

A CHRONICLE OF CEDAR LAKE CONSERVANCY

1993

A self-appointed steering committee, consisting of Don Blount, Don Hicks, Mike Hill, Jim Larson, Don Matteson, Pat Ritter and Jim Spaeth, decided to form a lake association to collectively address issues such as property regulation, fish stocking, hazard marking, Eurasian milfoil and any other concerns Cedar Lake property owners had.

The first annual meeting of the Cedar Lake Owners' Association was held on August 21, at the Aitkin VFW Club. Officers and directors were: Jim Larson, President, Marlette Pittmann, Vice President, Jim Spaeth, Treasurer, Don Blount, Janis Broughton, Steve Haasl, Dan Hruza and Mike Menth. According to the meeting minutes, topics of discussion included treasurer's report (dues were \$20), bylaw language, home/cabin security, lake rules and information on the use of outboard motors and jet skis. The treasurer's report showed 185 paid memberships. Lake level information was presented by an area DNR hydrologist; discussion of the BN railroad bridge and beaver dams ensued. Suggestions on the direction of the organization were solicited.

1994

A newsletter sent to the dues-paying membership (no information available on how many this included), stated "The lake association is your chance to find out more about our lake, the factors that impact it and get to know other Cedar Lake owners. Your association needs your talent and ideas for our growth and the preservation of Cedar Lake. If you can't volunteer your time, at least join our association. A large membership base will provide us with a loud voice pertaining to matters involving our mutual benefits of lakeshore ownership. To help fill our immediate needs please contact one of the board members or note your area of interest on the enclosed membership form."

The mission in 1994 is still the same today.

1995

At the annual meeting on June 10, the Cedar Lake Owners' Association By-Laws were adopted. Later that year ideas and designs for an association logo were requested from the membership. Elinor Eberhardt maintained the property owners' database. Postage on the newsletters was 32 cents at the time.

1996

Elinor Eberhardt and Sandy Larson took on the newsletters.

1997

Jim Larson, Membership Chair, reported there were 159 paid members.

1998

The new logo debuted (created by Larry McKenzie), which is still used today but with the updated name.

1999

Andria Klucas replaced Elinor Eberhardt as editor of the newsletter. There were 30 lake stewards searching for Eurasian milfoil and purple loosestrife.

2000

Gerry Delaney, President, reported in a newsletter that the main areas of activity for the Board related to the water clarity, environmentally friendly shore land management and the efforts to obtain tax-exempt status (501c[3]). Under the IRS rules at the time, the “owners’ association” part of the organization’s name implied that a primary purpose of the organization was to protect or enhance the investments of Cedar Lake property owners. IRS regulations do not consider that a legitimate basis for tax-exempt status. Conservational and educational objectives are more consistent with tax-exempt status. The Board of Directors selected the name Cedar Lake Conservancy and worked on drafting new bylaws to reflect the change of focus.

Also, during this year a special edition of the newsletter was sent to members. There were significant concerns about the water quality. Tom Eberhardt, Water Quality Chair, reported a 2’ – 3’ loss in water clarity over the last five years. He stated reduced water clarity is typically caused by an increase in algae, which is caused by increased fertility of the water usually meaning more phosphorous in the water. The Board approved an initial water sampling and phosphorous testing plan that cost about \$1,000.

2001

The hunt was on for women directors. The organization’s name was officially changed to Cedar Lake Conservancy. Water clarity continued to slip. President, Gerry Delaney, stressed the need to communicate with all property owners in the Cedar Lake Watershed so they would know how their activities may affect Cedar Lake. Jim Spaeth, Sunset Bay Resort owner, started the first lakeshore restoration project. The purpose of the project was to reduce the erosion going into the lake from a hill to the east of the resort cabins.

2002

John Menge was welcomed as President, a Cedar Lake Conservancy website was developed and Kari Dragovich joined the Board. Les Martin took over as Water Quality Chair. Water clarity was still a concerning issue. During this year there were 158 paid members.

2003

The Board of Directors received the most comprehensive report ever done on Cedar's water quality, lake levels and fisheries compiled by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. The study confirmed Little Cedar showed more signs of stress than the rest of the lake. Causes of the problematical status of Little Cedar were quite clear. The two major streams coming into Cedar Lake both enter Little Cedar first. Both these streams carried at least triple the nutrient levels of the lake itself. The exit stream for Cedar is at the north end of the lake. All the water leaving Little Cedar passed through the main body of the lake thereby making potential problems in Little Cedar every property owner's problem. There were 182 paid members, the highest to date since inception.

2004

President, John Menge, and Water Quality Chair, Les Martin continued to reiterate the poor water clarity and asked property owners to do their part in updating septic systems and shoreline erosion. Curlyleaf pondweed was discovered in the lake by the DNR. Membership declined to 136. Postage for mailings was 37 cents.

2005

At the June annual meeting the membership voted to develop a lake management plan spear headed by President, Les Martin. The plan would determine property owners' priorities now and in the future. Steady rains in June led to continued poor water clarity.

2006

Managing your shoreline was the focus this year. Property owners had the opportunity to learn about buffer zones, preventing shoreline erosion and revegetating with wetland plants at the annual meeting. In addition, results of the lake management plan were discussed. Lake level was not one of the top issues based on survey results. The Conservancy was given a section of County Road 28 (Pioneer Avenue) for liter pickup in the spring and fall. A sign on the road displays the clean up dates. Postage for mailings was 39 cents.

2007

Water quality checks were to start in Cedar Brook and Casey Brook, as it was suspected they were culprits in the degradation in Little Cedar. Due to an extremely dry year, this was put on hold. How to implement a water garden to enhance property beauty and reduce shoreline erosion and improve water quality was the highlight of the annual meeting. The Aitkin Area Fisheries survey showed a better than average size and population of walleye and northern. Pan fish were average, tulibee/perch below average and muskies were doing well. There were 134 paid members.

2008

Rick Bruesewitz from Aitkin Area Fisheries was the featured speaker at the annual meeting. There were 67 paid members.

2009

There were 137 paid members. No other information available.

2010

Water clarity numbers were some of the best according to Water Quality Chair, Les Martin. Discussed at great length at the annual meeting were zebra mussels, which started to invade Mille Lacs Lake. Efforts were being taken to voluntarily monitor the public access for incoming boats that may have these “hitchhikers” in bilges, live wells and bait buckets. There were 98 paid members. Postage for mailings was 44 cents.

2011

Zebra mussels, Eurasian milfoil and other invasive species were the hot topic at the annual meeting. The DNR netted 19 muskies during a ten-day period, one more than any previous year. The Conservancy lost three valued members: Tom and Elinor Eberhardt and Phil Rzeszutek. Tom and Phil were past presidents of the Board. Paid membership for the year was 97.

2012

Paid membership declined to 26. No other information available.

2013

Cedar's clarity climbed according to Les Martin, Water Quality Chair. Phosphate levels ran about half what they were six years ago. Shoreline buffers and water gardens immensely helped. No Eurasian milfoil or zebra mussels had been discovered. Channel catfish were found in the Mississippi and the DNR alerted property owners that they could find their way into Cedar. Board Director, Dar Heino, set the Conservancy up with a FaceBook page. After reorganization of the Board, the resurrection of the newsletter (now called The Cedar Log) and the creation of a FaceBook page by Board Director, Dar Heino, the paid membership was on the upswing at 112.

2014

The Conservancy was successful in obtaining its first watercraft inspection grant for the season. Trained inspectors were at the public landing doing scrutinizing all boats for any invasive, aquatic species. Water quality was not the best due to runoff from the rains. The Conservancy hosted its first annual food drive for the Aitkin Food Shelf. There were 137 paid members.

2015

Annual dues increased in \$25. This was the first increase since the inception of the organization in 1993. The Conservancy started accepting donations to specifically help fund public access inspections. In addition, efforts continued to be made for social activities. At the annual meeting, the Board requested feedback on muskies in the lake. Many property owners noted some intense algae blooms. If seen again in 2016, samples will be taken to see if nutrient levels have changed according to Water Quality Chair, Les Martin. A safety deposit box was opened at Bremer Bank in Aitkin to house the organization's official papers. Steve Haasl and Debbie Campbell have keys. The Board decided to restore the website. Michael Klinepier, son of Board Director, Kelly Klinepier, volunteered to build the site hosted by Minnesotawaters.org. The site would go live by the 2016 annual meeting. There were 142 paid members. Postage for mailings was 49 cents.

2016

Don Blount, a founding member and past President, passed away. Postage for mailings dropped to 47 cents.