Lake Eau Claire Association P.O. Box 229 Augusta, WI 54722-0229

www.lakeeauclaire.org

August 2011, Issue 56

## Special Edition about Lake Eau Claire Management Plan

#### President's Message

#### Greetings!

Our annual meeting is scheduled for August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at the Lake Eau Claire Park. Please join us for this important meeting. In addition to our standard agenda we will be discussing the current Lake Management Plan. This is an excellent opportunity to understand what efforts have been made to date to implement the plan and what the future holds. We encourage you to attend to learn more and we welcome any questions or discussion.

As always, you can join us for a social hour followed by dinner and our meeting. We'll be electing several Lake Eau Claire Board positions being vacated and review our lake fundraiser. It will be an informative afternoon. Thanks in advance for your participation and we look forward to seeing you! Warm Regards,

Kristin Charlton, President

### LAKE EAU CLAIRE ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA AUGUST 20, 2011

- Call to Order
- Minutes
- Treasurer's Report
- President's Report
- Clear Water Fundraiser
- Introduction of New Lake Residents
- Recognition of Outgoing Board Members
- Nominating Committee Report
- Election of Board Members
- Holiday Party
- Adjournment

#### **Presentations to Follow Meeting**

- Co-chairs of the LEC Steering Committee will lead the discussion on the Lake Management Plan for 2010 and updates for the 2012 version.
- Information and an update on the "LEC Protection and Rehabilitation District" Marlo Orth.

### Lake Eau Claire Association Annual Meeting

Saturday August 20, 2011

Where: Lake Eau Claire Club House everyone welcome!

4:00 PM Social Hour

5:00 PM Dinner, Meeting & Presentations

Cost: \$8.00 Adults, \$4.00 children (under 5 free), beer \$2.00 per cup with free refills, soda

and water free.

Meal includes pulled pork, hot dogs, potato salad, and baked beans

## THE RATIONAL AND PROCEDURE FOR FORMING A LAKE EAU CLAIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN

By Dr. ROD G. ZIKA

Lake Eau Claire (LEC) fits into a category referred to as an impoundment lake that was formed in 1937 as the result of damming the Eau Claire River and flooding about 1100 acres of the river basin above the dam. So in essence the lake is new relative to most natural lakes in the mid-west and is only 74 years old and not thousands of years old. Like most impoundment lakes, LEC is steadily undergoing changes that because of its characteristics, the development on the lake, and the water shed that feeds it are negative changes. In other words, we have seen the best years and the lake is in a state of decline. This is not unusual for impoundment lakes and for that matter for many natural lakes these days. If one carefully studies the brief history of LEC the changes are obvious:

- (1) The lake's navigable surface area has decreased by as much as 20% over the last 50 years and this is continuing.
- (2) The lake has become more eutrophic with dense blooms of photoplankton appearing during low precipitation summer and fall seasons.
- (3) During a study in 1998 it was confirmed that during the summer over 90% of the algal population in the lake was a toxic blue green algae (indicative of an unhealthy lake).
- (4) Most of the once abundant fish habitat in the form of coarse woody habitat has disappeared from the lake and it is not being replaced.
- (5) The once very productive fisheries has all but collapsed from what it was 40-50 years ago and for that matter of what it was just a few years ago.
- (6) Because of the eutrophication in the lake much of the internal volume of the lake is a lifeless dead zone because of rapid anoxic (lack of oxygen) conditions from May to October in most years.

These are the obvious problems that have been identified through observation and scientific studies that have been conducted over the last 15 years. There are other potential problems that may face us in the future such as the introduction of invasive species and these may need to be dealt with as well. So far we have been lucky on this one, perhaps because the LEC Association has been proactive and has instituted a cooperative boat landing survey and education program to try to stop the introduction of invasive species.

The most ominous situation we face now is the continual transport of sand into the main body of the lake. For the last 74 years the head waters of the lake have protected the lake from the intrusion of sand by functioning as storage areas. As of last year (2010) that reservoir has been filled and sand will now quickly begin to flow into Skid Row and the Rookery areas. If we do not stop this sand influx soon the cost to fix it will become prohibitive. Obviously we cannot afford this, but if we act soon we can stop the intrusion of sand and perhaps even reverse the situation and begin to restore areas that have already been lost.

