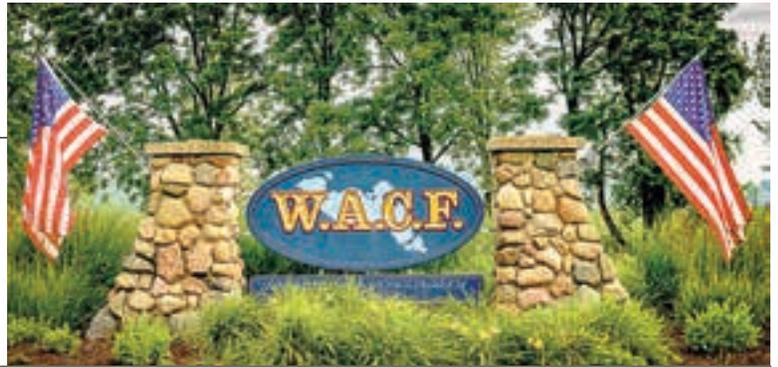


CONSERVANCY VIEWS

Preserving Water Quality & Scenic Beauty of Our Lakes



Wawasee Area Conservancy Foundation

Fall 2016



Chairman's Letter

By Dr. Joan Szynal, WACF Chair

A special thanks to all of our supporters that attended our 25 year anniversary yearly meeting. We had a record attendance at the event, a tremendous breakfast and phenomenal weather. During the event presentations reviewed some of our past accomplishments. These include:

Erosion and Sediment Control which include projects on Turkey Creek, Dillon Creek and Martin Creek as well as their tributaries. Why do we do these projects? The water coming into Wawasee from these creeks carries sediment, phosphorus, E.coli and other hitchhikers that effect our water quality.

Invasive Control which includes working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and DNR in identifying and treating what, where and when to treat these plants and algae. And do not forget that everyone who uses a boat or fishes or swims this lake benefits from this work.

Land Acquisition projects

which are ALWAYS pursued with water quality as a goal.

Stopping the Hogfarm which was going to be placed between our two major inlets, Turkey Creek and Dillon Creek and had the potential to place thousands of pounds of waste into our watershed.

Mitigation of original Oakwood request for a marina and 250 pier slots next to one of our two remaining wetlands. Presently there are 60 slips and a facility that is enjoyed by many.

Placement of first Ecobuoys in state to protect wetlands... Promotion of glacial rock and a Healthy Shoreline Initiative... Knapp Lake Sewer seed money.

And last but not least our Educational initiatives which will be discussed further in this newsletter.

Also at the meeting three board members exited the board who have been more than instrumental in our success. Diana Castell, Nick Stanger and Tom Yoder. All three of these members have been visionaries in protecting this lake volunteering countless hours over the last 9 years.

WACF is a better organization and this lake a more enjoyable place to swim and ski and sail and fish because of their work. To Diana, Nick and Tom.....
THANK YOU

We welcome new members Russell Anderson, Jay Jorgensen and Beth Morris. Beth has the honor of becoming a new board member and chairing the ecology committee!!

There have been many great successes and the key has been WACF LEADERSHIP. WACF builds relationships with all the key organizations and advisory groups that can help or that have ownership, such as the DNR. We are involved in planning, giving guidance, setting priorities, conducting pertinent studies where necessary and ultimately providing monetary resources to achieve all these accomplishments. We believe this leadership role is critical for doing the right projects at the right time. The alternative is chaos. It has taken tremendous patience and effort over the years but today WACF is highly respected by all the many partners who help and they welcome WACF's leadership.



A Thank You Note from the Executive Director

By Heather Harwood, WACF Executive Director

Thank you for your support! Without our great volunteers and donors WACF would not be able to complete projects working on our mission to preserve and protect our lake area in this special place. We all have this in common: roots in our lake area. And as we spend time here, we bring our own experiences and knowledge from other places. Our area is rich in cultural diversity, bringing a strength from our varied constituents. We bring insight and experiences from other places in Indiana, or other states or countries. This rich cultural mix presents a basis of developing our own appreciation of special areas – including this exceptional environmental setting at our Wawasee watershed. I've traveled to,

and lived in other areas, beautiful areas and am impressed the varied beauty of our country. And it always brings me back to appreciating our corner of the world. Wawasee watershed is rich in beautiful natural surroundings, and WACF works to respond to challenges in our watershed. And we take that seriously, knowing the value of our special area.

WACF is busy studying our watershed, determining priorities, so we can react and improve. Our Ecology Committee, under the direction of new Board member Beth Morris and past Chair Diana Castell, is diligent on understanding the issues we face. Our Education Committee, under the direction of Pam Schumm does

programming sharing why it's important. We are excited about our website (www.wacf.com) under the direction of Larry Baumgardt – check it for upcoming events, WACF radio, and lots of information on projects, land, photographs, and threats to our watershed including Jerry Riffle's updates on Starry Stonewort.

