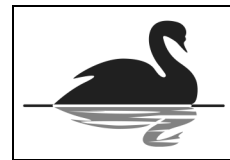


# The Trumpeter



Published by Big Swan Lake Improvement District (LID) and Big Swan Lake Association of Todd County

## Goals proposed for Big Swan in 2016 and beyond

### Our common goals:

- *Protect and improve lake water quality*
- *Protect and improve lakeshore*
- *Protect and improve all public and non-public waterways flowing into the lake*
- *Protect and improve the fishery*
- *Protect and improve the lake's recreational value*
- *Communicate, educate and involve our members in reaching these goals*



Chuck Macy Dave Nickolay

*Letter from Chuck Macy, chairman of the Big Swan LID, and Dave Nickolay, Association president*

Big Swan Lake Association (BSLA) was formed in 1985 and the Big Swan Lake Improvement District (BSLID) was established in 2006. These two organizations partner with each other to protect and improve Big Swan Lake. The common goals of both organizations are listed in the left column.

In 2015, BSLA property owners received the Todd County Soil & Water Conservation District's (TCSWCD) Land Stewardship Award. Only one lake entity or

individual in Todd County receives this award each year, which is testament to all of us, as property owners, in taking steps available to us to protect our lake. We property owners need to recognize and thank our two past officers, George Brezinka and Denny Harder, along with their respective board members, for all that they have done for us during their terms in office.

Our challenges in 2016 and in the years to come will require focus on the following objectives:

- Work with TCSWCD to implement Aquatic Invasive Species education and inspections at public and private lands,
- Implement the 2015 Lake Water Quality Study recommendations,

- Partner with TCSWCD, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the DNR to successfully complete the lake Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study scheduled to start in 2016,
- Implement state Buffer Law requirements for our lake in 2017 and 2018,
- Develop and implement a plan to increase fish populations in our lake,
- Continue our annual treatment program to control current and future invasive plant species.

Now, more than ever, our organizations need your help and financial support to preserve, improve and protect Big Swan.

We "thank you" for all you've done in the past!

## Plan to offer more AIS education at lake landings

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Big Swan Lake has a one public landing maintained by the area DNR Parks and Trails office in Little Falls, plus undeveloped DNR land on the north end it lists as a landing.

Tim Edgerton, DNR Areas Supervisor, will facilitate erecting new Help Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers signs at the public landing and possibly the other lot this spring.

Besides the updated AIS signs, two additional signs will be erected at the public landing.

One is a waterproof information box containing AIS information and the second is an updated northern catch-and-release possession limit sign.

Also this spring, our association will ask private boat landing owners for permission to erect AIS information boxes and fish possession signs at their landings. The lake association with help from the county will cover the cost.

With the continued threat of the spread of Eurasian milfoil,

zebra mussels and other invasives, our lake association wants to do all it can to educate boaters on how to identify harmful invasives.

Because of the great recreation and fishing opportunities Big Swan provides, we will continue to see landing visitors who may have brought their boats from infested lakes. We hope through education to reach out to these visitors to help us all keep Big Swan Lake the hidden gem it is.



*Outdoors paper finds good fishing opportunities on Big Swan.*

## What fish can we keep?

*Outdoor News* recently featured our lake as an “outstanding crappie lake” with “no shortage of northern pike” and “bass at head of class.”

With this great news about the health of Big Swan and its healthy fish populations probably comes increased fishing pressure. So, let’s review fish-possession and catch-and-release regulations for the lake.

In 2008 the DNR designated Big Swan as a northern pike catch-and-release lake. This specified that fish caught in the 24-inch to 36-inch slot size must be released. One trophy fish over 36 inches can be taken as part of the

total six northern pike possession limit.

DNR fish managers “are perplexed” why there are so few fish in the protected slot size. “We should have more big fish but we don’t. It’s a mystery why,” they said.

