

# Ripples

LAKE RIPLEY  
PRIORITY LAKE PROJECT

Vol. 11, No. 2

Summer 2003

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## FROM THE HELM

We get some very interesting telephone calls at the Lake District. People call with questions and complaints about anything and everything that has any possible connection to Lake Ripley, and we like it that way. You're the eyes and ears of the Lake District, and your calls help us respond to concerns in a more timely fashion. In fact, over its 12-year existence, the Lake District has developed an impressive track record of identifying and addressing a large array of concerns that affect Lake Ripley. We attribute much of this progress to the support and cooperation we receive from those in the community.

Unfortunately, we cannot always quickly solve every problem affecting the lake, and sometimes people don't like the answers they get. I can assure you that we work very hard every day to fulfill our mandate to preserve and protect Lake Ripley. Although we try to base all our decisions on good science, there are not always clear and easy solutions to the problems we face, and not all solutions lead to immediate and equitable results. If it were only that simple!

We have now spent nearly 10 years working to identify and correct non-point sources of pollution through our state-funded Priority Lake Project. Soil erosion and polluted runoff are shown to be among the leading causes of algae blooms and many other problems we face on the lake every summer. We have also been busy trying to protect and restore fish and wildlife habitat throughout our watershed. In cases where existing laws and policies have proven inadequate to address these types of concerns, we have worked through the Jefferson County Lake Enhancement Committee to come up with recommendations for changes. Those recommendations will be presented to the County Board sometime this summer (see article). On a larger scale, the State of Wisconsin is currently reviewing its shoreland zoning regulations, and may likely propose changes as early as next year.

What makes the work of the Lake District so interesting is that it is always changing. Just when we think we have put out all the fires, another blaze erupts. Yet, through all these crises, we have made steady progress. Lake Ripley continues to hold her own despite intense development and lake-use pressures on such a small water body. I remain optimistic that with your help we can continue to make progress with our efforts. Your concern about the lake and those telephone calls are important to our success. I usually end my messages with the mantra "Bad things happen when good people do nothing," but this time let's say "Great things happen when good people do something."

*John Molinaro*

Chair, Lake Ripley Management District

## Notice of Budget Hearing and Annual Meeting

The budget hearing and annual meeting of the Lake Ripley Management District will take place on August 9th and August 16th, respectively. Both meetings start at 9:00 a.m. and will be held at the Oakland Town Hall (W8536 USH 12, Fort Atkinson). A proposed budget and official notices will be published in the Cambridge News within two weeks of the meeting.

Derek Hoffman's term on the board is set to expire at the annual meeting, and he has submitted a bid for re-election. Any three electors of the Lake District may nominate additional candidates by submitting written nomination papers to the secretary at least 45 days prior to the annual meeting. The names of all nominated candidates shall appear on the published notices of the annual meeting, and ballots shall provide space for write-in candidates.

## Lake Ripley Watercraft Census Underway

**W**ater bodies like Lake Ripley are finite resources with seemingly unlimited demand. This, along with the dramatic increase in the quantity, size, variety and speed of today's watercraft, poses new questions concerning lake access and overcrowding. How many and what types of watercraft currently operate on Lake Ripley? Where do they come from? How and when do they use the lake? Is there a maximum boating density that the lake can accommodate?

The Lake District hopes to shed light on these types of questions by conducting a detailed boat census this summer. The census will provide some of the necessary baseline data for studying recreational "carrying capacity" issues. Such studies attempt to estimate the number of different watercraft that can be operated on a particular lake at one time before safety, aesthetic enjoyment, and/or environmental quality become compromised. They also use various criteria to estimate the potential for reaching a given threshold. If warranted,



existing policies and regulations can then be revisited to help prevent overuse.

Results of the study will be made available later this year. In the meantime, we are looking for volunteers to assist in conducting regular boat counts. If you would like to participate, please call the Lake District office at 608-423-4537 or send an e-mail to [ripley@bminet.com](mailto:ripley@bminet.com)

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New boardwalk at the lake District Preserve.

## New Trail Loop Opened at Lake District Preserve

Nature enthusiasts wanting a closer view of wetland plant and animal life should be pleased with a new addition in the Lake District Preserve. Now, visitors can explore deeper into the restored marshland using a new 140-foot gravel path and 122-foot elevated, wooden boardwalk. Both path and boardwalk are located on the far west side of the property near the preserve entrance, forming a small loop that links back to the main trail. The new trail loop bisects a shallow-water marsh, and will allow the public to safely enjoy the more aquatic elements of the 100-acre preserve without disturbing fragile plant communities.

We wish to thank Land Resource Company, LLC for their work on the project, and for donating a portion of the installation cost. We also extend our gratitude to the Oakland Conservation Club for allowing us to use their facilities during the construction process.

## Committee Moves Forward with Lake Solutions

Jefferson County's Lake Enhancement Steering Committee is advancing 14 recommendations to improve education, management, and laws affecting the county's 26 lakes. The committee is comprised of a volunteer group of citizens, including representatives from the Lake Ripley Management District. It developed its recommendations after more than two years of research, debate, and consideration of public comments.

A final report is now being prepared by the Land and Water Conservation Department. Over the next month, this report will be presented to the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors and other key implementers. The goals of the 14 recommendations are as follows:

1. Create a county-wide lake organization
2. Create a lakes contact list
3. Interpret lake data
4. Monitor lake water quality
5. Reduce the cutting and removal of shoreline vegetation
6. Restore native shoreline buffers
7. Educate people about exotic and invasive species
8. Monitor and control exotic and invasive species
9. Strengthen "setback averaging" zoning laws
10. Improve shoreland zoning compliance and enforcement
11. Reduce non-point source pollution
12. Offer green certification program for landscapers and lawn care services
13. Send shoreline property owners information on lake issues and laws
14. Develop an educational booklet on recreational issues

For additional information, contact Patricia Cicero at the Jefferson County Land & Water Conservation Department (920-674-7121), or browse the web-site at [www.co.jefferson.wi.us/lcon/](http://www.co.jefferson.wi.us/lcon/)

## Environmental Deed Restrictions Sought for Majestic Pines Subdivision

As this newsletter goes to publication, a proposed 22-lot subdivision on Lake Ripley's South Bay nears final plat approval. The property is roughly bounded by U.S. Highway 12 to the south, Marina Lane to the west, Island Lane to the east, and Lake Ripley (including Vasby Island) to the north. Due to the presence of extensive wetlands, floodplain and environmentally sensitive shoreline, the Lake District is working closely with the Oakland Town Board to help ensure the adequate protection of Lake Ripley.

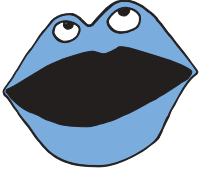
Much of the site was previously identified as ecologically significant by the Wisconsin Department of Natural

Resources, and is designated as an environmental corridor in the Town's comprehensive growth plan. High-quality aquatic and wetland plant communities in the vicinity of the development include several rare and threatened species. These plants also contribute to the prime fish-spawning areas within and adjacent to Vasby's Channel.

Consequently, and at the urging of the Lake District, the Town Board has given conditional approval as long as no building occurs on the island or within the wetlands. Current efforts are directed at negotiating reasonable deed restrictions to help minimize potentially adverse impacts to local water quality and rare fisheries/wildlife habitat.



## Fact or Fiction?



An active construction site on Lake Ripley.

*Farmland produces more polluted runoff per unit area than any other land use.*

**Fiction.** A study of lakebed sediment cores spanning the last 150 years from four Wisconsin lakes proves otherwise. Residential and commercial construction was shown to cause more erosion and sediment delivery on a per-unit-area comparative basis. In Wisconsin, the soil erosion rate during construction is 10 to 100 times greater than the rate of erosion from agriculture. For every acre under construction, about 1.5 dump truck loads of soil washes into a nearby lake or stream unless the builder uses effective erosion controls.

### **Ripples**

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*Water quality affects property values.*

**Fact.** Studies have repeatedly established a direct relationship between a lake's water clarity and land values. As water clarity changes, the market prices of lakefront properties have responded accordingly. These studies show that people will pay more, all other characteristics being equal, for a property on a lake with high water quality than they would for a property on a lake with lower water quality. Although "the golf-course look" might increase property value in the short term, such changes by too many owners will eventually alter a lake's ecology and degrade its water, resulting in a long-term decline in property value.

*Wetlands offer some of the most important wildlife habitat in the state.*

**Fact.** According to the Wisconsin DNR, wetlands are home to more bird species than any other kind of habitat: 39 percent of the state's 370 species of birds are found here. In addition, 43 percent of all federally listed threatened and endangered species use wetlands at some point in their life cycles. In Wisconsin, 32 percent of the state's threatened and endangered plants and animals depend on wetlands.

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