

# Ripples

LAKE RIPLEY  
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

Vol. 8, No. 1

Winter 1999

## 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

**Patrick Curtin**  
Jefferson County  
(920) 648-4855

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

## FROM THE HELM

### All it takes for bad things to happen is for good people to do nothing.

Over the last year, I have been honored to be a member of the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute. The program is sponsored by the University of Wisconsin Extension at Stevens Point, Wisconsin Association of Lakes, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Thirty individuals from all over the state participated in three, two-day seminars during the course of the year.

I couldn't begin to relate the wealth of information we covered during the year in the space available in this newsletter. We studied the philosophy and ethics of lake management, aquatic ecology, and organizations, people and politics. But, what I hope I can do is give you a taste of the impact these seminars had on me and hopefully at some point on Lake Ripley.

The first seminar in May was held at Central Wisconsin Environmental Station near Stevens Point. What a change from Jefferson County! This area is considered the doorway to the great northern forests. When going over to breakfast, a bald eagle swooped down to a perch just 50 feet from where I stood. He sat motionless surveying his domain and deciding what to have for his morning meal. I spent several days going to lectures and meeting other participants from all over the state. I was impressed by their dedication and commitment to their lakes and to the commonality of our problems. We had arrived as strangers, but we left as friends.

The second seminar was at Kemp Station in Woodruff, Wisconsin on Lake Tomahawk. After a short reunion, we began the hands-on work of aquatic plant identification, fish management and shoreline habitat restoration. Now if Stevens Point is the doorway to the northern forest, Kemp Station is the heart. What spectacular scenery! As we sat at sunset watching two juvenile loons play in the bay, it is easy to recommit yourself to protect the small bits of nature still left. I always returned to Lake Ripley even more determined to preserve those small natural areas left for the future.

The third seminar was in November at Durward's Glen in the Baraboo hills. This is a small area of Wisconsin not rubbed smooth by the glaciers. We spent several days discussing common problems and their possible solutions, and finally realizing that our time together was coming to an end. For me, the highlight of the experience was a short visit to Aldo Leopold's shack. Aldo Leopold is the father of the environmental movement, a native son whose influence reaches nationally and internationally. We had the honor of meeting his daughter and great grandson. If you need inspiration, get an invitation to the Leopold shack.

During the last session, while we were complaining how hard it is to get people to meetings or ask people to volunteer, someone mentioned the quote that I've used for my title. You're going to see it a lot in the future, because I believe it to be true and frankly it makes me feel better. So next time when you're thinking about going to what seems to be another one of those endless meetings, just remember "All it takes for bad things to happen is for good people to do nothing."

*John Molinaro*

Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** The Jefferson County Land Conservation Department is sponsoring a tree seedling program again this year. A number of different species are available for purchase (25-tree minimum order), and will be available for pick up in mid-April. If you are interested in ordering, please call (920) 674-7110 for more information.

# Highlights of the Lake Ripley Management District & P

**A**lthough Lake Ripley's peak recreational period came to an end a few months ago, your Lake Ripley Management District (LRMD) remains busy planning and implementing a variety of lake-protection and improvement programs.

The following is a brief status report on some important efforts that are intended to help us better understand, protect and effectively manage Lake Ripley and the surrounding watershed. As always, you are invited to attend our regular board meetings to ask questions, submit comments/concerns, and participate in discussions pertaining to these and other issues.

## Lake Management Planning

A great deal has been accomplished since we were awarded a \$8,500 grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources earlier this year. This grant is currently being used to finance the development of a Comprehensive Lake Management Plan for Lake Ripley.

As part of the effort, an in-depth survey was distributed to all LRMD residents (over 800 households on and around Lake Ripley). The survey asked for feedback on topics ranging from recreational preferences and impediments, to ecosystem health concerns and management priorities. By the October 1 deadline, about 38% of the survey recipients had responded to the questions. The results are currently being evaluated, and will soon be distributed to all LRMD residents. A public hearing is scheduled for **Saturday, April 29, 2000** to formally present the survey results and to solicit additional feedback on the future direction of lake protection efforts. The hearing will take place at 11:00 a.m. at the Oakland Town Hall, immediately following a scheduled LRMD board meeting.

