

Lake Ripley Management District

Mission

To protect or enhance the health and condition of Lake Ripley, while ensuring both equitable and sustainable public use of the resource.

Administration

The LRMD is run by a board of directors, consisting of five elected members owning property within the District (serving three-year staggered terms), and two appointed representatives from the Town of Oakland and Jefferson County. A Project Manager implements LRMD programs and administers the state-funded Priority Lake Project.

Formation

The LRMD was formed in 1990 under Chapter 33 of the Wisconsin Statutes to ensure the protection and effective management of this important public resource. It is a local, special-purpose unit of government serving over 1,500 property owners. LRMD boundaries closely follow those of the Oakland Sanitary District, and incorporate a significant portion of the lake's watershed area.

Financing

Funding may be derived from a combination of local tax dollars, grant awards, private donations, and special assessments or charges. The LRMD is authorized to levy a maximum of 2.5 mills to finance projects that maintain and improve the quality of life in and around Lake Ripley. However, since its inception, the LRMD has not had to exceed 0.5 mills. It also has been the recipient of over \$1 million in grants, mostly related to administering the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project.

Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project

Purpose

To protect and improve the quality of Lake Ripley by controlling soil erosion, mitigating polluted runoff, and restoring degraded fish/wildlife habitat.

Administration

The DNR's Non-point Source Water Pollution Abatement Program launched the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project in 1993. It is a collaborative effort involving administrative, technical and/or financial assistance from DNR, DATCP, U.W.-Extension, and the Jefferson County Land and Water Conservation Department. The LRMD employs a Project Manager to direct the 13-year, watershed-rehabilitation effort, primarily by assisting eligible landowners in correcting non-point sources of pollution.

Financing

The Project, which ends in 2007, receives about \$72,000 in state grants each year to pay for staff, office expenses, public education programs, and the cost sharing of pollution-control practices.

Objectives

- Reduce phosphorus and sediment pollution entering the lake
- Minimize the effects of *eutrophication* (the accelerated aging of a lake caused by excessive polluted runoff)
- Prevent further wetland loss, and increase wetland acreage in the watershed
- Protect critical fish and wildlife habitat around the lake
- Preserve and restore natural shorelines
- Educate the public about the resource and its management
- Protect threatened groundwater resources

Dates of Interest

1907: Ole Evinrude, founder of Evinrude Outboard Motors, tests some of his first motors on Lake Ripley.

1940s: The state record largemouth bass is caught on Lake Ripley weighing 11 lbs., 3 oz. O.H. Perry Sr. donates wetlands at the Lake Ripley inlet to the DNR.

1964: Vasby's Channel is dredged by the adjoining landowner, creating an island in South Bay.

1984: A public sewer is installed around the lake.

1986: Lake Ripley is one of 50 lakes in the state to be selected by the DNR to participate in its long-term trends monitoring program.

1989: Concerned residents organize to purchase a used weed harvester to combat nuisance weed growth that covers about 40% of the lake surface.

1990: Residents petition the county to form the LRMD—an inland lake protection and rehabilitation district. A Town ordinance is adopted that establishes slow-no-wake zones and times on Lake Ripley.

1991: The newly formed LRMD takes over the weed-harvesting program. A \$10,000 state grant is obtained to study sediment cores of the lake bottom to reconstruct historic water quality conditions. Michael Spellman, LRMD Chair, receives a certificate of appreciation from Governor Thompson for his efforts to protect Lake Ripley.

1992: An aquatic plant management plan is prepared to guide weed harvesting. The Oakland Conservation Club installs a new pier at the public boat landing to improve access to the lake. The first "carp-a-thon" is organized to help control nuisance carp populations. The LRMD becomes Wisconsin's first Lake District to participate as a state-funded "Priority Lake Project" (designed to address non-point sources of pollution through education and cost-share incentives). An opinion survey is used to solicit public input regarding the lake and its management.

1993: State funding of the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project begins. About \$72,000 in annual grants will be received through 2006 to administer the Project and provide cost-share incentives to eligible landowners. A watershed inventory is conducted to assess existing conditions and identify sources of pollution. A \$10,000 state grant is received to conduct a fishery inventory of Lake Ripley. The DNR declares Lake Ripley an outstanding natural resource needing protection and long-term management. The quarterly Ripples newsletter gets its debut. A partnership is started with Cambridge High School to conduct annual water quality monitoring. A DNR study finds water quality conditions in Lake Ripley ranging from fair to poor.

1994: The Priority Lake Project pioneers the use of bioengineering to control shoreline erosion and restore native vegetation. \$89,914 in state and federal grants are used to renovate the public boat landing. The LRMD is awarded the "Outstanding Lake Stewardship Certificate of Appreciation" from the Wisconsin Association of Lakes. A \$30,900 state grant is received to help purchase a new weed harvester. John Molinaro replaces Michael Spellman as LRMD Chair. A Water Resources Appraisal is completed to evaluate water quality conditions and offer management guidance. 426 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.

