



Winnebago Waterways

Lake Management Planning

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Poygan, Winneconne, Butte des Morts, Winnebago

What is Lake Management Planning?

A lake management plan (LMP) is a dynamic document that serves as a guide for strategic and collaborative management of our lakes:

- Updated every five years
- Sets targets and goals for lake improvement
- Creates a framework for regional collaboration
- Leads to funding opportunities for improvement projects

A lake management plan is not regulatory nor will it create a new layer of government.



Why do we need a plan?

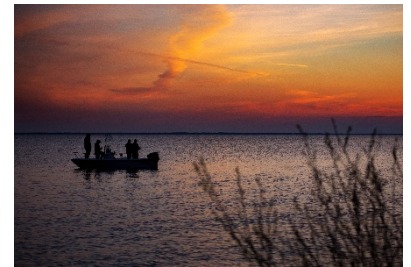
The lakes are vital to our local economies as well as long-held family traditions. The Winnebago Lakes are wonderful resources that provide:

- Clean drinking water to 250,000 residents
- Revenue for local economies
 - \$234 million annually for 5 county region from angling (4,300 jobs!)
- A variety of recreational opportunities (boating, fishing, swimming, hunting, aesthetics, etc.) that are enjoyed by area residents and tourists

The lakes are currently in a degraded state with algal blooms, polluted runoff, and invasive species being top issues of concern for area residents and lake users (*Weigh-in on Winnebago project*). Together, the lakes make up one of the largest freshwater systems in the U.S. Because of the size of the lake system, most management issues span multiple jurisdictions which can make efficient management difficult. The need for effective and cost-efficient ways to manage the lakes is what led five counties and other agencies to combine their efforts to initiate the development of a lake management plan.

What is the goal of the project?

The goal of this project is to coordinate with stakeholders and project partners to develop a framework for cooperation throughout the region to improve upon existing programs and efforts that aim to restore or protect the health of the Winnebago Lakes.



What goes into a Lake Management Plan?

The lake management plan for the Winnebago Lakes will focus on in-lake concerns such as:

- Aquatic invasive species
- Aquatic plant management
- Recreational lake use, access, and navigation
- Water quality
- Watershed management
- Shoreline practices
- Habitat, Fish, and Wildlife
- Outreach and education
- Other topics as needed

How is the LMP project being funded?

Calumet County, Fond du Lac, and Winnebago Counties contracted with Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance (FWWA) to help advance lake management planning efforts.

FWWA used the county money as match to leverage four, two-year Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Surface Water Grants (one for each of the four lakes). FWWA received the grants in 2017. The DNR grants are supplying 50% of the funding for 2017 and 2018, with the other 50% being provided by the three counties.



Additional support for the project is being provided by several organizations through staff time: Fond du Lac County, Calumet County, Winnebago County, Waushara County, UW-Extension, East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance, WDNR. We anticipate this list of supporting organizations to grow.



- Assist with collection of data/information
- Help develop evaluation criteria for reviewing management options
- Provide input to help prioritize and select best management action recommendations

Steering Committee Responsibilities:

- Recommends final project goals and management objectives to the Winnebago Lakes Preservation Committee
- Recommends consultants to fill gaps in information
- Provides final recommendations to the WLPC based on focus group and technical team guidance
- Drives project through to completion
- Initiates and plans for implementation of LMP

Overview of the Project Structure:

The **Steering Committee** drives the project and is made up of 16 voting members and 5 non-voting advisory member. **Technical Teams** are small groups of experienced conservation professionals formed for each management topic. **Focus Groups** are groups of concerned members of the public and organizations (stakeholders) for each management topic. Technical teams help to facilitate Focus Groups and serve as a communication link between the Focus Groups and Steering Committee. The **Winnebago Lakes Preservation Committee (WLPC)** will be made up of County Executives/Administrators, County Board Chairs and the Land Conservation Committee Chairs for each county (3 seats for each county) or their approved designee. County representatives on the Steering Committee serve as the communication link between the Steering Committee and the Preservation Committee.

