

It's Been Ten Years!

Just How Did BRWA Come to Be?

By Joan Elias, with help from Dorothy Lagerroos and Tracey Ledder

It must have been 2001 or even earlier, when a few of us began discussing the need for a local watershed group. We came to realize that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources had very little information on the water quality of the rivers and streams in the northern part of the state. North of Highway 70 (or Hwy 8 or even Hwy 29, depending on the issue or who you asked), we in the north got little attention from Madison.

What was the quality of our waters? What information did the state have on which to base its decisions for designating degraded waters, or the opposite—outstanding resource waters? Most of us who lived here thought things were pretty good, but we heard the stories of the old-timers—small creeks full of brook trout, where now brookies were rare to non-existent; cold and clear streams, where now some were murky with sediment as culverts failed. We knew we had to protect what we had and we knew there was room for improvement.

It was due to the prompting of Erv Soullier, head of Bad River Natural Resources Department., that the Bad River Watershed Association came to be. Erv approached the League of Women Voters and said, who better than the League to start a watershed association, since in the Anishinabe tradition, women are the keepers of the water. The League was up for the challenge.

We began by hosting meetings with local agencies and organizations involved in natural resources, including the US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, Trout Unlimited, Bad River Natural Resources Department, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Northland College, University of Wisconsin Extension, the four-county Natural Resources Conservation Service, and The Nature Conservancy. There was great interest among these agencies and organizations in forming a watershed group, though we debated on the scale—Chequamegon Bay or sub-watershed (e.g., Marengo or Potato)—which should we tackle? We chose the Bad River Watershed, which in a sense was the middle ground, even though it is the largest watershed in the Wisconsin portion of the Lake Superior basin.

The core group, who met over and over, who came up with the name 'Bad River Watershed Association,' who hammered out the first mission statement and set of

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**Celebrate this milestone with
BRWA by joining us in taking
care of our home watershed.
See page 5 for details.**

Happy Anniversary - Join Us for a Party!



We're celebrating all year long, but the best part about an anniversary is it's a reason to have a party! Don't forget to join us at our 10th Anniversary Celebration event on Saturday, June 23rd at Freehands Farm, located at 60445 Summit Rd, Ashland. We'll be featuring some yummy local food from the Delta Diner and the O'Dovero Meat Market, South Shore Brewery beer, a cake and ice cream social, and other refreshments. We'll be presenting the Karen Danielsen Outstanding Stewardship Award to this year's recipient (keep reading to find out who it is!), and will be having lots of fun reminiscing about the last ten years of BRWA with friends and family.

There will also be family games and activities, a campfire to roast hot dogs or make s'mores, AND live music featuring a super talented friend of BRWA, Andy Noyes and his musical partner, Stevie Matier! (Psst! If you have a musical instrument you might want to bring it with you!)

Tickets are available at the event, and cost \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids ages 3-12, or \$25 per family. For questions please email Valerie at valerie@badriverwatershed.org or call 682-2669. We hope you will be there to celebrate with us! ♦

BRWA Program Accomplishments From 2002-2012

WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

- BRWA's original, flagship program began in 2002.
- Nearly 90 sites sampled since 2002.
- 4-year chemistry baseline completed at 15 sites.
- 4-year macroinvertebrate baseline at 14 sites.
- Bacteria sampled at over 40 sites.
- Involved over 130 volunteers.
- Macroinvertebrate data was key information used by Wisconsin DNR to designate several Bad River Watershed streams as Outstanding/Exceptional Resource Waters



Volunteers Keith and Laura Carlson collect water samples on the Marengo River.



BRWA Culvert Program Manager Michele Wheeler leads a culvert crew.

CULVERT RESTORATION PROGRAM

- Program began in 2003, with a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to fix three culverts.
- Initiated inventory of road stream crossings in 2004, with 10 volunteers surveying 88 sites.
- Completed first culvert replacement on Billy Creek in 2006.
- To date over 900 of the 1,000+ culverts have been inventoried in the watershed.
- A total of 15 culvert replacements completed with partners, restoring access to 20 miles of stream habitat.



Volunteers Mary and Jack Wichita collect stream data for the Watershed Action Program.

WATERSHED ACTION PROGRAM

- Began in 2009 with formation of the Marengo River Watershed Partnership.
- Marengo River Watershed Action Plan completed in 2010; awaiting EPA approval.
- Plan contains over 200 actions and project ideas to maintain and improve the health of the Marengo River Watershed.
- Quarterly Marengo River Watershed Partnership meetings continue to provide community forum for conversation and information-sharing about issues and opportunities related to implementing the Action Plan.
- Newest grant will help connect landowner conservation interests with available technical resources, targeting the most critical areas to improve watershed health.



