

Ripples

LAKE RIPLEY
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

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Spring 2001

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FROM THE HELM

Winter slowly turns to spring, the ice leaves the lake, and the Lake District begins to prepare for another active season. This year we face many challenges, complicated by the U.S. Supreme Court decision to remove federal protection from many of our wetlands. Lawmakers in the State are working hard to write legislation to fill the gap, and assure no additional loss of this very important resource we rely on to protect our lakes. The Lake Ripley Management District has always been aware of the possibility that there might be a change in the laws that govern wetlands. We have therefore developed programs over the years to restore and protect wetlands on several fronts.

Our Non-point Source Grant Program has cost-shared projects that restore and return wetlands to the watershed, and we continue to look for individuals who are interested in participating. In addition, we have contacted owners of existing wetlands and begun a conservation easement program. Through this program, property owners can maintain ownership of their land and have the satisfaction of knowing that this very important asset will be protected forever. We encourage anyone interested in either of these programs to call the office for information.

Our most important and successful wetland protection project has been the establishment of the Lake District Preserve. The restoration of nearly one hundred acres of wetlands and prairie has been an example of cooperation between numerous national, state, and local organizations. The Preserve has been in existence for several years now, and we need your help. The Lake District has so many important projects going all the time it's impossible to give the Preserve all the attention it deserves. We need a group of interested citizens to form a volunteer organization to help us improve and maintain the Preserve. This group would advise the Lake District on needs and suggested improvements, and help with the implementation of various projects.

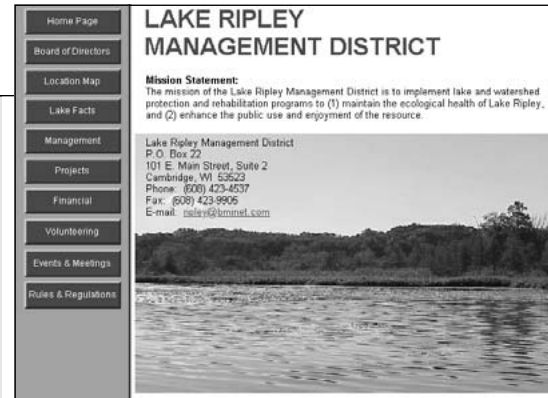
We are looking for people with knowledge of wetlands and prairies, and people who just love nature and want to get involved. Young and old can come together to teach each other and us about plants and wildlife. Since this will be a brand new organization, you can be involved in the details. How often you get together and what projects are needed will be decided by the group and presented for approval to the Lake District Board. Just call or email us if you are interested in getting involved.

John Molinaro

Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

Lake Ripley News Briefs

Our new web site at
www.lakeripley.org



We Have a New Web site!

The Lake Ripley Management District is pleased to announce it has a new web site at www.lakeripley.org! It contains information on ongoing management programs, volunteer opportunities, upcoming meetings and events, lake rules and regulations, key contacts, Lake Ripley facts and trivia, and much more! The web site will be improved and updated on a regular basis to keep you informed of major policy decisions and management efforts.

Lake Ripley Management Plan Approved

The LRMD Board of Directors unanimously approved the Lake Ripley Management Plan at its March 17, 2001 meeting! We wish to thank everyone for your support and participation throughout this two-year planning process. By responding to opinion surveys and providing input, many of you chose to play a critical role in the development of this long-term management strategy for Lake Ripley. The Board now plans to start implementing these recommendations as it strives to cost-effectively protect and enhance the quality of life on and around Lake Ripley.

The Plan is available for review at the LRMD Office at 101 E. Main Street in downtown Cambridge, as well as the Cambridge Public Library at 200 Spring Street. It can also be downloaded from our new web site at www.lakeripley.org. From our home page, go to the "Projects" section and click on the downloadable file icon.

Volunteers Wanted for 2001 "Lake Sweep"

The annual "Lake Sweep" litter cleanup is planned for Friday, April 27th (Rain date: Friday, May 4th). The Cambridge Aquatic Environmental Club, Cambridge High School's science classes, and the Lake Ripley Management District are hosting the event. Volunteers will target shorelines, community parks, and roadsides around Lake Ripley and Koshkonong Creek through downtown Cambridge.

Please come join us as we work to clean up our community waterways! The more people we have taking part in the event, the more trash we will be able to remove! There is also a need for project sponsors. Sponsors are asked to provide a nominal cash donation (\$25 suggested), and/or contribute needed supplies for our volunteers. Useful items include heavy-duty garbage bags, work gloves, orange safety vests, snacks/treats, beverages, and access to a rowboat(s). Previous sponsors included Lon's Country Foods, Melster Candy Company, Village Bakery & Coffee Shop, Lake Ripley Bait Shanty, and Cambridge State Bank. Please call the Lake Ripley Management District at (608) 423-4537 for more information. We hope you join us!

