

# Ripples

LAKE RIPLEY  
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

Vol. 7, No. 2

Summer 1999

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## FROM THE HELM

A tremendous amount of precipitation was unleashed this spring, causing a number of problems and concerns associated with increased storm water runoff, flooding and standing water. Property owners located in lowland areas where water naturally collects experienced the worst of the flooding problems. Impacts to the lake itself were just as visible and equally troubling. The heavy rains eroded unprotected soils and washed sediment and other pollutants into Lake Ripley, significantly reducing water clarity.

It is tempting to place all the blame for these problems on the extraordinary amount of rain we received within a relatively short time frame. The reality, however, is that other, human-induced factors are responsible for our current predicament. One of these factors is the loss of wetlands to development. Wetlands are known to soak up floodwaters, filter pollutants and provide a host of other benefits. In fact, the June 26, 1999 edition of the Wisconsin State Journal just reported that wetlands "act like large sponges, soaking up rain and runoff and then releasing it slowly back into rivers and lakes." The article continued by stating that "One study by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service showed that a typical acre of wetlands can store from 1 million to 1.5 million gallons of flood water."

Of the 1,500 acres of wetlands that originally protected Lake Ripley, only 500 acres remain today. The Lake Ripley Management District (LRMD) has attempted to address this issue ever since the organization was established nearly 10 years ago. In the last few years, the LRMD has managed to restore several acres of wetlands on private property located within the Lake Ripley watershed using matching funds from our Priority Lake Project's Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement Program. We have also been able to protect and restore some wetlands through our acquisition of the Lake District Preserve. Unfortunately, these efforts only scratch the surface. There is a great deal of work that still needs to be done.

The LRMD is anxious to work with any residents who want to restore wetlands on their property. We are prepared to supply all the necessary technical assistance, and will actively pursue funds to help defray costs. If you have existing wetlands on your property, we want to protect them. The LRMD will cover 100% of the cost of establishing environmental easements to permanently preserve those areas. If your property experiences flooding problems or stays wet for long periods of time, please consider restoring part or all of that area to wetlands. Wetland restoration may help the rest of your property stay dryer, while providing water quality and wildlife habitat benefits that everyone will appreciate.

Please call the LRMD office at (608) 423-4537 and speak with Paul Dearlove if you are interested in protecting or restoring wetlands on your property. In the meantime, have a healthy, happy and safe summer on Lake Ripley.

*John Molinaro*

Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

## Lake Users Urged to Review Lake Rules

For the second consecutive year, the “Lake Watch” patrol will be helping law enforcement officials by keeping a close eye on activities taking place on Lake Ripley.

Volunteers will be patrolling the lake throughout the summer to promote boating safety, document suspected violations, and notify authorities of illegal behavior. Anyone who plans to recreate on Lake Ripley is responsible for fully understanding and obeying all state and local ordinances.

Please take some time to familiarize yourself with applicable rules and regulations before you engage in any activity on the lake. Your cooperation will help us keep the lake

safe and in good condition for everyone to enjoy.

To obtain a list of rules and regulations that govern activities that occur on the waters or shorelands of Lake Ripley, please contact the LRMD office and request a free informational brochure. The brochure covers many of the state

and local laws that regulate boating, water-skiing, swimming, fishing, and shoreline development activities on Lake Ripley.

Besides knowing and following all the rules, there are many things each of us can do voluntarily to help protect Lake Ripley. The box at left contains a short to-do list of recommended activities.

### What We Can Do to Help Lake Ripley:

- Practice “catch-and-release” when fishing.
- Be courteous to fellow lake users, and think about how your actions may affect others.
- Slow down when operating a watercraft in shallow water where aquatic habitat is easily damaged.
- Plant a tree or other vegetation along the shoreline.
- Maintain a vegetated buffer strip between a plowed farm field and a ditch or stream bank.
- Limit impervious surfaces and exposed soils on your property to prevent storm water runoff.
- Minimize the amount of herbicides and phosphorus-rich fertilizers used on lawns and crops.
- Pick up litter along the lakeshore.
- Make a donation to a local environmental organization or charity.
- Become a volunteer for the Lake Ripley Management District.
- Attend LRMD meetings to stay informed and voice concerns.
- Politely attempt to show other lake users how they can help protect the lake.

## Recent Accomplishments

The 1999 Ripley Lake Sweep was a tremendous success! The event was organized in partnership with Cambridge High School as part of an Earth Day celebration this past spring.

Project sponsors included Cambridge State Bank, Superior Services of Fort Atkinson, Cambridge Bakery, Melster Candy Company, and the Lake Ripley Marina. Over 150 high school students and community volunteers ended up participating, collecting litter and other solid waste debris from the shores of Lake Ripley, the lake’s inlet tributary, and Koshkonong Creek through downtown Cambridge.

Several old tires, broken buoys, a rusty bed frame, cans, bottles,

fishing line, plastic wrappers and other debris helped fill more than 30 garbage bags and a large dumpster. Thanks to everyone’s hard work this unsightly litter is no longer left to pollute our waters and spoil our views.

### Brochures Available

The LRMD recently produced three public information and education brochures that are now available upon request.

