike Chain becomes available.

The PCLA Needs You! Our annual membership has ranged between 35 to 50% of property owners. On average, a group of about 20 people volunteer their time. Although we have had considerable success, we need more people to join, to share their ideas and concerns, and where possible volunteer their money or time. We can improve our efforts of controlling EWM if two or more people would volunteer to go through the UW-Extension distant learning training program (at home) to become licensed applicators and also have some donors committed to funding the ***Pike Chain Defense Project***. We could also use more people to conduct surveys, hand pull EWM, serve on committees and broaden our efforts in other areas such as organizing social events.

Even if you don't join or volunteer your time, remember we are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Your donations (not your dues) are tax deductible. To continue our present work, we need a majority of our members to donate more than the \$15.00 annual dues. Implementing the ***Pike Chain Defense Project*** would require those with the means to donate a more significant amount. A separate fund would be set up if we are able to get commitments of \$5,000 to 7,000 for one or more years. The project will also require a reliable boat and motor, which could be donated. The project would go a long way to helping us sustain the lakes.

We can't stand still! Many of our officers, board members and others have volunteered for years. We need new people with new ideas and energy. If you haven't done so already, please fill out the attached form and become a member, make a donation of your money and/or time so we can continue to enjoy the Pike Chain for years to come. Indicate your interest in learning more about the ***Pike Chain Defense Project*** and the UW-Extension Licensed Applicator program on the form. Call PCLA Board Member, Bill Swenson 715 -394 -4680 or President Al Bochler 715 -682- 6372 if you are interested in getting these efforts underway this winter.

Thank you for your generosity. Together we can do great things for the Pike Chain of Lakes .

Sincerely,

Al Bochler, President