Lake District Board Requests Voluntary "Quiet Days"

The LRMD Board voted to proclaim Tuesday as a voluntary "quiet day" on Lake Ripley. Lake users are asked to voluntarily operate their motor boats and personal watercraft at slow-no-wake speeds every Tuesday from June 1st to August 31st. The goal of the voluntary quiet day is twofold. First, it encourages people to give the lake an opportunity to recover after a busy weekend of heavy motor boat and jet ski traffic. Second, it allows silent-sport enthusiasts to enjoy the tranquility of the lake one day out of the week throughout the peak boating season. Signs will be erected at boat access points to announce the Tuesday quiet day and request the public's voluntary compliance.

Cambridge Ace Hardware to Stock No-Phosphorus Fertilizer

Cambridge Ace Hardware is now stocking a no-phosphate lawn fertilizer by Scenic Green™ (a LESCO® product). The no-phosphorus fertilizer is comparable to other lawn fertilizer products in both price and effectiveness. A 40-pound bag of 25-0-11 fertilizer covers 10,000 square feet, and costs only \$13.99/bag. The “25-0-11” indicates that the product contains 25% nitrogen, 0% phosphorus and 11% potash (potassium), respectively.

Phosphates are considered a contributing factor to water pollution, and high levels of this nutrient can support the excess production of algae and aquatic weeds. Although we encourage people to try to refrain from using fertilizers near Lake Ripley for water quality reasons, we recognize that there are some situations when fertilizer use may be appropriate. This may be the case when native plants growing in lower quality soils are replaced with turf grass, which requires much more care and maintenance. However, the soil in most areas around Lake Ripley naturally contains more than enough phosphorus to support turf grass growth and development. Supplemental applications are not necessary, and grass clippings allowed to remain on the lawn will decompose and return phosphorus to the soil – practically insuring that a deficiency will never develop.

Phosphorus-containing lawn fertilizers used when or where they are not needed pose serious threats to the quality of our lakes. Problems are most likely to occur when too much fertilizer is applied, soil erosion takes place, or product is spilled or allowed to accumulate on sidewalks,

driveways, streets and sparsely vegetated areas. Under these situations, phosphorus can end up exactly where it does not belong – in the water.

To avoid over-fertilizing your lawn, have your soil tested every few years so you can determine exactly how much and what kind of fertilizer you need. County extension agents can provide guidance on how to test your soils. Then, follow package directions and apply only the amount needed. Don't forget to exclude the land area covered by your home and garden when calculating the square footage of lawn you need to cover. The best time to fertilize lawns is on a calm, dry day in the fall (September), with a repeat application in spring (May) if needed. Water soon after applying fertilizer to promote fast absorption into the plants.

Remember that even though your property might not be in visual distance of the lake, your actions do impact the resource more than you might think. The best policy is to leave areas well vegetated, while subsequently minimizing hard surfaces that impede the natural infiltration of rainwater. Try to avoid activities that involve clear-cutting or exposing soils to the affects of rain- and wind-induced erosion. Finally, limit the extent of your property that you devote to lawn space. As opposed to deeper-rooting native vegetation, turf grass requires more maintenance, is less effective at absorbing excess water, and has almost no value as food and cover for wildlife.



Grant Awarded to Conduct Aquatic Plant Inventory

The Lake Ripley Management District was just awarded a \$10,000 DNR Lake Planning Grant to conduct an aquatic plant inventory of Lake Ripley. The purpose of the proposed project is to:

- (1) evaluate the condition of the lake's aquatic plant community,
- (2) gauge the effectiveness of our weed harvesting program at controlling Eurasian watermilfoil, and
- (3) update our aquatic plant management plan. Our goal is to manage aquatic vegetation to protect water quality and fisheries habitat, while allowing reasonable recreational access to the water.

Aquatic plants form the base of the food chain, and provide the foundation for a healthy aquatic ecosystem. A diversity of native vegetation provides oxygen, food and cover for the lake's fish and wildlife. It also stabilizes bottom sediment, filters pollutants, and keeps algae blooms in check. The invasion of non-native “weed” species, pollution, motor boat disturbances, and unguided plant-control efforts are among the biggest threats to the aquatic plant community. Unwanted changes in species composition within certain areas of the lake can be a good indicator of such problems. This summer's aquatic plant inventory will allow us to identify these changes, pinpoint problem areas, and improve upon our ongoing management efforts.

2001 Tentative Meeting Schedule

Saturday, February 17, 2001
Saturday, March 17, 2001
Saturday, April 28, 2001
Saturday, May 12, 2001
Saturday, June 16, 2001
Saturday, July 21, 2001
Saturday, August 11, 2001 (Budget Hearing)
Saturday, August 18, 2001 (Annual Meeting)
Saturday, September 15, 2001
Saturday, October 27, 2001
Saturday, December 15, 2001

Apply now for cost-share assistance!

Up to 70% cost-share assistance is available to eligible landowners interested in developing Best Management Practices (BMPs) for their properties.

BMPs are designed to control soil erosion, reduce stormwater runoff, protect water quality, and enhance wildlife habitat. They include activities such as restoring wetlands, installing riparian buffer strips, protecting shorelines, developing nutrient management plans, repairing eroding ditch banks, etc.

If you are considering a water quality or wildlife enhancement project, contact the Lake Ripley Management District to see if you are eligible to receive financial assistance.

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