



December 2023

**Friends of Lake Eau Claire  
Lake Eau Claire Association, Inc.**

P.O. Box 229

Augusta, WI 54722

[www.lakeeauclaire.org](http://www.lakeeauclaire.org)

## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

By Lori Bechtel

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

As we approach year end, I thought it would be good to reflect on all that The Friends of Lake Eau Claire has accomplished this year with the help of our Lake District.

- We purchased a new (used) pontoon to assist with fish crib installations and other lake projects
- We donated \$50,000 to the Lake District for Hay Creek cleanout
- We donated \$1,000 to the Augusta School Backpack Program
- We raised over \$4,500 at the annual Ice Fisheree
- Lake Eau Claire and Lake Altoona continued collaborating effectively throughout the year
- We had another excellent fireworks display which was funded 100% by your donations
- We raised over \$5,500 at our annual golf outing
- Our 5<sup>th</sup> annual calendar raffle raised close to \$8,000
- We solicited and obtained over 47 sponsors which helped us to raise almost \$13,000
- Our membership continues to grow slightly each year
- We recently cleaned out the northside small creeks
- The boat and equipment that were purchased through an awarded Eau Claire County ARPA grant was gifted to newly formed Eau Claire River Watershed Association. This equipment will be used for monitoring and measuring lake efforts.
- We have approved a gift of \$50,000 to the Lake District for the future cleanout of sand near Skid Row.

Wow, that is a lot of great information! We could not have done any of this without all of the great donators, volunteers, board members, and the Lake District.

I want to express my sincere thanks to all of you! You make great things possible on Lake Eau Claire. Thank you for taking the time to read all of our posts, newsletters, and emails. Thank you for donating and volunteering and being a Lake Eau Claire advocate. Thank you to the Lake Association board members for helping us keep all of this going and thank you to the Lake Eau Claire District board for all the time they spend on our beautiful lake.

I would like to wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! I'm sure 2024 will have more great things in store for Lake Eau Claire!



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# COMING SOON!

## Friends of Lake Eau Claire

### 2024 Calendar Raffle Sales!

The Lake Eau Claire August Calendar Raffle will start sales soon. We will again draw a winner(s) daily throughout August. Every weekday we draw one \$100 winner and on Saturdays and Sundays, we draw 2 - \$100 winners. If you win, your name goes back into the barrel for a continued chance to win. Thank you to the countless people that sold tickets this past year and THANK YOU to everyone that supported us by buying tickets! All money raised will go back into keeping Lake Eau Claire beautiful for years to come!



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Have you heard? The NWIRC is holding an ATV race on Lake Eau Claire on Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup>.



Our club races studded and un-studded ATV's, studded motorcycles and UTV's. Race day registration is from 7:30am-9:30am at Mike's Buckhorn Bar. Practice ends at 10:15am. Driver's meeting at 10:30am and racing will start at 11:00 am. There is no admission fee for spectators. Our goal is to be a fun and exciting event for everyone! Thank you and we look forward to seeing you on the ice.

The Lake Association will be holding some raffles at the event so stop out on the ice to see what all the action is. The event will take place off of the North Shore boat landing between the two shorelines.

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## **Northside Creek Dredging Completion**

**By Joe Bechtel**

On October 31<sup>st</sup>, with the help of the City of Augusta, the County of Eau Claire, Bridge Creek township and Ludington township, we were able to clear the sand on the Beach Creek and Bedpost Creek, both on the north side of the lake. The traps are relatively small, but we remove a considerable amount of sediment each year. We had four trucks that were donated to help our lake district and lake association handle this effort and its cost.

A little less sediment was removed this year due to fewer high-water events occurring in 2023 but still considered necessary to prevent sediment entering the main lake at these points of water runoff. Estimated sediment amounts removed: Bed Post trap - 110 cubic yards; Beach trap - 125 cubic yards, for a total of 253 cubic yards of sediment not entering the lake. A special thank you to Scott Williamson (City of Augusta), Kenny Bohl (EC County), Dusty Bergman (Town of Bridge Creek), and Derrick Brown (Town of Ludington) who were the drivers of the trucks. Also, Doug Tollefson who is the owner of Doug's Trucking and Excavating. Doug has been a consistent contractor that has handled this project for several years and does an amazing job emptying the traps.

Al Weisenbeck and I coordinated the effort. This was our first year, as it had been handled by Fred Poss since the inception of the project. A special thanks to Fred for all his efforts and seamless handover. Everything went as planned, no surprise with Fred's diligence and documenting everything that needed to occur.

