

# Ripples

Lake Ripley Management District

Vol. 32, No. 3

Summer 2025

## LAKE DISTRICT OFFICE

**Oakland Town Hall**  
N4450 County Rd. A  
Cambridge, WI 53523  
(608) 423-4537  
Lake.manager@tn.oakland.jefferson.wi.gov.  
 www.lakeripley.org @LRMDLS2020

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jimmy DeGidio**  
Chair  
(608) 921-1340

**Debbie Kutz**  
Treasurer  
(920) 650-9122

**Georgia Gómez-Ibáñez**  
Secretary  
(608) 628-7212

**Steve Bieschke**  
Commissioner  
(847) 420-5330

**Doug Maurer**  
Commissioner  
(608) 515-3976

**Meg Turville-Heitz**  
Jefferson County Rep.  
(608) 695-0313

**Laura Payne**  
Town of Oakland Rep.  
(608) 279-7173

## LAKE MANAGER

**Lianna Spencer**  
Lake.manager@tn.oakland.jefferson.wi.gov  
(608) 423-4537

## WEED HARVEST CREW

**Leo Allen**  
**Jim Jermain**  
**Richard Moen**



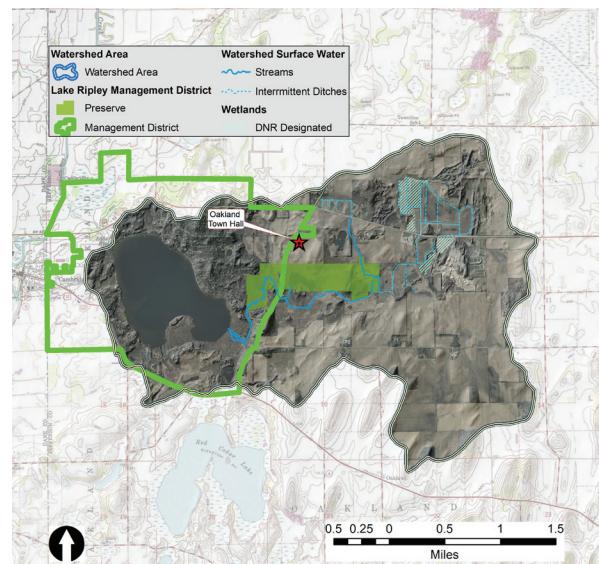
## WHAT IS A 'LAKE DISTRICT'?

Over the years, several residents have asked me what the Lake District is. Often, many do not understand where the District boundaries are or what our mission is. We are often asked if we have meetings and who is on the Board. Well, I have some answers for you! The District Board meets monthly on the third Saturday of the month at 9:00am at the Oakland Town Hall and you are welcome to join us. We have seven commissioners; one is appointed by Jefferson County Board of Directors, one is appointed by the Town of Oakland Board of Directors, and the other five commissioners are elected by members of the District at the annual meeting. The boundaries of the District were established by following most of the Town of Oakland's Sanitary District borders.

A lake district is a governmental body created to manage and protect public inland lakes, which has the ability to tax property within its boundaries. Unlike voluntary lake associations, lake districts are governed by elected commissioners and local officials, allowing both resident and nonresident property owners to vote and hold office.



Our Chair, Jimmy, enjoying a beautiful day in the Preserve.



A map of the District's boundaries (in lime green). Map created by Jefferson County Land and Information Department.

