The Winnebago System holds 17% of Wisconsin’s surface water.

What is a lake management plan?

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

- Updated at least every five years
- Sets goals for lake improvements
- Creates a framework for regional collaboration
- Opens the door for funding opportunities for improvement projects

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 >200,000 residents
- Revenue for local economies: recreational fishing alone brings in ~$234 million annually for 5 county region (that’s 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. The lakes make up one of the largest freshwater systems in the U.S. Because of the size of the system, most lake issues span multiple jurisdictions which can make management of the system difficult.
The goal of the lake management planning project is to develop a regional framework for cooperation to restore and protect the health of the Winnebago Lakes.

What goes into a lake plan?

The lake management plan for the Winnebago Lakes will develop goals and management recommendations for:

- Aquatic invasive species
- Aquatic plant management
- Recreation
- Water quality
- Watershed management
- Shoreline practices
- Habitat
- Community Engagement
- Water Levels

Are we forgetting something? Send us your suggestions! [www.winnebagowaterways.org](http://www.winnebagowaterways.org)

How is the project being funded?

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

FWWA used the county money as match to leverage Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Surface Water Grants.

Additional support for the project is being provided by several organizations through staff time. Check out the last page of this handout for a list. This list will continue to grow as more organizations get involved with the project.
How is the project structured?

This is a large project with many moving parts. Several organizations and stakeholders are contributing to the lake management plan. To make the moving parts more manageable and to ensure there are ample opportunities for stakeholders to engage at multiple stages throughout the planning process, we organized the project by focus groups, technical teams, and leadership committees.

**Project Structure**

**Technical Teams:**
- Small groups of experts
- Assess, prioritize, and analyze key lake issues
- Identify/address data gaps
- Develop and recommend management actions

**Focus Groups:**
- 10-12 members of the public
- Ensure all relevant interests are represented
- Help prioritize and select the best management action recommendations

**Steering Committee:**
- Provide final recommendations to the WWC based on Focus Group and Technical Team guidance
- Drive the project through to completion
- Initiate and plan for implementation of the LMP

**Winnebago Waterways Committee (WWC)**
- Elected officials from the counties funding the project
- Oversee project budget and project management

**Did you know?**

Recreational fishing brings in $234 million annually to the five county region around the Winnebago Lakes.

Want to get involved? Sign up for a focus group! Visit winnebogowaterways.org or contact karin at (920) 857-0448 or karin@fwwa.org.
A collaborative, regional effort to improve the Winnebago Waterways was initiated in 2010. The timeline shown below provides an overview of progress that has been made since the beginning of Phase 1, where we currently are in the process, and where we plan to go in 2020 and beyond.

**Engagement**

**Phase 1**

**Weigh-in on Winnebago**

2010-2013

Initial Stakeholder Engagement

During Phase 1, lake users and area residents were asked to identify key issues affecting the Winnebago System, list what they like about the System, and provide suggestions for making the System better. Top issues of concern identified by the public were algae blooms, polluted runoff, and aquatic invasive species.

**Exploration**

**Phase 2**

**Winnebago Waterways**

2014-2015

Cooperative Management

Phase 2 explored cooperative management options for managing the Winnebago System. Recommendations in the Phase 2 report led to Phases 3 & 4.

**Planning**

**Phases 3 & 4**

**Lake Planning**

2017-2019

Currently, stakeholders, area experts, and the surrounding counties are working to develop a plan to tackle top issues of concern for the Winnebago Lakes. The plan will outline regional goals and objectives and prioritize actions for future funding considerations.

**Implementation**

**Phase 5**

**Implementation of Management Recommendations**

2020 and beyond

Using the LMP to leverage grant dollars, individuals, groups, and local governments will work together to tackle the issues facing our lakes. The plan will be a living document that will be updated regularly to reflect changing issues and concerns. Goals and priorities will be adjusted as existing goals are met and projects are successfully completed.

**These lakes make us who we are as a region**
The project area spans six counties and includes the four Winnebago Pool Lakes as well as the subwatersheds (colored sections) shown on the map.