The pictures show the care being taken to avoid spillage and to respect the natural edges of the traps. Thank you to all that participated in this task!



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## **Lake District Update – Dredging News**

Mike Lea - District Chairman

There are several updates to share as a new dredging season approaches. The 10-year dredging permit with the Wisconsin DNR was up for renewal in March 2023. After gathering information over the past year and multiple meetings to submit the application with required documentation, approval of the permit was granted in mid-October for another 10 years. This is big news as we have a lot of dredging projects planned! Three new potential dredging sites were added to the application: the Northwest Creek near the aerator building, the delta in the southeast end of the Rookery, and the Eagle's Nest area on the Eau Claire River.

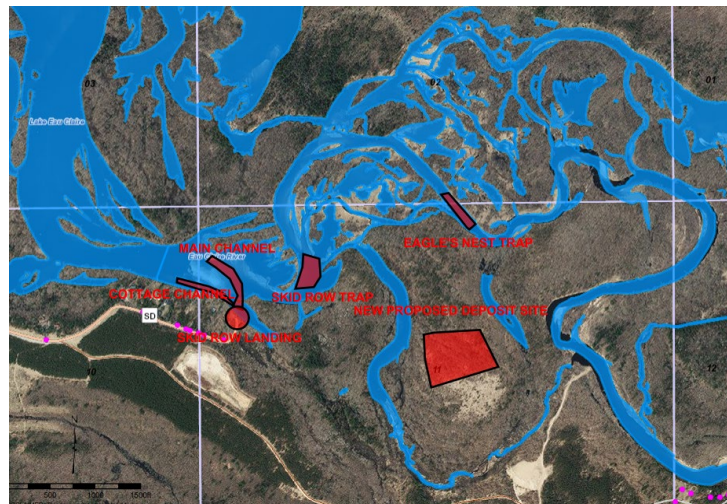
The 5-year contract for dredging the two main traps on the river, and the traps on Muskrat and Hay Creeks are up for renewal this year. There were 4 companies showing interest that attended a bid tour meeting on October 30<sup>th</sup> to assess the project sites. Two additional contractors also expressed interest. The bids will be opened on November 14<sup>th</sup>. We are fortunate to have the Eau Claire County Purchasing department managing this process with us.

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Three individual projects at the Skid Row boat landing are going up for bids in November with plans to complete work this winter. A top priority is opening the channel along the cottages downstream from the boat landing to reestablish access to the lake and landing for residents and users. A new trap (Skid Row Trap) is also planned upstream and around the corner from the boat landing to help protect this reestablished access from future sedimentation. If this new trap can be established in this dredging season there will be an additional main channel dredged from the boat landing to the lake. This will restore access from the landing to the lake through the larger section of the river channel. The work on this main channel and trap are dependent on whether contractors can access the trap area from the boat landing. The sediment will be deposited in the existing Skid Row deposit site on Forest Connector Road. If river current and soft bottom conditions don't allow access this winter, that part of the project will be delayed until a new proposed deposit site upriver can be approved. This new deposit site will allow for improved access to the Skid Row Trap.

The new proposed deposit site upriver near the Eagle's Nest was surveyed and determined to be above the established flood plain level last winter. Surveying and engineering were largely completed by volunteers, including a significant contribution from Joe Kirst and *Everyday Surveying and Engineering, LLC*. The site was approved for removal from the Eau Claire County Forest Lands by the Eau Claire County Board, and we are now awaiting approval by the Wisconsin DNR. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) must also confirm and approve that this section is outside the flood plain. These two approvals are the final steps for developing the new deposit site. Once granted, this site will be used for spoils from dredging at the Skid Row Trap and from an additional trap we are considering near the Eagle's Nest. If we can get these approvals in the next month, we may have time to do the site prep on the proposed deposit site so it is ready for the 2024-2025 dredging work.



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## Lake Eau Claire Association Supports the Augusta Schools

Each year our lake association requests donations for a local charity. This year we selected the Augusta School backpack program. We collected donations at our annual meeting held at the end of August and through our Member Planet website.

