

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY AND PLANNING MANDATES

“If you don’t know where you are going, how can you expect to get there? An intelligent plan is the first step to success. The man who plans knows where he is going, knows what progress he is making and has a pretty good idea when he will arrive.”

-- Basil S. Walsh, American motivational speaker and author

1-1 LAKE DISTRICT AUTHORITY, SCOPE AND CAPACITY

WISCONSIN STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The Lake Ripley Management District is a special-purpose, local unit of government representing and acting on behalf of area property owners to protect and manage Lake Ripley. The District was officially formed in December of 1990 by resolution of the Jefferson County Board. It was established as an Inland Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District under Chapter 33 of the Wisconsin Statutes (see “Operating Authority and By-Laws” in Appendix A).

JURISDICTIONAL BOUNDARIES

Lake District boundaries approximate those of the Oakland Sanitary District. They extend just past Highway 18 to the north and Highway 12 to the south, and share a boundary with County Road A to the east and the Dane-Jefferson County line to the west (see Figure 1). These jurisdictional boundaries overlap with the western third of the watershed, which drains surface water to the lake. The Lake District incorporates about 7% of the Town of Oakland’s total land area, and covers approximately 1,800 acres of land around Lake Ripley (see Figure 2). It is completely contained within the Town of Oakland in western Jefferson County, Wisconsin.

GOVERNANCE

A seven-member board of commissioners is elected to set policy and authorize activities carried out by the Lake District. The board consists of five elected property owners within the District (serving staggered, three-year terms), and two appointed commissioners representing Jefferson County and the Town of Oakland. The Board convenes regular business meetings, usually on a monthly basis, that are noticed and open to the public.

The Annual Meeting of the electors (resident voters) and property owners is held each August, at which time a budget for the next fiscal year is approved and elections are conducted. State law



2009-2010 Lake Ripley Management District Board of Commissioners and staff. Front row (left-right): John Molinaro, Georgia Gomez-Ibanez, Jane Jacobsen-Brown and Gene Kapsner. Back row (left-right): Dennis McCarthy, Walt Christensen, Mike Sabella and Paul Dearlove.

authorizes the Lake District to tax up to a maximum rate of 2.5 mills (\$2.50 per \$1,000 of equalized valuation) for the purpose of financing its programs and operations. However, since its inception, the Lake District has never exceeded a 0.5 mill rate. This is partly due to the fact that various grants, and occasionally donations, are routinely secured to supplement local tax dollars to increase management capacity. Appendix B contains the Lake District's latest operating budget, as well as a summary of the District's past property valuations, budgets, mill rates and associated tax levies.

A full-time lake manager is retained by the Board to manage the affairs of the Lake District, and to direct its programs and activities. The lake manager also supervises seasonal weed-harvesting staff, and oversees the work of any volunteers or student interns who may be assisting with project-specific activities. The position was created in 1993 for the original purpose of directing a 13-year, state-funded Priority Watershed Project focused on identifying and controlling sources of polluted runoff. The position was made permanent and fully tax supported starting in 2007 when the Project grant ended.

