

UPDATE 2025



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The sen sets over Shawano Lake, one of the waterways preserved and protected by the Shawano Area Waterways Management nonprofit organization. GREG MELLIS | NEW MEDIA

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New weed harvesting equipment paying off

The new weed harvester purchased last year by the Shawano Area Waterways Management group has proven to be a huge success.

“We’ve got a full year under our belts, and things are going well,” said Todd Dobberstein, president of SAWM’s board of directors.

The custom-built weed harvester and transportation barge, were purchased at a cost of about \$500,000, was purchased by SAWM with matching funds from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

SAWM operated two separate weed harvesters and two separate weed barges for mechanically harvesting and removing nuisance weeds from area waterways for several decades.

One harvester and one barge unit were used for weed harvesting in the lake. The other was used for harvesting in the channel and the upper Wolf River. The two separate harvesting tandems were necessary due to the height limitations of the County Road HHH bridge. The units were unable to navigate under this bridge.

SAWM assisted in successfully lobbying the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in 2019 and 2020 to raise the bridge height when it was slated for reconstruction so that the units could safely navigate beneath the bridge.

The new harvester has GPS capabilities, allowing operators to accurately locate their work. Accurate location is essential as SAWM permits from the DNR are very specific on location and types of plants that can be cut.

SAWM supplements its mechanical weed cutting with chemical treatment of weeds, mainly along seven buoy lanes to keep navigation open. A special focus is the invasive Eurasian milfoil.

SAWM members can pay for cutting around docks on the lake and the channel.

The crew also skims floating weed beds from the lake to reduce the amount of weeds that would otherwise gather on shore or interfere with boat navigation. This also removes an additional source of nutrients that would promote undesirable plant growth.



One of the 2025 goals of the Shawano Area Waterways Management nonprofit organization is to provide consistent, high-quality private and public nuisance weed harvesting. With help from the DNR, a new weed harvester and transportation barge was purchased in 2024, replacing equipment that had been in use for decades.

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Do you know what to do when you see a buoy?

Anyone slicing, sailing, skimming or steering your boat through the Shawano Lake will undoubtedly come across some buoys. Shawano Area Waterways Management places buoys on the lake, chan-

nel and river for safety reasons. The purpose of a slow no wake buoy is obvious, but they are an important part of safe boating on the lake, channel and rivers. If you see black and white

vertical striped buoys, keep them on your left (port) side. Think of them like a centerline of a two-way road. The black and white vertical stripe buoys are designating a channel through shallow or

excessively weedy areas. Staying near them will get you through these areas safely. On Shawano Lake they are located in the north-west corner and south-west area (west of the

Bamboo Bar). If you see red and green buoys, stay between them. The cost of maintaining the buoys and lights is a significant expense covered by SAWM. The cost of a buoy is \$146,

and the cost of a single light for a buoy or bridge is \$277. Use caution when navigating near the buoys. Running over a buoy is an offense that will result in a fine.



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Boaters and anglers are encouraged to drain their livewells and fish buckets before leaving boat launches. Shawano Area Waterways Management is dedicated to preserving and protecting the waters of Shawano Lake, the Wolf River and the channels connecting them.

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Anglers play key role in aquatic invasive species prevention

Draining water from livewells and equipment makes a difference

Among the many projects of Shawano Area Waterways Management is coordinating the local Clean Boats, Clean Water program.

The total project cost is more than \$5,000 each

year. In 2023, the local group received a \$3,000 grant, and in 2024, the grant totaled \$4,000. A similar grant was applied for in 2025.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

urges anglers to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species by draining water from their boats and equipment.

Some Wisconsin lakes and rivers are known to contain aquatic diseases or small invasive species like spiny water fleas and zebra mussel larvae.

SAWM officials applied for more than \$16,000 in grant money for Eurasian water milfoil mapping and a point intercept survey

More than \$12,000 was received in 2023, with a final payment of \$1,610 received in 2024.

Wisconsin law requires boaters and anglers to drain livewells, motors and containers before leaving a boat launch or fishing spot to prevent the transport of diseases and invasive species from one waterbody to the next. Because water cannot be used to transport fish away from the shore, it's

recommended to use ice instead.

If you are using live bait, Wisconsin fishing regulations state that minnows can only be purchased from a licensed Wisconsin bait dealer, and no more than two gallons of water may be used to transport them.

Minnows may only be used on a different waterbody if no lake or river water or previously used minnows have been added

to the container.

No other fish can be held in the minnow container, and dead bait must be preserved in ways that do not require freezing or refrigeration.

Never dispose of unwanted bait in a lake or river.

If you have worms that you will not use before they die, dispose of them in a closed container in the trash, never on the ground.

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At left, Todd Dobberstein, president of the board of directors of Shawano Area Waterways Management, addresses members during the group’s recent annual meeting. At right, members and non-members prepare to enjoy the 2024 golf outing to raise funds for the nonprofit organization.

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Walleyes for Tomorrow releases nearly 10 million fish into local lakes

Shawano Area Waterways Management is a big supporter of the Walleyes For Tomorrow Shawano Chapter and its effort restock area lakes with through spawning habitat construction, enhancement and rehabilitation.

“We support them, and they support us,” said Todd Dobberstein, president of SAWM’s board of directors. “We all have a passion for the local waterways system.”

Across the state, thou-

sands of volunteers and members have donated their time and talents to raise funds for projects that will benefit walleye, said Mike Arrowood, WFT president.

“WFT is a totally volunteer organization with a penchant for project implementation,” he said. “Projects require funds to complete, and the WFT chapters are the backbone of this effort.”

Ken VanDenPlas, chairman of the Walleyes

for Tomorrow Shawano Chapter, noted on the group’s Facebook the local group recently released nearly 10 million eggs into local lakes.

In the 1990s, Shawano Lake was a premier walleye lake, but then, reproduction plummeted.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fisheries biologist Elliot Hoffman said earlier this year a study of the movement of the local walleyes showed that a third of the popula-

tion is running up to Loon Creek and then Loon Lake. They’re spawning up there as well.

The remaining fish are on Rose Nose Point and Schumacher’s Island, the historical areas where they’ve always spawned.

In April, crews gathered fish from about half a dozen sites around the 6,200-acre lake, nurturing eggs in a portable hatchery.

The local chapter has been doing this for more

than a decade. Fewer than a million eggs were collected that first year. This year, nearly 10 million were collected and released in Shawano, Washington and Loon lakes.

Eventually, when the walleyes are a few days old, they are released. The last of the fish were released May 5, according to the chapter’s Facebook page.

Less than one-half of 1% will make it to the spawning age.

Some numbers from the 2025 Shawano hatchery:

- Number of walleyes eggs in hatchery: 10,480,000.
- Female walleyes used: 131.
- Average size of females: 18.99 inches.
- Male walleyes used: 339.
- Average size of males: 17.89 inches.
- Number of walleyes netted in five days: 1,240.
- Total number of walleyes used: 470.

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