

Horsehead Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District #1 Annual Meeting August 1, 2026

Sloan Center Meeting Room, Lake Tomahawk, WI

Commissioners Present:

Dusten Tornow, Chairperson
Dave Averbeck, Treasurer
Kevin Collins, Secretary
Stephanie Sowatzka, Lake Tomahawk commissioner
Dan Hess, Oneida County Board Commissioner, absent



Meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Dusten Tornow. The meeting proceeded with an introduction of all members that were present. The list of attendees is attached (Attachment 1).

Dusten asked the members to approve the agenda with a change the scheduling of the agenda to allow Carol Warden¹, Univ. of Wisconsin, Trout Lake Research Station, Center for Limnology to speak earlier and allow her to leave early. Dave Averbeck made a motion to approve the agenda with the change. Dennis Batchelet seconded motion. Approved.



Carol Warden is working on Long Term Ecological Research, which was funded for 45 years by National Science Foundation (NSF) up to this year. They are currently looking for donations /sponsors to keep the research going. Please contact your senators and representatives to help with this effort. She explained that funding for their lake study has ended, but they are exploring alternatives including fee-for-service projects and seeking donors to continue their work.

Carol presented research on long-term ecological trends in northern Wisconsin lakes, focusing on chloride levels from road salt, changes in ice duration, and warming waters. She explained that chloride levels in Sparkling Lake, which sits along Highway 51, have been increasing due to road salt pollution, with contamination detected from surface to bottom depths. Her presentation shows levels at 15 milligrams per liter compared to problematic levels of 10 milligrams per liter. This is a concern for indigenous species as chlorine stresses the fish in the lakes. She noted that Horsehead Lake could also be getting increased chloride levels because it sits along a highway (Hwy 47 is in Horsehead Lake's watershed). All lakes are affected to a degree.

The overall research also showed a decline in ice duration over 45 years, with approximately 10 days less ice cover on average in 2025 compared to 1982.

Carol presented surface water data showing significant temperature increases (July & August) in Madison Lakes over 45 years, from 22.2°C in 1982 to 23.3°C in 2025, which is affecting cold water fish species like cisco and whitefish. She shared results from two long-term projects: a successful crayfish removal experiment in Sparkling Lake that restored bluegill populations by removing invasive rusty

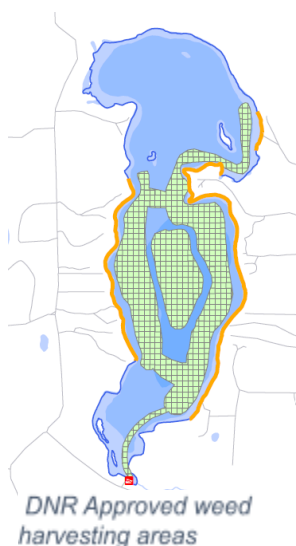
¹ Picture of Carol Warden, <https://limnology.wisc.edu/staff/warden-carol/>

crayfish, and the Crystal Mix Project in Crystal Lake that eliminated invasive rainbow smelt and improved perch population by mixing the lake's temperature layers. She also outlined educational initiatives including Schoolyard LTER programs for local schools, Science on Tap at Rocky Reef (1st Thursday of month from October thru May) monthly events, and open houses at Trail Lake, along with volunteer opportunities like electro fishing.

Kevin Collins motioned to accept last year's meeting notes. It was seconded by James Watters. Approved.

Dusten announced that there is a volunteer signup sheet and anyone can spare some time is encouraged to help out. Dusten mentioned that he was surprised at the amount of work needed to maintain an active district so any help will be appreciated. Dusten reminded everyone that, by law, we are following the "People of the Lakes" Guide for Lake Districts and during the meeting we adhere to "Roberts Rules" meeting guidelines. Anyone can make a motion. Making motions, seconding motions and voting are only to be done by eligible voters. He asked that people state their name when making or seconding a motion so the secretary can record their names.

