

# HORSEHEAD LAKE PROTECTION & REHABILITATION DISTRICT NO 1



September 15, 2014

## Chairperson:

Dennis Batchelet  
6461 Pigeon Road  
Lake Tomahawk, WI 54539  
(262) 670-5067  
(262) 844-8193

## Secretary:

Mike Esler  
7753 Crow Rd.  
Lake Tomahawk, WI  
54539  
(715) 525-1633

## Treasurer:

Tim Desmond  
6509 Hwy. 47  
Lake Tomahawk, WI 54539  
(312) 310-9357

## Town Board:

George DeMet  
8075 Fawn Lake Rd.  
Harshaw, WI 54529  
(715) 277-2599

## County Board:

Thomas Rudolph  
1740 Larsen Drive  
Rhinelander WI 54501  
(715) 362-6222



[www.horseheadlake-wi.org](http://www.horseheadlake-wi.org)

## August 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Notes

- Mike Esler elected to Secretary position.
- Fiscal year changed to September 1-August 31.
- Voted to continue weed cutting during the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> week in July.
- Set aside \$6,000 for possible Crappie and Bluegill stocking, based on DNR shock survey.
- 2014-'15 total budget - \$32,270.
- Mill rate for 2014-'15 set at \$0.4847, or \$48.47/\$100,000 property value.
- Finishing 2013-'14 fiscal year with \$925.82 cash surplus.

## Fish Kill

The worst winter in forty years has left our lake recovering from a sizeable fish kill, which is not unprecedented,

Nobody on the lake has reported seeing a single Bluegill or Crappie since last year! Fishermen have been catching 12-14" Northern and have seen a few Perch, but that's about it. One documented 18 1/2" Northern was caught.

The good news is that tons of various minnow species have been seen all over the lake AND on August 18<sup>th</sup>, the DNR planted 9,175 Largemouth bass in the lake. (See the results of the 8/27/14 DNR electroshocking fish survey on our website).

There are many theories abounding to explain the fish decline. The district has contacted John Kubisiak, DNR fish biologist, and two fish breeders to explore the possible causes.

There are three main probable causes: 1) 30" of ice took up so much water, leaving much less oxygen in the water, 2) continuous snow on the lake prevented sunlight from penetrating

to allow plant life to furnish oxygen, 3) our relatively shallow lake. Deeper lakes allow fish to drop down further where oxygen is "richer", as colder water holds oxygen better. Most probably the fish died from lack of oxygen, though at "ice out" on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and the week before, two separate reports of at least 35 eagles (who also had a rough winter) encircling the aerator open water and taking many fish. Another parallel scene occurred on the west shore near the Van Natta pier aerator at about the same time.

One fish breeder explained that if the oxygen level dropped to about 2 ppm (parts per million of oxygen) many fished died at that time.

Paul Bursik reported that when the ice went out, he observed lots of fish frozen in the ice itself.

It seems our lake experienced a perfect storm of negative conditions.

To the avid fisher person, news of our fish

kill strikes severe disappointment as fishing is one of the most enjoyable of summer past times.

For this reason, residents at the annual meeting agreed to set aside \$6,000 for restocking Bluegills and Crappies. The district was told by the DNR that while we can get free Northerns and Largemouth bass, we would have to pay to stock the former fish - they are "native to our lake", but reassured us that our lake will on its own.

So, we wait.

### **Outlot**

Dennis Lanphear, the lot owner, hired an attorney to send the district a letter on Sept. 3, 2013. The letter stated our district was no longer allowed to use the property and would entertain an offer to purchase. Your commissioners replied, "we are not interested at this time". No fishing access to the lake has been allowed since he purchased the property and it remains unsold.

### **New Site for Weed Removal**

Working with the DNR and property owners, Terry & Hallie Moline and Mary Ellen Zickus, the district has secured permission to offload

weeds on state land near the aerator. The district has been granted a fifteen-year limited use permit and made an agreement with owners to use their private road off Bluebird Road, south. The agreement calls for yearly inspection of the private road prior to weed-hauling and after to assess any possible damage. The district has set \$750 aside to correct any damage. The agreement will be revisited on a yearly basis. Aside from possible minor repairs, there are no costs associated with district use of the road or state land.

