

Local residents recognized as Lake Leader

DNR Water Quality Bureau Director Susan Sylvester, UW-Extension CNRED Director Karl Martin, and Wisconsin Lakes Board President Mary Knipper together recognized Chris Gaetzke of Dunn County Land Conservation Division and Ron Verdon, Tainter Menomin Lake Improvement Association for completion of their training to protect Wisconsin's lakes.

Chris Gaetzke and Ron Verdon were two of 26 participants to graduate from the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute, a statewide leadership program that helps lake stewards gain a better understanding of lake ecology and how to work with state and local governments to assure lakes get the attention they need. Through a combination of reading, classroom activities and field experiences, participants learned about lake management, local and state government, and leadership skills.

"With over 15,000 lakes statewide and a modest amount of state staff in service to protect them, it is clear that no one state agency or unit of government can independently provide the attention that each lake deserves" explained Patrick Goggin, UW-Extension Lake Specialist. "This leadership program provides local lake leaders with effective tools and resources to assist them as they volunteer their skills and talents to the stewardship of our lakes".

The Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute draws participants from across the state to take part in a series of three two-day seminars held at locations across the state. Participants demonstrate a commitment to protecting the integrity of the lakes in Wisconsin with an investment of their time and a \$300 tuition fee.

The Wisconsin Lakes Partnership is a team made up of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the citizen advocacy organization Wisconsin Lakes. Together they recognized the need for new and on-going leadership in the management of our lakes and created the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute in 1996. The mission of the Institute is to assist citizen lake leaders in developing and enhancing both their technical and people skills, ultimately enriching their communities and the waters within them. Since its inception, nearly 300 participants have graduated from the Institute. Graduates have gone on to make significant contributions in addressing a host of diverse water management challenges. The program has received national attention as an effective strategy to enhance lake stewardship and protection.

The graduation ceremony took place at the Aldo Leopold Shack near Baraboo, a fitting setting for celebrating the lake leaders accomplishments and looking ahead to their conservation journeys in the world of lakes. For more information about the program contact: Chris Gaetzke at 715-231-6540, Ron Verdon at 715-505-2800 or the UW-Extension Lakes staff at (715)-346-2116, < uwexplakes@uwsp.edu >, or the web link: <http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/programs/lakeleaders/default.aspx> >.