Friends of the White River

Winter 2004 Issue #1

DNR Awards White River Protection Grant

Late last summer, the Wild Rivers Chapter of Trout Unlimited was awarded a Wisconsin DNR River Protection Grant for conservation planning in the White River watershed—in particular, the section of the watershed between Highway 63 on the west and Highway 13 on the east. The grant goals include:

◆ creating a White River Watershed Planning Group comprising landowners and concerned citizens along with representatives from conservation organizations and local and tribal governmental units;

◆ providing training and education to the Planning Group in the areas of ecology, river protection, leadership and organizational development;

◆ developing a management plan for the White River watershed that identifies critical issues and opportunities affecting the watershed's health; and

◆ developing long-term educational outreach within the White River watershed through training sessions, newsletters, promotional literature, and public presentations.

The grant provides funding for these projects, with the ultimate goal of creating a permanent, well-educated citizen-based organization that will care for the health of the watershed. Work on the grant began in fall 2003 and will continue through the development of a management plan, scheduled for completion in spring 2004. For more information, contact Laurence Wiland at (715) 278-3659 or lwiland@cheqnet.net.

Jan. 29 Meeting Will Focus on White River Conservation Tools

Just about anybody familiar with the White River has a story to tell about the waterway's first-class trout fishery, exceptional scenic beauty, or high water quality. Many landowners and users of the White River also share a desire to preserve and even improve the ecological health of the river and its watershed (see survey results, page 3-4).

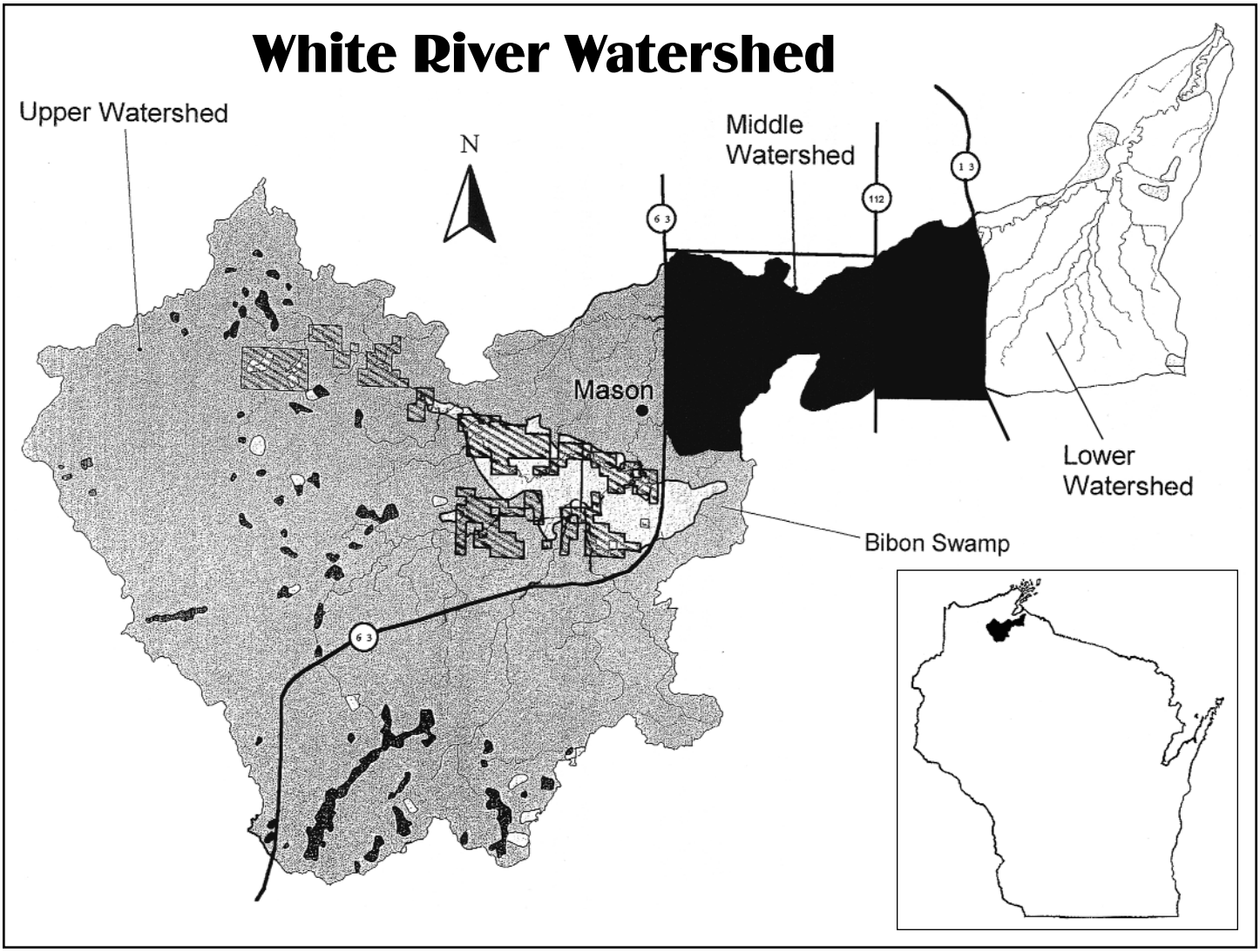
White River landowners, anglers, paddlers, and friends are invited to share their ideas and opinions at a public meeting at 6:30 p.m. January 29, 2004 at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center on Highway 2 just west of Ashland. The meeting's purpose will be to to discuss conservation tools and options that may be used to protect and preserve the White River for future generations.

