

HORSEHEAD LAKE PROTECTION & REHABILITATION DISTRICT #1

Fall 2024 Newsletter



HLPRD Board Members

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Message from the Chair

“Welcome to the Fall 2024 newsletter. We’re grateful to all residents and members who have contributed to the health and preservation of Horsehead Lake. Stay informed with updates from our recent meeting and exciting developments as we move into the winter season.”

– Dusten Tornow, Chairperson

Annual Meeting Highlights – August 3, 2024

- Meeting was held indoors at the Lake Tomahawk Sloan Center.
- Financial Report: Year-end balance (as of July 1, 2024) stands at \$27,088.43.
- Next Annual Meeting will be held on August 2, 2025. Mark your calendars!
- Audit: Charles Konsitzke reviewed the financial records and found everything in good order.
- Aquatic Survey Results: Onterra's survey found a few curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) plants, with population levels remaining very low and stable since 2021. No Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) detected.
- Guest speaker Susan Knight gave a wonderful presentation!
- Dave Averbek was re-elected as Treasurer for another term. Thanks Dave!
- Black crappies are no longer under catch-and-release restrictions.

Summary of the Guest Speaker Presentation

At the annual meeting, Susan Knight, Emeritus Scientist from the University of Wisconsin's Trout Lake Station, provided an insightful talk on lake science.

Key Takeaways:

Limnology Program: UW's program has studied lakes for over 100 years, focusing on ecological balance and lake preservation. Vilas and Oneida counties are home to over 2,400 lakes, making this region a prime study area.

- **Trophic Cascade:** Maintaining a balance of predator fish, prey fish, zooplankton, and algae prevents algae blooms. HLPRD's fish stocking efforts—especially bluegill and crappie—are helping maintain this balance.
- **Acid Rain Study:** A split-lake experiment highlighted the environmental impact of acid rain and informed the Clean Air and Water Acts. Horsehead Lake's pH (~10) means it likely won't be affected by acid rain, due to the presence of calcium carbonate.
- **Wild Rice Research:** Knight's current project investigates the decline of wild rice in northern lakes.
- **Community Outreach:** Susan highlighted outreach events like Science on Tap, where scientists engage with the public at breweries, including the Rocky Reef Brewery in Woodruff.

For more information on UW Trout Lake Station, visit: <https://limnology.wisc.edu>

Project and Lake Updates

Aerator Project

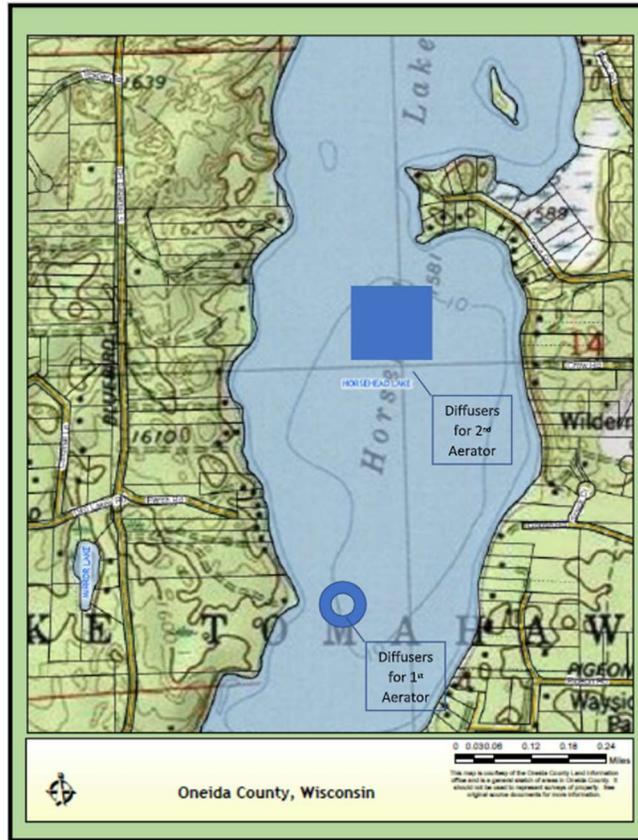
- **Monitoring:** Dissolved Oxygen (DO) sensors are now deployed in the deepest parts of the lake to track oxygen levels throughout winter.
- **Reminder:** Please do not move or disturb the buoys or sensors. This data will help us meet DNR permit requirements and improve lake oxygen levels for fish health.

Open Water Advisory



⚠️ Open water hazards will be present this winter with two aerators operating on the lake. Snowmobilers, please avoid these areas. Residents with aerators around their docks are also reminded to warn guests.

The map below outlines the approximate locations of the open water:



Tax Levy and Mill Rate Updates

- Final 2024 Tax Levy: \$25,485
- Equalized Property Value: \$37,782,663
- Mill Rate per \$1,000: \$0.6745

Note: The levy and mill rate increased this year (the budgeted spend is virtually unchanged) due to a smaller carryover from the prior year.

Fishing and Boating Regulations



- Catch and Release:

- Recommended for bluegill through 2025.

- **Black crappies are no longer under catch-and-release restrictions.**

- Boat Landing Reminder: Avoid power loading to prevent shifting the lake bottom into a berm near the boat ramp.

- Wake Boarding Ordinance: Wake Boarding Boats are becoming a concern for Wisconsin Lakes due to the damage it causes to the lake bottom. As shared at the Annual Meeting, both Oneida County and the Town of Lake Tomahawk are discussing limiting the boats on area lakes and on July 10th the Town of Lake Tomahawk enacted an ordinance to help protect shallow lakes in the area.

