

Fish like a
GIRL



By Beckie Gaskill
 OF THE LAKELAND TIMES

“Hugel” knew?

The other night I took some time to really get into the “Permies” website, permies.com. The site is full of people dedicated to various parts and pieces of permaculture. Several months back, in talking with Mike Haasl, who runs the permaculture club in Rhinelander, he told me about the site, of which he was a huge fan. I had been checking out a post or two here and there, but finally had a chunk of time to really get into it. I wanted to see what it was all about and possibly share it with readers.

But, as life would have it, I found myself diving deeper into one specific aspect. I kept seeing people posting about their “hugel” beds. Of course, and not surprisingly, I needed to know more about this. It led me to the term “hugelkultur” (pronounced hoogle-culture). It seemed like something I should know more about, and I was not disappointed. For that reason, this week I will share hugelkultur specifically and the entirety of the Permies site will have to wait for another day. Suffice it to say, for anyone interested in permaculture, or any of its parts and pieces, this is a place you want to spend some time.

The first article I came upon under the category of hugelkultur was from the Old Farmer’s Almanac. It touted hugelkultur as “the ultimate raised bed,” and got my attention instantly. Hugelkultur, it said, can be translated as “mound culture.” At its simplest form, from what I learned, it is pieces of wood, fallen trees and sticks — and it is best if some of that wood is rotten or rotting — that creates the bottom of the raised bed. The next layer is compost and dirt, with topsoil on the top.

Apparently this type of gardening has been around for centuries in Europe, and can often be found as part of a permaculture system in Germany. Basically, the idea is to take rotting wood and allow it to decompose, making a super fertile and moisture-retaining garden bed.

Some of the mound type gardens I saw in my search were five to six feet high. A new bed six feet high, once the wood completely decomposes, can wind up to be only two feet high.

The mounds are wider at the bottom and come up to a

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POWWOW FLYBY

An American bald eagle flies past the Bear River Powwow grandstand on Sunday, Jan. 15, in Lac du Flambeau.

Natural Resources Board hears proposed spring hearings questions regarding wildlife and fisheries management

By Beckie Gaskill
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Each year the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) partner for the annual spring hearings. The in-person meetings historically took place on the first Monday in April at 7 p.m. For the past few years, online input has opened up at that time and remained open for 72 hours. This year there will be open house style meetings, which was touched upon by Kari Lee Zimmerman at the NRB meeting. She said this year the department decided to try something new. In the last few years, the public has become adapted to the online version of the questionnaire. The week ahead of the hearings questionnaire coming out, she said, the public would be able to come to an open house in their county to learn more about a variety of topics. This will be done, she said, in an effort to get more people to engage with the department and also to learn more about the spring hearings. The thought was this would be a less formal interaction between the public and the department. More information regarding these open house meetings will be available at a later date. This has been a joint effort between the Conservation Congress and the department, Zimmerman said.

Fisheries questions

At this month’s Natural Resources Board (NRB) meeting, the department submitted several questions to

be voted upon by the public in April. Meredith Penthorn, fisheries management policy specialist, brought those proposed fisheries questions to the board. Some of the questions, once again, will be lake-specific, while others would affect a larger area, or look to change specific things statewide.

Musky season

One of the fisheries questions had to do with the muskellunge statewide season structure. The state is split into two musky zones, currently. The Southern Zone is open from the first Saturday in May to December 31 each year. The Northern Zone, which encompasses all inland waters north of Highway 10, opens on the Saturday prior to Memorial Day and runs until December 31. In the Southern Zone, ice angling is permitted, but that is not the case in the Northern Zone. The question posed asks if there would be support for a statewide season to run from the first Saturday in May, to extend to December 31 in open water only.

One reason for the ask in changing this regulation is that anglers may claim to be fishing for bass, which has a year-round catch and release season, while actually targeting musky, walleye or pike, according to the background information of the question. This change would bring the musky season statewide to open on the same dates as other game fish, which would simplify regulations and allow for more angling opportunity.

Walleye bag limits

The second question posed came about, according to the question background, from a recent public opinion survey. That survey showed “significant public concern” regarding walleye populations in the face of increasing angling pressure in regions where the daily bag limit remains five walleye or sauger per day. In the Ceded Territory, which covers approximately the northern third of the state, including the Northwoods, the region-wide bag limit was set at three fish in 2015. The question asks whether there would be support to create a daily bag limit of three walleye or sauger statewide on inland waters. Great Lakes bag limits, and any water with a daily bag limit of less than three, would remain unchanged.