One thing is apparent and that is if we don't do anything LEC will continue to decline and so will property values. Most of the problems that I have pointed out above can be stopped and in some cases even reversed to restore the lake to conditions that existed many years ago. The LEC Association has for many years been proactive in developing a plan of action and has encouraged and helped support various scientific and engineering studies to understand the details of the problems and design ways to address them. This has required a series of multiple phases. (Continued)

**PHASE I:** Over the last 15 years numerous scientific and engineering studies have been conducted on LEC. These studies have been costly in terms of time and money and have involved contributions of both from Eau Claire County, DNR, Army Corp Engineers, LEC Association, and non-profit organizations. These studies led to characterizing and assessing the magnitude of the problems and to evaluating potential solutions. That is, what will work and will not. Many of these studies and summary results can be found on the LEC Association web site.

PHASE II: A preliminary plan was developed for what was labeled the LEC Protection and Rehabilitation Project. This plan took into account the results of the previous 15 years of research and studies and the perceived needs of the LEC community and lake users. In 2009 a mail survey was conducted to determine people's opinions about the lake and prioritize the perceived problems and solutions. This process was further refined in late 2009 to 2010 through a series of open public steering committee meetings that included lake and local residents, DNR, Eau Claire County officials, and WI extension Service workers. From this process a list of priorities was set and the preliminary LEC Protection and Restoration Project plans were further refined.

PHASE III: The outcomes of phases I and II were used next in 2010 to develop a detailed long term Protection and Rehabilitation Plan that was put together by the LEC Association, Eau Claire County, and the WI-DNR. This plan was written as a proposal for funding and drafts were submitted to DNR and Eau Claire County for consideration. Also during the same period permits were prepared and submitted to DNR. The permits submitted so far are a blanket permit for installation of coarse woody habitat for fisheries restoration, lake-river headwaters restoration to Troubled Waters Bridge, and a lake aeration system to reduce oxygen depletion during the summer in an attempt eliminate the dead zone, reduce eutrophication and improve overall water quality. This is an ongoing process that is on hold for now because we need to demonstrate that we have funds to sustain these projects once they are initiated.

PHASE IV: Implementation and maintenance of the proposed projects in the Protection and Rehabilitation Plan are the final step. It is now clear that we must demonstrate that we have a steady and sufficient annual income to support the ongoing activities in the Protection and Rehabilitation Plan. We could do this through donations, but past experience over the last 15 years tells us that this is not a reliable and steady source of income. During the steering committee process the only identified viable alternative for sustained funding was through the formation of a LEC lake district.

If residents of LEC don't support the alternative of a Lake District or find some other means of sustained financial support the opportunity to restore and develop a protection plan for the future may be lost. The fact that Eau Claire County, DNR and the LEC Association have already invested a significant amount of effort and money in achieving Phases I, II, and III means that the opportunity will probably not come again anytime soon and if it does it may mean starting the process all over again.

# MESSAGE FROM THE LEC PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION DISTRICT CITIZENS COMMITTEE

#### By Marlo Orth

I would like everyone to think about what this lake means to you and your family and friends. It would be nice if the county or someone else would take care of it, including the costs, but that is just wishful thinking as it will not happen. I think we should think of the lake to be our "lake yard". We do not expect the county or anyone else to take care of our lawn yard. But we say everyone plays in the lake yard, so the county should take care of it. This is all true, but the lake is still your lake yard.

We have a Lake Association and a Lake Foundation with very dedicated board members. The Lake Association dues are \$20.00 annually. In addition it accepts donations and annually holds a fund raiser. Many lake residents support the Lake Association, but not all. Same is true for the fund raiser. For the most part it is the same people in both cases. The Foundation is designed to accept donations, bequests etc. With the funds the Lake Association has, it has created three sediment traps on creeks. Two traps were installed in 2005 and one in 2007. These traps have worked better than I even anticipated and approximately 200 truckloads of sediment have been extracted from these traps to date or it too would be in our lake. We have fabulous cooperation from many people. The Town of Ludington and city of Augusta furnish one truck each and town of Bridge Creek furnished two trucks when we clean out the traps. Each entity covered their respective truck, fuel and labor expenses.

