

Shoreline News

Newsletter of the Big Portage Lake Riparian Owners Association
www.bigportagelake.org

October 2020

2020—What a year!

by John Alt

Social distancing! Flatten the curve! Face coverings! Essential workers and PPE! Safer-at-home/stay-at-home orders! A whole new (to us) pandemic vocabulary entered our lives in 2020.

There was a request by Vilas County for summer home owners to remain in their winter homes due to limited local healthcare resources in Vilas County. Large group gatherings were prohibited. Many local social events were cancelled or delayed. Businesses closed. Dining establishments became take-out only!

After the state opened back up, retail businesses, bars, and restaurants reported a banner year. Go figure. Construction jobs boomed. Just try to find someone to come out and do small jobs for you. Almost impossible! This was summer 2020 on Big Portage Lake, in Land O' Lakes, and around the country.

We are in a new "not-so-normal" life for now and how that pans out remains to be seen. Let us hope the coronavirus pandemic ends soon so we may return to "normal" life in 2021. In the meantime, everyone please take measures to keep yourself and others safe and so we can remain healthy and be back in 2021 once again enjoying our beautiful lake.

Big Portage Lake Stewardship Program

by Susan Johns

In 2018, the Big Portage Lake Riparian Owners Association (BPLROA) was awarded a Lake Management Planning Grant by the State of Wisconsin. The two year grant program focused on updating data on the status of the lake and the development of a lake management plan. The work has been completed with the assistance of our

contractor, White Water Associates (Amasa, Michigan), and hundreds of volunteer hours donated by lake residents.

In May of this year (2020), documents for the Lake Management Planning Grant were submitted to the Wisconsin DNR. Responses to reviewers' comments were reviewed and a final report was submitted this summer. When all final documents are approved, all requirements for the grant will be successfully completed and a report will be issued. A link to a copy of the report will be posted on the BPL website as soon as it becomes available.

Water Quality Monitoring

by Lee Nielsen

The water quality BPL is monitored each year by Temperature, Clarity, and Chemical analysis. Temperature and clarity readings are taken within two weeks of ice out with continued readings every two weeks through September. In June, July, and August, water samples are taken once a month and sent to the WI DNR that monitor the phosphorus and chlorophyll levels in the water.

- Temperature: Temperature of the lake is taken at three foot intervals from the surface down to 40 feet. May 15th surface 48.1° and bottom 44.0°. July 1st at surface 78.0° and bottom 50.7°.
- Clarity: A Secchi dish is used to monitor water clarity. Taken on a sunny day, the white dish is lowered into the water and a reading "in feet" is taken when the dish disappears. 2020 year readings ranged from 26.5 feet in May to 16 feet in September.
- This annual water quality monitoring allows our Lake Association and WI DNR to review, monitor, and maintain the health of Big Portage Lake. Please contact me if you would like to see how these readings are taken.

Five Reports from Dave Slezewski

Turtle Nesting and Hatching Report

The roadside turtle nesting sites around the lake were quite active this past season. Jill Edwards and I covered a number of nests with protective cages. We are not sure how successful hatching was, but Lee Nielsen and Suzanne McCartin captured video and pictures of baby snapping turtles leaving their nests and making their way to water at the Portage Creek crossing site. Very exciting! Thanks, Jill, Lee and Suzanne!

Four turtle crossing signs were stolen this year, but all 4 were recently recovered. We will continue to use signs for now, but we hope to paint turtle crossing stencils on the road surface at each crossing site next spring as an alternative to the signs.

We continue to encourage residents, guests, and renters to be mindful of these sites and slow down to avoid mature and newly-hatched turtles crossing the road. We need help monitoring turtle nesting activity next spring and summer. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Dave Slezewski at 608-516-2721.

Loon Nest Platform and Nesting Activity

We deployed the loon nest platform (LNP) at the rocky shoal this spring. Unfortunately, the loons did not use it. It was apparent early on that fishing pressure around the shoal made this location challenging for nesting activity so it will be placed in a bay on the west side of the lake next spring. Thanks again to Loon Ranger Linda and Fred Prehn for constructing the LNP!

A pair of loons with a yearling were sighted several times. It is uncertain whether this pair and juvenile nested on Big Portage Lake last year or were simply visitors. We welcome any and all loon guests!

