

A Newsletter for People
Interested in Wisconsin's
Inland Lakes



Lake Tides

November 1975

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WLEX COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAMS
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—EXTENSION

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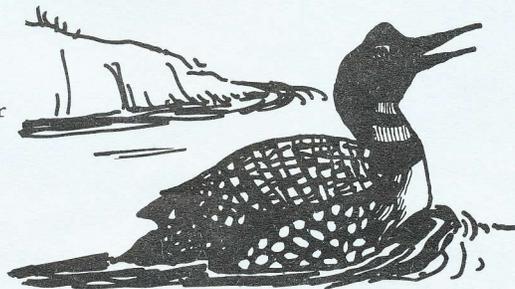
In the Wake of a Loon - an Editorial

The response to our trial balloon issue of *Lake Tides* was most gratifying. We were encouraged to continue this service by many groups of lake property owners and local professionals. We plan to continue to publish an issue every 3 or 4 months. However, we are sorry to say that we cannot, at the present time, add an unlimited number of names to our mailing list. The list has already grown to 2,000 and some of you are sending names and addresses for the complete membership of your association. We would like to be able to include all interested citizens in the list at some future date. However, because of budget constraints, we are forced to limit the mailing list to lake community leaders, usually the officers of the lake association or district. If your officers are not on our list, we invite you to send us their names and addresses.

Not only has the response to the Newsletter been very positive, but the response to the whole program has been

overwhelming. In the past 15 months, we have worked with approximately 200 lake communities. We are, of course, very pleased with this show of interest. However, we feel compelled to remind you that the amount of state financial aid available to lake communities is very small. At the present time, there is only about 1 million dollars per year available through the program. We do not believe that this should discourage you from forming a lake district; however, we feel that you should be realistic about the chances of receiving financial assistance and the amount of that assistance. The maximum any community can receive is \$100,000 or 10% of the annual state aids budget.

There are three major reasons why lake communities are forming lake districts. The first is to provide a local unit of government to facilitate the involvement of local property owners in the management of the lake resource. The second is the availability of state



technical assistance. Thirdly, state funds are available only to official lake districts. It is our opinion that the first reason is by far the most significant reason and we encourage you to emphasize that reason in your promotion of the lake district concept. We look forward to working with you as you establish a district and/or you apply for and receive state assistance. However, it should be kept in mind that the central part of Chapter 33, and the Inland Lake Program developed under it, is to enable you, as lake property owners, to establish a legal entity for the local management of your lake. Money is important but a viable lake district cannot be built merely on the hope that the state or federal government will pay for your projects.

Sincerely,



Lowell L. Klessig &
Lake Management Specialists



Robert J. Sterrett

★★★

DEADLINE, 1976 — JANUARY 1st

If you intend to receive state assistance in 1976, you must have formed an official lake district and made an application by January 1, 1976.

Therefore, if you are still in the process of forming your lake district, that process should be completed immediately. If you are going to the County Board, the petition should be delivered to the County Clerk within a few days. The County Board must appoint a committee and that committee must send out a notice of hearing to each land owner at least ten days in advance. Following the hearing, the County Board will decide on whether or not to create the district at their next meeting. Since all these things must happen before you can apply, there is no time to waste.

Immediately following the creation of the lake district, the County Board should appoint three lake residents and one Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor to the lake district commission. The town or city or village with the highest assessed valuation with the district should also immediately appoint one of their members to the commission. The commission should then, as soon as possible after it is constituted, make application for technical assistance. Application blanks are available from and should be returned to Don Winter, Office of Inland Lake Renewal, Box 450, DNR, Madison, Wisconsin 53701.

Please remember all these steps must be completed in order for a new district to be considered for financial assistance in 1976.

AMENDING WISCONSIN'S LAKE MANAGEMENT LAW

The lake management law (Chapter 33) was thoroughly studied and carefully drafted and has been very popular. However, every new law has some procedural flaws and leaves some policy issues unresolved.

Assembly Bill 1175 has been introduced by the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources to correct those procedural flaws and resolve some additional policy issues. These amendments to Chapter 33 were generated by lake communities which felt that certain changes would make the law easier to work with. The following list describes the major changes contained in A.B. 1175:

1. Allow nonresident property owners to serve on the lake district commission.
2. Increase the emphasis on lake protection in the law itself.
3. Allow a city or village or sanitary district to petition the county board for the property owners within the city or village or sanitary district rather than require individual signatures on petitions in those areas.
4. Allow a district to substitute three newspaper notices of the annual meeting for the written notice to electors residing within the district.
5. Allow the annual meeting to compensate the commissioners if they choose to.
6. Allow lake districts to assume sanitary district powers if the annual meeting votes to request such powers and the town board confers such powers to the lake district. (This would eliminate the duplication of a sanitary district and a lake district for lake communities which wanted both types of services.)
7. Town boards would only be responsible for creating lake districts where a town sanitary district previously existed.

Copies of A.B. 1175 are available from *LAKE TIDES* or your legislators. If you have any interest in these changes, you should communicate your reactions to your State Representative and State Senator.

ECOLOGICAL NEWS NOTES: WEEDS AND THE PROPERTY OWNER

With this issue of LAKE TIDES we are beginning a series of educational articles on the ecology of lakes. We hope that through such articles, your knowledge of the total lake system will be increased.

"Boy, I've never seen the weeds and algae so thick in the lake. A person can practically walk across the lake on them!" This cry of frustration is quite common on some lakes here in Wisconsin. Even though weeds and algae can be immediate problems to lake users the source of those problems are the excessive nutrients that are getting into the lake. In this issue we discuss what lake

users and property owners can do to curb nutrients from getting into the lake without spending a significant amount of money. Before we talk about these ways, perhaps it would be good to briefly describe aquatic weeds.

In general, aquatic plants are a desirable and necessary part of the aquatic ecosystem. They provide both food and habitat-cover for fish and other wildlife. It is when aquatic plants grow excessively and interfere with the use of the lake that they are called "weeds."

Aquatic plants require sufficient quantities of nitrogen, phosphorus, light, temperature, carbon dioxide and vitamins. Aquatic plants will grow in abundance until one of the above factors comes into short supply. The lack of this material will limit the growth of plants no matter how abundant the other materials are.

In most Wisconsin lakes in the summertime, phosphorus has been found to be the limiting factor to the growth of algae and other aquatic weeds. If the amount of phosphorus entering a lake can be stopped or significantly reduced, then we can expect the amount of algae and aquatic weeds to be reduced.

Phosphorus can enter the lake from a variety of places. Ground water, particles from the atmosphere, and waters running over the surface of the land all can contribute phosphorus to the lake. How much each source contributes can only be determined through a study of the lake.

Property owners can reduce phosphorus and other nutrient inputs to the lake by changing certain practices. These changes will cost little or no money to the property owners.

The following are suggested changes:

1. Maintain a natural shoreland buffer between the home and lake. Trees and brush trap nutrients and retard erosion.
2. Don't remove existing vegetation from around the lake or fill your wetlands. Removing vegetation on steep slopes or on shoreland which is subject to wave action can cause severe erosion. Minimize the area cleared for a lawn.
3. Cut down or eliminate the use of fertilizers on lawns. Generally, the fertilizer ends up in the lake. Instead, use just lake water for watering the lawn. Lake water probably contains sufficient nutrients to keep your lawn green and in the end, some nutrients will be used by the lawn.
4. Use phosphorus-free detergents in your home. This will reduce the amount of phosphorus which could reach the lake via septic tanks.
5. Make sure your septic tank filter field is of adequate size for your home. As more and more seasonal residents become permanent residents around the lake, it has been found that the existing drainage fields

are not adequate. This is especially true when people install garbage disposals, automatic dishwashers, laundry facilities and showers in their homes. Also, spread out the use of these appliances throughout the day; otherwise, the filter field will become overloaded and effluent will seep into the lake.

6. Don't rake leaves or grass clippings into the lake.
7. Don't pile or burn trash on the ice in the winter-time.
8. Clean your septic tank about once every two years. This will lengthen the life of your filter field and prevent clogging of the soil which generally allows effluent to surface on the ground.

Even though some of these points seem small, in many instances by making these changes in use practices, significant amounts of nutrients can be kept from entering the lake. These changes in practice can be undertaken by individual property owners. To curb other sources of nutrients to the lake, the individual property owner is helpless and only through group action can they be curbed. These sources will be the subject of another *News Note*.

THE LAKE RUSH OF THE SUMMER OF '75

Summers are very busy times around lake communities. This was especially true in 1975 when many lake communities renewed efforts to do something about *the lake*. At your invitation we gave educational presentations at a great many of these communities, usually at the annual or a special meeting of the lake association. We were on the road every weekend, holiday, and many evenings in an effort to cover the entire state. Several thousand lake property owners learned about Wisconsin's new Lake Management Program this summer. In addition, about 400 leaders of lake communities attended the six regional conferences held around the state.

We were sorry that we were unable to meet all of your requests due to conflicting engagements. If we were unable to visit your community this past summer, we hope to do so in the near future. However, we suggest that you make your request for an educational program to your local Extension agent at the earliest possible time in order that we can arrange to attend several meetings in a given area of the state in one trip. For example, Lowell was able to make presentations at four lake association meetings within 24 hours over the Labor Day weekend, because the lakes were all within two adjacent counties.

We hope to continue to provide such educational services, but it will require advanced planning on our part and on yours.

HOW WE DID IT IN NEW RICHMOND - John Soderberg

Editors' Note: With this article LAKE TIDES begins a series showing individual lake communities in action and written by leaders of those communities.

John Soderberg is a banker by profession. John was appointed to Inland Lake Council as a citizen member by the Governor and serves as Chairperson of that Council.

Wisconsin's Lake Management Law (Chapter 33, Wisconsin Statutes) signed by Governor Lucey, May 29, 1974, provided "the light at the end of the tunnel" for a long, confusing and frustrating journey that began for me in September of 1971.

Citizen concern for the degradation of the Willow River in St. Croix County brought about a public meeting to form an ad hoc committee to "restore the Willow River to its full esthetic and recreational value." I accepted the leadership of this committee not really aware of what lay ahead.

After discovering that our problem was far from unique in Wisconsin and that no real "vehicle" existed for those citizen groups who wanted to reverse the trend of dying lakes and rivers, our energies were directed to passage of the above mentioned legislation.

The enactment of the law meant another beginning of what we had originally set out to do; cure our own situation of a highly eutrophic flowage.

Inasmuch as the river runs through several townships, merging from two small forks upstream before it flows through New Richmond and empties into the St. Croix River, we were faced with the enormous question of where do we draw the boundaries of a proposed lake rehabilitation district.

The key, we decided, was *watershed*. Working with our county Extension agent, DNR people, Soil Conservationist, and just good common sense, we drew a very ambitious boundary on a county map and decided to do it right from the very beginning by building a good rationale that could withstand the critics. The proposed district encompassed 176 square miles, 112,640 square acres, 3,300 land owners, seven townships, a village and a city. This dictated formation by petition of landowners.

After going to the City Council and the Village Board for their resolutions of approval, we then began our informal informational hearings in the townships.

As it seems to happen in most public meetings, the negative emerged immediately and we then spent most of

the remainder of the meeting neutralizing the negative point of view. In every case, the finish of each meeting focused on the positive aspects of conservation, good land-use practices being preached by the farmers themselves, and an enthusiastic attitude of "it's about time we get a chance to determine our destiny in lake rehabilitation."

Using hundreds of well-organized petitioners in the townships and city, well-versed on the key issues of the new law, we set out to achieve something in excess of the required fifty-one percent of the landowners' signatures. Approximately thirty-five days later, we presented the St. Croix County Board of Commissioners with 2,046 signatures, or sixty-two percent of the landowners in the proposed district.

The County Board, at its next meeting after holding the required hearing, voted unanimously to form the Upper Willow Rehabilitation District, thus culminating over three years of intense effort on the part of hundreds of people who had voluntarily given of their time and energy.

In retrospect, well-defined goals, education and communication were the key factors in establishing a very large lake district. The great cooperation of the media, the effort of school children, community organizations and people in general who took a stand on our project have reassured me that we have turned the corner on abuse of our environment.