BRWA Team

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Joan Elias

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Voices from the Watershed

APRIL STONE-DAHL

When I got involved (in BRWA), I was very new to the world of organizations and boards. It was challenging for me because there was so much to know, and not only the people but the different connections BRWA had with other organizations and departments.



I got to plan the Spring for the Water fundraiser that took place every spring as well as provide cooking and serving up good food at a few of the summer picnics acknowledging the volunteers...which I also was. I was trained to collect and test water at a few sites within the watershed and had done so for over five years. That was a great experience for me. I met such wonderful, caring, supportive and beautiful people within this organization.

Some folks have moved on and some new ones are taking their places. The culvert inventory continues to make headway. The office went from being non-existent to a closet to an office space with many rooms. And yes, it is everything I had hoped for for BRWA. I am so happy to see that it is still growing strong.

When BRWA started out, it was all about educating folks in the watershed about watershed issues. And when this mine issue came to be, I wondered if BRWA was going to make a formal statement about it. I didn't hear anything for awhile, but then, they did come forward and offer some WONDERFUL sessions in the communities regarding what could happen to if the mine came through. This was such a great way to get that information out there and to help educate folks about some heavy duty concerns. Much applause goes out to BRWA for this. I loved it! They were holding true to their mission statement after all.

—April Stone-Dahl lives in the Lower Bad River subwatershed, and is a member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa.



LAURENCE WILAND

I was asked to get involved with BRWA and serve on the first board of directors. Knowing the purpose of the new group and the quality of the people involved, I was happy to accept. What I have seen in the past 10 years is an increase in the cooperative spirit and cooperative results both among natural resource agencies as well

as between agencies and citizens who want to put their concern about the health of the watershed into action.

I think the role BRWA played in the response to the mining

proposal was critical. I remember discussions in that first year about the upcoming possibility of mining in the watershed, and the need to have a coordinated voice and sound data to respond to that should it happen—and that is exactly what happened. This is what I hoped BRWA would become—an entity that would protect and improve watershed health in an already fairly healthy watershed—NOT an entity created to respond to some disaster after the fact.

I think the best thing that happened to BRWA is that it grew from the initial group of volunteers to include a professional layer of effort and administration. That is a huge step for any organization.

There is a unique spirit in BRWA because it's doing great things to stabilize and protect and improve something that is already pretty good. People do get energized in response to a crisis or disaster, but in those sorts of groups it seems you're always playing catch-up and victory can sometimes mean just trying to slow down or mitigate damage. BRWA is in the unique position of being able to think deliberately, to make plans and pursue projects proactively. There is a lot of strategic strength in operating from that position.

—Laurence Wiland lived in the Marengo River subwatershed for the past 11 years.

NANCY LARSON

When I think of the Bad River Watershed Association, I think of building community around our watersheds. I've always been impressed with the creative approaches the Association takes to expand that sense of community and speak to people in ways that are meaningful to them.



The watershed association deals in citizen science, but also in citizen stories. The association events where residents share their stories from the watershed create a shared story among families, neighbors, and communities in various parts of our large watershed. That shared experience and shared appreciation for the watershed bring people to action.

Many of us in the natural resource field have been working together for years to figure out how these Lake Superior red clay flashy flow watersheds work and to develop land management practices that slow erosion and protect habitat. We coined the term "slow the flow" for these efforts. The Bad River Watershed Association is our key citizen based partnership for "slow the flow" work. We appreciate the group very much.

—Nancy Larson lives in the Marengo River subwatershed, and is a Wisconsin DNR Water Resources Team Leader and former BRWA citizen water quality volunteer.

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Tracey Ledder: This Year's Karen Danielsen Outstanding Stewardship Award Winner

by Jo Bailey, BRWA Board Member

Tracey Ledder and I had a lovely lunch on her work break. Tracey is the St. Louis River AOC Specialist for the Wisconsin DNR. (AOC means "Area of Concern," which could be her middle name.) She is a true activist with energy to create and to gather data to problem-solve. She is also many other things, all valuable to this area.

To help celebrate BRWA's 10th Anniversary, and honor a volunteer that has worked tirelessly for 10+ years to ensure that BRWA came to be, and that our Water Quality Program is what it is today, we honor Tracey Ledder as this year's recipient of the Karen Danielsen Outstanding Stewardship Award.

