

CLEARLY

making a difference for

Wisconsin Lakes

It is hard as heck to interview a veteran of twenty years with the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network. They will answer questions about water quality and aquatic plants. They will talk about the beauty of their lake, the fish, the loons, the wonderful community of folks that live on the lake and the joy the lake brings to their family. They will talk about the need to monitor water quality so that their children and grandchildren are able to enjoy the same beauty that we enjoy (and sometimes take for granted). But, they will not talk about themselves. Many do the work alone - paddling or peddling or motoring out to the deep hole and quietly collecting the data. They do not want or expect gratitude or recognition. In the four years that we have celebrated the 20-year milestone, each volunteer has told us something along the lines of "It's about the lake, it isn't about us."

But, volunteering for twenty years with the same group is a big deal! Recording water quality data, looking for invasive species, and recording native aquatic plant information on a lake for that length of time reflects on hundreds, even thousands, of hours on the lake. In many cases, the volunteer data is the only data that exists for that waterbody. This baseline lake data is extremely important – how can we track climate change, water quality changes and aquatic plant community changes if we don't know what we started with? Volunteers act as sentinels on the lake – watching for changes and educating their neighbors and the general public. Sometimes the annual "state of the lake" address given by the CLMN volunteer is the only scientific water information available to waterfront owners. And sometimes the volunteer-collected data is all that agency personnel have available to determine a course for effective management.

So, to each volunteer, from all of us – THANK YOU. It is about the lakes, but we want you to know that it is about you as well.

Twenty-year volunteer monitors (1988-2008)

Lisa Conley, Lac LaBelle, (1164 acres, 45 ft. max. depth), Waukesha County
Del Dufrain, Sand Lake (936 acres, 50 ft. max. depth), Sawyer County
Phillip Fritz, Bass Lake (36 acres, 50 ft. max. depth), Marinette County
Richard Lathrop, Presque Isle Lake (1280 acres, 80 ft. max. depth), Vilas County
Marj Mehring, Squash Lake (396 acres, 74 ft. max. depth), Oneida County
John Sipos, Golden Lake (250 acres, 46 ft. max. depth), Waukesha County

Interviews from past and present 20-year volunteers can be found on the UWEX Lakes website (www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes), both on the Convention 2009 Follow-up and Citizen Lake Monitoring Network pages.



20 Years Monitoring and counting...