



Dear Friends,

The Friends of Sylvania would like to wish you a happy and peaceful 2014 and to thank you for your interest in Sylvania and your support of our work. In 2013 we had another successful year assisting the US Forest Service in protecting and preserving the Sylvania Wilderness. We also had one sad event with the passing of one of our board members.

REMEMBERING TOM CHURCH

Those of us who have a special place in our hearts for the Sylvania Wilderness were greatly saddened this past June to learn of the death of Tom Church of Watersmeet, Michigan. Tom was a fellow Friends of Sylvania Board member, and one of the individuals involved in founding the Friends of Sylvania (FoS) in 2009. Tom was just 58 years old.

Tom's love affair with Sylvania began when, as a young boy growing up in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, he convinced his parents to drop him and his brother off for a week on their own in Sylvania. The experience left him with a deep bond to Sylvania that continued for the rest of his life. Tom spent much of his working career in Minnesota, but in the 1980s he purchased a cabin on the shore of Crooked Lake. For the remainder of his life, Tom spent as much time as he could at the cabin and on reducing threats to Sylvania so that future generations could enjoy the same experience there that he had enjoyed. Tom worked with the Sierra Club, the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition, and other organizations to pass the Michigan Wilderness Act which eventually became law in 1987, officially designating Sylvania as a wilderness. He coordinated the purchase of a large parcel of land that was slated for subdivision, a threat to Sylvania due to its close proximity to the wilderness. Tom did live long enough to see the Forest Service install a gate at the Crooked Lake boat landing in early 2012 - something he had worked on for a very long time. This gate will reduce the spread of additional invasive aquatic weeds introduced by trailered boats by allowing carry-down access only.



Tom Church portaging after a day of invasives work [W. Brinkmann]

Those of us who knew Tom well will never forget him or his contributions to Sylvania and the surrounding Ottawa National Forest. Tom would want those of us who love Sylvania, as he did, to carry on this important work.

Robert Evans

INVASIVE WEED PROJECT

The 2013 FoS Invasive Weed Crew consisted of 3 part-time students: two new students, Sam and Dave, and Haily who was a member of last year's crew. We needed additional help in late June so we hired Sarah, a Watersmeet high school student, who impressed us with her thoroughness, energy, and enthusiasm. Several local and out-of-state volunteers provided additional

More about WEEDS on page 2

SIERRA CLUB SERVICE TRIP

In June a group of 10 intrepid paddlers traveled to Whitefish Lake to get a head start on this summer's invasive European marsh thistle problem. We spent two and a half days working in two teams to remove first-year rosettes and second-year plants. This was a critical task since in previous years our Invasive Weed Crew got stuck in several weed patches for a whole day,

More about SIERRA CLUB on page 2

WEEDS from page 1 . . .

assistance, including participants in service trips/outings to Sylvania organized by 3 different groups. These volunteers and the FoS field leaders donated 910 hours of field work.



FoS invasive crew taking a break from pulling European marsh thistles [W. Brinkmann]

Over 450 known sites of invasive species were revisited. About 190 new sites were identified, which increased the number of known weed sites in Sylvania from 134 (originally provided by the Forest Service at the beginning of the project) to 822, a 6-fold increase over a 3 year period. Most of these sites are thistles: European marsh thistle, Canada thistle, and Bull thistle. We also focused our attention on the road system around Sylvania which is a major source of invasives moving into the wilderness. We spent less time on Japanese barberry since much of Sylvania's western boundary had been searched in 2011 and 2012. A new patch of garlic mustard was discovered at a drive-in campsite, bringing the total number to 4; all 4 garlic mustard sites are at campsites, indicating that the seed vectors are people and/or their furry companions.



FoS invasive crew loading up the canoe after a long day of work on Crooked Lake [W. Brinkmann]

The FoS Invasive Plants Removal Project is critical to the protection of Sylvania. We thank the Forest Service for their continuing financial and logistical support for 2014 and 2015. Forest Service grant money is used to support our paid students, but

even with efficient use of these funds we will not be able to operate the project at the current level without additional assistance. Therefore, our need for more volunteers and additional funding is considerable. *Waltraud Brinkmann*

SIERRA CLUB from page 1 . . .

while the plants were in seed. The intent of this service project was to get a jump start on the problem by removing thistles well before they flowered and spread their seeds, and we succeeded.



