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P. O. Box 145 • Three Lakes, WI 54562

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Three Lakes Waterfront Association - Established in 1967
Spring 2010

Clean Boats, Clean Waters . . .

Contributed by Ed Jacobsen

Our **Clean Boats, Clean Waters** program has been very successful and lucky. We have been lucky in two ways. First, we are lucky to have as many dedicated volunteers helping to inform the boating public that our chain is clean and we want to keep it that way. Second, we are lucky to not have had a large infestation yet. While we have all this going for us, we still need help. We only have about 50% of the volunteer coverage we need on weekends at the important landings to let people know how important clean boats are in keeping our lakes free of invasive species.

Any time that you can devote to the **Clean Boats, Clean Waters** program would be appreciated. The association not only benefits from coverage at the boat landings, but financially because we earn \$12.00 of grant money for every hour a volunteer spends at one of the landings. This money goes directly back toward our efforts to fight the AIS problem.



The landings where we need volunteers are: Medicine Lake off Highway X; Big Stone on Highway 32; Townline off Highway 45 North; Big Lake on North Big Lake Loop Road; Burnt Rollways Dam off Highway X; and at Laural Lake Campground. If you can donate any time please call Ed Jacobsen at 617-0566 or email Ed at Jaketheoilguy@yahoo.com.

Water Level Regulation . . .

Contributed by Sam Morgan

The Three Lakes Chain (Burnt Rollways) is operated as a reservoir to help regulate the flow in the Wisconsin River. The basic operating plan for Burnt Rollways is to lower the lake level over the winter season, starting in late October or early November and ending in early March. The extent of the drawdown is about 2.5 feet. This is done to augment the flow of the Wisconsin River over winter and provide storage in the lakes for spring runoff. When the snow begins to melt we close the gate at the dam to the minimum allowable opening (1 inch) and let the chain refill to the summer target level. In a normal spring the chain reaches the summer target level by late April or early May. During the summer recreation season the gate at the dam is operated to keep the lake level at the summer target level. In most years this means that the lake level is very stable, +/- a couple inches from the target level. Then, in late fall we start the cycle over again with the winter drawdown.

This past winter the drawdown was similar to what we have done every year in the past. The

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2009-2010 Board of Directors

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Scholarship Elmer Goetsch/Judy Renquist
Septic System Review Judy Renquist
Shoreland Zoning Norris Ross
Water Safety Jack Werner
Website Heidi Nykolayko

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Saturday, July 10th at 9:00 a.m. at the Reiter Center

www.ThreeLakesWaterfrontAssociation.com

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President's Forum . . .

Spring came very early in March. Ice was out by the middle of the month. At this writing in early May, it is extremely dry in the Northwoods. Fire danger is high and water is low on the chain. Without a lot more rain, our five-year drought may have a major impact on boating this summer. On April 30, the water level at Burnt Rollways was down 1.5 feet from normal.

The TLWA will again be running our volunteer programs this summer. Ed Jacobsen will run Clean Boats/Clean Waters and Ed Martens will handle Adopt-A-Shoreline. These programs continue to be our best defense against invasive species. In addition, our lake management plan will be in its second year on Long Lake and will be coordinated by Jack Werner. Norris Ross will administer our new lake management plans on Virgin, Whitefish and Big Lakes. The TLWA continues to have funding from the state for all of these projects. As an association of lake owners, we are very busy protecting and enhancing our valuable resource.

On February 1, Wisconsin Act 31 went into effect. This new law states that "it is illegal to operate a motorboat at greater than slow-no-wake speed within 100 feet of the shoreline of all lakes". The law also says that a "town may provide an exemption from the prohibition or may substitute a lesser number of feet".

Wisconsin Act 31 has caused much discussion about how this law affects the Three Lakes

Chain. The Town Board has held three listening sessions for the public to give input. To make a long story short, on May 4th the Town Board created a 6 person Advisory Committee to make recommendations to the Town Board about Act 31 and how it should be applied to the lakes in the Town of Three Lakes. The Advisory Committee and Town Board have difficult decisions to make.

Please know, however, that Act 31 is in effect on all waters until and if the Town Board passes an ordinance to amend Act 31 as written. Should the Town pass such an ordinance, the DNR must review it and the Town must have a public hearing to allow public input. This process could take up to two months or more. As of this writing, there are a number of areas on the Chain that are slow-no-wake, but are not marked slow-no-wake.

