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A Newsletter for People Interested in Wisconsin Lakes

Lake Tides

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While no final conclusions or recommendations have been reached on these and other aquatic nuisance control issues, most agree that there is justification for some use of chemicals in lakes. When used as one component of a lake management program, chemicals can help control weeds, some algae, mosquitoes, and rough fish.

Little St. Germain is an example of the problems that can result from the use of chemicals in a lake ecosystem. The bigger concern is those lakes which need attention but receive none. The future for Little St. Germain is bright, however. Officials of the lake district realized several years ago that the best approach to solving their algae problems was to address the source of the lake's excessive nutrient concentrations. Hopefully they will soon be able to begin taking action to ensure the long-term health of the lake rather than having to rely on short-term cosmetic treatments.

Boyd Best of the Little St. Germain Rehabilitation District is scheduled to speak at the Annual Lakes Convention on March 29th in Stevens Point. We will hear his perspectives and those of several other panelists regarding the need for revision of the Aquatic Nuisance Control Program.

* * *

HOMEOWNER TIPS FROM THE PLEASANT LAKE PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION DISTRICT

1. Burning of leaves, lawn clippings, brush, scrap wood, etc. should not be done near the shore, on roadways, or on properties in the Pleasant Lake District because it releases airborne phosphorus and a phosphorus rich residue which rainwater will carry into the lake. This also includes barrels or burning cans, etc. Burning also creates a health hazard to you, your family and your neighbors.

   Do not deliberately place on the shore or in the lake any organic materials; leaves, brush, debris, etc. The Town of LaGrange has contracted with a sanitary hauler to remove these materials from the district, if properly bagged or placed in cans. Any organic material removed from the lake or shoreline removes potential phosphorus that would be released into the water.

IN THE WAKE OF A LOON:

CONVENTION CRIER

There is only one place to be the last weekend in March if a lake is important in your life. That place is the Wisconsin Lakes Convention. In case you misplaced your brochure, a summary of the program at the University Center in Stevens Point follows:

MARCH 29TH (1:00 P.M.)

- State officials and legislators discuss State investment in lakes
- Types of lake information that local volunteers can collect
- Non-point pollution programs
- Use of chemicals to control algae, weeds, and swimmer's itch.

MARCH 30TH (8:30 A.M.)

- Recent research on weed control, artificial wetlands, experimental audification, biomanipulation, and mercury contamination
- Fish reproduction/WALD business meeting
- Keynote address by Senator Proxmire
- Workshops on tax status, boating safety, fish management and monitoring programs.

To register, send $16 (payable to UW-Extension). A map and lodging information will be sent to preregistrants.

See you soon,

Lowell K. Klessig

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AERATION (continued)

Richard Wedepohl
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Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707

By comparing your results with those of others, we will be better able to provide guidance on aeration system design and operation.

NOTE: If you have not fenced or roped off your open water area, you have a potential liability problem and are in violation of Wis. Stat. 167.26.

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EXPERIENCE OF A LAKE COMMISSIONER

DON CHENEY
LONG LAKE PROTECTION & REHABILITATION DISTRICT
CHIPPEWA COUNTY

At the 1979 annual meeting of the Long Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (Chippewa County), I was elected to the five-person board by a vote of 63 to 59 in an election I was guaranteed by the Chairman I would not win. I had a number of other public service jobs at the time and certainly didn't need another, but I ended up the unlucky winner. Actually, as it turned out, it was an experience that I enjoyed and was even re-elected to a second three-year term.

It was the tradition of this Commission that the newest elected member of the Commission be named Secretary, so I was greeted at the next meeting with a cardboard box of disorganized material. In that I am an engineer and accustomed to organization, my first project was to get the material in three-ring binders with all "junk" mail discarded.

The Lake District had been organized in 1975 and a lake quality study was contracted for. I looked at the study and in comparing it with the studies my own engineering firm had made, it was obvious we got what we paid for--not much. The low bidding procedure in selecting a qualified lake study engineer was typical of the success of that procedure for selecting professional work. Not good.

Long Lake is infested witn crayfish and the study didn't mention them, so we employed a crayfish expert to make a second study which dealt only with our crayfish problem. This study had some good ideas that are still being used as guidelines for monitoring and attempting to control the problem.

The next item that came to my attention was that the board didn't seem to have an organized plan of what they should be doing. We decided to prepare a plan that could be used for long and short range planning. We held a specific meeting to develop such a plan.

