Water Quality Newsletters

Part of Approaches to Clean Water Communication
Newsletters

Water quality programs have used newsletters to deliver alerts and periodic updates to interested stakeholders. This document contains examples of water quality newsletters, including notes about topics covered and means of distribution.

This document include examples from the following programs, in order:
- Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- Indiana
- Louisiana
- Minnesota
- Penobscot Nation
- Red Lake Nation

These examples originate from responses to an Environmental Law Institute questionnaire on communication distributed in the fall of 2019. The examples are not intended to be comprehensive; rather, their collection is meant to facilitate the sharing of ideas among water quality programs, especially CWA 303(d) programs, and to help generate new ideas about how to communicate water quality and program information.
The 13 Moons Program provides cultural, ecological, and natural resource management information appropriate to the current moon. Thirteen Moons pages are produced by Fond du Lac Resource Management and the University of Minnesota Extension and published in the Fond du Lac newspaper. More information about the program and the full archive of pages can be found here.
Hoosier Riverwatch, IDEM’s volunteer monitoring program, publishes the quarterly Riffles and Pools newsletter. The newsletter is distributed through email and provides updates on upcoming workshops as well as watershed monitoring and protection activities.

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**Greetings Riverwatchers!**

We hope everyone is healthy and in good spirits! The past few months have been challenging for all Hoosiers. With challenges come opportunities for growth. Perhaps you learned new tools for communicating and staying in touch or found time for hobbies or work-related projects that would otherwise remain untouched. We certainly hope spare time enabled you to slow down and enjoy the moments. Our neighborhood walks and sojourns to favorite parks provided welcome, temporary relief from life under quarantine.

As we slowly return to work and society, we need to be resilient to the changes around us and find greater strength, deeper meaning, and growth from this experience. Time marches on, and we want to share one change to HRW. Riverwatch coordinator Carol Newhouse is on a leave of absence to address health issues. We wish Carol a speedy recovery! Our staff look forward to working with Riverwatch instructors and volunteers to keep HRW wheels moving forward. Citizen involvement in water quality concerns is vital to the future success and welfare of our water resources. We appreciate your involvement and support!

— Kristen Arnold, Technical and Logistical Services Section Chief
Watershed Assessment and Planning Branch

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**White River Mainstem Project**

IDEF will begin a fifth cycle of probabilistic monitoring in June 2020 by sampling the mainstem White River and tributaries from the headwaters to the mouth encompassing three 8-Digit Hydrologic Units (05120201, 05120202, 05120203). IDEM will sample the East Fork White River and tributaries in 2022.

The probabilistic monitoring program is named for its design for statistical probability. IDEM collects and analyzes water samples from randomly selected streams of different sizes within a given basin. Results from a small number of sampling sites provide a snapshot of the overall physical, chemical, and biological quality of the waters within the basin at a given point in time.

IDEM was approached by the Muskingum Sanitary District’s Bureau of Water Quality to collaborate on a project with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources’ (IDNR) Division of Fish and Wildlife to sample fish communities on the mainstem White River. To evaluate the White River mainstem as supporting or non-supporting for aquatic life use, approximately 60 targeted sites will be sampled for water chemistry, fish community, and habitat.

In October 2019, IDEM received $25,000 in funding from U.S. EPA to analyze water chemistry samples for nutrients. U.S. EPA’s Chicago lab will be analyzing water chemistry samples for general chemistry and dissolved metals, saving IDEM $55,000 in laboratory costs. Site reconnaissance (working with landowners and others to determine the best route to access the site) started in November 2019. Sampling for this project will end by October 2020. Results should be available by early 2021.

**The objectives of this project are:**
- Collect samples to give a "snapshot" of the water quality of the West Fork White River and White River.
- Assess stretches of the West Fork White River and White River that have not been sampled for many years.
- Collect additional data at historical IDNR sites to continue monitoring and managing the fish community.
- Sample stream reaches on the 2014 List of Impaired Waters for possible removal of impairment(s).
- Identify shifts in fish community structure along the river.
- Identify how far up the West Fork White River invasive Silver Carp (Hypophthalmichthys molitrix) and Bighead Carp (Hypophthalmichthys nobilis) have reached.

The stretch of the West Fork White River and White River included in the project is 405 river miles long. West Fork White River has a drainage area of 5,375 square miles, with 24.2% forest, 17.6% developed land, and 1.6% wetland. The entire White River has a drainage area of 11,340.9 square miles, with 30% forest, 12.9% developed land, and 1.8% wetland.

IDEM’s interactive story map provides more information about the project. If you have questions, please contact Stacey Sobat, Watershed Assessment and Planning Branch, at (800) 451-0027 (press 5) or (317) 308-3191, or ssobat@idem.in.gov.
Louisiana DEQ disseminates updates through Discover DEQ, a monthly newsletter distributed on the DEQ website and via email.

Louisiana: Discover DEQ

Sibley Lake fish consumption advisory lifted
Louisiana is fortunate to have many beautiful lakes, rivers and waterbodies. The state’s aquatic resources are part of the reason it has been dubbed a sportsman’s paradise. Sibley Lake near Natchitoches is one of Louisiana’s water assets, but it has had a long history of advisory concerning fish consumption.

Sibley Lake is a 2,250-acre impoundment in the late 1950s to produce a reliable drinking water supply for Natchitoches. It provides approximately five million gallons of drinking water daily for area residents. It has an average depth of nine feet and maximum depth of 40 feet. It has been a popular sportsmen’s destination for boating and fishing for many years.

