

Creatures at the Preserve

The Lake District has partnered with the WDNR in their Snapshot Wisconsin program which sets up trail cameras to monitor wildlife. This volunteer program provides us a way to see the types of wildlife in our preserve and also gives DNR wildlife biologists data for their monitoring and assessments. As we better understand the critters who use this area, management actions could be modified to increase more biodiversity.

In our first week, we had over 340 images taken of deer, raccoon, possum, squirrel and even a domestic cat.



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FROM THE HELM

Since serving on the Lake Ripley Management Board since June 2014, I started to think about what would happen if John Molinaro decided to retire. I thought to myself, we all need to learn as much as we can so if that day ever comes we can continue to move the Lake District forward.



Over the past 3 years I feel that I've been part of something very special. I soon found out our Lake District is known statewide and throughout the country for several best practices, management studies and have received several grants to support the hard work that has been done. I also found out that the Lake District residents greatly support our efforts. One recent example is when we informed our residents and partners that we have an opportunity to buy land from the DNR. The district, generous residents and sponsors responded with more than enough donations to buy the 40 acres. We recently just closed on the land adding these wetlands to the Lake District Preserve.

At the 2016 Annual meeting John announced his retirement. His last meeting was in August of this year. At the end of the 2017 Annual meeting the Lake Ripley Management Board elected me to serve as Chairman. We have a Board that is dedicated to the Lake District which makes learning from them very exciting.

As we go through change, I think of what we can do to improve. I've always felt if we're not improving then we're not progressing forward with our mission. Our Lake Manager, Lisa Griffin, will be leaving at the end of the year. I would like to thank her for her outstanding work and endless drive to complete projects and her superior people skills. She has taken us to a new level and has helped me greatly these last few months. I wish her great success in her new career and thank her for helping with the transition as we search for her replacement.

As the saying goes change is good but sometimes very uncomfortable. I feel very fortunate to lead us through these changing times and as I said back in 2014 when I joined the board, "I plan on always helping out in the community and the Lake District as I feel Lake Ripley is one of the most important resources in the area."

Thank you and Happy Holidays,

Jimmy DeGidio, Chair

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Land Purchase Complete

As mentioned in the opening remarks from Chairman DeGidio, the District is happy to announce that 40 wetland acres have been added to the Lake District Preserve.

This land was offered for sale by the WDNR as part of a 2015 budget process. The only inlet stream to Lake Ripley meanders through this wetland that provides habitat to fish and wildlife, enhances water quality and provides flood control. The addition of these wetlands to the Lake District Preserve will ensure continued public access and recreational opportunities with management to help protect the wetland and lake.

This purchase was made possible with the generous support of partners and residents. We would like to thank the Cambridge Foundation, Fort Atkinson Wisconservation Club, Pheasants Forever Jefferson County Chapter #200, Oakland Conservation Club, United Community Bank, Badger Bank, Dave DeGidio of DeGidio Tooling LLC, Georgia Gomez-Ibanez, Joel and Linda Winn, Todd and Robin Touton, and Rick and Debra Kutz of Kutz's Hillside Rental. Additional funding opportunities and management options are underway with Ducks Unlimited and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Inlet Stream Health

The un-named inlet stream to Lake Ripley is monitored in three locations every month from May to October to gather water quality data. The three sites include one on Hwy 18, Hwy A and Ripley Road. The data collected is used as a snapshot of current conditions but is also used to detect changes over time.

Data has been collected since 1973 in some stretches of the stream. A detailed analysis of the watershed was conducted in 1993 by the DNR and a second analysis was conducted in 2015 by the District.



Hwy A monitoring site

Data collected includes dissolved oxygen, water clarity, and turbidity, stream flow, temperature, pH, conductivity, total phosphorus, and identifying macroinvertebrates (insects) and fish species.