Residents and their guests and renters are reminded to keep at least 200 feet away from wildlife, particularly nesting loons as they may

abandon their nest if they feel threatened. Wildlife harassment is against the law, and if you see it happening, you can report it anonymously to the Wisconsin DNR tip line, 800-847-9367.

What is the New Courtesy Code Committee?

The coronavirus pandemic has created unprecedented times in previously unimaginable ways. Our lake has been impacted by the pandemic as well. Many have been able to work from home, which has transformed our land occupancy, and rental activity has increased as people look for alternatives to traditional vacations. Fishing was an approved activity by Wisconsin early in the pandemic and resulted in significantly increased pressure on the lake. However, the increased human activity and its impact on the lake has raised concerns for some residents.

To better address these matters, we have formed a Courtesy Code Committee (CCC) consistent with the BPLROA *Statement of Purpose* which includes the tenet "To provide property owners with suggested standards of common sense, lake stewardship that discourages pollution, excessive noise, reckless powerboat operation and other activities that may negatively affect the enjoyment of Big Portage Lake." The CCC is also meant to contribute toward the goals of 2020 Big Portage Lake Adaptive Management Plan. We are still formulating the path to accomplishing our mission, but some items that will likely be part of the mission include the following in order to pursue the goals of BPLROA, the Lake Management Plan, and the goals of the CCC:

- Updating the published BPLROA Courtesy Code (available on the BPL website) as necessary with input from Association members and as federal, state, and local laws change;

- Communication with, and soliciting input from, Association members and other lake associations and organizations ;
- Provide education and suggestions to property owners including rental property operators;
- Liaise with government and enforcement officials as needed.

If you have an interest in joining the CCC, please check the box in the enclosed membership dues form and you will be contacted.

Share Your Wildlife Sightings

BPLROA members are encouraged to post wildlife photos and videos to The BPLROA Connection Facebook page. Once you have paid your membership dues, you and members of your family can join The BPLROA Connection by searching for the page on Facebook and requesting to join.

We will keep a tally of wildlife sightings and share the totals in upcoming newsletters. We will also post to the Facebook page links to DNR wildlife surveys for citizens to participate in.

If would prefer to just share your wildlife sightings without using Facebook, please contact Dave Slezewski at 608-516-2721.

Fireworks: A thrill, but at what cost to the lake?

In Wisconsin, fireworks that explode and/or leave the ground are illegal without a permit. This includes M-80s.

Fireworks are an obvious fire hazard that could potentially cause a wildfire or damage property. In Wisconsin, if you start a fire that requires emergency services or damages property, you are responsible for all the costs.

The noise from fireworks, amplified over water, impacts veterans, wildlife, and quality of life for other lake residents. Some dogs are terrified of loud noises, which can lead to runaways and injury.

Fireworks can be dangerous to wildlife as well. Young animals can get separated from adults. Also, Marge Gibson, founder of the Raptor Education Group, a bird education and rehabilitation organization based in Antigo, reports receiving loons and eagles over the years that were “gruesomely injured” by fireworks. She received an eagle injured by fireworks this summer. For the full story, see <https://fox11online.com/news/local/bald-eagle-likely-injured-by-fireworks-recovers-at-wisconsin-facility>.

The chemical composition of fireworks pollutes our water and air with toxic chemicals such as mercury, lead, and nitric oxide. These pollutants build up in the lake ecosystem over time—that means in the water, fish, wildlife, and vegetation. Remnants of the packaging produce litter that ends up on the lake bed and on our shores.

As an alternative to all the risks and damage fireworks bring to the lake, consider contributing your dollars to the purchase of fireworks for the fabulous July 3rd display in Land O’ Lakes instead.

AIS Monitoring of BPL Shoreline

by Dan Johns

As another growing season comes to an end, I am happy to report no new Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) were discovered in Big Portage Lake. We continue to have reed canary grass in shallow fringe areas and Eurasian swamp thistle on shore edges.

These species are not worrisome, however. No virulent AIS (Eurasian Water-milfoil or curly leaf pond weed) have been discovered. Many thanks to the boat landing monitors and the lake users for all their hard work helping to keep AIS from our lake. Thanks as well to the assigned AIS monitors: Tom Gratz, Bob Wannemaker, Jules Eberhardt, Dave Slezewski, Lee Nielsen and Dave Leifheit and all lake residents who have kept watch.

