

## BRWA Hosts Annual Meeting and Volunteer Picnic Sept. 24

The summer has flown by us, and as we leap into the fall season, BRWA wishes to take some time to slow down and give thanks to our volunteers and supporters at our 2011 Annual Meeting and Volunteer Picnic. This year's event is scheduled for Saturday, September 24, 11:00am-2:00pm at the Upson Community Park (located off Upson Park Rd in Upson, WI). Near the banks of the Potato River and Upson Falls, all volunteers, supporters, and community members are invited to join us for a program, picnic, and special events for an afternoon of fun!

BRWA staff and board will give a short program to highlight the year's accomplishments and honor our volunteers. Following the program will be a potluck lunch, with burgers, hot dogs, and beverages provided by BRWA. Attendees are asked to bring a salad or dessert to pass. The afternoon will conclude with some fun activities such as a hike to Upson Falls, water quality monitoring demonstrations, and a coloring contest for the kids! Those that are interested are invited to stay for the BRWA board meeting following the event, when new board members and officers will be elected.

To RSVP or to ask questions please call Valerie at 682-2669 or [valerie@badriverwatershed.org](mailto:valerie@badriverwatershed.org). ♦



*Some of our proud volunteers*



*Upson Falls*

## Why it Pays to be a Member of BRWA

By Valerie Damstra, Citizen Involvement Coordinator

"How many members does the Bad River Watershed Association have?"

This is a question that we get asked often, and isn't as easy to answer as you might think. When BRWA was founded in 2002, the intent of the organization was to be all inclusive by stating that "if you live within the Bad River Watershed, you are a member of BRWA." This meant there were no membership dues, and that all citizens of the watershed were considered members of the organization.

Since then, BRWA has become a growing group of people who recognize the unique beauty and importance of the Bad River Watershed. As this evolution has taken place, the Membership Committee and board of directors have discussed adapting the definition of membership. This is to ensure that what is considered to be our "membership" is an accurate reflection of the community support of our work.

BRWA has worked tirelessly for the last nine years to assist citizens to gather information, identify problems, and implement solutions to maintain the integrity of our watershed for future generations. The board has decided that implementing a dues paying (or "contributing") membership to help support this work will give BRWA even greater credibility in shaping decisions that could alter our land and water resources. Many people will still ask though "Why should I become a contributing member of BRWA?" Here is why it pays:

- **Strength in numbers of people:** With a more defined number of supporters based on membership contributions, we can show our true strength in the number of members the organization has. Annual memberships and renewals will allow us to more accurately track our supporters on a regular basis, and will serve as a "check-in" to allow members to decide to continue support for the upcoming year.

- **Strength in numbers of dollars:** BRWA has been very successful to date in obtaining grant funding to work on specific programs and projects that have benefitted the watershed. However, membership contributions will give BRWA more flexibility to work on new projects and issues that may not be funded by current grants, and will allow us to respond more quickly to the issues important to you.

- **Strength to grow and adapt in the face of change:** As our watershed community faces challenges to our land and water resources, contributing members will help BRWA grow as a strong and viable organization despite what the future may hold. BRWA exists in part to provide local citizens a voice for the watershed, and support via memberships will help BRWA continue that work now and into the future.

The BRWA board is working out the details on how to implement a dues paying membership. We anticipate initiating these changes towards the end of the year and into 2012. We look forward to a big and bright future for BRWA that is only possible through the support of citizens like you. If you have any questions about the BRWA's membership policy please call us at 715-682-2003. ♦

## BRWA Launches Petition to Sustain Environmental Regulations in State's Mining Law

By Michele Wheeler, Executive Director

Gogebic Taconite's lobbyists have been working in Wisconsin's legislature to change laws regulating mining. At the beginning of the summer, we heard a lot about interest in changing timelines in Wisconsin's mining law. What was seen in early drafts of the legislation were changes to not only timelines, but also sweeping rollbacks to both environmental regulations and public input. Governor Walker lists changes to the mining law as a top priority for the administration.



In order to fully understand the consequences of changes in a law, we need to first understand the content of

the current law. Changes to Wisconsin's mining law could have a significant effect on this area and could affect the quality and character of the watershed for 25, 50, even 100 years. It is important to understand the current provisions of the law that we can't afford to lose.

