



Shoreline News

Newsletter of the Big Portage Lake Riparian Owners Association

New Big Portage Lake Website

Big Portage Lake has a new, mobile-friendly website at www.bigportagelake.org. The website is one way to keep up to date with lake and local news and events. It is also a resource for information you may find useful.

The new website includes links to current weather, the latest newsletter PDF, a downloadable membership renewal form, the current fire danger rating, upcoming events and notes about previous events. Before the summer of 2019, a page with an archive of association newsletters will be added to the website.

The first section lists upcoming events and includes links to Land O' Lakes related websites and the websites of surrounding towns' events calendars.

The second section is all about Big Portage Lake and the projects that have taken place or are currently ongoing on the lake. These projects include the Lake Management Update; Clean Boats Clean Waters and boat landing monitoring; fisheries; shoreland monitoring; Loon Watch; the lake history project and book; bat patrol; and the frog and toad survey. Many of these projects are looking for volunteers and some offer great opportunities to involve your children and grandchildren. This section also includes links information on the BPL FaceBook page and where and how to order BPL logo clothing.

The third section is a gallery of lake photos with information on how to submit your own for inclusion in the gallery.

The forth section is about BPLROA, including the 2019 meeting schedule, Statement of Purpose, Bylaws, and financial statement.

The last sections lists phone numbers and websites of local, state, and lake related organizations. The Contact section at the bottom of the website provides ways to contact BPLROA.

www.bigportagelake.org

January 2019

Shoreline News is the newsletter of the Big Portage Lake Riparian Owners Association (BPLROA) and is published twice a year in winter and early summer.

Association Officers

President: John Alt

Vice President: Dan Johns

Secretary/Treasurer:

Alice Muehlethaler

Directors:

Dawn Eckstein

Jill Edwards

Dave Leifheit

Lee Nielsen

Peter Pinnow

Steve Saewert

Mark Schermeister

Dave Slezewski

Webmaster and Newsletter Editor:

Jill Edwards

Lake Management Update Grant:

Susan Johns

Fishery Committee:

Dave Leifheit

You may contact these individuals using information in the BPL Directory or via the Contact form on the BPL website at www.bigportagelake.org

Common Loon drawing by Bob Hines for
the US Fish and Wildlife Service

The President's Pen

By John Alt

Good-bye 2018! Hello 2019!

Your lake association Board continues to be very active. It was refreshed this past year with some new elected members. I say refreshed because the new board members have brought new ideas and positive energy to the board and have accepted and are executing their new assignments with vigor.

Your board is approachable! Let your board know your thoughts and suggestions so they can be reviewed and action taken if appropriate.

The CBCW boat landing monitoring program continues well. However, more trained volunteers are needed to adequately monitor the boat landing and help prevent the spread of AIS into our lake.

Bat Patrol takes place 3 to 4 times a summer and takes an average of 2 to 3 hours each time. If you have not been on a bat patrol, come join us. It is an experience to remember. And new and better bat monitoring equipment is now being used.

The tree drop and fish stick program has provided additional habitat for the fish in our lake. More trees will be dropped in the summer of 2019.

The organization's 2018 Fourth of July parade float (which in our minds took first place) took second in the parade. You can view pictures of the float on the BPL website.

All activities on the lake need volunteers. Please step up! Ask a board member how you can help. When asked, do please volunteer for the benefit of your lake!

We encourage all eligible property owners and family members to join the association. You can

fill out the form on the back of this newsletter. If you do this right after you read the newsletter, you won't forget! Thank you.

Have a great winter. See you on the lake this summer. Cheers!

Lake Updates

By Dave and Nancy Leifheit

FISHERIES

Jules Eberhardt and Dave Leifheit met with the DNR lake biologist for Vilas County. The density of adult Walleye has been steady over the years and is above average for northern Walleye lakes. According to the DNR our lake is doing well with respect to fish and they do not recommend any changes.

The slot of 14–18 inches no harvest has been in effect since 1997. One possible change to the slot limit could be allowing one over 14 inches and no minimum. Another possible change could be a 15 inch minimum with a high, no-harvest slot of 20–24 inches. Such changes would take up 3 years to be approved.

TREE DROPS

Jules and John Alt have approval from the DNR for 16 trees to be dropped into the lake for fish sticks on Richard Kraus's property on 1100 feet of his frontage. The drops should be done next June.

John Alt gave me a copy of Phil Hallock's Lake Survey of 1977 report done by DNR and completed in Feb 1978. I plan to send a copy to the DNR.

NORTHWOODS LAND TRUST

Nancy and I have joined and get their newsletter. The cost is \$25 individual membership or \$35 family membership. The address is Northwoods Land Trust, Inc. PO Box 321, Eagle River, WI 54521. The Wallmann-Holtzer Nature Preserve was highlighted in a recent newsletter.

LAKE HISTORY BOOK

If you would like to submit an addition for the Big Portage Lake History book, go to the lake website bigportagelake.org. Under the Big Portage Lake section, find Lake History. Download and print a copy of the Questionnaire, complete it, and send it to bplconnection@outlook.com or send the form in with your dues when you pay them. We will make additional pages available to print out as necessary.

