

Burnett County Lake Planning Grant - LPL 259 Final Report



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Final Report

Introduction

The Burnett County University of Wisconsin Extension office, the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association, and the Wisconsin Association of Lakes received assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to carry out a countywide lakes grant. The overall project goal was:

To increase the number of lake organizations in Burnett County and to strengthen the existing ones by providing educational and organizational assistance. Through this process, individual lakes and the countywide lake organizations will increase their role in solving lake issues, write and submit more individual lake grant applications, become more informed and vocal on lake related issues in the county, and strengthen their overall ability to address issues.

To accomplish these goals twelve project activities were planned:

1. Host a Countywide Lake Fair;
2. Print two countywide lake newsletters a year (to go out to all lake organizations members in the county, approximately 2,000);
3. Complete an inventory of possible lake leaders on all named but unorganized lakes in the county (approximately 200);
4. Using the lake leader inventory names, host two lake organizational meetings in the summer, targeting these potential leaders. One session will be held in the southwestern part of the county and one in the northwestern part of the county. Potential names will be generated by interviewing town officials, local businesses, civic organizations, and Realtors;
5. Provide follow up assistance to individual lake groups that wish to organize. As part of this, a small starter fund (\$50, for example) would be provided by the county lake association for new groups;
6. Attend annual summer meetings of existing lake organizations to speak on behalf of the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association and the Wisconsin Association of Lakes;
7. Sponsor a grant writing seminar on lake grants, targeting existing lake organization boards;
8. Complete an organizational and planning retreat for the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association board of directors. As part of this process, conduct a needs assessment/survey of

existing lake organizations.

9. Host one educational session on the legal aspects of lake conflicts for interested individuals and lake organizations;

10. Develop a slide show on changes that have occurred on Burnett County's lakes for use by local lake groups;

11. Develop an educational in-service and programs to be used in the schools on lake management related topics; and

12. Conduct promotion activities to carry out the above mentioned activities.

The remainder of this report will provide information on these project activities and a final wrap up and conclusion.

1. Host a Countywide Lake Fair

The Northwest Wisconsin Lake Fair was held June 17, 1995 at Forts Folle Avoine. Bill Smith, the featured speaker, addressed the Northern Initiative. There were over 200 people in attendance and 28 exhibitors. There were also 25 volunteers from 10 lake organizations. The planning committee spent months organizing the event, which in fact, strengthened their capacity to implement projects and programs. Copies of the planning and promotional materials and news articles are included.

The assessment of the planning committee was that the lake fair was a success, but that other methods could help spread the word. The planning committee planned to pursue lake forums for 1996 and 1997. These would focus on workshops with key speakers in the county.

2. Print two countywide lake newsletters a year (to go out to all lake organizations members in the county, approximately 2,000)

Through support from this project, three newsletters were sent out to approximately 2,000 riparians each issue. These were sent out between June 1995 and June 1996. The newsletters slowly improved in their look and content, due to the support received. Copies of the issues are included.

The assessment of the value of the newsletters is high. The ability to share information across lake organizations and to keep abreast of new information are two most cited reasons for valuing the newsletter. This newsletter has continued as a twice a year publication.

3. Complete an inventory of possible lake leaders on all named but unorganized lakes in the County (approximately 200)

For this project, a steering committee from the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association and UWEX met to review potential lakes having no organization and their possible leaders. After considering the enormous numbers of lakes, the committee narrowed the focus to 11 without an organization: Dunham; Clear; Crooked (organized, but weak); Devil's; Viola; Johnson; Birch Island, Poquette; Bashaw; Nicaboyn; and Benoit Lakes. Resort owners, town officials, and other community leaders were contacted to establish a list potential invitees from these lakes. Letters were sent to the list inviting their participation (see attached).

4. Using the lake leader inventory names, host two lake organizational meetings in the summer, targeting these potential leaders. One session will be held in the southwestern part of the county and one in the northwestern part of the county. Potential names will be generated by interviewing town officials, local businesses, civic organizations, and Realtors

Since the list had been narrowed to 11 principal lakes, one session was held instead of two. The session was held Tuesday October 24, 1995 with 30 people representing eight of the 11 lakes. Bob Korth was the guest speaker. Packets were provided to each lake group, including information on starting associations, model by-laws, and a copy of the recent newsletter. From this start Johnson, Clear, and Birch Island Lakes organized. It should be noted that the workshop was not the only reason for the group's organizing, but a component.

