

# Friends of the Gile Flowage (F.O.G.) Newsletter

*Reminder: Time to Renew Your Membership for 2006*



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

Early Winter, 2005

## 2005 GRANT PROJECTS PROTECT THE FLOWAGE

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### Flowage Factoids



**What the heck is this?**  
**See p. 2 for more info**

*Photo credit: Danielle Smith*

Don't forget: FOG wear makes great holiday gifts. The FOG logo can be put on almost any wearing apparel. Available at Rossi Wear in downtown Hurley.

### Gile Flowage Environmental Study Reveals The "State of The Lake" Is Excellent

The final results of two year's worth of environmental study of the Gile Flowage are complete as a result of a DNR Lake Planning Grant secured by the Towns of Carey and Pence working with FOG. As reported by Dr. Dean Premo of Whitewater Associates, the company that conducted the assessment, the state of the Gile Flowage is excellent. This assessment is the first effort we know of to pull together research that has been done on the Flowage and gather new data as needed. Up until now, research on the Flowage was spotty.

The assessment was based on existing information, but also field research. Dr. Premo and several FOG members participated in two water sampling excursions on the Gile this summer and fall. With Harold Schmude at the helm of his trusty pontoon boat "The Ark", the group weathered wind and waves to measure water clarity, mercury, and algae levels just to mention a few.

The assessment found that the state of the Gile Flowage is excellent. Here is a thumbnail sketch of the findings:

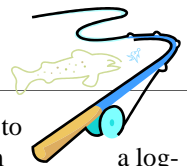
**Water Quality:** The Flowage's is a productive (eutrophic) water body. It's water has a neutral pH (acidity) level with enough buffering action to protect against acid rain precipitation.

**Habitat:** The Flowage has high quality riparian (land adjacent to the shoreland) habitat with little fragmentation of the forest. This is thanks to the perimeter being owned by the power company and the presence of public land that has kept the riparian area intact. The riparian area is critical for local and migrating wildlife and to prevent runoff and erosion. Woody debris, like dead trees, that fall into the Flowage from the shore also provide important habitat for fish and the critters they feed on.

**Fish:** We may not catch as much as we would like, but the report found a diverse population of fish. Pan fish were in low abundance, but growth was good.

*Continued on page 2*

## Yes, There Will Be A Fish Crib Project This Winter!



According to Gary Miles, FOG Board Member and project leader, there will be a work bee in late January 2006 to construct fish cribs for the Flowage. The FOG Board approved the purchase of 13 cords of hardwood poles from a logger for fish crib construction. The FOG Board approved expenditure of FOG funds for this Gile Flowage improvement project.

Help is needed for the work bee to assemble the cribs, and cut brush that will be stuffed inside the fish crib. There will be food and beverages compliments of FOG for all helpers. It should be a productive, fun day that will help the Gile's fishery.

FOG will be working with the local media to let people know when and where they can get involve in the project. If you are interested in helping and would like Gary to call you when he knows the date and more specifics, please call him at 715.561.2876.

## (continued from page 1, "State of The Lake")

**Other Good Things:** Just to mention a few cited in the report, The Gile has a reasonable amount of recreation pressure and because of its size, there are not as many conflicts between different users. The islands greatly add to feeling of remoteness and northwoods character. Bald eagles and loons' nesting and use were cited as indicators of environmental quality and import to the Flowage's northwoods character

Some threats to the Flowage we need to be aware of and monitor:

**Least restrictive lake classification:** The Flowage is classified a "Class 1 Lake" in Iron County Zoning. This leaves the critical riparian area more vulnerable to development and fragmentation. Both the Town of Carey and Pence have recommended special land use and zoning consideration for the Flowage's riparian area.

**Water Level Fluctuations:** Fish populations and aquatic habitat, such as aquatic plants, are negatively effected.

**Low Diversity and Sparse Distribution of Aquatic Plants:** This is probably due to the Flowage's naturally dark water that prevents light penetration and water fluctuations. Only 15% of the "littoral zone" (from the water's edge to where aquatic plants usually root) is vegetated compared to 50% being ideal. There are only 24 species of plants and only one or two of them are dominant. The maximum depth most plants were found in was knee deep or less. These factors affects fish habitat.

**Uncertainties about future management:** "Nothing ever lasts forever" and though the Flowage has forever been in power company ownership and management, there is no guarantee that will always be the case. A change would could have significant consequences on the Flowage. The same is true for the **sale of public land** on the Flowage.