BIG PORTAGE LAKE FACEBOOK PAGE

The BPL Facebook page is up and running. Thanks to those of you who posted pictures and kept everyone up to date with the lake happenings. If you would like to join the page, send a request to bplconnection@outlook.com and you will be sent an invitation to join the Facebook group called *The BPLROA Connection*. Thank you to Mark Schermeister for setting up our page initially!

BPL LOGO CLOTHING

Fuzzy Antler provides our lake logo clothing. In the future, we plan to make announcements of the deadlines to facilitate batch ordering on the bigportagelake.org website. If you want to take a look at available merchandise, go to fuzzyantler.com. You may contact us at bplconnection@outlook.com for additional ordering directions.

Boat Landing Monitoring CBCW/AIS

By Steve Saewert

Tired of acronyms? Well, these are two of which you may be aware by now. CBCW stands for Clean Boats Clean Waters and is the State of Wisconsin's program to prevent Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) from entering our waterways. BPLROA is heavily involved in several CBCW activities, including monitoring the boat landing.

When we receive a State grant, BPL's boat landing monitoring is performed by students

from UW-Oshkosh and BPL volunteers. The State pays 75% which covers the of the cost of the students, and the BPL volunteers "work off" the rest in volunteer hours to fulfill our 25% match. Otherwise, the association would need to pay in dollars the 25% match portion.

For 2018, I'm happy to report that we made our quota of hours, albeit with far fewer volunteers than in the past. This means that a very few volunteers put in most of the monitoring hours. Thanks to all of you who put in any hours—they are all needed and appreciated and are obviously valuable and effective.

We hope to continue to receive a State grant to pay the Oshkosh students in 2019. Volunteers will still be needed to fulfill the hours required for our 25% match.

The Board has discussed investigating the hiring the Oshkosh students for additional hours which would require spending funds from our treasury up to \$1300. But first, we need to find out if the students are even available for extra hours.

For 2020, I am looking at a new development for monitoring the landing to supplement the actual on site monitors. Specifically, installing a video camera at the landing. The Town of Plum Lake has installed several. The camera operates 24/7 and the concept of having your boat launching activity captured on video is reportedly a tremendous deterrent. Many lake organizations are looking at this concept. The units cost around \$9,000, of which the State will fund half. We also need approvals from the Town of Land O' Lakes, since the Town owns the boat landing. I urge you to go to the company's website and look at the information on the video units, lakesentry.net.

I usually like to lighten up and end my report with a joke or a pun, but I can't think of any, canoe? See you this summer!

Swimmers Itch

By Lee Nielsen

The lake association was recently contacted to participate in a cross-continent research study focused on swimmer's itch. Should you experience an occurrence on Big Portage Lake, please report it to the website: swimmersitch.ca. This website also has information on swimmer's itch FAQs and what to do once symptoms occur. Please also contact a BPL board member, as we are interested in knowing if "swimmer's itch" is occurring on our lake.

What is Swimmers Itch? Swimmers itch, also called cercarial dermatitis, appears as a skin rash caused by an allergic reaction to certain microscopic parasites that infect birds and mammals. The parasites are released from infected snails into fresh and salt water. While the parasite's preferred host is the specific bird or mammal, when it comes into contact with human skin it causes an allergic reaction and rash. Swimmers itch is found throughout the world and is more frequent during the summer months.

Life Cycle: The adult parasite lives in the blood of infected animals, such as ducks, geese and in mammals like raccoons. These parasites produce eggs, which are passed onto these animals (generally waterfowl). When the eggs land into the water, they hatch releasing larvae that swim in search of a certain species of aquatic snail. After finding a snail, they undergo further development and are released back into the body of water. The new larvae then swims in search for a suitable host to continue the life cycle. While humans are not suitable hosts, once contacting the swimmer's skin, they may cause an allergic reaction and rash. Because these larvae cannot develop inside a human, they soon die.

Preventing Swimmer's Itch: The best way to prevent swimmers itch is by not feeding and attracting waterfowl to your shoreline.

Editor's Note: Wild animals should never be fed processed human food. For example, waterfowl should never be fed bread or crackers. See dnr.wi.gov/topic/wildlifehabitat/documents/dontfeedwildlife.pdf

AIS Shoreline Monitoring and Lake Management Project News

By Dan Johns

First, the good news. We have not found Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) or Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) in Big Portage Lake and continue to believe we are free of these invasive species.

Now for the other news. As part of the update to our lake planning grant, I assisted our grant contractor, White Water Associates, in conducting a point intercept study over a two-day period in late July. Several findings were noted and are discussed below.

Patches of Reed Canary Grass were noted growing in and around water's edge at various locations around the lake. Previously, significant growth of Reed Canary Grass had been limited to the North Bay. These new patches will be mapped as we continue to monitor this invasive that is widespread in Wisconsin and extremely difficult to control. Additionally, I will be contacting property owners next summer about follow up and Reed Canary Grass control. Fortunately, this grass does not like deeper water, growing only in swampy or very shallow waters areas and will not advance into the lake. The main downside of Reed Canary Grass is that it can displace native plants that are beneficial to ducks and other wildlife.

