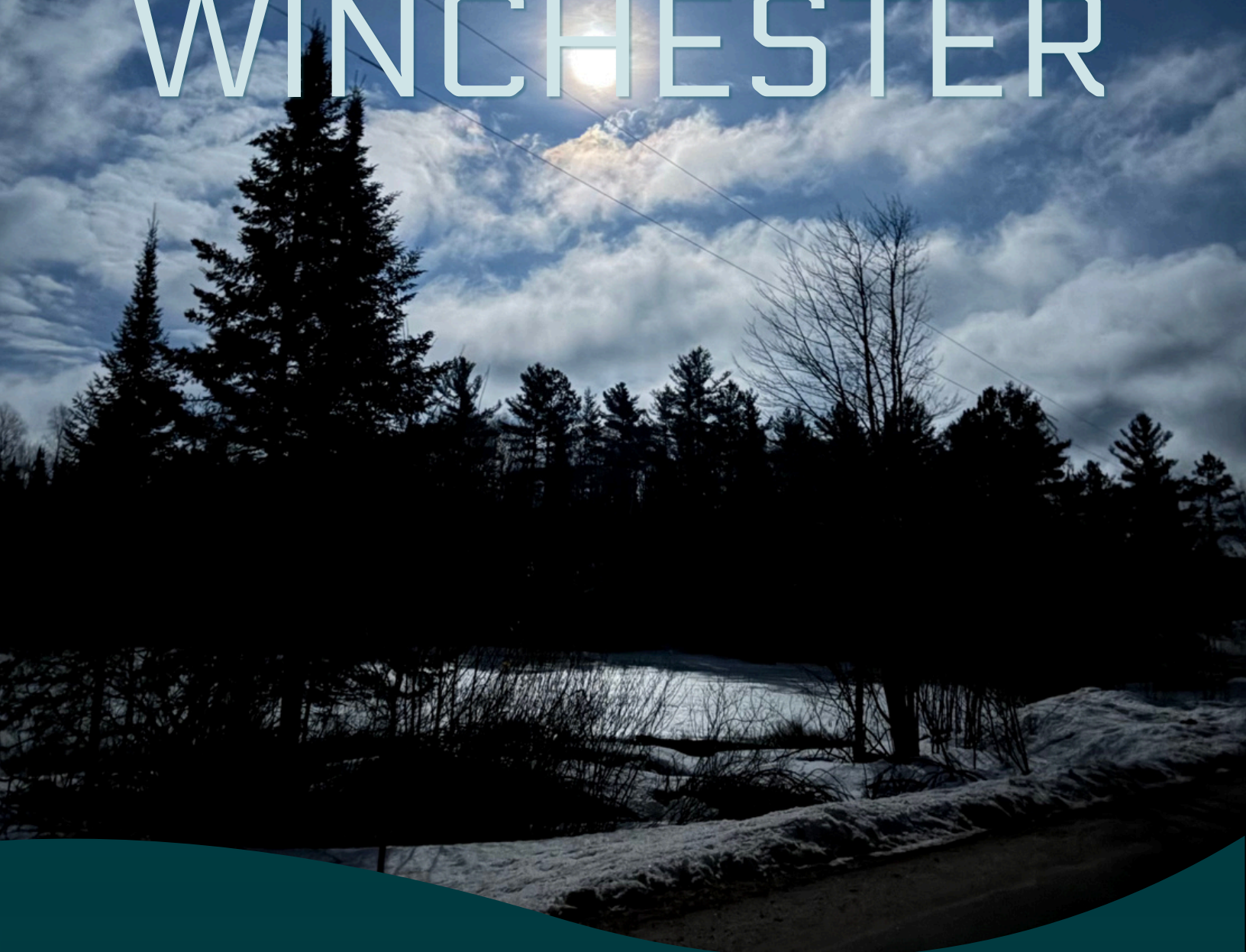




# WELCOME TO WINCHESTER



Winchester is located in the northwest corner of Vilas County, covering over 34,000 acres with more than 6,000 acres of public land in the Northern-Highland American Legion State Forest. It has 34 named lakes, 29 unnamed lakes, and its land area is nearly 80% wooded.

