

Ripples

LAKE RIPLEY
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

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Lake Ripley Management District Board of Directors

John Molinaro
Chair
(608) 423-4743

Tim Lorden
Secretary
(608) 423-4855

Mike Sabella
Treasurer
(608) 423-4603

Steve Decker
Commissioner
(608) 423-4872

Joanne Knilans
Commissioner
(608) 423-3067

Paul Jorstad
Town of Oakland
(608) 423-4949

Pam Rogers
Jefferson County
(920) 648-6428

Paul Dearlove
Project Manager
101 E. Main St.,
Suite 2
P.O. Box 22
Cambridge, WI 53523
(608) 423-4537
E-mail: ripley@bminet.com

Web site:
www.lakeripley.org

FROM THE HELM

I guess most of my life I could be considered a city boy. It has only been the last ten years, through my involvement with the Lake Ripley Management District, that I've become aware of the term land ethic. Much of what is written on the land ethic refers to farms. Back in the 1930's, 40's and 50's, new farming methods resulted in the loss of habitat for wildlife, prompting many in the conservation community to begin writing on the need for a land ethic. A leader in this field was Wisconsin's own, Aldo Leopold.

It is not my purpose here in a few paragraphs to fully explain the land ethic. J. Baird Collicott and Eric T. Freyfogle sum it up well in their new book of previously unpublished Leopold works titled *From the Heart of the Land*. "Conservation is fundamentally a moral issue." "Along with rights of ownership came the duties to the community, duties to leave room for wildlife, to keep soil in place, to leave hydrologic flows sufficiently natural, and to ensure in other ways, that the owner's tract of land contributed to the health of the larger landscape."

The farmer has been preached to, and in many cases, has responded positively to the call for changes in farming methods. In this small space, I would now like to address the need for the lake community to acknowledge and accept the need for a land ethic. "Conservation requires shifts in the knowledge, skills, desires, and aesthetic sensibilities of the landowning populace and, ultimately, the development of a land ethic."

The Lake Ripley Management District, through its Non-Point Pollution Abatement Grant (Priority Lake Project), has worked with many lakefront property owners in restoring their shoreline. In a sense, developing a land ethic. "The chief obstacle to sound land [and lake] management" is "not so much the difficulty of restoring habitat as the difficulty of redirecting the attitudes and values of landowners and land users."

The Lake District will soon be attempting to expand our land ethic beyond shoreline owners. We will be contacting property owners around the lake about a new program called Roadside Rain Gardens. This is a plan to catch rainwater before it washes pollutants into the lake. If you are contacted about the possibility of a Roadside Rain Garden on your property, approach the idea in the sense of a land ethic. Hopefully, as the Lake District works to find other ways to protect and maintain Lake Ripley, we will not only continue to add to the Land Ethic, but will create a whole new Lake Ethic.

John Molinaro

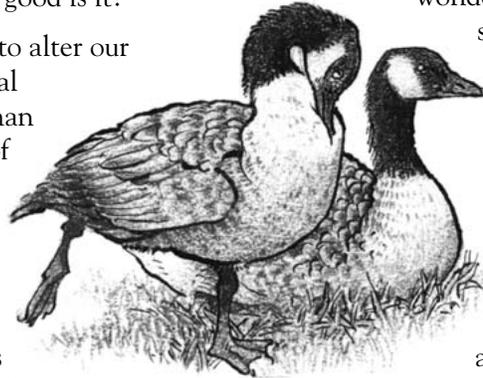
Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

Goose Gossip

An abundance and diversity of wildlife is a valued and necessary component of the natural environment. Many of us recognize the ecological significance of native flora and fauna, and do our best to preserve the sensitive habitats that support these important species. In the words of Aldo Leopold, “The last word in ignorance is the person who says of a plant or animal: ‘What good is it?’”