In the 2015 analysis dissolved oxygen increased when compared to 1993 levels. Water clarity and turbidity were favorable during low flow events. Water temperatures vary by each site with cooler temperatures found at Hwy A and Ripley Rd. Flow velocities and pH were similar to 1993 levels. Conductivity has increased in sites closer to the lake.

Phosphorus is important to monitor as this nutrient is needed by plants and animals. Too much phosphorus leads to excessive plant and algae growth. The amount of total phosphorus was reduced in 2015 except during rain events. However, current water quality standards show that the amount of phosphorus in the inlet stream remains high.

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Paddle Boards increasing around the Lake

Every year the district conducts a survey on the types of watercraft and number of piers and boat lifts found around the lake. For the first time since we started collecting data in 2003, non-motorized watercraft such as canoes, kayaks and paddle boards are more numerous around the lake. The survey crew felt that the amount of paddle boards on the lake is steadily increasing though the survey didn't tease that out within the category.

2017 Boat Survey	
Pontoons	198
Speed boats	114
Non-motorized	208
Fishing (motor)	25
Jet skis	53
Sailboats	12
Total	610

Pontoon boats saw a noticeable increase. Twenty two more pontoons were counted this year, bringing our total from 176 in 2016 to 198. All other categories showed similar values from their normal trends. Though the survey doesn't reflect why there is this increase in this type of watercraft, it will be interesting to see numbers next year.

The office receives calls asking about activities like parasailing and wake boarding on Ripley. Lake size, boating and other recreational pressures may limit this type of recreation on our lake.



Recreational Rule Changes

Recent legislation has proposed to change rules on recreational uses of our waters. Recently, a new bill has passed the Senate and Assembly that would allow for a pilot to operate a boat pulling someone on water skis without a second person, or spotter, on board. The boat would have to be equipped with a mirror that gives the pilot a wide field of vision so they can keep an eye on the person skiing.

This bill AB100/SB69 was supported by the tourism industry but was opposed by some law enforcement groups. It is unknown whether some lakes can require a spotter be present, especially for highly used lakes with frequent boater conflicts.



Another proposed bill AB358/SB286 would not require the use of a personal flotation device for anyone over 18 years age who is using a paddle board. However, watercraft such as kayaks and canoes would still require a flotation device.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

Please join us at an upcoming LRMD Board meeting. Meetings are held at 9:00 a.m. at the Oakland Town Hall. Agendas can be found online, the Cambridge News or posted at Lake Ripley Family Restaurant and Hering's Lake Ripley Inn.

- Board Meetings: December 16, January 20, February 17, March 17, April 21, May 19, June 16, July 21
- Annual/Budget Meeting -August 18



Make plans for your next garden

The tawny colors of Fall are a signal to many folks to get out their gear for winter sports. For gardeners, it is the season to plan improvements for next year's garden.

We are currently planning what to plant next spring at the Town of Oakland lakeshore garden, a joint Lake District-Town of Oakland project. The removal of invasive species last summer opened up some spaces which we will fill with additional native plants.



istock

The lakeshore garden is located by the Town pier, next to the former Arbor Dell and at the end of Beach Lane. It's primary purpose is to absorb runoff before it reaches our lake. Lawn grass absorbs only about 40 % of runoff, because its roots are so shallow. Deep-rooted native flowers and grasses create a "sponge" that will hold runoff on the land to seep into the ground.

These plants will also benefit our native pollinators that are struggling to find food. And, we hope, their beauty may please all of you as well, as you walk the lake road.

