

The Top 6 (cont.)

Soon, we will be entering a major transition period, as 2006 marks the final year of the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project. Over the last 13 years, \$72,000 in *annual* state grants have paid for landowner cost sharing, watershed restoration and pollution-control work, water quality rehabilitation, community outreach (including this newsletter), as well as office and staff support. This funding has allowed us to make tremendous strides toward fulfilling our mission of protecting and enhancing Lake Ripley, and at very little actual cost to local taxpayers.

As we make this critical transition, your support and involvement will be needed more than ever! Here's how you can help:

- ▶ Attend monthly Board meetings
- ▶ Attend the annual meeting in August to vote for the continuation of important lake-improvement efforts
- ▶ Visit our website for lake-related news and information, including upcoming volunteer opportunities
- ▶ Contact us with your questions or concerns

Ripples
Lake Ripley Management District
N4450 CTH A
Cambridge, WI 53523

Mark Your Calendar!

March 18:	LRMD Board Meeting (9:00 at Oakland Town Hall)
April 15:	LRMD Board Meeting (9:00 at Oakland Town Hall)
April 20-22:	Wisconsin Lakes Conference (Green Bay, WI—Call 715-346-2116)
April 28:	Lake Ripley Litter Cleanup (8:00-3:00—Call 423-4537 for details)
May 13:	Volunteer boat-inspector training (8:30-12:00 in Lake Mills—Call 423-4537, and help educate boaters to identify and combat invasive species)
May 20:	LRMD Board Meeting (9:00 at Oakland Town Hall)
June 17:	LRMD Board Meeting (9:00 at Oakland Town Hall)
July 15:	LRMD Board Meeting (9:00 at Oakland Town Hall)

[Future meeting dates TBD]

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LAKE RIPLEY
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT



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FROM THE HELM



March is a strange sort of month for me. Although the weather man tells me it's the beginning of spring, looking out the window tells me it's winter. Even so, I know that soon the snow will be gone and the ice will be leaving Lake Ripley.

This year ahead may be one of the most challenging for the Lake District. We are coming to the end of our non-point pollution grant, and will be faced with completing as our grant money.

We will still have to continue harvesting lake weeds, maintaining water quality, monitoring shoreline erosion and doing all we do to keep the lake in good shape. The DNR grant that we have had for 13 years to carry out the Priority Lake Project has brought \$936,000 to Lake Ripley. This grant has helped us accomplish things we probably would not have done without it.

But, we have learned over the years, and although it may be difficult, we will find a way to continue. It will cost us all a little bit more, but a healthy lake means healthy property values. We will continue to look for other grants, and we will have to tighten our belts; but just like spring follows winter, we will be here to make sure Lake Ripley remains the place where we all want to live.

John Molinaro
Chair, Lake Ripley Management District



The Top 6: A Landowner's Guide for a Clean and Healthy Lake Ripley

#6 Don't "feed" the lake

Most lawns around Lake Ripley should thrive without fertilizer. If you must fertilize, follow instructions on the label and consider zero-phosphorus varieties. The amount of phosphorus contained in a bag of fertilizer is referenced by the middle number on the label (i.e., 10-0-10), with the other numbers representing nitrogen and potassium. Phosphorus is the nutrient that stimulates plant and algae growth when it washes into the lake as runoff. According to the Minnesota DNR, just one pound of phosphorus in runoff can produce up to 500 pounds of weed and algae growth! Soils in our region are already predominantly phosphorus-rich, meaning the vast majority of lawns would not benefit from receiving additional inputs. Based on a study of 236 lawns in neighboring Dane County, average soil phosphorus concentrations were actually about four times higher than the amount needed to maintain a healthy lawn. Overusing phosphorus is bad for turf development, and will cause the nutrient to build up in the soil where it poses a long-term water quality threat. While the effects of over-fertilizing a single lawn may appear inconsequential, lawns in the aggregate represent a significant source of water pollution. Hardly a surprise considering that lawn grass is now the largest irrigated crop in the U.S. By limiting fertilizer use, you're not only protecting water quality, but also saving time and money that can be better spent enjoying the lake.

