

Ripples

LAKE RIPLEY
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

Vol. 9, No. 4

Fall-Winter 2001

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FROM THE HELM

In 1993, the Lake Ripley Management District was awarded a Non-point Source Pollution Abatement Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). This annual grant finances the efforts of the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project through 2006, and is made up of two parts. The first part covers public outreach, renting an office and hiring an employee to administer to the program. The second part pays up to 70% of the cost to help property owners correct non-point source pollution problems.

The first years of the program entailed detailed examination by the DNR regarding the condition of Lake Ripley at that time and the sources of non-point source pollution. Those studies identified a number of pollution sources, including eroding shoreline and drainage ditches emptying into the inlet of the lake.

Over the next few years, a series of aggressive lake managers contacted property owners to explain the program and encourage participation. The response from shoreline owners was immediate. Within a few years, most of the severely eroding shorelines were repaired and we had begun the next level of projects. I am proud to say that all our lake managers have been on the cutting edge of new technology, and many methods were first tried on Lake Ripley with great success. Shoreline conditions are always changing and we continue to monitor the entire lake for problems.

Although our efforts to repair shoreline have been very successful, they only account for part of the problem. Addressing deteriorating drainage ditches, estimated to contribute 75% of sediment loads to Lake Ripley, have proven more difficult. These projects involved much fewer but larger landowners, and were much more expensive problems to correct. Our first success was when Pat Long of Long Sod Farms agreed to start a four-year program to repair all the ditches on his property that affected the lake. Pat should be given a great deal of credit for recognizing the benefits to his property and the health of Lake Ripley, and investing his money in this large project.

Our next big step was the purchase of the Lake District Preserve. A large DNR grant and generous donations from local organizations enabled the Lake District to purchase 100 acres adjacent to the lake inlet. We were able to restore many acres of wetlands and native prairie. In addition, we were able to install a ditch plug on our property to prevent additional non-point source pollution from entering the lake.

This left only one piece of the puzzle, one property owner with a deteriorating ditch that was polluting the lake. We spent parts of five years with three different lake managers trying to negotiate some arrangement that would allow us to solve this problem. We offered the same financial assistance for the repair of the ditch that we offered all our other cost-share participants. We offered to plug the ditch on our property, and purchase a flood easement to protect the adjoining landowner from any damage that might occur no matter how remote. We offered to purchase the two acres of land that might possibly be impacted should the ditch be plugged. Finally, we offered to cost share the repair of the eroding ditch and find donations to pay the owner's cost share, meaning no cost at all to the owner. All offers were rejected.

The Lake District Board, left with no alternative and with great regret and disappointment, decided to take the matter to court. In September, the court decided in the District's favor, and we were able to purchase the two acres that could potentially be affected by a ditch plug. We have already started the permit process that will allow us to effectively stop this significant source of pollution to Lake Ripley.

This, therefore, completes the first phase of our non-point source pollution program. We continue to monitor shoreline and ditches for problems. We will continue to contact property owners with suggestions and recommendations to improve their property. We remain firm in our opinion that: "Bad things happen when good people do nothing."

John Molinaro

Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

IN LOVING MEMORY OF STEPHEN W. DECKER

The Lake Ripley Management District lost a devoted friend and tireless leader on September 27, 2001 after a valiant battle with cancer. Steve Decker, a long-time Lake Ripley resident and Lake District Board Commissioner, was a knowledgeable supporter of our continuing water quality protection efforts, as well as a strong proponent of using rain gardens, shoreline bioengineering and construction site erosion control to mitigate polluted runoff. He took great pride in the beautiful lake we've all grown to love, and was never afraid to lead the charge on potentially contentious initiatives that would ensure its protection. Steve's friendship, passion, generosity and leadership will be sorely missed, but he will never be forgotten. Our thoughts and prayers remain with him and the family and friends he left behind.

Shoreline Restorations

Imagine a shoreline with its native plants and shrubs long since stripped away. In their place, a barren and uninterrupted expanse of turf grass ends abruptly at the water's edge. The shoreline is mounded due to years of ice heave, and pockets of loose earth are gradually washing away. Turtles, frogs, butterflies and other sensitive wildlife no longer frequent this area that is now devoid of habitat. A sand beach and aggressive aquatic "weed" raking have further sterilized the site, making it difficult for fish to spawn, feed and find adequate cover.