Topics covered include the history of the LRMD and Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project, interesting lake and watershed facts, and Lake Ripley’s rules and regulations. Contact the LRMD office if you are interested in receiving these brochures.

### Preserve Nears Completion

The Lake District Preserve is well on its way to full rehabilitation! Wetland and prairie restoration efforts have involved ditch plugs, wetland scrapes, seeding and wildlife habitat enhancements. We invite you to visit the preserve and explore the area yourself to witness the remarkable transformation process. The preserve is now teaming with wildlife such as great blue herons, sandhill cranes and wood ducks. In addition, the recently restored wetlands are successfully retaining large amounts of eroded soil washed from upland farm fields. This polluted runoff would normally be delivered to Lake Ripley, producing murky waters and destroying critical aquatic habitat.

## Many Animals Depend on Wetlands

**W**etlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to rain forests and coral reefs. An immense variety of species of microbes, plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds, fish, and mammals can be part of a wetland ecosystem. Physical and chemical features such as climate, landscape shape (topology), geology, and the movement and abundance of water determine the kinds of animals and plants that inhabit each wetland.

Wetlands can be thought of as “biological supermarkets”. They provide great volumes of food that attract many animals. These animals use wetlands for part of or all of their life-cycle.

Dead plant leaves and stems break down in the water to form small particles of organic material called “detritus”. This enriched material feeds many small aquatic insects, shellfish, and small fish that are food for larger predatory fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals.

More than one third of the U.S. threatened and endangered species live only in wetlands, and nearly half use wetlands at some point in their lives. Many other animals and plants depend on wetlands for survival.

### Fish and Wildlife Habitat

For many animals and plants, like wood ducks, muskrat, cattails, and swamp rose, inland wetlands are the only places they can live. Beaver may actually create their own wetlands. For others, such as striped bass, peregrine falcon, otter, black bear, raccoon, and deer, wetlands provide important food, water, or shelter. Many of the U.S.

breeding bird populations – including ducks, geese, woodpeckers, hawks, wading birds, and many songbirds – feed, nest, and raise their young in wetlands.

Migratory waterfowl use coastal and inland wetlands as resting, feeding, breeding, or nesting grounds for at least part of the year.

### Natural Products for our Economy

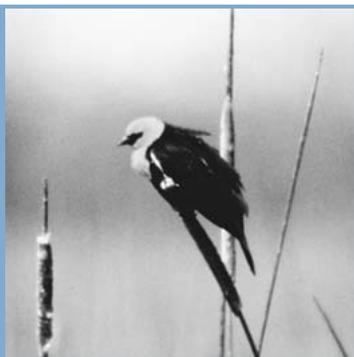
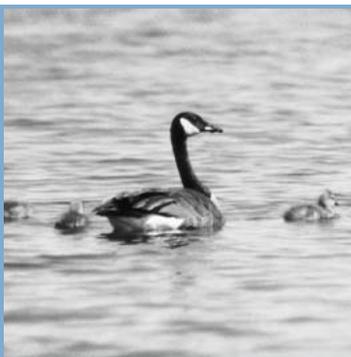
We use a wealth of natural products from wetlands, including fish, cranberries and wild rice, as well as medicines that are derived from wetland soils and plants.

Wetlands have recreational, historical, scientific, and cultural values. In one estimate, more than half of all U.S. adults hunt, fish, birdwatch or photograph wildlife, spending a total of \$59.5 billion annually.

—adapted from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Wetlands and Nature”



**Taking advantage of the “biological supermarket,” are a variety of creatures including a great blue heron (above) dining on a catfish.**



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## Lake Ripley Management Plan

**E**arlier this year, the LRMD applied for and received a DNR Lake Planning Grant to develop a Comprehensive Lake Management Plan for Lake Ripley. The plan will evaluate the effectiveness of past lake-improvement efforts, and provide long-term guidance on addressing issues such as aquatic plant and algae control, fishery enhancement, wildlife habitat protection, non-point source pollution reduction, and recreation management.

We are currently evaluating water quality conditions within the inlet tributary that drains surface water to Lake Ripley. A number of physical, chemical and biological measurements are being taken to help identify potential problem areas. We will also be soliciting public input through extensive surveys and public hearings

regarding the historic and present quality, use and management of Lake Ripley. Lake-use preferences and management priorities will be identified during the public comment phase, and will form the basis of various improvement strategies that

are ultimately proposed for Lake Ripley. Finally, we will be evaluating alternative management strategies, as well as outlining a detailed action plan that will guide day-to-day decision making over at least the next several years.

### **OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF BUDGET HEARING & ANNUAL MEETING**

The LRMD budget hearing and annual meeting will take place on August 14 and 21, 1999, respectively. Both public meetings will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday at the Oakland Town Hall. A proposed operating budget and tax for the coming year will be presented at the budget hearing. District members who are in attendance will then vote to amend and/or approve the proposed budget and taxes. Board elections are to take place at the annual meeting. Chairman John Molinaro and Secretary Timothy Lorden currently hold board positions with terms that expire in August. They will each be running for re-election. The official agenda for each meeting will be posted no less than 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting dates.

### ***Ripples***

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