

## Fish Passage Restored at Three (Soon to be Five) Road Crossing Sites

It's that time of year. Temperatures start to drop and brook trout have one thing on their minds—spawning! Brook trout depend on those small, clear, cold streams to lay eggs for the next generation of fish. There's more oxygen in cold water, and the eggs and young fish are sensitive to water pollution. And now at three sites in the watershed, they'll be able to reach those areas. Two additional projects are scheduled for later this fall.

BRWA works together with township, county, tribal and federal partners on culvert projects. Townships assist during installation, county conservationists help with engineering and design work, and federal partners help with project management, monitoring and funding.

BRWA and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) crews will visit these sites again this fall to see if fish are moving up through the new pipes. This work is important to understand how fish are benefiting from these projects. Survey crews will also look at stream habitat for changes with the new structures.

"Monitoring after culvert replacements is essential," says Pam Dryer, Habitat Biologist with the USFWS. "Landowners, county and town crews and partners can see how their stream changes over time. We also use the data to improve our future culvert work." ♦



*At this project on Iron County's Norman Creek, an undersized culvert is replaced with a clear span bridge, allowing fish to reach the upper reaches of the creek (inset).*

## Culvert Restoration Sites

### **Norman Creek and Norman Creek Road in the Town of Anderson, Iron County**

BRWA worked with the Iron County Land and Water Conservation and Forestry Departments to replace this undersized culvert with a clear span bridge. The project will restore access to the upper 3.5 miles of this Class II trout fishery.

### **Two tributaries to the Marengo River, Hager Rd in the Town of Lincoln, Bayfield County**

BRWA worked with Bayfield County Land and Water Conservation Department on these two crossings. Each of the existing four-foot culverts were replaced with six-foot pipes. Both sites were installed lower in the stream bed to allow for passage, and with better alignment to prevent erosion. In one of the culverts, baffles were also installed to slow the water down inside the pipe. Both of these tributaries are spring-fed, and two of the coldest we sampled this year (averaging 10 degrees Celsius) – prime habitat for brook trout spawning. Together, these projects will restore access to approximately three stream miles of spawning area and fish habitat.

### **Troutmere Creek and Midway Rd in the Town of Marengo, Ashland County**

BRWA is working with the Ashland County Land and Water Conservation Department on this project. The drop at the outlet prevents many fish from accessing the upper 2.5 miles of this Class I trout fishery, also designated as an Exceptional Resource Water by the WDNR. Instead of replacing the pipe at this site, restoration will include building up the stream bottom below the culvert to lessen the drop at the outlet.

### **Bad River Tributary and Birch Hill Road, Ashland County**

The Bad River Natural Resources Department has been working with the Town of Sanborn to replace an undersized degraded culvert having its flow impacted by a beaver dam. The new 5.5-foot culvert will better deter beaver activity and be better aligned with the stream channel, along with ensuring adequate fish passage.

# BRWA News

## Meet the Newest BRWA Board Member



Randy Lehr began working at Northland College this fall as the Bro Professor of Regional Sustainable Development, where he'll work to tie outreach in the local community with student experience and course work.

He has a strong background in water resource management, watershed restoration projects, and monitoring. Randy also has a lot of experience working with watershed groups from around the country, with emphasis on how to tie science to the decision making process. He joined the BRWA team to learn more about what's happening locally and to offer his expertise to strength our group. ♦

## BRWA's Community Assessment: How Can We Best Serve You?

BRWA works to empower all residents and landowners in our watershed to take care of the land and water they call home. Through water quality monitoring, culvert inventories, or public forums on local issues, we want to make caring for our watershed accessible. Because it's the decisions that each of us make—as property owners, leaders or decision makers—that will shape what this area looks like in the future.

To make sure we are best serving the needs and interests of local people, we're in the process of reviewing our programs to ensure meaningful opportunities for citizens as watershed stewards. Thanks to a grant from the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, we've started a Community Assessment. In general, this means finding out what community interests and concerns are, what needs to be done to address those interests or concerns, what is being done by others and where the holes are.

With this info in hand, we'll make sure we continue to be an asset to the watershed, and to the community. ♦

## BRWA Supporters Enjoy Outdoor Expo and Annual Picnic

Nearly 80 people gathered at Copper Falls on August 14th for BRWA's annual picnic. BRWA supporters enjoyed a wide range of Outdoor Expo activities in the afternoon.

David Bratley and David Hanson helped their group find over eight species of dragonflies and butterflies on a guided walk through the park. BRWA technical advisor Tracey Ledder and Val Damstra collected insects from the Bad River, and Trout Unlimited volunteers Jim Emerson and Dick Berge demonstrated how to tie flies to imitate those bugs. Meanwhile, Trout Unlimited volunteers Chuck Campbell and Rolland Kiel showed people how to cast a fly rod. Copper Falls State Park intern Emily Anderson led a crew in removing invasive honeysuckle from the Park. Some Outdoor Expo participants enjoyed the less strenuous option of listening to Brian Heeringa's presentation about bats, while others enjoyed a leisurely walk to Copper Falls.