Through the help of policy experts from across the state, BRWA investigated existing environmental regulations regarding mining in Wisconsin. Important elements of the law are outlined in a one page fact sheet that is available on our website at [www.badriverwatershed.org](http://www.badriverwatershed.org).

BRWA launched a petition on August 31 to maintain environmental regulations in Wisconsin mining law. BRWA board president Darienne McNamara stated "It would be damaging for this community to end up with jobs for some at the expense of

enough clean water for others. We need a good permit process and laws without loopholes to make sure we don't end up there."

BRWA's petition states:

*Companies seeking to establish mining operations in Wisconsin should meet requirements that protect water quality and supply, while providing opportunity for public input. Current environmental regulations should not be weakened.*

BRWA's petition focuses on environmental regulations. BRWA believes that mining companies should be held accountable to the law in the same way that other citizens and industries are. There shouldn't be special provisions or exemptions from environmental regulations for mining companies.

Proponents of mining law reform have expressed interest in shortening timelines in the existing law. BRWA feels that if there is a way to increase regulatory efficiency with a shorter process that completely maintains the environmental provisions in the existing law then that's a discussion that should be had. The petition put out by BRWA does not preclude that discussion. BRWA staff, volunteers and board members will be attending meetings with tribal, local township, county and city governments to present the petition to request sign-ons. Interested citizens can sign the petition at the BRWA website ([www.badriverwatershed.org](http://www.badriverwatershed.org)). Paper copies will also be made available throughout Mellen, Hurley, Ashland, Washburn, Odanah, Red Cliff and Bayfield. BRWA is working to present this petition to all state lawmakers by the end of September. ♦

### Quick Facts about the History of Wisconsin's Mining Law\*

- Iron ore mining began in Wisconsin in 1880, with the majority of Wisconsin's iron ore mined from the Gogebic Range. However, there was little state regulation for much of that period.
- The first laws about mining related to worker safety in the early 1900's.
- The first law that dealt with environmental impacts was adopted in 1959, in recognition of the large amount of water required by taconite mining.
- In the '70's, a series of laws providing the framework for mining in Wisconsin were passed. These laws were developed by consensus, with the mining industry (Exxon, Wisconsin Manufacturing and Commerce and others), environmental groups, and citizens at the table. They were consolidated in 1996 as Chapter 293 of the statutes.
- In 1997, Chapter 293 was amended to require an additional step for mining sulfide ore (for copper, zinc and other metals): the applicant must first provide evidence that at least one sulfide mine in the U.S or Canada has operated for 10 years, and at least one sulfide mine has been closed for 10 years, without polluting ground or surface water (can use two separate mines as evidence). If a mining proposal is not a sulfide mine, which G-Tac's is not, this step is skipped and the standard law applies.

#### \* Compiled from:

Legislative Reference Bureau. 2000. REGULATION OF METALLIC MINING IN WISCONSIN <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/lrb/pubs/wb/00wb15.pdf>

Thomas Evans, Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey. 2004. AN OVERVIEW METALLIC MINERAL REGULATION IN WISCONSIN. <http://wisconsingeologicalsurvey.org/pdfs/miscpdf/sr13.pdf>

These links and additional information about the mining issue are available at [www.badriverwatershed.org](http://www.badriverwatershed.org).

### About BRWA:

#### What we do

We are a community organization that works to involve all citizens in taking care of and enjoying their home watershed. We accomplish this by conducting educational programs and forums about how our watershed can be affected by the decisions we make. In addition, we assist citizens to gather information, identify problems and implement solutions to maintain the integrity of our watershed for future generations.

#### Our Vision Statement

The Bad River Watershed Association envisions a future in which change and development within the watershed grow from a stewardship ethic that seeks to minimize ecological damage, while maximizing ecological and community health.

#### Our Mission Statement

The mission of the Bad River Watershed Association is to promote a healthy relationship between the people and natural communities of the Bad River watershed by involving all citizens in assessing, maintaining and improving watershed integrity for future generations.

## Culvert Program: Another Great Summer Working in Our Watershed

By Breanne Large, Culvert Program Crew Leader and Sarah Romero, Culvert Program Intern

This summer we interned for the second time with BRWA's Culvert Restoration and Monitoring Program. We worked on six streams this year: Apple Creek, City Creek, Norman Creek, Troutmere Creek, an unnamed tributary to the Marengo River on Hager Road, and Trout Brook.



