

Monthly Wisconsin Lake Org Chats

Monthly chats, tentative topics include...

- Organizational Capacity (Jan. 2025)
- Communicating Effectively (Feb. 2025)
- Annual Meetings (March 2025)
- Budgets & Priorities (April 2025)
- Finances (May 2025)
- Committees
- Lake District Boundaries
- Insurance
- Membership
- and more! (what are your ideas?)

Goal: Introduce important & timely topics to the lake organization community in Wisconsin in a fun and engaging way while pointing the way to additional resources.



Episode 4: Aligning Budgets with Purpose

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Why do we need a budget?

Your budget is a representation of your organization's capacity.

What you spend money on should reflect what you are trying to achieve.

Tracking revenue and spending is a core responsibility of a governing board.

If you are in a lake district, the law requires that you have an annual budget to raise revenue through taxes and/or charges.



Two different budget worlds, similar challenges...

Associations

Funded by membership dues, donations, fundraisers, grants

Can be hard to predict how income will vary from one year to the next

Variations in income can translate to variations in programming and a roller-coaster effect

Districts

Funded primarily with taxes and mandatory special charges, as well as grants and donations

Budget amounts subject to annual approval from taxpayers & residents

Should lead to more predictability compared to lake associations

In both cases, there is regular and ongoing need to show value to partners/interested parties.





FROM OSPREYS TO IMPACT

How Green Lake Found Focus—and
Flourished

Stephanie Prellwitz, Green Lake Association





© Thomas Schultz



The Osprey Camera Years: Well Loved, But Wandering

- Many small, disconnected programs.
- Mismatch between public perception ("They're doing so much!") and actual lake impact.
- Great at appearing busy. But what were we actually accomplishing?



Popular doesn't always mean purposeful.



The Wake-Up Call: 2014 Green Lake is Listed as Impaired

- A wake-up call: upsetting, disorienting, overwhelming.
- But it forced a question: What matters most?
- Chose to go all in on water quality.
- A bold, strategic shift:

**A singular focus on
water quality**



Focus isn't limiting. It's liberating.

**Our mission:
To safeguard Green Lake by improving its water
quality, protecting it from critical threats, and
accelerating its return to a clean lake.**



Reinventing the Annual Gala: Risking it All on Three Pillars

It Goes Against Human Nature to Overpay for a Wine & Cheese Basket

- High effort, low return
- Stretched our team thin
- Didn't tell our story



GLA's Three Pillar Projects



Clean Streams



Green Acres




Invader Defense



From Tchotchkes to True Priorities

- What are our biggest priorities?
- How much will they cost?
- What are we willing to commit to?



REMOVE 196,000 LBS. OF CARP OUT OF BIG GREEN

THE NEED:

Two years ago, Green Lake's infamous carp formed a stinky tide of dead floater carp on our shores. This year, we worked hard with our partners to remove 160,000 pounds of carp and it made all the difference. Yet, one carp left in Big Green can produce one million eggs, so we have to keep at it.

OUR RESPONSE:

We need to continue the successful carp blitz to prevent another "Carpageddon." The GLA wants to invest in a multi-prong carp removal strategy that permanently removes 196,000 carp out of Big Green.

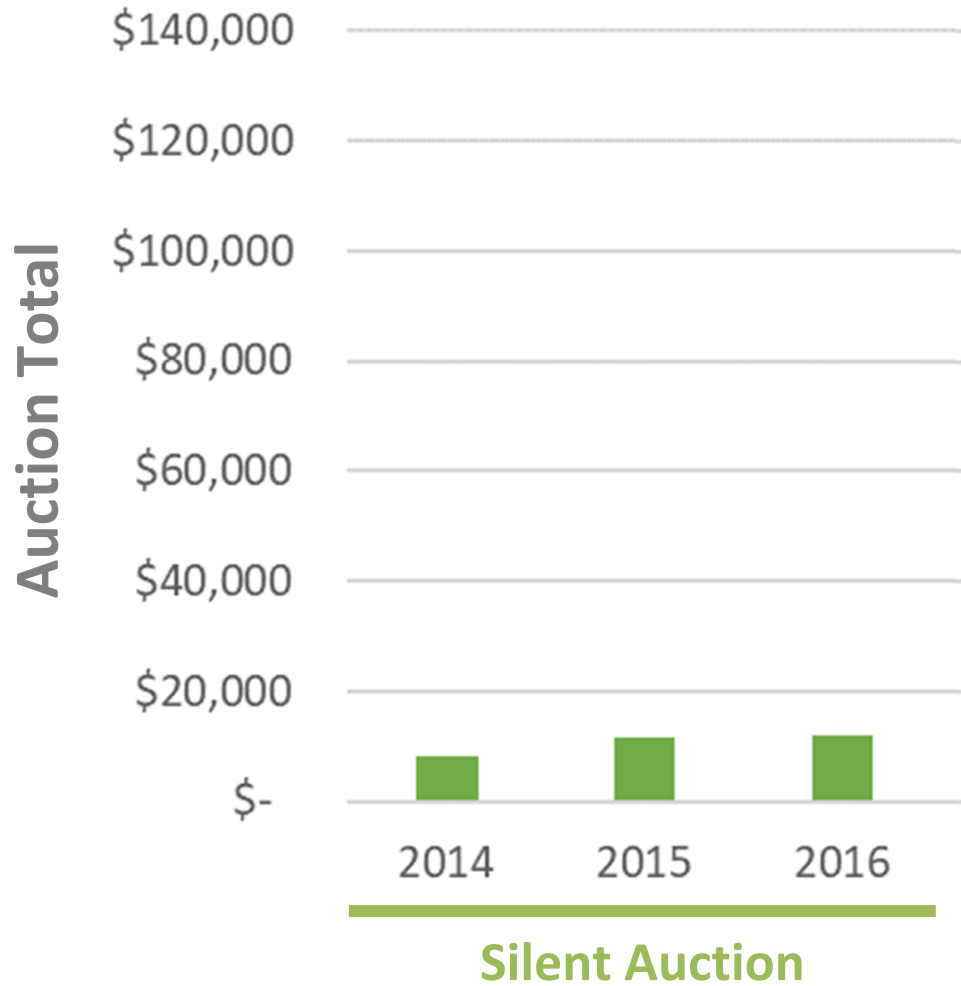
HOW YOU CAN HELP:

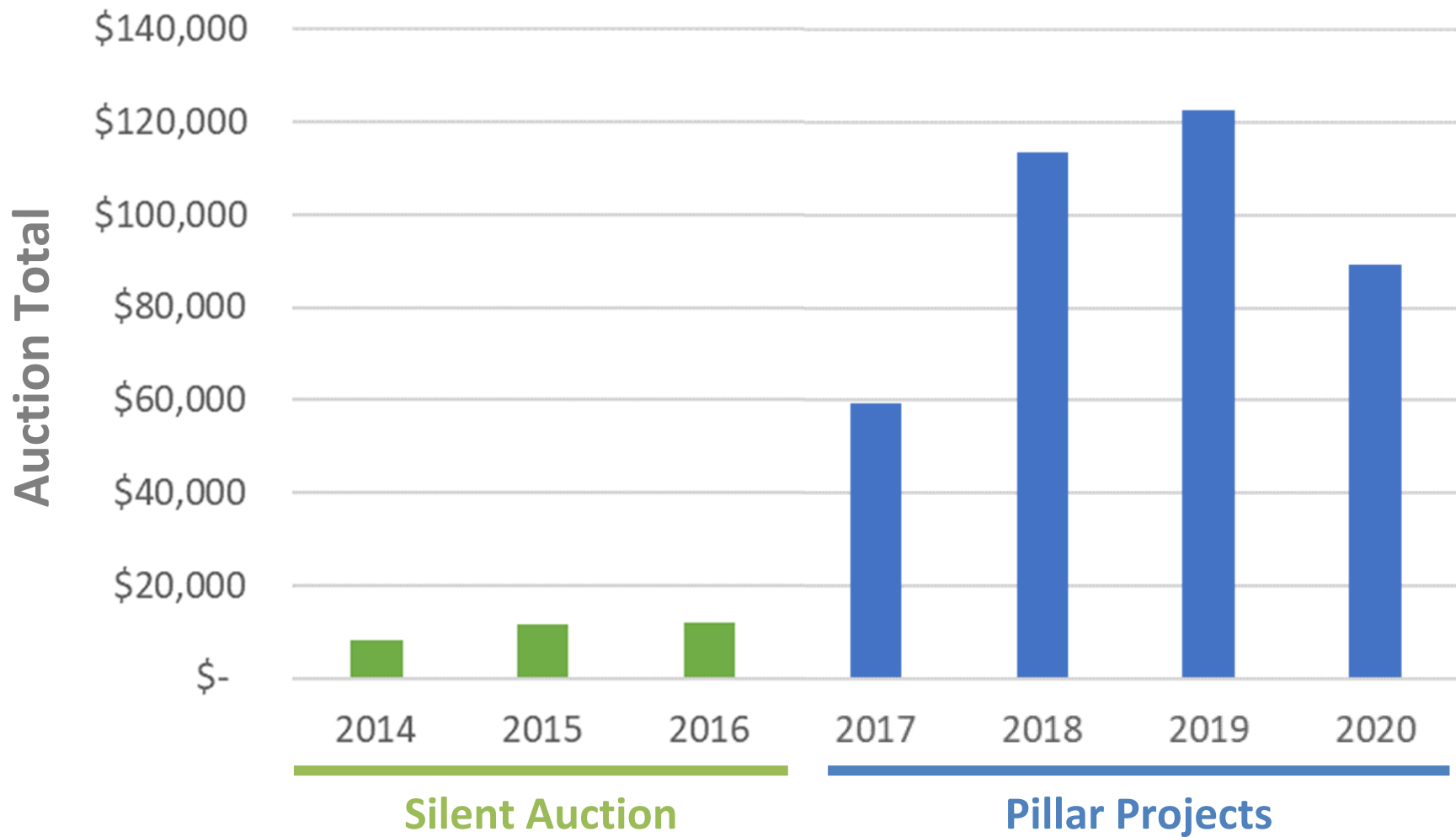
EVERY \$250 YOU GIVE
ALLOWS US TO SAY
ADIOS TO 933 CARP.

