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Health of Shawano Lake focus of UWSP research

Shawano Lake in Shawano County is the fourth largest inland body of water in Wisconsin. The lake is heavily used for recreation and it plays a large role in the Shawano County economy, but this 6,000-acre lake is facing a myriad of concerns.

Shawano County and the Shawano Area Waterways Management Association (SAWM), a citizen organization, contacted the Center for Watershed Science and Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help them identify sources of pollution and create plans for improving conditions in Shawano Lake. A Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) \$200,000 grant to the county this past year, combined with matching in-kind contributions and/or funds from Shawano County, SAWM, and surrounding communities and towns that are in the Shawano Lake watershed directs center staff to produce a comprehensive watershed health report by 2007.

According to Nancy Turyk, a water resource scientist at the center, the grant will support a collaborative project between UWSP, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, SAWM and the Shawano County Land Conservation Department.

“The community and the state are rightly concerned about the overall health of this large body of water,” said Turyk. “Shawano Lake is an impoundment draining to the Wolf River with a large watershed and hence this shallow water body has serious issues including algae and aquatic plant concerns.”

The center’s grant work will focus on collecting needed water quality and land use information, educating area citizens about the Shawano Lake watershed and many issues facing Shawano Lake, and assisting with the development of a strategic plan for improving the lake’s overall health. Work began on this study in 2003 with three lake planning grants where the results suggested further study was needed.

“For far too many years, Shawano Lake has needed extensive chemical treatments to combat aquatic plant growth for as much as \$20,000 in a year,” said Turyk. “I think area leaders and lake property owners are seeking less obtrusive and more comprehensive approaches toward a healthier lake ecosystem.”