On hand to make presentations will be Ruth Oppedahl, executive director of the Bayfield Regional Conservancy, who will talk about land trusts and other land protection tools. Diane Daulton, director of the Ashland-Bayfield-Douglas-Iron County Land Conservation Department, will discuss cost-share conservation programs available to private landowners through her organization.

The meeting is made possible through a Wisconsin DNR River Protection Grant given to the Wild Rivers chapter of Trout Unlimited for conservation planning along the White River. For more information, contact Laurence Wiland at (715) 278-3659 or lwiland@cheqnet.net.

The White River and its watershed are part of the larger Bad River Watershed, which encompasses 675,000 acres of land in Bayfield, Ashland, and Iron counties, draining the White, Marengo, Brunsweiler, and Potato rivers and Bear Trap and Tyler Forks creeks—all the waters that flow into the Bad River and then into Lake Superior. The Friends of the White River is a committee of the Bad River Watershed Association, Inc. The mission of the Bad River Watershed Association is to promote the healthy interconnection between the human and natural communities of the watershed by involving all citizens in maintaining the integrity of watershed systems for future generations.

BAD RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
310 Stuntz Avenue, #301
Ashland, WI 54806



About the White River watershed

◆ The White River watershed drains a large area of Bayfield and Ashland counties and is scattered with numerous lakes. Its headwaters are near Delta and it flows to the confluence of the Bad River near Odanah, on the Bad River Indian Reservation.

◆ The Wisconsin DNR's White River Fishery Area spans several reaches of the upper White River, including the South and West forks. This 2,400-acre area north of Drummond is managed for its fishery, wildlife and recreation potential.

◆ The Wisconsin DNR also manages the 900-acre White River Wildlife Area in northern Ashland County, which protects forest habitat and fisheries.

◆ The Porcupine Lakes Wilderness Area, also in the upper White River watershed, is managed by the U.S. Forest Service and protects about 4,500 acres of roadless headwater streams, lakes, bogs and northern hardwood forest.

◆ The White River flows through the Bibon Swamp State Natural Area, a state-owned, 10,000-acre wetland complex that provides critical habitat for fish, plants and wildlife.

◆ Most of the White River and its tributaries have been designated as high-quality Class I and Class II trout waters.

Landowner Survey Reveals Desire for Conservation

In an attempt to learn about the residents of the Bad River watershed, the Bad River Watershed Association in 2002 sent a survey to 2,918 landowners with Bad River watershed addresses, including those in Ashland, Bayfield and Iron counties as well as on the Bad River Indian Reservation. A total of 199 surveys were returned, for a response rate of about seven percent. Of those who responded, 57 were from landowners in the White River subwatershed. Following are the survey results of the White River watershed landowners:

1. How concerned are you about the following issues?

ISSUE	*Not Concerned*	*A Little Concerned*	*Concerned*	*Very Concerned*	*Unsure*
Lack of jobs	10%	27%	27%	36%	0%
Loss of scenic beauty	4%	16%	34%	46%	0%
Increase in residential development	20%	18%	31%	31%	0%
Lack of housing	37%	24%	29%	8%	2%
Adverse effects of commercial activity	8%	24%	29%	39%	0%
Motorized recreational usage	6%	22%	24%	48%	0%
Runoff and erosion	4%	14%	33%	49%	0%
Number of billboards and signs	9%	27%	35%	27%	2%
Loss of farmland	27%	22%	22%	29%	0%
Degradation of wildlife habitat	10%	4%	29%	56%	0%
Spread of invasive species	4%	17%	21%	51%	7%

2. Do you foresee a change in the following within the next 20 years?

CHANGES	*Foresee Increase*	*Foresee Decrease*	*No Change*
Population	82%	12%	6%
Residential development	96%	2%	2%
Available jobs	20%	35%	45%
Number of farms	0%	89%	11%
Size of farms	35%	42%	23%
Logging	26%	26%	48%
Tourism	80%	9%	11%