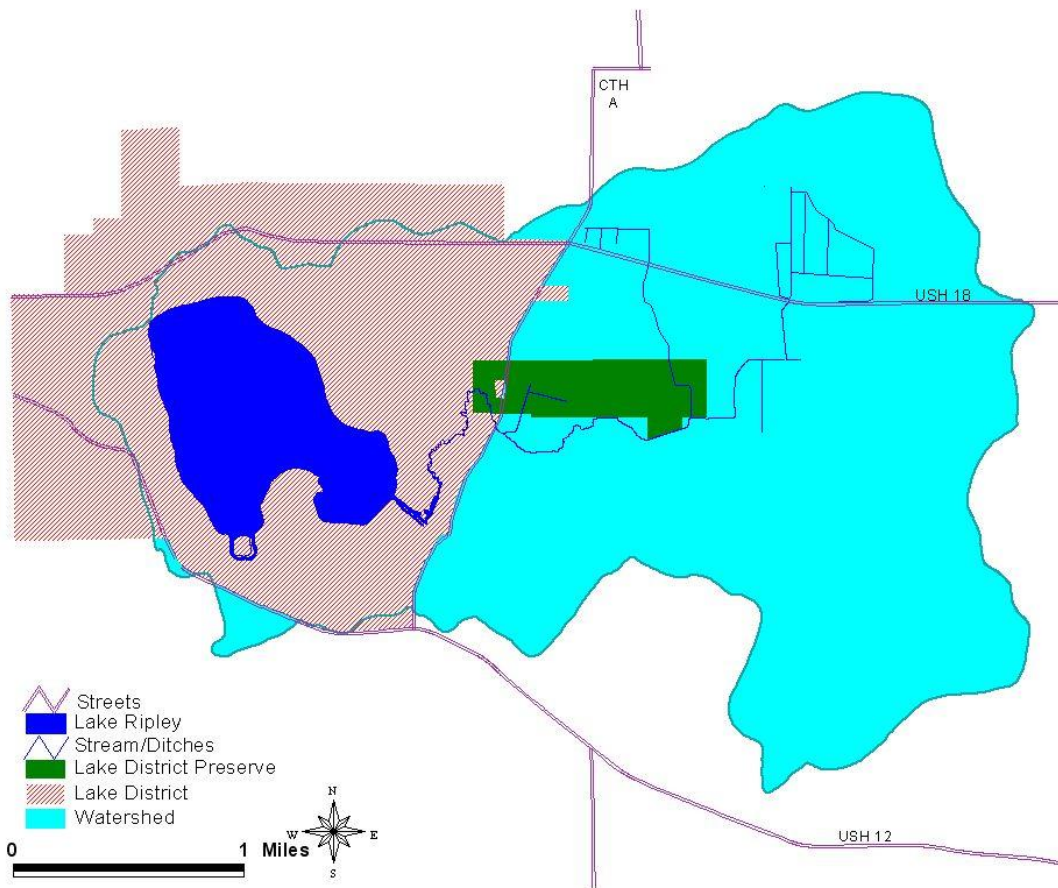


Figure 1: Boundary Map of Lake Ripley Management District, Lake Ripley Watershed, and the 167-acre Lake District Preserve

