

LAKE ALEXANDER PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Fall 2018

Dear LAPOA Members Autumn 2018

It's early October we had our first snow, and the autumn colors are finally coming into their own, and fast. We've had at least 2 nights of good frost around the lake as of October 5, so I've heard many wonder what the winter might hold?! Time will certainly tell...I hope you all get the opportunity for one last visit to see the colors and to check out the considerably reduced water levels, I would argue they've gone down 8-10 inches since late July?! Once again, at this writing we have had our final Board meeting for the year in late September and fortunately there were no major issues "lingering about" as far as the Board is aware. And to remind you all, our Board minutes from the latest meeting are posted on our website found at www.minnesotawaters.org: click on the link on the left for Lakes and River Groups, and then click on L for Lake Alexander Property Owners Association.

As was the case last year at this time, there really isn't a whole lot new to report on. Other than the fact this has been a quite gray wet and downright cool early autumn, not much to comment about. We have received some more shoreline restoration applications to our recently implemented and incentivized Lakeshore

Restoration program, as discussed at this past summer's annual meeting. Thanks to Doug Cook, once again for his efforts on this program, it is really gaining some momentum and the Board is pleased with that activity. For further information, read more details about the program and the application form found on our website. We hope that you find our Fall newsletter an easy read yet informative, and send us any comments or concerns to any LAPOA Board Member, and any necessary action will be taken.

In summarizing this Fall President's Letter, this will once again be the final correspondence for the season. However, we do maintain contact during the winter season with all Board members, so feel free to contact one of us with any enquiries, and if immediate action is required, we'll do our best to respond as timely as possible. Finally, best wishes to all of you for an enjoyable fall and winter we look forward to seeing you sometime this winter or spring!

Warm wishes,

Dr. Bill, LAPOA 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.

LA LID TAX CUTS COMING BIG TIME... (no Hell or Highwater)!

If you are like me you get tired of the political ads "as seen on TV"! One that caught my interest was a proclamation that the average MN family (of four) would save about \$5,000 in 2018 federal income taxes due in 2019. Well this time it seems to be true according to www.smartasset.com.

But why bring this up? — well lake neighbor, because your Lake Alexander Lake Improvement District (LALID) tax assessment is also being slashed in 2018 payable 2019. It will drop 58% from \$200 per riparian property owner to only \$85! As LALID treasurer I see a trend that our current expenses for aquatic invasive weeds and related bog control have been recently dropping allowing us to build a healthy reserve in case history repeats itself or we have to deal with some new invasive aquatic species foes such as zebra mussels or starry stonewort. The reduced LALID assessment was discussed at our annual July public meeting and voted upon. The next step will be adoption by the Morrison County Commissioners and then you will see the reduction on your next MN Lake Alexander property tax statement.

The LALID continues to benefit from our association with the Lincoln Quad Lakes group and sharing our joint grant funding. You may recall that for the past few years we no longer get a DNTR \$100 @ acre reimbursement for treating AIS weeds we now get our third party weed mapping reimbursed —so far this year it amounted to over \$3,800!

For now, we are vigilant in monitoring our lake's aquatic environment. The late ice out showed the emergence of many weeds. Making the Curly Leaf Pondweed spring treatment a comparatively minor expense (at least this year). Eurasian Milfoil was also less predominant as about 16 acres were treated in late August. And our bog expenses were limited to a few thousand dollars so far. A considerable investigation by the DNR found that the report of zebra mussels could not be documented — even though a single adult zebra mussel was said to have been found and exhibited at our annual July meeting. Please let a LALID board member know if you feel you have seen any new out invasive weed cropping's.

You may have also heard that our neighbors to the Northwest on Lake Shamineau have quite a high-water problem. In 2015 their survey reported about \$1.5 million dollars in expenses due to high water — which has only gotten worse the past three years. Currently they are evaluating spending millions to bring that water back down — and a LID tax assessment of about \$1000 annually. Unfortunately they are not alone as nearby Crookneck is also about 2 feet Ordinary High Water level. So, let's be happy about our natural outlet to Fish Trap Lake and their also being just ordinary like us. Or just plain joyful over the spike in our walleye population.

Ron Wieber, LALID Treasurer

Preventing Septic System Freeze-up

Things to consider when getting ready for winter...

1. If there is no protective cover from snow as an insulator then you may want to consider an insulation cover or blanket. Your tank, drain field, mound, or trench should all have this cover to trap heat inside the system. As you know, there are resident anaerobic bacteria in the septic tank that break down the solid waste materials that treat the raw wastewater that your household produces. The heat maintains a high level of metabolism among the bacteria. If you don't provide a good snow cover, the frost will go deeper into the septic components eventually freezing the entire system.

2. Long intervals of not using your septic system will also encourage freeze-ups. This will occur with infrequent use in the winter months, i.e. weekends and also with low water usages entering the septic systems allowing the systems to freeze. You are encouraged to use more water if up on the weekends to create running wastewater to help keep the system open.

3. Soil compaction is caused by placing heavy objects on your drain field or driving over it. When this occurs the septic below freeze more easily resulting in damage to the septic system components and eventually results in a failed system.