To start, Tracey is one of the reasons that BRWA exists. She saw a need for water quality monitoring and discussed this with Dorothy Lagerroos. Then the ball started rolling! These two dynamos reached out to the League of Women Voters and other organizations interested in environmental change and conditions. That was over 10 years ago. They wrote and received a River Planning Grant that allowed them to purchase four water monitoring kits. Tracey commented, "Then the volunteers lined up." The work of BRWA began.

Equally interested folks joined together to begin BRWA. Tracey led them in writing the by-laws and forming a 501c3 organization. Joan Elias was also instrumental in building the foundation. Their first water monitoring began in December of 2002. By the fall of 2003, BRWA had begun macroinvertebrate monitoring, which takes place twice a year.

As the years evolved Tracey developed and ran the volunteer quality control sessions and introduced "chemistry control" as well. This meant creating a solution of known concentration for volunteers to identify and analyze—already knowing what the answers were supposed to be. She is a large part of the reason our present Water Quality Program is so well respected.

"Data is really kind of dull, to most people," says Dorothy Lagerroos. "The fact that this group, thanks in large part to Tracey Ledder, established a really hard-core data machine, and then turned data into something that jives people, is nothing less than miraculous."

In 2000, Tracey was the full-time head of Water Monitoring for the Bad River Tribe. Obviously the work BRWA does and its discoveries affect the water quality on and through the reservation which has 40 sites to monitor on its own land. Another aspect of Tracey is her education as an environmental

science and engineering major with a master's degree from Virginia Tech. Her studies there centered on drinking and waste water plus its treatment. Tracey feels that "most of what happens on land affects the water."

Tracey moved here from New Jersey to take her job for the Bad River Tribe. In New Jersey she had worked with plant control to remove pollution of the water. She explained that excess nutrients produce greater plant growth. Then this excess creates clogging of the streams. The decomposition meant a

depletion of oxygen in the water, and fish died. In her present volunteering for BRWA she sees instead "non-point pollution" (not out of a pipe) in which we have too much sedimentation, largely because of Lake Superior clay in the soil. We also have erosion effects due to clear-cutting of the trees. There is "flash flooding" when snow melts and fills the streams. Plus she sees areas of high bacteria.



Tracey Ledder, with daughter Eleanore, testing water on the banks of the White River.

This is all under her volunteer umbrella.

I asked how she came about her clear love for Water. Without hesitation she replied, "My Gramma."

Apparently Gramma was a rebel who lived on the Delaware River and taught Tracey to swim, fish, canoe, kayak, row, and most of all to love the water. Tracey's daughter, Eleanore, is now 11. She has inherited the same love for water, and has kayaked the Brule solo. Tracey took her to many meetings as a baby. In fact Eleanore was made an honorary member of the League of Women Voters 10 years ago. She and her Mom took sailing lessons together last summer.

Tracey is a true fire-soul who endorses the goal to share our knowledge of the earth with one another to bring about a better environment. For this reason and all stated above, Tracey is truly deserving of this year's award. The board voted unanimously to honor Tracey's 10 years of volunteering built upon her crucial help in starting BRWA and its essential Water Quality Monitoring Program. The staff, board, and members say, "Thanks for all you have done, Tracey, to make this a vital and growing organization." ♦

Editor's Note: The Karen Danielsen Outstanding Stewardship Award was created in 2009 as a way to honor a founding board member and dedicated volunteer, Karen Danielsen. Karen was strong voice for the organization, and was involved in BRWA through every opportunity offered—as a field volunteer, committee member, events planner, board member, and board president. Karen's passion for BRWA and all she did to help move the organization forward will not be forgotten. This award is given annually to a dedicated volunteer who shows the same passion for BRWA as Karen did.



WHEN YOU CARE FOR THE WATER ~ YOU CARE FOR THE WORLD START AT HOME

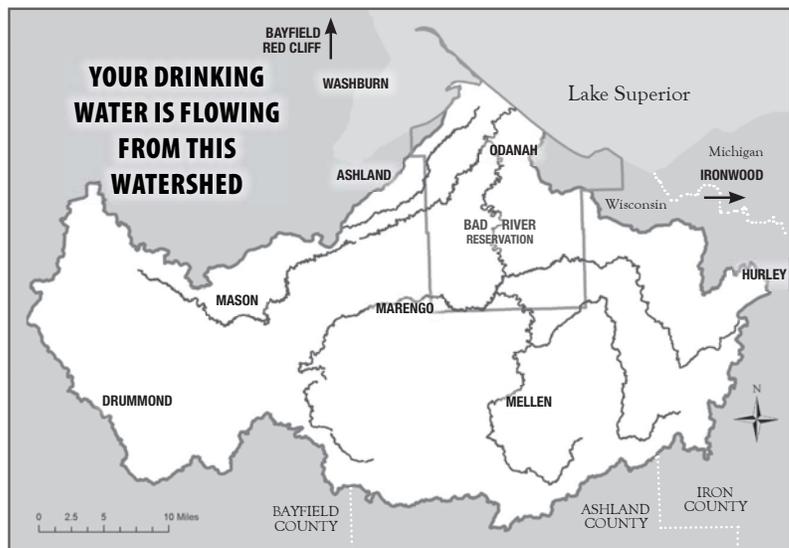
The Bad River Watershed Association (BRWA) is a community organization of people like yourself who enjoy and care for their **home watershed**. Would you like to:

- * Learn more about decisions we all make affecting our land and water?
- * Work with others to gather information and learn more about our streams?
- * Help ensure problem areas in our watershed are identified and practical solutions are implemented?

Then join BRWA today!

A BRWA Membership

- * Implements water quality monitoring
- * Offers landowners solutions to keep polluted runoff out of streams
- * Partners local governments with natural resource professionals to replace culverts and restore fish passage and habitat
- * Keeps citizens informed of possible large-scale land use changes like mining and connects them and local decision makers with sound science, to ensure responsible care of land and water resources



The BRWA envisions a future in which change and development within the watershed grow from a stewardship ethic. With your membership, you join hundreds of others who care for the water that all our lives depend upon.

BRWA MEMBER BENEFITS: *Watershed Waves* newsletter published quarterly; BRWA bumper sticker; invitations to member-only events and discounts at BRWA events



The Bad River Watershed drains over 1,000 square miles within the

Counties of Ashland, Iron, and Bayfield, in Wisconsin. Its major rivers are the Upper Bad; Lower Bad; Tyler Forks; Marengo; Potato; White; and Beartrap Creek - all spawning grounds for lake sturgeon, trout, salmon, and walleye. Headwaters are in the Chequamegon National Forest. The lower portion is within the Bad River Reservation. Bad River empties into Lake Superior at the Kakagon-Bad River Sloughs - the only extensive coastal wild rice wetland in the Great Lakes Basin.



The Bad River Watershed Association was formed in 2002, with "the mission 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."

Yes! I want to make a difference and become a BRWA member.

- \$25* \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 Other (TAX DEDUCTIBLE).

*BRWA could not survive without member generosity; some give financially, some give valuable time, and many give both! To celebrate BOTH kinds of contributions, we extend membership to any supporter who donates \$25 or more per year OR volunteers for four hours or more per year.

- Please keep my donation anonymous.
 I am unable to contribute financially today. Please add me to the list of volunteers.

CHOICES - HOW TO JOIN

ONLINE: www.badriverwatershed.org CALL US at 715-682-2003
 USE THIS FORM & MAIL TO: BRWA, P.O. Box 875, Ashland, WI 54806

Name _____
 Address _____ City/State/Zip _____
 Email _____ Phone _____ Check payable to BRWA. Charge: VISA MasterCard
 Card number _____ Exp.date: _____ CVW _____ 3-digit code on back
 I am also interested in being a volunteer.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact BRWA
715-682-2003
www.badriverwatershed.org

See our WISH LIST at www.badriverwatershed.org for other giving opportunities.

PHOTO: Caroline Sadie Ray lives one mile from Lake Superior.
 PHOTO & GRAPHICS: Ros Nelson

Ten Years! *(continued from page 1)*

bylaws, who wrote the first grant proposals, who really made this organization happen, consisted of only a few people from the League, Trout Unlimited, Bad River Natural Resources Department, and the Nature Conservancy.

“We worked on our mission statement with facilitator Jane Silberstein, who was a sustainability guru at the time,” says Dorothy Lagerroos. “After a few comments Jane said, ‘Let me get this straight—you want this organization to integrate the human and natural communities in a healthy way?’ We said, ‘Yup, that’s what we want.’ She was very impressed.”

We recognized that our watershed was in pretty good shape compared to many others throughout the state and the region. However, we knew our streams and rivers had some problems—primarily due to non-point runoff that brings sediments and nutrients into the streams—and we discussed ways of garnering attention to our overlooked corner of the state. Because it is usually easier to get funding to remediate or restore than it is to protect, we knew it would be difficult to acquire funding to begin collecting the baseline data that we knew was so important. We tied our first grant proposals to collecting much-needed baseline water quality data and to surveying culverts throughout the watershed to determine which culverts were in need of replacement. These two programs, which provided critical information, came to define us in our first 10 years.

Throughout the first four years, we relied solely on volunteers for every aspect of the organization. We partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Northland College to get projects accomplished. Since those early days, we’ve grown slowly but steadily—from our first grant of \$500 and a part-time volunteer coordinator, to multiple grants and five staff—our progress has demonstrated that we are indeed filling a vacuum.

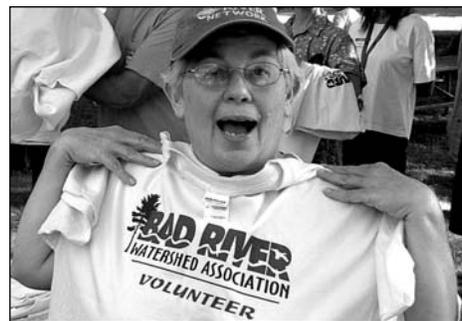
As we look ahead to the next 10 years and beyond, new challenges will continue to arise. We look forward to meeting those challenges through new and continuing volunteers, motivated staff, and adequate funding. ♦

10th Anniversary Trivia:

Q: Where was the first culvert located that BRWA replaced?

Email your answer to valerie@badriverwatershed.org. The first person with the correct answer will win a special prize!

Answer to the 10th Anniversary Trivia question in the Spring 2012 issue of Watershed Waves: **Bad River at Gilman Park**



Dorothy Lagerroos showing her enthusiasm for BRWA and our volunteers.

Watershed Voices *(continued from page 3)*



LESLIE KOLESAR

Ten years ago letters were sent to all the riparian owners in the Bad River Watershed seeking volunteers to help establish baseline water quality information. I read my letter with excitement, glad to get an opportunity to do something meaningful. And so seven years of water testing began.

The Vaughn Creek in Saxon was my testing area. At first I tested on the Lower Road. The water there was stagnant—full of algae and duckweed with non-forested wetlands both upstream and down. People had been dumping garbage there for a long time—empty oil cans, deer carcasses and the typical cans and bottles. There was even an old TV stuck in the muck at the edge of the creek. Not a very nice place. But people saw me testing there and gradually the dumping stopped. A nice family bought a home nearby and began cleaning up. During a dry spell the muck dried out enough to retrieve the TV. We joked that the frogs would have to find something else to do at night instead of watching the Muppets!

Then I moved downstream on Curry Road where the Vaughn Creek turns into a clear, cold, forested stream. What a delightful place to test water. By this time the BRWA was testing for E. coli and I tested sporadically at this site for E. coli. During this time, culvert projects were also occurring. The poorly placed culvert under Hwy 169 was remedied with a fish ladder and now there are brook trout in the Vaughn Creek upstream of the highway after a long absence.

One of the things that has most impressed me about the BRWA is the organization's ability to work with volunteers, landowners and local units of government in such a positive manner. Rather than stressing enforcement, the BRWA has always sought solutions that benefit all parties involved. Work has always been done with a spirit of cooperation. To me, that's been the key to the organization's success. I'm proud to belong to such an outstanding organization.

—Leslie Kolesar lives in the Potato River subwatershed.

Thank You!

Thanks to our Donors and New Members: Anna Stone, Bruce Moore, Naomi Tillison and James Burtrum, Jane S. Smith, Jane Swenson, John and Connie Franke, Keith and Laura Carlson, Kathy Trochlell, Lindsay Wood Davis and Amanda Davis, Marilyn Wilson, Mary Rehwald, Kelly and Margaret McKnight, Mike and Amy Amman, Nate and Angie Schoeppach, Robert Fizzell, Ruth Oppedahl, Eric Sorensen and Linda Zirngibl, Steve Baumgardner, Thomas Piikkila, Eric Nelson, Elizabeth Bader and Jordan Grunow, Mike and Jo Bailey, Ashland Baking Company, the Fiorio Brothers Investment Center, and the Town of Anderson.

Thanks to our Funders: Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation, Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, US Forest Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, US Fish and Wildlife Service Coastal Program and Great Lakes Basin Habitat Partnership, Norcross Wildlife Foundation.

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The full board in 2007, after completing BRWA's first organizational strategic plan.

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Summer 2012 Watershed Waves

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all the news from your



...moved out of a closet and into a "real" office (2009)



FIND US ON FACEBOOK

Remember when BRWA...



...hosted "First Person Local" (2006-2010)



...held its first annual picnic (2003)



...won awards for our Volunteer Water Quality Program (2008 and 2010)



...got our very own field vehicle (2011)

Join us at BRWA's 10th Anniversary Party and start making new memories!

6:00pm
 Sat., June 23, 2012
 at Freehands Farm
 60445 E Summit Rd
 Ashland