Aside from the survey, a number of water quality investigations were performed in the lake and inlet tributary throughout the year. Student and teacher volunteers from Cambridge High School assisted with the monitoring. This and other available scientific data for Lake Ripley will be used in conjunction with public input to develop a plan that will guide decision making over the next several years. The plan will attempt to address issues like aquatic plant and algae control, fish and wildlife habitat protection, pollution abatement, and recreational conflict management. Please join us at the April 29th public hearing to find out more about this critical planning process, and to participate in discussions aimed at formulating a long-term management strategy for Lake Ripley.

## Pollution-Control Efforts

A 1995 resource inventory of the Lake Ripley watershed revealed that agricultural drainage ditches contribute as much as 75% of the sediment that enters the lake each year. Sediment from eroding ditch banks, farm fields, residential construction sites and other sources leads to poor water clarity, reduced aquatic habitat, algae blooms and nuisance weed growth. The 1995 report also recommended protecting and restoring wetlands in the watershed to help filter soil particles and other pollutants from runoff flowing toward Lake Ripley. Aside from providing water quality buffers, wetlands are shown to be valuable for wildlife habitat and flood relief.

In an effort to restore remaining wetlands and thereby protect water quality, the 99-acre Lake District Preserve was purchased in December of 1997. The closing of an agricultural drainage ditch at the preserve this past winter near CTH A was a significant step

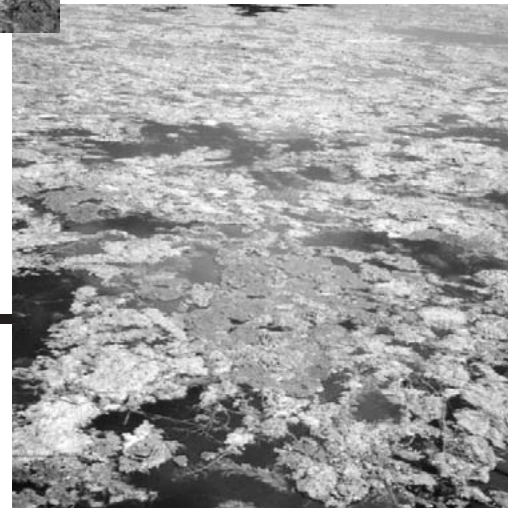


### CAUSE

Gully erosion after a rain storm in the Lake Ripley watershed (looking south toward the Lake District Preserve ditch plug).

### EFFECT

Surface "scum" of algae feeding on excess phosphorus from polluted runoff.



toward revitalizing area wetlands and preventing large amounts of sediment from getting into the lake. Efforts are now focused on a second drainage ditch that we would like to "plug" on the opposite side of the preserve.

Because this drainage ditch is estimated to deliver a tremendous amount of sediment and phosphorus to Lake Ripley every year, we are working to get it closed sometime in the near future. Your LRMD is presently struggling to garner the cooperation of an adjoining property owner who must consent to the project before the necessary permits can be approved. Alternative solutions are being

# Priority Lake Project

explored in the event that a reasonable compromise cannot be made.

Other pollution-control projects include stabilization and reshaping efforts on approximately 17,000 feet of drainage ditches located on the Long Sod Farms, and the installation of shoreline protection measures and vegetative buffers on various lakefront properties around Ripley.

## Electrofishing Survey

Every fall, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources conducts an electrofishing survey on Lake Ripley to assess the health of the fishery. A special boat equipped with “boomshockers” is used to send an electric current through the water that temporarily stuns fish so they can be identified, counted, measured and then released back into the lake. The resulting data can reveal how the overall number and size-distribution of various species are changing over time. This information is then used to evaluate the condition of the fishery, and whether fish-stocking or habitat enhancement programs need to be modified. Earlier this year, for instance, 21,000 walleye fingerlings were released into Lake Ripley as part of an ongoing stocking effort.

Feel free to call or stop by the LRMD office to learn more about our fish surveying and stocking programs. In the meantime, please consider practicing C.P.R. (Catch, Photograph and Release) to help prevent over-harvesting of prized gamefish species like largemouth bass, walleye and northern pike.