After more than 30 years of sampling lake sediments and fish, the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ), the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) have lifted the fish consumption advisory for Sibley Lake.

The last signature necessary to remove the advisory on the water body near Natchitoches was signed Dec. 21, 2018. The fish consumption ban had been in place since 1988. No one currently involved with water quality at a state regulatory agency can recall another instance where a fish consumption advisory issued due to chemical contamination has been rescinded in Louisiana.

“... I am pleased to see one of our state’s impaired water bodies returned to its designated uses. This was a small feat. The process to restore Sibley Lake demonstrates the care and commitment of the LDEQ, LDH and LDWF to protecting the public from possible health risks of contamination, and making it safe for everyone to enjoy,” Gov. John Bel Edwards said.

“... It is a singular achievement. It is a victory for environmental remediation, a major battle we have won in the fight to clean all of Louisiana’s waterbodies,” LDEQ Secretary Dr. Chuck Carr Brown said.

Thanks to a coordinated effort between multiple state agencies, our state, the Sportsman’s Paradise, now has one more body of water in which residents who...
Minnesota: Waterfront Bulletin

Minnesota PCA publishes the Waterfront Bulletin, a monthly email newsletter providing updates on impaired waters, watershed project funding, and other restoration and protection actions. The publication also accepts submissions from the public.

Water quality and monitoring: What a difference a day makes

The relatively dry spring helped produce excellent water quality in many streams and rivers throughout Minnesota. These conditions were good for fish, as well as fishing and other forms of river recreation. An angler caught a small-mouth bass in the Maple River in southern Minnesota when the water was clear.

One storm can change that. Heavy rains lead to runoff from farm fields, many of which are bare at this time of the year, as well as from paved areas in cities. The rain flushes pollutants from the landscape and raises stream levels. The results are erasive flows, higher levels of pollutants, and muddy waters.

For example, rains on May 16-17 led to higher levels of sediment in the Le Sueur River near Maricopa, as shown in this sample bottles at right. The results before and after:

May 10
- Total suspended solids: 32mg/l
- Nitrate = 3.4 mg/l
- Phosphorus = 0.095 mg/l

May 17
- Total suspended solids: 1,160 mg/l (34 times higher)
- Nitrate: 11 mg/l (3 times higher)
- Phosphorus = 0.904 mg/l (15 times higher)

The Le Sueur is a tributary to the Minnesota River, which carries high-sediment loads to the Mississippi and downstream. The Maple River referenced above is a tributary to the Le Sueur.

Catching that flux of pollutants is the job of the Watershed Pollutant Load Monitoring Network. This network of states and local partners monitor the quality of major rivers throughout Minnesota. Their work is important for detecting if water quality is getting better or worse, tracking the impact of restoration work, and identifying source of pollution, as well ways to reduce them.

Climate scientists predict that heavy rains are becoming more common, making water retention even more important for keeping pollutants out lakes and streams. Practices that retain water include:
- Building soil health on cropland
- Planting cover crops
- Restoring wetlands
- Building water and sediment retention basins
- Planting rain gardens
- Planting buffers of native vegetation along lakes, streams and ditches

Learn more:
- What the MPCA is doing to improve water quality
- Watershed pollutant load monitoring, including real-time data

Waterfront Bulletin

The Clean Water Partnership (CWP) loan program helps restore lakes and streams in Minnesota one project at a time. The program, administered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), marked its biggest year ever in fiscal year 2020, awarding $8.75 million in no-interest loans. It’s been about 25 years since the program came close to that level, previously $7 million in the mid-1990s.

This program has supported 1,621 projects in 304 localities, including cities, water districts and non-profit groups, to reduce non-point pollution, which is pollution from diffuse sources such as cropland runoff, urban stormwater and failing septic systems.

But as interest rates dropped to low levels over the year, the program had difficulty generating applications. Then program staff — Cindy Penny and Kurt Sculler — proposed a change. Because previous recipients had paid back their loans with interest, the program had its own source of funding from the interest payments. In other words, MPCA staff had increased the funding available through good management and interest payments.
Penobscot Nation: Pəskehtəkwok—Joining of the Branches Newsletter

Penobscot Nation DNR’s Pəskehtəkwok—Joining of the Branches newsletter is printed and inserted into the community flyer, included in the electronic version of the same, and distributed by email.

Lots of River Herring Are Coming Up the Penobscot

Removing dams and improving fish passage (www.penobscotriver.org) means more fish coming up the river again!

As of June 2 there had already been 1.6 million river herring counted at the Milford Fish lift. Each of the past two years they have counted around 1.2 million by the end of the season, so we are breaking records. The two species of river herring that make up these numbers are the Alewife and Blueback Herring. For more information about the biology of

If you want to keep track of the numbers coming up the Penobscot and other rivers in Maine go to http://www.maine.gov/dmr/science-research/seaan/programs/trapcounts.html

Alewives have been making a comeback throughout the state - check out The Nature Conservancy’s new video about their journey and importance!

https://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/unitedstates/maine/thecomeback-alewives-return-to-maine-rivers.xhtml?bury=thecomeback-local.noc.me

Because fish and a wide variety of other wild foods are a traditional part of a Penobscot subsistence diet, DNR scientists analyzed contamination levels in some of them. And we are thrilled to be finished with the first of three brochures and posters about the best ways to keep yourself safe when eating them! Here is how you can get the information in the first brochure about fish:
The Red Lake Nation DNR Newsletter is released three to four times per year and includes updates on water quality in addition to other topics such as forestry and wildlife. The newsletter is released digitally and mailed to tribal members.