

## OPINION

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### Granite Lake is a Star Lake

By Ray Rau

A **Star Lake** has been born right here in the Annandale area.

Granite Lake has been selected by the board committee members of the **Star Lake** Program and been designated a **Star Lake**.

This program became law in 2008 as an initiative introduced by State Sen. Mary Olson of Bemidji.

As stated by Sen. Olson, "The **Star Lake** Program will recognize and assist lake associations that voluntarily implement water-friendly lake management practices beyond what is currently required by law."

The legislation established a **Star Lake** Board that is composed of lakeshore owners and representatives from several state agencies. The board is tasked with soliciting applications from lake associations, reviewing the applications against required criteria and voting on **Star Lake** status.

In order for a lake association to receive **Star Lake** status, it must meet the following criteria.:

- "Developing and updating a **Star Lake** or river management plan that aims to improve the health of a lake, identify opportunities for public-private partnerships, promote shoreland best management practices, and educate association members;
- "Maintaining a membership of at least half of the private shoreland owners;
- "Participating in a water quality monitoring program that meets Pollution Control Agency standards; and
- "Holding annual meetings to review the **Star Lake** plan and notify appropriate state agencies and local government units in the development and monitoring of the **Star Lake** or river management plan."

The **Star Lake** Board also works with private and public entities to allocate resources and provide technical help to **Star Lake** associations in order to achieve the benchmarks stated in their lake management plans.

The legislative bill also contains provisions to financially assist **Star Lakes** by providing a priority to those lakes when applying for grant monies.

Star Lake associations receive letters from the **Star Lake** Board designating their respective lakes as **Star Lakes**. In addition, they receive signs that indicate **Star Lake** status, and \$500 checks to be used by the associations as they wish.

For Granite Lake, this journey started back in 1999 when the association was again activated after being dormant for many years. A monitoring program was put in place, followed by a lake management plan, and after that a monitoring plan was completed.

To meet the goals set out in the management plan, several water improvement projects were completed that required working with private and public agencies for technical assistance and financial support. The association in its efforts to improve water quality in Granite Lake has gone far beyond the criteria required by the **Star Lake** Program.

Associations can only reach **Star Lake** status by having a dedicated membership, outstanding leadership in its president and hard-working board members. The Granite Lake Association has received outstanding support from landowners/farmers in the watershed. The association has listed as one of its top priorities to work closely with private organizations and government agencies. When all of these things above are in place, good things happen. Granite Lake has all of these! The association must have a good lake management plan in place and attempt to implement every aspect contained in the plan. A good monitoring program must be in place that provides consistent, high quality water health data to the state agencies, and monitoring activities that extend over decades.

To give someone more perspective on the likelihood of obtaining **Star Lake** designation, one has to consider that the state has approximately 10,000 lakes. Only about 1000 of these lakes have organized lake associations, and of those lakes there are less than 100 having that sort of management plan in place that might qualify their lake with a **Star Lake** designation.

Granite Lake is proud to be a recipient of this award.

Ray Rau is a member of the Granite Lake Watershed Association.