The backpack program is completely a donation-based program, distributed through the Augusta School District. The district uses donations to purchase non-perishable food for the program from Feed My People. Since Feed My People can purchase food at a substantial discount, the district can stretch their donations when they buy food. The district gives meal bags to children who are meal challenged on the weekends. They send home four meals, plus snacks every week – enough to help feed the children for the weekend when they don't have access to breakfast and lunch at school. Each week they serve about 50 students from elementary to high school age. In addition, donations also help fund their Family Support Program which provides clothing, toiletries, school supplies and more to any child in the district that needs these items. So far this school year, these programs have served around 200 students.

Through the generosity of our lake association members, we collected \$515. The lake board members felt this was an important program and wanted to show strong support of

the Augusta community who attends and supports many of our lake events. The lake board decided to use some of our general funds to add \$485 to the donation, for a total of \$1,000.

The school district was extremely grateful for our generosity. Renee Olson, who oversees the backpack and family support programs, said that our donation will fund needs for a couple of months. That's two months that our area children will have food for the weekend. We can be proud of our efforts to improve and maintain our lake, but we can also be proud to have this opportunity to help the children in our community.

Thank you for your generosity!

*Photos courtesy of Bruce Bartel*





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## BUCCA BABY BULL RATS

By "Fisherman Fred" Poss

Most veteran bass fishers know that both large and smallmouth bucket mouths really love to bust a topwater frog swimming across a stretch of lily pads. Frogs are a great hot summer evening top water bait if you are looking for explosive strikes.

But this article is focused on bait with a little different concept. The "Bucca Baby Bull Rat" is a brand-new bait that won't even be available for another month. But, folks, I have to tell you, this one is gonna be a winner! The Baby Rat comes in white, brown, or black with a pink removable tail and one extra tail for replacements. It has two trebles, a jointed body that adds some nice noise to the bait, and a small diving bill in front so the bait goes six inches to a foot underwater. The bait has life-like hair drawn on its body and offers the texture and size of a real mouse.

Hey, I am getting a couple. And if you want some, go to Karl's Fishing & Outdoors. The baits are pricey (\$19) but if you fish them on heavy (20 lb.) mono or fluorocarbon, you shouldn't lose too many on biteoffs. One modification you may want to consider is filing down the diving bill, so the bait skates across lily pads more easily. A long casting rod of seven feet or more and a low ratio retrieve reel in the 5:1 category should do the trick! Catch you later!

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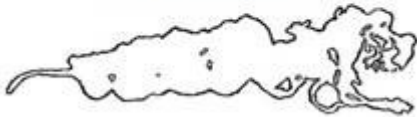
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## Lake Eau Claire Ice Fisheree



The **Lake Eau Claire Ice Fisheree** is a family fun event where entrants participate in a 3 hour catch and release fishing tournament. Fish registration will be among game fish (must be legal length) and panfish, both based on length.

The 10th annual Lake Eau Claire Ice Fisheree will be held Saturday, February 3rd, 2024, at the North boat ramp on County Road ND Circle from 9am to 12pm. Line sales will begin soon at The Woodland. Even if you don't fish, you can still come out and be a part of the action either by volunteering to help or to support Friends of Lake Eau Claire by buying some raffle tickets!

Each year the Ice Fisheree has donated a Vexilar fish locator to the Lake Eau Claire Association which we raffle off to help support, protect, and improve the water quality and fishery on the lake. This benefits all that enjoy the recreational use of Lake Eau Claire! We will once again be raffling a Vexilar, doing a 50/50 raffle, and will have calendars available. Please come support us and Thank You to all the volunteers!

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Nature Notes  
Flying Squirrels  
*By Michael Harden*

An interesting, yet rarely seen member of our state's fauna is the flying squirrel. There are about 50 species worldwide, with two species in Wisconsin. They are the northern flying squirrel, *Glaucomys sabrinus*, and the southern flying squirrel, *Glaucomys fuscus*. The former occupies the northern half of the state while the southern occupies the southern two-thirds or so. It should be noted that the ranges of these mammals are in a state of flux due to habitat changes and the climate changes we are witnessing. Both species may be found in the vicinity of Lake Eau Claire, and both are protected in Wis.

These two species may be somewhat difficult to distinguish if encountered, which is a somewhat unusual occurrence since they are strictly nocturnal. The northern is larger; about 10.4-12.4" in total length and an avg wt. of 4-7 oz. The southern is smaller; 8-10" and weighs only 2.5-3 oz. They look very much alike, with very large dark eyes and gray dorsal pelage sometimes with a cinnamon tinge. A key is that the northern variety has white hairs to the skin on the underside, while the southern is white on the underside but the hairs grade to gray near the skin.