3. How long have you or your family lived or owned land in the watershed?

0-5 years	9%
6-10 years	9%
11-20 years	12%
21-30 years	12%
30 years or more	58%

4. What is your age?

26-35	13%
36-45	15%
46-55	26%
56-65	23%
66 and older	23%

5. What is your occupation?

Retired:	44%
Farmer/logger	21%
Other:	35%

6. Have you noticed a change in water quality since you have lived in the Bad River watershed?

Yes, for the better	4%
Yes, for the worse	27%
No	69%

7. What is the source of your drinking water?

Private source (well)	89%
Public water provider	11%

8. If you own a residence, what kind of water treatment facility do you have?

Private septic system	77%
Public sewer treatment	23%

9. What are your top reasons for owning property in the area?

Primary residence	38%
General liking for area	14%
Peace and tranquility	12%
Fishing and hunting	9%
Cultural/family ties	8%
Observing wildlife/ nature	6%
Farming	6%
Job location	3%
Forestry	3%
Holding as investment	1%

10. Do you plan to sell or purchase land in the watershed in the future?

No	57%
Yes	43%

11. What activities do you or other members of your household enjoy in your watershed?

Hiking/walking:	82%
Hunting:	81%
Fishing:	74%
Bird/wildlife watching:	72%
Sight-seeing + driving:	67%
Canoeing/kayaking:	49%
Swimming:	47%
Camping:	44%
Cross-country skiing:	39%
Snowmobiling:	23%
Wild rice collecting:	9%
Trapping:	7%

12. Do you fish?

Yes:	81%
No:	19%

13. If you fish, in the length of time you have fished in the Bad River watershed, have you noticed a change in the number of desirable species that you catch?

More desirable species	4%
Less desirable species	63%
Have not noticed a change	33%

Friends of the White River

a program of the

BAD RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

310 Stuntz Avenue, #301
Ashland, WI 54806

One of the most revealing questions on the landowner survey asked the open-ended question "What do you hope this area will be like in 20 years?" Here is a sample of those responses:

- I hope forest management will keep the area as close to what it is today hopefully some better jobs that are year round instead of seasonal.
- As pristine as it was when I first moved here.
- Hoping non-point pollution will be under control. Especially erosion from farming and logging. Controlling sprawl by requiring 40 acres or more for building houses. Economic development decrease. Organic farming increase.
- I would like to see our farm land use continue to be used wisely, that herbicides and pesticides be used properly. Fields of bountiful crops free from infestation of weeds and disease, streams that are free from excessive run off pollution. Neat and clean homesteads dotting our country side, villages that promote attractive yards free from unnecessary accumulation of junk. Forests that are harvested when timber is mature, that new growth may be replenishing our forest so that all God's feathered and furry friends may have food to eat and a place to hide.
- more interest in protecting the forest from diseases etc. and more control over the harvest of the federal and county forest including private lands.
- just as it is now or even quieter and more tranquil, fewer motorized vehicles in woods and on trails
- better land planning; better zoning ordinances; I hope much better ordinance administration; better use of our forests to meet country wood needs; the forest service show some interest in local citizen needs
- I would like to see all townships and county zoning to be consistent--not special zoning for the money people and strict zoning for the people that can't afford the lawyer
- Hopefully much the same as is now, lots of wood mixed with open meadows and fields
- Haven for wildlife
- maintaining/ improvements of natural environments
- to maintain its environmental quality for the next generations
- no worse than it is right now. More like it was 30-50 years ago.
- Have better control of snowmobilers and four-wheelers. Reduce taxes.
- No billboards, clean air, clean water (safe)
- Like it was 20 years ago!!
- Same or better than now, but who likes change? Unless it truly is for the better. We all seek stability and productivity to some extent.
- If you can confine motorize recreation to amusement parks, our forests and waters and wildlife will not exist if they continue this abuse. We also need some one to over ride the zoning commission, the talk a good story but do a very poor job. Unless these things are addressed in the very near future you can forget about the water shed association there will be nothing in the next 20 years
- As it is now- or as it was 30 years ago.
- No increase in population no further housing or development in river frontage- decrease in snowmobile and atv activity elimination of jet skiing- decrease in spread of exotic species sound logging practice, e.g. in causing erosion
- Prospering - growing but not too fast!
- end pulp industry and manage forest towards diversity/ grow hemp
- less tourism and people
- to remain wild
- no more degradation of land
- improved trails for hiking and biking, too many ATV trails
- everyone will have better jobs, nature will be healthy, our land will be safe and stay that way with peace over all
- fewer people
- an increase in land available for public use (less no trespassing signs)
- I would like to see rivers and lakes not developed
- I came here for the low population density. I hope it stays the same.