

Friends of the Gile Flowage (F.O.G.) Newsletter– *Important News on VHS*



Inside This Issue

Pence Boat Landing Rehab.p. 1
FOG Now Tax Exempt.....p. 1
Flowage Fisheries Update.....p. 2
VHS Threats Gile.....p. 3
Food For Thought.....p. 4

Protecting and enhancing the Gile Flowage for now... and future generations

Summer, 2007

FOG HELPING TO REPLACE AGING PENCE 4H BOAT RAMP

Another Gile Flowage boat landing will be renovated in summer, thanks to help from Xcel Energy, FOG, and the Wisconsin DNR.



Locally known as the “Pence 4H Boat Landing”, the boat ramp is located on the west side of the Gile Flowage along Spring Camp Road. It is a popular put-in for boaters and is one of the best low water launch sites on the Flowage.

After years of use, the Pence 4H boat landing ramp is showing extreme signs of wear. The concrete ramp pads have shifted exposing rebar and creating an uneven launch surface. (*see page 2*)

Xcel Energy will replace the aging Pence 4-H boat landing ramp to improve safety and access to the Gile Flowage. The arrow points to a dangerous large piece of rebar exposed by the aging concrete slabs

Flowage Factoids

What Are Those Huge Red Rock Piles Near The Flowage?



The large piles of red rock towering over the Flowage’s northwest shore near Gile, are waste rock left from the Montreal Mine.

The Montreal Mine was one of the largest of many iron mines on the Gogebic-Penokee Range. Organized in 1884, it operated under the continuous management of the Oglebay-Norton Company until 1962.

The Montreal was also one of the world’s deepest iron ore mines. Iron bearing ore and rock were extracted from as deep as 4337 feet below the surface. From a vertical shaft, miners tunneled horizontally until they were below an ore body. Using dynamite, they blasted up into the ore, creating huge underground caverns called “stopes.” The rock that fell down from the roof and walls was loaded into ore cars called “slops” and hauled up the main shaft to the surface.

Ore bearing rock was transported by rail to Ashland, then shipped to steel mills. The waste rock remained behind.

Please be aware that the stockpiles are on private property. They are a monument to the miners and their families who helped build the “Iron Range.”



FOG GRANTED WISCONSIN TAX EXEMPT STATUS

We all know about how much paperwork is involved in preparing our taxes. But think of how much is required by the State Department of Revenue to grant tax-exempt status for an organization, like FOG.

FOG Treasurer Jeanne Matchefts knows. Thanks to her work in successfully negotiating the Wisconsin Dept. of Revenue paperwork and requirements, on July 23, 2007 FOG was granted legal status as a Wisconsin State non-profit, tax exempt organization.

This means that FOG is exempt from sales and use taxes, and donations to FOG may be tax deductible. We’ll be getting more information to you about tax deductibility of donations and dues in our next newsletter.

FOG is also applying for recognition as a Wisconsin Qualified Lake Association to be eligible to apply for DNR and other grants directly.

This is an important step in building an organizational structure for FOG that will allow our organization to accomplish its mission of protecting and enhancing the Flowage.

Pence 4H boat Landing To Be Replaced (con't from Page 1)

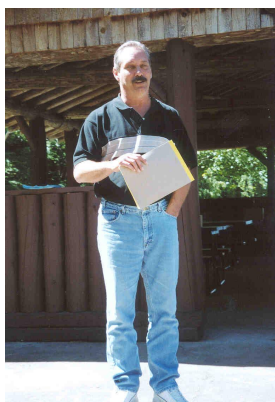
After several FOG members pointed out the problem, the FOG Board of Directors voted to alert Xcel Energy to request their assistance.

Rob Olson, of Xcel Energy, is working with FOG on the project and indicates that the landing will be improved by his company in August or September of this year during a period of low water level. Xcel is deciding whether to replace the landing with concrete slabs or to pour a concrete landing. Rob indicated that some work will also be done to stabilize the shoreline near the boat landing from erosion.

Boaters are cautioned to avoid using the landing's concrete ramp until improvements can be made. Boaters are temporarily launching off the side of the Pence 4H boat ramp to access the Flowage.



Boaters have been forced to launch from the shore off Spring Camp Rd. causing erosion of the shoreline and threatening the road-way.



FLOWAGE UPDATE FROM JEFF ROTH Senior Fisheries Biologist—Wisconsin DNR

I don't have anything real specific to report but I acknowledge the "exceptional" fishing that folks are experiencing for panfish and walleye alike. Never in the history of the Gile have we seen such an abundance of large bluegills being caught. The same is true with the walleye action.

We have a moratorium on relocating panfish due to the VHS (Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia) problem. We will only be allowed to move fish in the future if they test negative for VHS. The analysis costs \$500 now is likely to increase next year. We are not budgeted for this level of certification so I am soliciting donations from recipient lake groups to cover the cost of certifying donor lake fish to be disease-free.