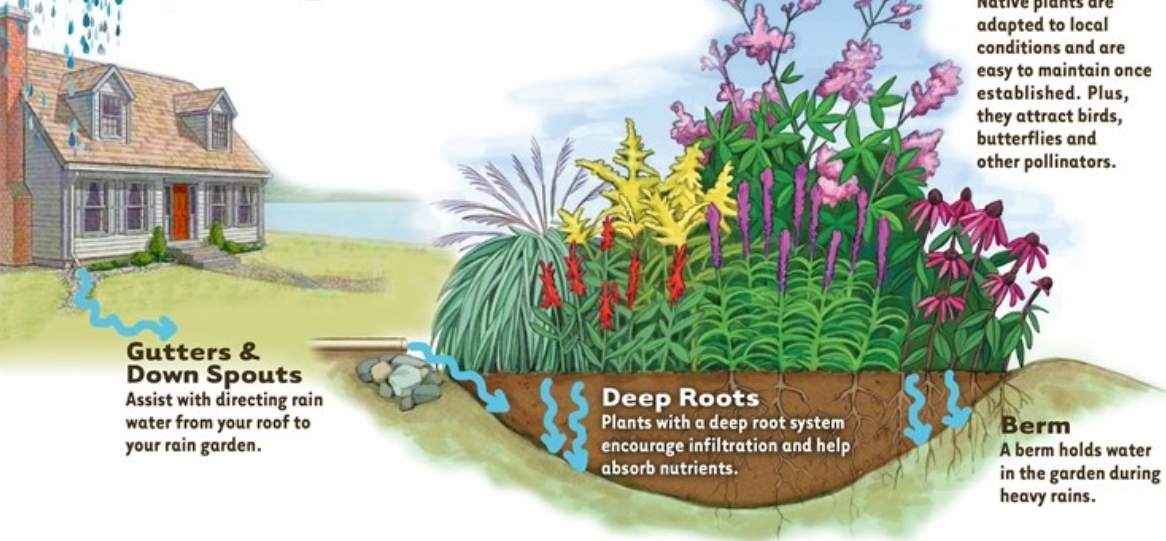
By planning early, we can take advantage of the "early bird" pre-season native plant sale at Agrecol, and you can too! By "piggy-backing" on our Lake District order, you too can get high quality plants at very reasonable costs. This plant sale is usually announced in late January. Visit our web-site at [www.lakeripley.org](http://www.lakeripley.org) or call the office at 423-4537 and find out how you can join the process.

If you're thinking of installing a new rain garden or lakeshore garden, resources and funding opportunities may be available through either our cost-share program or through the DNR Healthy Lakes Program. More information on the Healthy Lakes program can be found at [www.healthylakeswi.com](http://www.healthylakeswi.com) or contact the district office.



Add beauty to your yard and protect the lake!

How does a rain garden work?



Keith Kolb joins the Board

At the 2017 Annual Meeting, Keith Kolb joined our Board of Directors. Keith and his wife Maureen have lived full-time on Lake Ripley since 2015 after being part-timers since 2012. Living here is better than they could have even imagined, with the friendly people, local activities and of course beautiful Lake Ripley.

Keith and Maureen have 6 children and 4 grands, who all love spending time "at the Cottage". With retirement coming soon after almost 35 years at Baird, Keith looks forward to spending even more time with the grand kids creating a water loving tradition for them too. Retirement will also allow Keith to spend time protecting the valuable Lake Ripley watershed for them and future generations.

Keith looks forward to working with members of the board and staff who he believes are doing a tremendous job balancing the protection of the watershed with allowing the community to enjoy its great recreational opportunities. "I hope to learn from the Board and contribute as we continue to keep the right balance of protection and enjoyment."



Keith and his wife Maureen are all smiles on a beautiful lake!

3rd Annual Pontoon Classroom

On a warm calm day in September, Cambridge High School students poured off the school bus and loaded onto pontoon boats to learn more about our lake. Students listened to speakers about various lake topics and were able to try their hand at lake monitoring. It was a great day to share with students how we learn about the health of our lake and how we use that information in our decision making.

Special thanks to Paul Garrison (DNR-retired) and Patricia Cicero (Jefferson County Land & Water Conservation Dept.) for leading informative talks, Craig Kempel and Georgia Gomez-Ibanez for speaking on various lake topics and volunteer captains Dave & Rae Martin, Jimmy DeGidio, Mike Sabella and Keith Kolb.