Technical Team Objectives:

- Assess, prioritize, and analyze key lake concerns/issues
- Develop and recommend project goals
- Collect relevant information
- Analyze/evaluate information
- Identify/address data gaps
- Develop and recommend management objectives
- Develop robust list of possible management actions
- With the help of Focus Groups, prioritize and recommend the best management actions

Focus Group Objectives:

- Identify and recommend major lake concerns/issues
- Help to ensure all relevant interests are adequately represented
- Help with community education/outreach
- Provide input to help establish and clarify project goals

Overview of the Planning Process:

Step 1: Secure project funding to initiate planning process

- Three counties invested in the project by hiring Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance.

Step 2: Define the project area

- The project area was determined by drawing an outline around the subwatersheds that touched one of the lakes.

Step 3: Secure additional project funding

- FWWA applied for and received four two-year DNR grants to supplement the county funding

Step 4: Conduct initial project outreach

- On April 24th, 2017, the Winnebago Waterways Kick-off Celebration introduced the project to the community
- In May 2017, three LMP Public Meetings are being held to engage area stakeholders in the planning process

Step 5: Organize Focus Groups and Technical Teams

- Technical Teams and Focus Groups are being assembled

Step 6: Develop project goals

Step 7: Collect/analyze information, assess data gaps

Step 8: Identify additional funding needs, secure funds, and hire consultant

Step 9: Develop management recommendations

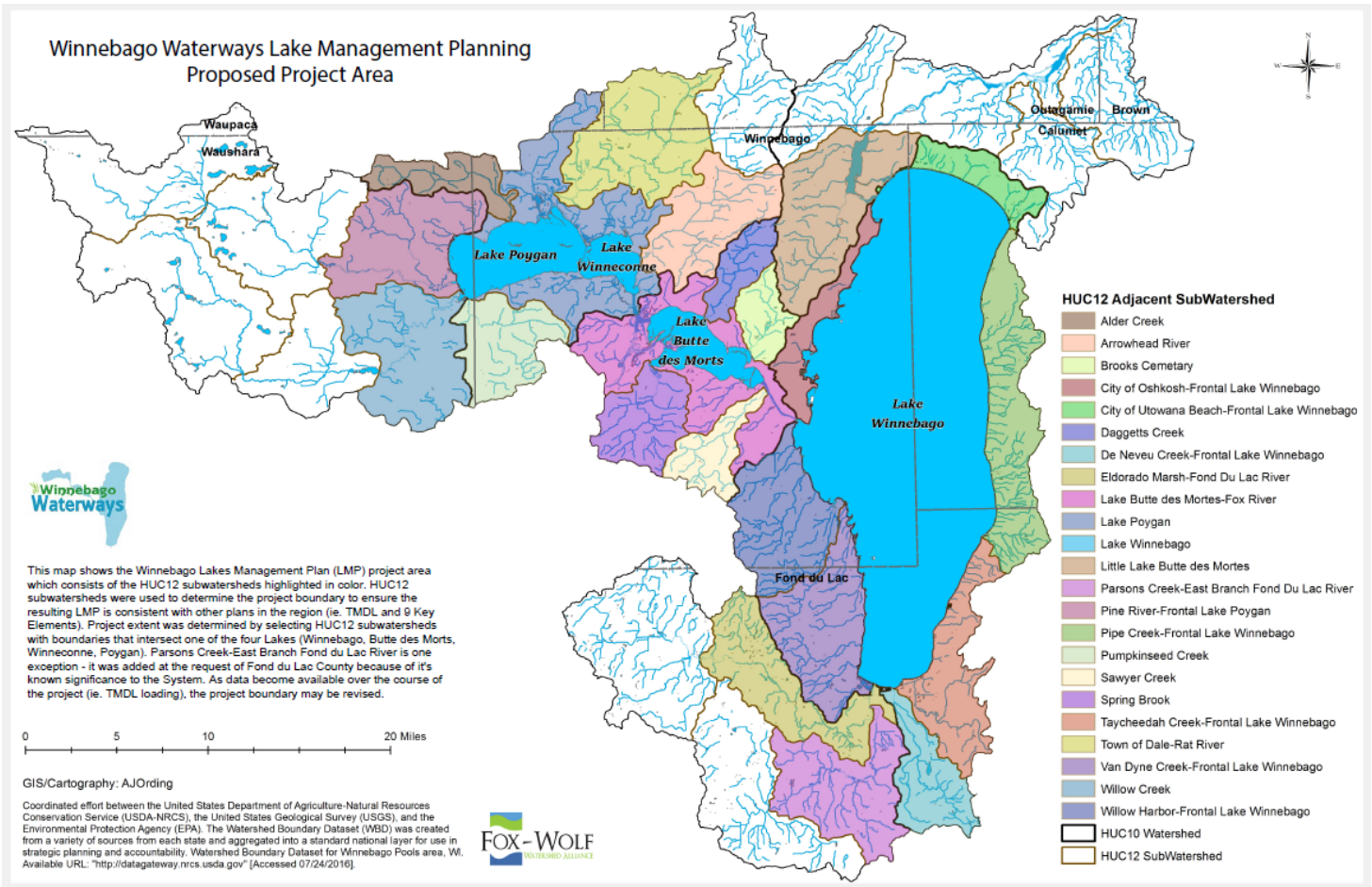
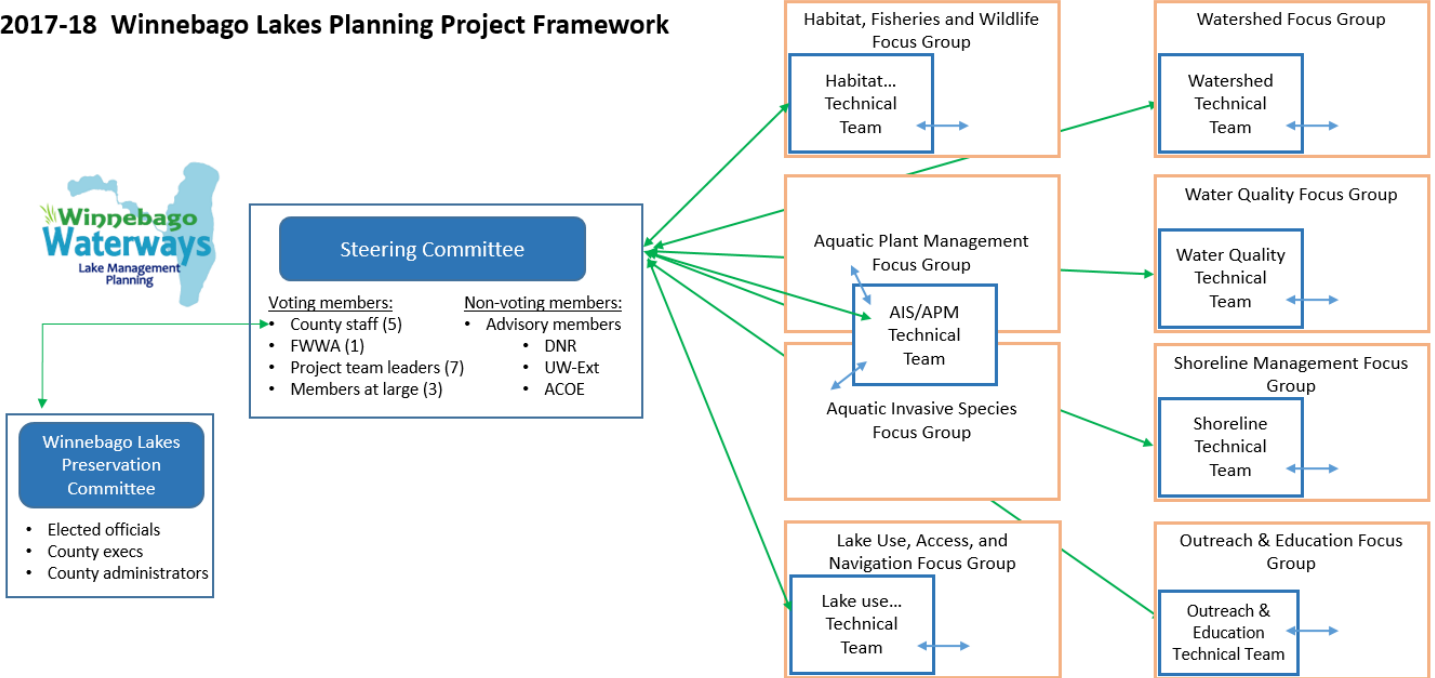
Step 10: Hold public meetings to select and prioritize management action recommendations

Step 11: Finalize management recommendations

Steps 1 through 8 and part of 9 will be completed in 2017. The remainder of Steps 9 through 11 will be completed in 2018. Once the LMP is finalized and approved by the WDNR, the next phase of the project will be implementation.



