

HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL STATION

10,000 years ago Glaciers created Sunset Lake, a kettle lake.

About 800-1000 years before present Early Woodland Indians (a mound-building culture) inhabited this site as determined by arrowheads, pottery pieces, and mounds found on/around current CWES land. Other Native American peoples followed.

1850's Logging operations reach central Wisconsin and change the face of the land at Sunset Lake.

1910 Mark Nelson, (Mathias Gjefsen), purchases 40 acres of land on the southwest shore of Sunset Lake from a man named Marlin Gunderson. Mark builds a hunting cabin shortly afterward and lives in it until about 1940. Mark had moved from Norway to Amherst in 1889

1921 Mark Nelson, friend of local Boy Scouts, leases his land to the Samoset Council for \$20 per year for a five-year term with an option to buy. Camp Chickagami is officially "born" just 11 years after the Boy Scout Movement begins in England although scouting activities here took place even earlier than 1921. Origin of camp name unknown.

1924 Clinton Copps donates a parcel of land at the foot of "Arrow Head Hill," a hill on the north side of Sunset Lake that creates an arrowhead image in the lake due to its reflection in the water This was the first of many future land donations in Camp Chickagami and CWES history. This land is added to the land in that area already leased to Arthur Jones, Scoutmaster. Later, Arrow Head Hill becomes one of the places where the solo overnights take place for the Order of the Arrow.

1928 The 1921 lease option is exercised and Mark sells his "upper" 20 acres (7 acres of land and 13 of water) to the Boy Scouts. Original Trustees of the land include J.W. Dunegan, E.B. Robertson, L.M. Alexander, George W. Mead, and Issac Witter. When the Boy Scouts aren't using the land, the Girl Scouts are permitted to host camps and this sharing of the land during summers takes place for more than 45 years.

1930-1932 Arvada Swenson Bestul (Scandinavia, WI) and Marge Menzel (Stevens Point) are two of over 40 Girl Scout summer campers at Camp Chickagami. They live along the "Tent Trail" in wooden platform tents. "We just lived for swimming." She swims across Sunset Lake, a rowboat beside her. This is a common challenge for campers in the early 1930's. Campers each have equal amounts of money allowed for the canteen purchases (snacks) so that one camper doesn't have more than anyone else during the Depression.

1936 The Order of the Arrow, a national camping organization, becomes active at Camp Chickagami. According to Samoset Council literature, "Candidates for this Honor are elected by vote of all Scouts in camp on a basis of high ideals, achievement, outstanding camping ability and service."

1937-1938 Cabins are constructed on east and west camp. Cabin names include: Delaware, Iroquois, Seminole, Ojibway, Mohican, Cheyenne, Sioux, Winnebago, Fox, Menominee, Cherokee, Chippewa. Names later changed to tree names such as Maple, Oak and Cherry.

1938 Camp Chickagami brochure advertises 12 days of camp for \$12.00. Limit 75 Boy Scouts and Camp Staff in "7 cabins and nine large tents." Frank Konopacki will be the head chef again this year and "all the boys that have sampled his pies, doughnuts, and cookies will be anxious to get some of them." Jean Walker (McQueen) attends Camp Chickagami for her first time. This is the last year that the campers had to make

their own mattresses (called ticks) by filling a giant pillowcase with hay. "The outdoor toilets were under a roof on a hill facing another small lake so the 'view' while resting was delightful." Jean is stepdaughter of Elda Bark Walker after whom the future CWES dormitory is named and she is daughter of Don G. Walker in whose memory the dinner bell on Sunset Lodge is later dedicated.

