

LAKE ALEXANDER PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Spring 2017

From President Dr. Bill's Desk

Spring 2017

Dear LAPOA Members,

Here it is the opener of fishing 2017, and the weather is as nice as it has been on opening day in many years!? I don't think anyone is complaining about that, although the fish may not be biting, and water temp is around 60 degrees F. Ice out was around April 3, so a few days later than last year, and water levels tended to be somewhat high, but still within 2-3" of our average at this time of year...As has been the case the past couple of Springs, again this year there have not been an abundance of floating bog issues, which is always a welcome beginning to the Summer season.

Snowfall was below average again, and so it was not a good year for ice fishing or snowmobiling, unfortunately, but seems to becoming the pattern in recent Winters. There were some ice heaving issues especially around the east end access moving South, but that was all that was brought to my attention so overall, less than normal heaving damage, again, good for most of us. And finally, even though there was a lack of snow cover for most of the Winter, there didn't seem to be many frozen septic issues this year either. I would thus like to take the opportunity to welcome all of our Summer residents back to the

lake, from wherever South you may be arriving; here's wishing you another Summer of enjoyment and relaxation on Lake Alex and around the Lincoln Lakes area. I would like to bring to your attention our upcoming Summer gathering: **our LAPOA annual meeting is set to occur in combination with the Lake Alexander Lake Improvement District meeting, on Saturday, July 8, 2017 at the Scandia Valley Town Hall.** Please mark that date on your calendars and look for further information in this newsletter. Finally, our website address continues to be found at minnesotawaters.org, where you should click on the link on the left to Lakes and River Groups, and then click on page 10 to find the Lake Alexander Property Owners Association.

I would like to finish out this 2017 President's Spring Letter by saying that I again look forward to seeing many of you around Lake Alex this Summer and hope many of you will participate in our annual meetings on July 8. Lastly, I would like to make my annual appeal to you to please share your thoughts with me or any other LAPOA Board members as our Property Owners Association continues to be member driven; and once again, thanks to all for your continued support of the Lake Alexander Property Owners Association!!

Dr. Bill Faber, President

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Mission Statement: To act as stewards of Lake Alexander in regards to water quality, fish management, and shore line conservation.

LALID TREASURER'S UPDATE Fall 2017

This past Summer of 2016 has been good to the Lake Alexander Lake Improvement District's (LA LID) pocket book. Currently we have an additional thirty thousand dollars more at the bank than this time last year due to nominal cost associated with invasive species weed treatments and bog control measures. And yes - hopefully your shoreline was not one of the few adversely affected by ice heaving this past winter.

As we start the 2017 Summer at the lake season we know we will have a significantly longer weed growth season as a result of the early April ice out and a warmer start. Water levels are a bit above average for Spring and fluctuate with Summer evaporation and rainfall. But when that lake water creeps up and along with windy conditions, that combination can cause bogs to break apart, float away and cause damage.

Should you encounter a bog please contact a LA LID board member for assistance if desired. Smaller bogs (less than size of pick up trucks box) are generally best taken care of directly by individuals. If possible it may be helpful to beach the small bog and let it dry out - significantly reducing their weight and making the bog much easier to cope with. Larger bogs will require the resources of your LA LID. Bogs can be

disposed under the LA LID's group permit - the Morrison County gravel pit accepts bogs without a charge.

You may have seen the invasive weed signage at the public boat landings or full color brochures at local businesses starting this past fall. They graphically illustrate where curly leaf pond weed and Eurasian milfoil weed treatments commence. Let's hope and pray for a season that resembles 2016!

It would be great to see you at our annual meeting which we hold with the Property Owners Association at the Scandia Valley Township Hall. This year it will be the morning of the second Saturday in July (7-8-2017). Please join us for learning, fellowship, coffee & donuts!

On a parting note, we have lost a fond LA LID board member (and long time friend of my family) Rick Lindmeier due to cancer that was discovered only two months before his death. Our condolences to his family and all of our recently deceased lake neighbors that are no longer with us to enjoy our local piece of Heaven.

Ron Wieber
LID Treasurer

Fisheries Report

I met with the Department of Natural Resources Area Fisheries Manager Eric Altena in April to discuss the state of the Lake Alexander Fishery. According to the DNR, the fish management focus for the lake is primarily Walleye with secondary management for Northern Pike, Muskellunge, Largemouth Bass, and Smallmouth Bass. Walleye are a much sought after species on Alexander and a variety of sizes were observed in the 2014 survey (the most recent available). Although the Summer survey Walleye catch was lower than the desired management goal, the catch rate was an increase from the last survey, near the long-term average for the lake, and within the normal range when compared to similar type lakes. A third of the Walleyes sampled were between 12 and 29 inches and the average weight was 2.3 pounds, well above the normal range of 1.1-1.9 pounds. Walleye Fry are stocked every year.

