

# PROPERTY OWNERS HEARD:

## PROTECTING LONG AND DES MOINES LAKE

By John Haack and Bret Shaw

### LAKES EDUCATION PROGRAM GETS INSIGHTS FROM YOU

Understanding what motivates lakeshore property owners is helping Burnett County design and deliver lakes education that is useful to property owners like you. During the past year and a half, many of you participated in lake discussion groups, phone interviews or returned the lakes questionnaires. Your responses provided important insights for future lakes education efforts focusing on protecting natural lake shores or improving developed lake properties.



*For Clean Water & Lakeshore Habitat*

Burnett County and University of Wisconsin Extension are using your insights to design tools and educational approaches that communicate information that is practical, appealing and relevant to lake shoreline owners. We hope this information encourages behavior changes needed to produce positive, measurable effects on protecting our lakes. During the coming summer, we will share a number of new educational products with you - a youth lakes field guide, brochures, and various initiatives branded with the "Share Your Shore" logo. We hope these items will encourage you to take some action, small or large, that protects and enhances your lake and lakeshore property for generations to come.

### TAX INCENTIVES FOR WATER QUALITY, FISH AND WILDLIFE

Many of you felt the most important benefits of allowing more natural vegetation on the shoreline areas of your property were maintaining good water quality, improving fish and wildlife habitat and reducing runoff water and eroded soil from entering the lake. These insights are right on the mark and supported by researchers and biologists across the state. When asked what strategies would encourage you to allow a portion of your shoreline to return to a more natural state, tax credits rated the highest. You will be hearing more from us about the Burnett County Shorelines Incentive Program and how you can participate to protect your lake and lower your taxes while doing so



### WATCHING KIDS SWIM

A number of different things prevent some of you from allowing more natural vegetation on the shoreline areas of your property. One of the larger barriers to doing this are concerns that an obstructed view of the lake reduces the ability to see children or grandchildren while they are playing in or near the water. One easy option to address this concern is to introduce landowners to strategic planting of low growing native shrubs and grasses that still provide a view of the lake and the ability to watch over children. The enclosed brochure "Top Ten Native Plants" lists a few of the shorter native plants found along lakeshores. More information on specific low-growing vegetation will be featured in a future issue of the Burnett County Lake and River Association's newsletter - *LakeLines*.



## TICKED OFF BY TICKS

One worry that rated relatively high was that having more natural vegetation would increase the prevalence of nuisance insects such as ticks. Including the use of mulched paths or mulched yard edges, which ticks avoid, in shoreline landscaping will help people prevent ticks on their property while allowing for more natural lake shorelines.



## PROTECTING HABITAT FOR YOUR FAVORITE ANIMALS

Another area the survey explored was what wildlife you enjoy seeing most, with the intent of explaining how specific native plants and natural habitat contribute to the well being of your favorite animals. On the whole, you indicated eagles and loons were the animals you wanted to see more of around your properties. Some noted the loss of lake frogs and wished you had more around for the kids to enjoy. Knowing specific types of habitat features loons or frogs need for optimum nesting and survival of their young may encourage some property owners to protect specific habitat features.



## DUCK...DUCK... GOOSE?

Most of you really like wildlife - on the other hand, most of you were not interested in attracting some kinds of animals to your property – most notably geese. One of the insights that emerged from both the focus groups and surveys is that while you may be okay with watching geese fly overhead or swimming in the water, you do not like them congregating on your lawn and leaving nasty green goose droppings behind when they migrate off to greener pastures. Your concerns prompted us to include a short article “Duck...Duck... GOOSE” in this edition of LakeLines., which describes how natural vegetation can prevent geese from using your property as their summer home.



## NOT EVERYONE LIKES THE WILD LOOK

We asked how you liked your property's lakeshore to look. We wanted to know whether you would be more willing to just “let it be” and allow natural, native vegetation to take over or whether you preferred a look that you more clearly controlled. Some of you liked to let native vegetation just “go wild” while others liked to be more in control of the vegetation on your property. There are lake-friendly options for both. Expert advice and educational materials on lake-shore landscaping plans can show how to allow more natural elements to emerge in the shoreline area while allowing some flexibility to plant native shrubs in an organized manner to fit a more manicured yard.



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