CAN WE COUNT ON
TO HELP US



Clarity inspires generosity—and action.





Pillar Projects Build Capacity





Now, “Program Pillars”

- We liked the Pillar Project framework
- But three specific categories of work was too constrictive
- Aimed for broad, all-inclusive categories with a long shelf life

GLA's Five Program Pillars (circa 2023)



**Phosphorus
Reduction**



AIS Prevention



**Data
Evaluation**



**Community
Activation**



**Critical
Infrastructure**





How We Use Our Program Pillars Now

- The entire foundation of a new strategic plan
- The framework for staff reports
- The categories of our annual Impact Report
- The structure for over first-ever major gifts campaign with five pillars



A good framework doesn't just guide your team—it galvanizes your whole community.

From Osprey to Impact



What's your osprey camera?

**What could you let go of to
make room for greater impact?**



Discussion about Green Lake's Experience...



Online Tools to Help Match Budget to Purpose

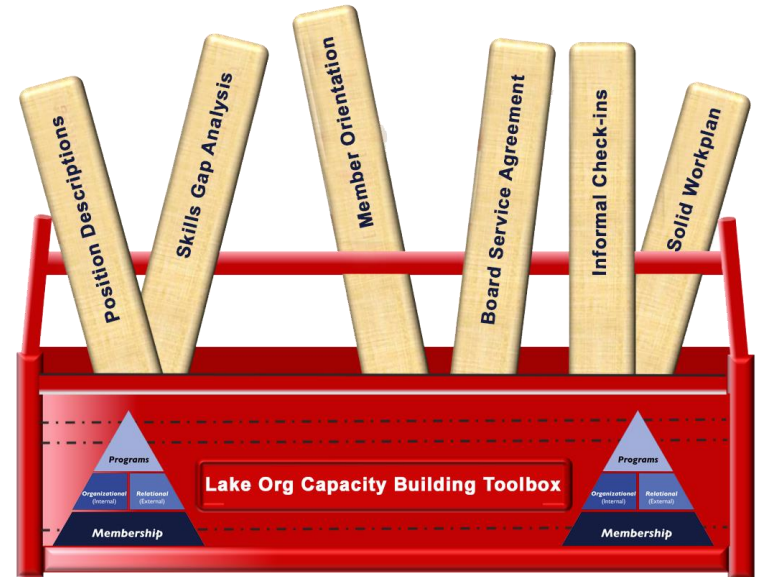
For lake associations, you will find a wealth of freely available budgeting and fundraising resources online...