4. Snow compaction will work in much the same manner. You want to avoid compaction of snow as it will drive the frost deeper and result in freeze-ups.

5. Not enough plant cover can also cause lack of insulation. If these concerns are present, straw is a great inexpensive insulator. It also will hold any snow we get which will add to your insulation.

6. It is recommended to pump your septic system on a regular basis. Every two years is recommended.

7. Systems that are water-logged are also targets for freeze-ups. These systems fail to disperse the wastewater effectively and cause slow drainage thus allowing waste water to drain and will allow freeze-ups to occur.

8. Make sure your septic system is capped so that cold air is not able to enter system and freeze it over.

Dave Schleichert
LAPOA Board Member

Restoring Shoreline Report

Doug Cook
Board Member

I am pleased to announce that at the fall board meeting we approved our first grant for a shoreline restoration project. The project involved erosion control. The award totaled the \$500 maximum, with the property owner matching that amount. We have two more projects in the hopper that will likely finish up next summer. Both of these are erosion control projects using bio-logs and native plantings to control erosion. If you are interested in the program, you will find the complete project proposal along with an application form on the association website at <https://minnesotawaters.org/lakealexanderpropertyowners> or just search for "lake alexander property owners". Or you can contact me for an application of more information at douglascook@yahoo.com.

Changes to the shoreline restoration grant program

In response to property owners erosion control problems, the board has expanded the program to include erosion control above the buffer zone. While the program always included shoreline erosion control, it will now expand to erosion control on embankments above the shoreline buffer zone where run off endangers the lake. These areas are difficult and dangerous to mow and prone to run-off that can carry fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides into the lake. Establishing native plants in these areas will anchor the soil to prevent erosion filter run-off or stop it altogether, eliminate the need to mow the hillside and add beauty to the landscape.

Erosion Control Best Practices

Many of us have experienced erosion of our shorelines with the recent high water. Some have installed rock rip rap but that is not the only or necessarily the best method to control shoreline erosion, depending upon your shoreline characteristics. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the following are best practices to control shore erosion.

1. Consult a shoreline restoration specialist and/or local soil and water conservation districts staff to assess erosion type

and damage and to develop a remediation plan.

2. Use standard bioengineering practices such as bio-logs, live stakes from willow and dogwood (must be installed during the dormant season).
3. Use seeds and plugs of aggressive native plant species, as appropriate for the region.
4. Place coarse woody debris, such as brush bundles or logs to reduce wave action and allow natural regeneration of plants.
5. Increase the wet meadow transitional zone though conservative re-grading of cut bank erosion.
6. Non-degradable shoreline retention material should be avoided.

For more information:

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/water_access/bmp/erosion

Morrison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

"TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND DIRECT ASSISTANCE FOR CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT OF SOIL AND WATER"

So states the mission statement of our local SWCD. With such a mission, they have a keen interest in protecting and conserving the water and watershed surrounding our lake. They are an important part of our shoreline restoration grant program, which they enthusiastically support. SWCD staff will visit your site, discuss your issues, help you with solutions and answer your questions along the way. A visit by the SWCD is an early step and a requirement to participate in our grant program. Depending upon availability, they may have funding to assist you with your project in addition to the lake association grant money if your project qualifies.

Visit their website for more information at

<http://morrisonswcd.org>

With offices located in Little Falls, they can be reached at 320-632-3553.

Fisheries Report Fall 2018

In the spring newsletter I reported on the lake fishing assessment survey underway by the DNR. This comprehensive assessment of the fishery is done every four years, the last being in 2014. Local Fisheries Manager Eric Altena reported on the progress at the annual meeting in July. The data collected up to that point included electrofishing in the fall of 2017 and ice-out trap netting this past spring. The trap netting consisted of 12 nets lifted daily from May 6-18. The netted fish were measured, weighed and released. Mr. Altena reported the walleye count was very high and exceeded the crappie count which is unusual. The final piece of the assessment was begun August 20 when four gill nets were set. The DNR pulled one net per day for the next four days, recording the length weight and sex of each species. In addition, scales are scraped from the fish to determine the age of the fish. All of the data from each of the assessment methods is entered into computerized spreadsheets where the results can be

studied and processed into meaningful reports. In the end, the assessment gives a picture of the overall health of the fishery and the individual species in it. The final report should be available before the spring newsletter.

Mr. Altena also reported that he personally stocked 2.5 million walleye fry into the lake in spring. If all goes well, a survival rate of 1-3% is expected resulting in 25,000-75,000 walleyes from this one stocking. Walleye fry stocking will continue annually at varying rates. Lake Alexander is dependent upon the stocking of walleyes as there is little evidence of natural reproduction. The question of why there is poor natural reproduction of walleye has yet to be fully answered. Stocking reports and assessments for the last 10 years are available at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind>.