## LAKE DISTRICT CONTINUED

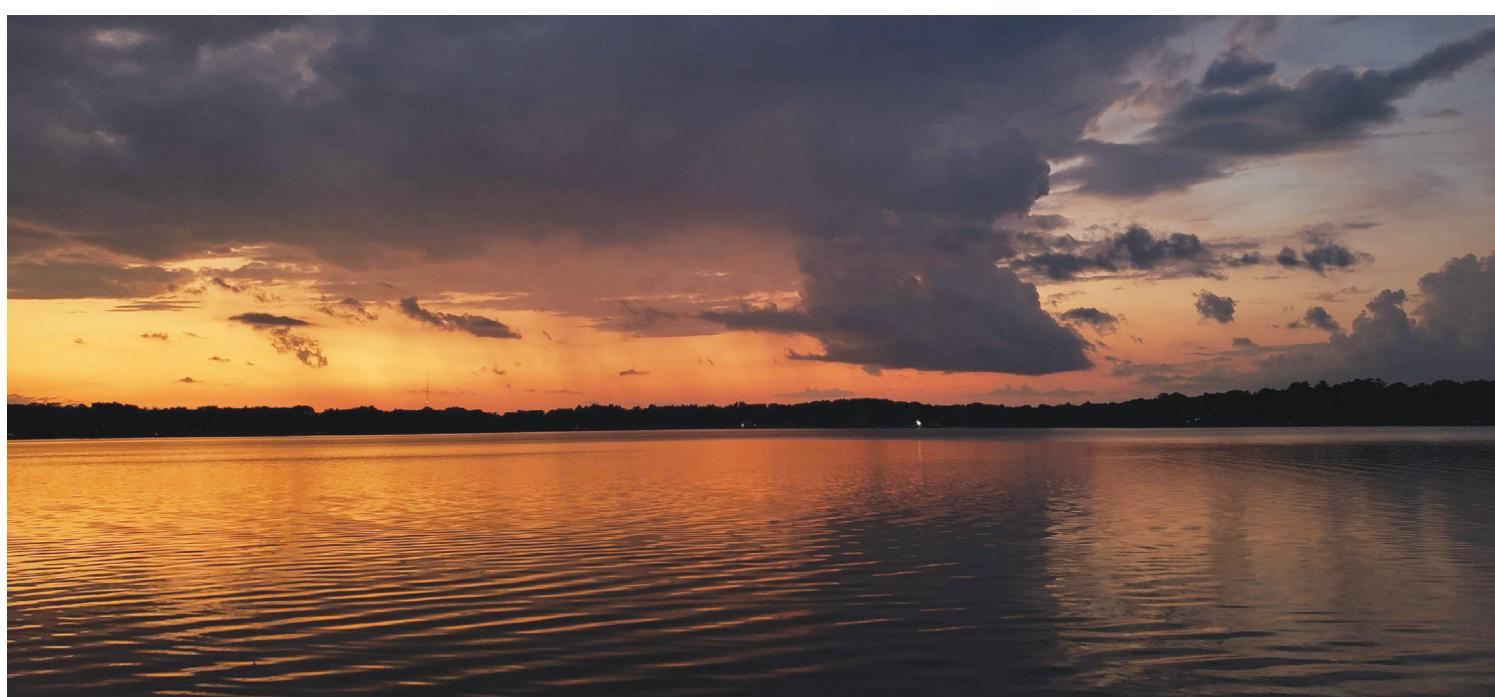
To form a lake district, the lake must be publicly accessible, and boundaries should include properties directly benefiting from the lake, such as riparian parcels and recreation-related businesses. The process begins with a petition signed by 51% of landowners or owners of 51% of the land area within the proposed district, followed by filing the petition with the county clerk. A public hearing is held within 30 days, and the county board decides within six months. Lake districts can also be formed by town boards, city/village resolutions, or converting sanitary districts. Once approved, the initial board records the district's legal description, organizes meetings, and prepares for the first annual meeting. Lake districts work to address lake management issues like water quality, habitat restoration, and recreational improvements, providing a structured way to fund and manage lake protection efforts.

In 1988, Lake Ripley was invaded by the invasive Eurasian watermilfoil – blanketing 40% of the lake's surface, while also affecting the wildlife and the health of the lake itself. In the summer of 1989 a group of volunteers raised enough money to buy the first weed harvester and started the process of harvesting Eurasian watermilfoil. This was the start

of our weed harvesting program that thrives today. The following year the group started the process of forming the Lake District, which was approved by the Town of Oakland and the Jefferson County Board in 1991. Now, 34 years later, the District's mission remains unchanged - to preserve and enhance Lake Ripley's water quality, its fish and wildlife communities and its overall ecological health, while ensuring public access and the use of the lake that is safe, fair, and practical.