The ordinance enacted on July 10th, prohibits the “use of ballast tanks/bags or fins or continuous operation at transition speed in order to create an artificially enhanced wake or operation of a motor boat in an artificially bow high manner causing wake enhancement is prohibited.” This ordinance should protect shorelines, nesting loons, fish habitat and water quality on Horsehead Lake. The subject of the Land and Water Conservation committee meeting today included an ongoing project of lake classification and the identification of outside stressors that affect lake health including enhanced wakes, development density, AIS and public access.

Weed Harvesting

Weed harvesting was not done this year. Per our management plan, the lake was assessed by Deb Bursik, Dusten Tornow and Tom Niebler and all agreed the weeds were not in need of cutting this year.

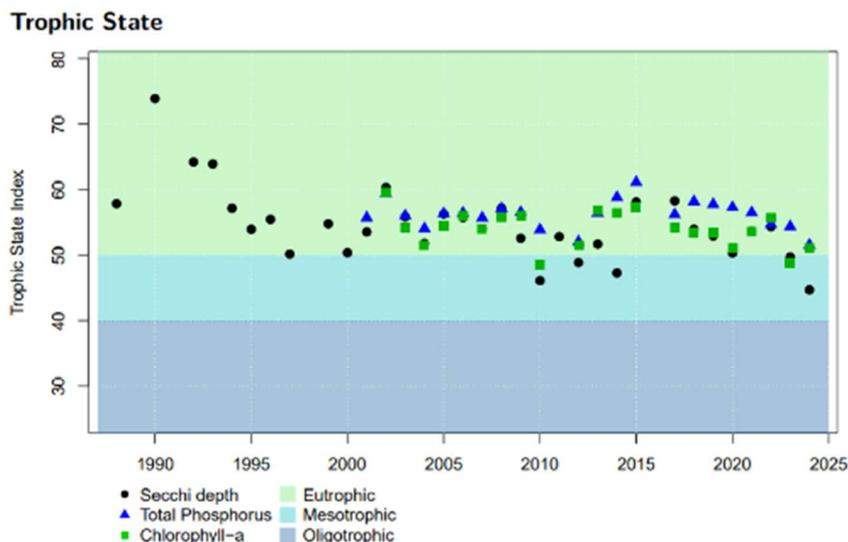
Please see the attached note about what we have learned about weed harvesting.

Yellow Iris Removal

Interested in removing yellow iris? Contact Aquatic Plant Management at www.aquaticplantmanagement.com or call 715-892-2681.

Water Quality Assessment

This summer's DNR analysis shows improved water clarity and lower phosphorus levels. Several residents noted clearer water compared to previous years—thanks to everyone's efforts to protect the lake!



Trophic state indices (TSI) indicate the amount of nutrients in the lake. The TSI equations use late summer (July 15 - September 15) averages of Secchi depth, total phosphorus, and chlorophyll- α .

Eutrophic: excess nutrients, lower clarity, and greater risk of harmful algal blooms and hypoxia (low oxygen)

Mesotrophic: moderate levels of nutrients, moderate clarity

Oligotrophic: low levels of nutrients, high clarity, lower risk of hypoxia

Upcoming Commissioner Meetings

- November 16, 2024
- April meeting TBD
- July meeting TBD
- August 2, 2025 (Annual Meeting)

In Memoriam

We remember lake district member Joe Helmuth, who passed away in September. You can read his obituary here: <https://www.honorone.com/obituaries/Joseph-Joe-A-Helmuth?obId=33126316>

Stay Informed – Email Updates

• If you receive this newsletter by mail, please send your email address to horseheadlakePRD.sec@gmail.com to help us save on postage and printing costs.

Thank You to Our Volunteers

- Webmaster: Dusten Tornow
- Aerator Monitoring: Dave Averbeck
- Water Sampling: Kevin Collins
- Dissolved Oxygen Testing: Paul Bursik
- Audit Committee: Charles Konsitzke

Did You Know?

- 97.5% of Earth's water is saltwater.
- Only 2.5% is freshwater, and just 0.01% is available on the surface as lakes or rivers.

We are fortunate to have access to this precious resource—let's keep working together to protect it!

Weed Harvesting

Horsehead Lake's dense aquatic plant population sometimes obstructs boat travel, necessitating mechanical harvesting. However, harvesting is limited by strict environmental guidelines to prevent ecological harm.

When is Harvesting Needed?

Harvesting occurs only when submerged plants grow within 1–2 feet of the surface, blocking navigation. About 144 acres are eligible for cutting, though the annual limit is 75 acres to protect the ecosystem. The lake's northern portion is a conservation area and off-limits for harvesting.

Risks of Harvesting:

Harvesting can disturb sediments, reduce water clarity, and harm aquatic life such as fish and insects. Invasive species like Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) could also spread through harvesting equipment if not properly cleaned.

Maintaining Lake Health:

The lake currently maintains a clear-water state, crucial for preventing algae blooms. Frequent harvesting could shift it to a turbid state dominated by algae, threatening the lake's ecological balance.

Current Status:

No harvesting has been needed since 2018, and the lake's wildlife is showing signs of natural recovery. As such, the lake district follows DNR recommendations to limit harvesting to navigation purposes only, prioritizing long-term ecological health.

For more detailed information, visit the Comprehensive Management Plan 2020 on the Horsehead Lake website or review the DNR Zoom conference recording on the topic.

*The Management Plan refers to the Comprehensive Management Plan 2020 completed by Onterra. It can be found on our website at www.horseheadlake-wi.org.

DNR Zoom conference recording:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/NTg86FjfgbyUrVrDwZKn9Xm9Jm4OZBsfwoNZgHVg2dSyLzvXNbleJgbgjbvYZox.3p6_JVCWiaNTZzCX