**FERC Dam Licensing:** For some unknown reason, the Gile Dam is not licensed by the Federal Energy and Regulatory Commission (FERC). This leaves uncertainties in authority and environmental and public participation requirements should the dam be decommissioned.

**Exotic Aquatic Species:** Two non-natives have colonized the Flowage: the Spiny Water Flea and the Chinese Mystery Snail. Other potentially serious invasive species are found in neighboring lakes and threaten the Flowage including Eurasian Water Milfoil and Purple Loosestrife.

**Mercury in the system:** Mercury is found in the Flowage's water, sediments, and fish. The source is unknown, but it supplies mercury that bioaccumulates or "magnifies" in the food chain.

There is a lot more to the report than we can squeeze in here. Dr. Premo praised FOG for being an active involved group as being one of the most positive things the Flowage has going for it. We are fortunate to have a healthy ecosystem in the Flowage and our challenge will be to help keep it that way.

## ***STRANGE JELLY LIKE BLOBS FOUND IN THE FLOWAGE LAST SUMMER !***

What were those strange jelly-like blobs as big as a dinner plate that we found in the Flowage last summer? They aren't an alien invader, a mutant, or a jellyfish. They are a harmless colony of algae and bacteria called a **Bryozoan**. A Bryozoan mass may attain the size of a basketball and we found some this size attached to floating driftwood. The colony will not sting. Bryozoans are found in ponds, lakes and slow streams and attach themselves to vegetation or the undersides of logs to avoid strong sunlight. The presence of Bryozoans usually indicates good water quality because they generally cannot survive in polluted or muddy waters.



### **WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?**

The Bryozoan colony starts in spring as a single microscopic individual, but grows by budding throughout the summer to attain a larger size by late summer. The colony dies out by late fall, breaks up, and often washes on shore. Individual colony members are released as a winter-hardened "seed" and may be carried to other waters on the feet of aquatic animals and waterfowl. The individual is able to germinate after passing through the digestive system of animals. In the United States, freshwater bryozoans only occur east of the Mississippi River and north of the 39th parallel... including the Gile Flowage!

# FROM THE FLOWAGE...

## FLOWAGE GETS NEW BOAT LANDING SIGNS, FLOWAGE MAPS, AND BOATER WELCOME KITS

As we reported in our last newsletter, thanks to support from a DNR Aquatic Nuisance Species Grant, US Boat Foundation grant and the Towns of Carey and Pence, FOG has created the "Be A Friend of the Flowage" educational campaign. We have created some cool ways to encourage Flowage users to help stop aquatic invaders before they infest the Flowage. The educational message uses this easy to remember slogan to remind boaters of what they need to **R.I.D.** the Flowage of aquatic invaders from hitch-hiking a ride on their equipment:

**R**emove any animals or plants from their boat, trailer, or motor,

**I**nspect all equipment for aquatic hitch-hikers

**D**rain and dumping bait buckets and bilge water away from the lake.

We have designed the products do to both promote ways of stopping exotics and also give users information they need about the Flowage. New products that you will see with this message include:

**New Boat Landing Signs:** The new boat landing signs will be installed at the County C, Gile Park, Pence 4H, and Sucker Hole Boat Landings. The signs will feature the R.I.D. message and a map of the Gile Flowage. They will be constructed of rustic wood design with protective roofs. The signs will be installed in spring, 2006.



The old County C boat land sign will be replaced with a 2-paneled sign featuring the new Gile Flowage map and the R.I.D. message

### A HOLIDAY GIFT FOR YOU...

#### The new Gile Flowage Brochure and Map

Hot off the press... Our new a new Gile Flowage brochure and map. It is one of the educational promotional items that carry the message to help us get R.I. D. of aquatic invaders.

**Gile Flowage Brochure:** A full color brochure featuring the R.I.D. message and a detailed Flowage map with important boating and recreational information about the Flowage.

**Boater Welcome Kits:** These welcome kits will be handed out by volunteers and students at boat landings or on-the-water

to encourage boaters to help us stop aquatic invasives. The kit is comprised of promotional items that carry the R.I.D. message including the **Gile Flowage Brochure/Map**, a **Gile Flowage litter bag**, a **27-inch adhesive fish ruler**, and a postage paid confidential **boater survey** designed to get feedback from boaters.