- 1939** Jean Walker McQueen snaps "Friendship Trail" photo. A resident of Stevens Point, Jean tells us that "a number of those camping years included the dark and dreary period of WWII. Camp at Sunset Lake was a wonderful 'journey to joy.' It was in such contrast to the wide world conflagration that otherwise consumed our minds and days at that time."
- 1940** Boy Scout literature, "Gateway to Adventure" read: "A fine Campfire Circle steeped in camp tradition overlooks the lake and is an outstanding point of interest and activity in camp." Arrow Head Hill was also mentioned as a reason that the Camp was an "interesting place."
- 1941** George Mead of Home Lumber Company buys the "lower" 20 acres of the Nelson property, logs it, and donates it to the Boy Scouts.
- 1945** Sometime before the summer of 1945, Mark Nelson's cabin is moved from its original location on the southwest ridge overlooking the lake to its present position in main CWES camp. The cabin later serves as an office, a library, and a classroom until 1999 when it becomes the CWES General Store in memory of Mark and his profession around 1900 as the owner of the Benson's Corners General Store, three miles southeast of Sunset Lake.
- 1947** Sunset Lodge was built. It includes a fireplace on the west end that Robert Worth later describes as a place where boys competed for the closest bunk bed during winter camp.
- 1948-1951** The original surviving trustees and the heirs of the original camp trust guiding Camp Chickagami since the days of Mark Nelson deed 60 acres over to a new group of trustees. The Samoset Council concentrates its resources on the development of Camp Tesomas in Rhinelander and a new Camp Chickagami Trust is created in 1951 to guide the future of the property as they begin to look for other uses of the land. The five trustees represent the Scout districts (Northwood, Southwood, and Portage) along with two judges, one each from Wood and Portage Counties. Also around this time, Hiram Anderson donates 37 acres on the northwest corner of Sunset Lake. This land later becomes known as Raccoon Run Trail.
- 1955** Land around Arrow Head Hill is transferred from the Samoset Council to the Boy Scout Trust established in 1951.
- 1956** Becker Lodge is constructed.
- 1965** Hiram Anderson donates 6.5 acres of land adjacent to the Clinton Cops land around Arrow Head Hill. By this time, the land holdings in trust total nearly 125 acres.
- 1968** Hiram Anderson donates 80 acres of property on Severson (Budsberg) Lake, two lakes east of Sunset Lake, to the Wisconsin State University-Stevens Point Foundation, Inc. (later UWSP Foundation, Inc.). The land is subleased to the College of Natural Resources and used for educational purposes.
- 1974** Roland (Rollie) Martin, ("Swift Hare" in the Order of the Arrow and a resident of Amherst Junction), leads the last summer camp for Boy Scouts at Camp Chickagami. Summer camps for boys are the first three

weeks in June. The rest of the summer is filled with Girl Scouts. The Firebowl is known as the "Calling Out Bowl" because of its sacred role in the Order of the Arrow. Hiram Anderson, local attorney and Trustee of Camp Chickagami (superseding Trustee Mangenbach as trustee) approaches Lee Sherman Dreyfus, Chancellor of UWSP to discuss the possibility of using the property for educational programs.