Three big issues facing the lake are: sedimentation, water quality and fishery. The most costly of these issues is sedimentation and the majority of this sediment comes via the river. The Lake Association has not, nor do I see it capable of, generating sufficient revenue to address sedimentation caused by the river.

If we all band together and each of us contributes a little, I am convinced we can address the river sediment issue and in due time the water quality and the fishery. The mechanism provided in the statues for this is a "Lake District".

The county has a "Lake Rehab Fund" which to date has only been used for sediment removal. On the previously mentioned creek projects the County Lake rehab fund partnered with us splitting the cost 50-50, however we had to take the leadership getting all the permits and applying for the matching funds etc.

Last fall to help balance the budget for 2011, the county wanted to take out all the Lake Rehab money. However, we convinced them to keep the money in Lake Rehab Fund and if we form a Lake District by September 1, 2012 they agreed to leave \$50,000 in this fund for us to apply for on a cost sharing basis.

Last year, 2010, the Lake Association presented a plan to the DNR for approval to address river sedimentation, fishery and water quality. Our plan was rejected. Until we have the means (money) to provide for continued maintenance of these projects, DNR will continue to reject our plan. Until we have an approved plan we cannot apply for permits, apply for grants, etc. much less do any work. Some say the county should take the leadership and foot the cost to do all these projects. That is not how government works. The initiative and leadership will need to come from us. The county will partner with us. The county already has a sizeable investment and annual cost in Lake Eau Claire. The county owns and operates the dam which costs the county about \$30,000 per year.

(Note: If a Lake District is formed, the ownership of the dam remains with the county as do all expenses and costs.)

The county maintains the parks; boat launches and swimming beach. This responsibility would remain with the county even if we had a Lake District. (A Lake District is a specialized unit of government designed to manage a lake or group of lakes. It has no regulatory control over your land or improvements, a Lake District strictly deals with water issues). It is true the county collects money at the park, boat launches and swim beach. In 2009 they collected \$17,710 and \$19,269 in 2010. However the last two years the county spent in excess of \$65,000 each year in maintaining the launches, parks and swimming beach.

Someday each of us will depart this lake property and it will go to our heirs or it will be sold. By all of us working together we have the ability to protect the lake, which also translates into protecting our investment. Also, over time we will be able to improve the lakes water quality and the fishery. In my opinion we can do this with a one mill assessment. This would generate over \$49,000 per year to protect and improve the lake. To make our money go further, we can apply for matching funds and grants. Based on 2010 total assessments values (this is after bridge Creek was re-assessed) on average, per parcel, a one mill assessment would mean \$212.61 being added to your property tax bill.

If you haven't signed a petition to form a Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District to protect your investment in your lake property and address the issues confronting the lake, I encourage you to do so and mail it to Beverly Orth, 712 E. Grant Ave., Eau Claire WI 54701. This is the democratic process at work and it will be what the majority want. If we have a Lake District, an annual meeting must be held every year. It is at this meeting that all decisions are made. What we wish to do, how we pay for it, etc. and unlike other governmental units, such as towns (e.g. Bridge Creek and Ludington) non-resident property owners have the right to vote and hold office in the Lake District. Many of you have already sent in your signed petitions to form a Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District. Thank you. If you have any questions or need a new petition, please contact me. Home phone - 715-832-6961, cell - 715-828-3052. Address: Marlo and Beverly Orth, 712 E. Grant Ave., Eau Claire WI 54701.

## UNSOLICITED LETTER FROM LAKE RESIDENTS

"It Seems to Us"

Hi there! We are Fred and Cheryl Poss. You can find us at the end of SD Lane about a mile short of the Skid Row boat landing. We moved to Lake Eau Claire four years ago as we both love the outdoors, and I enjoy catch and release fishing. Both of us have tried to follow the debate about forming a lake district. The issues on both sides are fundamental to the quality of life we want to have here and to how much government and tax we can accept.