Flying squirrels do not fly; but they glide. A thin web of skin called the patangium extends from the wrist to the angle on either side. By jumping from a higher point, usually from up in a tree they can sail 50 meters or more and land on the trunk of a tree, climb up it, and repeat the process. It is an efficient way to cover ground and evade predators.

Flying squirrels are omnivorous, eating a wide variety of nuts, seeds, fruits, insects, and sometimes bird eggs. They also like raw meat and are sometimes caught in traps baited with it. Their main enemies are feral or domestic cats. Hawks, owls, foxes, raccoons, and others. They prefer to nest in cavities in trees, where the female gives birth to an average of three young per litter in April or May. They are not true hibernators, but they do hole up in the winter, and sleep through the cold spells. They sometimes sleep communally in water to keep warm, with as many as 12-20 individuals sharing a space. This winter something has chewed a hole in a spot in my cabin and appears to be wintering in my attic, a common practice.

Being so strictly nocturnal, many people have never seen a flying squirrel. For those of us as old as I, you may remember the Riverview Tavern, which was located just SW of the river bridge, across the river from our beloved Black Bear. I believe it was back in the 60's when the proprietor had feeders outside the windows overlooking the river which were lighted, and the flying squirrels would come and raid them after dark and provide an interesting and close-up view of these magnificent little guys. The show was free while you enjoyed 25 cent games of pool and enjoyed a \$1.50 PITCHER of cold delicious. Aaahhhhh the memories.

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**Charitable Giving Strategies**  
*By Heidi Conner*

It's never too early to begin planning your charitable giving strategies for the year. Most everyone is familiar with making cash contributions to a charitable organization, but given how large the standard deduction is, it may be difficult to realize any tax benefits with cash contributions. Listed below are some charitable giving strategies that can help maximize your tax benefit of charitable donations.

- Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD) – This strategy allows you to use QCD's to manage your required minimum distributions (RMD) from an IRA. A QCD allows individuals who are 70 ½ years old or older to donate up to \$100,000 to one or more qualifying charities directly from a taxable IRA instead of taking their RMD. This strategy allows you to make charitable donations while reducing your taxable income.
- Non-Cash Gifting – This strategy involves gifting of longer-term appreciated stocks to charity. You potentially eliminate the capital gains tax you would incur if you sold the asset first and donated the proceeds, and you get to claim a charitable deduction for the fair market value of the asset if you itemize.
- Donor-Advised-Fund (DAF) – This strategy is like a charitable investment account for the sole purpose of supporting charitable organizations you care about. You can make a large contribution to a DAF in a single year potentially enabling you to itemize for that year. You then recommend grants to charities from the account annually in the amount you normally give to charities each year.

Lake Eau Claire Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) and is a qualifying charitable organization. Charitable contributions to the Association of cash or using the above strategies may help you reduce your taxable income. We encourage you to talk with your tax and financial advisors to see how making a charitable contribution to the Lake Eau Claire Association, Inc. may provide you with some tax benefits.

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Save the Date

ATV Races on Lake Eau Claire – Saturday, January 13, 2024 – start time 11am
Ice Fisheree contest – Saturday, February 3, 2024 – 9am to noon
4th of July fireworks – Thursday, July 4th at dusk
10th Annual Golf Outing – Saturday, July 20th at Hickory Hills Golf Course, Eau Claire
Lake District Annual Meeting – 2:00 pm Saturday, August 17, 2024
Friends of Lake Eau Claire Annual Meeting & Picnic – Immediately following Lake District meeting Saturday, August 17, 2024
Fireworks over Lake Eau Claire –Saturday, September 2, 2023



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Friends of Lake Eau Claire Board of Directors

Did you know that the Friends of Lake Eau Claire board is made up of 12-15 directors from the surrounding lake and local community? We thought it might be nice to introduce you to our board of directors over the course of the year in our newsletters. Each newsletter will feature some of our directors. Currently we have 13 directors. We appreciate all of the time and effort each director puts into different aspects of the managing of our association. A lot of the work that is done goes unseen but can be quite substantial. We thank them all for their efforts!

Nathan Smith - I have had the privilege of serving as secretary on The Friends of Lake Eau Claire board for several years. My wife Nikki and I both grew up in Augusta and attended Augusta schools. In 2018, we purchased a cabin on the northside of the lake and subsequently spent weekends on the lake with our children and grandchildren for several summers. We have since removed the original cabin and built a permanent home on the lot. Lake Eau Claire is a recreational gem. Our family and friends have collected treasured memories associated with this lake. I'm very grateful to be involved in the efforts to preserve this wonderful local resource.