Now imagine the shoreline after it's been re-vegetated with a diversity of native plants, shrubs and trees. Deep penetrating roots hold soil in place and prevent the shore from eroding. A variety of plant types form an attractive garden that brings color and structure to the shoreline. Desirable wildlife returns, but conditions no longer

attract nuisance congregations of geese. Finally, less time is spent mowing the lawn and applying expensive fertilizers that can pollute the lake.

Many property owners are now beginning to make these wonderful shoreline transformations through our cost share program. These relatively inexpensive and ecologically beneficial projects are usually eligible for 70% cost reimbursement. If you own lakefront property, please contact the Lake District office to find out how you can complete your own restoration project. For those who have property elsewhere in the watershed, consider similarly attractive rain gardens to redirect and soak up excess stormwater runoff. We also sponsor projects such as farm ditch stabilization, grassed waterways, conservation farming, streamside buffers, nutrient management planning, wetland restorations, shore protection, and conservation easements.



A newly installed shoreline restoration project using natural coconut fiber rolls to stabilize the banks and plantings along the riparian zone at the Sylvan Mounds II site. This project was installed in the summer of 2001. The native plants and shrubs require little maintenance, and will become fully mature within a couple years.

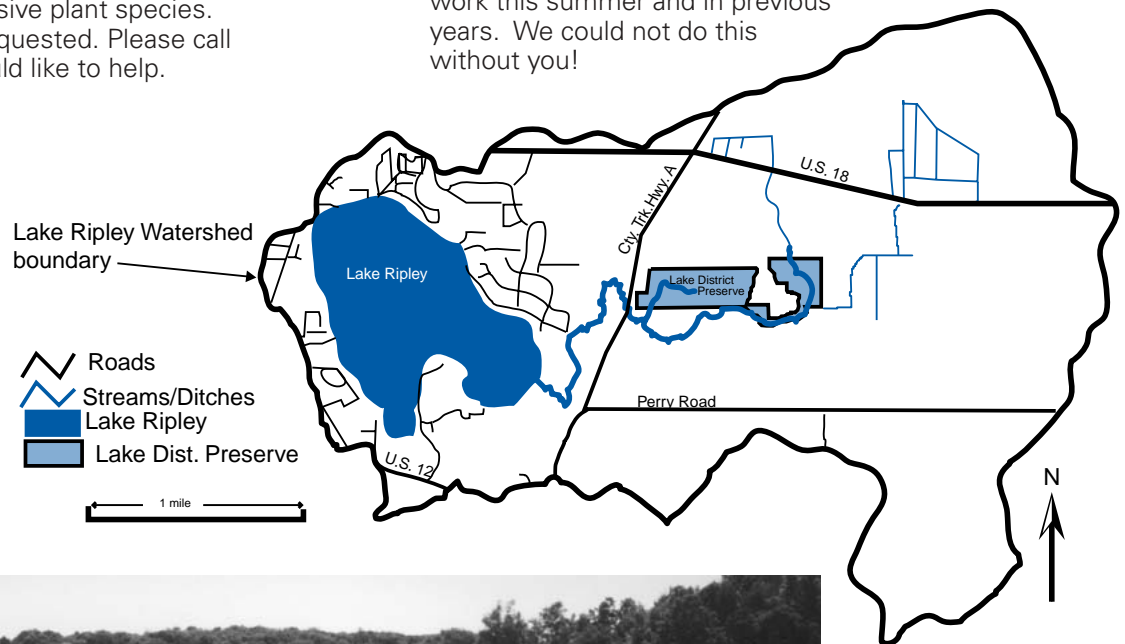


Shown here is the Gaulke/Reay shoreline restoration site in full bloom last summer. This site is near the Sylvan Mounds II site.

