



Navigating Wisconsin's Conservation and Water History

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What we'll cover

- WI conservation heroes
- Connection to water
- Citizen involvement
- Today's challenges
- Q&A

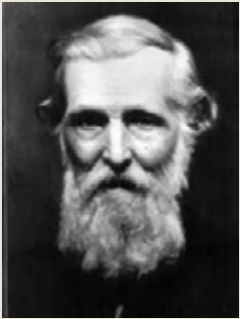


Rich conservation history



- WCHF established 1982
- 32 state organizations
- Anyone can nominate
- 91 inductees
- Statewide impact or beyond
- Many water connections
- All walks of life

The Big Four



Muir, 1838-1914

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."



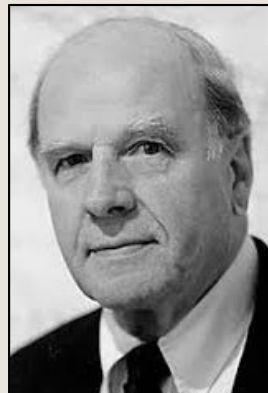
Leopold, 1887-1948

"When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect."



Olson, 1899-1982

"By saving any wilderness, what you are really saving is the human spirit."

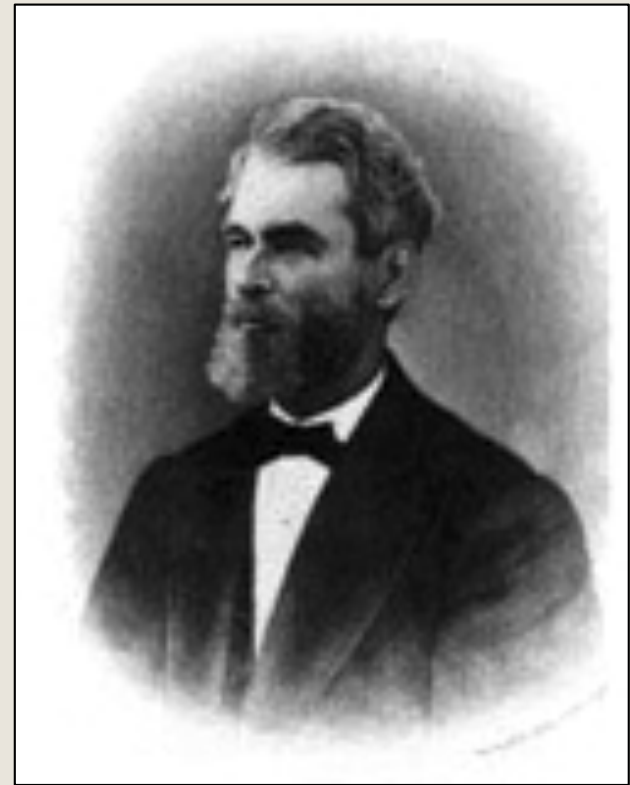


Nelson, 1916 – 2005

"The economy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the environment."

Conservation roots: Increase Lapham

- Arrived in Wisconsin, 1836
- Civil engineer
- Careful records on pristine environment
- Served as benchmarks
- 1855: Natural history survey
- Warned about cutover



Lapham, 1811-75

Early UW roots: Charles Van Hise

- UW-Madison president
- Embraced Wisconsin Idea
(Boundaries of the campuses are boundaries of state)
- Early conservation text (1910)
- Predicted climate change



Van Hise, 1857-1918

“Conservation means the greatest good to the greatest number for the longest time.”

Paul Husting goes duck hunting

- 1913, Rock River, Horicon Marsh
- Arrested for trespass by private shooting club
- Case went to Supreme Court
- Husting represented himself
- Strengthened Public Trust Doctrine
- Advocate of public water rights



Husting, 1866-1917

Owen Gromme: Art and conservation

- World-renowned wildlife artist
- Longtime Milwaukee Museum curator/taxidermist
- Ardent conservationist
- Fought to preserve Horicon Marsh using his art to fund
- Also used art to help establish International Crane Foundation



Gromme, 1896-1991

Other Horicon heroes:

Wilhelmine La Budde, Curly Radtke, AD Sutherland



Gromme's "Connor's Ditch"

Virgil Muench and rivers

- Lawyer battled water pollution, destruction of wild rivers
- Fought power company plan to dam Namekagon River
- 1951 Supreme Court decision...
- Defined public rights in rivers, streams



