



Madeline Island

Wilderness Preserve News

Summer 2010

SUSTAINING THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF MADELINE ISLAND

By Tom Kromroy, President

Sustainability seems to be the environmental mantra for the new millennium. Following is a definition of sustainability offered by Wikipedia: "Sustainability is the capacity to endure. In ecology the word describes how biological systems remain diverse and productive over time. For humans it is the potential for long-term maintenance of wellbeing, which in turn *depends on the wellbeing of the natural world and the responsible use of natural resources.*"

I think most of us would agree with this or a similar definition of sustainability. It is the wellbeing of ourselves as well as the wellbeing of our children and their children that largely motivates us to protect the forests and wetlands of Madeline Island. Protecting these lands so that they can thrive and be enjoyed in their natural state for generations to come is possible because of the donations from the generous membership of the Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve (MIWP). To all who contribute to preserving the lands that make this such a special place – Thank You!

Membership

The Preserve, a not for profit land trust that is dedicated to protecting and preserving natural areas on Madeline Island, has been in existence for twenty four years. Our membership base is diverse, and many of our members have been with us from the earliest years. As our organization ages, we need to look at ways to increase our base. Consider asking your children or your new island neighbor down the road to be members. Sustaining our membership base is vital to the long term success of our efforts. If you are reading this newsletter and you are not a member we encourage you to join today.

Buckthorn Task Force

MIWP continues to sponsor the Buckthorn Task Force. The photo shows the crew that we assembled on a Saturday last September. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of the Boy Scouts from Grandview and Washburn, members of The Northwoods Weed

Cooperative, members of the MIWP, residents of the Town of La Pointe, and guidance from the Wisconsin DNR we removed buckthorn from five acres of Town-owned forest land adjacent to the Capser Trail in that one day. For four weeks beginning in May of this year, the Town of La Pointe will be working with a student from Northland College who has volunteered to remove buckthorn from infested land. The MIWP has furnished all of the tools and materials that she will need.

(Letter: continued page 2)



(President's Letter: continued from page 1)

Remarkable progress has been made in buckthorn management on the island in the past couple of years. Let's keep up the good work – success will require many more hours of volunteer labor. Please come out and help!

Wind Turbine Farm Development

The Town of La Pointe has assembled an Alternative Energy Committee (AEC) to study the viability of wind energy as an option for the Island Community. Last fall the AEC approached the MIWP with a request to locate a wind farm composed of five to seven wind turbines on MIPW-owned land on the north end of the Island. We denied the request because our Articles of Incorporation prohibit our lands from use for industrial and or commercial purposes. Members of the MIWP board also believe that an industrial wind farm, with 300 feet tall turbines, may have an overall negative environmental impact on the Island. The AEC is continuing to study the project's feasibility and will be performing additional wind studies on Town owned land on the north end of the Island. The committee has been asked by the Wisconsin DNR to prepare

an environmental impact statement that will evaluate the effects of the project on Island lands, eagles, bats, migrating birds and humans. We will keep everyone informed as this project proceeds.

Sustainability

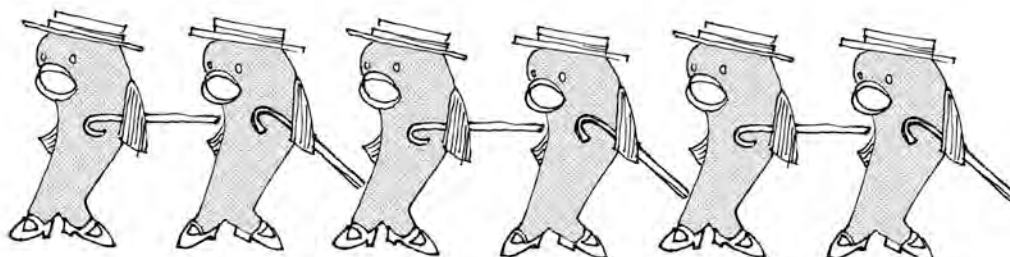
I extend my thanks to everyone who supports the goals of the MIWP to protect our Island's beauty and resources for future generations to enjoy. Together we are making a difference



Wind Farm on Wolfe Island, Ontario, photo courtesy of National Wind Watch (www.wind-watch.org)

MIWP CONTINUES TO BATTLE INVASIVE SPECIES AT 4TH OF JULY PARADE

We're back! After a short one-year hiatus, the elite and well-rested MIWP marching non-band is returning to the Madeline Island Fourth of July Parade with an even bigger extravaganza, and we'd like you to come along. Continuing in the popular "Invasive Species" series, this year we plan to feature the ever unpopular Asian carp. While we take the carp invasion seriously, we don't intend to be the slightest bit serious about this float, and carp, which are known for flinging themselves into boats, may be flung. Think National Geographic meets the Three Stooges. Costumes at this point are vague (does anyone have a good idea for cheap, easy-to-build carp outfits??) so just show up and we will make things work. Plan to meet at the marina thirty minutes before parade time (the parade usually starts at 10:30 AM, but check with the Chamber of Commerce) under the MIWP banner. Questions? Call Victoria Erhart at 715-747-2277 in early July. And don't be koi!



carpe diem

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS RAISED ABOUT ISLAND WIND PLANS

By Dan Engstrom

The following article, originally published in the February issue of the Island Gazette, lays out some of the environmental concerns regarding placement of industrial-scale wind turbines on Madeline Island. A follow-up article on the noise impacts of wind farms will appear in the May Gazette. The MIWP believes that decisions regarding wind development will be among the most important environmental choices facing our island community in the coming years, and that we all need to become better informed about the consequences and trade-offs of those decisions. To that end, the MIWP is sponsoring several public presentations on wind development this summer; see schedule elsewhere in this newsletter. You can learn more about how other Wisconsin communities are dealing with industrial wind development at www.betterplan.squarespace.com.



In the previous issue of the Island Gazette the Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve (MIWP) laid out its reasoning for opposing the proposed siting of industrial-scale wind turbines on its lands at the northeast end of the Island. Those concerns were narrowly focused on our mission and bylaws which preclude any type of commercial development on Preserve lands. However, in our formal response to the La Pointe Alternative Energy Committee (AEC) we stated broader concerns that utility-scale wind development could have a negative environmental impact on the Island. Those concerns were brought into sharper focus on December 16th at an informational meeting organized by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) at the Great Lakes Visitor Center in Ashland. There representatives of the DNR, National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bad River and Red Cliff bands of Lake Superior Chippewa, the AEC, and the MIWP discussed the potential environmental impact of an Island wind farm on area wildlife. Four major issues were raised:

- (1) There are five active bald eagle nests on the north end of the Island that could be impacted by the proposed project.
- (2) There are concerns about the impact the project would have on the bird migration corridor across Lake Superior.
- (3) Piping Plover, an endangered species, is known to nest on Long Island and has also been found on Outer Island. Wind turbines could impact local movement between the islands.
- (4) There are concerns about the impact of wind-turbines on the Island's bat population.

These are not trivial concerns. The bald eagle population of the Apostle Islands is still recovering from pesticide poisonings of the 1960s and 70s, and nesting success is near the threshold for what wildlife experts consider to be a healthy population. Eagles, and raptors in general, are particularly susceptible to turbine collisions, and widespread eagle deaths have been reported from industrial wind farms across the US and northern Europe. In Norway, more than a dozen white-tailed sea eagles – a close relative of the bald eagle with similar behavior and ecology – have been killed by a single industrial wind farm along the North Sea.



A Long Island piping plover receives color-coded leg bands for identification and tracking. Photo by Alice Van Zoeren

(Wind-farm concerns, continued on page 6)

23RD ANNUAL SPRING MEETING AND EVENING RECEPTION

The Wilderness Preserve will be hosting its 23rd Annual Spring Meeting this coming Memorial Day weekend, Saturday May 29th, at The Clubhouse on Madeline Island. Similar to last year, the event will be an evening reception with an informal buffet of elegant and hearty hors d'oeuvres, complimentary wine service, and coffee /tea and assorted deserts (come with an appetite). Many thanks to the Madeline Island Music Camp for providing The Clubhouse for this event. This year's evening fare will be provided by Lotta's Café of La Pointe. A social gathering and food service begins at 7:00 p.m., with the program beginning at 8:00 pm.

Our program this year features renowned journalist and author

PETER ANNIN

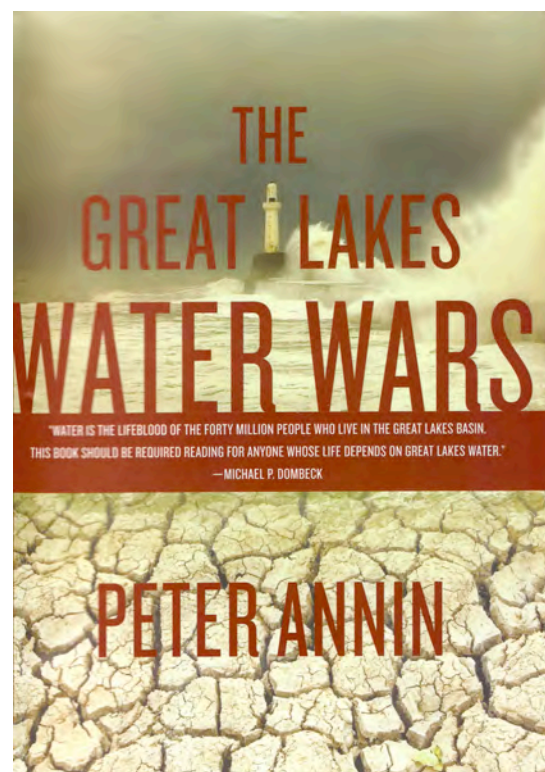
“THE GREAT LAKES WATER WARS”

“Because [the Great Lakes] look so big, we perceive them to be able to handle anything we throw at them ... Their size belies their fragility.”

– Cameron Davis, new Great Lakes 'Czar' for the Obama Administration

A veteran conflict and environmental journalist, Peter Annin spent more than a decade reporting on a wide variety of environmental issues for *Newsweek*, including droughts in the Southwest, hurricanes in the Southeast, wind power on the Great Plains, forest fires in the mountain West, recovery efforts on the Great Lakes, and the causes and consequences of the "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico. Since January 2000 Annin has worked as Associate Director of the Institutes for Journalism and Natural Resources, a nonpartisan national nonprofit that organizes educational fellowships for mid-career environmental journalists.

The Great Lakes Water Wars has often been called the definitive book on the Great Lakes water diversion controversy. It delves into the long history of political maneuvers and water diversion schemes that have proposed sending Great Lakes water everywhere from Akron to Arizona to Asia. Annin provides a behind-the-scene account of the struggle over Great Lakes water, as the eight Great Lake states and two Canadian provinces try to implement an unprecedented accord designed to protect the lakes from unwarranted water diversions. *The Great Lakes Water Wars* tells the colorful story of the on-going effort to conserve this invaluable freshwater resource, and the book serves as an important warning about what could happen if the lakes are left unprotected. In 2007 the book received the Great Lakes Book Award for nonfiction.



The price of the Spring Reception and Program is \$30 per person.

Reservations can be made (through May 24th) by contacting MIWP Treasurer Russ Fridley, 740 Amber Drive, Shoreview, MN 55126 ☞ (651-484-1542) ☞ Email at: russellfridley@gmail.com

(maximum 120 guests)

SUMMER 2010 PROGRAM

Evening lectures are co-sponsored by the Madeline Island Historical Museum

Saturday, May 29th, 8:30–10:30 a.m. “Spring Bird Migration on Madeline”

Peter Hudleston and Victoria Erhart will lead us on our 9th Annual Spring Bird Hike. Before the trees leaf out, see a number of migrating warblers, hermit thrushes, resident chickadees, woodpeckers and more! Learn bird songs so even if you don't see the birds you can identify them. Don't forget your binoculars! Meet at Big Bay Town Park.

**Saturday, May 29th, 7:00 p.m. MIWP's 23rd Annual Spring Meeting and Evening Reception
"The Great Lakes Water Wars"**

Peter Annin, author of *The Great Lakes Water Wars*, is a veteran conflict and environmental journalist, whose book focuses on the issue of water diversion from the Great Lakes. At the Clubhouse.

(see detailed announcement, page 4)

Thursday, June 10th, 7:00 p.m. “Creating Healthy, Vibrant Communities for Our Great-Grandchildren”

With Steve Sandstrom, educator/speaker, focusing on issues of sustainability in the Chequamegon Bay Region in Northern Wisconsin. He will speak about efforts being undertaken to insure a future world that is healthy in every respect: socially, environmentally, and economically. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum.

Thursday, June 17th, 7:00 p.m. “Living in a Wind Factory”

With Gerry Meyer, who lives next to a wind energy project in Byron, Wisconsin. Join Jerry to learn about his experience living within ¾ of a mile of five wind turbines and the effects wind turbines can have on wildlife. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum.

Saturday, June 19th, 9:00 a.m. – noon “3rd Annual Buckthorn Pull – Work Session & Open House”

Join Isaiah Messerly, biologist crew leader, of The Great Lakes Exotic Plant Management team, as he teaches and assists in the identification and effective eradication of invasive Buckthorn. Best practice and all chemicals needed will be provided. Wear work clothes and boots and bring gloves. Celebrate a good team effort at the end with cider and cookies! Meet at the Capser Trail, across from the Fire Station.

Thursday, July 1st, 7:00 p.m. “Bald Eagles In The Apostle Islands – Sentinels For Monitoring Change in our Environment”

With Bill Route, Ecologist, National Park Service, Great Lakes Inventory and Monitoring Network. Bill will explore trends in environmental contaminants found in Great Lakes Bald Eagle populations and show how these magnificent birds can help monitor the effects of climate change. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum.

Thursday, July 8th, 7:00 p.m. “Bears of Northern Wisconsin”

With Bruce Prentice, Ashland High School Biology Teacher, learn why *Ursus americanus*, the northern black bear, is an important part of Wisconsin's northwoods ecosystem. Bruce's *Ashland High School Black Bear Project* is one of the many partners involved in *The Wisconsin Black Bear Research Project*, which serves to help us understand our state's second largest mammal. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum.

Thursday, August 5th, 7:00 p.m. “Present Status & Future Plans for Madeline Island Community Wind”

With Burke Henry, Madeline Island Alternative Energy Committee. Come learn about the important environmental and energy choices facing our island community. At the Madeline Island Historical Museum.

Saturday, August 7th, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m. “Mondamin Trail Medicinal and Edible Plants”

Join Pastor Marina Lachecki, St. John's UCC, on this popular annual forage. Using her extensive knowledge of native plants, she will share with us her stories and wisdom about what this greenery can do to both feed and heal our bodies. Meet at Ojibwe Memorial Park (near the marina and Indian cemetery)

All events are free (except the Spring Reception) and open to the public

(Wind-farm concerns: Continued from page 3)

The Apostle Islands including Madeline are an important bird-migration corridor across Lake Superior. For this reason and because of important nesting habitat, the Apostles (excluding Madeline), along with lower Chequamegon Bay and the Kakagon-Bad River Sloughs have been designated by the state of Wisconsin as *Important Bird Areas*. The IBA program is a global effort to identify and conserve areas that are vital to birds and other biodiversity. Both direct mortality from turbine collisions as well as indirect effects on bird migration and behavior are potential concerns. Turbine noise as well as their flashing nighttime strobes could be disorienting to migrating birds. Numerous scientific studies over decades have documented the negative effects of noise on animal ecology, including habitat use, nesting success, and predation.

Possible effects of wind turbines on Piping Plover are of special concern, because the only known nesting sites on Lake Superior for this federally protected species are located on Long Island. However, plovers from Long Island have been spotted on Outer Island, and exactly how they get back and forth is uncertain, though the most direct route passes right over Madeline's north end. Given current efforts to protect and increase plover numbers (see 2009 MIWP newsletter), any development that might hinder expansion of nesting areas or contribute to bird mortality would be a serious setback.

It is well known that bats are highly susceptible to mortality from wind turbines, especially during migration. Independent studies have documented the deaths of thousands of bats at a single facility over a period of a few months during migration. Bats appear to forage for insects in and around operating turbines and are struck by the turbine blades (which travel in excess of 100 mph at the tips) or succumb to a sudden drop in air pressure in the airspace around the turbines – which ruptures their lungs.

These concerns regarding wind-farm development on Madeline are reflected in the US Fish and Wildlife Service's siting guidelines which recommend that wind turbines should not be installed "... in documented locations of any species of wildlife, fish, or plant protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act, ... in known local bird migration pathways or in areas

where birds are highly concentrated, ... near known bat hibernation, breeding, and maternity/nursery colonies, in migration corridors, [or near] ... areas or features of the landscape known to attract raptors (hawks, falcons, eagles, owls)."

Because of the particular environmental sensitivity of Madeline Island, the governmental agencies present at the Ashland meeting said they would request an environmental impact study on how the project will affect area wildlife and ecology. As part of this effort, the agencies would like to see a two year bird and bat study to document existing conditions prior to the project being constructed. The cost of this study was estimated at between five hundred thousand and one million dollars. The Town or the developer, whoever that might be, will be responsible for arranging for the study and for all associated costs.

Although the MIWP opposes wind development on its own lands, we have not taken a formal position regarding the placement of wind turbines elsewhere on the Island. However, the issues raised at the December agency briefing in Ashland raise serious doubts about whether such a project is in the best interest of the Island's ecology and tranquility. We are concerned about possible effects from turbines located on lands adjacent to ours as well as impacts to neighboring land-owners and on resident and migrating wildlife.

As an environmental organization, we recognize and strongly support the need for our communities and country to develop alternative energy sources. But as is also evident on our small island, large-scale energy development, no matter how green, has inherent conflicts and drawbacks. We applaud the hard work and efforts of the Town and AEC in pursuing these goals, but suggest that it may now be time to reconsider alternatives to industrial-scale wind development. Conservation, winterization, small-scale solar, and geothermal, although less dramatic and symbolic than 330-foot wind turbines, may be far less costly and damaging in the long run. The MIWP would welcome the opportunity to work with the AEC on such alternatives.