### **Notice of Winter Open Water**

Notice is hereby given that no stakes or rope will mark open water during the winter season. Lake owners are obligated to make their guests aware of this to release them from liability. Large-print signs at the Kildeer landing warn of open water danger.

### **Managing Eurasian Water Milfoil**

Divers using GPS coordinates, will again go out in late August to pull the weeds from the lake floor. Last year the entire

job took three hours' time at a cost of \$225.

Our recent study recommends a repeat of the lake study every 3-4 years.

### **Lake Water Testing**

Lake data for 2013 reveals that our lake is just inside the Eutrophic category; aging a bit faster than we would like. In 2012, the Trophic State Index (TSI) was 52. Currently at 57, we are slightly worse, but it varies from year to year. In 2009, the TSI was 56. Secchi readings show an average clarity depth of 7.5 feet, while last year it was only 6 feet.

Mike and Kim Esler have volunteered to continue our lake testing for official DNR reporting in 2015. This will be their 4<sup>th</sup> year in the important role.

### **Aerator Maintenance**

Prior to the onset of ice, the aerator will be inspected and serviced by Mike Esler to help ensure its continued

service throughout the winter. He assures us that parts are readily available at reasonable prices. Because he can perform this service, at no cost, the district no longer finds it necessary to set aside money for replacement.

### **Clean Boats/Clean Waters**

We currently have no volunteer for our Clean Boats/Clean Waters program. Hallie Moline, our former volunteer, reported very few fishermen during the past year. She also reported that fishing has been down this season, undoubtedly due to the unusually large fish kill during the last winter.



### **Weed Cutting**

Due to the unusual absence of surface weeds, our weed cutting was cancelled this year, resulting in a savings of \$17,500. True to his word, Cliff Schmidt allowed the district to cancel at no cost.

Cancelling the weed cutting is resulting in a tax rate that less than half last year's, though residents said that is not the highest priority in setting our budgets.

Weed cutting has been scheduled for July 14-24.

2015, as was agreed at the annual meeting.

### **Check Your Boats and Trailers**

Be sure your boat has NO plant material attached when you launch your boat in Horsehead Lake or take it out. Your boat and trailer should be washed thoroughly with soap and water before re-launching in our lake if it has been in another body of water. Leaving it out of the water for a full week will substitute for washing with soap.



### **From the Chair**

By Dennis Batchelet

Everything your commissioners do during the year culminates with the annual meeting.

Twenty-one residents, this year, came out in the rain to conduct our business and set a path for the coming year.

Usually weed cutting is the topic that attracts the most attention, but this year it was a moot point, with virtually no surface

weeds to deal with. But, unfortunately, that also meant we lost a lot of fish to a record-setting, even historic, harsh winter.

Residents spoke passionately about their interest in fishing, so we voted to set aside \$6,000 for possible fish stocking, based on the DNR shocking our lake in late September to get a better fish count and distribution of species.

Every year is different on the lake. Maybe that's why we like it so much ☺

### **Law Enforcement on the Lake**

Suspect abuse of fishing limits? Contact Warden Tim Ebert or report to 1-800-TIP-WDNR.

Got an issue involving disorderly conduct or excessive noise? Contact the Oneida Co. Sheriffs Dept.

### **Did You Know?**

- 1) The most-recent (2013) district property valuation is \$19,508,400.

- 2) The Northland Discovery Center in Manitowish Waters is great for kids - and free.
- 3) The Gray Fox has cat-like retractable claws and can climb trees.
- 4) Earthworms are not native to WI. Dispose in trash.
- 5) To protect our WI forests, firewood should not be transported more than 10-25 miles and is illegal to do so.

### **Our 2012-'13 Volunteers**

Secchi testing/water

sampling: Mike & Kim Esler

Audit Committee:

Bev Fagan

Clean Boats/Clean Waters:

Terry & Hallie Moline

Nominating Committee:

Nobody, yet. We need some leadership here.

Outlot Task Force: Disbanded

Sincerely,

Dennis Batchelet

Tim Desmond

Mike Esler

George DeMet - Lake

Tomahawk Supervisor

Tom Rudolph - Oneida Co.

Supervisor