Winchester is a small community with 528 permanent residents (estimated in 2020) and also serves as a 'home-away-from-home' for over 3000 seasonal residents. It's the perfect setting for recreational activities like fishing, boating, biking, hiking, birding, photography, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and more!

[winchesterwi.com](http://winchesterwi.com)

Photo credit: Luke Huybrecht



# IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Vilas County Sheriff's Department: 715-479-4441

Department of Natural Resources: 1-888-936-7463

Northwoods Animal Hospital  
Manitowish Waters location: 715-358-6840  
Minocqua location: 715-356-3269

Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222

Town Office: 715-686-2123

Winchester Public Library: 715-686-2926

# Unexpected Problems?

## Power is out! Who do I call?

Winchester is served by two power companies: Bayfield Electric (715-372-4287) and Xcel Energy (715-543-2358). To find out who your power company is, you can visit their websites at [bayfieldelectric.com](http://bayfieldelectric.com) and [wi.my.xcelenergy.com](http://wi.my.xcelenergy.com). Both companies have outage maps available on their websites.

## Downed or Exposed Powerlines

Downed or exposed powerlines can be dangerous; please keep your distance. Call the power companies listed above.

## Rentals:

You are encouraged to contact your landlord or rental agency in the event of a power failure or any other issue that may arise.

## Having Gas Problems?

If you suspect a gas leak, exit the area and call 911.

For issues regarding natural gas, you can contact WE Energies (800-242-9137).

## Septic Issues?

The nearest septic service is G & S Septic Pumping (715-476-3999) in Manitowish Waters.

# Welcome to Winchester

Winchester is a small community nestled in the Great Northwoods of Wisconsin and has been a cherished vacation destination for more than 120 years. Its timeless, small-town charm has drawn visitors back year after year, often for generations. Within Winchester's borders are more than 30 named lakes and 29 unnamed lakes, all well known for their outstanding fishing and recreational opportunities. Surrounded by the beauty of the Northern Highlands State Forest and located near Michigan's Ottawa National Forest, the area also offers endless opportunities for hiking, hunting, birdwatching, and wildlife viewing. Winchester is conveniently located near Highway 51, yet far enough away to provide the peace and quiet that make it a true Northwoods retreat.

This folder contains information about the local area, environment, and other general resources we hope you will find useful during your stay. To those who live here, Winchester is more than a destination – it is home. People choose to live here for the same reasons visitors return year after year: a strong sense of community, safety, and a close connection to nature. We hope you experience that same feeling while you are here.

Over the years, rules, ordinances, and regulations have been established to help ensure everyone's safety and enjoyment. While the number of governing and advisory bodies involved may sometimes seem confusing, it is important to be familiar with them. Included in this packet are lake-use guidelines from the Town Lakes Advisory Committee, along with information provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the State of Wisconsin. Many of Winchester's lakes are associated with local lake associations. If you have questions or concerns regarding a specific lake, please speak with your neighbors or contact the Town Office for assistance in connecting with the appropriate association.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the Town Office directly. If no one is available there, the staff at the library are also knowledgeable and happy to help. For the most up-to-date information regarding library hours, waste transfer station hours, Town Clerk office hours, and other services, please visit [winchesterwi.com](http://winchesterwi.com).

In the event of an emergency, or if you need to speak with a law enforcement officer, call 911 or the Vilas County Sheriff's Department non-emergency number at 715-479-4441. Winchester's Northwoods Emergency Medical Services District (NEMSD) and Volunteer Fire Department are conveniently located at the Town Hall on Highway W, allowing for quick response times throughout the community.

For questions or concerns related to the environment, fire permits, wildlife, or injured animals, please contact the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources at 1-888-936-7463.



# TOWN OF WINCHESTER LAKE USER GUIDE



## Common Sense Courtesies

- **Water Sports:** Please restrict the activities of water skiing, tubing and personal water craft (PWC) to the hours of 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM, and at all times respect those who are swimming or fishing.
- **Quiet Hours:** Please consider your neighbors and eliminate excess noise and loud music, especially between 10:00 PM and 8:00 AM.
- **Space:** Observe Loons, Eagles and other wildlife from a distance of at least 100 feet, and 200 feet from nesting Loons and chicks.
- **Clean Lakes & Shoreline:** If you carry it in, please carry it out.
- **Fireworks:** Think before you shoot and clean up afterwards. Fireworks make noise, frightening children, pets & wildlife while contaminating our lakes with heavy metals and other toxic chemicals. They also pose a serious fire hazard to both forests and personal property.