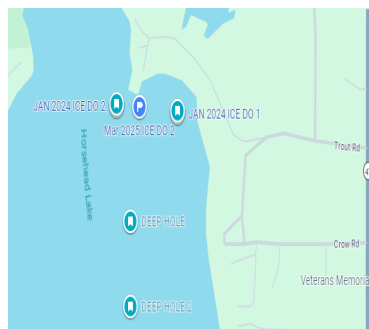
Weed Harvesting Strategy Review



Dusten reported on this year's weed harvesting efforts, noting that while weed levels were assessed as bad, they were not as severe as last year, leading to a reduced harvesting period from two weeks to three days. The weed harvesting committee discussed challenges with the current process and suggested that we evaluate weed growth in mid-June with earlier weed harvesting in July rather than in August. A question was asked about harvesting the mats before they sink back into the lake? Dave explained that our permit only allow harvesting in designated areas. Dusten also stated with the current harvesting approach it takes 15 minutes to get out into the harvest location, 5 minutes to fill the harvester and 15 minutes to return to the boat landing to unload. Discussion ensued on finding different egress routes or exploring alternative contractors. Dennis B. suggested TSB LLC as an alternative. Dusten acknowledged that he is not happy with harvesting to date and HLPD needs to develop better specifications for future bids.

Dusten announced that Tony Ellis resigned and Kevin Collins has stepped up to take secretary position on the board.

Kevin Collins explained the winter Dissolved Oxygen (DO) study that was done again this year as part of the Aerator project. Kevin deployed two sensors this winter. These sensors measure DO and water temperature. The two sensors were deployed in two different locations on the lake, the Deep Hole and Deep Hole 2 (approx. 600 ft south). The sensors were set to record data every hour from deployment to expiration of the DO module after 7 months. We still have a DO issue in Horsehead Lake, but the detailed study illustrates that diurnal DO fluctuates from 2-3 ppm to almost 0 ppm. This occurs in late winter. The DO levels improve as longer hours of daylight begin in March. Having the aerators in operation allow the fish to migrate to higher DO levels at night and allow them to forage during the day. In spite of the heavier



snow and ice cover on the lake, there were no reported fish kills during the winter of 2025-26. HLPRD will deploy these sensors again this fall. The entire study can be found in Google Drive: Horsehead Lake P & R\documents\20270731 HLPRD annual meeting\20260709 HLPRD remote dissolved oxygen study.pdf

Kevin also reported on fish catch. He personally has caught crappie up 16 inches in length. His suggestion is to put back the big crappie for breeding stock and keep the 10-12 in. for fish fry. The crappie and blue gill are all over the lake. Nancy also caught a 32.5 inch pike this year. It is still recommended that all pike be harvested from the lake.

One final point was that the south end of the island to the Trout road peninsula is less than 400 ft. This would be considered a no wake zone for jet skis. Just a reminder. This started a discussion of posting a no wake buoy around the island area. A lot of residents at the meeting are concerned that the boats are disturbing the loons in the area and are churning up the water in that section. DNR approval is required to place a buoy in that area. Kevin will check the regulations. Dennis has two buoys available, he made a motion that HLPRD investigate placing NO WAKE buoys around the island, Jon Aldrich seconded the motion. Approved.

Alan Hougum reported that the HLPRD Website Committee looked into the ADA requirements for the District website. The Federal requirements were pushed back from April 2027 to April 2028. Alan explained what the ADA specifications require, The committee looked into possible companies to comply with requirements. The cost using private sector for compliance was over \$10,000 for initial setup and \$1500/year for maintenance. A volunteer organization called LakeKit.net costs \$500 initial fee. The annual fee is less than \$200. A motion was made by Alan to hire LakeKit² to bring our website into compliance with ADA requirements. It was seconded (unknown person) and approved.

Tracy Hougum talked about a facebook page called *"Horsehead Lake Resident Community"* to allow Horsehead Lake residents to communicate with each other. Tracy and James Watters manage this facebook group. Dusten explained that this is NOT a function of the lake district but a place for residents to post their pictures and interact with other residents. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/horseheadlake>

Kevin described the current state of water quality in Horsehead Lake. The water continues to improve in clarity, phosphorous and chlorophyll which are the three DNR measurements for assessing lakes. He had placed handout sheets (attached) in the tables for all to review illustrating these parameters.

Dave presented the financial report showing the organization is trending to spend \$15,000 less than budgeted last year, with expected savings of around \$20,000 due to reduced weed harvesting costs. He outlined upcoming revenue including \$3,000 in grant money from the second aerator installation and a \$12,000 tax payment to the district. The members approved the 2026-27 budget of \$61,588, which includes funding for an aquatic plant management plan update starting in 2027, with the DNR covering approximately 67% of the costs through grants. Alan Hougum motioned to approve the 2026-27 budget as presented. Kris Batchelet seconded. No discussion. Motion approved.