A barbeque dinner was offered to all Outdoor Expo Participants and BRWA members. BRWA volunteers were presented with t-shirts donated by an anonymous donor and Heart Graphics. (Thanks to you both!). It was a great time to recognize the beauty of our watershed, and the efforts of all of the BRWA volunteers who are working to keep it that way. ♦

*At the annual BRWA Expo and Picnic, the next generation of BRWA members checks out a collection of insects gathered from the Bad River (left), while Chuck Campbell gives tips on the finer points of fly fishing (above right).*



### Board of Directors

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Culvert Program Manager

Matt Hudson  
Watershed Action Director

Valerie Olinik-Damstra  
Citizen Involvement Coordinator  
& Volunteer Coordinator

### Contact BRWA!

715-682-2003 - phone  
badriverwatershed.org



# Marengo River Watershed Partnership Project Update

## Technical Experts Weigh In on Marengo River Watershed Priorities



*A stretch of the Marengo River*

Lured by some great, home-cooked food (thanks JonBoy!) and the promise of a day filled with productive information exchange and discussion, a group of 25 natural resource professionals gathered at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center for the Marengo River Watershed Partnership Technical Team Workshop on August 31.

The goal for the day: find out “what we know” about issues affecting the health of the Marengo River Watershed and discuss “what should we do about it?” The workshop was an important step in making sure we’re working on the most important projects in the Marengo River Watershed Action Plan.

Also in attendance were Janette Marsh and Cynthia Curtis, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staff who will be approving the plan. The approval process will open the door for BRWA and its partners to bring resources to our area to insure this truly is an “action” plan.

The draft Watershed Action Plan will be available for review beginning at the next Marengo River Watershed Partnership meeting on October 7, 2010. ♦

## The Marengo River Watershed Action Plan – How Can it Work for YOU? Join BRWA for a community meeting and potluck on October 7 to find out!

BRWA staff has been hard at work over the last several months working with the Marengo River Watershed Partnership (MRWP) of local citizens, governments, and agencies to develop a Watershed Action Plan for the Marengo River Watershed.

On Thursday, October 7, 2010 we will be hosting a community meeting and potluck to present a draft of the Watershed Action Plan. We will also talk about how this plan can work for you as part of the watershed community, and how the action plan is already being implemented to meet the vision of a healthy Marengo River Watershed.

The MRWP Project Partners meeting will take place from 5:00-7:00 pm at the Marengo Valley School, located at 62408 State Hwy 112, Ashland, WI 54806. The community meeting is also a potluck so please bring a dish to pass! To RSVP for the meeting, or for more information on the MRWP Project and the Watershed Action Plan, call Valerie at 682-2669 or email [vodamstra@gmail.com](mailto:vodamstra@gmail.com). ♦

### Got a Comment to Make?

BRWA wants to know what you think about the draft Marengo River Watershed Action Plan. Comments will be accepted until November 12. A comment form will be available online at [www.badriverwatershed.org](http://www.badriverwatershed.org) or submitted by email to [vodamstra@gmail.com](mailto:vodamstra@gmail.com). If you have questions or want to know more please call Matt at 682-2661 or Valerie at 682-2669.



**Taking action in the Marengo Watershed:** Students from Northland College recently completed macroinvertebrate sampling on Trout Brook, a tributary to the Marengo River. The data will be used to determine baseline water quality conditions. In addition, this data will be used to help the Town of Morse evaluate if they are on track in reaching their Comprehensive Plan goals.



## Of Bats, Bugs, and Bogs

By Brian Heeringa

Whether you find them interesting or just plain creepy, bats are a very important and extremely vital part of our ecosystem. Bats are usually feared to the extent that they are misunderstood. This misunderstanding has often led to embellishment with myths and superstitions. For example, people have often believed that bats are blind and they become entangled in people's hair. Neither is true. In fact, all bats can see (some as good as humans), and bats want nothing to do with your hair. Using echolocation (high frequency sounds emitted through their mouth or nose that bounces back to their ears) bats can detect objects as fine as a human hair in complete darkness.

There are over 1,000 known species of bats in the world, making up almost one quarter of all mammal species. Of that, there are approximately 47 species found in the United States and Canada. So what's the big deal? What's so special about these flying mammals? What does it have to do with me?

Wisconsin is home to between seven and eight bat species. The seven most common found here include the Big Brown Bat, Hoary Bat, Eastern Red Bat, Tri-colored Bat (formerly the Eastern Pipistrelle), Silver-haired Bat, Little Brown Bat, and the Northern Myotis. All these bats, including most of those found in the entire United States, are insectivores which means they feed exclusively on insects. That's a very good thing! A little brown bat can catch and eat up to 1,200 insects in an hour, and eat up to their full body weight each night! Many fly over water, around light, or in open areas, like backyards where insects congregate. Worldwide, bats are the major predators of night-flying insects, which include mosquitoes and numerous crop pests. This lessens the need for pesticides that are unhealthy for us and cost farms millions of dollars each year.

With all living creatures, bats need water to survive. When active, all but the most desert-adapted bat species must have daily access to clean water for drinking. Northern Wisconsin has quite an abundance of water resources, how do our bats use them? Bats will use various water bodies for foraging and navigation in addition to quenching their thirst. For example,

little brown bats, silver-haired bats, and tri-colored bats prefer to forage over lakes, rivers and ponds; while Eastern red bats, hoary bats, and big brown bats have been known to use waterways for travel and foraging. These bats, and others, typically drink while flying, swooping down to the water surface and skimming the top with their mouth open.



Ponds, seasonal pools, and wet meadows with pooled, standing water offer essential drinking and foraging resources for forest bats. Beaver ponds, along with riparian zones, can be considered the most valuable aquatic resources, as they provide drinking, roosting (dead and living trees with cavities and/or loose bark, lightning struck trees with crevices, dense foliage, etc.) and foraging habitat in close proximity. Activities or management practices that limit or eliminate access to water, or

degrade water quality can negatively affect bats.

What can I do to help? There are many ways for you to become involved with conservation of bats and water resources alike. The first way is to become educated. There are many great resources available in books or online to get you started, including several organizations specifically geared toward bat conservation such as Bat Conservation International or Bat Conservation of Wisconsin. Other ways to be involved can take place right in your own backyard.

- **Put up a bat house.** As natural roosting habitat is destroyed bats will look for alternative places to roost. A properly designed bat house simulates natural roost conditions required by some species.
- **Keep your backyard natural.** Natural habitats such as trees, especially dead trees, provide homes for many bat species.
- **Limit the use of pesticides.** Even though they may kill your insect pests they are also harming bats. Look for natural alternatives instead, such as diatomaceous earth. However, the more bats you have around you, the more insects they will eat, and the fewer insect pests you will have.

—Brian Heeringa of the U.S. Forest Service hosted a presentation about bats at the BRWA Outdoor Expo. Some of the great info he covered in his presentation is covered in this article.



# Thank You!

**Thanks to our Water Quality Volunteers:** Tracey Ledder, Tom Podlesny, Bobbi Rongstad, Kent Goeckermann, Rachel Coughtry, Caleb Coughtry Carpenter, Gabe Coughtry Carpenter, Dr. Henry Gradillas, Jerry Setzke, Ulli Kastens, Joan Elias, Andrea Haugo, Rob Jones, Jack Wichita, Roland Wolff, Darienne McNamara, MaryJo Gingras, Heather Palmquist, Dale Thomas, Colleen Matula, Ed Kolodziejski, Don Smith, Mike Klump, and Mike Stobbe.

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## So What Have You Been Doing for the Past Year?

BRWA's annual report for the July 2009–June 2010 is now available. Check the BRWA website to check it out, or call the office for a copy at 715-682-2003. A sneak peak at the report through Board President Bill Heart's preface to the document is included below.

Since becoming president of the Board of Directors a year ago, my enthusiasm for the BRWA has really grown. I was on the original board and kept an eye on the organization for the past six-plus years and was honored to be asked to be the new president. The BRWA has grown immensely in these past years and I am very proud of the efforts of the past boards, volunteers, and now staff.

In the past year the BRWA has moved ahead with our Culvert, Water Quality Monitoring, and the Watershed Action Programs. We are strengthening relationships with many of the local natural resource agencies through the Chequamegon Bay Area Partnership group which is working to bring resources into the area to cleanup or improve our part of the world.

The past year has been instrumental in moving the BRWA into a much stronger organization. We've strengthened our financial management policies, our membership database and organizational structure. We held a Board retreat where the makeup of the Board and the committee structure was changed to better support the work of our group. We all believe that this will strengthen the BRWA, and make us better able to carry out our mission.

The growth in our organization has come with some challenges, as we continually figure out how to best support local people in caring for the watershed. With continued dedication and hard work, shared by a community of watershed stewards, we'll be able to keep our home in the great condition it is—and perhaps make it a little better. ♦

**Message from the President**

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—Bill Heart

*BRWA Board President Bill Heart, showing off the fruits of his more hunting labors.*

## 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.

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## **Fall 2010 Watershed Waves**

[Get your Watershed Waves via email](mailto:brwa_wi@yahoo.com)

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### **Time for fall macros sampling!**

BRWA volunteers will be out in force this month all across the watershed. Armed with nets and sturdy waders, volunteers will collect macroinvertebrates hiding on rocks in the stream to help determine water quality. To find out which streams BRWA volunteers are sampling, or to sample a stream near your home, contact Val at 682-2669.

