

## Explore Florence County winter events

### Pete "Toad" Church Ice Fishing Derby

Jan. 19 from 6 a.m. - 6 p.m.

The Pete "Toad" Church Ice Fishing Derby sponsored by the Aurora-Homestead Conservation Club is Saturday, January 19. Entry fee is \$7 for adults, kids 12 and under free with an adult (kids still need to pre-register). Fish anywhere and register your fish at the Hitch-N-Post by 6 p.m. Must pre-register at: Bob's Midland in Aurora, Hitch-N-Post in Aurora, Whisler Outdoors in Florence or Pat's on Mane in Niagara. Door prizes to win. This is the Wisconsin free fishing weekend, so Michigan folks do not need a Wisconsin license. Fish categories include walleye, northern, perch, crappie and bluegill/pumpkinseed. Food and drinks available all day at the Hitch-N-Post. Open to any body of water. Proceeds go directly to local fish stocking programs. For more info call Doug or Nick at 715-589-4400.

### Sis's Florence County Fair Smear Tournament

Jan. 26 at 5 p.m.

Sis's Florence County Fair will be again be having their Smear Tournament on January 26 at the Florence Community Center. Registration begins at 5 p.m. Registration on site only. Tournament starts at 6 p.m.

Prizes awarded for first through fifth places. Four-Point Smear Game \$10 per person. Beer, soda and sand-

wiches available for purchase. No carry-ins please. Bake Sale items available for purchase

Contact Jessica Klumpp at 906-282-9153 for more information.

### Roberts Memorial Ski Race & Lessons

Jan. 26 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

The Roberts Memorial Ski Race will once again be held at Keyes Peak (located 3 miles south of Florence on Hwy. 101) Must pre-register, space is limited. There will be ski instruction in the morning. Optional timed runs on a NASTAR course in the afternoon. All participants ages 6-17 will be awarded medals. *Only* \$10 includes lessons, lift ticket, ski rentals if needed and a chance to race the course if you want to. \$20 maximum per family.

For more information contact Lori Moore, 715-528-5377

### Chili Ski-In at Lauterman Trail

Feb. 2 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

The Friends of the Wild Rivers Interpretive Center as well as the USFS will host their annual Chili Ski In. The snow conditions have started off well this year, so let's hope for more snow! This event will take place at the Lauterman Shelter located 9 miles west of Florence on Hwy 70. Admission Fee: FREE.

For more information contact Lori Moore, 715-528-5377

### Roadhouse 139 Annual Ice Fishing Derby on Long Lake

Feb. 2 from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Roadhouse 139 Annual Ice Fishing Derby on Long Lake will take place on February 2. Entry fee is \$8 and you can sign up until noon that day. Measure all fish on the lake from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Proceeds go to Long Lake Association. Punchboard raffles start Friday night and go until board is done.

Contact Name: Dawn Lord, 715-674-4576

### Leff's Annual All Lake Fishing Derby

Feb. 16 from 5 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Leff's Annual All Lake Fishing Derby will take place on Saturday February 16th 2019. You can fish any Florence County water. Derby starts at dawn and ends at 4:30 p.m. \$5 entry fee with 100% payout. Entrance fee can be paid until noon on February 16. Enjoy the raffles, food and fun.

Contact Name: Leff's Bar, 715-528-5151

### Keyes Peak Winterfest

Mar. 2 from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.

The Annual Keyes Peak Winterfest event is on Saturday, March 2 at Keyes Peak Ski Hill 4 miles south of Florence on Hwy 101. It only costs \$15/person for a whole day of skiing, snowboarding, tubing, snowshoeing and games (\$5 for season pass holders). This price includes your lift ticket, free rental equip-

ment and the chance to take part in other fun activities. The event runs from 11 a.m. - 4 p.m. and the lift ticket is good until hill closing at 9 p.m. This is a great family value! Activities include human bowling, snow ball launch competitions and expert disc golfers will be on hand to teach you how to disc golf. Make sure to try the best tube run in our region. Helmets are provided. A shorter tube run is available for young children.

### Sis's Florence County Fair Smear Tournament

Mar. 9 at 5 p.m.

Sis's Florence County Fair will host another Smear Tournament on March 9 at the Florence Community Center. Registration begins at 5 p.m. Registration on site only. Tournament starts at 6 p.m.

Prizes awarded for first through fifth places. Four-Point Smear Game \$10 per person. Beer, soda and sandwiches available for purchase. No carry-ins please. Bake Sale items available for purchase

Contact Jessica Klumpp at 906-282-9153 for more information.