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STAFF
Paul Dearlove Project Manager (608) 423-4537
LAKE DISTRICT OFFICE
Oakland Town Hall N4450 CTH A Cambridge, WI 53523
Phone: (608) 423-4537
E-mail: rippley@charterinternet.com
Website: www.lakeripples.org

The Top 6 (cont.)

#5 Let rainwater infiltrate



Hard surfaces like rooftops, streets, driveways, parking lots and patios prevent rainwater from absorbing into the soil, thereby contributing to runoff pollution, flooding and groundwater depletion. Closely cropped, shallow-rooted turf grass and compacted soils can have a similar effect. Our disappearing natural areas—which will capture and absorb 90% of precipitation—is causing a growing proportion of rainfall to be delivered quickly to the lake as direct runoff versus groundwater flow. This results in a short-circuiting of the natural cleansing process that occurs when water is able to soak through the ground. Simple solutions include conserving water, limiting the use of impervious surfaces on the landscape, directing downspouts into rain gardens, and preserving or restoring native plant cover around our homes.

#4 Prevent erosion



Erosion can happen whenever the ground is disturbed or bare soil is left exposed to the weather. Heavily tilled cropland and deteriorating drainage ditches are among the erosion-prone sites in the agricultural portions of our watershed. In the residential portions, poorly managed construction sites and clear-cut shorelines are often to blame. At the start of the Lake Ripley Priority Lake Project in 1993, these sources were estimated to contribute 3,537 tons of sediment to the lake each year. This number has since been cut by more than half, mostly through landowner cost-sharing efforts. Regardless of its source, sediment smothers fish-spawning beds, destroys water clarity, fuels noxious weed and algae growth, and makes the lake less inhabitable for all but the most pollution-tolerant aquatic life. Some effective tools for minimizing and containing soil erosion include no-till farming, grass drainage swales, shoreline “buffer” plantings, . . . and on active construction sites: straw matting, hay bales and silt fencing.

#3 Beware of exotics



Non-native (“exotic”) plant and animal species have been ravaging aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems for generations. You may be familiar with names like Eurasian water-milfoil, zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, Asian carp, reed canary grass and common buckthorn. These represent just a tiny fraction of the invasive pests that can spread prolifically and wreak havoc if left unchecked. Many exotics aggressively out-

compete and displace native species, throwing entire ecosystems out of balance and causing any number of unanticipated consequences. Once a large-scale infestation occurs, exotic species will be nearly impossible to eradicate. So prevention is the first line of defense against any foreign invaders, and is the most economical in the long run. Do your part by learning how to distinguish exotic plants and animals from their native counterparts. Then, help prevent their spread through responsible gardening practices, and by inspecting and cleaning your boat/fishing equipment after each use.

#2 Bring back nature

Picture a remote and unspoiled lake somewhere far off the beaten path in northern Wisconsin. Lushly vegetated shorelines... Turtles basking on fallen tree limbs... The sounds of frogs emanating from a thick bulrush stand... Fish teaming around submerged timber and aquatic plant beds. Wild lakes such as these do still exist, but they’re becoming harder and harder to find. That philosophizing comic-strip character, Pogo, was right when he famously remarked: “We have met the enemy and he is us.” Our suburban landscaping rituals are carving up fish and wildlife habitat into monocultured lawns, sterile beaches, and “improved” lake views. Try restoring some natural habitat by planting a native shrub and perennial garden, letting a fallen tree lie at the shoreline, or just sharing your swimming beach with an un-raked stand of lily pads or pondweeds.



