

Help Wanted– Stream and Lake Monitoring Volunteers

Data collection and analysis is necessary in order to make and carry out our healthy lake goals. We are continuing our efforts to monitor Lake Ripley and various points of our inlet stream.

Monitoring is a fun way to learn about sampling methods, stream and lake health, and contribute to the health of Lake Ripley. Training and equipment is provided.

Let us know if you would like to help as a stream or lake monitor! It's a great way to be a part of the stewardship of Lake Ripley.

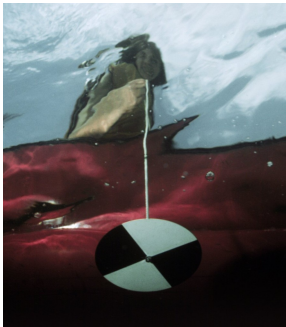


Photo credit: WDNR

Mark your calendars

January 10, 2015
March 21, 2015
April 18, 2015*
May 16, 2015
June 20, 2015

LRMD Board Meetings
9:00 a.m. at Oakland
Town Hall

* Lake Ripley Area Earth Day clean up– stay tuned!

January 17-18, 2015
DNR Free Ice Fishing Weekend

April 22, 2015
Earth Day

April 23-25, 2015
Wisconsin Lakes Conference
Stevens Point, WI



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Lake Ripley Management District
N4450 County Rd. A
Cambridge, WI 53523

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Cambridge, WI
Permit No. 5

Ripples



Vol. 21, No. 6

Fall/Winter 2014

LAKE DISTRICT OFFICE

Oakland Town Hall
N4450 County Rd. A
Cambridge, WI 53523
(608) 423-4537
ripley@oaklandtown.com
www.lakeripley.org



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Molinaro
Chair
(608) 423-4743

Mike Sabella
Treasurer
(608) 423-4603

Jane Jacobsen-Brown
Secretary
(608) 423-3319

Georgia Gomez-Ibanez
Commissioner
(608) 423-9898

Craig Kempel
Commissioner
(608) 423-3605

Jimmy DeGidio
Town of Oakland Rep.
(608) 921-1340

Walt Christensen
Jefferson County Rep.
(920) 723-1320

LAKE MANAGER

Lisa Griffin
(608) 423-4537

WEED HARVEST CREW

Dick Langer
Ed Grunden
Bruce Crump
Richard Trailer
Roger Rude
Robert Henkel

FROM THE HELM



Winter has arrived early this year, catching some people by surprise. Lake Ripley has ice on the edges and hundreds on migrating waterfowl. All in all, these are the quiet days before any major snowfall, the lake freezing over, and winter sports getting into full swing.

I want to thank Dennis McCarthy for his service on the Lake Ripley Management Board. Dennis has moved on and our loss will be somebody else's gain. At the same time we welcome Craig Kempel and Jimmy DeGidio to the Board, and look forward to their contributions to our goals of protecting and preserving beautiful Lake Ripley.

Every year people ask me about weed harvesting, and over the years I have heard just about every plan to solve what many perceive as a major problem. The fact is, there is a fine line between removing too many plants, and not removing enough of them. All healthy lakes have good populations of native aquatic vegetation. These plants provide habitat for many species that sustain the aquatic food chain. If we could remove all the plants, we would not only remove these vital species, but create a habitat that would promote the growth of algae. In effect, the lake would be pea green and in some cases toxic to people and pets.

So, we try to maintain a balance of healthy aquatic vegetation, while making sure the lake is available to recreational activities. To this end, we continue to study the lake, by testing water quality and phosphorus loading, among many others. We continue to include articles in this newsletter to help you understand the work the Lake District does.

I wish you all a happy and healthy holiday season. *John Molinaro, Chair*

The Balance of our Lake Ecosystem

Aquatic plants are an indispensable part of our lake's ecosystem. However, individual lake uses and personal plant density tolerances vary. Some lake users prefer to leave it to nature and not interfere, while others see plants as more of a nuisance than a benefit and would prefer no plants at all. Removing too many plants would harm our beautiful lake and affect family activities we all enjoy, while too many plants can limit recreational uses. Finding the balance is key, but it is not always an easy task.

Plants benefit the lake by providing valuable habitat for wildlife and human uses. Anglers, waterfowl hunters, and wildlife watchers, know that aquatic plants enhance fishing opportunities and provide cover and food to all sorts of life.

Continued on page 4



Photo Credit: Janice Hoiby



Program Accomplishments:

Ripley Rewards was a 2014 pilot program seeking to engage landowners in pledging an action to complete projects aimed to protect and enhance the water quality of Lake Ripley. Many homeowners took action and completed one or more actions on their properties.

