

**BEPCO response to the spring 2009 fish kill on the Big Eau Pleine announced by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in press releases and interviews dated March 18 & 19, 2009**

We at the Big Eau Pleine Citizens Organization (BEPCO) are very concerned about this spring's fish kill and it's short and long term damage to the Big Eau Pleine fishery. This report from the Wisconsin DNR dated March 18, 2009 is the third documented fish kill in the past year. See [http://dnr.wi.gov/news/BreakingNews\\_Lookup.asp?id=1162](http://dnr.wi.gov/news/BreakingNews_Lookup.asp?id=1162)

Our lake association, BEPCO, has been organized in response to the 2008 late summer, dramatic, drawdown of the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir and the resulting fall fish kills, which followed the spring 2008 fish kill. Further information about us and the 2008 fish kills are available on our website. <http://www.bigeaupleine.org>

BEPCO leaders met with the Wisconsin DNR and the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Co. (which operates the reservoir under license from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) on February 11, 2009. Among the items we discussed, the 2008 water drawdown with the resulting fall fish kill, and the continuing water quality concerns were the priorities. We continue our efforts to strengthen the ongoing communications between the three parties, as not all issues are fully communicated – due to the newness of the relationship. We are looking forward to our participation in a water quality monitoring program starting later this year, in partnership with the WDNR.

We have a concern regarding the reason stated for the cause of this winter's low dissolved oxygen content on the Big Eau Pleine. It was stated that the heavy population of plant life was the cause. With the annual draw downs of the reservoir there is a lack of any substantial shoreline plants/vegetation. As prior studies have shown the low dissolved oxygen issue is tied directly to the water pollution affecting the reservoir, coupled with the low water levels. The water pollution is also responsible for the algae blooms in the summer.

This issue has been affecting the Eau Pleine since it's completion in the late 1930s. On a further historical perspective, there was a study done by Dr. Byron Shaw from UW Stevens Point, with the aid of six graduate students, on the water pollution problems occurring in the Big Eau Pleine from 1973 to 1980. The first recommendation coming out of his study was for WVIC to increase the volume of the Big Eau Pleine Reservoir by 40 percent, but this was opposed by WVIC and not implemented.

We want to thank our local media outlets for their reporting on the issues affecting the Big Eau Pleine. Please reference these and other articles published recently, detailing aerator operation, fish kills and water pollution concerns:

“Pulling the Plug”, *The Record Review*, October 1, 2008,

“Who's minding the fish?”, *The City Pages*, Oct. 9-16, 2008.

“Funds Drying Up To Run Big Eau Pleine Aerator”, *The Mosinee Times*, Oct. 30, 2008

As this has been a very long term, recurring, problem, we at BEPCO look forward to working with all parties and agencies involved in addressing these issues and in helping to find a workable solution to protect the natural resources of the Big Eau Pleine. We at BEPCO are dedicated to having a safe and healthy resource for all to enjoy.