We will be sampling the Gile annually as directed by the management plan. Next year we will be indexing the walleye and smallmouth population. The "new" slot length limit on smallmouth bass will go into effect next spring and will be posted at the landings. In 2009, we will be sampling the panfish population and fall gamefish recruitment.

We did some maintenance work on the County C Boat Landing this year through our agreement with the county by adding fill in and around the launch. Prior to that, launching a boat was causing some real problems for folks.

FOG should continue to preach the importance of exotics as it relates to boat disinfection. **The Gile Flowage is ESPECIALLY susceptible to invasion with folks fishing Lake Superior and then moving to the Gile.** This is especially true for smallmouth bass anglers who fish the Bay for half a day then move to the Gile.

The worst case scenario is VHS is found in Lake Superior and then transferred to the Gile Flowage with associated loss in the fishery we have built up over the years. Scary thought!

We cannot over emphasize the threat of this invasive and how susceptible the Gile Flowage is.

(Editor's Note: We have already seen the spread of Spiny Water Fleas from Lake Superior into the Flowage. VHS is potentially an even more devastating aquatic invader that could inadvertently introduced into the Flowage. See page 3 for more information on VHS and what you can do. The FOG Board will also be addressing the issue of donating for the required testing lake fish for stocking in the Flowage)

VHS Threatens Inland Fish Populations- Gile Flowage “Especially Susceptible”



Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia, also called VHS, has been found in Wisconsin waters. It is the latest, and arguably the worst potential threat to Wisconsin's fishery, aquaculture and tourism industries yet. This fish disease can spread from one waterbody to another on boats, trailers, in minnow buckets, live wells and in bilges.

VHS has caused massive fish kills in the eastern Great Lakes, killing gamefish and pan fish including musky, walleye, bass, bluegill, crappie, northern and trout. It also affects rough fish and minnows. Many of the experts are concerned that VHS may result in fish kills as high as 80% in infected lakes and that it might take decades for a lake or stream to recover after infection. Others believe the disease may develop into a cycle of fish kills that occur on a regular basis. All agree that it is a disturbing threat and that we need to do all we can to keep VHS out of our inland waters if we hope to keep our healthy fishery.

According to the DNR fact sheet on VHS *'Infected fish shed the virus in their urine and reproductive fluids. The blood vessels become weak, causing hemorrhages in the internal organs, muscles and skin. Fish can also become infected when they eat an infected fish. VHS virus can remain infective up to 14 days in water.'* Infected fish often show bleeding through the skin and swollen eyes.

VHS began in Europe, affecting rainbow trout populations. It is assumed that it was brought to the US in ballast water, although this cannot be confirmed. What can be confirmed is that following massive fish kills in parts of the eastern Great Lakes, **VHS has now been found in Lake Michigan and the Fox River and Winnebago Lake system in eastern Wisconsin, including in Little Lake Butte des Morts— locations where many Gile Flowage users recreate and reside.** Recent reports of VHS found in Lake Superior are not confirmed. Testing continues. The good news is that VHS is not a threat to people eating their catch

We should be especially concerned about VHS because our inland lakes and streams are within minutes of landings on Lake Superior and we see plenty of landing traffic to the Gile from elsewhere in the Midwest. The State of Wisconsin now has emergency rules in place that prohibit the transfer of fish into the state without testing, prohibits the use of frozen Great Lakes bait, prohibits minnows used on the Great Lakes and the Lake Winnebago system to be used on other inland waterbodies, prohibits sportsmen from transporting live fish and requires them to drain live wells, bait buckets and bilges. When VHS is found in just one more inland waterbody, these measures will be applied statewide. Many are concerned that by the time this disease shows up in another lake or stream, it may be too late.

DNR Senior Fish Manager, Jeff Roth, believes the Gile Flowage could be especially susceptible to invasion by VHS if this disease spreads into Lake Superior and then is transferred to the Flowage. Spiny Water Fleas may have been spread into the Flowage in this manner. FOG has been actively working to stop the spread of aquatic invasives through its new boat landing signs and boater welcome kits. But we all need to do more to practice what we preach and educate others!

BE PROACTIVE.. PRACTICE AND PASS ON THE KNOWLEDGE OF HOW TO STOP VHS

- Drain all water from your boat and trailer, containers, and fishing equipment including bait buckets and coolers.
- Do not move live fish, including unused minnows, between waters. All fish must be dead before leaving the landing or shoreline. Ice your catch and discard your minnows.
- Do not use minnows unless they were purchased from a licensed Wisconsin bait dealer or you caught them from the water you are fishing.
- Remove all visible plants, animals, and mud from your boat and trailer.

For more information on VHS visit: <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/pages/vhsfacts.html>.

If you witness a large number of dead or dying fish, the DNR is asking your help to contact a local DNR office or the DNR Hotline at 1-800-TIP-DNR.