We divided the plan into general problem areas. Along with each problem area we had possible solutions to the problem. This plan was discussed at an annual meeting and approved unanimously. It was then printed and the 15-page booklet was distributed to each member of the district.

We were aware from the beginning that member participation was a problem. The Commission had plenty to do, but the members weren't involved; so we organized committees associated with the problems as outlined in the plan. Each committee had a volunteer chairman and volunteer members. Each Commissioner had responsibility to oversee one of the committees. Each committee was asked to carry out ideas set down in the plan and to add new ideas at they came up.

I continued as secretary and treasurer for five of the six years on the Commission. This, I felt, was essential to maintain continuity over the years. I might add, a secretary of a district should have a personal secretary and all the usual office equipment to function properly. I had these items at my disposal which made the job a lot easier.

The following accomplishments were due to the dedicated work of the various Commissioners and committee members:

1. A detailed lake quality maintenance report was prepared in cooperation with the DNR.

2. A continuous census of the crayfish population.

3. New ideas regarding fish cribs and weed gardens have been tried and evaluated.

4. Artifical weeds are being tried to give the fish some cover. (The crayfish had destroyed our natural weed beds.)

5. The DNR fish stocking program was reviewed and a fish seining and transfer program started.

6. Absentee balloting was inaugurated with great success.

7. A sewerage system inspection plan was developed and approved for implementation.

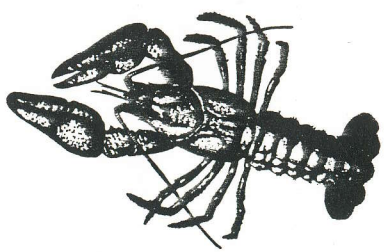
A number of times during our meetings someone wanted us to undertake a program that had nothing to do with lake quality such as high property taxes, fire protection services, speed boat control, buoy markers for underwater obstacles and vandalism. I resisted such projects with the arguments that maintaining lake quality was our purpose and we had enough to do without worrying about these other items. They were worthy projects, but they belonged to others.

When I came on the board in 1979 we had about $6,000 in a low interest savings account which was moved to a money market. I encouraged the Board to spend the money on worthy projects or give it back to the taxpayers. Some years we only spent the interest but now we have plans for the remainder. I definitely felt the money should not be left idle.

The Town Board has one member and the County Board another on our Commission. I feel that the backbone of the Commission is the three-elected members, but it is essential that those two appointed members be interested in the work of the district. In the case of our district, we always had interested town and county representatives who seldom missed a meeting.

In conclusion, it was an interesting six years. I still communicate with members of the newly-elected board and feel they are doing a better job that we did, which is as it should be.

* * *



FEDERAL CLEAN LAKES FUNDING UPDATE

Past attention to water pollution control has focused almost entirely on cleaning up our nation's rivers and streams--water resources common to all states. Unfortunately not as many states have important lake resources. Perhaps it is not surprising then that lakes have been neglected by both Congress and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It appears that states like Wisconsin, blessed with lakes, will have to work that much harder to ensure lakes share equal status with rivers in terms of national investment in the quality of public waters.

The modest $5 million for clean lakes in the current Federal budget has been impounded by the Office of Management and Budget. In 1985, the entire Clean Water Act is likely to be rewritten. The decisions made by Congress this year will set Federal water audit policy for the next five years. It is a crucial time to communicate with your Congressman and Senators.

At the March Wisconsin Lakes Convention, Senator Bill Proxmire will be making the keynote address. It is safe to say that without Senator Proxmire's past interest and leadership there would have been no Federal Clean Lakes program at all. We will be recognizing him for those efforts at the convention and look forward to hearing his remarks.

* * *

ATTENTION: LAKE AERATION USERS

If you are aerating to prevent fish winterkills and are monitoring oxygen levels with Hach Kits, you should consider checking oxygen readings for accuracy. The chemicals used for the tests deteriorate with time. They have an expected shelf life of approximately one year <u>if</u> stored in a cool, dark, and dry location. The best bet is to reorder chemicals each year to ensure accuracy. If you don't know exactly what is needed or where to order, you can call Hach Chemical at 1-800-535-5940.

You may also wish to contact your local fish manager or DNR district lake coordinator to ask them to visit your lake and test the oxygen with their equipment. Then you could compare your oxygen measurements with theirs. It is strongly recommended that you keep good records of both your oxygen readings and aeration schedule. Please send copies of your records to:

REFERENCE HANDBOOKS REVISED

The Handbook has been revised and will be available ($4.00) at the Convention. The 3-ring binder contains almost entirely new material. Commissioners who still have their old binder can obtain the insert material at no cost. Since the binders are expensive to mail, please pick up copies for other commissioners in your community who are not able to attend the convention.

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SECCHI DISC PICK-UP

The lake communities listed below volunteered to participate in the WALD sponsored secchi disc/water level program with the U.S. Geological Service. A representative should plan on picking up a secchi disc and an instruction sheet at the March Convention in Stevens Point.

Noquebay, Marinette Co.
Montello, Marquette Co.
Puckaway, Marquette Co.
Sharon, Waushara Co.
Bugle, Trempealeau Co.
Redstone, Sauk Co.
Neshonic, LaCrosse Co.
Morris, Waushara Co.
Muskellunge, Lincoln Co.
Crystal, Trempealeau Co.
Bone, Polk Co.
Clam, Burnett Co.
McCaslin, Marinette Co.
Bear, Oneida Co.
Chilton, Calumet Co.
Little St. Germain, Vilas Co.
Big Cedar, Washington Co.
Alma, Vilas Co.
Moon, Vilas Co.
Pleasant, Walworth Co.
Amnicon, Douglas Co.
Dowling, Douglas Co.
Wheeler, Oconto Co.
Big McKenzie, Burnett Co.
Anvil, Vilas Co.
Devils, Sauk Co.
Fish, Dane Co.
North, Waukesha Co.
Rockland, Racine Co.

Secchi discs will also be available for purchase at the Convention.

LITTLE ST. GERMAIN FISHKILL

A lot of people can think of only one thing when they hear "Little St. Germain Lake"--fishkill. Last summer, like most summers, nuisance algae blooms interfered with recreation on the lake. Lake district officials applied for and received a permit from the DNR to spray East Bay with copper sulfate to control the algae. On August 29th, approximately 194 acres were sprayed with 2,400 pounds of copper sulfate. This is slightly more than the quantity of copper sulfate that has been sprayed in previous years for about two decades. However, this year something different resulted--a massive fishkill of gamefish, panfish and rough fish totalling about 10,000 pounds in an area of about 30 percent of the lake's 980 acres.

The reason for this fishkill was at first uncertain. Nothing like this had ever occurred in the past. The copper sulfate solution was applied within EPA label restrictions as verified by the DNR onsite supervisor. After several weeks of investigation, DNR technical specialists concluded that given the lake's physical and chemical characteristics along with the rate of application, the fishkill was the result of copper toxicity.*

Luckily it appears that the damage to Little St. Germain is not permanent. Fish in other parts of the lake were not affected. Ice fishermen are catching some nice walleyes and northerns this winter, according to area residents. In addition, a follow-up fish survey by the DNR indicated that the lake still supports a very desirable fishery with many large fish being found. Yet, the question remains as to why this happened and what can be done in the future to prevent fishkills at other lakes when chemical algal control is used.

For the past several months, the DNR has been reviewing the Aquatic Nuisance Control program. Discussion has included the validity of using aquatic pesticides at all, what the role of the DNR should be in regulating the use of chemicals, providing more training for the onsite DNR supervisors who oversee the chemical applications in the field, and the need for closer management of the program.

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*Fishkills have followed chemical applications in several other lakes including Long Lake (Calumet County) in 1984. However, in all these cases, the cause of the fishkill was suffocation rather than direct poisoning. When the algae died, they rotted and used up the oxygen in the water. Lack of wind to re-oxygenate the water usually accompanied these fishkills.

If organic material is not removed, it is better to compost this material on the back slope of your lot and then work it into the garden and flowerbeds as mulch. Strict care should be taken to keep rainwater from flowing through such compost piles and then into the lakes.

2. An overloaded or failing septic system may discharge nutrients and possibly harmful bacteria into the groundwater and lake. This may cause localized lake-front weed or algae problems. It is recommended that septic tanks be cleaned and drainfields inspected every two years by a licensed septic tank service.

3. Don't let building downspouts drain directly into the lake. Channel rainwater from roofs or driveways away from the lake so that it will drain into the ground and not into the lake.

4. Use techniques to slow or catch running water on steep or long slopes.

5. Place paths, walkways or trails so they do not run directly down slopes to the lake, and channel the rain-water from them into the ground.

   (The use of coarse gravel-filled sinks or trenches can be constructed to drain this excess rainwater into the ground. Make them large enough to handle a heavy rain-fall.)

   (Ponding of surface water is encouraged; DO NOT drain directly into the lake.)

* * *