



SUMMER

2009

THE TRUMPETER

BIG SWAN LAKE IMPROVEMENT NEWSLETTER

WATER QUALITY WATCH CONTINUES

Big Swan Lake Association members met with representatives from the Todd County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) in late March to discuss results of 2008 water monitoring.

MPCA reported it has all the data required to complete the lake water quality assessment. As a result, all in-lake water monitoring (except secchi disk readings) will be discontinued.

Monitoring of the four lake inlets will continue in 2009 as a joint venture between the lake association, Todd County and MPCA. Funding for monitoring non-grant sites was approved at the May 2009 association meeting.

In a related communication on May 13, MPCA's St. Paul office informed the association that Big Swan is part of the state's 2010 impaired waters list because past monitoring shows the lake has high phosphorus and chlorophyll levels. The final list will not be released until late summer or early fall.

Once the list is released, MPCA's Brainerd office will conduct a study. The primary tool for addressing impaired waters is a pollution-reduction plan called

a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), the peak amount of pollutants a water body can receive without violating water quality standards. The TMDL process identifies all pollution sources and determines how much each needs to clean up to meet the quality standards. Total contributions must be less than the maximum daily load. Source-reduction strategies make up the implementation plan, which begins once the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approves a completed TMDL.

TMDL timing is uncertain, but MPCA has been encouraging because of our current and future work with Todd County Soil and Water. This should help us make a case for early approval of a TMDL. We will need the continued support of property owners and local government agencies throughout this period. After funding is obtained, the firm MPCA hires to do the study will determine the schedule.

We will publish more information in future newsletters as it becomes available. Starting with this issue, attached to the newsletter will be series of MPCA articles describing the entire TMDL process, from initial water assessment through clean up.

SEEKING BOARD REPRESENTATION

Volunteers to serve as directors of the Lake Improvement Association board are being sought for the next meeting on Saturday, Aug. 29.

At least one nominee is needed to represent each of the major developments: Big Bay, Park Terrace, Dogloop West, Big Swan Resort and Bauer Addition. By July 1, nominees should be sent to the board secretary at toid5727@embarqmail.com or by calling 763-420-5727.

Positions of President and Treasurer are up for election. At the May 16 meeting, Bonnie Alsleben volunteered to serve as interim treasurer until the August election. She is serving in place of Clarence Grimli, who passed away May 3. He had served as treasurer for the last three years.

PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN LAKES GOLF AND DINNER

The annual Save The Lakes Golf Tournament will be held Friday, Aug. 7 at the Long Prairie Country Club. A dinner and other fun events will take place at the Hub Supper Club later that afternoon and evening.

Details are still being developed and

will be communicated at the Hub and elsewhere as they become available. Volunteers from both Big Swan and Long Lakes will be needed. Call Diane Peters at 320-285-2625 if you would like to help. You can make reservations for golf and/or the dinner by calling the Hub.



ASSOCIATION NEEDS BROAD “PUBLIC SUPPORT” FROM YOU

Because Big Swan Lake Association is involved in operating a non-related business — charitable gambling at the Hub Supper Club — it is required to contract with a state-licensed certified public accountant (CPA) to conduct an annual audit and prepare its federal tax returns. Our CPA, Richard Horn, requested time at the May 2 board meeting to share his concern regarding the sources of our association income — dues, gifts, grants, golf fundraiser, gambling.

To maintain its tax-exempt status, at least one-third of total association income must from “Public Support” (dues, gifts and grants.) Because of a sharp drop in membership since the creation of our Lake Improvement District (LID), the association no longer meets this requirement. Many property owners believe the LID replaced the association. This is not the case at all, as outlined in the Spring 2008 issue of *The Trumpeter*.

The association generated more dollars for Big Swan Lake improvement activities in the last two years than total LID assessments for the same period. If we cannot achieve and maintain our “Public Support” source of income, the association could lose its tax-exempt status.

We urge all property owners to join in association efforts to improve the conditions in our lake. Membership dues of \$30 and/or tax-deductible donations can be made by sending them to Big Swan Lake Improvement Association, Att: Interim Treasurer Bonnie Alsleben, 17778 Dogwood Loop, Grey Eagle, MN 56336.

INVITED TO BREAKFAST ON THE FARM

Jeff Rohde, who with his wife Korinna operates a dairy farm southwest of Big Swan along Highway 287, invites lake residents to attend Breakfast on the Farm there on Saturday, June 27 from 8 to 11 a.m.

Rohde, speaking at the May 16 association meeting, explained the event is geared to the non-farm community of Todd County to show how its agricultural producers are making considerable investments in conservation practices. “Farmers and lake people need to work together to protect the environment,” he said.

Rohde, for example, with the help

of cost-share funding has invested thousands of dollars in improvements that include a manure pit that collects runoff from a new heifer barn and other facilities, buffer zones to protect farm waterways and manure injection equipment.