## Lake Watch Patrol

A special thank you goes out to all the volunteers who participated in the second annual, Lake Watch program! The purpose of the program is to assist local law enforcement officials by documenting boating violations that present safety or environmental concerns on Lake Ripley. Alleged violation reports are then sent to the proper authorities in the event that further action is warranted. The Lake Watch Patrol also takes an active role in informing their fellow lake users about local ordinances and other applicable regulations that help keep the lake safe and enjoyable for everyone.

## Weed Harvesting

No weed harvesting was performed this year due to a combination of reduced water clarity conditions and slower-than-normal plant growth. An unusually wet spring followed by a hot, dry summer with heavy motor boat/PWC traffic created a situation favorable to murky water and

abundant algae production. This situation dramatically reduced sunlight penetration to the lake bottom, limiting plant growth for most of the growing season while promoting algae blooms (e.g. floating “scums”).

Studies show that a healthy amount of native aquatic plant cover is critical to the health of the overall ecosystem. Plants stabilize the lake bottom, provide fish and wildlife habitat, filter pollutants, and soak up the nutrients that fuel algae blooms. This year’s nuisance weed growth occurred later in the season and was primarily confined to the shallower, no-wake zone in Inlet (East) Bay – a designated sensitive area. Although mechanical harvesting was not performed this year, there is always the possibility that it will be warranted in future years. A State-approved, Aquatic Plant Management Plan is used as a guide to determine when and where harvesting should occur each summer.

## Information & Education

Your LRMD has started distributing “Welcome Wagon” informational packets to new property owners in the Lake Ripley area. These packets contain a variety of materials (i.e., brochures, past newsletters, etc.) that are intended to bring new landowners up to speed on lake-protection and improvement programs that are being implemented on Lake Ripley. Beginning this spring, special mailings will also be sent to lakefront property owners. The mailers encourage lakefront residents to do their part in protecting Lake Ripley, including maintaining well-vegetated shorelines (buffer strips), and using no-phosphorus lawn fertilizers.

## Upcoming LRMD board meetings

**Saturday, February 19, 2000**

**Saturday, March 18, 2000**

**Saturday, April 29, 2000**

All meetings will be held at 9:00 a.m. at the Oakland Town Hall. Agendas are posted prior to each meeting in the local newspapers, as well as at the Oakland Town Hall, Lake Ripley Inn and Lake Ripley Family Restaurant. For those who are unable to attend the meetings, feel free to call the town hall at (920) 563-9198 between 9:05 and 9:20 a.m. during scheduled board meetings to share a comment or concern. To obtain more information regarding various program activities, potential volunteer opportunities, etc., please contact the LRMD office at (608) 423-4537. We appreciate your continued support as we work together to protect Lake Ripley!

---

## The Goals of Ecosystem Management

All living things require food, shelter, reproduction sites, oxygen, proper temperature and other conditions. Disrupt any one of these, and the delicate ecosystem balance is disturbed, sometimes forever.

Traditionally, natural resources have been managed by ignoring this fundamental principle. Solutions have narrowly focused on remediating symptoms instead of considering the entire ecosystem. Not enough fish in the lake? Restock it. Too much sand in the river? Dredge it.

Ecosystem management, a relatively new approach, means looking at the big picture. It means addressing the long-term consequences of today's decisions and it means thinking of various resources as interrelating parts of systems rather than as individual components to be managed separately. It also means balancing sometimes competing interests in favor of the greater good.

### Balance

Although constantly cycling and changing, the plants, animals and other elements of healthy ecosystems are able to regulate themselves to adapt and respond to changes and stresses. Ecosystems at risk or dying have lost this

resiliency. Just like a basketball that has lost too much air, they cannot bounce back. By dramatically changing environments in which they live, humans can have a profound effect on the ability of ecosystems to respond to stress. The challenge is to find ways in which human needs can be met without exceeding the natural limits of ecosystems.

### Monitoring and Assessment

Information gathered through inventory, water quality monitoring and assessment forms the basis of ecosystem management.

The data are useful in a number of ways, but can signal early signs of ecosystem deterioration. That's when Land Conservation Department staff and the citizens in the watershed can decide which steps need to be taken to stop or reverse the harmful actions.

Sometimes, tough choices have to be made. However, a fundamental principle of ecosystem management holds that decisions must be based on the best information science can provide, with sustainability as the goal. It also means helping to ensure a healthier world for tomorrow.

### *Ripples*

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