Doug Cook
LAPOA Board Member

We Love Our Lake Alex Loons

Keep an Eye Open While Boating

One of the most enjoyable aspects of life on Lake Alex is the large population of Loons (*Gavia immer*) on the lake during the open water months. The ghostly tremolo of the Loon is a quintessential part of the north woods experience and we are fortunate to have a sizable population of mating Loons on our beautiful lake. From spring through the summer, we can observe mating pairs with juveniles in tow. We have also observed Loon nests in the spring as they only go on shore to mate and incubate their eggs which takes on



average 26-29 days yielding 1-2 chicks. Loons are uniquely designed for diving and unlike many birds, adult Loons have solid bones which makes them less buoyant. Loon chicks, with their downy feathers are very buoyant and won't be able to dive like an adult until all of the juvenile feathers have molted later in the summer. Despite their additional weight, migrating Loons have been clocked at over 70 MPH due to their streamlined body profile. Recently, I had a very personal encounter with an immature Loon that had crawled up onto our beachfront and had settled upon a concrete paver. Our ever vigilant Duck Tolling Retrievers, Cali and Rookie, were quick to alert us to the arrival of the Loon chick on our shoreline, and fortunately for the baby Loon it came to rest just outside the perimeter of our invisible fence. When I approached the Loon, I could see that one of its wings was in a contorted position and a significant swath of feathers had been shaved from its wing. Not knowing if the wing was broken, I went into the house and secured a storage tub and a pair of rubber gloves hoping to put the Loon into a secure place while determining what to do with the injured chick.

After making numerous phone calls to the U of M Vet Hospital, various animal rescue organizations and a couple local vets, I came across Wild and Free Wildlife Rehabilitation center in Garrison, MN affiliated with the Garrison Animal Hospital (320) 692-4180. Even though I called after hours, Dr. Debbie Eskedahl

(who was trained in animal rescue at the Raptor Center) took the call and gave me detailed instructions on how to care for the baby Loon. Surprisingly, a baby Loon can eat 8-12 dozen minnows a day so job one was to head down to the BP Station on Hwy 10 and buy enough fatheads to get the Loon through the following Monday when the Loon could be delivered to Wild and Free. I put the chick on a damp towel and placed a bowl of water with about a half a dozen minnows in it next to the injured bird. Baby Loon proceeded to consume at least 4 dozen minnows in the first hour so clearly this little one hadn't eaten in quite some time. Over the

course of the next 24 hours, all 10 dozen minnows were consumed. Interestingly, an internet fact check revealed that a family of Loons with two chicks can consume 10000 pounds of fish over the course of a summer.

The following Monday morning, Dr. Bill Faber, who knows Dr. Debbie Eskedahl, was kind enough to make the drive to Garrison to deliver the chick to Wild and Free. After further examination and X-Ray, it was determined that the baby Loon's wing was likely traumatized by a passing watercraft propeller but was not broken, making the prognosis for a full recovery into the wild very likely. This story had a happy ending, but I think the lesson here is that we all need to give our treasured Loons plenty of leeway when navigating our boats and watercraft on the lake. Even though our feathered friends appear many times to be unafraid of our presence, special vigilance is required not to hit these beautiful birds. Baby Loons are particularly vulnerable as they cannot dive as deep as an adult to escape an oncoming boat prop. With all the threats that exist to baby Loons, including Muskies, Eagles and onshore predators, let's all do our part to protect the survival of these magnificent residents of Lake Alexander.

Gene Champeau
Board Member

Hunt For Zebra Mussels!

I'm sure you heard the news, "Zebra Mussel found in Lake Alexander." Yes, a single zebra mussel was found on a rock, we received a report of Zebras found by fisherman on the East end of the lake, as they recognized them from Mille Lacs Lake, (note: no pictures or samples were taken). The DNR was contacted and an Invasive Species team was sent out to search the area. We started in the area of the East public landing, wading in the shallow areas using Aqua Scopes, then progressed to using a boat with the aid of the Aqua Scopes and rake drags, traveling almost to Bear Cabins. Results of this search...negative no signs of Zebra mussels.

Morrison County as you may know has provided us with equipment to survey for Veliger's; the larva of the Zebra Mussel, as well as Spiny Water Flea. A single female mussel can produce up to 30-40,000 larvae each reproductive cycle and over 1 million each year, this usually takes place around the time frame of Mid-June to Mid-July.

With this survey equipment two surveys were conducted at three locations on the lake. In addition an extra sample was

taken in the area of the East landing. Results of these surveys were... again negative, no indications of Veliger's or Spiny Water Flea. After the finding of the Zebra on the rock, DNR search teams were again dispatched to our lake. DNR Invasive Species staff conducted follow up inspections, using dive equipment on four different occasions, in the months of June, July and August, for a total of 20 hours, resulting in no Zebra Mussels.

In addition, Morrison County approved an additional survey for Veliger's in the area of the Blue Front Resort, four composite samples were taken, results of this survey were negative. Are we free and clear then as far as Zebra Mussels? **NO.** As of Oct. 8th we (Lake Board) have not received any calls of any findings on docks and/or lifts as they come out of the water. Thus, we must all work at keeping our lake Zebra and other Aquatic Invasive Species free. Clean-Drain-Dry your watercraft.

Chuck Schiemo
LAPOA Board Member