2017-18 Winnebago Lakes Planning Project Framework



Lake Management Topics:

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

AIS are non-native plants, animals, or pathogens that cause harm to the economy, environment, or human health. As part of the planning process, an Aquatic Invasive Species Strategic Plan will be developed for the Winnebago Lakes and tributaries. The strategic plan will identify and describe: where AIS have been identified in the Lakes and identify gaps in information about AIS in the system; past and current prevention and control efforts; goals and recommended strategies for preventing/controlling AIS including AIS education and outreach.

Aquatic Plant Management (APM)

A healthy, productive lake has a variety of aquatic plant species which helps prevent invasive plants from establishing and makes the plant community more resilient. Overgrowth of aquatic plants can impede navigation and recreation. APM is a component of a lake management plan that balances stakeholders' interests and expectations when developing realistic aquatic plant goals for the lake. The APM plan helps to guide decision making and will allow progress to be monitored over time. It also will help to coordinate collaborative efforts for more effective aquatic plant management activities.

Habitat, Fish, & Wildlife

The LMP will identify habitat areas and practices that are critical for healthy, sustainable populations of wildlife and fish. The goal of fish management is to have a fish community that is able to sustain healthy, natural populations and are able to adapt to the pressures of fishing because the needs for fish reproduction and growth are met within the lakes. This may mean educating anglers to encourage ethical fishing behaviors to ensure fishing pressures don't throw the fish community out of balance. The goal of habitat management is to have in-lake, near shore, shoreland, and wetland habitats that are able to support and provide shelter for a variety of fish, invertebrate, waterfowl, shorebird, and mammal species. Otters, beavers, muskrats, and waterfowl can be found along the shoreline in search of food, water, shelter, or nesting material. Healthy in-lake habitat for fish is composed of a diversity of aquatic plants and woody structure.

Water Quality

All four of the Winnebago Lakes are currently listed as impaired. Water quality described the desired chemical, physical, and biological conditions of a waterbody. The goal of the LMP is to describe management actions that improve the lakes so that all four of the lakes are fishable, drinkable, swimmable, and aesthetically enjoyable.

Watershed Management

Land use, practices, and management within a lake's watershed can impact both its water quantity and quality. The land nearest the water generally has the largest impact on water quality in the lake. The LMP will describe current land use within the lakes' watershed and provide recommendations for practices that can reduce or prevent nutrients and other pollutants from reaching the water.

Shoreline Practices

Shoreland practices can impact both water quality and habitat. The most important and productive areas of a lake are in the near-shore zone where light reaches the lake bottom. Shoreland areas near the water provide transitional habitat for many aquatic and terrestrial animals including birds, frogs, turtles, and small and large mammals. Healthy, natural vegetation and other shoreland practices can help to improve the quality of the runoff that is flowing across the landscape towards the lake. The LMP will examine current shoreland conditions around the lakes and provide recommendations for beneficial shoreland practices.

Recreational Lake Use, Access, & Navigation

Lake use for recreation increases the quality of life for area residents and has a tremendous impact on our economy. The goal of Lake Management is to ensure that the lake can continue to provide the benefits that attract homeowners and lake users. This section of the LMP will likely cover lake access, use, recreation, navigation, and tourism. This includes land and water trails, non-motorized vessel and ADA access, navigation signage, buoys, and safety, tourism opportunities, and many more.

Outreach and Education

The Winnebago Lakes are wonderful resources that provide drinking water to thousands, bring money to the region through tourism dollars, and offer numerous recreational opportunities. To increase the chances for success in efforts to improve and protect the lakes, it's important we help area residents get to know their lakes. This section of the LMP would recommend ways to increase the visibility of the lakes to the surrounding region, teach people about lake issues as well as potential solutions, and above all get more people out on the water to enjoy the lakes!

What are we missing?

Did we forget something? Please let us know – we want to make sure we cover as many lake concerns as possible. You can submit your ideas through our online feedback form at www.winnebagoWaterways.org or by contacting the Winnebago Waterways Program Coordinator at (920)851-0948 or korin@fwwa.org