Unfortunately, because we continue to alter our environment so profoundly, ecological imbalances are not uncommon. Human activity has led to the introduction of non-native, invasive species that threaten the quality and stability of entire ecosystems. Our activities on the landscape may also favor certain types of plants and animals over others. Whitetail deer, raccoons and sparrows have adapted all too well to our way of life, while more sensitive songbirds, frogs and turtles are becoming increasingly scarce. Consequently, management is often required to protect the health and biological diversity of the wildlife community as a whole.

The large and expanding goose population on Lake Ripley has recently warranted such management attention. Waterfowl are a common occurrence on lakes like Ripley, and their presence adds to the beauty and charm of our water resources. However, excessive numbers of geese are starting to contribute to a number of problems, and are rapidly becoming an impediment to the public’s use and enjoyment of the lake. High resident goose populations are shown to damage shorelines, pollute surface waters through defecation, displace other wildlife via territorial



aggression, and introduce diseases and parasites (including those that cause Swimmer’s Itch). Aside from loving green, manicured lawns at the water’s edge, geese are literally flocking to Lake Ripley in part because many of us regularly feed them. Whether we do it out of compassion for wildlife or to intentionally attract these natural wonders to our shorelines, this regular feeding is starting to cause more harm than good.

As per the recommendation of the Lake Ripley Management District, the Town of Oakland recently adopted an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of geese and other waterfowl on Lake Ripley. This action was taken in response to concerns that problems would only worsen if feeding were allowed to continue, and is modeled after similar policies developed for other area lakes.

Feeding entices birds into delaying their migration and often into becoming permanent residents. Geese and other waterfowl can eventually become overly dependent upon these handouts, which often do little to satisfy their nutritional needs for survival. Feeding also results in large numbers of birds competing for very limited food supplies in small, concentrated areas. This leads to overcrowding and poor nourishment, increasing waterfowl susceptibility to life-threatening diseases.

For the above reasons, we ask Lake Ripley residents and users to please refrain from intentionally feeding the geese and other waterfowl. Your cooperation will help us maintain a more self-sustaining waterfowl population, which is to the benefit of the lake and its diverse wildlife.

Rain Gardens

“Rain gardens” are vegetated landscape features you can create to (1) enhance the beauty of your property, and (2) soak up excess rainfall that can otherwise lead to flooding and runoff pollution. They are established on the portion of your property that naturally collects water during heavy rainfall or snowmelt – often next to water-impervious surfaces like roads and driveways. Low, seasonally wet spots and storm water drainage routes make excellent locations. A variety of aesthetically appealing plants and shrubs can be used that do not require a lot of maintenance and upkeep. Stone borders, mulch, and other landscaping techniques can be used to further increase the attractiveness of your rain garden. Excess water is then diverted to these locations where it can be soaked up by the plants and naturally infiltrated into the soil.

Sound interesting? Contact the Lake Ripley Management District for more information. We would be happy to meet with you at your property to start exploring your options. Depending on eligibility, you may also be able to obtain cost-share assistance for the design and installation of your rain garden.

Exotic Species Watch

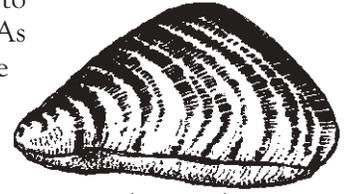
“**E**xotic” species are not nearly as alluring as the name might imply. An exotic species describes any organism that is introduced into a habitat where it is not native. Introducing species accidentally or intentionally, from one habitat into another, is risky business. Freed from the predators, parasites, pathogens and competitors that kept their numbers in check, species introduced into new habitats often overrun their new home and crowd out native species. Their numbers will explode in the presence of enough food and a favorable environment, and once established, can rarely be eliminated.

In the late 1980s, an exotic species known as Eurasian water milfoil invaded Lake Ripley and created a crisis situation when it covered over 40% of the lake’s total surface area. The milfoil severely impaired navigation and use of the lake. It also reduced native plant diversity, which had a negative affect on fish habitat. The infestation of this fast spreading aquatic weed was among the top issues leading to the formation of the lake management district in 1990, and remains a serious concern to this day.