Please join us in caring for, and appreciating our watershed, and all that goes with it. A couple reminders: don't rake leaves into the lake and be phosphorus-free! Special thanks to all our volunteers. We hope to see you at our Christmas lighting on December 2nd starting at 5:30pm.

Happy Thanksgiving!
Heather



Education

By: David Brandes, PR Chairman

Education is one of the cornerstones of the mission of WACF. Our overall mission to protect and enhance our watershed but that is done in many ways. Certainly we do many projects to help keep our watershed clean and fight the battle from silt and chemicals entering our lakes. We also battle invasive weeds which threaten not only clean water but recreational usage.

However, one of the most important things that WACF does is the continued education of children and adults about how we must be on guard and then teach the methods we must use to keep our watershed as clean and safe

as we can make it.

Under the leadership of board member Pam Schumm and her committee members, they have a long list of seminars, hands-on functions in conjunction with the Syracuse school system, and fun projects even for the younger children. If the children fall in love with the watershed, we have gained guardians of the waters forever.

It is only through a massive effort to educate that WACF can insure future involvement of our youth and young adults to continue the never ending battle that confronts all lakes and streams.

As you will read in this edition,

we have been very ambitious in our efforts. Our education programs are for all and the more you learn about our watershed, the better we can protect our future here in the Wawasee Area Watershed.

As WACF's acquisition of these priority wetlands becomes a reality, our focus is changing from acquiring important wetlands, to a job of land maintenance and education. So why not come to our education programs to learn how you can help and also volunteer for our many committees to help teach and pitch in on our projects.



Falltastic

By: Pam Schumm, Education Committee Chair



A fire was crackling and fresh donuts and apple cider were waiting for hikers to return from the second annual Falltastic Trail Walk held at WACF on October 15 and 16. Gorgeous sunny warm weather greeted dozens of walkers on Saturday while the weather was a bit more uncooperative on Sunday. People who attended received a scavenger hunt they could use along the trail walk. The trail was decorated with corn stalks, straw bales, pumpkins, gourds and fall



decorations. There were even a few old skeletons hanging around! Educational placards could be spotted along the trail and explained how organisms get prepared for winter, how the lake gets prepared for winter, how the wetlands help the lake and water quality as well as some fun facts about the fall time of year. There were even a couple “quizzes” along the way. Treats for the four legged friends accompanying walkers was an added bonus this year. Look for this trail walk next year October 21 and 22.

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WACF Hosts Elementary Field Trip

Students from Syracuse Elementary third grade left the normal classroom and entered the WACF “classroom” for a field trip this fall. 96 students participated in several activities to learn about trees. Students participated in four “stations” taught by volunteers. At one station they learned that leaf shape is determined by genes of the tree so each leaf of a particular species has about the same shape, but the size of the leaf may be determined by the location in the tree, the amount of sunlight the leaf gets, how old or young it might be and other factors. Students noticed that each leaf is not exactly alike. They did leaf rubbings and an activity to show them how leaves change color in the fall when the temperature drops and the chlorophyll begins to disappear.



A second station saw students hugging trees blindfolded. Later the students were able to find the tree they hugged based solely on the texture of the bark. Students also learned how to estimate the age of a tree and they made a pine cone weather station. In this activity they learned that pinecone scales open in dry weather and close in damp weather to spread the seeds more efficiently.



A third station was a scavenger hunt along one of the three trails on the property. After the scavenger hunt students could use the objects they found and make “nature art” pictures at the fourth station.



It's For The Birds

By: Pam Schumm, Education Committee Chair

About ninety second grade students from Syracuse Elementary visited the WACF Levinson-LaBrosse Education Center on Wednesday, October 19 for a field trip to learn about birds.

Each student participated in five activities. At one station students learned that bird beaks are shaped for a specific food source. Students tried out different utensils for beaks (tongs, pliers, tweezers, etc.) in four different environments. Students were able to see that not all birds can eat the same food because their beaks are shaped differently, and not all birds can eat in all environments.

At a second station students learned about bird feet -- they are shaped differently to help the bird move in a particular way, like tree climbing, swimming in water, or perching on a branch. Then the students drew a leg and foot of one bird with finger paint.

Another station demonstrated to children that different animals use different techniques to stay warm in winter. Some use blubber, others use hair or feathers or even air. Students decided which combination the birds might use.

In another station students were able to make a pine cone bird feeder to take home and hang from a tree.

The last station was to create a picture of a bird using leaves and sticks from the woods.

Thanks to many volunteers for helping with all the educational activities offered at WACF. Without the help of these wonderful volunteers we would not be able to offer programs for both children and adults.



