



Coho salmon stocking, 1968, and waterfowl banding, circa 2000.

# From the archives of a 'superagency'

FIVE-DECADE TIMELINE TELLS TALE OF DNR DEDICATION AND ENDURANCE.

*Kathryn A. Kahler and Andrea Zani*

Quite a lot can happen in 50 years, to be sure. And when that half-century involves a government agency with work as wide-ranging and comprehensive as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the sheer volume of the highlights can be prodigious.

It's been 50 years since the DNR was created through state government reorganization prompted by the recommendations of the Kellett Commission, an 18-member group appointed in 1965 by Gov. Warren P. Knowles and headed by William Kellett. At the time, the Wisconsin Conservation Department was responsible for managing the state's fisheries, wildlife, forests and parks, and enforcing laws protecting fish and game, while the Resource Development Department was overseeing statewide water and air pollution control.

The Kellett Commission's call for the merger of the two departments was heeded, and on July 1, 1968, the DNR officially came into existence. This newly created entity was viewed by many as the first

"superagency" in the nation — given authority to regulate air and water quality, as well as solid waste disposal, and directed to develop an integrated program to protect air, land and water resources and the plants and animals dependent on them.

The Natural Resources Board, also new, was tasked with guiding the DNR. The first board consisted of four members from the former Conservation Commission and three from the Resource Development Board, with Lester P. Voigt as DNR's first secretary.

The year-by-year timeline presented in these pages attempts to corral some of the history of the past 50 years as it relates to the DNR and its mission. Some of these notable occurrences involved state resources and the DNR directly, while

others informed the agency's work, including landmark legislation such as the U.S. Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act, and federal laws banning or regulating various pollutants.

Though certainly thorough, the timeline is by no means all-inclusive. The difficulty comes not in finding efforts, events and accomplishments to point out, but in culling from the enormous list.

What's here, hopefully, will be considered interesting and enlightening, and maybe just a little bit celebratory — fitting for a 50th anniversary.

The hope also is that the final year of this particular timeline, 2018, is not an end but rather a beginning, a starting point for another 50 years — or more — of similar dedication, important service and success.



The Department of Natural Resources and Natural Resources Board are created through reorganization of state agencies. ¶ The St. Croix/Namekagon River system is named the first wild and scenic river in the nation. ¶ Coho and chinook salmon strains from the Pacific Northwest are stocked by DNR in Lake Michigan to help control invasive alewife and spur recovery of other species.



**First Secretary Lester P. Voigt**

ED SCHUMANN

Outdoor Recreation Act Program (ORAP) is expanded, authorizing the state to spend \$200 million to acquire lands for outdoor recreation. ¶ First rules regulating dumps take effect.

U.S. National Environmental Policy Act is signed and the federal Environmental Protection Agency is created. ¶ First Earth Day, founded by Wisconsin Sen. Gaylord Nelson, is celebrated on April 22. ¶ The 1967 Clean Air Act is expanded to create a variety of new air quality standards. ¶ Several state properties are established: Yellowstone and Buckhorn parks; Brown County-Cadiz Springs State Recreation Area; Ahnapee State Trail; and Gov. Knowles State Forest.



**Air monitoring van**



**MacKenzie Center**

Wisconsin Conservation Congress receives statutory recognition. ¶ Wisconsin is the first state to ban DDT pesticide. ¶ Ice Age National Scientific Reserve is established, including nine units in Wisconsin. ¶ Environmental Education Center in Poynter is named in honor of Harley MacKenzie.

1968

1969

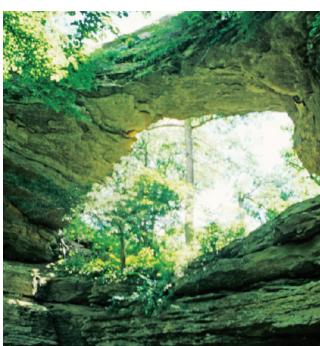
1970

1971

1972

1973

1974



**Natural Bridge State Park**

Congress creates the Clean Water Act. ¶ First list of Wisconsin endangered and threatened species is developed following enactment of the state's endangered species law. ¶ Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act becomes law. ¶ Wisconsin Supreme Court reaffirms the Public Trust Doctrine, decreeing that waterways are common highways and forever free. ¶ Two state parks (Natural Bridge and Kinnickinnic) and one state trail (Sugar River) are established.