While most lake management plans focus mainly on in-lake issues, this plan is being written as a watershed plan. This means the lake management plan will address in-lake issues as well as runoff from urban and agricultural landscapes which can have a negative impact on water quality.

### Lake Name
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lake Name</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Max Depth (ft)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winnebago</td>
<td>131939</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butte des Morts</td>
<td>8581</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winneconne</td>
<td>4553</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poygan</td>
<td>14024</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over 200,000 people get their drinking water from Lake Winnebago.
What topics will be covered?

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)
AIS are non-native plants, animals, or pathogens that cause harm to the economy, environment, or human health. The AIS Strategic Plan will highlight where AIS have been found in the Lakes, past and current prevention efforts, and recommended strategies for preventing the spread of AIS.

Water Quality
All four Winnebago Lakes are currently listed by WDNR as impaired. The goal of the LMP is to identify management actions that would improve water quality within the lakes so that all four of the lakes are fishable, swimmable, drinkable, and aesthetically enjoyable.

Recreation
Lake use for recreation increases the quality of life for area residents and has a tremendous impact on our regional economy. To ensure that the lakes continue to provide the benefits that attract lake users and homeowners the LMP will cover lake access, use, recreation, and navigation aids.

Watershed Management
Land use, practices, and management within a lake’s watershed can impact both its water quantity and quality. 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.

Water Level Management
Lake levels are artificially controlled by dams located in Neenah and Menasha. Timing and variability of lake levels have a big impact on everything from recreation and habitat to industrial intakes and water quality. The LMP will recommend a modified strategy with the goal of improving water quality.

Aquatic Plant Management (APM)
A healthy lake has a variety of aquatic plant species which provide habitat and improve water quality. Aquatic plants can reduce algae growth and help prevent invasive plants from establishing. However, overgrowth of aquatic plants can impede navigation and recreation. The APM section of the plan will balance stakeholder interests and expectations while developing realistic aquatic plant goals for the lake.

Habitat
The LMP will identify habitat areas and practices that are critical for healthy, sustainable populations of wildlife and fish.

Community Engagement
Outreach, education, and engagement of the community in lake issues will be critical in developing and maintaining long-term community support to implement the plan. The LMP will recommend ways to continue to increase the visibility of the lakes, educate people about lake issues, engage community members to advance implementation and get more people out on the water to enjoy the lakes!

Shoreline Practices
Shoreline practices can impact both water quality and habitat. The LMP will examine current shoreland conditions around the lakes and provide recommendations for beneficial shoreline practices.

Lake Winnebago is home to the largest, self-sustaining lake sturgeon population in the world.

Follow Winnebago Waterways on Facebook
Participating Organizations

Lake management planning for the Winnebago Lakes is a collaborative, regional effort. Many individuals and organizations are dedicating time to work on this project. The number of project partners continues to grow. Listed below are organizations involved in the planning process at the time of the development of this document. For an up to date list, visit our website.

Anchor Point Marina
Butte des Morts Conservation Club
Calumet County
City of Appleton
City of Fond du Lac
Ducks Unlimited
East Central WI Regional Planning Commission
Fond du Lac County
Fond du Lac Visitors Bureau
Fond du Lac Wastewater Treatment & Resource Recovery Facility
Fox-Wolf Watershed Alliance
Future Neenah
Lake & Pond Solutions Co.
Lake & Wetland Ecosystems, LLC
Lake Poygan Sportsmen’s Club
Lake Winnebago Quality Improvement Association
Lawrence University
Oshkosh Convention & Visitors Bureau
Oshkosh Yacht Club
Pheasants Forever
Stantec
University of Wisconsin-Extension
University of Wisconsin-Green Bay
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh
US Fish and Wildlife Service
US Geologic Survey
Walleyes for Tomorrow
Waushara County
Winnebago County
Winnebagoland Conservation Alliance
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Wisconsin Lake & Pond Resources, LLC

A BIG thank you to everyone contributing to the lake management planning effort!

Questions? Comments? Contact: Korin Doering, Winnebago Waterways Program Coordinator
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