Those interested in attending the event at the Rohde farm, which also will include farm tours, a petting zoo and educational stations, should park in the Grey Eagle Elementary School parking lot. Shuttle buses will be leaving every 20 minutes for the nearby farm. Cost is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children 12 and younger.

INFORMATION GUIDES WILL BE PROVIDED

A portion of our Lake Vegetation Management Plan requires our association and the DNR to provide information to lake property owners about ways to preserve, improve and protect out water resources. We will provide printed material from the DNR and other sources with suggestions for lake improvement. Each of us can do something to lessen the impact of our activities on the quality of lake water. Information will be distributed in *The Trumpeter*.

NEW BOG PERMIT

Big Swan Lake Improvement District has received a 2009 permit for the removal and/or staking of migrating bogs with the following conditions for removal: no bogs larger than 2,500 square feet; no use of heavy equipment; no disposal in wetlands; no disturbing loon nests.

Conditions for staking are: Stake in original locations if known or in an undeveloped area where other cattails exist; Do not block access to water for any property owner; Use 2' x 2" wood stakes of sufficient numbers and length to keep bog in place; Allow for water level fluctuations.



One September 2008 dawn, thousands of Purple Martins roosted on power lines along 184th Street on the northeast side of Big Swan Lake. Last year, an estimated 75,000 to 100,000 Purple Martins used the southwest corner of the lake opposite the public landing as a pre-migratory staging area before setting off to winter in Brazil.

BIG SWAN MAKES BIG NEWS AMONG PURPLE MARTIN FANS

Big Swan Lake is making a national name for itself, at least among supporters devoted to conservation of Purple Martins.

Kelly Applegate, wildlife biologist for the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Indians, spoke at the association's May meeting about the news being spread online and in publications devoted to martins. Applegate and other members of the Purple Martin Working Group of Minnesota discovered a large pre-migration roost late last summer on Big Swan.

One online report estimated 75,000 to 100,000 martins roosting in cattail beds on the southwest corner

of the lake, directly across from the public landing. Doppler radar, a tool used to discover potential roosts, indicated the lake might have become such a pre-migration staging area. The subsequent search verified that.

Applegate says the staging area brings together martins from several Upper Midwest states during late August and early September. These insect-eating birds gather seasonally to prepare for their grueling migratory trek to Brazil.

Late summer sightings of an influx of birds began a couple of years ago. According to Applegate, Big Swan may be supplanting a colony on Upper

Spunk Lake near Avon, Minn., where martin numbers have been dropping. In the state, martins are also known to stage in corn fields near Willmar.

Applegate and the Purple Martin Working Group will be visiting the Big Swan roost again late this summer, this time attaching transmitters to some of the birds to study their travels, he says. He asked for volunteers to provide pontoons for researchers to visit the main roosting area during the last week of August and the first week of September.

The Purple Martin group says the backyard favorites have declined in the state by 78 percent since 1965.

CURLYLEAF TREATMENT SHOWS REPORTABLE RESULTS

Lake Management treated 39 acres of Big Swan Lake for Curlyleaf Pondweed the week of May 11, reported Dennis Harder, the board member who coordinates the spray treatment program. Breakdown of the covered acres is:

- 17 acres in the Narrows,
- 6 acres in the west side extension of the Narrows,
- 8.8 acres on the Big Island,
- 6.3 acres at the north end near the former resort area.

Lake Management did not treat the Big Bay, as both the company and the DNR did not find Curlyleaf present at the time.

Harder reported water temperature and wind levels were excellent at the time of treatment, so successful results are expected. Curlyleaf was recorded at about one to two feet long, an ideal target size for treatment, he adds.

Lake Management offered several other observations:

- It found a small amount of Curlyleaf on the southeast side of the lake, about halfway between Big Bay and the South Landing. The patch is not thick enough for treatment yet, but bears watching.
- It noticed very little weed growth in the shallow areas.
- One property on the east side that was treated showed heavy signs of Curlyleaf.
- Both Lake Management and the DNR found Curlyleaf on the Island this year, which was not the case in 2008.
- Lake Management reports the infestation of Curlyleaf in the Narrows is much improved, but still is present enough to warrant treatment at least one more year.

Harder reported Lake Management has been asked to conduct a follow-up survey to help identify results and potential targets for next year. DNR recommended doing the assessment in early June when all vegetation has emerged.

"Overall, we should see good results and continue to improve the quality of Big Swan as it relates to controlling Curlyleaf," concludes Harder.

PULL TAB RETURNS REPORTED FOR 2008

At the May association meeting, a report on gambling activities was given by committee member Kathy Brezinka. While 2008 sales levels were down from 2007, she reported profits were generated and distributed to Long Lake, Grey Eagle Fire Department and Big Swan Lake.

The funds were used as follows: Long Lake for improvement to the public landing and a property owners information booklet; Grey Eagle Fire Department applied funds toward the purchase of a new fire truck; and Big Swan Lake continued with their water monitoring program and Curlyleaf control.