Crappies in one’s possession include any fish kept that day plus any fish in storage from previous fishing trips. Ten crappies are the total a person can possess in the boat and at home in the freezer.

Walleye possession is the same as northern pike. The number of walleye that fishermen can have

in possession in their boat and at home in the freezer is six.

The bass possession limit also is a total of six in the boat and at home. And sunfish limit is 20.

An interesting Minnesota fish possession regulation that many fishermen don’t know is that any fish eaten on the same day they are caught count toward the daily limit. This rule also applies to giving fish away—fish given away count toward possession limits.

For the sake of future generations, please practice catch-and-release and follow possession limits.

*Goal: “To effectively inform citizens and Todd County lake users about AIS”*

## How Todd County’s AIS plan will evolve in 2016

The county’s updated 2016 AIS plan will continue an emphasis on outreach and education, boat inspections, zebra mussel monitoring and cost-sharing of individual control projects.

Outreach will be expanded by providing AIS education kits to every middle school, in addition to elementary schools.

Arranging for boat decontamina-

tion equipment was a challenge last year, which might continue. One solution could include partnering with Douglas County.

The county will try a new approach to enhance boat inspections. AIS funds will support a part-time sheriff water patrol staff member to visit landings not inspected through scheduled inspections on 23 county lakes.

This position can also provide assistance if regular inspectors need enforcement support.

Also, lakes will be sampled more often in 2016 to use composite samples at pre-determined locations. More targeted sampling would follow if veligers (larvae) show up in composite samples.

## County reports on 2015 AIS plan and status

Todd County implemented its first Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) plan in 2015.

Among its initiatives, inspectors made 6,539 contacts at county landing to inspect and educate boaters. The county summarized its AIS status:

AIS infested lakes in the county include Sauk (Eurasian milfoil and flowering rush) and Little Birch (Eurasian milfoil.) Infested

rivers include the Crow Wing (faucet snail), Long Prairie (zebra mussels) and Sauk (flowering rush). Bodies of water with curlyleaf pondweed such as Big Swan are not included among the DNR’s primary AIS concerns.

A recent addition close to Todd County is Lake Silvia, just downstream of Big Birch, where zebra mussels were found at the end of the 2015 fishing season.

Monitoring for zebra mussel veligers (larval stage) was completed in three rivers and 21 lakes, including Big Swan. No veligers were found during the sampling period.

The Long Prairie River remains the only zebra mussel infested body of water in the county because it is connected to the Alexandria Chain of Lakes.

## Battle to control curlyleaf continues

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), including Eurasian milfoil, curlyleaf pondweed, zebra mussels and others, can cause serious problems for recreational uses such as boating, fishing and swimming on Minnesota lakes.

Fortunately, Big Swan has avoided most of these problems. But in 2005 curlyleaf became pervasive enough to impair lake activity, so much so that the “narrows” became almost impassable in June and July. Onsite surveys by the DNR and others confirmed that curlyleaf needed control.

Big Swan Lake Association funded the first chemical treat-

ment of curlyleaf pondweed in 2005. The following year property owners formed the LID to provide a continuing source of funding for AIS control.

Between yearly applications and better weather conditions, curlyleaf spread has been brought under control. Lake Management, Inc. has been contracted from the beginning to apply DNR-approved treatments.

Denny Harder explains total eradication is not possible because tiny seeds continue to drop into the lake bottom, blooming up to five years later. So each year, lake property owners need to fund treatment

to minimize curlyleaf impact.

Follow-up monitoring by public and private agencies and volunteers help identify persistent patches of the invasive, leading to targeted treatment of the most infected areas. Each year requires coordination to obtain proper DNR permitting and available grants. Also, early spring inspections and water temperature readings help ensure optimal treatment timing.

Treated in 2015 were 55.8 acres. The total will rise to 58 acres this year if the DNR approves it. Funding comes from the LID, Association dues, fundraisers and grants.