- 1975** The Trustees of Camp Chickagami lease the camp property to the UWSP Foundation which in turn sub-leases it to the College of Natural Resources (CNR) for operation as the Central Wisconsin Environmental Center (CWEC). (Name later changes to Central Wisconsin Environmental Station (CWES) because of the state requirements for being named a "center.") Bob Schmatz, an outdoor education instructor in the College of professional Studies at UWSP is employed part-time to oversee CWES. He returns to full-time teaching on campus and Richard Wilke is hired as the first full-time CWES Director in March. School programs begin two months later with Waupaca students led by teacher, Marilyn Dickson. Ron Zimmerman, a graduate student at the CNR, is "volunteered" for duty at CWES by his advisor, Jim Newman. (Ron later becomes the first CWES Assistant Director.) Student volunteers, including Dan Sivek, staff the first school programs. Summer programs kick off in June. The North New Hope Lutheran Church grants permission for CWES to use adjacent Church properties. This includes a Minister Lake parcel, for educational programs. A Steering Committee was formed. Its members, appointed by UWSP Chancellor Dreyfus, include Leonard Gibb, Ken Willett, Robert Worth, Mary Williams, Dan Trainer, James Newman, Roger Wood, Bob Schmatz, and Rick Wilke. The mission of the CWES is to "provide a foundation for appreciation and understanding of our environment and to develop the skills and attitudes needed to deal with present and future environmental problems."
- 1976** CWES Residence building is built.
- 1977** In January, Ella Weetz, resident of Amherst, joins the CWES Team the first CWES secretarial staff member. Sunset Lodge is winterized to enable CWES to offer food service year-round and serve larger groups during the winter. Nelson Cabin is remodeled to serve as office space for project staff. Over \$100,000 in grants have already been awarded in support of CWES program development. Rick Wilke departs to earn his PhD and Ron Zimmerman directs CWES in his absence. Mike Gross is hired as a half-time university coordinator who is the first faculty instructor for the "Practicum in Environmental Education" course. Betty Ostrowski joins the CWES Team as a cook and continues her service through 1999. First Natural Resource Career Workshop for high school students is offered at CWES. A \$29,000 grant is awarded to fund the development of the CWES school curriculum. A team of four people led by UWSP graduate student Marty Kane get the job done. The curriculum modules are later sold across the world. The National Park Service designates CWES as the first National Environmental Study Area in Wisconsin in recognition of its "exemplary programs in environmental education that are actively used by schools and other groups."
- 1979** Although the new school curriculum had been piloted previously, the official kick-off of the new modules take place this fall. Another boost to the school programs includes the construction of the Elda Bark Walker Lodge. It is funded with a \$120,000 bequest to the UWSP Foundation from Mrs. Walker who passed away in 1978. This lodge, a winterized school dormitory, allows CWES to host year-round residential programs at last. The dinner bell atop Sunset Lodge is dedicated in memory of Don G. Walker, Elda Bark Walker's second husband who passes way in February just four months after Mrs. Walker. Don was an avid fisherman. Bill Chiat is hired as Assistant Director and his service continues for about five years.
- 1980** Anderson Lodge, named for Hiram Anderson, is constructed. It becomes the Boy Scouts' new winter camping facility as they continue to have first rights to CWES/Camp Chickagami for weekends in October through April as part of the 1975 trust agreement with UWSP.

- 1981** Project Earth, the Environmental Station in the Parks Program, is started and runs for six weeks each summer for the next nine years in Marathon, Wood, and Portage County neighborhood parks. Over 10,000 youth and nearly 100 young naturalist staff are educated through the program over the next nine years.
- 1982** The first Elderhostel program is offered and participants come from as far as Florida and Arizona.
- 1983** A lease arrangement is developed with the North New Hope Lutheran Church. It allows CWES the opportunity to use church lands adjacent to CWES for educational purposes. This includes the Minister Lake property where pond study takes place as well as the land on which the challenge course is later created at CWES. Mary Duritsa (Hemshrot) starts work as Assistant Director/Program Coordinator at CWES.
- 1984** Sunset Lodge expanded to create current office area on east end.
- 1985** CWES celebrates its 10th Anniversary with a kick off of the Adopt-a-Log Program to fund support for new construction of cabins to replace old Boy Scout cabins on the east property. Lee Sherman Dreyfus gets it all started by shaving the first log.
- 1986** Mary Duritsa Hemshrot assumes Acting CWES Director position as Rick Wilke is hired as the first Associate Dean of the CNR at UWSP. He retains the right to return to CWES as Director, hence Mary's "Acting" Director title. Mike Wodyn becomes Assistant Director.
- 1988** Joe Passineau becomes the new CWES Director. He is a former Boy Scout at Camp Chickagami. Dave Aplin is hired as Assistant Director.
- 1990** Tehri Parker becomes Program/Assistant Director. She later plays a key role in designing the new energy cycle program. Todd Knepfel, past graduate student at CWES, becomes Program Coordinator and plays a major role in developing the CWES Challenge Course. He continues his service in a number of important roles for more than eight years. CWES hosts a National Wider Opportunity for the Girl Scouts of the USA. About 50 girls come from around the country to learn about "Caring for the Earth."
- 1991** Family camps are popular.
- 1994** Pete Matthai becomes Program Coordinator and builds on his past practicum and summer staff experience at CWES. His service continues for four years.
- 1995** CWES celebrates its 20th Birthday. CWES is given the "Excellence in Environmental Education" Award from the Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education. Connie Dorn completes her graduate thesis setting groundwork for a physical master plan for CWES (Grad committee chair, Joe Passineau).
- 1996** New east bathhouse construction is completed. This facility serves the five Scandinavian-style log cabins (completed through the Adopt-a-Log program) as well as Anderson Lodge.
- 1997** Joe Passineau returns to teaching full-time at UWSP. Patty Dreier becomes CWES Director. Patty had been hired as Assistant CWES Director in 1996. She had previously been associated with CWES as a practicum student at CWES and as Director of Project Earth in 1987.

