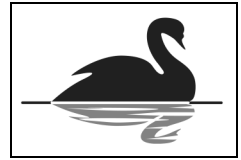


The Trumpeter



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Our guiding 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*

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President proposes streamlining member meetings

Current bylaws of the Big Swan Lake Association of Todd County (BSLA) state that spring and fall (May and August) meetings will be held each year for dues-paying members. At the fall 2016 meeting, members discussed holding only one meeting each year in the spring. No action was taken.

Current President Dave Nickolay, a year and a half into his first two-year term, believes that one membership meeting per year is all that is needed. He points out that if association business matters requiring voting by members occur after the spring meeting a special fall

meeting notice could be sent out with the notice of the Lake Improvement District (LID) meeting scheduled each August.

Nickolay also points out that the association board, under current bylaws, is authorized to take action on all financial matters up to \$1,000 per item. If a proposed expenditure exceeds that limit, members could approve it at a specially called meeting in conjunction with the LID's annual August meeting.

Nickolay believes that changing bylaws to allow a once-per-year meeting would help in recruiting future volunteers to run

for the board. He points out that currently association board members meet four times per year, twice one month before each membership meeting and at the biannual meetings.

He also believes board members would be more willing to run for second terms or volunteer for future open board positions if the time commitment is reduced. He himself is faced with this decision in 2017, either to run for reelection or resign because of his other board commitments. He said he would run for a second terms as president if the meeting time commitment is reduced.

AIS boat inspections step up at the landing, others continue on the lake

Todd County aquatic invasive species (AIS) boat inspections totaled 257 on Big Swan Lake in 2016.

The county-hired independent contractors inspected 171 boats entering and 86 leaving the lake. Inspections started in May and ended in September. Heaviest inspection month was July with 117.

Inspectors found 165 boats with drain plugs pulled out and six were found with drain plugs still in. They found 166 boats and trailers had no AIS plants attached, while five had attached plant material. Plants were removed by hand before the boats and trailers were al-

lowed to launch. Inspectors found no zebra mussels.

In addition, four DNR conservation officers and the Todd County Sheriff's water patrol routinely visited the lake to look for other violations.

DNR officers reported issuing two citations for angling without a license, two citations for extra fishing lines, one warning for watercraft registration, three warnings for fishing without a license in possession, one warning for no fire extinguisher, one warning for no life jacket, one public access violation warning, one warning for unremoved boat drain plug and one ATV registration warning.

Inspect on shore for invasives

Last fall the DNR asked lake associations to work with members to inspect equipment that had been submerged in their waters. If property owners find infestations, the DNR asks them to note exactly where the specimens were found, take pictures, collect the specimens, and report them to a county invasive specialist.

No invasives have been found yet on Big Swan shores. But be cautious when transporting boats, docks, lifts, etc. Bitz Hardware in Grey Eagle, for example, has rental trailers for lakes with and without zebra mussels. Learn more at the DNR website.



Sun rises over quiet Big Swan.

Seeking stabilization of overall lake levels

At the August 2016 meeting, members discussed Big Swan Lake water levels. Presented was a report by Ken Zeik, DNR hydrologist, that analyzed several years of lake water levels and precipitation data, as well as DNR culvert permits for water flowing out of the lake at Erie Drive on the north end.

The DNR maintains that current overflow culverts do not

affect the lake's average water level fluctuation because the downstream culverts are lower than the 1,191-foot elevation of the concrete apron over which water flows out of the lake before reaching the culverts.

Some lake residents question the effect the new overflow culverts under Erie Drive are having on water levels. They say the lake has not reached its ordinary high

water mark of 1,194 feet for many months and that the overflow culverts, which are higher than the main culverts, continued to drain water from the lake all last summer.

The association set up a three-person committee to do a cost-benefit analysis of a study of overall lake levels and determining elevation of outflow culverts that might provide better lake

Water quality monitoring continues

Big Swan Lake will continue to be part of a state water quality study in 2017.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) began water quality monitoring in the lake last year and will continue this process in 2017. It is monitoring a select group of lakes within the Upper Mississippi River Watershed to compare results of two years of monitoring with regional water quality standards.

When monitoring is completed next fall, MPCA will analyze the two years of data before issuing a report. Bonnie Finnerty of MPCA's Brainerd office anticipates

it will share a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) report with lake residents by mid-summer 2018.

This data sharing will likely take place in a public meeting. The MPCA will review the report and work with property owners to prepare strategies for improving lake water quality with pollution-reduction projects.

MPCA staff and volunteers monitor lake quality by collecting water samples and taking temperature and dissolved oxygen readings at various locations. Monitoring generally begins in May and ends in September.

Considering further water quality tests

BSLA is considering re-testing creeks flowing into the lake to see if projects on its west side have improved water quality. Last inlet testing was done in 2009. Other lakes such as Long Lake test inlet flows yearly. Members decided to wait until the MPCA releases its TMDL preliminary results.

