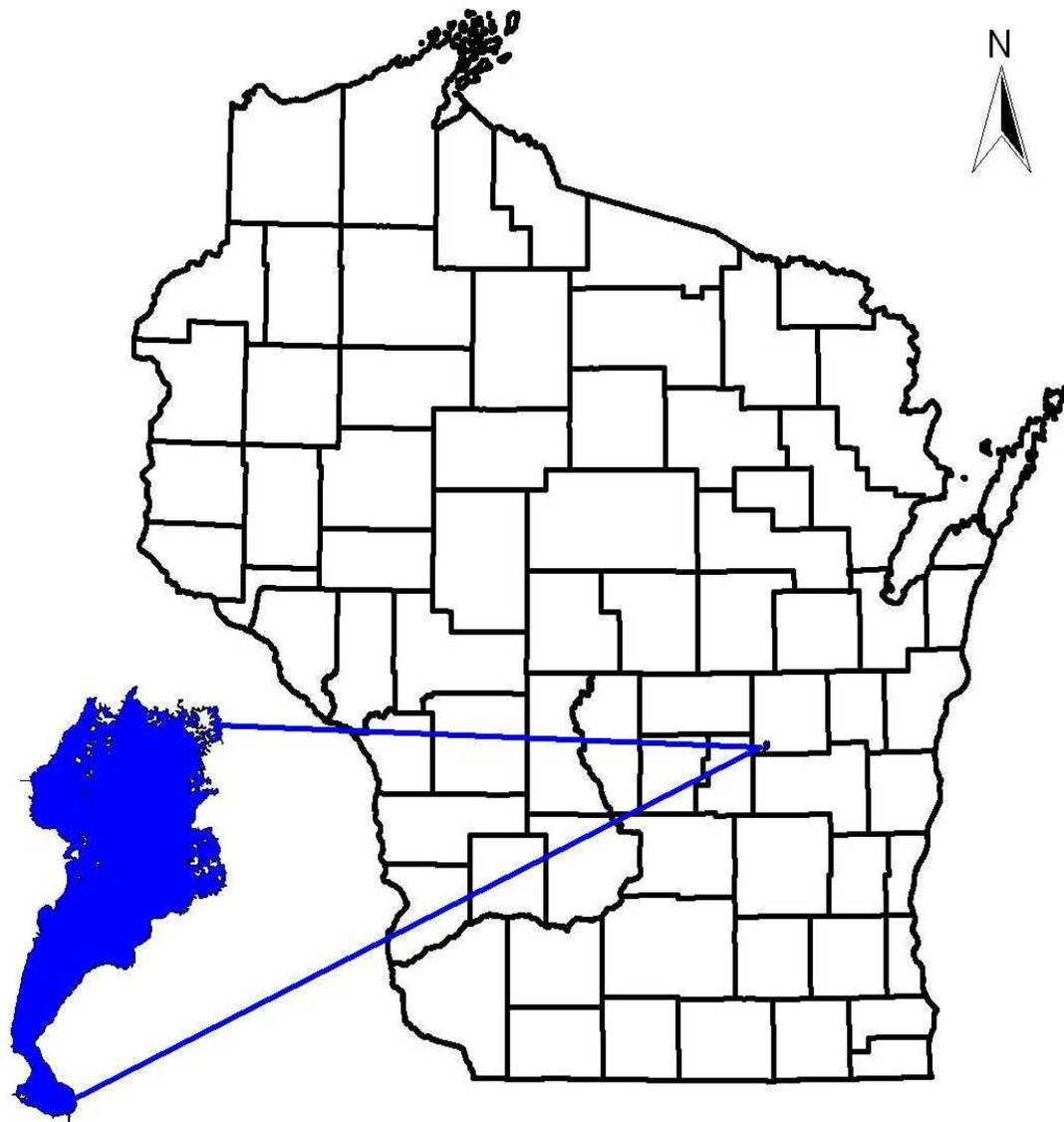


The background of the slide is a vibrant, green-tinted photograph of a wetland. It features a variety of aquatic plants, including large, heart-shaped leaves and tall, thin grasses. Several small, white flowers are scattered throughout the scene, adding to the natural beauty of the landscape. The overall atmosphere is one of a healthy, thriving ecosystem.