With this project FOG is taking the lead in educating people about how to protect the Flowage from aquatic invaders so we can keep its boating, swimming, and recreational values great!

This project was generously funded by the **US Boat Foundation** and the **Wisconsin DNR**



### Special Thank You's to 2005 Grant Project Helpers

This year's grant funded projects required a huge amount of work. We would like to say a special "thanks" for these people who volunteered their time, special talents, and faith in FOG to make these wonderful results possible:

**Joel Enking:** For using his GIS skills to create the new Gile Flowage map featured in the brochure and boat landing signs.

**Chuck Tronvig:** For constructing the rustic boat landing sign structures and **Judy Tronvig** for donating pictures for the brochure.

**FOG Board members:** Peg Sutherland, Gary Miles, Jim Kaffine, and Dan Bormann for project review and helping with water quality sampling and **Jean Matchefts** for project financial accounting and newsletter preparation.

**Cathy Techtmann:** For project design and coordination.

**Town of Carey & Pence Boards:** For project support and administration.

**US Boat Foundation and WI DNR:** For grant funding and support.



## Happy Holiday Greetings



This is our last FOG newsletter for 2005.

Thanks for supporting the Friends of the Gile Flowage and helping enhance this wonderful resource that we share a passion for.

As is traditional to report at year's end, here are a few highlights of what we have accomplished together in 2005:

### Provided leadership and representation for the Flowage

FOG is now recognized as the organization representing the Gile Flowage. We established strong working partnerships with Towns of Carey & Pence to assist with Flowage issues and secure funding through grants for enhancement projects.

### Grants for the Gile Flowage

DNR Lake Planning Grant: Working with the Towns of Carey and Pence, we secured a second \$10,000 DNR Lake Planning Grant to complete Phase 2– Environmental Assessment of the Gile Flowage Watershed that will be incorporated into the Town's Comprehensive Plans This grant saved the Towns \$4000 in mandated planning costs and provided valuable scientific information about the Flowage that had never been researched before that will help in future decision making.

DNR Aquatic Nuisance Species Grant and US Boat Foundation Grants: FOG helped secure two grants totally \$12,000 for a major educational campaign to encourage Flowage users to help stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. The products of these grants are 4 new boat landing signs, , the first ever Gile Flowage brochure and map, and a welcome boater kit (including a litter bag, fish ruler, and boater survey) that will be distributed to Flowage users in 2006 as part of an educational campaign to stop aquatic invasive species.

### Educational and Organizational Meetings

Annual FOG Meeting, 5/28/05. Elections, silent auction, potluck, updates, fun!

Protecting the Shorelines and Stopping Invasives Educational Presentation, Presenter: MaryJo Gingras from ABDI Land Conservation Dept. , FOG Fall Festival,, 9/24/05

State of the Lake– Gile Flowage Watershed Assessment, Presenter: Dr. Dean Premo, White-water Associates, 12/7/05

FOG Board Meetings: Board members meet bi-monthly depending on business

### Quarterly Newsletters and FOG Website

Keeping you informed about issues and activities affecting the Flowage

***Please renew your membership and help us continue working for the Gile Flowage***

### ***Some of our 2006 highlights include:***

Winter Fish Crib Construction and Installation Project– January 2006

Annual Meeting: June, 2006

Distribution of Boater Welcome Kits: summer, 2006

FOG website update

Newsletters informing you of what's new with the Flowage: quarterly in 2006

Aquatic invasive species monitoring: on-going

Island Clean-up Work Bee: fall, 2006

### The mission of the Friends of the Gile Flowage, Inc.

...is to preserve and protect the **Gile Flowage** and its surroundings, and to enhance the water quality, fishery, boating safety, and its aesthetic values, as a public recreational facility for today and for future generations. Membership in FOG is open to any individual, family, business, or organization that subscribes to this mission



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**On-The-Web at <http://rueruel13.tripod.com/index.html>**  
*Please note that in the URL the character before the number 3, is the number 1, not a letter "l". Thanks to Peg Sutherland for maintaining our site!*

### **FOG Board of Directors**

**President:** Cathy Techt-mann. Phone: 715.561.2185

**Vice-President-** Dan Bormann

**Secretary-** Peg Sutherland

**Treasurer-** Jeanne Matchefts

### **Board Members At Large**

Gary Miles            Joel Enking  
Jim Kaffine           Gary Hopp