Before



After

Announcing the Annual Healthy Shoreline Award...

This year's Healthy Shoreline winner took out concrete area behind the seawall for planting. This provides better drainage through soil than just off into lake. The glacial rocks are great... The design of these rocks with the "shelf" above water level significantly diminishes debris being caught in the rocks, the design is more stable, and there is less rock slippage through the year.



After

Misbell (Shelly) Schloss has won this year's Healthy Shoreline Award. Winners receive a gift certificate to a local restaurant.



Water Quality and Invasives Update from your Ecology Committee

By Beth Morris, WACF Ecology Committee Chair

Ecology Committee Purpose:

Address hot spots in and ecological threats to the watershed, conduct projects as needed to improve ecology of the watershed, and maintain ongoing Ecology Committee activities such as water quality monitoring and data evaluation

Now that leaves are falling, the boats are put away and piers taken in, I reflect on another wonderful summer at Lake Wawasee. It is truly a special place that draws our family together across the miles and keeps us close as we share the fond memories of summers at the lake.

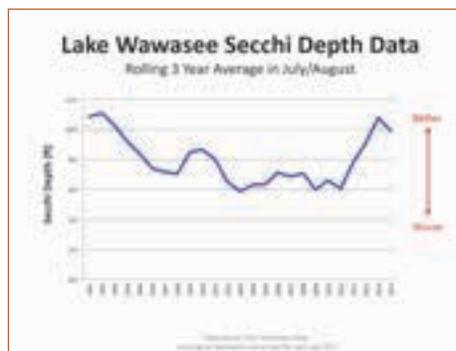
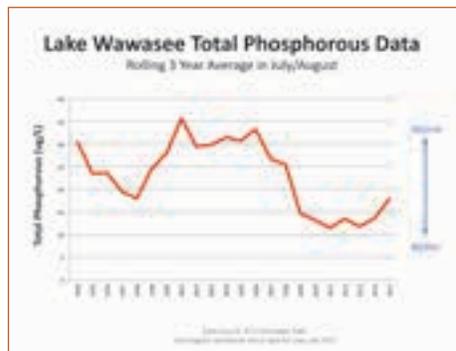
As your new Chair of the Ecology Committee and a relative newcomer to WACF, I have been continually impressed by the level of effort by our many volunteers, most of them operating quietly in the background. Did you know that we have an ongoing monitoring program to track the water quality of our beloved lake? In fact, **WACF volunteers collect water samples for three separate programs throughout the summer as follows:**

- Water temperature and Secchi depth (water visibility) data throughout the Ten Lakes chain on every WACF canoe trip
- Testing for E. coli at various locations in the lake
- Sampling for phosphorous (a key nutrient), chlorophyll a (a direct estimate for how much algae is in the water) and Secchi depth (water visibility) as part of the Indiana Clean Lakes Program hosted by Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs.

This data is reviewed by your Ecology Committee and reported to the

WACF board.

This summer, the volunteer data from 1994-2015 was analyzed (see charts below).



It shows that the total phosphorous has decreased since its highest level in early and mid-2000's and that the water visibility is improving. You can take comfort in knowing that the many upstream projects completed by WACF such as the sediment and erosion control projects on Dillon and Turkey Creek watersheds are contributing to the ongoing improvement of water quality in our lake.

Additionally, WACF commissioned a study to help us understand the water quality impact of sewer installation on Knapp Lake, one of the lakes in the Wawasee Area Watershed. This study will look at numerous lakes in the watershed pre-and post-sewer installation.

We keep an eye on and work to manage invasive species on land and in the water. While Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) seems to be declining in acreage, Starry Stonewort (SSW) seems to be slowly increasing. This is a new invasive species to the Midwest, brought into our lakes by transfer from boats and even by birds. And, like the Zebra mussel invasion in 1990 that at first was so feared, we are still learning about its treatment and lifecycle in a lake. In partnership with DNR, both EWM and SSW were treated twice this past summer. Additionally, a new invasive plant called phragmites was treated in Conklin Bay by use of both aerial and land-based spraying. And last but not least, the WACF Center property has been sprayed recently to remove invasive plant, and a "Tree of Heaven" invasive was removed next to a mitigated wetland.

Your Ecology Committee and WACF volunteers are committed to collaborating with the many resources available to us (see picture below) as we seek to ensure the ongoing health of our lake and preservation of property values for generations to come. We welcome your questions and comments.





Freshmen Take A Day Off

By: Pam Schumm, Education Committee Chair



Freshmen students at Wawasee High School get to take a day off school to study the ecosystem of Lake Syracuse and Mudd Lake—on rafts!

They arrived at the WACF's newest property—Between the Lakes—and learned about a watershed by building a model and adding everyday pollutants.