A Northern Pike regulation was implemented in 2003 which requires the release of all Pike between 24 and 36 inches with one over 36 inches allowed in possession. The objective of the regulation is to improve the Pike population and will remain in place until at least 2022. The slot appears to be working as the Northern population is trending up in both numbers and size after overfishing this population. Anglers are encouraged to keep smaller Northerns for table fare and release all others. An overabundance of small Northerns is a problem in many Minnesota lakes due to the practice of keeping only larger fish. Small Northerns are just as good on the table.

Musky populations continue to be within the lake manage-

ment goals, with some fish present exceeding the 50 inch legal minimum.

Looking at the records available from the past 20 years, both Large and Smallmouth Bass populations are trending down but remain above the normal range for the species and gear used to assess them. Both Black Crappie and Bluegill numbers were decreased in the 2014 assessment. Yellow Perch numbers were very low in 2014 gill nets, but they did appear in electrofishing assessments which indicate they are smaller in size. The reduction in Yellow Perch size is a statewide issue with an unknown cause at this time. Tullibee (Cisco), an important forage base for larger fish, were at a 20-year high in 2014. Tullibee require cooler water temperatures than the other species for survival and are threatened by warming water temperatures.

Mr. Altena encourages anglers to practice responsible catch and release, especially for Bluegills. To build a population of larger Bluegills, the larger fish need to be returned to the lake in order to keep a healthy population of genetically larger fish. Removing the larger fish leaves a stunted Sunfish population from which recovery is difficult. Lastly, responsible shoreline and landowner conservation practices on lakeshore properties directly affect the water quality of the lake and the fishing quality.

The next spring trap net assessment will take place in 2018, with electrofishing assessments to occur this fall. You can find more information on the Lake Alexander Fishery at <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind>.

Restoring Shorelines

The previous article discussed the importance of healthy shorelines to overall lake water quality and my personal experience with restoring our shoreline.

The evidence that healthy lakes require healthy, native shorelines is undeniable. Most of us are here because we enjoy the natural beauty of the lake, the fishing, the wildlife, or the recreation. All of these attributes depend upon lake water quality which in turn is heavily influenced by shoreline development. We unknowingly harm shorelines by clearing brush and trees, importing sand to make beaches, and installing manicured lawns to the waters edge, or clearing native vegetation by hand removal, chemicals or weed rollers. Lawns that are fertilized cause phosphorus run off into the lake which in turn feeds algae blooms. Lawn chemicals that are toxic to fish find their way into the lake to harm the fishery. Small actions by an individual that seem to have little impact instead have a huge impact collectively. Left unchecked, the negative consequences have been seen throughout the country:

- Reduced water quality due to run off pollution
- Loss of fish and wildlife
- Altered lake character and experiences
- Lower property values

The last bullet point should ring a bell. The value of your property is directly related to the quality of the lake. A lake with poor fishing and swimming is not desirable to prospective buyers. People prefer clean water and will pay more to live on lakes with good water quality. The good news is that we can reduce our impact on water quality and habitat by healthy and sustainable lake shore management practices. Waterfront owners play a crucial role in determining the future water quality of a lake. What we do to sustain and improve water quality will pay dividends in both resale and lake experiences.

This series of articles will explore what we can do as both individuals and an association to protect, improve and sustain the quality of our lake for future genera-

tions. There will be made available techniques and land management practices we can follow, reference materials, and help available through county and state agencies. The good news is that we enjoy a healthy lake at the moment, but it is under development pressure and threats from adjacent potato farming operations. Small seasonal cabins are progressively being replaced by large homes. Naturally vegetated properties are being cleared for manicured lawns with no buffer to filter the run off. We are fortunate to be at the origin of our watershed, but anything we add to the lake makes its way into Fishtrap Lake and down the Long Prairie River and affects those waters along the way.

We will explore more practices in detail but there are a few simple things you can do to start down the path responsible shoreline management. Yards can grow unfertilized or use zero phosphorus fertilizer to eliminate phosphorus run off from your property. Natural weed killers can be used instead of toxic chemicals. "Weeds" are aquatic vegetation beneficial to fish and can be allowed to grow. Most importantly you can create a buffer strip of natural vegetation between the waters edge and the lawn edge. Buffer strips do not have to be planted, they can consist of native vegetation allowed to grow selectively. Buffer strips can also be planted with ornamental native vegetation; that will be covered at a later date. These practices require a change in our standard of what is beautiful around the lake, moving away from the manicured lawn to the water. It will be important to educate our friends and neighbors, too. We are also fortunate to have many landowners who have kept their shorelines in a natural state, giving us a good base to preserve. In addition we have landowners who have completed shoreline restoration projects.

As an association 325 members strong (70% of the properties!) We can make a huge impact on our lake quality if we join together and explore the ways in which each landowner can contribute to the greater good. There will be a discussion about this topic at the annual meeting and I encourage you to bring any thoughts and suggestions you may have. If anyone has experience in this area, I would be pleased to hear from you. For more information here is a link to excellent information on shoreline restoration:

<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/shorelandmgmt/index.html>

Douglas Cook
LAPOA Board Member

Lake Alexander Lake Improvement District Board Members

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Danger At The Dock

How many times have you let your kids go for a swim off a dock at the lake? Seems harmless enough, particularly if they are wearing a life jacket. But in recent years, there have been more and more reports of people being electrocuted while swimming in a body of fresh water, such as a lake. This is a phenomenon called Electric Shock Drowning (ESD) and can cause a fun day on the water to go horribly wrong.