The TLWA Board of Directors is committed to its objectives of promoting boater safety and protecting our beautiful resource. As a Board, we have a duty to speak out on behalf of these goals. We have done that in regard to Act 31.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, have a wonderful summer. Enjoy the great outdoors, boat safely and do all you can to prevent the spread of invasive species.

Tom Harris

Tom Harris
President
Three Lakes Waterfront Association

Scholarship . . .

Contributed by Elmer Goetsch

Congratulations to Roberta Candela, winner of the 2010 \$1,500 TLWA college scholarship. Roberta is a 2010 graduate of Three Lakes High School. She plans to study environmental science at the University of Arizona.

TLWA Membership and Volunteer Application

Check the mailing label for your current membership status.
If you are not already a member of the Three Lakes Waterfront Association, please join now.
Annual membership is just \$20.00 per household. You can't afford *not* to get involved!

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Primary Mail Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Three Lakes Address: _____

Lake: _____ Three Lakes Phone: _____

Enclosed is \$20 for membership and \$ _____ as an additional tax exempt contribution toward the cost of the invasive species prevention program for a total of \$ _____.

Detach completed form and mail with a check payable to:
Three Lakes Waterfront Association, Inc. • P. O. Box 145 • Three Lakes, WI 54562

Volunteer To Keep Our Waters Clean

TLWA began the *Clean Boats, Clean Waters* program the summer of 2005 and added the *Adopt-A-Shoreline* program in 2006. Both programs have been quite successful, thanks to the wonderful efforts of the volunteers. Please join the ranks this year to help prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species.

Volunteer for: Clean Boats, Clean Waters Adopt-A-Shoreline
 Past volunteer New volunteer

Chinese and Banded Mystery Snails: Are They in Your Lake?

Contributed by Ted Ritter

John Havel, Professor of Biology at Missouri State University, is working with the WDNR on a project to assess lakes for the risk of Chinese or banded mystery snail population establishment. The study will hopefully lead to better understanding of lake suitability for these species and their potential impact. Professor Havel will work out of the Trout Lake Limnology Station this summer and intends to visit as many northern Wisconsin lakes harboring these

snails as possible. He would like presence/absence information where known to help with his planning.

Please e-mail Professor Havel at JohnHavel@MissouriState.edu and inform him if your lake has these snails.

If you need to refresh your memory on non-native snails, click on the following link to view pages from the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network training manual: http://vilaslandand-water.org/ais_citizen_lake_monitoring_network/clmn_ais_manual_contents-ms.pdf

Water Level Regulation . . .

(Continued from page 1)

difference has been a near total lack of spring rains to help refill the chain. Snowmelt refilled the chain about 1 foot in March, but since that time there has been virtually no rain to help complete the spring refill. The little rain that did occur fell in scattered small showers of about one-tenth of an inch at a time. This kind of rain does not produce any runoff.

The dry conditions this spring follow seven consecutive dry years from 2003 to 2009. Over that seven-year period the Vials County area is as much as 40 inches short on precipitation. The ongoing drought means that we need some heavy rains to overcome the dry soil conditions and generate enough runoff to refill the chain. We have precipitation records for northern Wisconsin dating back to 1890 and the current drought is the worst in recorded history, even worse than the 1930's.

We have had the gate at the dam set to the allowable minimum opening of 1 inch since the snowmelt started in early March. That is all we can do to help refill the lakes. Now we need some rain.

The Eagle Chain is controlled by the Otter Rapids Hydroelectric Dam. Hydro dams are operated differently than reservoir dams. They are operated with a constant lake level all year. The flow through the Otter Rapids dam is regulated to match the amount of water entering the Eagle Chain so the lakes remain at a constant level. Water is not taken from the Three Lakes chain to fill the Eagle chain.

All of our reservoirs in northern Wisconsin, as well as most of the natural lakes, are suffering with low water because of the extended drought and lack of spring rain in 2010. Most of our natural-lake reservoirs are between one and two feet below the summer target levels (Burnt Rollways is down about 1.5 feet). Some natural lakes that are not controlled by dams are down 4 feet or more. Our larger reservoirs are really low. Rainbow is 14 feet down, Willow is 10 feet down, and Rice (Nokomis) is 6 feet down.

In summary, we have not changed the operation of Burnt Rollways. The low water levels are a result of the ongoing drought. Just about every lake in northern Wisconsin is suffering the same problem. The only solution is lots of rain.

Grants Update . . .

Contributed by Norris Ross

The Three Lakes Waterfront Association received a grant this spring through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Lake Planning Grant Program. The grant will provide funds for the development of a proactive Lake Management Plan for Big Lake, Whitefish Lake, the Thoroughfare and Virgin Lake. Currently, the lower end of the Chain is in the middle of a previously-funded Lake Management Plan for Long Lake. These two major grants will allow for the careful study of the upper and lower ends of the Three Lakes Chain. The long range goal, of course, is to develop a Lake Management Plan for the entire Three Lakes Chain. Lake Management Plans are now required by the WDNR before long-term funds for dealing with invasive species are granted.

Lake Management Plans include many analyses and documentation efforts. They will include

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Shoreland Stewardship . . .

Contributed by Judy Renquist

The quality of our lakes is ultimately a reflection of how we take care of our shoreland.

Waterfront home owners too often bring traditional landscaping practices with them from their conventional residential lawns in the cities. This means striving for a perfect manicured lawn (utilizing fertilizers / herbicides / pesticides) that extends right out to the water's edge. This carpet of green can be a very serious problem for the ecology of your lake.

If you haven't already, please consider restoring a buffer zone of native vegetation along the shoreline of your lake property. Once established, the native plants present a magnificent

Training Workshops . . .

Contributed by Ed Martens

The Oneida County Land and Water Department, in cooperation with University of Wisconsin – Extension, will be hosting a **Clean Boats, Clean Waters** workshop in Three Lakes at the Community Building on Friday, June 11th. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the workshop ends at noon.

In addition, an **Adopt-A-Shoreline** (Citizen Lake Monitoring) Workshop will be held at Bonnie's Lakeside Resort in Three Lakes on Thursday, July 8th. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. and the workshop ends at noon.

For more information contact Lawrence Eslinger, the new Oneida County Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator by phone at 715-365-2750 or by email at leslinger@co.oneida.wi.us.

seasonal array of colors and textures, while preventing sediment / pollutant run-off into the lake.

The easier, less expensive method of creating a shoreline buffer is simply not to mow along the water's edge at least 35 feet from the lake's high water mark. Turf grasses will grow 12-24 inches tall before going to seed. Overtime, shrubs, ferns and other native plants will naturally fill in and provide a more diverse plant cover.

There is valuable information on the internet on shoreland restoration in Wisconsin that will provide answers to all your questions and give additional motivation for improving our Shoreland Stewardship. There are many, but one you may want to check is: www.uwex.edu/ces/shorelan/zone2.htm.

Water Safety . . .

Contributed by Jack Werner

One of the major causes of drowning for a single fisherman in a boat is falling overboard without wearing a life jacket. Many fishermen do not like to wear bulky life jackets because it inhibits their movement. One solution to this issue is to use an automatically inflatable life jacket which is much less bulky. The jacket is designed to automatically inflate when the wearer falls into the water. Although a bit pricey (\$100 and up) they could be a life saver. Why not buy one for the fisherman in your life. It would make a great Father's Day or birthday gift. There are many places online where inflatable life jackets can be purchased.



Just a reminder: Safety videos are still available at the White Deer Liquor Store in Three Lakes.

Symbols of the North

By Stacy Craig

The loon is probably one of the most recognized symbols of the Northwoods. Not only by sight, but also by sound. The eerie call of the loon brings a sense of peace and tranquility to northern visitors during the summer months.

Loons are a rare and shy water fowl. Although they swim fast in water, they are very clumsy on land. Therefore, they nest on shore, very close to the waters edge. Each year, they use the same nest and typically lay just two eggs. Predation of the eggs and the young can hamper the ability for the loon population to flourish.

In order to protect the loon, volunteers across the state, known as Loon Rangers, have begun the annual task of monitoring the success of loons and educating their local communities about sharing their lakes with the enigmatic bird. Loon Rangers are coordinated by LoonWatch, a program of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College. For 31 years, these volunteers have collected data about the success of loons on more than 300 lakes, providing an invaluable resource to shape policy and educational efforts.

If you are fortunate enough to see a loon, LoonWatch suggests you stay two hundred feet away to avoid disturbing them, and reduce your wake in areas where you suspect a nest. If you see someone distressing a loon, explaining the loon's agitation is often enough to resolve the situation. Stacy Craig, program director for LoonWatch, says most cases of loon harassment arise from curiosity, not malice.

Harassing nongame wildlife, such as loons, is illegal. Punishable by both state (Wisconsin's Natural Resource codes 19.25 and 12.10) and

federal (Migratory Bird Treaty Act) law, fines for wildlife harassment range from \$288 to \$15,000. According to Wisconsin DNR code, harassment includes disturbing, pursuing, catching, taking, and shooting wildlife. LoonWatch reminds people that it is particularly important to keep pets from roaming free on shorelines where loons might be nesting, and also recommends that both people and pets stay off islands with nesting loons until July 15th, when most loon chicks are already hatched. Loon harassment and other violations should be reported to the WDNR law enforcement tip line at 1-800-TIP-WDNR (1-800-847-9367).

Loons are not only essential characters on Northern Wisconsin lakes, they are also an ideal indicator species for lake health, part of the reason LoonWatch and Loon Rangers work so hard to document them.

"Because of the loon's niche -they typically return to the same lakes year after year- they give us an impression of lake health and changes over the long term," says Stacy Craig, program director for LoonWatch. "Loons bioaccumulate toxins such as mercury. By studying them and watching reproductive outcomes, we can understand how pollution and other changes to their environment affect them."

LoonWatch is always looking for more volunteers. The only requirement is that volunteers visit a particular lake often. If you do not have someone monitoring loons on the lake that you live on or frequently visit, please consider volunteering. Even if the lake only has sporadic loon activity, the data collected helps paint a complete picture of loon health. Training opportunities held each spring help volunteers learn more about loon monitoring. Anyone interested in becoming a Loon Ranger or learning more about LoonWatch should visit www.northland.edu/loonwatch.

Grants (cont'd) . . .

input from all residents on the lakes. Resident input and lake use patterns are combined with complex water testing data to evolve a comprehensive baseline picture of the current state of the lakes. This baseline becomes extremely valuable for future comparative studies and for the basis of any future actions in the lakes.

Overall, the scope of the work funded in the grants will provide the following kind of information:

- The drainage area definition (watershed) for the lakes.
- The areas of each lake's watershed that may be supplying excessive amounts of sediment and nutrients.
- An identification and location of important plant communities (emergent, submergent, floating-leaf) within the lakes and a listing of the dominant species within those communities.
- A determination of plant community diversity for the lakes and how each lake's diversity compares with other lakes in the region.
- The identification and location of any rare or threatened plant species within the lakes.
- Of the plant species found in the lakes, their abundances relative to each other.
- A determination of where exotic plant species (e.g., Eurasian water milfoil, curly-leaf pondweed, purple loosestrife) occur in and around the lakes.
- A summary and analysis of specific chemicals found in the lakes, how these concentrations compare with other lakes in the region, and what these concentrations indicate concerning the health of the lakes.
- An analysis of the limiting plant nutrient (phosphorus or nitrogen) in the lakes.
- The potential point-sources of pollution that may be affecting the lakes.
- Aquatic plant management alternatives.
- A listing of management options that may be utilized to protect and enhance the important and sensitive areas of the lakes.

- The trophic state (e.g., oligotrophic, mesotrophic, eutrophic) of the lakes.
- A summary of recent historic fisheries data, biological information relating to specific fish species, and how it applies to the management plan.
- An assessment of the shoreline condition.
- The steps that could be taken to help improve each lake, such as work in the watershed (e.g., agricultural best management practices), shoreland restoration opportunities, in-lake native plant introductions, etc.
- The funding sources available to assist in the implementation of the pertinent management and protection options that are outlined in the lake management plan.

The new grant is in the amount of \$79,890 for cash received. With reimbursement for donated value for volunteer work and other contributions, the scope of the entire project will involve an estimated \$115,000. The project is divided into eight phases and will take several years to complete. The technical work will be conducted by the professional limnologists from Onterra, Inc. They will be working closely with Three Lakes residents to complete the project. Project details will be found in a forthcoming newsletter devoted almost entirely to the Lake Management Planning grants.

The first spring water samples in the new study have already been collected by Onterra staff. One of the first important tasks is to organize a stake-holders group representing all four bodies of water. The stake-holders group will oversee the entire project and be involved in soliciting input from individuals currently using the lakes. This "steering committee" is critical to the success and meaningfulness of the project in helping to maintain the quality and pristine nature of the lakes. If you are interested in being involved on this exciting project or would like more information, please contact Norris Ross (546-2250). All levels of involvement are welcome with a variety of tasks available. More details and information about the grant activities will be posted on the website.