*Funding by lake property owners keeps recreational options open.*

## MPCA starts monitoring lake's water quality this year

For at least the next two years, Big Swan Lake will be part of a state water quality study.

Each year the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and local partners monitor a select group of lakes within particular watersheds. Big Swan, which is in the Upper Mississippi River Watershed, is on the water quality monitoring list for 2016 and 2017.

The MPCA generally monitors targeted lakes for two consecutive summers and then compares the results with regional water quality standards. This helps determine where pollution-reduction projects are needed to improve lake quality.

MPCA staff and volunteers will collect water samples and take temperature and dissolved oxygen readings monthly.

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) monitoring for the first year begins on Big Swan in May and ends in September.

As part of MPCA's Citizen Lake Monitoring Program, Lee Daly has taken regular secchi disk readings on Big Swan to determine ongoing water clarity. For purposes of this study, he will increase the frequency of his secchi-disk readings to weekly.

*Big Swan joins list of lakes to be monitored monthly for pollutants.*

## Volunteers always needed for lake's fundraising activities

Big Swan Lake has two ongoing fundraising activities that Nancy Hillman needs help with organizing and running.

We are involved in the bingo portion of charitable gambling at the Hub Supper Club. Swanville's Dollars for Scholars program now administrates the pull-tab operation there, but

our lake and other organizations that receive a share of charitable gambling profits have been asked to run Thursday night bingo once a month. Nancy needs four people to help on those nights.

The annual Lakes Golf Tournament, shared with Long Lake, is Big Swan's major fundraiser.

Held on the first Friday in August at Long Prairie Country Club, volunteers are needed to help with planning and running the event. Don't forget to sign up for the day's golf tournament, meal and silent auction.

To help with these fundraisers, contact her at 320-285-2634 or [nancyhillman@msn.com](mailto:nancyhillman@msn.com).



*Sign up for the fun of this year's tournament on Friday, Aug. 5.*

# Why become an association member

As of 2015, 166 property owners surround Big Swan Lake. But out of this number, only 65 are members of the lake association, even though 100% of membership dues go toward improving our lake. Through our association, we can improve and preserve it for future generations while increasing lakeshore property values.

Here are some examples of what your membership dues and active participation, in conjunction with LID involvement, help make possible:

- Controlling spread of invasive curlyleaf pondweed,
- Financially assisting local farmers to install feedlot improvements that reduce runoff into the lake,
- Monitoring the lake for new invasives including Eurasian milfoil and zebra mussels,
- Supporting Todd County

on septic system inventory,

- Working with DNR Fisheries to manage our fish population,
- Monitoring boat landings to prevent the introduction of invasives into the lake,
- Partnering with state and county agencies to preserve and restore our shoreline to reduce contaminants from flowing into the lake.

Your \$35 per family (\$30 single) annual membership dues will help keep Big Swan Lake one of the best recreational, fishing and property investments you can make. To those who are renewing, thank you. We are glad to have you as a continuing member.

If you are not currently a member, please consider joining our association. Membership also gives you voting rights in association matters.

## Membership Form

*\$35 family (\$30 single) annual dues*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail this form and dues to: Bonnie Alsleben,  
Treasurer, 17778 Dogwood Loop, Grey Eagle, MN  
56336

**See meeting minutes and  
more about your lake at:**

**[bigswanlake.com](http://bigswanlake.com)**

**Save the date:** The association's annual spring meeting will be held Saturday, May 21, starting at 9 a.m. at the Hub. The meeting agenda will be mailed in early May.

Your boards of directors:

### Lake Improvement District

Chairman: Chuck Macy

Secretary: Lee Daly

Treasurer: Pat Brauch

Director: Jim Macy

Director: Mike Wolters

### Lake Association

President: Dave Nickolay

Vice President: Mark Redding

Secretary: Steve Richter

Treasurer: Bonnie Alsleben

Director: Nancy Hillman