Sierra Club Service Project crew saving Sylvania from invasives [R. Bannerman]

The invasive removal project was made particularly unpleasant by the newly hatched mosquitoes. Everyone had an opportunity to test their bug evasion skills, and one participant happily indicated that he had succeeded. The enclosed tundra tarp was invaluable for cooking. The meals were great even though some of them were experimental.



Sierra Club Service Project crew prepares to attack a dense thistle patch [D. Wallace]

This service project was jointly sponsored by the Friends of Sylvania and the Sierra Club River Touring Section. We will repeat this project June 20 - 24, 2014, hopefully without the bugs. Please join us for this critical task. *Daniel Wallace*₂

UNIVERSITY OF DUBUQUE SERVICE LEARNING

In 2012 Victor Popp, Director of Recreation at the University of Dubuque, and Wally had a conversation that sparked an idea. It led Victor and colleague Professor Adam Hoffman to develop a course in the Environmental Sciences that has as one of its requirements a camping trip to Sylvania and volunteer work under the guidance of the Friends of Sylvania. The university approved this course and the Watersmeet District Ranger from the Ottawa National Forest approved this activity.



University of Dubuque students and instructors searching for Canada thistle [V. Popp]

In June of 2013 we met at the Clark Lake south beach. After a safety session and discussion of the life cycle of Canada thistle, the participants gleefully entered the nearby meadows. There was a lot of excitement and fun walking through the grass and identifying and pulling the plants. Each student received a 'Certificate of Appreciation'. Based on this success, the plan for 2014 is to increase the service portion of the course.

Waltraud Brinkmann

CLARK DAY USE BUILDING

The Ottawa National Forest (ONF) received funding to renovate the Sylvania Day Use building and to repair some of the roads in the Sylvania Recreational Area. Work started in the fall of 2013 and will continue throughout the winter. It will include installing a new roof and upgrading the bathrooms and shower facilities. The completion date of the project is somewhat uncertain since it is weather dependent but is expected in early summer.

Melissa Simpson, ONF, Recreation & Wilderness Manager

FISH AND GAME CLUB SERVICE DAY

Forest Road 6320 marks the eastern boundary of Sylvania Wilderness. It and all of Sylvania's borders are areas of high priority for the FoS because they are the main vectors for invasive species entering the wilderness.

In late July 9 volunteers from the Land O'Lakes Fish and Game Club met to assist the FoS in their effort to remove invasives from the perimeter of Sylvania. We worked along Forest Road 6320,



Land O'Lakes Fish & Game Club crew after attacking invasives along Forest Road 6320 [C. Pytlarz]

covering 2.5 miles. There was some education about good plants and bad plants and how to remove the bad ones effectively. By noon dozens of trash bags were filled with weed seeds and plants.

The ten of us enjoyed the fresh air of that summer morning, made new friends and gained knowledge that we brought back to our own yards. There is nothing more rewarding than removing plant species that have the potential of taking over a native landscape. We thank the Fish and Game club for their assistance and look forward to continuing to work with them on this critical project.

Cheryl Pytlarz

SYLVANIA LOON SURVEY

The ONF has been monitoring over one hundred loon breeding territories across the forest for over 20 years with the help of volunteer Loon Rangers, loon researchers who have partnered with the National Forest, and Forest Service staff. Not all breeding territories produce chicks because a territory may remain unoccupied or because of nest failure. Research suggests an average of 0.48 chicks/pair/year (cpy) will sustain a loon population. The long-term average on the Ottawa is 0.38 cpy. This productivity has been fairly stable and is close to or slightly higher than that for other areas in the Great Lakes Region.



A wary loon and chick wondering whether to trust the photographer [T. Wheeler]

Sylvania has roughly 16 loon breeding territories. The average productivity is 0.3 cpy. However, loons nesting on the larger lakes (Deer Island, Clark, Crooked, and West Bear) have been more successful with an average productivity of 0.50 cpy.

Nesting loons are very sensitive to disturbances, and nesting failure can be caused by friendly onlookers who are not aware of their impact. Stay at least 200 feet away from islands and other possible nesting sites, such as low-lying, narrow peninsulas, between ice-off and July 15. For more information, please contact Lauren Romstad at 906-358-4025.