Nat'l Council on Nonprofits

<https://www.councilofnonprofits.org/running-nonprofit/administration-and-financial-management/budgeting-nonprofits>

[People of the Lakes Guide - Extension Lakes | UWSP](#)

[Lake Districts - Extension Lakes | UWSP](#)



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Appendix F – Sample Lake District Budget

Frog Lake District 20__ Budget Summary

	Preceding Year <i>Actual</i>	Current Year Jan-June <i>Actual¹</i>	Current Year Jan-Dec <i>Estimated²</i>	Next Year <i>Proposed</i>
Revenues				
Tax Levy	\$ 3,000	\$ 3,500	\$ 5,500	\$ 3,500
Special Charges	\$25,000	\$20,000	\$25,000	\$35,000
Special Assessments	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Lake Grant Reimbursement	\$ 0	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500	\$ 2,500
Carryover/Cash Balance	\$ 0	\$ 2,000	\$ 2,000	\$ 0
Total Revenues:	\$28,000	\$33,000	\$40,000	\$41,000
Expenditures/Appropriations				
<u>Capital Costs³</u>				
Dump Truck	\$ --	\$ --	\$ --	\$10,000
<u>Costs of Operations</u>				
Copying/Postage/Supplies	\$ 1,000	\$ 500	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,000
Conferences (Mileage/Expenses)	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 500
Clean Boats Clean Waters	\$ 0	\$ 300	\$ 300	\$ 300
Boat Landing Watch				
Harvesting Expenses ⁴	\$18,000	\$ 5,000	\$20,000	\$20,000
New Harvester Fund (see below)	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000
Lake Grant	\$ 0	\$ 7,000	\$11,500	\$ 2,500
Insurance	\$ 1,500	\$ 1,700	\$ 1,700	\$ 1,700
Total Expenditures:	\$26,000	\$20,000	\$40,000	\$41,000
Balance:	\$ 2,000		\$ --	\$ --

Non-lapsible fund⁵:

	Balance at end of preceding year	Current year tax contribution	Estimated Interest	<i>Estimated</i> Balance at end of current year
New Harvester	\$25,000	\$5,000	\$1,500	\$31,500



Annual Review, Audits, Trend Analysis

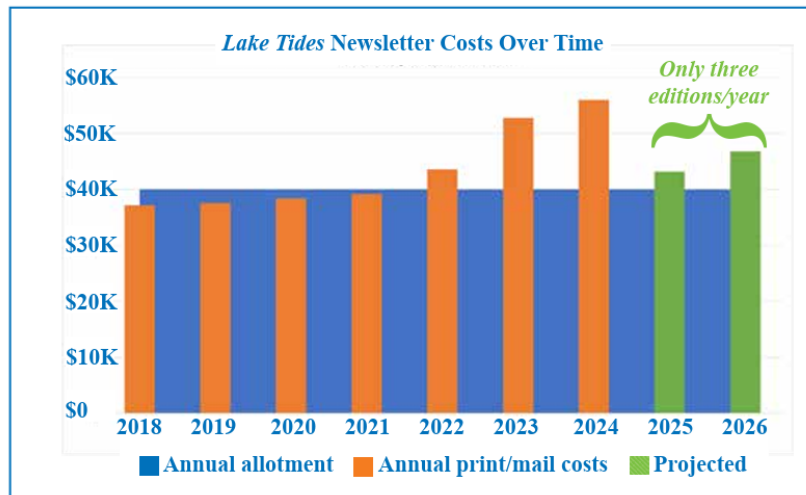
You annual spending can (should) be coupled with an annual report:

- what did you do?
- what did it cost to do it?
- where did the money come from?

Lake districts are required to present an “audit” at the annual meeting- but there’s not a definition of what the audit must entail.

The story of last year’s spending can and should inspire people to participate in current/future funding.

It can also be helpful to capture a longer timeframe (5-10 years) to understand how your organization is changing and explain trends to funders/donors...



Coming next month...

A Closer Look at Finances



Please let us know what you think of these monthly lake org video chats. We appreciate your feedback and thank you for your time.

[Monthly Lake Organization Video Chats](#)