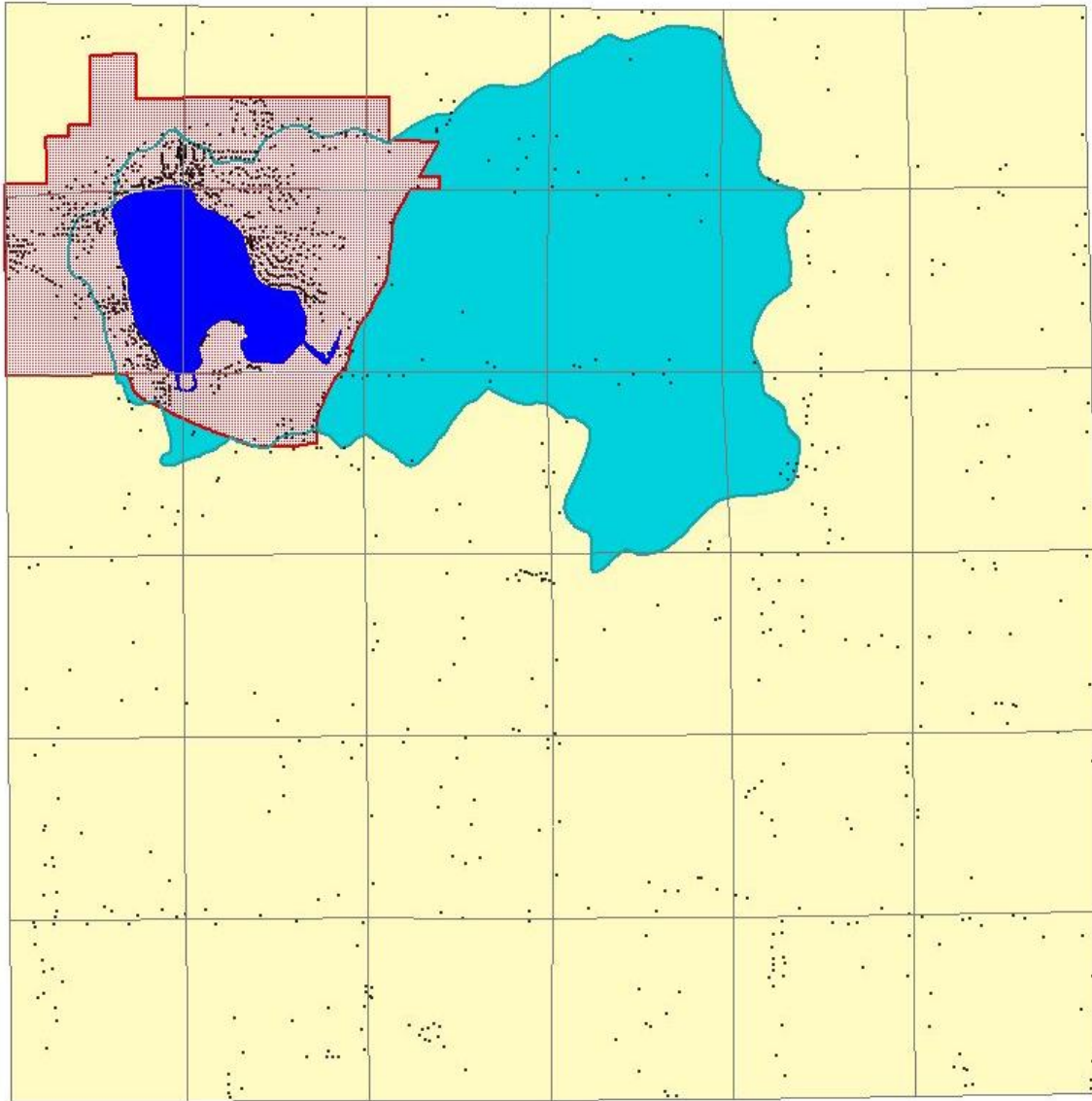


Figure 2: Map of the Lake Ripley Management District, Lake Ripley Watershed, and Residential Address Points within the Town of Oakland¹

CAPACITY FOR PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

The Lake District is well positioned to develop and successfully implement this comprehensive lake and watershed improvement plan. While it has no rule-making, permitting or regulatory authority, the District has unique powers and resources that give it the capacity to shape positive change on Lake Ripley and throughout the watershed. Strengths include:

- A 19-year operating history;
- A governing board comprised of members with diverse backgrounds and experiences;

¹ 2005 Jefferson County land parcel data

- Employment of a full-time, professional lake manager to carry out all District activities;
- Established programs and strong intergovernmental partnerships;
- A record of effective public outreach, management planning, fundraising, policy advocacy and project implementation;
- Ownership of valuable land interests (like the 167-acre Lake District Preserve) and capital equipment assets (such as those related to weed harvesting, lake monitoring and office administration);
- A vast repository of lake-related information and actionable management guidance; and
- The organizational capacity capable of addressing large, complex problems.

1-2 MISSION AND MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

***Mission:** To preserve and enhance Lake Ripley's water quality, its fish and wildlife communities, and its overall ecological health, while ensuring public access and use of the lake that is safe, fair and practical.*

The above mission shall be accomplished using a multi-faceted, watershed-based approach that engages all affected or controlling stakeholder groups (i.e., lake users, lakefront property owners, watershed landowners, local business interests, local government officials, regulators, community nongovernmental organizations, etc.). This big-picture approach shall recognize the complexity and interconnected nature of the larger lake ecosystem and hydrologic cycle. Our overriding goal is to take cost-effective action that best serves the resource and the common interests of Lake District property owners.

Management decisions will favor long-term solutions that (1) address the root causes of actual problems, and (2) strive to fairly balance competing interests that are compatible with our mission. Strategies may involve collecting and sharing information about the lake and watershed, identifying and controlling sources of pollution, managing aquatic invasive species, protecting and restoring fish and wildlife habitat, and generally advocating for the shared enjoyment and stewardship of Lake Ripley.

In summary, we affirm that a clean, healthy and attractive Lake Ripley creates property value while affording numerous quality-of-life benefits. A growing body of evidence shows that a well-maintained lake not only provides the community with abundant recreational opportunities, but adds value to local properties and businesses by making the area a more desirable place to live, work and visit. Some of this evidence is briefly summarized as a literature review in Appendix C.

1-3 PURPOSE OF PLAN

Lake Ripley's accessibility and popularity have long contributed to watershed-development and lake-use pressures that affect its overall condition. Ongoing concerns include overdevelopment, soil erosion, polluted stormwater runoff, nuisance algal blooms, problem weed growth, the

introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species, loss of habitat and natural scenic beauty, and seasonal overcrowding that leads to a less than desirable recreational climate.

This plan is intended to address these and other concerns, namely by promoting well-informed decisions that can best protect and enhance this valuable community resource. It is a challenge made more difficult in light of two realities. One is the sheer scale, complexity and evolving nature of the main problems that threaten Lake Ripley's long-term health. The second is the changing and sometimes conflicting value judgments, perceptions and expectations found among the lake's property owners and visitors.