Now, there is a new bully in town called the zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*). Zebra mussels are small, fingernail-sized mollusks native to the Caspian Sea region of Asia. They were first found in the Great Lakes in 1988 after being accidentally introduced to North America in ballast water from a boat that traveled across the ocean. Tolerant of a wide range of environmental conditions, zebra mussels have spread to parts of all the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River, and are now showing up in smaller, inland lakes throughout Wisconsin.

Zebra mussels can multiply at exponential rates, forming dense colonies of up to 65,000 individuals per square foot.

They will cover any firm surface such as rock, metal, rubber, wood, docks, boats, native mussels, crayfish and even aquatic plants. Their shells are very sharp, and can become a hazard to swimmers and barefoot waders. As they feed, zebra mussels filter the same plant and animal plankton from the water that many other species rely upon for food. Although filter feeders may improve water clarity over time, they also compete for the same food resources required by juvenile fish and other native species.



zebra mussel

If you find zebra mussels or other exotic species in a lake not known to be infested, save some of the specimens and contact Wisconsin DNR (608/266-9270), UW-Extension (715/346-3366) or Wisconsin Sea Grant (920/683-4697). To help prevent the spread of zebra mussels and other exotic species into Lake Ripley:

1. Learn what these organisms look like (at least those you can see). Brochures with color photographs are available at the Lake Ripley Management District office.
2. Inspect your boat and trailer, and remove any visible plants and animals.
3. Empty your bait bucket on land – not in the lake.
4. Drain water from bilge, live wells and motor.
5. Wash and dry your boat, trailer, and other boating equipment to kill harmful species that were not visible at the boat launch.

Slow-no-wake Buoy Committee Formed

Following recommendations presented in the recently approved Lake Ripley Management Plan, a special steering committee has been organized to re-evaluate the slow-no-wake zones on Lake Ripley. The public steering committee is charged with formulating a strategy to address growing problems associated with increased boat traffic. Continuing concerns and problems are mostly related to aggressive boating behavior in shallow, near-shore locations. These concerns include noise, decreased water clarity, shoreline erosion, destruction of aquatic plant beds, wildlife disturbance, spread of Eurasian water milfoil, user conflicts and safety risks.

The steering committee is comprised of open-minded individuals representing a diversity of recreational interests. Anglers, motor boaters, paddlers, jet skiers, swimmers and wildlife enthusiasts all have a right to use and enjoy the lake, and all have fair representation on the committee. They will have the difficult task of formulating a strategy that (1) protects the quality of Lake Ripley, (2) is fair and acceptable to the majority of lake users, and (3) is cost-effective and enforceable.

Thanks to our Volunteers and Sponsors!

The Lake Ripley Management District wishes to thank all the volunteers and sponsors who helped make the annual "Lake Sweep" litter cleanup a tremendous success.

In particular, we thank Ed Grunden, Lisa Schneeberger, Tim Lorden, Jamie Arnold, Rose Marie Ward, Jim Biechler, Joanne Knilans, the Rod Lee Family, and the Cambridge High School biology students for their support and participation.

We are also extremely grateful for the generous contributions we received from the following sponsors: Village Bakery & Coffee Shop; Melster Candies, Inc.; Cambridge State Bank; Steven Bentz Company; Lake Ripley Bed & Breakfast; D. Adams & K. Haack; and Edward Jones Investments.

Don't Forget!

- The Lake District's annual meeting will be held August 18, 2001 (9:00 a.m. @ Oakland Town Hall).

(Written nominations for board positions are accepted at least 45 days prior to every annual meeting. Electors must be present at the meeting in order to vote).

- We have a new web site at: www.lakeripley.org
- Lake-friendly, no-phosphorus fertilizer is available at Cambridge Ace Hardware.
- Tuesdays are voluntary "quiet days" (slow-no-wake) on Lake Ripley.
- A grant-funded aquatic plant inventory will be conducted on Lake Ripley this summer.

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Lake Ripley Management District
P.O. Box 22
Cambridge, WI 53523