A total of 39 projects completed!

Downspout diversion	Plant a native tree	Install a rain barrel	Install a rain garden	Install a lakeshore garden
8	11	14	5	1

Many of these landowners received goods and services to assist in the implementation of these practices. With the support of our program partners and sponsors and the willingness of landowners, these actions will help provide valuable habitat and reduce water runoff into Lake Ripley.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we wish to thank all those who participated in this program and made this first year so successful. Decisions on how to improve the program and how frequently it will occur is still being considered.

If you missed out on the opportunity to participate in Ripley Rewards, financial and technical support may be possible to implement similar projects through a new DNR grant initiative starting in 2015. Read on to learn more about this new and exciting grant program!



Lakeshore garden installed off of Sleepy Hollow Road.

Lets Stay in Touch!

We strive to provide up to date information using several outreach tools. Upcoming events, projects, educational activities and slow-no wake information are provided through Facebook, email, and newsletters.

If you are a shoreline association, civic group, landowner, or visitor and wish to join our contact list, or update us on any contact changes, please send an email to ripley@oaklandtown.com.

As always, feel free to visit our website, join us on Facebook, stop by the office or give us a call.



www.lakeripley.org



New Grant Opportunities!

In late November, the DNR rolled out a new Healthy Lakes Implementation Plan with goals to increase lakeshore property owner participation in habitat restoration and runoff and erosion control projects.

This plan provides technical and financial support in establishing certain practices.

- ✧ Installing fish sticks "tree falls"
- ✧ Native plantings
- ✧ Diversion practices
- ✧ Rock infiltration practices
- ✧ Rain Gardens

Up to \$1000.00 may be available from the DNR for each project. Visit this website for project fact sheets, plant lists, and more information on this new and exciting opportunity.

www.dnr.wi.gov/lakes/grants/

If you've been thinking about or have a shovel-ready project and would like to be included in the grant, please contact us right away! The grant deadline is **February 1st**.

ICE ANGLERS!

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
WWW.DNR.WI.GOV/INVASIVES/AQUATIC

To prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species and VHS, WISCONSIN LAW REQUIRES THAT YOU:

INSPECT your ice fishing equipment and

REMOVE any attached aquatic plants or animals (before and after use on ice).

DRAIN all water from equipment including buckets or containers with fish when leaving ice.

DON'T MOVE live fish away from a waterbody.

BUY minnows from a Wisconsin bait dealer. Use leftover minnows only under certain conditions.

Bait Rules:
You may take leftover minnows away from any state water and use them again on that same water.
You may use leftover minnows on other waters only if no lake or river water, or other fish were added to their container.
Two gallons of water is allowed for transporting minnows.
Smelt and other dead bait must be preserved in a way that does not require freezing or refrigeration.
Visit www.dnr.wi.gov/fish/vhs/vhs_preservation.html for more information.

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

There is something to be said about the passion of those who brave freezing temperatures, cold fingers, howling winds, and whatever fury mother nature can send their way to set a tip-up, or jig for a few hours. Whether it's for the love of the sport, a chance to gather with friends and family, a few hours to relax in a winter wonderland, or the chance to land the largest fish during a festive fishery, those who are on the ice care about the health of Lake Ripley.

Ice fishing makes up a quarter of the annual catch in Wisconsin!– Source WNR

Efforts to control invasive species form entering our lake or transporting them from our lake to others take place during our warmer months. Warm weather lake users have been very supportive of the educational programs that were put into place through the Clean Boats, Clean Waters Program. But efforts to keep Lake Ripley healthy shouldn't stop when winter arrives!

To continue the educational outreach mission of the district, we are asking that ice fisherman remember actions that can be taken to protect Lake Ripley and other waters they may visit this winter. The brochure provided above gives a great overview of simple steps you can take to stop aquatic hitchhikers.

Another way to help keep Lake Ripley clean is to remember to keep the ice clear of garbage or hazardous materials. Garbage left on the ice will fall to the lake bottom once ice melts and could pose a future risk for boaters. Last year, numerous complaints about garbage on the lake were received. Dripping vehicle fluids, left over ashes or charcoal, cigarette butts, and wooden pallets all pollute the lake. Please help out by removing any garbage from the ice.

Whether you enjoy Lake Ripley when it's warm and sunny or cold and frozen over, we need everyone's help to keep Lake Ripley clean.