If you were a farmer, where would you build your farm? Where would you put the business district or a school? These were questions students had to answer in order to build the watershed. Then they added the pollutants and let it rain.

As they watched their pollution run into the lakes and streams they were able to see how everything mixed together. Wetlands were added to soak up the pollution and absorb excess water that was flooding some lowlands.

After lunch the freshmen boarded



their rafts with chaperones and raft guides. They studied a field book, took water samples and tested for nitrates, phosphates pH, temperature and dissolved oxygen. Students collected native and alien plants and identified them. As soon as the rafts entered Syracuse Lake, the educational part of the trip was complete and the team building began with an all out raft race and splash contest.

There was not one person that came back a bit dry!

Some students thought it would be a boring day, and did not attend, but from the comments we heard, it was anything but boring!

The rafts were borrowed from the Kosciusko Soil and Water Conservation District. State police, conservation officers, Lake Patrol and retired teachers volunteered their time to help with the raft trip. The WACF plans to offer this trip on a yearly basis to incoming freshmen.

**Please join us for our 2nd annual
Christmas Lighting Event
December 2nd, 5:30-7:30pm**



Bug Fest

By: Pam Schumm, Education Committee Chair



The second annual Bug Fest was held at the WACF Levinson-LaBrosse Education Center in mid-September.

All fourth grade students in Wawasee School Corporation participated over 2-1/2 days. The students arrived and looked at macro-invertebrates that had been collected earlier that morning from the Wawasee shorelines.

Students completed two models to learn about the watershed and pollution. Then students were divided into 5 different groups to rotate through 5 different activity stations to learn about insects.

At one stop they became birds and had to find pasta caterpillars on the ground. However, some pasta was more difficult to find than others and some was more nutritious.

In another station they used their proboscis (a straw) to suck up juice. But not everyone's proboscis was like the rest, so they learned about variations.

In a third station the students became a particular macro-invertebrate. Here they had to move like the organism, and find food like the organism while avoiding pollution.

A fourth station was to learn about metamorphosis so students had to spin a cocoon out of toilet paper and

wrap one of their classmates up within a certain period of time.

The final station was a six-legged race to learn about the body structure of an arthropod. Here students learned that arthropods have jointed appendages; that all insects are arthropods but not all arthropods are insects; and finally that insects always have 3 pair of legs.

At the conclusion of the half day event, class pictures were taken.

WACF is proud to be able to offer this kind of educational activity to our area students. WACF Board members, retired teachers and interested persons volunteered to help with the activities.

Sign-up for WACF e-news! *By Larry Baumgardt*

For the last three years, we have supplemented our semi-annual printed WACF newsletters with timely digital e-news of upcoming events and critical watershed issues. We send approximately 3,500 printed newsletters to the watershed community but have only about 1,300 e-mail addresses at this time, so it is likely that many of you reading this are not currently receiving our e-mail news. We do not share e-mail addresses with anyone, so if you decide to join our list, your address will be secure. You may join our list in either of two ways. On the home page of our website, www.wacf.com there is a "button" for e-news sign-up. You may also just send us an e-mail at info@wacf.com and tell us that you would like to receive our e-news.



Important Work

By Dr. David Brandes

The Water Quality you live here for.

For many of you, the Wawasee Watershed is a getaway from the “daily grind”. For others it is a year round home and for many others, it is a place to vacation for a short time.

One thing we all share about this beautiful area is its clean waters.

Without the WACF the waters of our lakes would not be as clean as they are. All lakes deteriorate and that is true of ours. The rate at which lakes deteriorate varies as to the protection they receive. If we weren't able to purchase valuable wetlands and surrounding lands that adversely affect the waters, we wouldn't see the results we've come to expect.

We only have to look at other lakes that weren't guarded and protected to see the devastation that can and does occur. Nearby Grand Lake near St. Mary's Ohio which is the largest lake in Ohio was not stewarded by a conservancy such as ours and basically it died. Now the state has poured millions of dollars to try to bring it back from it's demise from mostly chemical caused damage. Imagine what our

watershed would look like if you didn't support WACF's efforts. When you look out at our lakes you see clean water and recreation at it's finest. This is due to continually monitoring our waters for any and all things that might affect it. Our busy Ecology committee is studying the surrounding lands and waters constantly for anything that might harm the watershed. We keep in touch with our area farmers to discuss ways to prevent chemicals and topsoils from getting into the waters that drain into our lakes. When a property adjacent to a feeder stream becomes available, we are there to discuss possible purchase or conservation easement so that WACF can guard against any future damage.

Let's face it... you've come to expect that when you are here, you want the water to be as clean and safe as it can be. That fact alone has helped keep our real estate values higher than most any lakes in Indiana. So giving to WACF helps insure exactly what you have come to expect and what you want to pass on to your children and grandchildren... clean and safe waters.

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