**Lake Michigan shoreline erosion**



Congress creates federal Endangered Species Act. ¶ Heritage Hill State Park and Bearskin and Red Cedar state trails are established.

**Red Cedar State Trail**

DNR creates the state's first Inland Lake Renewal Project and expands Coastal Zone Management program to include the Great Lakes. ¶ Congress enacts Safe Drinking Water Act. ¶ State park campsite reservation program begins.



Anthony "Tony" Earl becomes DNR secretary.

Wisconsin Water Pollutant Discharge Elimination System is developed. Power Plant Siting Bill is passed. Federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act is passed, prompting innovation in fuel-efficient vehicles. Gov. Nelson State Park is established.



Illegal dumping

Congress enacts Resource Conservation and Recovery Act governing disposal of solid and hazardous waste. Legislature passes bill creating groundwater protection program. Federal government bans manufacture of PCBs. DNR issues first fish consumption advisory, warning people not to eat Great Lakes fish contaminated with PCBs. Buffalo River State Trail is established.

1975

1976

1977

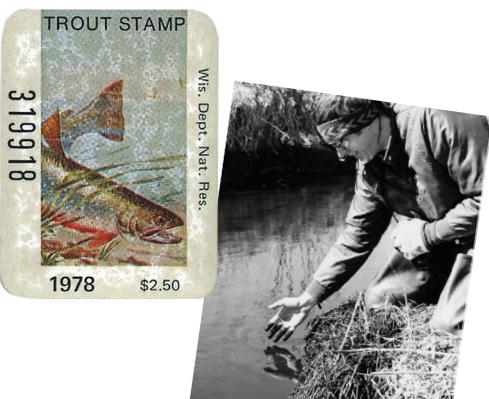
1978

1979

1980

1981

DNR's Office of Endangered and Nongame Species is created. Wisconsin's Hazardous Substance Spills Law is enacted. Federal law bans chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in aerosol cans. First Trout Stamp is established at \$2.50, with funds dedicated to supplementing trout stream habitat improvement. La Crosse River State Trail is established.



Spills Law engenders cleanup



Pyare Square Building

ORAP is again expanded and titled ORAP-2000 to recognize its long-range goal. DNR's central office staff move from Pyare Square Building on University Avenue to the new General Executive Facility 2 (GEF 2) in downtown Madison. Fish and game violation hotline — 1-800-WDNR-TIP — is established.



Carroll D. "Buzz" Besadny becomes DNR secretary. Federal Superfund program is created to clean up the nation's worst hazardous sites. DNR forms Acid Deposition Task Force. Wisconsin's Shoreland Protection program is enacted. Hoffman Hills State Recreation Area is established. Blaze orange clothing is required for hunters.

Military Ridge State Trail is established.

Legislature passes groundwater protection law. <sup>¶¶</sup> Tax check-off program to fund DNR's endangered resources program is signed into law. <sup>¶¶</sup> Wisconsin becomes the first state to meet fishable and swimmable water quality standards. <sup>¶¶</sup> Abandoned landfill and environmental repair law is passed to provide state funds when a responsible party is not found for contaminated sites. <sup>¶¶</sup> Federal appeals court ruling guarantees Ojibwe tribes the right to hunt and fish off their reservations on ceded territory across northern Wisconsin.



State waters welcome swimmers



Glacial Drumlin State Trail

Ojibwe tribes exercise their right to hunt deer for the first time off-reservation through negotiation with DNR. <sup>¶¶</sup> Glacial Drumlin State Trail is established.

Scientific Areas Preservation Council is renamed Natural Areas Preservation Council, with its 11 members advising DNR on habitats for rare species in need of protection.

<sup>¶¶</sup> Legislature passes Managed Forest Law, providing tax incentives for forest production.

<sup>¶¶</sup> Environmental warden positions are created. <sup>¶¶</sup> First off-reservation spearing harvest is taken by Ojibwe tribes. <sup>¶¶</sup> Remediation plans for handling dirty sediments from the harbors of Green Bay, Superior, Menominee, Sheboygan and Milwaukee are begun after being identified by Great Lakes Charter. <sup>¶¶</sup> State parks begin Wisconsin Explorer and Junior Ranger educational programs.

1982

1983

1984

1985

1986

1987

1988

Bureau of Endangered Resources is formed. <sup>¶¶</sup> Great Lakes Trout and Salmon Stamp is established at \$3.50.

Wisconsin sues U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for failing to require Illinois and Indiana to reduce ground-level ozone. <sup>¶¶</sup> DNR begins aquatic resources education program. <sup>¶¶</sup> Petroleum Environmental Cleanup Fund Award program is established to remediate contamination from product storage systems. <sup>¶¶</sup> Kettle Moraine State Forest-Lapham Peak Unit is established.



Safe drinking water



Wetlands waterfowl

Gov. Tony Earl signs Wisconsin's Acid Rain Law, the first of its kind in the nation. <sup>¶¶</sup> Congress enacts Emergency Wetlands Resources program to protect and promote conservation of the nation's wetlands and establish National Wildlife Refuges for waterfowl. <sup>¶¶</sup> Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin is established. <sup>¶¶</sup> Congress amends and reauthorizes Safe Drinking Water Act. <sup>¶¶</sup> Wild Goose and Great River state trails are established.

Wisconsin's Air Toxics Rule limits emissions of 438 hazardous air pollutants. <sup>¶¶</sup> Six peregrine falcons are released by DNR on UW-Madison campus, marking the return to Wisconsin of a bird that was nearly extinct by the 1970s because of pesticides.

<sup>¶¶</sup> Baraboo River, "400" and Hillsboro state trails are established.



400 State Trail

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is created, authorizing up to \$250 million in state debt to acquire and develop land for recreational uses, wildlife habitat, fisheries and natural areas. ■■ North American Wetlands Conservation Act is enacted. ■■ State Trails Council is created and Gandy Dancer State Trail is established.

Federal Wetland Reserve Program is authorized as part of an amended Farm Bill. ■■ Clean Air Act is amended to control acid rain, issue stationary source operating permits and expand the hazardous air pollution program. ■■ Legislature passes law to encourage reduction, reuse and recycling of solid waste, and Council on Recycling is created. ■■ DNR begins urban forestry program with staff of seven foresters providing technical assistance to communities. ■■ Chippewa River and Old Abe state trails are established.



Council on Recycling encourages reuse practices



Accessible cabin at Kohler-Andrae State Park

Green Bay-Greenleaf State Trail is established. ■■ First accessible cabin is opened at Mirror Lake State Park. Over the next two decades, seven more cabins with amenities are opened at Buckhorn, Harrington Beach, High Cliff, Kohler-Andrae and Potawatomi state parks, Kettle Moraine State Forest-Southern Unit and Richard Bong State Recreation Area.

1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996

State laws are enacted requiring mobile air-conditioner maintenance to protect Earth's ozone layer.



George Meyer is appointed DNR secretary. ■■ Breach in treatment at a Milwaukee water treatment plant leads to an outbreak of waterborne disease known as Cryptosporidiosis, sickening more than 400,000 people, hospitalizing more than 4,000 and causing the death of at least 104. This leads to new monitoring of drinking water drawn from lakes or rivers. ■■ Natural Resources Foundation launches field trip program.

Wisconsin's Land Recycling Law takes effect, designed to address abandoned and contaminated "brownfields."

Wisconsin Act 27 gives appointment authority of DNR secretary to governor rather than Natural Resources Board. ■■ Elk are reintroduced in northern Wisconsin. ■■ Legislature enacts spill law and lists recyclable materials banned from landfills.



Elk reintroduction

DNR's website goes live. ■■ Wisconsin's Partners for Clean Air — a coalition of 260 businesses, community organizations, schools and government agencies — is formed. ■■ Friends of Wisconsin State Parks is formed. ■■ DNR undergoes major reorganization to optimize effectiveness and better serve customers. ■■ Congress amends and reauthorizes Safe Drinking Water Act. ■■ Wild Turkey Stamp is implemented to fund turkey habitat and management efforts.



**Wisconsin Dells State Natural Area**

Dry Cleaner Environmental Response Program is created to cover eligible costs associated with contamination caused by dry-cleaning solvents. ■■ New legislation requires more than 153 municipalities to develop plans to control runoff. ■■ National Wildlife Refuge Act is passed. ■■ Bald eagle is removed from Wisconsin's endangered/threatened species list. ■■ Wisconsin Dells Natural Area is established.

DNR creates first automated license issuance system, replacing 100-year-old paper license system. ■■ Tomorrow River and Henry Aaron state trails, Fisher Creek State Recreation Area, and Lakeshore State Park are established.



**American bald eagle**



**Milwaukee's Lakeshore State Park**

Bald eagle is removed from the federal endangered species list. ■■ Karner blue butterfly habitat conservation plan is signed. ■■ Stewardship Program is reauthorized for 10 years and \$46 million. ■■ Recycling program is made permanent. ■■ Parks Automated Reservation System is initiated, allowing phone reservations for state parks.

1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004

Federal Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health Act is passed, setting national standards for recreational water testing and authorizing grants to pay for beach monitoring programs at state and federal levels.



**Darrell Bazzell** is appointed DNR Secretary. ■■ Invasive Species Council is created. ■■ Eight whooping cranes reintroduced in Wisconsin make their first migratory flight to Florida. ■■ National dam removal program is rejuvenated, resulting in the removal of the last of four dams on the Baraboo River, restoring natural water flows and improving water quality, fishing and recreation. ■■ Division of Forestry is created.



**Scott Hassett** is appointed DNR Secretary. ■■ Office of Energy is formed to coordinate utility project reviews with the Public Service Commission.

Chronic Wasting Disease is first detected in Wisconsin deer. ■■ Captive Wildlife Law is enacted, committing DNR to coordinating wildlife health issues with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. ■■ International Migratory Bird Day is created. ■■ Natural Resources Board adopts rules package aimed at reducing polluted runoff from farms, urban areas, construction sites and other rural and urban sources.

Gray wolf is removed from Wisconsin's endangered/threatened species list. ■■ New groundwater protection law expands DNR's authority to consider environmental impacts of high-capacity wells and addresses water quantity issues in rapidly growing areas of the state. ■■ Green Tier law allows voluntary participation by businesses with a good environmental record to benefit beyond the regulatory process. ■■ Wisconsin's mercury rule requires large coal-fired electric utility plants to reduce mercury emissions.



**Gray wolves**

Great Lakes states and Canada sign an agreement to protect the waters of the Great Lakes.  A "Northern Initiative" designed to keep northern Wisconsin natural while accommodating development opportunities is adopted.  New rules streamline issuance of air pollution permits, allowing DNR to shift resources to compliance and enforcement of larger facilities.

Legislature passes the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Bill establishing a 10 percent renewable energy goal by 2015.  Wisconsin becomes part of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact for handling wildlife law violations.  Largest land conservation purchase in state history is announced; Wild Rivers Legacy Forest conserves nearly 65,000 acres in Florence, Forest and Marinette counties.  Out-of-state firewood is banned in Wisconsin state parks to stem emerald ash borer infestation.  Forty-four pristine stream segments are added to the Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters lists in 16 counties across northern Wisconsin.



**Matt Frank** is appointed DNR Secretary.  Viral hemorrhagic septicemia, a deadly fish virus, is found in Lake Winnebago waterway and emergency rules are implemented to control its spread.

 U.S. Supreme Court decides greenhouse gases fall under the Clean Air Act.  Lakeshore State Park is dedicated, becoming the first urban park in the state park system.  Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is increased from \$60 million to \$86 million per year through 2020.  Wisconsin's 500th State Natural Area — Lake Laura Hardwoods in Vilas County — is dedicated.  DNR's customer call center is improved with extended hours, toll-free number, bilingual and online chat services.