Sarah and Breanne

They were all very different from each other; nonetheless they shared beauty as a common trait. In fact, these streams were so stunning that it was impossible to not have fun at work. Troutmere with its clear and rocky bottom glistened a tremendous diversity of pebbles or Apple Creek with wood turtles lurking around surrounded by belittling tamarack forests. Furthermore, we also encountered a lot of wildlife and their traces. We saw wild turkeys, pheasants, turtles, a fisher, a gazillion frogs, fresh bear tracks, and wolf traces.

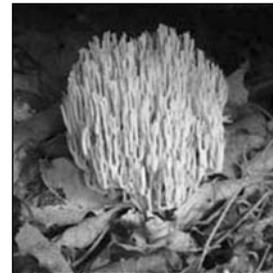
Culverts can create excessive sedimentation, forming a uniform stream bed with sparse fish habitat. One of the objectives of the Culvert Program is to see if culvert replacements with "fish-friendly culverts" create a better environment for fish to live in. As part of our work this summer, we conducted monitoring activities to see if this is true.

At each site we took elevation, habitat and substrate (i.e. sand, silt, rock, clay) measurements of the stream bed to see any sedimentation changes after the replacement of a bad culvert with a "fish-friendly culvert."

We are happy to have been part of BRWA's team once again this summer. It was a great experience for us. Now that the field work is done, we will be evaluating the data we collected. We are excited to see the results from our gathered measurements and what this could mean for future culvert restorations. ♦



A male wood turtle found exploring the new culvert at Apple Creek.



These coral fungi make beautiful coral-like mushrooms. Single large mushrooms can weigh up to 50 pounds!



This little green frog supervised us doing our cross-section. We saw tons of green frogs everywhere we went.

## Attention all Budding "Bug-ologists"! Fall Macroinvertebrate Monitoring Kick-Off and Training October 1

Interested in learning more about the 'bugs' (or macroinvertebrates) that live in the streams? Then join BRWA for a group training opportunity to learn how to monitor for these critters on Saturday, October 1 at the Mellen School, 420 S Main St. in Mellen. The training will begin at 9:30 am with indoor presentations, followed by a quick lunch provided by BRWA. Then we'll venture outside to the Bad River to get in the stream and practice what we've learned, concluding around 1:30 pm.



Valerie and her net — bugs fear her!

All volunteers (new and current) should plan to attend. Please RSVP to Valerie by Tuesday, September 27 at 715-682-2669 or [valerie@badriverwatershed.org](mailto:valerie@badriverwatershed.org). If you are not able to participate this fall but want to be kept informed about Spring 2012 Macroinvertebrate Training and Monitoring, please let us know. ♦

### OTHER IMPORTANT DATES FOR MACROINVERTEBRATE VOLUNTEERS:

Oct. 1-16: Sampling window for collecting your "bugs"

Oct. 26 & Nov. 2: Indoor ID sessions at Northland College, 5:30 pm — 8:30 pm.



### BRWA Team

**Michele Wheeler**  
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**Breanne Large**  
Culvert Program Crew Leader

**Sarah Romero**  
Culvert Program Intern

## Helping Out Their Local River:

### Landowners Implementing the Marengo River Watershed Action Plan

By Matt Hudson, Watershed Action Director

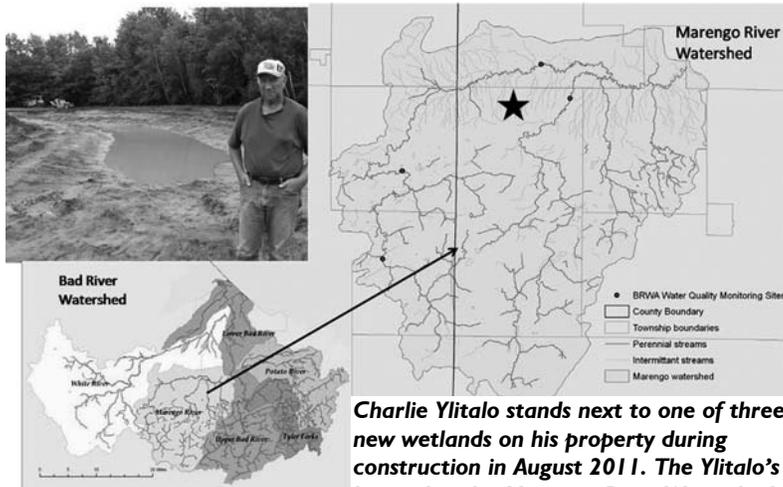
Back in our winter 2011 newsletter, I described how a visit from BRWA staff in 2010 connected Marengo River Watershed landowners, Charlie and Claire Ylitalo, to the right resources to put a series of restored wetlands on their property. Thanks to technical expertise and funding from the Ashland County Land and Water Conservation Department, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and additional funding through Ducks Unlimited, the project was recently completed in August.