#1 Get involved

Apathy and complacency are huge impediments to success. They threaten the investments we have already made to protect and enhance the condition of Lake Ripley. To quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: “All progress is precarious, and the solution to one problem brings us face to face with another problem.” Like the civil rights movement, lake management and restoration work needs to be viewed as a perpetual endeavor. The reason is that the human impact on the landscape and the lake is ongoing, far-reaching and, in many cases, ever intensifying. More people, more development, more demands on the resource... more impact. Consequently, years of progress can easily be erased without our sustained vigilance and a long-term commitment to maintaining lake quality.

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Lake Ripley News Bulletins

Yardcare Tips

- Over-watering your lawn wastes water, weakens the turf, and causes nutrients and herbicides to leach out. Don’t over-cut, and avoid watering during droughts when grass is dormant.
- Terrace steeply-sloped yards to slow the flow of water and reduce erosion. Direct water into grass swales, gravel trenches or (ideally) rain gardens.
- Use mulch—compost, grass clippings, straw, leaves or wood chips—around your flower and vegetable gardens. It adds nutrients, makes the soil easier to work, helps retain moisture, and insulates sensitive plant roots during the winter.

Serving on the Board

Interested in serving on the Board? Your 7-member Board includes five elected property owners in the District (serving staggered, three-year terms) and two appointees representing the Town of Oakland and Jefferson County. Board members generally meet the third Saturday of every month to conduct business.

Elections occur at the annual meeting. It is the responsibility of the Board to nominate candidates to fill any vacancies. Any three electors of the District may nominate additional candidates by submitting written nomination papers to the secretary at least 45 days prior to the annual meeting (held in August).

The names of all nominated candidates appear on the written and published notices of the annual meeting. Ballots printed for the election also provide space for write-in candidates. Voting is by secret, written ballot by eligible electors present at the meeting. Board commissioners assume their office immediately following the annual meeting at which they are elected.

Ideal candidates are those who will bring diversity to the Board, and who will work to advance the mission of the LRMD: “To protect and enhance the condition of Lake Ripley, while ensuring equitable and sustainable public use of the resource.”

Motors For Sale

The LRMD has two outboard motors for sale. Both were purchased new in 1994 with the acquisition of our weed harvester. They are 15-HP, 2-stroke, 15-inch short shaft, Johnson outboards. The motors were kept attached to the harvester, but have not been used in recent years and may require reconditioning. Offering price is \$800/each (or best offer). May be sold separately. Call 608-423-4537.



Osprey on Lake Ripley?

Reports of osprey sightings (a state threatened species with a wingspan up to 5 feet) recently led to a local partnership effort to attract a nesting pair of these majestic raptors to Lake Ripley. On March 2nd, a nesting platform was erected in East Bay, adjacent to land protected by conservation easement.

Osprey populations have been recovering following a 1972 ban on harmful pesticides like DDT. Since that time, nesting pairs in Wisconsin have increased from a low of 73 to 437 based on a 2004 survey. According to DNR, 75% of the state’s breeding population nest on platforms. Continued threats include habitat loss from waterfront development, predators, nest blow-downs and human disturbances.

Below are pictures showing the assembly process and what the nesting platform looks like once installed at the marshy shoreline. We thank the following partners for donating time or materials to enhance osprey habitat on Lake Ripley: Steve Bentz, Pat Ready, Dennis Kienbaum, Don Schmidt, and American Transmission Company.



On the Web

Visit our website at www.lakeripley.org and click on the “Links & Downloads” tab to access the following documents:

- Meeting minutes (archives)
- Ripples newsletters (archives)
- Lake Ripley Rules and Regulations
- Lake Ripley Management History
- Lake Ripley Resource Guide
- 2001 Lake Ripley Management Plan
- 2002 Aquatic Plant Management Plan
- 2003 Lake Ripley Watercraft Census & Recreational Carrying Capacity Analysis
- 2005 public opinion survey results
- 2005 study: Effects of Pier Shading on Littoral Zone Habitat and Communities in Lakes Ripley and Rock, Jefferson County, WI