² A project of [Wisconsin Lakes](https://lakekit.net/), <https://lakekit.net/>

Dusten stated that, per DNR guidance, we will keep the fish stocking process on hold. There is no catch and release recommendations for crappie and bluegill. Kevin pointed out that we still have too many northern pike in the lake, so please remove any northern.

Dusten reported that the Lake Tomahawk town wake boat ordinance was revised and updated to include lakes on the LT borders but dropped the section covering lakes in the town. HLPRD has requested that they re-approve the wake boat ordinance to cover Horsehead Lake.

Lake Studies Management Plan will be done in 2027. This entails an Early Season Aquatic Invasive Species survey or ESAIS, a comprehensive lake point intercept study and a floating leaf aquatic plant survey. The results of these surveys are combined in an Aquatic Lake Management Plan which reports where we are now and what we should plan for the future. Current status is we went out for bid, received two bids back. We are evaluating the bid submittals.

Beavers have been active in building on top of the existing dam. Dave will investigate recommendations from the DNR on trappers in the area.

Dave also reported that we have a new dock at the boat launch. A question was raised about improving the actual boat launch. It looks like power loading at the ramp is causing a berm across from the launch. It was asked who managed the launch, Dusten volunteered to check with the town.

HLPRD requires that commissioners are elected for 3 year terms, this year Dusten's term expires. He has agreed to run again. We are open for any members to offer their candidacy. No volunteers. The ballots were distributed and collected. Dusten was elected with 16 votes.

Dusten proposed that we use electronic newsletters to replace the mailed newsletters used in the past. This would reduce mailing costs and expedite sending out the newsletters to the membership. It was asked if this would also replace the annual meeting notification. NO, HLPRD is required by law to send out the notification of the annual meeting by US POSTAL MAIL no later than 14 days before the date of the meeting. Generally, the annual meeting packet consists of a cover letter, the previous year annual meeting notes, the budget and proposed budget and any other documents which the members would vote on.

Ed Choinski asked a question, what is the benefits to people not on the lake in being in the district? Dennis Batchelet explained that a previous court case found that properties not on the lake benefit indirectly from being included in the district. Ed then asked, "How a property can be detached from the district?". Dusten took the action to contact Ed over his concerns.

Next annual meeting was decided to be July 31, 2027.

Meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Attachment 1. HLPRD Attendance Sheet

2026 HLPD ANNUAL MEETING		
Sign in Sheet		
Name	Address	Email
Alan + Tracy Hougum	7694 Duck Rd.	thougum@icloud.com
Kirsten Tarnow	15610 S. Bluebird	kirstentatie@gmail.com
Nancy Collins	6473 Soyok	nancy.collins53@yahoo.com
BENIE FARBER	7150 CROW RD	FARBER@CROW.CAT.NET
Joe Miklos	7707 Crow Rd	joemiklos250@gmail.com
ED Choiniski	6891 Gypsy Ln RD L.T.	
Jon + Tammy Aldrich	7712 Trout Rd	brassy3@charter.net
Kristi Denny Batchelet	11461 Pigeon Rd	kbatchelet@charter.net
Linda Delius	7721 Trout Rd	ldelius@frontiernet.net
Melissa Thatcher	6465 Sack Ct.	meliethatthor@gmail.com
Kevin Cilliers	6473 Soyok Ct	
Stephanie Sowatka	7260 Kelly Dr.	Sowatka@yahoo.com
Dave Averbuck	6482 S Bluebird Rd	
Edm Balge	16365 Grasshark Rd	Kbalge@outlook.com idalge@outlook.com
Duke WATSON	6540 BLUEBIRD	

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LPRD Annual meeting\Proposed Budget FY26-27.Rev1.pdf

Horsehead Lake District Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Proposed Budget	Proposed FY '26-'27 Budget	Approved FY '25-'26 Budget	Comments
Administration and Operations			
Insurance	\$1,600	\$1,600	
Attorney Fees	\$500	\$500	
Office Supplies & Postage	\$500	\$500	
Commissioner's Fee	\$1,400	\$1,400	
Onitida County Tech Services	\$125	\$125	
Administration and Operations Subtotal	\$4,125	\$4,125	
Information and Education			
Wisconsin Assoc of Lakes Dues	\$250	\$250	
River Alliance of Wisconsin Dues	\$200	\$200	
Onitida Lakes & River Assoc Dues	\$50	\$50	
Convention expense reimbursement	\$400	\$400	
Annual meetings and picnics	\$200	\$200	
Annual meeting speaker expand	\$100	\$100	
Zoom meeting license	\$200	\$200	
Web Site & Backup vault	\$400	\$400	
Information and Education Subtotal	\$1,900	\$1,900	
Lake Management			
Wisconsin Public Service - monitor power	\$4,800	\$4,800	
Weed harvesting	\$20,000	\$20,000	
Weed harvesting permit	\$400	\$0	
Access road preparation / Maintenance	\$1,000	\$1,000	
Aeration System Preventive Maintenance	\$5,000	\$5,000	
Fish stocking	\$0	\$0	
Lake fish stocking permit	\$0	\$0	
Aquatic Plant Management Plan Update	\$10,000	\$0	When possible - reimburses district up to 50% (\$10K max)
Aquatic Plant Studies	\$0	\$4,000	
Aquatic Invasive species removal	\$4,500	\$4,500	
DC sensor maintenance	\$1,100	\$1,100	
Public Bid notices	\$250	\$250	
Lake Management Subtotal	\$40,400	\$39,150	
Contingency	\$4,000	\$4,000	
Contingency Fund	\$4,000	\$4,000	
Grand Total Operating Expenses	\$58,225	\$47,875	
Non-Expendable Funds For capital expenditures - 2nd senator			
Senator Loan - State Board of Commissioners Public Lands	\$1,318	\$18,317	Balance = \$2200 (after 10/15/26 payment) + interest
Total Budgeted Operating Expense + Capital Spend	\$61,188	\$65,192	
Horsehead Lake District FY 2026/27 Tax Calculation			
	FY 2025/26	FY 2026/27	Comments
Budgeted Operating Expense + Capital	\$61,188	\$65,192	
Carryover	\$15,400.00	\$16,229.59	Estimated for FY26/27 / Actual for FY25/26
Real Tax Levy	\$46,288	\$44,962	
Equalized Property Value	\$63,841,818	\$40,841,818	Based on 2025 DCR published data
Mill Rate 1000	\$1.1493	\$1.1145	
District Tax on \$100,000 Property	\$134.79	\$111.45	

Note: Outstanding Grant Fund Payment Due to District:
A final award grant payment is due to the district in the amount of \$10,700 is not included in the Income Budget estimate. We have added the 10K to clarify what is required to complete the project and assuming the requirements are completed when the final payment will be made.