TAXES AND LAKE DISTRICTS

We have received many questions regarding the taxing power of lake districts in recent months and in the following discussion we hope to clarify some of the major points regarding the powers of a lake district to tax property within the district. The following basic points should be kept in mind when considering property taxation by a lake district:

1. A distinction should be made between the general property tax, special assessments for special projects, bonding, and temporary borrowing. The general property tax is to be used for normal year-to-year operation of the lake district. Special assessments and bonds are designed to be used for major lake improvement or protection projects.
2. All property within the district that is taxed for other governmental purposes, including both real estate and personal property, is taxable under the general property tax of a lake district. The maximum that a lake district can tax on the general property tax is 2.5 mills of equalized assessed value which is about equal to the market value. The maximum unequalized mill rate will differ from community to community, depending upon the percentage of equalized

assessed value that the local community is being assessed by its local assessor.

The following land is exempt from the general property tax but is subject to special assessments: County property, city property, town property, village property, school district property, church property, forest crop land, cemeteries, etc. Only state and federal lands are not subject to special assessments.

4. Both the general property tax and special assessments are based on benefit to the property and not solely on the evaluation of the property. Therefore, a piece of property such as a farm, substantially away from the lake and benefiting less from the lake program, should be taxed at a lower mill rate than recreational property close to the lake. The decision on the benefit that is received by each piece of property is made by the lake district commissioners.
 5. Recommendations of lake district commissioners cannot go into effect until the annual meeting of the lake district has approved the budget for the lake district, the tax for the lake district and any project over \$5,000.
 6. After approval by the annual meeting, the lake district treasurer submits the tax roll to the town (village, city) clerk. The taxes would be billed as part of the regular property tax receipt of local government. It would be a line item that would appear on your property tax bill along with the county tax, the town (city, village) tax and the school district tax and then the lake district tax. The town (village, city) treasurer then collects the tax and reimburses the lake district.
- If the annual meeting of the lake district takes no action on a budget or tax, no tax can be collected. The district can raise money under these circumstances only with the temporary borrowing procedure using notes which expire no later than two years following the date of the borrowing.
8. A lake district annual meeting may on a year-to-year basis provide its commissioners with additional specified discretion or other instruction regarding the financial affairs of the district.
 9. Special assessments can only be made after a project has been approved by an annual meeting. The assessments are made by the commissioners following notice to property owners and the review of objections. Dissatisfied property owners may appeal to the circuit court.

THE ROLE OF LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS AND THEIR ORGANIZATIONS IN LAKE MANAGEMENT

The second edition of this booklet is available now from your County Extension Office. This booklet is about lake people: who they are, what they want, what they are doing, and the types of organizations available to them. The second edition contains new sections on what individual property owners can do and the lake district as a new organizational alternative.

CITIZEN WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Several states have initiated programs of water quality monitoring which utilize local volunteer efforts. The idea was first developed with high school students in Ohio. The program included both an educational component and an actual water sampling and testing component. We would like to know whether lake people would be interested in making water quality measurements on a regular basis if provided with the necessary materials. Your comments will help determine whether such a program is developed in Wisconsin.

WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT CAMP

The importance of dissolved oxygen in a lake, water weed identification, soils, ground water and a whole host of other topics were covered by a week-long Water Resources Management Camp. This camp was held from August 25th through the 30th on the campus of the University of Wisconsin in Superior. The class was sponsored by University Extension and Superior and it was open to all interested citizens.

A background in water resources was not a prerequisite for attending this class. As a matter of fact, the prime purpose of the camp was to teach people without a technical background how to measure, record and understand certain lake water quality criteria.

Sessions lasted all day and for a couple of hours each evening. It is hoped that information gained from this class will be used in formulating lake management programs on individual lakes. These management programs should be based on sound technical and social information obtained from this camp.

On the last day of the camp, the entire group took a one-day canoe trip down the Bois Brule River. A beautiful day made for a memorable trip and the end of a most enjoyable and valuable week for all those involved.

We would like to know if you would be interested in having the camp repeated next summer.



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