Muench, 1904-1971

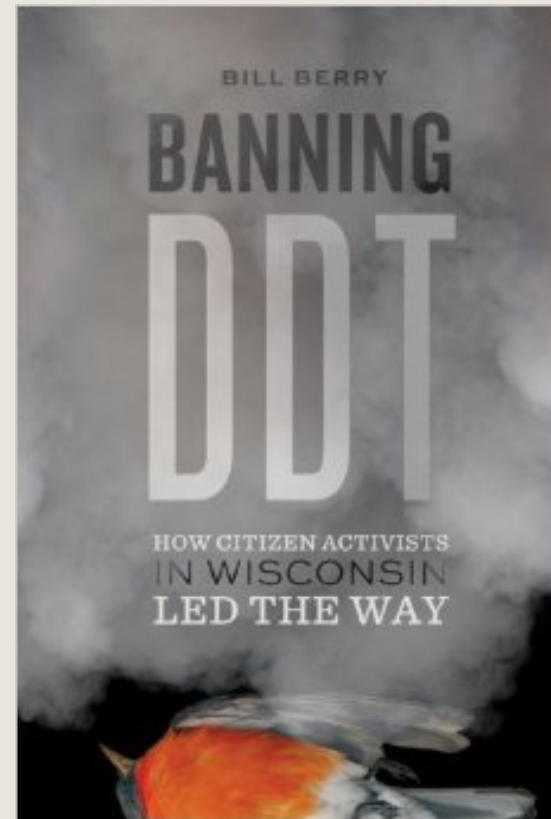
George Meyer

- Former DNR secretary
- Air and water quality
- Wetland and shoreline protection
- Urban and agricultural run-off to waterways



The DDT wars

- WI citizens challenged DDT as water pollutant
- DDT found in all WI waters, 1967
- Judge ruled in citizens' favor
- US DDT ban in 1972



Lorrie Otto and a basket of robins

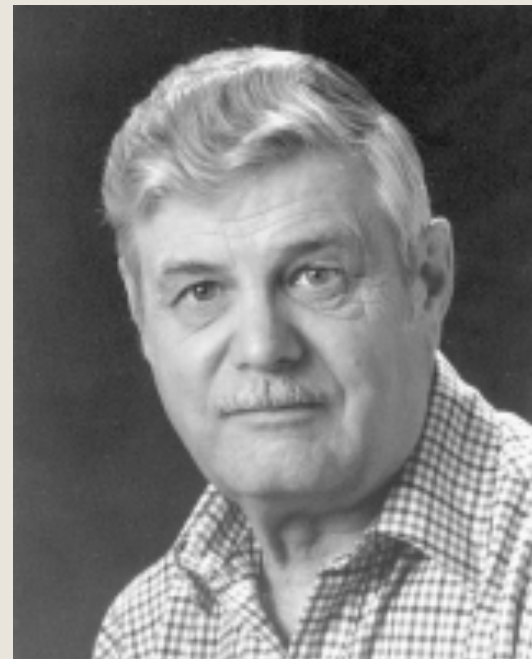
- Milwaukee housewife
- Key citizen activist in Wisconsin DDT wars
- Tireless, determined, impatient, informed
- Vanguard of women environmental leaders
- Citizen conservationist



Otto, 1919 – 2010

Don Johnson

- Milwaukee Sentinel
- Uncovered 1967 DDT study: Otto pressured him
- DDT in every water body in state
- Stories had huge impact
- Financial case for ban



Joseph Hickey

- Leopold protégé
- Reluctant citizen/scientist
- DDT research included work on Green Bay gulls
- Key role in unraveling DDT impact on raptors



Martin Hanson



“Fish Eaten from
Wisconsin Waters Could
be Dangerous to Human
Health”

Lessons learned, DDT

- Humans are capable of global imprint
- Ecological catastrophes can be avoided, and nature is resilient
- Citizen activists can make a difference
- Environmentalists need strong economic arguments: fish in Wisconsin waters
- Need business leaders engaged

Navigating Wisconsin water issues

- Water quantity/quality
- Central Wisconsin wells
- N and P in lakes, streams
- Invasive species
- Shoreland development
- Long history of disputes
- Social tension
- Public Trust Doctrine



Central Wisconsin water: Ground and surface waters connected

- Deep, continuous aquifer
- Dramatic increase in extraction
 - Fewer than 100 wells in early '50s, 3,200 today
- Lakes, streams affected
- Whose water is it?
- Will we establish prior rights to water?



Public Trust Doctrine

- Dates to 6th century Rome
- Part of our state constitution
- Navigable waters “common highways and forever free”: belong to the people
- Upheld in most WI Supreme Court rulings
- “Just vs. Marinette” (1972): Couldn’t fill wetland connected to navigable water
- But Rock-Koshkonong vs. WI (2013) limited public trust
- What about ground water?

Water quality challenges

- Kewaunee County crisis: bacteria in water
- State passed new law to limit spreading
- Nutrients in lakes: Winnebago, Madison



Kewaunee County

Blue-green algae

- EWG report: “epidemic of blooms”
- 169 blooms in 2017
- Lake Erie crisis
- Wisconsin hotspots
 - Winnebago
 - Green Bay
 - Wis River flowages



Cedar Lake, Polk County

Blue-green algae

- Harmful in lakes
- Water treatment gives rise to carcinogenic disinfection byproducts
- Lake Winnebago
 - 173,000 people get drinking water:
Appleton, Menasha,
Neenah, Oshkosh



Lake Winnebago

Can we find common ground?

- Science sufficient
- Public will?
- Economic case?
- Middle ground?
- Rules based on local, regional characteristics?



Can we agree water belongs to public?



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Questions?