Why does it happen?

ESD occurs when electricity from a boat or a dock "leaks" into the water around it. A person in the electrified water can experience anything from a mild tingling to a shock that passes through the body with enough force to cause muscular paralysis, causing the person to drown. It typically occurs in fresh water rather than sea water because sea water conducts electricity better than fresh water. (Electrical current looks for something to flow through. In salt water it can flow through the salt. In fresh water, there is nothing. However, it can pass through a human body that's in the water. If there's enough current passing through the body, things can go horribly wrong in a hurry. In salt water, the current flows around you, not through you.)

According to *Boating* magazine, at least eight deaths were attributed to faulty boat and dockside wiring in 2012. Many more fatalities listed as drowning were likely caused by ESD. In the past, it's been difficult to determine exactly how many drownings have occurred due to electric shock because an autopsy won't reveal signs of ESD.

Veliger Testing and Training /Quad Lakes Grant

As many of you are aware, Morrison County has at least two Zebra Mussel infested waters (Fish Trap Lake and the Mississippi River). Early detection of Veliger's (earliest life stage of the Zebra Mussel) provides the best opportunity to treat and protect against an adult Zebra Mussel infestation.

Morrison County hired RMB Laboratories to evaluate the lakes within the County for risk/suitability of Zebra Mussel infestation. The lab looked at water chemistry, lake use, lake bottom substrate and connectedness to other water bodies. Lake Alexander is rated as a High-Risk lake for Zebra Mussels infestation.

Morrison County has reached out to all the lakes in Morrison County looking for volunteers to test for Veliger's. RMB Laboratories will be conducting the training. Volunteers from six lakes (Lake Alexander, Fish Trap, Crookneck, Shamineau, Green Prairie, and Peavey), have offered their services.

Lake Alexander will have four volunteers attending training in June. Morrison County will be providing the testing equipment, as well as covering the cost of the testing for the presence of Veliger's.

Quad Lakes Group received a grant to conduct a pilot project using local civic groups, (Lions, Scandia Valley First Responders, etc.) to conduct AIS inspection on Fish Trap Lake. Volunteers would be trained in the inspection of boats and trailers, as well as provide information on AIS from the DNR to help educate the public. Volunteers would wear a vest or shirt indicating the program and the non-profit they are contributing to. A contribution to the non-profit of \$75.00 per event. An event would be two people for 2 hours of inspections.

Chuck Schiemo
LID Board Member

Prevention for Swimmers

There's no way to tell if the water you're getting ready to jump into is electrified. If you are already in the water and feel a tingling sensation, resist the urge to swim towards the dock. Instead, head for a shoreline at least 100 yards from the dock and yell for others not to go in the water. If you see someone in the water who needs help, follow the U.S. Army's advice: reach throw, row - but don't go.

Prevention for Boat and Dock Owners

If you own a boat, have it checked at least once a year by an electrician who is familiar with the safety standards of the American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) to make sure no electricity is leaking. You may also have them install an Equipment Leakage Circuit Interrupter (ELCI) on your boat or on the shore power cord, or use a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) in the shore power cord. Have the electrician explain how to use this equipment, and make sure you test it every time you take your boat out.

If you own a dock or a marina that is electrified, do not allow swimming within 100 yards. In addition, have your dock checked periodically to ensure there are no safety issues.

One of the most important things you can do is to educate yourself and others about ESD, especially children. Make sure they know why they shouldn't just jump right in the water. Doing so may save lives!

<http://www.boatingmag.com/how-to/electric-shock-drowning-prevention>

Bogs...Big & Small

Bogs, being part of our lake system, from wheel barrel size to football field size and how we respond to them.

Wheel barrel size, these you can remove yourself, drag them up on the shoreline and let them dry out and dispose of them.

A little bigger, let's say two to three-wheel barrel size. May need help from your neighbors with this one. Again, drag up onto the shoreline, let it dry out and dispose of it, compost pile might be a good location. This might be a good time for a little beverage time with your neighbors after the work is done.

Stepping up to the size where it's beyond your capability to move, now we're talking about the 4'x8' size (pick-up truck box size) and bigger. Time to contact a LID board member to have it removed and/or relocated. Phone numbers of your LID board can be found elsewhere in this newsletter. A LID board member will make a visit to your property to confirm that it needs a contractor to remove. Please note, a LID board member is the only one authorized to order this work. Also, be aware that when you call to have a large bog removed, it will be a few days before it can be moved.

Leaving a small bog on your shoreline can have its benefits too. Aquatic plants provide food and shelter for ducks, songbirds, and other animals while reducing problems caused by Canada geese and burrowing Muskrats. Tall plants like Bullrush and Cattail can reduce the energy of wave action to minimize erosion and help maintain water quality.

Chuck Schiemo
LID Board Member