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# Become a Lake Leader!

**Call for Nominations for Lake Leaders - Crew 15** - Are you interested in gaining skills and increasing your network related to lake management and protection? Want to tackle lake-related issues, but need some extra help? Consider nominating yourself, or someone else, for the Wisconsin Lake Leaders Institute. The next group, Crew 15, will meet in May, September, and October of 2024. The deadline for nominations is February 1, 2024.

**What is the Lake Leaders Institute?** This leadership program consists of three separate two-day seminars engaging approximately 30 individuals from different backgrounds who are committed to protecting and preserving Wisconsin's lakes. The first seminar focuses on our society and our individual communication styles. The second seminar focuses on aquatic ecology and watershed management. The third seminar introduces us to a multitude of other organizations who work to protect or manage our water resources and provides a foundation for understanding water law in Wisconsin. Individuals who successfully complete the program leave with new skills and resources to help them tackle lake-related issues. These graduates also have the opportunity to attend future training for Advanced Lake Leaders focused on topics of their choosing.

For more information, visit [uwsp.edu/uwexplakes](http://uwsp.edu/uwexplakes) and click on "Lake Leaders."

Lake Eau Claire has had 10 individuals go through the program and I'm sure they'd be happy to answer any questions you might have about this opportunity.

- Marlo Orth, Crew 5 and Chair for Lake Eau Claire District, [marloorth@aol.com](mailto:marloorth@aol.com)
- Dean Boehne, Crew 6 and Treasurer for Lake Eau Claire Association, [dcbost@trivest.net](mailto:dcbost@trivest.net)
- Kristin Charlton, Crew 6 and Secretary for Wisconsin Lakes, [kbcharlton@hotmail.com](mailto:kbcharlton@hotmail.com)
- Jodi Lepsch, Crew 10 and DNR Lakes Biologist for West District, [Jodi.Lepsch@wisconsin.gov](mailto:Jodi.Lepsch@wisconsin.gov)
- Robin Walsh, Crew 10 and volunteer with Friends of Lake Eau Claire, [rwalsh@waltersbuildings.com](mailto:rwalsh@waltersbuildings.com)
- Vicki Reed, Crew 11 and Citizen Lake Monitoring Network volunteer, [reedvf@uwec.edu](mailto:reedvf@uwec.edu)
- Lori Bechtel, Crew 13 and President of Lake Eau Claire Association, [lbechtel@comcast.net](mailto:lbechtel@comcast.net)
- Mike Lea, Crew 13 and Chair of the Lake Eau Claire Protection and Rehabilitation District, [mlearm@gmail.com](mailto:mlearm@gmail.com)



## ICE SAFETY

If you head out to one of Wisconsin's many lakes or rivers to ice fish, snowmobile, ATV, cross-country ski, or just to enjoy a winter day, we want you to have fun and be safe. A bit of advance planning and practicing basic ice precautions can help you return home safely.

### WHEN IS ICE SAFE?

There really is no sure answer, and no such thing as 100 percent safe ice. You cannot judge the strength of ice by one factor like its appearance, age, thickness, temperature or whether the ice is covered with snow. Ice strength is based on a combination of several factors, and they can vary from water body to water body. Ice strength can also vary in different areas of the same body of water.

### KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Because ice conditions vary, it is important to know before you go. The DNR does not monitor local ice conditions or the thickness of the ice. Local bait shops, fishing clubs and resorts serve winter anglers every day and often have the most up-to-date information on how thick the ice is on local lakes and rivers, as well as areas that are especially dangerous.

### SAFETY TIPS

- Dress warmly in layers.
  - Don't go alone. Head out with friends or family. Take a cell phone if available, and make sure someone knows where you are and when you are expected to return.
  - Know before you go. Don't travel in areas you are not familiar with and don't travel at night or during reduced visibility.
  - Avoid inlets, outlets or narrow areas that may have current that can thin the ice.
  - Look for clear ice, which is generally stronger than ice with snow on it or bubbles in it.
  - Carry some basic safety gear: ice claws or picks, a cellphone in a waterproof bag or case, a life jacket and length of rope.
-

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU FALL THROUGH ICE

If you fall through the ice, remain calm and act quickly.

