



Horsehead Lake Spring 2025 Newsletter

Brought to you by the Horsehead Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District #1



HLPRD Board Members

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Message from the Chair

“Welcome back to lake life! Whether you’re soaking up sun on the dock, casting a line at sunset, or enjoying morning coffee with a loon serenade—thank you for keeping Horsehead Lake the peaceful paradise we all love. Here’s your springtime update to keep you informed, inspired, and involved.”

– Dusten Tornow, Chairperson

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 lakes’ 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/NTg86FjfgbyUrVrDwZKn9Xm9Jm4OZBsfwoNZgHVg2dSyLzvXNblEJgbgibgvYZox.3p6_JVCWiaNTZzCX

Shoreline Evaluation Tool

Do you ever wonder how well you are maintaining the shoreline of your property on Horsehead Lake? HLPRD found a Shoreline Evaluation Tool that you can rate the shore of your property and look at how to improve it. Just go to this web site for a free self-evaluation of your shoreline property:

<https://survey.healthylakeswi.com/default.asp>

Kevin Collins has completed the survey and found items that he could do to improve his shoreline, such as planting shrubs, creating a rain garden or rain barrels to hold rainwater runoff. His property is located on a significant slope (>40deg) which influenced the recommendations. Your property may have a different solution, let the Shoreline Evaluation Tool assist you in making an environmentally sound decision.

Monitoring Dissolved Oxygen (DO) over winter

As most of you know, our shallow lake has a winter DO issue. Once the ice covers the lake, there is no exchange of oxygen between the air and water. Our lake fish depend on the DO to survive, and once the oxygen levels drop from 10 PPM (summer) to less than 2 PPM, the fish become stressed and die (winter fish kill). Our history of measurements shows that we typically drop to 2 PPM or less while ice is on the lake.

We have installed aerators to improve the exchange of oxygen by bubbling air thru the lake water column. The oxygen in the bubbles is then dissolved into the water and raises the DO levels. To evaluate the success of the aerators, we are monitoring the DO levels thru manual and remote sensor testing. This year will be the first year of remote sensor testing. Once the ice is off the lake, we will retrieve the sensor and analyze the results. In the past, manual DO testing is always difficult to conduct, as the weather, the ice depth and availability of volunteers to drill holes and sample the water all have to be considered. Of course, we are always looking for volunteers (call Kevin Collins for details). Ideally, someone who lives on the lake with snowmobile access.

Well Water Testing

The Wisconsin DNR recommends that you test your private well every year for coliform bacteria contamination and any time there is a change in how your water looks, tastes or smells. Oneida County Health Dept. reports that an estimated that 20-25% of Wisconsin wells have bacterial contamination. Oneida County Health Department, Univ. of Wisconsin Stevens Point (UWSP) and the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene (WSLH) are state labs willing to conduct tests for a price. WSLH has an extensive testing facility and can test your water for everything from bacteria to radioactivity and PFAS. Here's the link: <https://www.slh.wisc.edu/environmental/water/public-environmental-and-water-testing-prices/> If you are looking for basic homeowner tests, Oneida County offers testing for bacteria (\$27), nitrates (\$30) or arsenic (\$35). They work with the UW-Oshkosh water lab. You can pick up a test kit from the from the Oneida County Health Department at 100 W. Keenan St, Rhinelander. UWSP also offers testing, see their web site for details.

(<https://cnroutreached.asapconnected.com/#ProductCategory=WEAL>)

There are also a number of private testing companies available on the internet.

Aerator Update

Both aerators were serviced by Wisconsin Lake & Pond Resources on November 18, 2024. They were started Nov 26, 2024 and turned off April 9, 2025. The aerators appeared to operate normally though a full-time lake resident noted that aerator 2 diffusers became noisier in the spring. This will be investigated during the fall 2025 maintenance.

The dissolved oxygen (DO) concentration manually measured by Paul Bursik were lower than last year but still above the minimum target of 2 mg/l. Note that this winter's data was taken later in the year and it was a colder winter (much more ice). Prior to installing aerator 2 the DO concentrations of less than 0.5 mg/l were common in the deep water. We are hopeful that the improved DO concentration will significantly reduce the fish kills on Horsehead Lake.

Fish Stocking DNR conversation

This year, bluegill are still a catch and release species on Horsehead Lake. On April 15th, Kevin Collins spoke with Nathan Lederman, WI DNR Fisheries, regarding fish stocking by HLPRD. Nate's stated that he was not opposed to continued fish stocking on Horsehead Lake, rather, he would like to see if the stocking process is working. He suggested that we could skip a year in the stocking process in order to see if the bluegill and crappie are reproducing.

Nate also stated that Horsehead Lake is on the DNR schedule for fish surveys. This will aid in determining if the fish stocking is working. The testing was done on May 14th. The preliminary results are very encouraging, both bluegill and crappie were found in various sizes from 2" to 12". The DNR result indicates that fish stocking has jump started both fisheries. Nate also suggested that we monitor the bluegill fish beds this spring to see if there is any observed increase in the number of spawning beds and during the summer report the number/size of bluegills being caught and released. The DNR is planning to

take fish size samples in order to determine the growth rate of all species in the lake. This will result in a small number of fish kills.

The commissioners will be looking into how we can enable residents to report their catches online. Bluegill numbers and sizes are easier to observe as they tend to spawn in shallow sandy-bottom shorelines. Crappies typically spawn in deeper water with more vegetation.

How does HLPRD know who is in our District?

Since 1974, HLPRD has operated as a PUBLIC INLAND LAKE PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION DISTRICT. As a lake district we follow Wisconsin Statute 33 and assess taxes for maintenance and new projects that are beneficial to Horsehead Lake's health and district members. We have developed and follow a comprehensive lake management plan in 2017 as required and approved by the DNR.

The funding for maintenance and new projects is approved by District Members at the annual meeting. Projects have included replacing the dam, weed harvesting, fish stocking, winter aeration and lake studies throughout the 50 year history of the district. Major projects are funded by a combination of DNR grants and district members (through your annual real estate tax assessment).

We notify the members of the district's activities thru mailings, like this newsletter. As required by State Statute, we mail out the annual meeting information so the members can understand the district activities, attend the meeting where maintenance and new projects are discussed and funding for those projects is voted on.

To contact you, we obtain a copy of the district tax roll from the Oneida County Tax Assessor every year. If you are not getting the annual meeting mailing, it could be that your mailing address is incorrect at the Tax Assessor's office. For help with getting your HLPRD mailings, please contact the HLPRD secretary. We also maintain an email database to provide quicker communication. If you are not getting newsletters by email please send your email address to: HorseheadlakePRD.sec@gmail.com

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.

Upcoming Commissioner Meetings

- June 28, 2025 (Commissioner Meeting)
- August 2, 2025 (Annual Meeting)

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
- Ice On/Off Horsehead Lake: Jane Rosner

We are always looking for additional volunteers to help out with various tasks. Let a commissioner know if you are available.