The project is just one example of what landowners can do to help out local rivers while meeting their own goals for their property. "There's a lot of birds and other animals that I just don't see on my property like I used to," said Charlie on a recent visit to his land. "Whether these ponds will help to bring them back, I don't know, but I'm happy to take these areas of my farm that are not productive anyway and give them back to nature."

The Ylitalo's property is located in a high priority area for wetland restorations. The area, known as the "soil transition zone" between sandy soils to the south and the red clay soils to the north, is very susceptible to erosion. This zone stretches across the entire Lake Superior Basin in northern Wisconsin, and is a key area for implementing efforts to improve local streams like the Marengo River.

"We're really happy with how Ylitalo's project has turned out," said Ted Koehler, biologist with the US Fish and Wildlife Service. "This is a true example of how partnerships between local agencies like ours and County Land and Water Conservation Departments, groups like the Bad River Watershed Association, and private landowners can work together to the benefit of birds, wildlife and clean water."

That partnership model will get another funding boost over the next couple of years. BRWA just learned that it, along with Ashland and Bayfield County Land and Water Conservation Departments (LWCD) and Northland College, have just received a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency to find more interested landowners and implement projects like the one at Ylitalo's in the Marengo and Fish Creek Watersheds over the next couple of years.



Charlie Ylitalo stands next to one of three new wetlands on his property during construction in August 2011. The Ylitalo's are located in the Marengo River Watershed.

#### Marengo River Watershed Partnership Community Meeting and Fall Potluck

Thursday, October 20, 2011

Marengo Valley Elementary School  
62408 State Hwy 112, Ashland, WI

6:00-8:00pm (Potluck at 6:00, Meeting at 6:30)

Join us for project updates and a community discussion about happenings around the Marengo area.

Questions? Please contact Valerie at 682-2669 or [valerie@badriverwatershed.org](mailto:valerie@badriverwatershed.org)

This provides an exciting opportunity for landowners in the Marengo and Fish Creek Watersheds who want to do something to help their local rivers. More details about the project will be forthcoming, but in the meantime, landowners interested in projects such as wetland restorations, streambank stabilization, tree planting near streams and ravines, and livestock fencing and watering should contact me at 682-2661 or [matt@badriverwatershed.org](mailto:matt@badriverwatershed.org). Finally, I would like to thank the Ylitalo's for their hospitality every time I've visited their farm. Claire makes a "secret" sloppy joe that would win a ribbon at the County Fair! ♦



### Welcome Sara Lehr, Accountant Extraordinaire!

BRWA would like to welcome Sara Lehr, accountant, as the newest member to the BRWA team. Sara brings to BRWA a love of the outdoors and the experience of accounting specifically for nonprofits.

"I'm very excited to be joining the BRWA staff as I love to work with non-profit organizations. It's great to be working for an organization that is doing such meaningful work," says Lehr.

Thank you, Sara, and we are happy to have you on board! ♦

*Sara keeping an eye on a water buffalo. This is not in the Bad River watershed!*

Contact BRWA! Phone: 715-682-2003 • [badriverwatershed.org](http://badriverwatershed.org)

## Watershed Moments



Matt Hudson presents the Marengo River Watershed Partnership project to the Twin Ports Freshwater Folk (TPFF) group in Duluth, MN on August 3, 2011. TPFF is a group of researchers, agencies, students, and community organizations that meet monthly to keep in touch and talk about natural resource issues in the Twin Ports area. Photo by Tom Hollenhorst, US EPA



Jarred Stone, summer intern with the Ashland County Land and Water Conservation Department, takes a pH reading from the outlet of Caroline Lake, the headwaters of the Bad River, in July 2011. Both Jarred and Derik Harlow, Northland College student, collected weekly water chemistry samples throughout the summer from streams in the vicinity of the potential mine site between Mellen and Hurley. Photo by Matt Hudson, BRWA