5. Provide follow up assistance to individual lake groups that wish to organize. As part of this, a small starter fund (\$50, for example) would be provided by the county lake association for new groups

After discussion, Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association Board determined that funds were not needed as much as companionship and support. Instead the board formed an Ambassador program to visit starting lake organizations (see attached). The pre-associations visited through this method were Big Bear, Little Bear, Johnson, Birch Island, and Gull Lake. Of these, only Gull Lake did not elect to organize.

6. Attend annual summer meetings of existing lake organizations to speak on behalf of the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association and the Wisconsin Association of Lakes

This occurred steadily through 1995 and 1996, to promote lake fairs, lake forums, and workshops.

7. Sponsor a grant writing seminar on lake grants, targeting existing lake organization boards

A grant writing workshop was held November 14, 1995, with Dan Ryan as the featured speaker (see brochure). Four lake organizations, represented by 12 people attended this program. One result of this was the Round-Trade Lake Improvement Association first became interested in a research project on the biological control of Eurasian Milfoil, an effort which continues.

8. Complete an organizational and planning retreat for the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association board of directors. As part of this process, conduct a needs assessment/survey of existing lake organizations

A very effective retreat was held with the board at Luther Point Bible Camp on May 5, 1995. After the retreat, which was facilitated by UWEX specialist Bob Bright, a number of changes took place. The board reorganized, new officers were elected, meetings were more focused, and new activities (many of the ones cited here) were carried out. A survey, evaluation, and final report were prepared (see attached).

9. Host one educational session on the legal aspects of lake conflicts for interested individuals and lake organizations

The University of Wisconsin Extension, the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources sponsored a Law of the Lakes workshop on July 21, 1995. The program featured Mike Dresen, John Haack, Bart Halvorson, and local speakers. It was capped off by a pontoon boat tour of Clam Lake. People were turned away after the first 60 registrations. This was judged the most successful educational program by most of those involved in this project (see attached materials). Additional forums are planned to address legal issues on the lakes.

10. A slide show on changes that have occurred on Burnett County's lakes and for use by local lake groups

This item was not acted upon. A related activity on Courtesy Codes was carried out (see additional items section).

11. Develop an educational in-service and programs to be used in the schools on lake management related topics

In the Spring of 1996, Melanie Creger worked to complete this portion of the project. She organized a spring countywide lake assembly held at Yellow Lake. Students from the three high schools attended. Based on this experience, a decision was made to proceed with an envirothon to be held in the 1996-1997 school year. See attached materials for program, including a summary of activities completed and those distributed to each student.

12. Conduct promotion activities to carry out the above mentioned activities

Press releases, letters, and news articles were prepared to support these activities. Attached see examples of the printed items.

Additional Activities Carried Out

* **Courtesy Codes:** The Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association researched, designed, printed and laminated 5,000 codes. These were distributed to all the members of lake organizations in Burnett County, provided at all lake educational events in the county, and distributed at regional and statewide lake conferences.

* **Speaking Activities:** This agent spoke on grant programs at the 1996 Lakes Convention, shared information with Community Resource Development Agents at In-services, and twice met with Polk County officials to discuss lake planning grants (see overhead set).

* **Long Range Planning Grant Activities:** Based on the very positive relationship with the Department of Natural Resources with this first planning grant, the County pursued a more ambitious protection grant. It was designed to complete a comprehensive long range plan for land use in Burnett County. The County Board's Extension and Zoning Committees pointed to this initial grant as generating the interest and working relationship necessary to carry out the long range plan.

Final Wrap Up and Conclusion

This project was first initiated in April, 1995. Between then and December 31, 1996 when the project was completed, a number of significant activities took place. The grant provided the impetus to the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association and the University of Wisconsin Extension office to greatly raise their profile in terms of lake management planning activities. And, it eventually led the county to pursue more ambitious planning efforts.

The most successful activities were those that involved strengthening the capacity of the local countywide lake organization and the individual lakes. Through these efforts all the other items were possible. This agent would recommend other efforts which focus on strengthening groups and leaders.

A disappointment has been the lack of response of individual lake organizations on hosting board retreats. In spite of the positive responses and testimonials, no individual lake organization has stepped forward to request a similar effort.

One item that was well received by some of the state DNR administrators and locals was a November 3, 1995 mid-term progress report on the project (see attached). It provided an opportunity to discuss activities and some minor changes, such as the courtesy codes action. It is recommended that other projects, major or minor, provide simple updates.

The partnership between the state agencies, local government, non-profit organizations has proved to be very valuable. The County Board recognized the important role of the Burnett County Lakes and Rivers Association by naming one of their members to the nine member Long Range Planning Committee.