Also awaiting those results is further discussion of core sampling the lake bottom to learn how sediment may impact water quality and how to manage it.

Welcome and thanks!

Association members elected two new board members last August. Jan Lind replaces Bonnie Alsleben as treasurer, and Al Leinen replaces Nancy Hillman as at-large board member. Jan has lived on the lake for 35 years and has been an association member since 1985. Al and his wife Phyllis are new members after building their lake home last year. Secretary Steve Richter's term was also up, but no one volunteered to take over. Leinen also replaces long-time director Jim Macy on the LID board.

County continues AIS prevention

Todd County implemented its first Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) plan in 2015 and expanded it in 2016 and will continue in 2017 with the goal of slowing their spread.

Inspectors provided by two contractors made 7,849 contacts at 27 landings in the county to inspect and educate boaters last year. It completed monitoring for zebra mussel veligers (larvae) in 21 lakes, including

Big Swan. It confirmed two new zebra mussel infestations in Osakis and Big Birch Lakes.

The county sheriff's department assisted by recruiting a seasonal law enforcement officer, who spent 180 hours on the water or at boat landings educating boaters about AIS laws. The county also partnered with the DNR to deliver AIS instruction to 400 students at the Todd County Enviro-Fest.

Results of MPCA water quality monitoring in Big Swan won't be released until summer of 2018.

Fighting to keep up with curlyleaf control

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

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. The DNR and others confirmed our need for curlyleaf control.

Big Swan Lake Association funded the first DNR-approved treatment of curlyleaf. Property owners formed the LID the next year 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 2016 were 55.8 acres. Coverage could rise this year if the DNR approves it.

Besides the LID, funding comes from association dues, fundraisers and grants.



Control of curlyleaf and other invasives keeps recreation value.

Revived 4th of July boat parade proves a success



The association revived the lake's annual 4th of July boat parade in 2016. Thanks to Sharon Uecker, association member and owner of the south-end campground, and Dennis and Marlene Carlson, parade coordinators and leaders, for

helping conduct the parade.

Up to 15 decorated boats joined the parade at various points as it circled the lake, starting and ending at the campground.

This year's parade also will start at 10:30 a.m. on July 4 at the southern campground. The best-decorated boat will again receive a cash prize.

The \$50 prize for best-decorated boat in 2016 went

to Meredith, Luke and Natalie Kotton, grandchildren of Bonnie and Larry Alsleben.



Alsleben pontoon parades near shoreline.



Nickolay grandkids dress up.

Volunteers 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 administers the pull-tab

operation there, but our lake and other organizations that receive a share of charitable gambling profits are asked to help run bingo quarterly.

The annual Lakes Golf Tournament, shared with Long Lake, is Big Swan's major fundraiser. It is held on the first

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

To help, contact Nancy at 320-285-2634 or nancyhillman@msn.com.



Join the fun at this year's tournament on Friday, Aug. 4.

Reasons lake association needs continued support

As reported in the 2016 newsletter, 166 property owners surround Big Swan Lake. Of those, only 65 were lake association members in 2015. Good news! In 2016, membership increased to 78 members.

Through our association membership, we can improve and preserve our lake for future generations while increasing property values. All dues go toward improving our lake.

Here are some examples of what our membership dues and active participation enable:

- Controlling spread of invasive curlyleaf pondweed,
- Financially assisting nearby farm operations not on the lake to install feedlot improvements and buffer strips that reduce runoff into the lake,
- Monitoring for new invasives including Eurasian milfoil and zebra mussels,

- Supporting Todd County to manage septic systems ,
- Working with DNR Fisheries to manage our fish population,
- Monitoring boat landings to prevent introducing invasives into the lake,
- Partnering with state and county agencies to preserve and restore our shoreline to reduce contaminants from flowing into the lake,
- Communicating with all 166 lake property owners.

Our dues of \$35 for family and \$30 for singles help keep the lake one of the best recreational, fishing and property investments we can make.

Thank you to those who are renewing. If you are not a member, consider joining. Membership also gives voting rights in association matters.

Membership Form

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

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Please mail this form and dues to: Jan Lind, Treasurer,
30238 Douglas Drive, Grey Eagle, MN 56336

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

bigswanlake.com

Save the date: The association's annual spring meeting will be held Saturday, May 20, starting at 9 a.m. at the Hub Supper Club.

Your boards of directors:

Lake Improvement District

Chairman: Chuck Macy

Secretary: Lee Daly

Treasurer: Pat Brauch

Director: Al Leinen

Director: Mike Wolters

Lake Association

President: Dave Nickolay

Vice President: Mark Redding

Secretary/editor: Steve Richter

Treasurer: Jan Lind

Director: Al Leinen