To be successful, lake protection and rehabilitation must be guided by a comprehensive and well-publicized plan. Such a plan is needed to assess baseline conditions, diagnose problems, set forth management goals, and articulate a practical vision and strategy for the future. Because even the most well-intentioned actions can have unanticipated consequences, this plan will help decision makers avoid exacerbating an existing problem or creating entirely new problems. Specifically, this plan seeks to address the following types of questions:

- What are our management goals and priorities?
- What are the main problems, and whom do they affect?
- What are the expected outcomes of recommended strategies?
- How will results be measured and communicated over time?
- Who will do the work and how will it be funded?
- What level of protection or recovery should ultimately be expected?
- How long will it take to achieve the desired results?

This Lake Ripley Improvement Plan is meant to be comprehensive in scope, and is designed to serve as a fully-integrated reference and guidance document. It incorporates and builds upon prior resource assessments and planning efforts, mainly through informational updates, public opinion re-evaluations, and the revisiting of past strategy recommendations. To remain both relevant and effective, the plan should be allowed to evolve and adapt in response to new information, changing resource conditions, and an unpredictable future. The overriding purpose of the plan is to strengthen the decision-making capacity of the Lake District as it strives to protect and manage the lake at the watershed level.

1-4 PLAN DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables were produced as a result of the development of this plan:

1. A complete description of past and current resource conditions.
2. A re-evaluation of management priorities as defined by public opinion surveys and evolving lake conditions.
3. An analysis of the main problems and threats related to water quality, lake use, aquatic plants, fish and wildlife communities, and general watershed health.
4. The identification and mapping of "critical areas" that provide vital habitat or water quality-protection benefits.

5. The refinement of pollutant-loading and lake-response models.
6. The establishment of goals, objectives, tracking metrics, and specific targets based on ambitious but realistic management expectations.
7. A community-based social marketing plan targeting specific behavior changes (referenced and presented as separate, stand-alone documents).
8. The presentation of recommended actions.

1-5 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PLANS

To date, the Lake District has operated on the basis of information and recommendations set forth in three key management plans. They include:

- Nonpoint Source Pollution Control Plan for the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project²
Published: 1998
Design life: 10 years
- Lake Ripley Management Plan³
Published: 2001
Design life: 5-10 years
- Lake Ripley Aquatic Plant Inventory and Management Plan⁴
Published: 2002
Design life: 4-7 years

Most of the recommendations generated from these earlier planning efforts were subsequently implemented, or are currently the subject of ongoing management action. In addition, resource conditions from which these recommendations were formulated have since changed. Since the time these plans were prepared, a number of Best Management Practices (BMPs) were carried out in the watershed (i.e., farm drainage-ditch closures, shoreline repairs, wetland restorations, etc.), improved lake-use policies were instituted, educational programming was conducted, and at least one new aquatic invasive species (the zebra mussel) was discovered. Planning updates are now needed to adapt strategies to changing conditions, and to stay ahead of emerging threats. This plan provides those updates and consolidates all recommendations within a single guidance document.

² Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Lake Ripley Management District, and Jefferson County Land Conservation Department. 1998. Nonpoint Source Control Plan for the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project. Wisconsin Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Abatement Program. Publication WT-512-98.

³ Lake Ripley Management District. 2001. Lake Ripley Management Plan.

⁴ Lake Ripley Management District. 2002. Lake Ripley Aquatic Plant Inventory and Management Plan.

1-6 PLANNING METHODOLOGY

Failing to plan invites reactionary and misguided decision making, which leads to less than desirable results over the long run. To avoid this problem, the following planning methodology was employed which involved four key phases:

Phase I: Describe past and current conditions

The first phase consisted of gathering, updating and interpreting both scientific and social-science data relevant to the lake and its watershed. This step was necessary to define the many interrelated factors and variables that influence present lake conditions.

Phase II: Diagnose problems and threats

The second phase involved the analysis of available data to diagnose the lake's main problems and threats. Consideration was given to the nature and source of the particular problem, its magnitude of impact, affected lake uses, and other criteria.

Phase III: Identify goals, objectives and tracking metrics

The third phase was meant to help target management action to efficiently allocate limited resources. Goals and objectives were established in accordance with Lake District mandates, and were guided by the results of public opinion surveys, available planning guidance, and resource/institutional constraints. This step was also used to develop metrics and targets that could be used to track progress over time.

Phase IV: Recommend management strategies

The fourth phase involved identifying applicable management strategies that appeared most promising from a cost-benefit standpoint. This step attempted to propose specific actions that would advance identified goals, and that would cost-effectively address identified problems. Preference was given to those strategies that control the root causes, rather than the mere symptoms, of a particular problem or threat.