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The Clean Water Act

The EPA is required to implement The Clean Water Act (CWA) with goals to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters. In Wisconsin, the DNR is charged with complying with the CWA on behalf of the EPA. The law requires that states establish water quality standards and use data collected to gauge if those standards are being met.

The DNR routinely reviews water quality data collected and analyzes it to gauge whether the waterbody meets water quality standards. A waterbody can be impaired by not meeting any of a variety of water quality standards.

Data

At the Hwy A site, the phosphorus average from May to September was 0.38mg/L (milligrams per liter) in 1993. In 2015, average phosphorus concentrations including rain events was 0.1765 mg/L but excluding large rain events, that average dropped to 0.1557 mg/L .

May-September Phosphorus Average at Hwy A (mg/L)	
1993	0.38
2015 with rain events	0.1765
2015 no rain events	0.1557
water quality standard	0.075

This reduction in phosphorus concentration from 1993 could be from the establishment of the District Preserve, conversion of agricultural fields back to wetlands, restoration of stream banks to reduce erosion and improved farming practices. Unfortunately, even with these conservation practices, phosphorus concentrations continue to be higher than the state standard of 0.075 mg/L.

Rain events increase the amount of phosphorus found in the stream. Data shows that when it rains, we have less clarity, more turbidity and more phosphorus. As scientists predict more frequent and intense rain events, we can expect an increase in phosphorus also.



Swollen inlet after a 3.5 inch rain event in 2015

With the recent analysis of data collected for the inlet stream, the DNR has now listed it as an impaired water due to high phosphorus levels. Though we're sad to have this impaired listing, it will help us move forward in improving the amount of phosphorus that is found in the stream that flows to the lake.

Knowing that phosphorus remains a problem means that management objectives and best management practices can be further implemented to reduce this to water quality standards. Additional funding avenues may be available to help meet water quality goals.

More Information on the analysis can be found on our website.

Phragmites Updates

In 2014, when conducting lake monitoring a stand on non-native phragmites was seen from the lake. This invader has inundated wetland areas along Lake Michigan and Green Bay and is making its way west across the state.

As this was the only known patch of non-native phragmites in our watershed and located in valuable wetlands along the south shore, the LRMD was awarded a grant from the WDNR to help control this species.

Three years of herbicide application were performed to reduce the stand. Additional seeding of native wetland plants was placed this past fall and will be again in spring to help restore native plants to the area. Unfortunately, this is such an aggressive plant that more work will be needed to further control this plant.

Invasive plants and animals are a huge threat to our ecosystems. Their presence has an impact on native species, reduces biodiversity and can have economic implications by reducing water quality which could change property values.

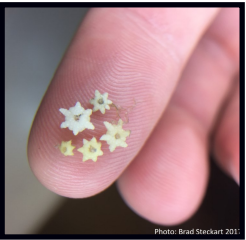
If you suspect you may have phragmites in your wetland, please let us know. Opportunities to piggy back control efforts can help to reduce costs and stop its spread.



Phragmites shown with seed heads. Photo credit: Paul Skawinski

Starry Stonewort Updates

Starry stonewort is a recently discovered aquatic plant (actually an algae) that has been located in neighboring counties to the east. Currently, this low growing plant resembling chara can reduce fish spawning habitats, displace native plants and foul boat props.



Bulbils of Starry Stonewort Credit: Brad Steckart

This plant produces reproductive bulbils which can help to identify it, but also spreads by fragmentation.



Starry Stonewort found on an anchor. The bulbil can be seen in the closeup. Credit: Brad Steckart

We Need Your Help

Lake residents and frequent visitors are most familiar with our lake. If you spot something that you haven't noticed before, please snap a picture, grab a sample if you can and let us know. Notifying us of a new plant or animal that you haven't seen before or something found on your equipment, helps us to detect, identify and hopefully stop any further spread to our lake or other lakes.