At least for us, three issues appear to dominate what is going on with Lake Eau Claire. First, the erosion and sedimentation of the lake is a clear and immediate problem. Neighbors tell us that they used to navigate boats all the way up to the Troubled Waters Bridge. But we can see the sand has come down so far and so thick that it has made the Skid Row boat landing nearly impossible to use. Common sense tells us that boat landing is popular and its sedimentation is headed for the lake next. Worse, an aerial map of the river and lake has been prepared. The picture is not pretty. No one can look at that map and argue we should just sit and wait. In fact, a lake scientist has also included a projection of just how far and how fast the sand will fill the rest of the river and the Rookery. The rate of filling is based on hard data which uses the past and current rate of sedimentation to make its predictions. Please look at the map and see for yourself how fast we are losing our river and lake. I will have copies available for anyone attending the next Lake Association meeting, or send us a request for a map to \$5270 SD Lane.

The second issue is boating and fishing. We are truly concerned about how shallow the lake is getting. Large stretches are only a few feet deep. Boating requires real care to avoid running aground, and cruising the lake basically is restricted to just making circles around the deeper outside edge. And for me, fishing has turned down right poor since the big flood of last summer. Maybe many of our fish were just washed over the dam? But I am sure of one thing - several of my fishing friends and I run the lake with first rate electronic depth finders, we just do not mark more than one or two fish. Large portions of the lake appear to empty of life. That is why we support installing an oxygen pump to aerate the dead zones of deep water, and adding woody structure and fish cribs to restore the fish population.

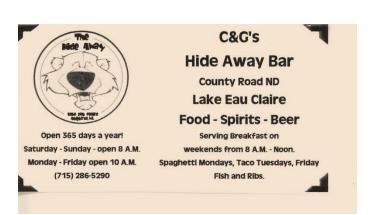
The third issue is what if anything should be done to address these problems? Included here are our ideas and the reasons why we support them:

- 1. We believe the potential commercial value of the sand sediment filling our lake should be investigated. Can it be dredged and sold? If so, the revenue could be collected by the formation of a Lake District governmental body and used exclusively by us to pay for the lake rehabilitation. If this goes forward without a lake district being formed, the money will go to the county instead and is likely to go to other purposes.
- 2. Create our own fish hatchery for Lake Eau Claire. I was part of a successful effort to build a portable hatchery on Red Cedar Lake near Birchwood. A few volunteers with knowledge of plumbing and electricity along with some willing fisherman to net spawning fish would allow us to repopulate the lake with walleye and other fish which have the correct genetic stock to prosper. The hatchery along with adding woody structure and fish cribs will quickly rebuild our anemic fish population.
- 3. Last but most importantly, we must form a Lake Eau Claire Lake District. It is the only realistic way to gather and control enough money to rehabilitate our lake. And we must protect the value of our real estate investments. Lake property is not cheap, and without action everyone will see their property values decline. One attempt to land a boat at Skid Row or one look at the aerial map of sedimentation is enough evidence to us that serious measures are necessary. We realize that a \$200 tax increase is hard to swallow. But all of us will lose a great deal more in real money as our lake property value is eroded away.

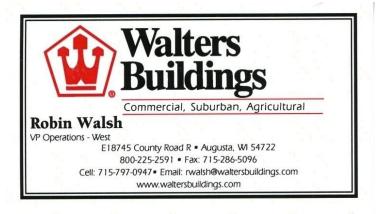
Thanks for listening! Fred and Cheryl Poss

#### Volunteers Needed

Watercraft inspections at the Lake Eau Claire boat landings taking place over the summer. If you see a suspicious boat that should not be launched because of weeds or invasive species, please contact the DNR hotline at (800) 847-9367. If you are interested in volunteering to perform inspections, please contact John Selz for more information.









## HELP KEEP WISCONSIN'S ROADSIDES BEAUTIFUL

It's finally spring and the Adopt-a-highway cleanup has now started. Please cleanup the ditches and areas in front of your property to help keep the lake roads looking clean and beautiful!

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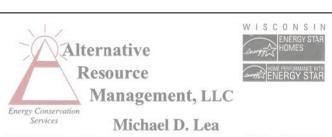
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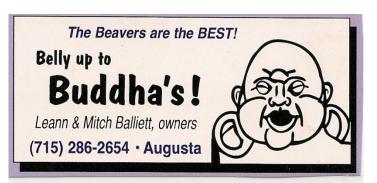


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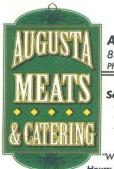
## Note from the Board of Directors Regarding the Lake District

The people working on forming a lake district are independent of the lake association; however, the lake association does endorse their efforts.









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