The Lake District protects Lake Ripley and manages 207 acres, coordinated by our Lake Manager, Lianna Spencer, and several part-time employees who assist in fulfilling our mission. None of this could be accomplished without our Lake District residents who support our efforts. As we continue to move the District forward, we have some big projects that are just beginning that will help protect Lake Ripley for years to come. Please stay involved, attend meetings, visit our website, contact your commissioners or our Lake Manager. As we near the halfway point of summer, enjoy a walk in the Preserve and if you're able to – get out on the lake and enjoy all it has to offer!

Chair Jimmy DeGidio



*Sunset on lovely Lake Ripley.*

## LAKE LESSONS: CONNECTING COMMUNITY WITH CONSERVATION

If you've ever gazed into the clear, shimmering waters of Lake Ripley and wondered about its health – you're not alone! Here at the District, we monitor all aspects of our lake's health and we are fortunate enough to be a part of the DNR's Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (CLMN) program. Since its inception, the CLMN program has brought together over 1,000 dedicated volunteers from across the state, all driven by a shared passion for safeguarding our aquatic environments. The goal of this program is to collect high-quality data, to educate and empower volunteers to share this data and knowledge with our District residents, the DNR and anyone who uses Wisconsin's lakes!

We measure water clarity, using the Secchi Disk method, as an indicator of water quality. We also collect chemistry (total phosphorus and chlorophyll-A), temperature and dissolved oxygen data, as well as monitor for the first appearance of aquatic invasive species near boat landings, other access points, or along the shoreline.

In addition, satellite images are used to retrieve water clarity data for lakes across the state. This effort began in 1999 when the University of Wisconsin-Madison Environmental Remote Sensing Center (ERSC) developed a model for the retrieval of water clarity data from satellite images while Citizen Lake Monitoring Network volunteers provided on-the-ground Secchi data to confirm and calibrate this model for each satellite image. The DNR continues to analyze data in this way today in its remote sensing program. Find the data here: <https://dnr-wisconsin.shinyapps.io/WaterExplorer/?stationid=283122>

So, when you see us out on the lake getting our hands wet, make sure to give us a wave! Together, we can ensure that our lakes remain vibrant, healthy, and a source of joy for everyone for generations to come.



A retired board member, Craig Kempel, and a DNR representative collecting CLMN data together.



## PREPARING FOR THE OUTDOORS

Whenever hiking through natural areas like prairies and forests, it's important to be aware of plants that can cause harm. Even when the weather is warm, it's always a good idea to wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and closed-toe shoes when hiking anywhere. Here are three plants you will want to be able to identify:



### Problematic Plants to Avoid!



Photo credit:uvahealth.com



Photo credit:Aaron\_Carlson



Photo credit:Robert Vicol

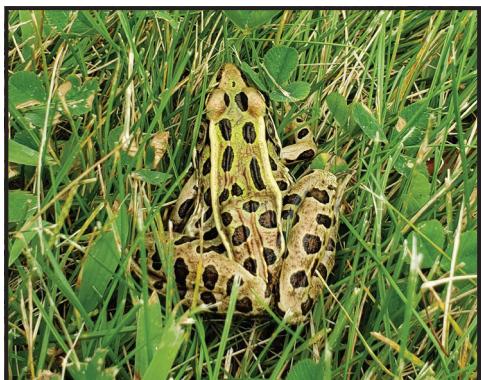
**POISON IVY:** This native plant produces an oil that causes itchy skin, and in more sensitive people, blistered skin. This plant can grow in both shady and sunny areas and sometimes grows as a vine. The old adage: "Leaves of three, let them be!" is good to remember. Avoidance is your best protection. Poison ivy can grow in various habitats, blooming from May to July.

**WILD PARSNIP:** This invasive plant has yellow flowers in an umbel structure. These flowers are look-alikes with the very beautiful prairie plant, Golden Alexander, which blooms in June, but instead of shapely leaves, those of wild parsnip look ragged. Avoid touching this plant! Its sap on skin will cause severe blistering burns in sunlight. This plant is most often found in sunny places, blooming during July and August.

**STINGING NETTLE:** Hairs from this large (2-7 feet tall) perennial plant inject several chemicals when coming in contact with the skin, causing welts, inflammation and a burning sensation. Removing the hairs and using cooling lotions can help reduce the symptoms. Nettles are usually found in woodlands, thriving in areas with disturbance.