During the year when the lake level receded (from approximately 2004 to 2015), additional shoreline was exposed and an increase in

thistles growing along the shore was noted in several areas. Up until this past summer, numbers were minimal and appeared to be native thistles. During the plant survey this summer, a few larger patches of thistles were noted. These new patches of thistles are believed to be Eurasian Swamp Thistles, an invasive that is spreading in much of Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula. (Photos can be found on the DNR website.) These thistles can be removed by digging or pulling out the individual plants. Removal is most easily done early in the season before the tall flower stalks develop. If you find thistles on your shore, please remove them or call me or one of the assigned monitors and we will assist you. Be careful to wear gloves and protective clothing as the thistles are quite spiny and prickly.

In September, I assisted a biologist from White Water Associates in conducting an invasive non-plant organism check of the lake. In addition to rusty crayfish which have been observed in the lake for years, we found mystery snails in sediment near the boat landing. These snails, while not a native species, are not thought to be of particular concern. We did not find zebra mussels or other invasive species, but did find a significant population of native mussels on the western shore. You may have noted the remains of native mussels eaten by muskrats and otters around the lake.

During the summer, a greater than usual bloom of suspended algae occurred in most areas of the lake. In some particularly shallow areas, a greater than usual bloom of filamentous algae was also noted. Water temperature was above average this past summer and these algae blooms are thought to be principally due to the increased water temperature rather than an increase in nutrients in the water. We intend to monitor this situation during the coming summer. If it worsens or occurs without warm water conditions, testing will be undertaken to further assess the situation. As a precautionary measure, please ensure your septic system is

properly located and functioning so that it is not allowing effluent to flow or leach into the lake. Also check that you do not have an accumulation of decaying plant material near the lake. Don't use phosphorus containing fertilizer on your property.

Next summer we will continue our lake monitoring activities. There are two new assigned lake monitors, Lee Nielsen and Dave Slezewski. They join the continuing crew of lake monitors: Dave Leifheit, Tom Gratz, Bob Wannamaker, Jules Eberhardt, Dale Ekkela and myself. You may see us during the summer months monitoring the shoreline of your property. As always, please keep a lookout for any new or unusual plant growth or water organisms and promptly report any observations of concern.

May we continue to *not* find that for which we search.

New Turtle Crossing Signage

By Dave Slezewski

Watch for new turtle crossing signs around Big Portage Lake this spring. The signs will be located where roads cross over creeks near the lake. We ask residents and their guests to be careful at these crossings, especially in the spring when turtles are crossing the roads looking for places to lay their eggs on land.

BPLROA has an Environmental Contingency Fund. Donations made to this fund are specifically earmarked for protecting our lake from invasive plants and other catastrophic problems. Contributions are most welcome. BPLROA is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

News Around Town

By Jill Edwards

In 2018, the Pine Cone Café got new owners as did Deerwood Resort. Subway closed in the fall. Next to Brew’s Pub, construction on a new grocery store, to be called Charlie’s Northwoods Grocery, was begun in late fall to open in summer 2019. And the former Gift Shop, across from Artistree, is now home to two new businesses. The east half is now Vernebelia, a fabric, yarn, sewing and crafts store and the west half will become a space for pop-up shops, which allow for small businesses to rent temporary, short-term retail spaces to offer their products and services.

Newsletter

Would you prefer to receive your *Shoreline News* newsletter in electronic format rather than the printed and mailed version?

Doing so will save paper and save your organization printing and postage costs and free up funds for other organizational needs. It would allow the introduction of color, the ability for members to

print copies to provide to friends and visitors, active (clickable) links and perhaps an additional newsletter during the year. And, the change will help reduce your environmental footprint! What do you think? Let us know!

Email webmaster@bigportagelake.org.

In Memory Of

In 2018, four long-time residents of Big Portage Lake passed away.

Our deepest sympathies go to the families of Mindy Mendlik (September 1929–July 2018), Edward Gee (November 1927–November 2018), Joan Ekkela (November 1927–November 2018), and John Imse (April 1929–December 2018).

Mindy Mendlik was a founding member of BPLROA and John Imse served on the BPLROA board and as president.

The BPLROA Board voted to present the Land O’ Lakes library with a donation in Mindy Mendlik’s name as requested in her obituary.



BPLROA Financial Report, December 1st 2018		
Assets		
Checking Account Balance		\$4,181.34
Savings Account Balance		16,146.39
CBCW Grant Account		1,842.62
Lake Management Grant Acct		10,384.45
Fidelity Portfolio (12/1/18)		
Charitable Trust	\$7,302.09	
Environmental Fund	1,819.65	
Working Capital	5,564.69	
		\$14,686.43
Total Assets		\$47,241.23
Liabilities		
2018 Lake Management Grant		(\$9,511.00)
Total Liabilities		(\$9,511.00)
Net Worth		\$37,730.23