BRWA celebrated Lake Superior Day weekend with other local organizations and farmers at the "Lake Superior Day" themed Ashland Area Farmers Market on July 16, 2011. Bob Rice, BRWA board member (shown pictured) and Valerie Damstra (along with daughter Violet), talked with community members about the organization and the water quality program. Photo by Valerie Damstra, BRWA



Bill Heart, President of the Friends of the White River, and Representative Janet Bewley, emcee the festivities at the annual Friends of the White River Fish Boil held on August 19, 2011. Members of the Friends of the White River, community members, and representatives from BRWA, UW Extension, Bayfield Regional Conservancy, and the Penokee Hills Education Project gathered on a lovely summer evening for great food and conversation to celebrate their passion of protecting the White River. Photo by Valerie Damstra, BRWA

## Thank You!

**Thanks to our Contributors:** Dennis Gisvold, Richard Berge, David and Karen Saarinen, Hans and Ulli Cords-Kastens Family, Chartier-Oakley Family, Thomas Piikkila, Mike Fitzgibbon Family, Alyssa Core, Steve & Margaret Baumgardner, McNamara-Ciembronowicz Family, Morud-Mitchell Family, Bruce Moore, Chas Wilson, Johnson-Damm Family, Donn and Ann Christensen, Kent and Patricia Shifferd, Jane S. Smith, Glen and Judy Bennington, Jean and Josh Mazzella, Christine Lindsey, Steve Riley, Wil Losch, Diana and Kelly Randolph, Daulton & Wilson Family, Tom Fitz, Cablk-Linder Family, Ros Nelson, Ron and Patty Anderson, Ethel Plucinski, Patrick Mayotte, Derek and Kim Ogle, Art Techlow, Sam Filippo, Sandra Bourbeau, Lake Galilee Association, Paul and Barbara Baldwin, Pam and Gerald Richardson, Jim and Jane Anklam, Jack and Mary Wichita, Cathy Zimmerman, Mike and Cheryl Trieschmann, Pam and Michael Ryan, Mark Leach, Tony Wallner, and Grant Herman.

**Thanks to our Water Quality Volunteers:** Tracey Ledder, Ulli Kastens, Henry Gradillas, Jack Wichita, Andrea Haugo, Joan Elias, Bobbi Rongstad and Tom Podlesny, Roland Wolff, Don Smith, Bill Mattes, Darienne McNamara, Mike Klump, Mike Stobbe, Maryjo Gingras, Heather Palmquist, Colleen Matula, Jerry Setzke, Ed Kolodziejski, Peter and Eileen Freiburger. *Welcome new volunteers Jim Crandall, Ron Nemec, Jarred Stone, and Derik Harlow!*

**Thanks to our Recent Funders:** Indigenous Environmental Network, John C Bock Foundation, James E Dutton Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership, US Forest Service, Freshwater Future, Plum Creek Foundation, Town of Morse.

### Support the work of BRWA

Anybody who supports our mission can become 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, P.O. Box 875, Ashland, WI 54806. Thank you!

*Address Service Requested*



## Fall 2011 Watershed Waves

Get your Watershed Waves via email

If you would prefer to get this newsletter in electronic format, please send a message with that request to: [valerie@badriverwatershed.org](mailto:valerie@badriverwatershed.org)



### The Day the Bad River Stopped Flowing

On Tuesday, June 28, 2011, the U.S. Geological Survey stream gauge at Elmhoist Rd. on the Bad River indicated zero water flow, followed shortly after by a huge surge in flow. What happened?

The photos at right show the large streambank failure upstream of the gauge that temporarily dammed up the river, causing the flow to “stop.” The river quickly broke through, causing the sudden surge in flow that followed.

Sediment is the main pollutant of concern in the Bad River Watershed. These mass failure events are a major source of sediment to the Bad River and its main tributaries.

#### BRWA Website Gets a Facelift

If you've visited our website lately, you may have noticed a new look. BRWA recently updated the website, and is working to add more content to help you learn more about your home watershed and what BRWA is up to. New items are added all the time, so check in often! We'd like to know what you think about our website so if you have any comments or questions please contact Valerie at [valerie@badriverwatershed.org](mailto:valerie@badriverwatershed.org).



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*Photos by the Bad River Natural Resources Department*