## AWESOME AMPHIBIANS!



**NORTHERN LEOPARD FROGS:** You might hear its call before you see it! This frog's call sounds like a loud "snore", or like a finger dragging over a well-inflated balloon. This large, handsome frog is olive green with large brown spots bordered in yellow. Being found statewide, you will see them in wet places near water (or in the water!).



## MEET SOME LOCAL INHABITANTS!

Summertime is the best season to enjoy observing two groups of mostly small, shy, usually well-camouflaged creatures: amphibians and reptiles. Both groups are cold-blooded creatures. Snakes and turtles enjoy sunbathing in sunny spots, while the soft skin of amphibians needs some moisture. Snakes are silent, but you can often detect the presence of frogs by hearing their calls. Here are six common, fun-to-see amphibians and reptiles!



### Remember Reptiles!



Photo credit Todd Touzon



**COMMON WATERSNAKE:** This non-venomous snake can be found in many aquatic habitats throughout Wisconsin. When adults are dry, they are gray or olive in color. When they are wet, the series of starkly contrasting brown to rust-colored bands running the length of their back become evident. This pattern helps these snakes blend in with their surroundings and escape unnoticed. They spend their time sunning on rocks, logs or tree limbs that occur along our shoreline. They very much hope no one notices them, being very shy creatures.

**SNAPPING TURTLES:** Snappers are the largest turtles found in Wisconsin. They rarely leave the water and occasionally bask above the surface to regulate their body temperature. They aren't usually a cause for concern, but bites from snapping turtles can be a painful experience for your fingers and toes. Snappers are most aggressive on dry land, so steer clear when possible and hold them away from your body if you pick them up to help them across a road. Snappers are a very ancient species, and prefer living in wetlands or small ponds, where the water is calm.

**GRAY TREE FROGS:** These small frogs can change colors to mimic where they are, sometimes looking like lichen-covered bark on trees, or shades of green! Their call sounds very much like a bird call, a short flute-like trill. Tree frogs sit, well-camouflaged, and wait for insects to come close enough to catch them.



**RED BELLIED SNAKES:** Wisconsin's smallest snake is a secretive inhabitant of woodlands that feeds mostly on slugs. These snakes are some of the most widespread and common snakes in Wisconsin, but their small size make them difficult to detect. Adults have striking red to yellowish-orange bellies and three small light-yellow spots on the back of their heads. These snakes can be seen soaking up the sun on a warm sunny day.

**AMERICAN TOADS:** The richly-patterned bumpy skin of toads protect them by camouflaging them. It's a myth that people can get warts by touching them. Toads often forecast incoming rain by their high-pitched trilling. Though their tadpoles begin in water, adult toads are land creatures.

## INLET STREAM RESTORATION WITH STANTEC – SUMMER UPDATE

As District residents, your commitment to preserving our beautiful lake is deeply appreciated. As we slip deeper into summer, we want to update you on our partnership with Stantec.

Currently we are in Phase 1; we anticipate there being five phases in total. Our goal for this project is to improve Lake Ripley's water quality by reducing the amount of suspended solids and nutrients that flow into the Lake through the inlet stream. Our win-win goal is for this project to both improve Lake Ripley's water quality as well as the landowner's land. We are committed to improving Lake Ripley's water quality, and this is an important step in the right direction.

In June, we completed a field assessment to identify areas along the inlet tributary and smaller side channels to the inlet tributary that are contributing sediment from bank erosion or other sources. This survey is referred to as a BANCS survey – Bank Assessment for Non-Point Source Consequences of Sediment. Our preliminary survey results have come back and have potentially identified some "hotspots" along the inlet stream that may be ideal areas to pilot-test a specific best management practice (BMP). These hotspots could be areas with an eroding bank or a unvegetated floodplain which can happen naturally over time but can become more pronounced when we alter our landscape. Our



*Heather kayaking down the stream!*

next step is to choose one of the hotspots, pair it with a supportive landowner, and execute the BMP. BMPs may include streambanks stabilization, floodplain bench creation, or in-stream structures, just to name a few. Resourcefully, the District has been applying for, and receiving, multiple grants to fund this work; there will be no costs to any of our partnering landowners.

Additionally, the Stantec team entered data from the last 10-years into a web-based model that can estimate long-term nutrient and sediment loads from different land uses within our watershed. Focusing along the inlet creek using the data from the BANCS survey and PLET model, the District plans to reach out to our supportive, neighboring landowners to work with them to develop an appropriate strategy for their land and the lake – together. So far, the support of the local landowners has been very encouraging.

This fall, the District plans on hosting an in-person meeting to answer any questions our residents may have. We will have District and Stantec representatives at the meeting to give you updates and discuss our next steps. We will publish a notice regarding this meeting later in the year. As always, feel free to reach out to the District office with any questions!



*The whole survey crew!*

**LAKE RIPLEY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT**  
**2026 PROPOSED BUDGET**

	<u>2024 ACTUAL</u>	<u>2025 BUDGET</u>	<u>2025 JAN-JUNE ACTUAL</u>	<u>2025 JAN-DEC ESTIMATED</u>	<u>2026 BUDGET</u>
<b>Revenues:</b>					
Real Estate Tax Levy	175,117	217,556	153,679	217,556	234,022
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b><u>175,117</u></b>	<b><u>217,556</u></b>	<b><u>153,679</u></b>	<b><u>217,556</u></b>	<b><u>234,022</u></b>
<b>Operations:</b>					
Landowner Cost Sharing	15,000	15,000	9,550	12,000	12,000
Weed Harvesting	15,275	17,850	1,411	17,150	18,280
Preserve Restoration/Management	12,868	27,250	11,062	27,250	32,750
Staff Payroll/Fringes/Taxes	85,276	95,528	45,495	95,528	105,051
Insurance	9,121	9,678	9,131	9,131	9,800
Legal & Accounting	2,840	6,000	2,550	6,000	5,500
Dues & Conferences	1,137	1,850	1,524	1,850	2,100
Office & Community Outreach	7,835	11,650	6,166	11,650	15,250
Commissioner Stipends	2,400	3,200	900	1,750	3,600
Rent	1,800	1,900	1,800	1,800	1,800
Capital Reserve, Land/Equip Acquistion	25,200	20,000	9,645	20,000	20,000
Miscellaneous & General Lake Mgmt.	4,623	7,600	3,710	7,600	11,300
Special Programs	200	50	-	-	-
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b><u>183,575</u></b>	<b><u>217,556</u></b>	<b><u>102,943</u></b>	<b><u>211,709</u></b>	<b><u>237,431</u></b>

**LAKE RIPLEY  
PROTECTION  
FUND**

Restricted Fund:

Estimated Balance (12/31/25) \$180,531

**2024 Activity**

Increase	3,000
Moved from checking to restricted funds	25,000
<b>Final Balance 12/31/24</b>	<b>131,081</b>

**2025 Estimated Activity**

Interest Earned	2,500
Moved from Loan Payments to Restricted	50,000
Moved from Restricted to Legal Fees	\$3,050

Estimated Balance 12/31/2025 180,531

Anyone wishing to see a detailed budget may come to the District office at the Oakland Town Hall, N4450 Cty Hwy A, Cambridge, during normal business hours. Phone ahead to make sure office is open at 608-423-4537.

**Budget Hearing**

August 16, 2025

9 a.m. at Oakland Town Hall  
N4450 County Road A  
Cambridge, WI, 53523

**Annual Meeting**

Immediately following budget hearing  
Oakland Town Hall

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of 2024 Annual Meeting Minutes
- III. Nomination of Board candidates, Statements of candidates, and Election - two open positions (Name on Ballot: Doug Maurer)
- IV. Chairman's report
- V. Treasurer's report
- VI. Approval of the budget and tax levy

VII. Discussion and possible action on other business that can be legally considered by the District

VIII. Tabulation of vote and election of board members

IX. Adjournment

**Meeting of the Board of Directors**

Immediately following Annual Meeting  
Oakland Town Hall

- I. Call to Order and Roll Call
- II. Election of Board Officers
- III. Adjournment

Note: Public Comment will be taken at discretion of District Chair

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