Fishing tournaments

The next question is in regard to small fishing tournaments. Currently, any tournament with 20 boats or more, 100 anglers or more, offsite weigh-ins or a prize value of over \$10,000 must obtain a permit from the DNR. However, smaller tournaments are not tracked in any way by the DNR. Permits for larger tournaments are used in calculations to determine monthly caps on the maximum number of tournament boat days per month for any body of water. A mandatory self-registration system would enable to DNR to have data on smaller tournaments, in order to determine if there is a need to better track those

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ber of fire arm harvests, however, “pop up” he said when there are good conditions on opening weekend of the nine-day gun deer hunt.

CWD

Pritzl also gave a chronic wasting disease (CWD) update to the board, telling them they would have a much more robust update in the coming months, when the CWD team would come to talk to them more in depth about the surveillance program and its findings.

The sample size this year stayed approximately the same, although the sampling sweep, which targeted certain areas of the state each year, ended in 2021. He attributed this to gaining a cohort of the hunting community in

all areas of the state that are interested in CWD sampling either from a food safety standpoint or simply a citizen science standpoint. This year saw approximately 16,000 samples once again. The sampling year, Pritzl said, does not truly end until March, however, as there are still samples trickling in.

There were 177 sampling kiosks across the state during this year’s hunting season. Hunters could submit samples at any of these kiosks.

Carcass disposal has also become a concern where the spread of CWD is concerned. There were 160 carcass disposal locations located in the state for 2022, Pritzl said. There were 136 carcass disposal dumpsters across the state, which was up 15 locations from the 2021 hunting season.

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21st annual Plum Lake Ice Fishing Tournament

Saturday, Feb. 11

The 21st annual edition of the Plum Lake Ice Fishing Tournament will be held Saturday, Feb. 11 by the Sayner-Star Lake Lions.

All fishing will be restricted to Plum Lake with fishing hours running from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Tickets are available now at Up North Traders and the Sayner Mobil Express in Sayner and at Last Cast Fishing Outfitters in St. Germain. Anglers may also purchase tickets on the day of the event at the fish registration shack located at the public pier boat landing on the south side of Plum Lake. Adult tickets are \$30 each. Kids 12 and under have a separate event with tickets priced at \$10. Parents may also buy adult tickets for their kids if they choose to do so.

Merchandise prizes in the adult divi-

sion total over \$3,000 in value which will be randomly drawn from among all entrants. Cash prizes to anglers catching top fish in walleye, northern pike, perch, bluegill and crappie divisions total \$700.

Every youngster entered in the kids’ division will receive a merchandise prize.

At the awards program which will begin at 3 p.m. in the Sayner Recreation Building, the Lions will have several raffles going, with prizes including a freezer filled with food, guns and much more.

During the awards program the Plum Lake Volunteer Fire Department will sell brats and burgers as well as soda and beer.

For further information, contact Lion Will Maines at 715-542-3501.

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tournaments for the sake of tournament boat day calculations. The question asks whether respondents would be in favor of such things as self-registration system to determine whether these tournaments should be better tracked.

Musky length limit on specific waters

Another question that pertains to the Northwoods was in connection with Plum Lake in Vilas County and the Turtle-Flambeau Flowage. This question asks whether there would be support to increase the minimum length limit for musky to 50 inches with a daily bag limit of one on those waters.

Other fisheries questions

There were many other fisheries questions as well, that would find their way to the spring hearings questionnaires, should they be approved by the NRB members. Many of those were in regards to the St. Croix River. There were pan fish questions, as well as a personal bait harvest question from VHS-affected waters.

F-shot

There were also several questions that revolved around wildlife

management rule changes. The first of those asked whether respondents would support the use of F-shot while hunting waterfowl. F-shot is used in Minnesota, Iowa and Michigan, but not in Wisconsin. This shot has been shown to pattern well for waterfowl with a larger gauge shotgun, according to the background of the question.

Youth season extension

The current youth deer hunt season begins on the Saturday nearest October 8th and runs for two consecutive days. The proposed question would expand this season to four days, rather than the current two. The season would begin on Thursday and run through the weekend. This would allow youth hunters to work around inclement weather.

Quartering bear, deer and elk

This question asks whether respondents would support removing the requirement that hunters divide bear, deer and elk into no more than five parts to remove it from the field. If this rule came to be, hunters could cut the animal into as many pieces as needed, as long as all pieces were removed from the field.

Student trapping registration

The last time this fee was increased was in 2008, from \$8 to

\$12. These fees have been used to prepare and distributed materials used in the Wisconsin Cooperative Trapper Education Program, as well as to administer the program and reimburse instructors for costs associated with presenting the classes. This question asks whether respondents would support a price increase from \$12 to \$20.

Junior antlerless harvest authorization

Another question asks whether there would be support for a junior antlerless harvest tag to be valid on both public and private land. Currently that authorization is land-type specific.