### Sustainable Forestry Conference

Apr. 4 from 7:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

The 2019 Sustainable Forestry Conference will be held at the Keyes Peak Ski Lodge, 4960 Hwy 101, Florence. Admission fee is \$30 per person. For more information contact Sabrina Leffler, 715-528-4480

## Northwoods well suited to gray wolf populations

Richard D. Ackley, Jr.

The densely forested lands of the Nicolet National Forest and the Chequamegon National Forest here in the north woods offer the gray wolf ideal conditions for population survival.

In 1972, Wisconsin passed its own endangered species law. Under the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the state created rules and regulations and identified which species to protect. Congress passed the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 1973 with a purpose "to conserve the ecosystem upon which endangered and threatened species depend". The law incorporates the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966 and Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1969.

Wisconsin is one of about a dozen states in the country with a wild gray wolf population. Gray wolves, also referred to as timber wolves, are the largest wild members of the dog family. Wolves are social animals, living in family groups or packs. A wolf's territory may cover 20-80 square miles,

which is about one tenth the size of an average Wisconsin county. The gray wolf in the western Great Lakes region is currently on the Federal Endangered Species List. This listing status limits the state of Wisconsin's management authority including the authority to hold a wolf harvest season.

When wolves returned to the state in the mid-1970s, they were considered wilderness species for which little habitat existed in Wisconsin. The DNR has since found that wolves are much more adaptable than originally suspected. Most areas of large contiguous forest, especially in Wisconsin's woods of northern and central Wisconsin appear suitable for wolves. It has been found that wolves do more readily select the most remote areas on the landscape for establishing territories and raising pups. Wolf packs select areas with a high percentage of forest and other wildlands, low densities of roads, low human densities, and few farms. Wolves seem to avoid urban areas, lakes with



extensive development, and other developed landscapes. Wolf packs generally remain in heavily forested areas, but wolves that disperse and become loners more readily travel through more developed and open landscapes. Some wolf pups raised near developed areas have become more tolerant of developed landscapes.

Since 1995, the Wisconsin DNR has had a volunteer tracking program to track wolves in the state. Wisconsin reported a minimum of 905 gray wolves and 238 wolf packs, according to the 2017-18 tracking survey by the Department of Natural Resources. The data shows a 2% decrease in

wolf numbers from the previous year and could possibly be a sign the population of the apex predator is leveling off.

Timber wolves are carnivores feeding on other animals. The DNR studies reveal that in the early 1980s, the diet of Wisconsin wolves was comprised of 55% white-tailed deer, 16% beavers, 10% snowshoe hares and 19% mice, squirrels, muskrats and other small mammals. Gray wolves are the largest wild member of the dog family, and in Wisconsin adult males averaging about 80 pounds and adult females averaging about 70 pounds. Gray wolves in Wisconsin share some

genes from the smaller eastern Canadian wolves (*Canis lycaon*) and are thus somewhat smaller than the gray wolves from the western US or northern Canada. Gray wolves have a massive head and neck important in killing prey, which results in larger fore feet than hind feet. Body weight, height, and foot prints are important distinguishing characteristics when comparing gray wolves to other wild and domestic canids.

Den and rendezvous sites are specific locations used for breeding and other pack activities. These sites may be some of the most critical portions of wolf habitat in the Great Lakes region. Habitat at den site locations can vary, but they most commonly occur in dense forest (conifer or mixed conifer/hardwoods) or shrub cover near open water, and usually a mile or more from the nearest road. Rendezvous sites are the home sites or activity sites used by wolves after the denning period and prior to the nomadic hunting period of fall and winter. Summer rendezvous sites are used by

pups and other pack members from mid-June through late summer and are generally in open areas of grass or sedge adjacent to wetlands. Rendezvous sites may include beaver meadows near ponds, forest openings, and two-track logging roads and trails, and are characterized by extensive matted vegetation, numerous trails, and beds usually at the forest edge. In winter, wolf packs regularly visit all the coniferous wetlands in their territories that serve as deer wintering areas.

Opportunities to learn about and teach others about wolves are available through the Gray Wolf Alliance in Ashland and the Timber Wolf Information Network in Waupaca.

For information on wolf hunting and trapping, or report a wolf sighting, contact the Bureau of Wildlife Management. Anyone suspecting a wolf depredation in northern Wisconsin should call USDA Wildlife Services immediately at 800-228-1368 or 715-369-5221. In southern Wisconsin call 800-433-0663 or 920-324-4514.