FY 26 - 27 Budget Proposal

7/1/2024

Proposed Budget FY26 - 27.Rev1

Treasury's Report

7/1/2024

Horsehead Lake Dist Budget Tracker FY25-26	Budget	Sept 1 - May 31	June 1 - Sept 31	Full Year Est	Under/Over
Administration and Operations					
Insurance - Total	\$1,600	\$1,589.00	\$0.00	\$1,589.00	\$11.00
Attorney Fees	\$500	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$500.00
Office Supplies & Postage	\$500	\$443.56	\$200.00	\$643.56	\$56.44
Commissioner's Expense Allowance	\$1,400	\$208.00	\$208.00	\$1,196.00	\$4.00
Onitida County Tech Services	\$125	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$25.00
Administration and Operations Subtotal	\$4,125.00	\$2,539.56	\$1,048.00	\$3,587.56	\$546.44
Information and Education					
Wisconsin Association of Lakes (Member Dues)	\$250	\$250.00	\$0.00	\$250.00	\$0.00
River Alliance of Wisconsin (Donation)	\$200	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$200.00	\$0.00
Onitida Co. Lakes & River Association	\$50	\$50.00	\$0.00	\$50.00	\$0.00
Convention expense reimbursement	\$400	\$80.00	\$0.00	\$80.00	\$320.00
Annual meetings and picnics	\$200	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00
Annual meeting speaker expand	\$100	\$0.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00
Zoom annual license	\$200	\$167.90	\$0.00	\$167.90	\$32.10
Web Site & backup vault	\$400	\$386.12	\$0.00	\$386.12	\$113.88
Information and Education Subtotal	\$1,700	\$1,124.02	\$200.00	\$1,324.02	\$375.98
Lake Management					
Wisconsin Public Service - Total for Period	\$3,000	\$1,177.29	\$150.00	\$1,327.29	\$1,672.71
Weed harvesting	\$20,000	\$0.00	\$20,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$0.00
Weed harvesting permit	\$0	\$153.75	\$0.00	\$153.75	-\$153.75
Access road preparation / Maintenance	\$1,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Aeration System Maint (WAPI & Districts)	\$5,000	\$3,712.50	\$0.00	\$3,712.50	\$1,287.50
Fish stocking	\$0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Fish stocking permit	\$0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Aquatic Plant Studies	\$4,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Aquatic Invasive species removal	\$3,500	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$3,500.00
DC sensor maintenance	\$1,100	\$0.00	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$850.00
Public Bid notices	\$250	\$258.91	\$150.00	\$258.91	-\$8.91
Aerator Key Lock Boxes	\$67.18	\$67.18	\$0.00	\$67.18	-\$67.18
Lake Management Subtotal	\$39,150.00	\$7,218.73	\$28,250.00	\$27,269.73	\$11,880.27
Contingency	\$4,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Contingency Fund	\$4,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$4,000.00
Total Operating Expenses	\$47,875	\$18,878.33	\$21,798.00	\$40,676.33	\$15,298.67
Non-Expendable Capital Funds - 2nd senator					
Loan payment due March 15	\$13,217	\$13,216.73	\$0.00	\$13,216.73	\$0.27
2nd DC sensor installation mtrb	\$28.85	\$28.85	\$0.00	\$28.85	-\$0.00
Total 2nd senator Project Expenses	\$13,245.85	\$13,245.58	\$0.00	\$13,245.58	-\$0.27
Grand Total Operating + Capital Spend	\$61,182	\$32,123.91	\$21,798.00	\$43,921.91	\$17,266.09
Income					
Interest - Total for Period	\$0	\$17.74	\$25.00	\$25.74	\$25.74
Total Tax Settlements	\$44,962.00	\$13,061.45	\$11,900.00	\$44,961.45	-\$0.55
Insurance refund	\$31.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$31.00
Total Income	\$44,993.00	\$13,110.19	\$11,925.00	\$44,982.19	\$10.81
Fiscal Beginning Balance					
Chequing Account Balance	\$7,342.52				\$7,342.52
Money Market Account Balance	\$19,120.05				\$19,120.05
Outstanding Credit Card Balance	-\$2.81				-\$2.81
Outstanding Chequing	-\$10,720.34				-\$10,720.34
Fiscal Ending Balance	\$15,739.22				\$15,739.22

FY25-26 YTD & Est Yr End

2nd 2

Proposed Budget FY26 - 27.Rev1

Horsehead Lake Water Quality thru 2026

This year, the water chemistry continues to show slow improvement in clarity, phosphorous and chlorophyll values. The DNR report for Horsehead Lake (thru 6/22/2026) indicates that our results are comparable to other lakes of our type.

Lake natural community: SHALLOW HEADWATER

Late summer trophic indicator averages (red) from the last 10 years compared to other **SHALLOW HEADWATER** lakes (gray box and whiskers). If red dots are absent, not enough recent data exists to calculate an average.