Free Winter Ice Fishing
January 17-18, 2015



Garbage left on the ice in 2014.

Woodland Burn

Fire has been both a natural and manmade occurrence in our wildscapes prior to European settlement. Native peoples used fire as a tool to clear lands, assist in hunting, and provide nutrients to soils. As native peoples were displaced and more lands developed, the use of fire decreased, and in some areas diminished altogether.

Long ago the lands draining to Lake Ripley were predominantly oak savanna that supported extensive prairies and wetlands. Areas where fire did not regularly occur helped established oak dominated forests. These oak ecosystems are ideal for protecting soils and providing wildlife habitat because the oak canopy is "open" and allows sufficient sunlight to reach the forest floor to support a strong herbaceous plant cover.

Since the 1850's, when land in this area became largely farmland, and fire suppression was necessary to protect homes and farm buildings, the woods now part of our preserve became home to many other tree species which are not fire tolerant and which cast denser shade, limiting the herbaceous ground-cover.

More recently, the arrival of the invasive tree Buckthorn, increased the shade in our woods, and further decreased the herbaceous ground-cover. It was determined that action was needed to restore the ground-cover plants in order to prevent erosion of the woodland slopes.



Rain garden located at the Oakland Town hall after spring 2014 prescribed burn.

Thus, in the winter of 2012 many Buckthorn and Elm trees were removed and a "forestry mowing" basically chewed up thickets of Buckthorn saplings.

But as anyone familiar with Buckthorn knows, the battle is not over even with this seemingly aggressive approach. Buckthorn stumps can "resprout", and seedlings can sprout by the thousands from the berries dropped into the soil.

A follow-up to the first action is required, and in this case a woodland burn should take care of the reproofs and the seedlings.

We have partnered with Applied Ecological Services to conduct a carefully planned woodland burn. The burn will occur this fall or winter when and if conditions are favorable. Prescribed burns involve extensive planning, permitting, training, notification and onsite preparations.

This is a continuation of the restoration efforts to manage our woodland as an oak-dominated forest with an herbaceous, native plant ground-cover. These efforts will help to maintain the ecological benefit our woodlands provide by decreasing water runoff, increasing water absorption into the soil, controlling invasive species and providing valuable wildlife habitat.



Same rain garden during the summer of 2014.

Board Member Retirement

Dennis McCarthy has served of the Board of Directors since 2002. He provided great insight into current lake conditions and changing trends as our lead lake monitor for the past 15 years. Dennis collected valuable information necessary to gauge water quality including but not limited to ice-off dates, dissolved oxygen levels, secchi-disk readings, and collected water samples for phosphorus levels. A graduate of the Lake Leaders Institute, Dennis also served on our weed harvesting committee. He took note of plant conditions and relayed that information to district staff.



We are very grateful to Dennis and his contributions to Lake Ripley. We hope Dennis and his family enjoy their new home.



Dennis is holding a zebra mussel sampler.

New Board Members

Craig Kempel was elected to the Board in August 2014. Craig's wife, Maggie, introduced him to Lake Ripley 39 years ago. The family's desire to protect our lake included a memorial donation to establish the F.K. Elson Memorial Fund on behalf of Maggie's parents.

Craig and his family enjoy swimming, boating, skiing, and sharing time together with friends

and family at their cottage. Craig's an active member of the Cedar Shores Association. He contributed to their water systems and a shoreline restoration of 420 feet of frontage as part of a cost-shared program partially funded from the WDNR through the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project.



We welcomed his 40 years of mechanical experience during the selection of plant harvester options and ongoing equipment maintenance needs. Craig brings his farming and mechanical engineering background to our Board along with a desire to maintain the health of our waters.

Jimmy DeGidio joined the Board June 2014 as the Town of Oakland Representative. He has been a resident here since 2003.

As the Vice President of his Teacher Union, Program Director, and Metal Fabrication instructor for Madison Area Technical College, Jimmy helps to prepare students for the next venture in life.

He has participated in restoring an eroding hillside on his property and also assisted with 180 feet of riprap which included a beautiful native planting on the Sylvan Mounds 1st Addition property. Jimmy enjoys watching these planted areas change through the seasons and appreciates the benefit they are to Lake Ripley.



"I plan on always helping out in the community and with the Lake District as I feel Lake Ripley is one of the most important resources in the area".

Plants also influence near shore or littoral zone productivity, water clarity, pH, phosphorus cycling, and water quality. Plants take up nutrients that may otherwise fuel algal growth and also help to filter pollutants and trap sediments from runoff. Their roots stabilize lake sediments, lessen wave action and assist in shoreline protection.