NRB approves rule to reduce mercury emissions by 90 percent.  Legislature ratifies Great Lakes Compact, banning long-distance diversions and ensuring sustainable water use in the Great Lakes basin.  A \$15.9 million renovation of Wild Rose State Fish Hatchery is complete.  Funding for aquatic invasive species control is increased by \$1.8 million in biennial budget.



2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012

Legislature passes Mentored Hunting Bill, making hunting legal for 10-year-olds and older accompanied by an adult.  Trumpeter swan is removed from Wisconsin's endangered species list.  DNR begins ballast water regulation of Great Lakes ships to stem flow of invasive species.  Shoreland development rules are updated to better protect Wisconsin's lakes and rivers.  Electronic recycling bill is signed into law.  DNR launches federally funded Clean Diesel Grant Program.



**Cathy Stepp** is appointed DNR Secretary.  DNR launches Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and redesigns website to provide better customer service.  CWD is detected in Washburn County and the state hires an independent deer trustee to review Wisconsin deer management.  Voluntary Public Access Program is enacted to encourage landowners to allow public use.  Participation in Green Tier programs grows from 46 businesses in 2009 to 86 in 2010.  DNR introduces streamlined water quality permit process for large-scale dairy operations.



**GREEN TIER**



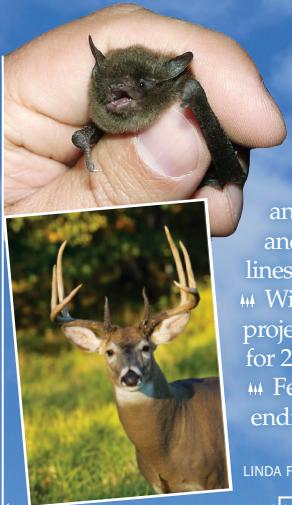
**CWD testing**

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is funded by federal government.  DNR begins public review of Lower Fox River and Green Bay Total Maximum Daily Load plan.  Air quality notification system is improved to include notices on county level.  Fifteen-year plan to control CWD is approved by NRB.  Comprehensive clean water rules are approved by NRB.  Anonymous "tip411" text messaging is created to report violations.

After removal of wolf from federal endangered species list, Wisconsin begins management program, including trapping and hunting season.  Ninety-nine waterbodies are added to impaired waters list for exceeding the state's new numeric phosphorus standards.  New online system streamlines water permitting process.



Hunting regulation changes allow use of rifles statewide and hunting in most state parks. ■■ Guidelines for Wetland Compensatory Mitigation in Wisconsin are finalized. ■■ Wisconsin Walleye Initiative begins, with stocking of large fingerling walleyes in Wisconsin lakes.



LINDA FRESHWATERS ARNDT

Wisconsin Legislature passes Act 55, which changes counties' authority to develop shoreland zoning ordinances more restrictive than state law. ■■ Newton Blackmour State Trail is established as the 37th state rail trail in Wisconsin. ■■ DNR rolls out Snapshot Wisconsin, a citizen science effort to capture photos of wildlife for population studies. ■■ DNR adds 209 waterways to the Impaired Waters List to facilitate increased management efforts toward improvements.

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

DNR makes \$11.8 million in federal funding available to disadvantaged communities to replace old lead drinking water service lines. ■■ GoWild, a new online licensing system, is instituted. ■■ Peninsula State Park's iconic Eagle Tower is removed due to safety concerns. ■■ DNR begins master planning process for six northern state forests covering 451,000 acres. ■■ Adopt-a-Wildlife Area program is launched. ■■ Five-year study shows rate of spread of aquatic invasive species has stabilized.



Daniel L. Meyer is appointed DNR Secretary. ■■ Legislature passes bill removing minimum age for hunting. ■■ DNR embarks on Recreation Opportunities Analysis study to examine existing and future recreation needs in eight regions throughout the state.

#### Kohler-Andrae State Park boardwalk

Except where noted, all photos were taken by DNR photographers and staff including Staber Reese, Dean Tvedt, Robert Queen, Jim Escalante, Thomas Meyer and Ben Pierson.

The DNR and Natural Resources Board mark 50 years of caring for Wisconsin's beautiful, expansive and vital natural resources.