- 1998** The Wisconsin Future Farmers of America organization awards CWES the "Distinguished Service Award." Sterling Strathe is hired as Assistant Director. CWES hosts a Hessen-Wisconsin Sesquicentennial Youth Camp for the Department of Public Instruction. This program brings Wisconsin teens together with teens from our Sister State of Hessen, Germany. The CWES Steering Committee is replaced by an Advisory Board chaired by Robert Worth. Other members appointed by UWSP Chancellor George include: Marwin Wrolstad, Jim Stoltenberg, Sally Ellingboe, Rhoda Brooks, Paul Adamski, Perry Cook, Bruce Froehlke, Victor Phillips, Patty Dreier, and Sterling Strathe.
- 1999** The strategic planning process continues. A vision of a new education center begins to take shape. CWES adopts a new vision statement and updates its mission statement. The mission of CWES is to "foster in adults and youth the appreciation, understanding, skill development, and motivation needed to help them build a sustainable balance between environment, economy, and community".
- 2000** The development of a new statewide middle school curriculum, "Wisconsin Forestree," is completed. The \$67,000 project is the largest curriculum development undertaking at CWES since 1977. CWES adopts a new logo and its image is updated for the new century. A major upgrade is completed on Walker Lodge and a new dock system updates the waterfront on Sunset Lake. For the first time in the history of CWES, another UWSP academic staff position is added to the two existing positions (Director and Assistant Director) to build a stronger staffing base for growing programs. The position is funded by revenues generated from CWES programs and services.
- 2001** Almost 100 students at CWES took shelter from storms and later assisted in storm damage clean-up. The greenhouse and hoop house were destroyed by white pines and the chicken coop was also damaged. A tree fell on a lodge directly above a bunk. The Director of the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station said they are lucky to have students that are learning forestry techniques and that it is a perfect hands-on experience for students to see how to manage property when a severe storm strikes.
- 2002** The Changing of the Land: A Wisconsin Forest History Unit was developed in 2002 under a Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) grant at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. The unit was originally distributed on CD-ROM to fourth grade teachers in Wisconsin. A one-day field experience that complements the unit is offered by CWES.
- 2005** Scott Johnson becomes director at CWES.
- 2005** Groundbreaking ceremony is held and plans revealed for Sunset Lodge renovation.
- 2007** Here is the director's update on an electrical fire that occurred in Sunset Lodge on October 17, 2007. *"The power just came back online about 30 minutes ago and we are currently double checking the electrical system for any potential hotspots and re-wiring some of the wire that was destroyed in the small fire. We only have a few trusses that were charred and are working with campus to double check their stability. Most likely we will only need to brace the trusses. A campus electrician has been here since 7:30 am working on getting us power back on and hard wiring our large freezer until we get supplies to fix all the wiring upstairs. Luckily this was a small event that only will cost us new wiring, as well as lost food and supplies due to water damage. We cooked breakfast for the overnight group this morning with summer camp propane cook stoves and griddles in front of Walker Lodge. They ate Subway for lunch and will be on their way home shortly. After we finished breakfast with that group we had 71 kids join us from Wausau and taught the beginning of lessons in buildings with flashlights. Excellent experience for our practicum students to learn how to go with the flow and how to make it happen regardless of the hand*

dealt. Not the best day to have 101 kids on site at the same time, but everything worked out as well as could be expected. Thanks to UWSP and all its departments for helping out with the fire as well as members of the Iola and Rosholt fire departments and the Portage County Sheriff's department. We will be cleaning up over the next couple days and because of the Midwest Environmental Ed Conference in Stevens Point, we did not book any schools so great timing from that standpoint."