Disabled trappers

This question asks whether respondents would be in favor of anyone holding an authorization to assist a trapper that holds a bobcat permit or harvest authorization for river otter or fisher and also holds a class A, B, C or D disability permit. Under current regulations, anyone helping a disabled trapper who is targeting bobcat, fisher or otter must also hold that same valid authorization. If this regulation were to pass, any licensed individual may assist a disabled trapper by setting or attending traps as well as tagging or registering a bobcat,

fisher or river otter.

Bear and domestic animals

The next proposed question would ask whether there is support for the ability of an individual to shoot a bear in the act of attacking a domestic animal. This would apply only on private lands. Such shootings would be required to be reported to the DNR within 24 hours. The department would have discretion on carcass disposition.

Harvest of diseased antlerless deer

When a hunter harvests a deer that is diseased with an infection such as CWD, the department issues a new tag to that hunter. Currently that tag must be for the same type (antlered or antlerless) deer. This question asks whether there would be support for this replacement tag to be an either-sex harvest authorization. The authorization would still be unit specific as well as land type specific.

The NRB members ultimately approved all of these questions to be included in the spring hearings questionnaire in April. More information will be available here regarding the opening date and time of the questionnaire, as well as the open house meetings that will be taking place prior to the meetings.

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smaller top, but the entire bed can be planted, not only the top. Plants can grow out of the sides of the mound (think of it somewhat like the shape of a mound system for a septic, but more pronounced) as well as on the top, and all the way down to the bottom of the mound. This type of planting increases the surface area of the bed quite a bit. I did not see any specific figures, but I would imagine a gardener might be able to plant twice as much in the same space.

Not only does this save space, but there is also water savings in this type of gardening. The wood at the bottom of the bed holds water, meaning the bed itself would be more drought resistant. One of the things I have noticed in traditional raised beds is they tend to dry out more easily. This seems as though it would eliminate those issues. Also, I have seen it recommended to put the hugelkultur bed parallel

a slope, to help it catch and hold as much water as possible. I tend to think, if this form of gardening has been used for centuries, that it works pretty well. At least logic would dictate that to be so.

Hugelkultur beds can be made as a mound, as I said above, or they can be more traditional raised beds, the type most of us have seen around our own yards and our friends’ yards. If I have the chance to try to technique out this year, this is would be the way I would go. The same coarse woody material is placed in the bottom of the garden bed.

To prep the bed, the Almanac recommended mowing the area and then smothering any grass with cardboard or wood chips, a technique with which many gardeners are familiar. Once smothered, a shallow pit is dug, with the topsoil retained for the top of the mound. The pit should be 12-18 inches deep and as even as possible throughout the whole bed. The gardener should be able to reach the middle of the bed, so ideally,

it should not be more than four feet across. The higher the bed is, however, the more water it will retain. And steep beds will mean more surface area for planting.

The first layer, as I said, will be woody material, starting with large logs on the bottom. The next layer will be smaller branches and twigs. It is recommended to use a mix of hard and soft woods, I suppose so the decomposition rate is different between the types of woods. The Almanac did say, however, not to use woods that are slow to decompose such as black locust, cedar or redwood. A special note here, as well. Trees such as black walnut can release toxins, as anyone knows who has them in their yard, so those should not be used, either.

The next layer is going to be grass and grass clippings or any other organic material. This level should be packed in firmly. Any turf that was excavated should be placed in this layer, with the root side up on the wood.

Once the organic material is packed in to the desired

height, the bed is ready to be wetted down. I have seen in several places, where gardeners have said once mushrooms sprout, they know the bed is wet enough. Once the bed is wet, any cracks or spaces should be filled with grass, leaf litter, or manure. Lastly, the bed should be topped off with two to three inches of topsoil and a layer of mulch.

One of the recommendations I saw was to build the bed in the fall. Then, let the bed sit over the winter, and it would be ready for planting the next spring. The first year, as the wood is breaking down, I read that it will need watering. It will also likely need nitrogen. As the wood rots, it will start using up nitrogen that would otherwise be available for garden plants. Plants such as legumes, that produce their own nitrogen, are good additions to the first year hugelkultur garden. In later years, however, more nitrogen is made available for the plants. This type of bed, I have found in all of the research I have done, is a great source of long-term, slow-re-

lease nutrients. It also helps keep nutrients from filtering into the groundwater.

Another benefit, at least in the first few years, is an extended growing season. With composting comes heat production. This can mean the ability to plant earlier and to keep crops in the ground longer in the fall.

Hugelkultur beds are also self-tilling over time. As the material at the bottom breaks down, air pockets open up, which allows air to reach the plant roots. Beneficial microorganisms can also make a home in these types of beds. Beneficial bacteria, insects, worms, fungi and other microbes will all find these beds a good place to thrive. I have heard it likened to building a living, breathing sponge. I would be interested to learn if any readers have tried this type of gardening in the past. It was a new idea to me, but I am sure others have experience. I would love to hear how it has worked out.

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