## It's the Law

- **Shoreland Lighting:** Please consider the glare of yard lights on your neighbors across the lake. Consider using motion detector lights, light shields and/or low wattage bulbs. *Winchester Town Ordinance 2018-07.*
- **Slow-No-Wake:** All boats are required to operate at slow-no-wake speed within 100 feet and all personal water craft (PWC) within 200 feet of lake and island shorelines. *Town of Winchester Boating & Water Regulation Ordinance 2018-09.*
- **Artificial or Enhanced Wakes:** Use of ballast, water sacks, mechanical fins or similar devices to create enhanced wakes is prohibited on all Winchester lakes. *Town of Winchester Artificial Wake Ordinance 2024-02.*
- **Boaters:** All boaters must stay at least 100 feet from anglers, swimmers, divers, snorkelers, rafts, docks and other watercraft.
- **Waterskiing & Tubing:** Waterskiing and the use of personal watercraft (PWC) are not permitted after sunset. *Town of Winchester Boating & Water Regulation Ordinance 2018-09.*
- **Invasive Species:** Launching or transporting boats or boating equipment with aquatic plants or animals attached is prohibited. Clean your boat, motor, trailer and anchor. Drain all water from wells and bilge. Do not release unused bait into the lake.

**Perform Lake CPR – be Courteous, Polite & Respectful  
Help Keep Our Lakes Safe, Clean and Enjoyable for Everyone**

Town Board Approved 2025

# Water Safety

By following these tips, you can help make sure you have a pleasant and safe time when out on the lake.

1. Never swim alone, if you do, wear a life jacket.
2. Wear a life jacket while out on the boat.
3. Children should not be left unsupervised near water.
4. Let people know where you will be and when you plan on being back.
5. Avoid diving in shallow and unfamiliar waters.
6. Bring extra drinking water.
7. Wear protective layers or sunscreen to avoid sunburn. When wearing sunscreen, remember to reapply every 2 hours.
8. Be aware of other boaters, including smaller crafts like canoes, kayaks and inflatables. Leave extra distance between your boat and nearby buoys; they often mark sand/rock bars and are not directly above the hazard.
9. Do not operate a motor boat where people are swimming.
10. Pay attention to local wildlife. In addition to sharing space with people, we also share our lakes with loons, beavers, muskrats and water fowl.
11. Wear shoes at the public boat landings, broken glass and fishing hooks maybe present.
12. In winter be cautious on the ice and know the conditions before you go. Only go on lakes you are familiar with and avoid areas with moving water.



# Outdoor Recreation Safety



1. Tell people where you are going for your activities and when you expect to be back.
2. Have a map of the area handy and your cell phone charged.
3. If you get lost, use your phone to call for help and stay where you are while you wait to be found.
4. Be aware of and prepared for local weather/ice/lake conditions.
5. Bring along extra water, a snack, first aid kit and any medications you may need.
6. Follow local advice, signage and safety regulations.
7. Dress in layers as conditions may change.
8. Stay on marked roads and trails that have signage.
9. Check and beware of ice conditions before heading out on the lakes in winter, especially in fall and spring when conditions can change rapidly. Avoid patches of ice over rivers and flowing water, as this ice can be thinner than areas around it.
10. Be aware of animals, give them plenty of space. Never get near baby bears, if you see a bear make yourself look big as possible, slowly back away. If it appears threatening yell, make loud noises and throw things.
11. Pay extra attention to keeping pets nearby and on leashes, most animals will want to be left alone but may come in conflict with unattended pets.

# History of Winchester

The Winchester area was inhabited by various Native American groups long before European settlement, with the most recent tribes establishing communities here around the 1500s. Located along the continental watershed divide, the region became an important route for trade and travel among Native Americans and, later, European fur traders.

The first documented European-American family to permanently settle in the area was the Buck family in the late 1800s, although it is likely that others had lived here earlier as trappers, hunters, and traders alongside Native communities.

The head of the Buck family, George Washington Buck, worked in the timber industry in Minnesota prior to the Civil War. Motivated by patriotism – or perhaps by the promise of room, board, pay, and travel – he enlisted with the renowned 1st Minnesota Volunteer Infantry Regiment to fight for the Union. G.W. Buck participated in several major battles and was eventually captured by Confederate forces, spending several months in a prisoner-of-war camp before being liberated. After his release, he reenlisted and returned to service. His years spent hunting and trapping in the wilderness gave him survival skills that proved invaluable both during combat and while imprisoned.

Following the war, G.W. Buck made his way to the Northwoods of Wisconsin and eventually settled in Winchester. There, he established one of the area's earliest all-inclusive resorts and guide services. Guests could choose from a range of accommodations, from primitive hunting and fishing camps to more "modern" cabins. The Buck family operated camps and cabins throughout the region, with their main homestead located between North and South Turtle Lake.

As the years passed, G.W. Buck's son, Fayette Buck, expanded the family business to include a hotel and tavern. Eventually, Fayette's wife, Anna Buck, along with their daughters, managed much of the operation themselves through the 1940s.

Between 1900 and 1910, major changes began reshaping the area. Railroads were constructed to access the vast timber resources of the Northwoods, and the Turtle Lake Lumber Company established the company town of Winchester, named after the company's owner. More than fifty homes were built in what is now downtown Winchester, along with a school, mess hall, boarding house, and company store. Workers and families who could not afford permanent homes – or who stayed only temporarily – often lived in tar-paper shacks near what is now the town park. By the mid-to-late 1920s, mill operations had ceased, and many families moved away in search of work elsewhere.

During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, much of the surrounding land was sold to private owners. Some families remained to raise children and work locally, while others purchased property to establish summer homes and resorts. Resorts such as Tall Timbers, Trutt's, Timberlane, and Wurm's Resort became familiar landmarks in the area. Over time, many of these larger resorts were divided and sold to individual property owners, and today many cabins and homes stand on land that was once part of those original resort properties.

Winchester's history has helped shape the unique character and hospitality that continue to draw visitors back year after year. Tucked away in the Northwoods, Winchester has retained much of its old-fashioned charm and small-town atmosphere. While only a few physical reminders of the past remain – old bridge pilings, historic cabins, street names, and buildings – thousands of photographs and historical documents have been preserved at the local library, many of which are on display for public viewing.

# Winchester Public Library

7748 Lake St.

Winchester, WI 54557

715-686-2926

[winchesterpubliclibrary.com](http://winchesterpubliclibrary.com)

The Winchester Public Library is a cornerstone of our Northwoods community, proudly serving residents, visitors, and seasonal guests alike. Through the support of the Town of Winchester and Northern Waters Library Service, the library is able to provide a wide variety of services and resources to the public.

Free public Wi-Fi is available throughout the library building, parking lot, and garden area, and is accessible 24 hours a day for anyone who may need it. Library hours vary throughout the year and may change seasonally, so visitors are encouraged to call or visit the library website for the most current information.

Throughout the year, the library hosts a variety of events and programs for all ages. The library continually works to offer new and engaging activities, including guest speakers, author talks, educational presentations, and programs hosted in partnership with local organizations such as the UW–Madison Division of Extension and Discovery Center programs.

Visitors also have access to public computers, printing, faxing, copying, and scanning services. Books, DVDs, and other materials are available for checkout, and library cards are free for both residents and guests, regardless of the length of their stay. The library staff are also highly knowledgeable about the local area and are always happy to answer questions or help visitors find local resources and information.

In addition to its regular services, the Winchester Public Library is home to a local history organization that curates fascinating displays highlighting the area's past. Exhibits often feature historical artifacts, photographs, stories, and books that showcase Winchester's rich heritage. Displays change regularly, making each visit a new opportunity to discover something unique about the community's history.

Go to [winchesterpubliclibrary.com](http://winchesterpubliclibrary.com) to check out their website and sign up for their monthly newsletter!