1995: A Non-point Source Pollution Abatement Plan is developed for the Priority Lake Project. The LRMD is awarded the "Lake Stewardship Award" by the Wisconsin Association of Lakes. A Town ordinance is adopted to regulate the placement of new piers in areas designated by the DNR as being environmentally sensitive. A Town ordinance is adopted to prohibit the use of motors in Vasby's Channel to protect fish-spawning habitat. A DNR study is conducted documenting the impacts of shallow-water motor boating on aquatic vegetation. Conservation easements are acquired to protect wetlands and undeveloped shoreline within the Lake Pointe Subdivision. 120 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.

1996: A public opinion survey is used to assess the attitudes of boaters toward existing boating rules. A \$2,000 state grant is obtained to pay for water testing supplies. 399 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.

1997: A Town ordinance is adopted to regulate the burning of yard waste around the lake. A \$120,000 state grant is received to help purchase the 100-acre Lake District Preserve. Another \$47,000 in local donations are received to cover the remaining acquisition costs. 505 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.

1998: Restoration and public access projects begin at the Lake District Preserve. A volunteer "Lake Watch" program is launched to monitor and report boating violations. John Molinaro, LRMD Chair, becomes a graduate of the Lake Leaders Training Institute sponsored by the Wisconsin Lakes Partnership. A nature trail is created at the Lake District Preserve. 335 feet of eroding shorelines and 2,950 feet of eroding ditch banks are repaired.

1999: A \$1,810 federal grant is used to cost share a ditch-plug and wetland-restoration project at the Lake District Preserve. \$8,558 in state funding is received to develop a comprehensive lake-management plan. The first annual "Lake Sweep" litter cleanup is hosted to commemorate Earth Day. A public opinion survey and hearings are conducted to solicit input on the lake's condition, use, and future management needs. The LRMD initiates a program to acquire conservation easements on wetland properties in the watershed. "Welcome Wagon" educational packets developed for new residents. 110 feet of eroding shorelines and 5,800 feet of eroding ditch banks are repaired.

2000: An LRMD website is created. The LRMD partners with Jefferson County on a two-year effort to identify management needs for the county's waterways. Data gathering and analysis begins as part of developing a lake management plan. 100 feet of eroding shorelines and 3,500 feet of eroding ditch banks are repaired.

2001: A \$10,000 state grant is received to conduct an aquatic plant inventory and formulate a plant-management plan. A Town ordinance is adopted to prohibit the feeding of geese and other waterfowl around the lake. Tuesdays are designated as voluntary "quiet days" where slow-no-wake speeds are encouraged. A public advisory committee is formed to explore ways of improving slow-no-wake zoning to better protect shallow aquatic habitat. 379 feet of eroding shorelines and 2,550 feet of eroding ditch banks are repaired.

2002: A \$2,200 federal grant is used to plug a 7,400-foot drainage ditch and restore 20 acres of wetlands at the Lake District Preserve. A public hearing is held to solicit input on a proposed ordinance amendment to expand slow-no-wake zones. 561 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.

2003: Environmental deed restrictions are negotiated to protect critical wetland and undeveloped shoreline areas within the Majestic Pines Subdivision. An elevated boardwalk is built at the Lake District Preserve. A watercraft census and recreational carrying capacity analysis is performed. An inventory of existing piers and shoreline development is conducted. 436 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.

2004: A \$3,500 state grant is received to research the impacts of piers on near-shore aquatic life. A \$1,500 Youth-Service-Learning grant is received in partnership with Cambridge H.S. to design and install rain gardens at the Oakland Town Hall. Several ordinance recommendations are advanced to better protect the lake from over-development and overuse. The LRMD works with Jefferson County to strengthen and clarify the shoreland cutting ordinance. 295 feet of eroding shorelines and 2,800 feet of eroding ditch banks are repaired.

2005: The LRMD office moves to the Oakland Town Hall. A 3,200-square-foot rain garden is installed on Town property as a community demonstration project. Informational kiosks are erected along the Lake District Preserve's nature trail. Town ordinances are adopted to increase the public launch fees, prohibit keyhole developments, and expand slow-no-wake zones. Four zebra mussels are found. A \$1,000 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction is obtained in partnership with Cambridge H.S. to help fund an invasive species public awareness blitz. A comprehensive public opinion survey is conducted. \$15,300 of additional cost-share funding is obtained from another priority watershed project. 902 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.

Past Highlights

- The LRMD is formed in 1990.
- Funding for the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project starts in 1993 (ends in 2007).
- Restoration of the 100-acre Lake District Preserve begins in 1998.
- Since the LRMD's inception, nearly \$1.3 million is obtained in state/federal grants and donations to help pay for lake-improvement programs
- Since 1994, 4,568 feet of eroding shorelines are repaired.
- Since 1994, 17,600 feet of eroding ditch banks are repaired. Another 9,057 linear feet of drainage ditches are plugged.

Ongoing Responsibilities

- Conduct lake and watershed studies
- Develop resource-management plans
- Help landowners control soil erosion and polluted runoff using conservation practices
- Manage aquatic weed growth
- Monitor water quality
- Restore degraded fish and wildlife habitat
- Identify and protect areas critical to lake health
- Obtain and administer project grants
- Acquire wetland-protection easements
- Act as an information clearinghouse
- Disseminate educational materials
- Investigate and report citizen concerns
- Serve as a local regulatory watchdog
- Advocate for policies that benefit Lake Ripley at the town, county and state levels

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Lake Ripley

PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT



HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS