

Ripples

LAKE RIPLEY
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

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Summer 2000

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FROM THE HELM

In our last newsletter, I introduced our motto: "Bad Things Happen When Good People Do Nothing." I truly believe this statement can apply to virtually everything we are trying to do at Lake Ripley.

This newsletter includes discussion pertaining to environmental easements. In the past, you have heard me talk about the depletion of wetlands around the lake. Although there were originally 1,500 acres of wetlands cleaning the water entering Lake Ripley, we now have less than 500 acres left. We continue to pursue a program designed to restore and rehabilitate those drained wetlands. If you have drained wetlands on your property and want to restore them, we have cost-share money available to help you do that. But we need to protect the wetlands we still have.

Wetlands are very important because they act as natural filters that absorb pollutants and excess nutrients that would otherwise drain into the lake causing algae blooms and nuisance weed growth. They also serve as giant, natural sponges. This was sadly pointed out last spring during the unusually heavy rains. Water that years ago would have been retained in these lost wetlands raced from field to field, flooding any property with a depression. All this polluted runoff eventually ended up in Lake Ripley.

Very interesting, but what does this have to do with you? Well, the Lake Ripley Management District wants to protect all the wetlands we have left. We want to do this by acquiring environmental easements on the remaining wetlands. All property owners who own wetlands should have received a letter explaining what we want to do. If you have received a letter, please contact our office. We can protect those wetlands forever, with no cost to you. We might even be able to save you a few dollars through various tax benefits. Your actions are important because, as you know... "Bad Things Happen When Good People Do Nothing."

John Molinaro

Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

NOTICE: Nominations are currently being accepted for one LRMDDB position that is up for re-election at the August 19th Annual Meeting. The position is currently held by Steve Decker, who intends to run for a second term. Nominations will be accepted at least 45 days prior to the meeting date. If interested, please call our office for nomination forms.

Wetland property owners: Are Conservation Easements for you?

Have you ever heard the saying that “a lake is a reflection of its watershed?” This is because lakes and their watersheds are inextricably linked. The condition of the watershed plays an important role in determining the quality and quantity of water that ultimately reaches the lake. Because of this important link, we must continue to focus a great deal of effort on managing the surrounding landscape if we hope to protect our lakes.

Intense residential and agricultural development in the Lake Ripley Watershed, coupled with poor land-use practices, continues to alter our landscape and impact the quality of our natural resources. Plant removal, soil disturbance, wetland drainage, and the proliferation of water-impervious surfaces all wreak havoc on downstream water bodies. These activities limit the land’s ability to infiltrate and purify stormwater, thereby increasing the amount of polluted runoff that enters the lake.

Recent studies reveal an alarming trend toward the degradation and outright elimination of critical wetlands and natural areas within our watershed as a result of adverse development activities. There is now overwhelming scientific evidence proving that wetlands are extremely beneficial in terms of water quality protection, wildlife

habitat and flood reduction. Unfortunately, the cumulative impacts associated with land clearing and drainage have reduced critical wetland acres in our watershed by about 70%, resulting in a corresponding decline in water quality and wildlife diversity.

To stop this disturbing trend, your Lake Ripley Management District is working with wetland property owners in the hope of establishing conservation easements on these remaining wetland areas. The landowner retains the private use and ownership of the land, but agrees to give up certain land-use rights to protect the wetlands from inappropriate development in perpetuity. Conservation-minded landowners can potentially realize significant estate, income and property tax benefits as a result of establishing conservation easements on areas that generally already have limited potential for development.

We are already working with several wetland property owners who expressed an interest in our easement program after we distributed special mailers on easements this spring. For those who have not responded but would like more information, please contact us so we can help you determine whether or not conservation easements are right for you.

Cost-sharing Available

The Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project helps protect water quality by working with landowners throughout the watershed to implement pollution-control strategies known as “Best Management Practices” (BMPs).

Cost sharing through the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project is a voluntary agreement that allows you and the state to share the costs of installing BMPs. The most common BMPs that are cost-shared in the Lake Ripley Watershed include:

Shoreline Erosion Control
Shoreland Vegetated Buffers

Wetland Restorations
Ditch Reshaping and

Seeding
Grassed Waterways

Nutrient Management
Reduced Tillage

Field Stripcropping &
Contour Cropping

Conservation Easements

Most BMPs are eligible for between 50% and 70% cost-sharing assistance. Check with your project manager (Paul Dearlove) if you are interested and would like more information. Call now while funding is still available!



Grassed waterways are among the funded BMPs.

Public Hearing Held

Residents of the Lake Ripley Management District were invited to participate in a special public hearing recently as part of developing a Comprehensive Lake Management Plan for Lake Ripley.

The purpose of the hearing was to present the results of the 1999, opinion survey of LRMD residents, and to gather additional public feedback on a variety of issues pertaining to Lake Ripley and its management. Recreational conflicts,

water quality conditions, public lake access, fisheries management, rule enforcement, and weed harvesting were just some of the topics that were the focus of lively discussion and debate. We are grateful for the exceptional turnout, and appreciate everyone's input and candor on such controversial issues.

The next step is to take your comments and identify management priorities that warrant our attention over the next

several years. A lake-protection and improvement strategy will then be formulated to address these priorities.

Our goal is to continue to implement programs that ecologically balance the health of the lake with a mixed-use recreational environment. Achieving such a balance remains our greatest challenge, especially when we recognize that a lake cannot be all things to all people. Hopefully, through

proper planning and public involvement, protection strategies can be developed that are based on sound science, and that best support common interests.

Announcement: A final public hearing will take place during the August 19th Annual Meeting to present key findings and conclusions, and to receive input on recommended management strategies. Stay tuned for forthcoming details and announcements.

Lake Sweep 2000

To celebrate Earth Day (April 22), the Lake Ripley Management District teamed up with nearly 150 Cambridge High School biology students for the annual "Lake Sweep" this spring. The litter clean-up event was initiated several years ago by Mr. Ed Grunden and his science classes, and continues to play an important role in keeping the Lake Ripley area clean and litter-free.

This year's event targeted neglected areas in and around Lake Ripley and Koshkonong Creek. Volunteers demonstrated pride in their community by collecting and properly disposing of the trash that collects along our roadsides and fouls our waterways. For an entire day, groups of participants were bused and deployed along area roadways, stream corridors and shorelines that were being blighted by litter. Enough trash was eventually collected to fill over 60 full-sized garbage bags! Jennifer Ruetten, a student volunteer, sums things up by reflecting: "We hardly made a dent in what garbage we picked up, but we did do something and that's what counts." Justin Farrar adds: "I thought it was cool to be helping out around the community, and I felt like we made a difference when we were done."



The "Lake Sweep" clean-up volunteers

A special thank you goes out to all our Lake Sweep 2000 volunteers and sponsors! Sponsors included Lon's Country Foods (donated garbage bags and gloves), Village Bakery & Coffee Shop (donated a generous supply of donuts), Melster Candy Company (donated a large box of saltwater taffy), and Lake Ripley Bait Shanty & Marina (allowed free access to their piers and boat launch).

One anonymous volunteer may have said it best by remarking: "It's always satisfying to go out and do something to clean the environment. Seeing all those bags of garbage really makes you feel like you're doing your part."

Meeting Schedule and Volunteer Opportunities

Public input and participation is an essential element in managing and protecting Lake Ripley.

The Lake Ripley Management District meetings provide an opportunity for you to learn more about our programs, and to express your opinions and concerns regarding the effectiveness of these programs. Meetings are generally held one Saturday each month starting at 9:00 a.m. at the Oakland Town Hall (located about two miles east of Lake Ripley on USH 12).

For those unable to attend, we still want to hear from you! Simply send us a letter with your questions or comments, or call (920) 563-9198

June 17
Monthly Meeting

July 15
Monthly Meeting

August 12
BUDGET HEARING

August 19
ANNUAL MEETING

September 16
Monthly Meeting

October 21
Monthly Meeting

(recorded on local cable) during the 9:05—9:20 a.m. public comment period at each meeting.

Also, feel free to call or stop by the LRMD office in downtown Cambridge to learn more about our lake-management efforts or upcoming volunteer opportunities.

We are currently looking for volunteers to assist with the following programs:

Weed harvesting

Lake Watch patrol

Litter clean ups

Water quality monitoring

Aquatic plant inventories

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