Lake characteristics can change depending on many natural and human factors. Weather can enhance or impede plant growth. Populations and types of fish species also impact plant conditions.



Removing too many plants allows more nutrients to be available for algal growth.
Photo credit: ibtmes.com

Invasive species like zebra mussels enhance water clarity allowing more light to reach greater depths and encourage plant growth. Invasive plants can take over areas forming dense patches contributing to floating mats and are often not a valuable source of food.

However, removal of plant growth in shallow areas can increase water temperatures contributing to algal growth,



Photo credit: Jeanne Scherer, Kathryn Heinlein, and Flickrriver.org



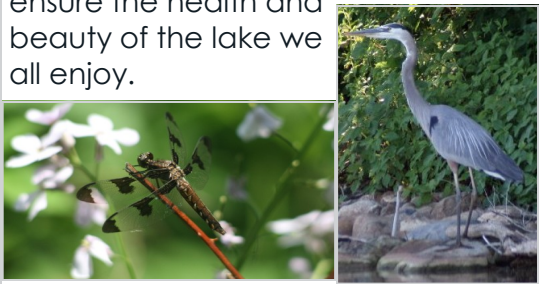
Common bladderwort: a native carnivorous plant that when triggered by prey use negative pressure to suck in its next meal.
Photo credit: UW-Milwaukee/ adknaturalist.blogspot.com

harm fish and frog spawning areas, and reduce water quality.

The LRMD Board and staff routinely survey lake conditions and assess plant growth. About every 5 years a complete plant survey is conducted to quantify plant species diversity and map where populations of plants occur on the lake. This information is used to develop our Aquatic Plant Management Plan and guides our aquatic plant harvesting objectives. This plan is reviewed by the WDNR and is necessary in obtaining permits required to carry out our best management practices.

Historically, chemical treatment was used sporadically from the 1977-1990 for the large population of Eurasian water-milfoil that occupied much of the lake. Since 1989, we have used primarily mechanical removal of plants with our harvesting barge as our best management option. Through current plant harvesting guidelines we have a more diverse native plant profile, less occurrence of invasive species, and a healthier plant community.

Our goal is to control nuisance plant growth while protecting beneficial plant communities that contribute to good water quality and optimal habitat conditions. We need a healthy plant community to ensure the health and beauty of the lake we all enjoy.



Program Updates

This year's harvest season started later than usual with initial cutting beginning on July 15th. Cooler temperatures and thicker ice cover may have inhibited early plant growth of some species. However, even with a later start date, 67 loads of plant material were removed from the water making this the third largest harvest recorded. The prior two years yielded 168 loads in 2012 and 87 loads in 2013.



Harvester and crew traveling to cutting area.

Mechanical harvesting and removal of plant material allows us to selectively address problem areas. Though chemical control methods have been used in the past to control invasive species, recent plant surveys indicate we now have a more diverse native plant community which could be adversely affected by herbicide treatments. Our ability to remove plant material means that decomposing plants won't contribute to nutrient loads that could fuel additional plant or algae growth.

We work closely with the DNR to ensure our program is designed to benefit lake health while ensuring recreational access for the family activities we enjoy. Permits are required before any plant management can take place.

Harvestable areas, navigation routes and target plant species are some of the many components that are discussed as part of the permitting process.



A load of plants is offloaded from the harvester into the shore conveyor. Material is then loaded into a dump truck carried to a compost site.

The Board routinely reviews the outcomes and costs of our programs. After a comprehensive analysis of our current harvesting equipment, we sought grant funding to replace our harvester, trailer, and shore conveyor system. As with any piece of machinery, wear and tear can take it's toll and replacement parts become harder to find.

We were very fortunate to receive a \$65,140 grant from the Wisconsin Waterways Commission to help defray district costs to purchase new equipment. We thank them for this opportunity and anticipate our new equipment will arrive early May.

Our existing equipment is for sale as a ready-to-work package. Please visit our website or contact the office if you or someone you know may be interested.

This program is further enhanced with valuable partners and an outstanding crew. We are grateful to the Hoard- Curtis Scout Camp as our base of operations. Our harvesting crew of six, brings a wealth of knowledge in order to run and maintain equipment, gauge cutting efficiency, and monitor lake conditions. We are fortunate to have such a capable and hardworking crew.

Citizen input, plant surveys, efficient equipment, a competent crew, and DNR guidance are crucial components to our program. This and other programs are part of our ongoing efforts in the continued health and preservation of Lake Ripley.