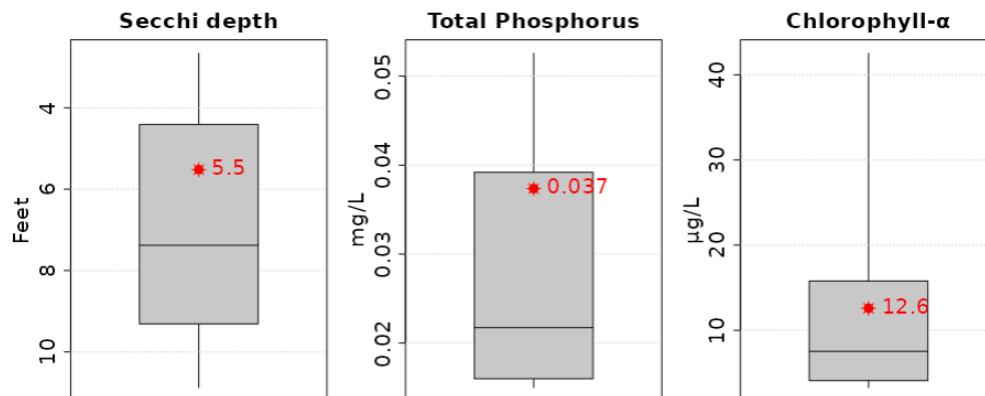


Figure 2. Trophic indicators thru 2025

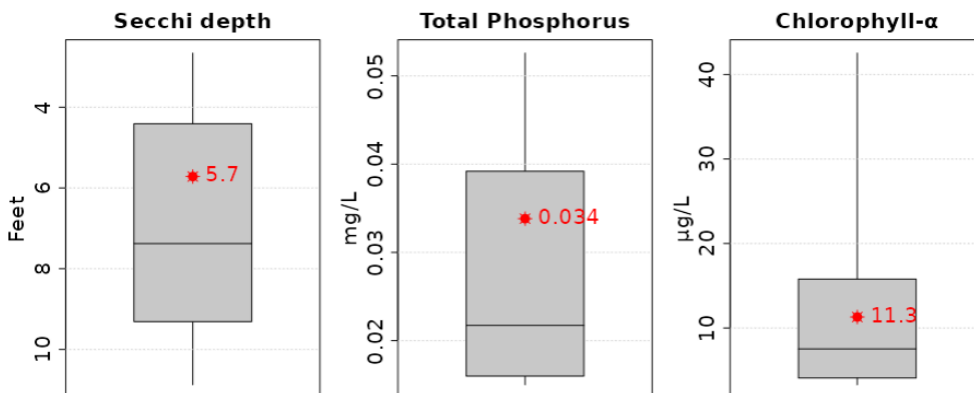


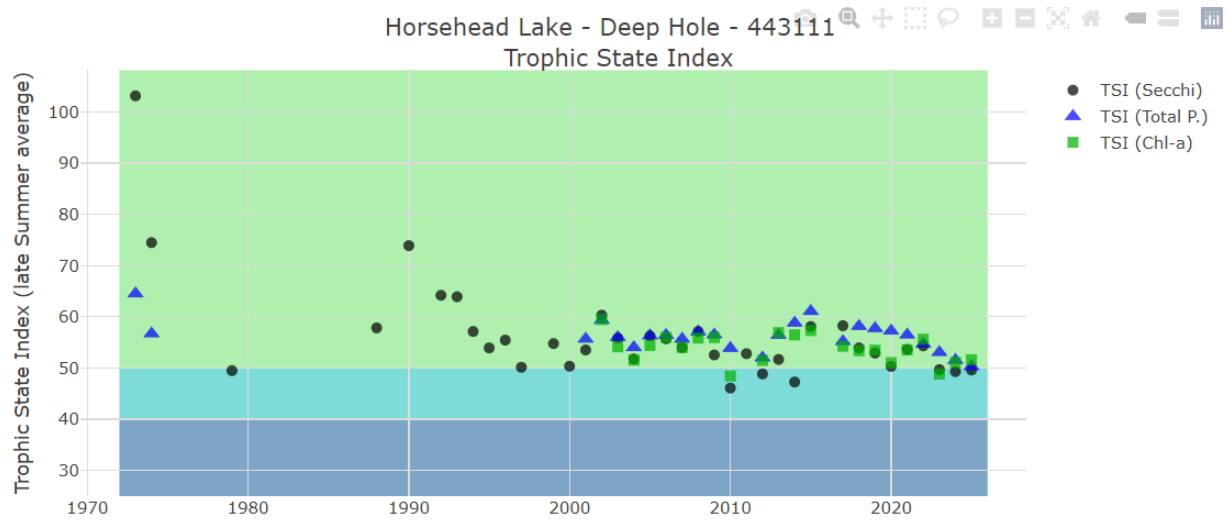
Figure 3 Trophic indicators thru 2026

Our trophic state, is borderline between mesotrophic and eutrophic and is trending toward meso over the last few years. Comparing the two graphs above, in every category our lake continues to improve.

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

Mesotrophic: moderate levels of nutrients, moderate clarity

Trophic State



Finally, here is an outline of our lake and the watershed around the lake. Watershed is defined as the area that drains into the lake. Any contamination in the watershed will eventually show up in our lake.

