

YRPC Weekly News

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Yellow River Unleashes a Rogue Floating Bog on Northwinds Resort

By: Arnie DeWitt, YRPC Stream Monitoring Coordinator

Arnie, it's that time of year again when the Yellow River releases its annual parade of floating bogs, those wandering clumps of vegetation that behave like they're on vacation without telling anyone. Locals call them "mini-islands," scientists call them "peat mats," and boaters call them "*oh no, not again.*"

But none have matched the legendary **Bogzilla of 1994**, a floating acre of forest that decided to check into Northwinds Bar and Resort on Rice Lake in Burnett County, without a reservation. The Yellow River flows into Rice Lake from the south end.

The Morning the Lake View Disappeared

Jim and Deb Anderson had just bought Northwinds and were still learning the ropes of owning a resort with a bar. Things like ordering beer, fixing leaky taps, and sprucing up the cabins.

What they *weren't* prepared for was waking up after a night of thunderstorms to discover that their Rice Lake view had been replaced by a **fully furnished woodland**. Trees, shrubs, wildlife — the whole package — parked directly in front of their resort like it was waiting for brunch.

One minute they had a lake view. The next minute they had a forest view. Nature said, "You're welcome."



Bogzilla, approximately and acre of woodland beached itself on the shore of Northwinds Bar & Resort back in 1994.

No Help in the Yellow Pages — Not Even Under ‘B’ for Bog

This was the era before Google, when problem-solving meant flipping through the Yellow Pages and hoping for the best. Jim and Deb searched for “Bog Removal,” “Island Towing,” and even “Emergency Landscaping,” but the phone book offered nothing.

So they turned to the most reliable emergency response team available: **the bar crowd**.

Within hours, about 20 patrons showed up with boats, ropes, and the kind of confidence only found in people who have already had two Bloody Marys.

Operation Bog Drag: A Masterclass in Improvisation

The plan was simple, bold, and absolutely not OSHA-approved:

- Big boats would tie ropes to trees on the bog and pull.
- Once the Bog was pulled away from shore, smaller boats would push from behind.
- Everyone would pretend this was normal.

Our family joined in with three boats from Benoit Lake, turning the whole thing into a floating block party. It took eight hours, several tanks of gas, and at least one argument about which direction “south” actually was, but the bog eventually surrendered.



Jim & Deb, (Deb standing in the back of the boat, Jim in the water unplugging the waterpump on his motor), Northwinds Bar is the white building on shore.



More boats arriving and some paddlers pitching in as well.

A New Island Is Born

Once anchored at the south end of the lake, the bog settled into its new life as a semi-permanent island. Ducks loved it. Hunters loved it. And Jim and Deb loved that their lake view had returned.

Today, the story of the Great Bog of '94 is retold whenever the Yellow River begins releasing its seasonal flotilla of drifting islands. It's a reminder of how unpredictable nature can be — and how a community armed with boats, beer, and determination can solve just about anything.

All photos above by Chris DeWitt

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