Lake Ripley Announcements

- The Lake Ripley Management District welcomes **Derek Hoffman** as its newest commissioner to the Board of Directors. Mr. Hoffman was appointed by the Board to serve out Steve Decker's remaining term.
- The **Slow-No-Wake Buoy Committee** will present its findings and recommendations at the 12/15/01 Lake District Board meeting. The public steering committee is charged with formulating a cost-effective and enforceable strategy that protects shallow aquatic habitat from unnecessary motor boat disturbance. Shallow water depths represent the most biologically diverse and ecologically sensitive areas on the lake, and are most susceptible to recreational impact and degradation. The group's primary objective is to use space zoning to preserve the long-term quality of the lake while accounting for the needs of competing recreational demands.
- A prescribed **prairie burn** will take place in mid-April at the Lake District Preserve. The controlled burn will be used as a management tool to sustain native plant populations and control the spread of non-native, invasive plant species. Volunteer assistance is requested. Please call (608) 423-4537 if you would like to help.
- Contact the Lake District office if you are interested in learning more about our **cost-share program**. We provide up to 70% cost-share reimbursement for a variety of pollution-control and habitat-improvement projects. We also pay 100% of the costs associated with the development of tax-friendly conservation easements on privately owned wetlands. Improve your property, protect water quality and increase wildlife habitat by taking advantage of these financial incentives. Limited funding is available, so please call today, (608) 423-4537, to see if your proposed project is eligible.
- Thank you to the volunteers who participated in this summer's **Lake Watch program**: Joanne & Chip Knilans, Steve & Nancy Truax, Kent & Jane Brown, John & Leta Bragg, Bruce Crump, Renee Roland, Jon Schuler and Bob Foersterling. Thank you also to the volunteers who evaluated lake-zoning strategies as part of a public advisory committee: Marjorie Gaulke, Richard Moen, Steve Bieschke, John Zorn and Tim Lorden. Finally, we wish to thank Jim Biechler and Rose Marie Ward, our volunteer water quality monitors, for all their work this summer and in previous years. We could not do this without you!

The newly purchased 100-acre Lake District Preserve is highlighted in the map at right. The preserve allows the Lake District to protect lands near the lake inlet, while restoring wetlands and native prairie. Shown below is a nature trail winding past a shallow marsh and wood duck house at the preserve.

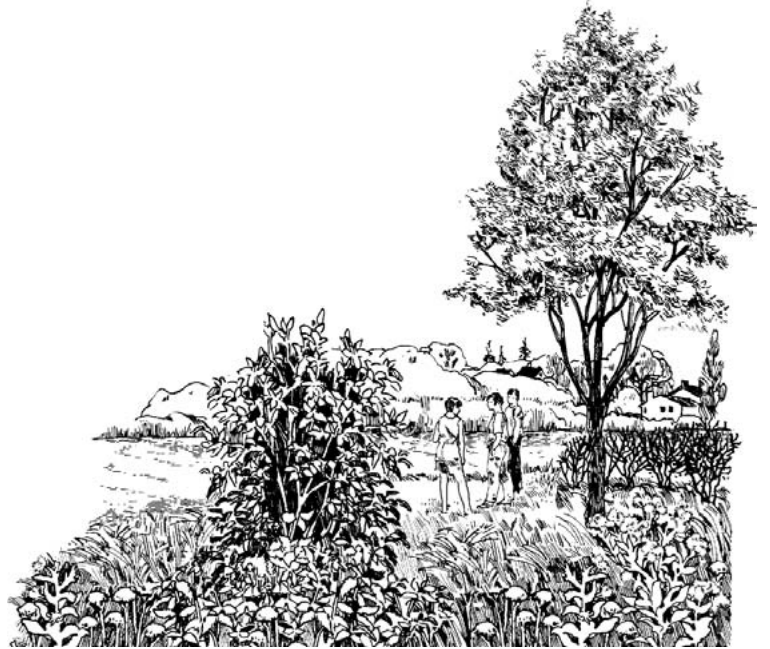


Citizens Work to Protect Jefferson County Lakes

The Jefferson County Lakes Enhancement Committee is a group of citizen volunteers working toward the effective protection and management of our local water resources. The group's mission is to protect or enhance the ecological quality and sustainability of Jefferson County's lakes, rivers and associated shorelands – including their water quality, fisheries, wildlife and natural habitat – while promoting reasonable public access and recreational opportunities that each of these water resources is capable of supporting. They plan on achieving this mission by developing recommendations that will guide Jefferson County, its townships, municipalities, lake districts/associations, conservation groups and concerned citizens in improving the quality of life on and around their local lakes and streams.

All meetings of the Lake Enhancement Committee are open to the public and held in the Jefferson County Courthouse. Recent discussion has focused on issues such as shoreland zoning rules and enforcement, lake classification, and citizen education. The next meeting is set for Wednesday, December 19th from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

If you are interested in serving on the Lake Enhancement Steering Committee or would like to be placed on a mailing list for the project, please contact



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