# Rush Lake

A Restoration Success

# Rush Lake Location



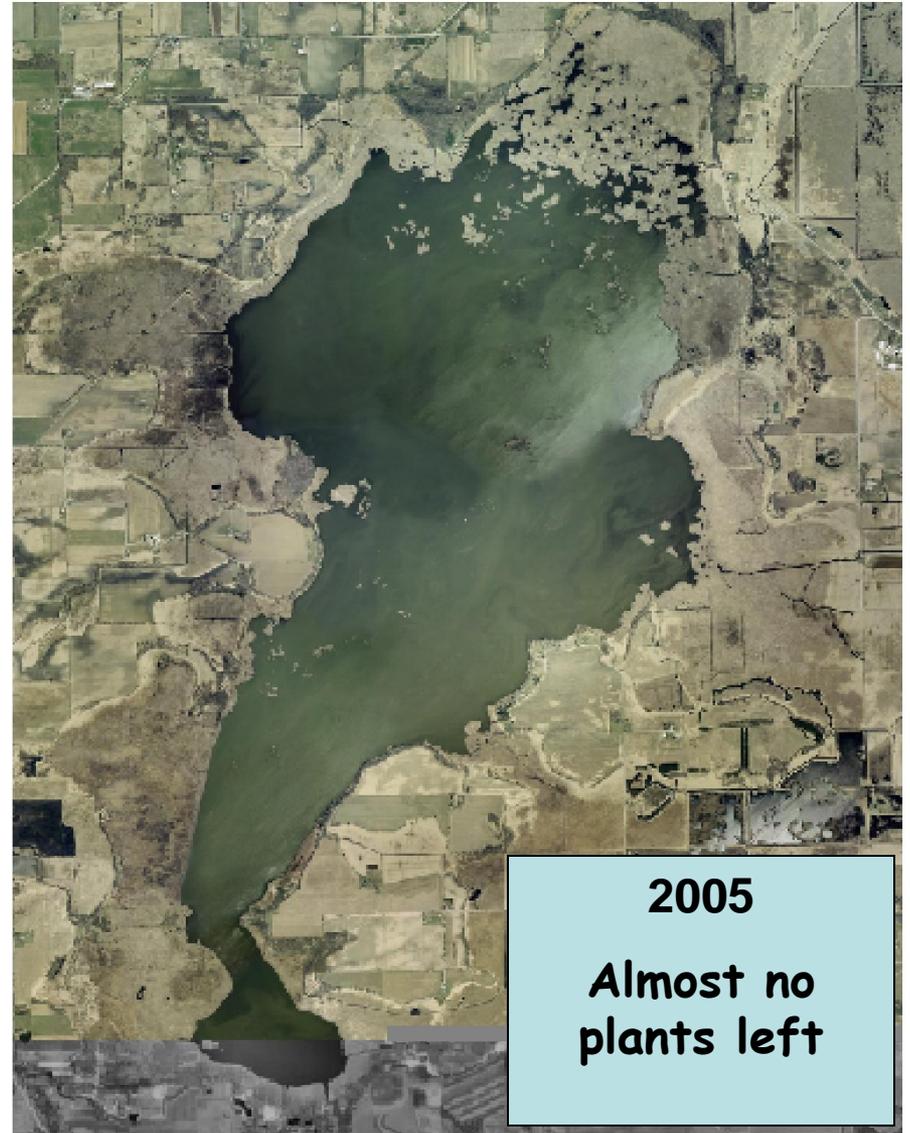
# Looking North



Winnebago County

Fond du Lac County

## Loss of Habitat in 7 Decades







# 1946 News Clipping

“Proposed dam to be built in Rush lake for the purpose of maintaining a higher water level, and thus providing a better game sanctuary”

“A higher lake level will protect duck foods from freeze out”

“Cat tails and bull rushes have over run the lake”

“The project has received a hearty endorsement from the State Conservation Department”

## Rush Lake Dam Project to Get Under Way on Sunday

Sunday will see the start of the long awaited dam project on Rush Lake, according to an announcement made by M. K. Monroe, Chairman of the Oshkosh South Side Business Men's Association, and Chairman of the Rush Lake Wild Life program. Mr. Monroe, who is a sportsman of many years experience, was in Berlin early this week, and he told us the story of the proposed dam to be built in Rush Lake for the purpose of maintaining a higher water level in the lake, and thus providing a better game sanctuary.

Mr. Monroe stated that he and his assistants, Lynn Small, of Oshkosh, Minor Harris of Rush Lake, and Sid Gordon of Oshkosh, have been working on the plans for the dam for almost two years. Their hope is to bring the ducks back to Rush Lake. The duck population on this lake has been growing less and less each year due to lack of forage. The level of the lake has been so low that winter seasons killed out much of the normal duck food that grows in the lake's bottom. A higher lake level will protect these duck foods from the ice and the ducks will find plenty of forage there when they return. Cat tails and bull rushes have over run the lake in past years, and these plants choked off the roots, which the ducks normally feed upon.

Monday morning authorization was granted for the project from the state planning board in conjunction with the Public Service commission, in Madison. The plan now is to recruit as many sportsmen from this Wisconsin area as is possible to start some of the preparatory work on the dam this coming Sunday.

A team from the Berlin Conservation Club, under the direction of Allen Carey, is expected to be on hand for the opening of the project. Any interested duck hunter who wishes to do his bit toward

the revival of Rush Lake as a duck hunting mecca, is urged to contact Mr. Carey as soon as possible.

The dam itself is to be constructed by public conscription. \$1500.00 is the necessary amount to complete the project. Anyone who is interested in helping the project with funds may make out a check to the Rush Lake Wild Life Program, and give it to Allen Carey, who will turn it over to the program chairman, Mr. Monroe.

This dam will be located at the east end of Rush Lake, approximately 500 feet from the Waukau Creek outlet. It will be of earth construction, and will raise the lake to the desired level.

Mr. Monroe stated that the project has received such hearty endorsement from the State Conservation Department, that that organization has pledged to appropriate everything necessary to the propagation of a duck feeding location, once the dam is constructed.

Mr. Monroe, who is an insurance man by trade, has two boys who have recently returned from the service, and he is interested in providing good hunting for them and all returning servicemen in this community. He is a leading sportsman of the state, who has conducted crow hunts and shooting events throughout Wisconsin. He can remember when Rush Lake was one of the state's outstanding nesting sites for ducks. Now the lake is slowly deteriorating into a cat tail choked slough. Years back, this lake was one of the very few nesting spots for Red Head ducks in the U. S. Now they land, but only to find the food that they are expecting is so scarce that they leave almost immediately.

The conservation Commission is confident that the lake can be restored. This dam is the first move in that direction. Berlin sportsmen are expected to take an active part in this move.



# Rush Lake Dams

- 1948



- 1963



- 2005

MAR 23 2007

# The Problems

## Biological

**Very Poor Duck Nesting Success**

**Formerly Common Marshland Birds  
and Animals Becoming Rare**

**Over-Abundant Rough Fish**

**Very Poor Water Clarity**

**Few Aquatic Plants Remaining**



black-crowned  
night heron (SC)



black tern (SC)



common moorhen (SC)

## Rare Wildlife



least bittern (SC)



great egret (T)



western grebe (SC)



red-necked grebe (E)



Blanding's turtle (T)



Forster's tern (E)

Photo Credit Glenn Bartley

# The Problems

challenges, barriers, issues to overcome

## Sociological

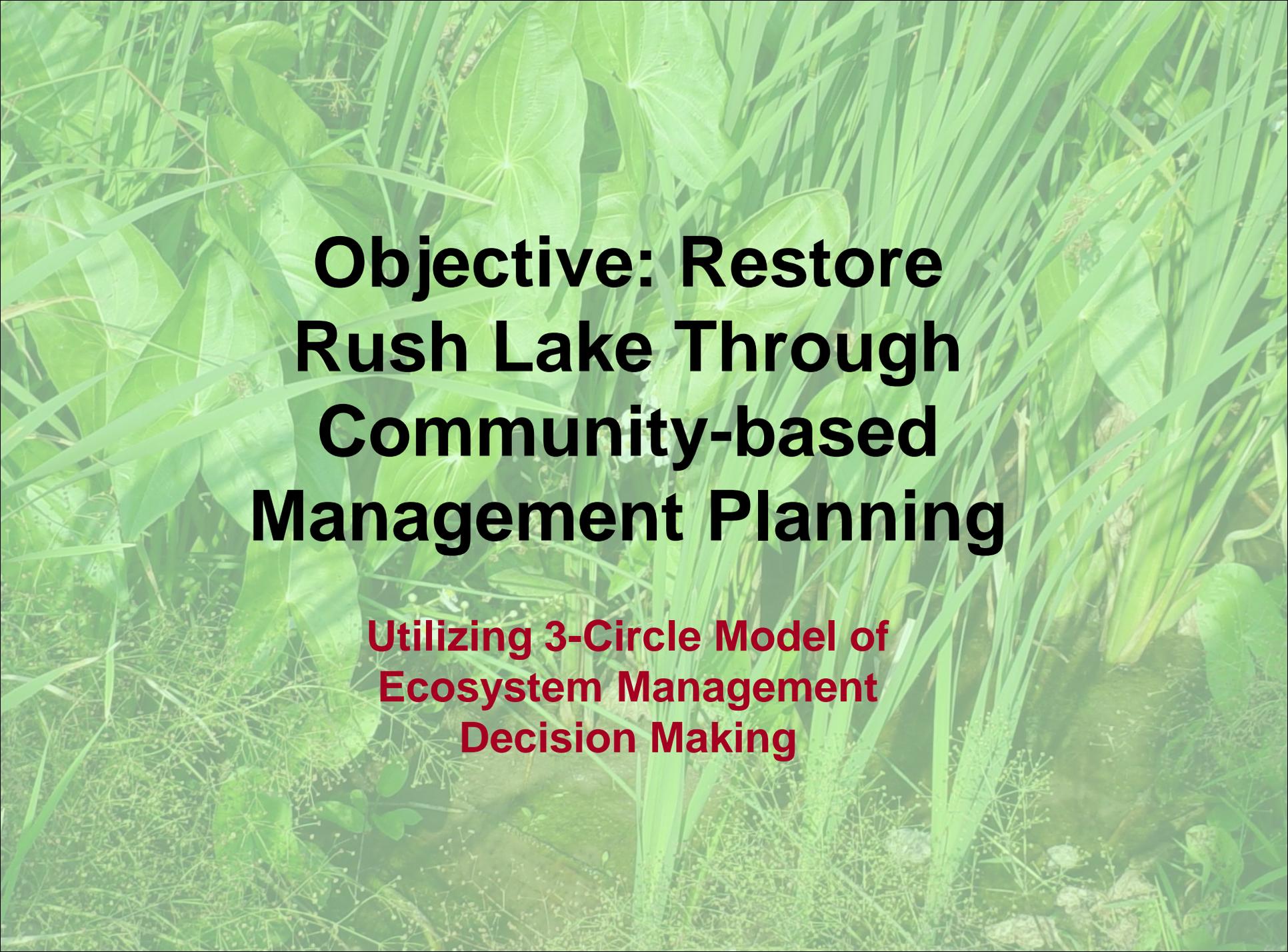
Duck Hunting Success and Enjoyment Diminished

Hunters, Birdwatchers, and Others Dissatisfied with the condition of Rush Lake but weren't sure what to do

Strong Mistrust of DNR

No Single Public Group Existed

Limited Financial Resources Available Locally



# **Objective: Restore Rush Lake Through Community-based Management Planning**

**Utilizing 3-Circle Model of  
Ecosystem Management  
Decision Making**

# Process

**Met with local groups and town boards to solicit members for a Rush Lake Restoration Steering Committee**

**Learned about how members remembered the lake and how they used it**

**Built consensus that a restoration effort was worth undertaking**

**Steering Committee selected its own leadership & Developed a Mission Statement**

# Process

DNR, USFWS, & UW-Extension were ad hoc members and technical advisors

Early focus on learning about shallow water ecology

Brought in others who had experience with water level fluctuation; Big Muskego Lake

Secured initial planning \$\$ from Great Lakes Protection Fund & Hired a Planning Consultant

Formed study groups to define what the public wanted to achieve in the restoration

- 14 Member Steering Committee representing diverse interests
- Monthly public meetings 1999-present
- Three public open houses
- Reorganized as a non-profit to coordinate long term management and manage incoming funds



# Project Timeline

- Planning completed in fall of 2002
- 2002-2004: Line up funding sources
- Winter-Spring 2005: Complete Environmental Analysis and Permitting
- Summer-Fall 2005: Replace dam and grade outlet channel
- Spring 2006: **Initiate Drawdown**
- Late Summer: 2007 Carp treatment
- Fall 2007: Bring water levels back up for waterfowl season
- Winter 2007/2008: South Boat landing upgrades

# Rush Lake Funding

- **Great Lakes Protection Fund- \$10,000 for Plan Development**
- **NAWCA - \$1 million for Restoration and Acquisition for Rush Lake and Winnebago System Upriver Lakes**
- **NRDA - \$420,000 for Rush Lake**
- **Ducks Unlimited - \$100,000**
- **Local Fundraising - Currently \$25,000**

# Re-grade outlet stream Improve In-Stream Habitat



# Construct New Dam



# Rush Lake Dam





**Carp Barriers in Dam Gates**

Drawdown !





JUN 23 2006



JUL 28 2006







JUL 28 2006



# **Managing Rough Fish**

## **Carp & Bullhead**

# Rush Lake Winter Fish Kill



- August 2007 Rotenone Treatment for Rough Fish



# Refilling - 2007

2006

2007



JUN 23 2006



SEP 7 2007

# Objective: *Hemi-Marsh*





SEP 7 2007



SEP 7 2007



SEP 7 2007



SEP 25 2008

# 3-Circle Model of Ecosystem Management

## Ecological

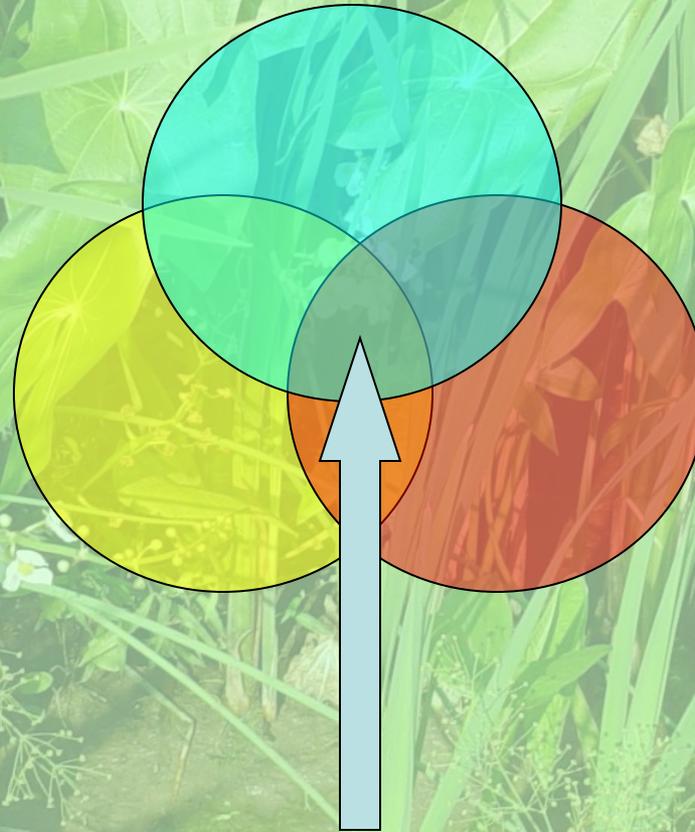
Water quality & Wildlife Habitat

## Socio-economic

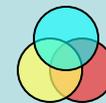
Duck hunters, bird  
watchers, nature  
lovers, project  
funders

## Institutional

DNR, UW-Extension,  
US F&WL, County &  
Town Governments



**Success**



**Rush Lake**

**A Restoration Success**