- 2011** UW-Stevens Point rents land from Ross Dick in the Town of New Hope to grow and harvest food to be used in the food service program at CWES. There is also a fenced off area for chickens for egg production.
- 2012** CWES secured a significant three-year challenge grant from the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation (MAC) to offer camp-themed after-school programming for up to 200 central Wisconsin youths per year. These classroom activities occur during the academic year September through May. The grant also provides partial scholarship opportunities for these CWES same children to attend a week of summer camp at CWES during the following summer.
- 2013** The Tomorrow River Community Charter School (TRCCS) opens the first Waldorf-inspired Wisconsin public charter school at CWES. Sixty-two students were enrolled for Fall 2013 in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 6. In 2014, TRCCS receives the U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon Schools Award.
- 2013** Former small cabins used by boy scouts, then summer camp staff quarters, are renovated to be used by the Charter school. The old maintenance building is renovated to Sunrise Classroom.
- 2013** Installation of a new entrance sign made by UW-Stevens Point Schmeckle Reserve sign making masters with sign base by Dulak Masonry.
- 2014** CWES received an on-site visit from the American Camp Association and receives accreditation.
- 2014** Water bottle filling stations are installed in Sunset and Walker lodges to save plastic water bottle usage
- 2015** Tom Quinn, current CWES program manager, serves as interim director of CWES until his formal appointment.
- 2015** Construction is completed for the Byron and Margaret Shaw cabin and a new bathhouse to accommodate increased usage by summer campers, school groups, and weekend education retreat groups.
- 2015** Gaga Pit is installed at CWES. Gaga is a fast paced, high energy sport played in an octagonal pit. Dubbed a kinder gentler version of dodge ball, the game is played with a soft foam ball, and combines the skills of dodging, striking, running, and jumping, while trying to hit opponents with a ball below the knees.
- 2016** CWES is recognized by the Bill Cook Chapter of the Izaak Walton League as "Outstanding Conservationist" of 2016.
- 2017** Mid-State Technical College students install solar panels with the help of TRCCS students. The project was funded by a grant from Constellation as part of their Energy to Educate grant program.
- 2017** Hoop house installation.

- 2017** Wisconsin native Chris Solinsky, American record-holder and NCAA Champion Coach, directs his first US Sports Camps - Nike Running camp at the fabulous grounds of the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. The camp is centered around a strength-oriented approach to running, while consistently touching on speed or speed drills to improve or maintain running efficiency.
- 2018** Lead the Pack is an outdoor-based orientation program for incoming college students that allows participants to meet new friends and learn about college life during an exciting 3-day adventure at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. In a fun yet challenging environment, students develop leadership skills, form lasting relationships with peers, and learn about college life from current students. Lead the Pack activities are outdoor-based and engaging, leaving participants ready to meet the school year with new friends, and with confidence.
- 2018** Ron and Patty Adamski outdoor fireplace dedication
- 2019** Sunset Lodge is dedicated to Rick Wilke as a tribute to his life, career and contributions to the university and environmental education. Rick was the first director of CWES and a long-time supporter. He worked to elevate the field station as a national leader in environmental education.
- 2019** Dutton cabin dedication
- 2020** The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point takes precautions to reduce the risk of spreading the coronavirus (COVID-19). Central Wisconsin Environmental Station cancels week-long residential camps, adventure trips and day camps for the summer, and will fully refund any participants who have already registered.
- 2022** In late September, 53 sixth graders at McKinley Elementary of Stevens Point School District experienced a special field trip to Central Wisconsin Environmental Station (CWES). The activities enhanced the school's regular Science and Social Studies curricula and were a great experience for the students. Support from Natural Resources Foundation (NRF) allowed more students to travel to the station, who normally may have been unable to afford the field trip fee. This grant was funded by NRF's Go Outside Fund which connects youth to outdoor, nature-based learning experiences.
- 2023** 100% of food waste is collected and sent to the university's recycling and reuse center to be composted and used for fertilizer in flower beds and on practice fields.