

Community Comes Together to Protect its Precious Resource and History



Osprey landing on nest in early spring at National Lumbering Hall of Fame site in Rice Lake, WI. (Photo by American Excelsior Co.)

Rice Lake, Wisconsin is a quaint town located in the northwest portion of the state. The lake is the cornerstone of the town that serves as a center for commerce, manufacturing, health and educa-

tional services in the area. Wild rice, which gave the town its name, and vast forests were once plentiful in the area. In 1864 a dam was built across the Red Cedar River to help ensure sufficient water levels to

float the loggers' harvest downstream. As a result of the dam, the water body of Rice Lake was conceived and shortly thereafter the settlement began. Thus, the lumbering industry, lake, and town have been intrinsi-



Restored shoreline at National Lumbering Hall of Fame in Rice Lake, WI. (Photo by Karen Heram)

cally connected since their beginnings.

Over time harvested forest lands led to the evolution of agricultural fields on the fertile soils of the area. However, still to this day, there are several manufacturing operations in town that are directly connected to the lumber industry. The important history of the area will be preserved in the National Lumbering Hall of Fame, which is located on the shores of Rice Lake just south of the dam that helped shape the area's history. This same piece of property was once the lumbering hub of northern Wisconsin. In 1880 the property was owned by the Knapp Stout Co. who was known as the largest lumber corporation in the world at that time.

The first phase of activities by the National Lumbering Hall of Fame included the restoration of native vegetation on-site, development of a self-guided tree walk, construction of environmentally friendly boat access to the lake, creation of on-site parking, bathrooms, and fishing access, and educational signage throughout the site. The National Lumbering Hall of Fame group led a collaborative project team that included the City of Rice Lake, Barron County, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Rice Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District, and over 300 volunteers. Jim Stoll, President of the National Lumbering Hall of Fame said, "There was great team work between all groups involved."

Jack Nedland (National Lumbering Hall of Fame) and Short Elliott Hendrickson, Inc. (SEH) developed the shoreline restoration site management plan. Exotic weed and brush species along with debris

needed to be removed in order to prepare the soil for the planned Self-Guided Tree Walk. All of the site preparation was completed by volunteers. Part of the site was mowed with the additional unwanted vegetation removed by hand. A brush mulcher was used to till the soil and chop the existing root systems over the entire area. Low woody shrubs directly along the shoreline were retained on site to help prevent easy access for unwanted Canadian Geese. A vegetated buffer strip was maintained along the shoreline at all times to protect Rice Lake.

The freshly tilled shoreline was immediately protected by using several products manufactured by American Excelsior Company. Curlex® NetFree™ Erosion Control Blanket (ECB) was used to cover and protect the soil until native vegetation could become re-established. The ECBs were anchored in place with biodegradable E-Staples® that were installed using the E-Stapler® applicator for ease of installation and to expedite the process. This ECB was chosen because it is ideal for shoreline restoration for several reasons: all components are 100% biodegradable, there is no netting to cut through when inserting native plants, potential animal entrapment issues sometimes associated with ECB netting are eliminated, and mowing activities, if desired, can commence as soon as vegetation becomes established.

Nearly 12,000 native plant plugs and over 100 trees and shrubs were plugged into the ECB or planted into the soil at the site. Again, all this work was completed by volunteers. The community came together at a site that will help preserve its rich lumbering history, while adding protective best management practices (BMPs) to help improve the water quality of their precious Rice Lake.

A self-guided tree walk, a horse shoe shaped trail around the peninsula of land, was constructed that identifies 18 species of trees that were common resources harvested during the lumbering era. These species include Paper Birch, Bur Oak,



Logs piled high on sled on way out of woods near Rice Lake, WI. (Source: Heffner, 2000)

White Spruce, Red Oak, White Oak, Sugar Maple, Witch Hazel, Highbush Cranberry, Tamarack, Willow, Wild Plum, Service Berry, Green Ash, Sumac, White Pine, Red Pine, Elm, and Jack Pine. A beautiful view of Rice Lake is present when walking the trail along the shoreline containing native plant and tree species dispersed throughout the area.