Lauren Romstad, ONF Wildlife Biologist

SYLVANIA TRAIL CLEARING

The Sylvania Wilderness is most easily accessed by canoe and hiking (on snowshoes and/or skis in the winter). Each of these traveling styles requires clear trails and portages for safety and efficiency. Each year, some of the trees in Sylvania are challenged by insect damage, high winds, and snowloading, providing us with permanent job security. This fall 9 volunteers from the Madison area and 6 from the Land O'Lakes area conducted 7 trail clearing events with one multi-day backcountry trip to provide interior trail clearing access.



Clearing a messy trail after an early snowstorm at the end of October [D. Wallace]

As the pictures show we work in whatever weather we get. Several times this fall we proudly announced that all the Sylvania trails were clear of obstructions, only to hear a short time later that another weather event created more job security. I hope that at least the downhills are still clear so we can get some good ski rides this winter! A special thanks to the trail clearing volunteers who work with only hand tools, muscles, and their brains to make Sylvania safe and accessible. *Daniel Wallace*

The Friends of Sylvania thank Sylvania Outfitters and Fiskars for providing us with fine canoes and tools.

The Friends of Sylvania sincerely thank all those who assisted, donated and/or volunteered to protect Sylvania during 2013:

Roger & Jane B., Madison WI
Waltraud B., Monona WI
Tom C., Watersmeet MI
Craig C., Minneapolis MN
Conserve School, Land O'Lakes WI
Richard D., Stevens Point WI
Carrie E., Madison WI
Lorena & Bob E., Iron River MI
Jim F., Land O'Lakes WI
Mike F., Cleveland Hgts. OH
Fred G., Fishers IN
Anne H., Madison WI
Scott H., Sartell MN
Jan K., Mineral Point WI
Susan K., U.S.A.
Joyce L., Reedsburg WI
Jennifer L., Madison WI
Liana M., Madison WI
Sonia M., Wausau WI
Chris M., Madison WI
Cheryl & Jeff P., Watersmeet MI
Kara, Vic & Isaac P., Dubuque IA
John R., Madison WI
Mikaela S., De Pere WI
Tim & Jill S., Menasha WI, Sylvania Wilderness Cabins
David & Carol S., Watersmeet MI
Karen S., Madison WI
Chris S., Milwaukee WI
Michael S., Woodstock IL
Bob T., Land O'Lakes MI
Gail Van H., Mt. Horeb WI
Paul W. & Cindy S., Eau Claire WI
Dan W., Fitchburg WI
Cora W., Madison WI
Tom & Linda W., Land O'Lakes WI
Land O'Lakes WI, Fish and Game Club participants
U. of Dubuque IA, Environmental Science Class

Donations in memory of Tom Church:

I. M. Enterprise, Wakefield MI
Carl K., Ironwood MI
Jana S. & Jeff P., Madison WI
Jim & Jane W., Ironwood MI
Anonymous, Bessemer MI
Anonymous, Chicago IL

Donations in memory/honor of:

Jennifer C., Roscoe IL (in memory of Gail C.)
Katherine K., Minneapolis MN (in honor of Andy K.)

Friends of Sylvania is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable and educational organization.

Wishing you a happy and peaceful 2014. Friends of Sylvania Board of Directors:

Wally Brinkmann Craig Coleman Bob Evans Dan Wallace

SAVE THE DATES: (see *Upcoming Events* on our website for more information)

June 20 – 24, 2014, **Sierra Club** invasive weeds removal project – volunteers needed - please contact
Dan Wallace 608/698-5144

July 26, 2014, **Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the federal Wilderness Act at Sylvania**
Speakers, discussions, and hikes are planned

June, July, August, 2014 **Fish and Game Club** work days. Dates TBD and will be posted in the F&G April newsletter and by email.

FoS Contacts:

Mail: P.O. Box 6353
Monona, WI 53716
Email: info@friendsofsylvania.org
Website: www.friendsofsylvania.org

FoS Newsletter:

Editors: W. Brinkmann
A. Helsley-Marchbanks
D. Wallace
Layout: C. Pytlarz



Sierra Club volunteers making a warming fire at the end of a long day of thistle removal [R. Bannerman]



Trail clearing crew in the back country taking a well deserved break [D. Wallace]