1. Do not remove your winter clothing. Heavy clothes can trap air, which can help provide warmth and flotation. This is especially true in a snowmobile suit.
2. Go back toward the direction you came. That is probably where you will find the strongest ice – and what lies ahead is unknown.
3. Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface. This is where a pair of nails, sharpened screwdrivers or ice picks are handy in providing the extra traction you need to pull yourself up onto the ice.
4. Kick your feet and dig in your ice picks to work your way back onto the solid ice. If your clothes have trapped a lot of water, you may have to lift yourself partially out of the water on your elbows to let the water drain before starting forward.
5. Once back on the ice, don't try to stand up. Lie flat until you are completely out of the water, then roll away from the hole to keep your weight spread out. This may help prevent you from breaking through again.
6. Get to a warm, dry, sheltered area and warm yourself up immediately. In moderate to severe cases of cold-water hypothermia, you must seek medical attention. Cold blood trapped in your extremities can come rushing back to your heart after you begin to warm up. The shock of the chilled blood may cause ventricular fibrillation leading to a heart attack and death!



*A DNR employee demonstrates the ice self-rescue maneuver.*

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### What is happening on Lake Eau Claire – from Josh Pedersen, Parks and Forest Department

An application for a boating grant to fix the north boat landing was filed for and approved at a waterways commission meeting. This work was completed in October and the north boat landing was replaced. This should be a long-term fix for this landing and eliminate the powerloading issues that we have consistently been dealing with. We will still be installing a new bathroom at this location in 2024 and will also be installing a small 10'x10' shelter near the boat ramp for picnickers.



The Skid Row boat landing now has a new pit toilet, which was installed in September.

The Cosgrove boat landing (south shore) was approved in the county 2024 budget and will be redone next year. We are beginning to work on the design for that lot. There will be many challenges with this site due to the steep grades and limited amount of space to work with. We anticipate hiring a firm to help with the design work. We will apply for matching funds from the recreational boating grant for that work as well. This was budgeted as a \$200,000 total project cost.

The next phase of the old clubhouse building will most likely be happening in 2024 given the timing of the demo work completion. This phase will consist of electrical and lighting, addition of railing, concrete refinishing, sidewalk work and making building ADA compatible. The roof option will also be explored during this phase. We are planning on finishing design work later this fall and getting the bid packet out for construction in early 2024. With hopes of making this “new” facility open for use in the middle of summer in 2024. Originally this was planned to all be completed in 2023, but we have faced a few challenges along the way.

We are also looking at a new system for monitoring the gates at Lake EC and Lake Altoona, one that would be fully automated. If all the design and engineering, get sorted out on this (and gets approved by county board) we will be applying for a municipal dam grant this winter to help with funding on this project. This would be a huge addition for my staff, as gate adjustments would become automatic and would also allow for the ability to adjust remotely.

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**FRIDAY, JANUARY 5**  
Augusta Girls Basketball v. Lincoln  
Meet in the High School Band Room @ 6:30pm

For questions or instrument needs contact:  
Rick Slembariski, Band Director  
rslembariski@augusta.k12.wi.us

Any and all Augusta alumni, students and staff, are invited.





**Did you know Membership for the Friends of Lake Eau Claire is only \$25 per year?**

As you can imagine, the Lake Association has many expenses during the year. Your membership fee helps pay for things like equipment repairs, website hosting and maintenance, postage and other mailing expenses, newsletter printing, and a host of other things. The dues received are put to good use and spent very wisely.

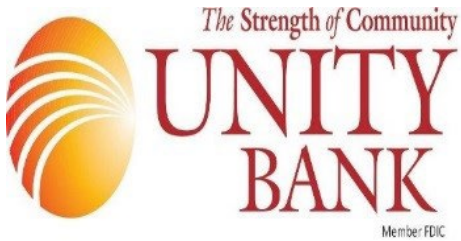
You can renew your membership or join today by going to the following link, <https://www.memberplanet.com/lakeeauclaireassociation>, click the “Join our group” button and fill out the form to “Create an account”. You can also join by mailing your payment to: Lake Eau Claire Association, PO Box 229, Augusta, WI 54722.

Lake Eau Claire Membership Dues Renewal/Application			
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Lake Rehab	\$		
Other Donation	\$		
Total	\$		

*Note: Donations to the LECA are tax deductible.*

Mail completed form with check made out to Lake Eau Claire Association to the following address:  
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