Installation of split-rail fencing, informational signs, and tree walk identifications along the route were made possible by The Heart of the North Builders Association with organization by Pat Mattmiller of Dobiehill Timberworks and volunteer efforts from Brueggen Home

Construction, Katty Kunstruction, Clint Doege Construction, MAC Construction, Spectrum Painting, and Lamperts Lumber. In addition, a wooden-framed kiosk housing educational guidance brochures for the historical tree walk was constructed by the group. Benches were installed along the trail so visitors can take a break and enjoy the serenity of the waters of Rice Lake or wildlife such as the Osprey that call the National Lumbering Hall of Fame home. A state-of-the-art boat landing was also constructed at the National Lumbering Hall of Fame. The two lane paved boat ramp with large docks provides easy and environmentally friendly access to Rice Lake. Cooper Engineering designed a boat wash station on site, which is one of the first of its kind in the area. Washing boats before and after launching can greatly help reduce the spread of exotic aquatic

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HABITAT RESTORATION



Native plugs through erosion control blanket on day of installation. Note Rice Lake in background.

species. Again, this feature was included in the project to help protect the resource of Rice Lake.

A paved parking lot area was also constructed for visitors. A paved parking lot and boat ramp eliminates the concern of gravel areas potentially eroding directly into Rice Lake; however, the potential

downside of a paved surface is the introduction of thermally charged runoff into the lake. Again, Cooper Engineering was called upon for their expertise to help with the concern. Cooper Engineering planned and developed a rain garden system to utilize the runoff from the paved surfaces. The parking lot was engineered to slope



“After” shot of same site shown in photo above. (Photos by American Excelsior Co.)

toward the rain garden to help prevent the majority of the thermally charged water from entering the lake during rainfall and snowmelt events.

Additional environmentally friendly BMPs were used around the raingarden system. Curlex® Enforcer® was installed in the swale entering the Rain Garden system, which collects runoff from the surrounding parking lot in addition to site runoff from the adjacent snow removal storage area. The grid-like netting of this heavy duty ECB will provide permanent vegetation reinforcement after its degradable curled and barbed matrix biodegrades over time. Curlex® Sediment Logs® were also installed to help filter the contaminated stormwater runoff and retain sediment before it entered the raingarden system.

The National Lumbering Hall of Fame preserved some historic concrete pillars on-site. These pillars can be seen most predominately near the public fishing pier that was added to the National Lumbering Hall of Fame site on the south side of the peninsula. In 1920 the concrete pillars were laid to support a monorail system to bring logs to the mills. Timbers of pine measuring 12” x 12” x 42’ were used with the concrete pillars to support a 15 inch I-Beam rail system. The system utilized an electric engine weighing approximately 8 tons that had a capacity to pick up a fourth of a carload (1/4 of the total amount of cargo that can be held by a freight car) of logs. An explanation of “The Mystery of the Concrete Pillars” is provided on signage at the National Lumbering Hall of Fame.

As is the case with all projects, funding commonly influences the end result. This very successful project was awarded grants thanks to dedicated efforts by Natalie Robarge, project coordinator, and by other members of the project team along with the historical and environmental benefits provided by the project. Shoreline restoration funding for the project received \$12,946 from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) and a \$68,000 Aquatic Invasive Species grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. WEEB funds were used to establish the shoreline by prepping the site to allow planting of trees, shrubs, and annuals. Various plant species were paid for by the Aquatic Invasive Species grant that were plugged and planted throughout



Completed raingarden system with porous excelsior fiber logs up gradient for filtering of runoff. Inset: Volunteers plugging natives through erosion control blanket (dyed green) in raingarden system. (Photos by Cooper Engineering)

the park area. A \$147,573 grant from the Wisconsin Recreational Boating Fund was used to build the boat landing for environmentally friendly access to Rice Lake.

Thank you to those volunteers previously mentioned and to the additional following volunteers that helped make this project happen: the National Lumbering Hall of Fame (NLHF) group including Jim Stoll, Jack Nedland, Stan Bergum, Steve Decker, Scott Reimer, Karen Heram, Bruce Ward, Roger Rivard, Darlene Johncheck,

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Michael Skov, Harvey Yeager, and Jim Dorrance, the local schools, Boy Scouts, Master Gardeners, American Excelsior Company, the City of Rice Lake, and the residents of the community whom all donated endless hours of their time to create a great educational site that will protect the resource of Rice Lake and preserve the lumbering history that shaped the community from the start.

The next goal of the National Lumbering Hall of Fame is to construct a museum building to house historical artifacts. If your travels ever bring

you through Rice Lake, Wisconsin, a visit to the National Lumbering Hall of Fame is a peaceful stop that takes you back in time for an unforgettable experience. **L&W**

Works Cited

Heffner, Robert. 2000. Rice Lake Gem of the Red Cedar Valley. Chronotype Publishing Co., Rice Lake, WI.

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