Big Portage Lake is been at a decades high water level through this season. This has contributed an increase of water lilies and reeds. It has also apparently contributed to the increased prevalence of native pond weed, particularly in the north and east bays. The water level has most likely contributed to the death of shore trees and vegetation which now find themselves engulfed in water because of the rising shoreline. This is part of a normal lake cycle.

Despite the particularly warm waters, particularly in July, the growth of algae, both floating and filamentous, appeared to be less than in recent years. All in all, the lake continues to be a high-quality aquatic environment.

Our continued vigilance is needed to prevent introduction and ensure early detection of AIS in Big Portage Lake. Please keep up the good work and report any suspect plant growth to me, Dan Johns, at 309-657-8646 or 715-547-6488, or one the assigned lake monitors.

I also ask that everyone who has guests or renters at the lake, educate them in the need to prevent the introduction of AIS and be on the lookout for the presence of AIS in the lake.

Boat Landing Monitoring: Summer 2020

by Steve Saewert

The year started out with a prohibition on all monitoring activities, for both our volunteers and the UW-Oshkosh students. But our Volunteer monitors really came through this year, making the quota of hours required for the State Grant without any monitoring allowed in May! Excellent monitoring activity in June, July, and August did the job for the Lake. Thank You monitors!

Some statistics:

No data for May. It was a high activity year for number of boats inspected: 2020—257 Boats inspected in June, July, August. 308 Boats

inspected in all 2019. 274 Boats inspected in all of 2018.

Extrapolating the June, July, and August numbers to a full season, I estimate Big Portage had over 400 boat launches and retrievals, a significant increase from previous years. Note that all these numbers only include data from when inspectors were on site at the landing. And remember that the landing is monitored less than 1/3 of prime time. A conservative estimate is that Big Portage had over 500 boat launches and retrievals this year. More surprising, in just three months of 2020, 41% of the boats inspected had been on a different lake in the 5 days before launch on BPL. While I couldn't find 2019 or 2018 numbers for comparison, that is much higher than I recall from logging data in past years. Boats in this category are considered a much higher risk for possible transmission of invasive species.

Members and property owners—this data puts our lake at risk. And remember that the landing is monitored less than 1/3 of the daylight hours during the summer? (And by now you know where this is going).

Please consider doing some monitoring next summer? Maybe just two or three hours a month will make a big difference. Training takes just two hours and may be available online again in 2021.

Please think about it and email me at spsaewert@gmail.com. I will get back to you in the spring when the training schedules are established.

Three from Dave Leifheit

Fisheries Committee Report

As a committee, we did not add any fish sticks or tree drops this year. I can report that I caught very few fish when I was on the lake August 18-23.

(I fished with a group on Lake Kabetogama at Voyager National Park in Minnesota. We only

caught 24 fish for the week, and the largest was a 25 inch Northern.)

Lake History Project

Two new Lake History entries have been submitted for addition to the history by next spring. Thank you, Dave & Cheryl Slezewski and Suzanne McCartin.

Any member wishing to complete a questionnaire, it is available on the website by going to: BigPortageLake. Org → Big Portage Lake Information → Lake History Questionnaire (in PDF). Complete and email to me at daveleifheit@aol.com or mail in with your dues.

Facebook: The BPL Connection

We are very pleased to have 66 members who have joined The BPLROA Connection Facebook page. Remember, after you pay your dues, you can join by searching for BPLROA Connection on Facebook and request to join. We welcome pictures of the beautiful scenery, especially for those of us who aren't able to be at the lake.

Also, Dave Slezewski is requesting wildlife sightings and pictures and will post some wildlife survey links for you to check out. For more information, see his Wildlife Sightings article in this newsletter.

In Memoriam

Ellen Nielsen passed away in January and after 57 years on Big Portage.

James Schlack, son of Sally and Bud Schlack, passed away.



Membership Renewals

by Alice Gee Muehlethaler

Thank you to all who renewed their memberships this crazy summer, after the transition to an April Newsletter by email only due to the pandemic!

Please note that the membership renewal and dues notice for 2021 (next year) is attached with this October newsletter. The Board is trying to be efficient and avoid the cost of an additional mailing.

The Board also voted to raise the dues a small amount. The last time dues were raised was 2009.

An Individual membership is now \$30 per person, and a Family membership is now \$45 per family. This will help prepare BPLROA for dealing with environmental and monitoring threats to the lake we all love. Thank you for your support!

Additional donations are always welcome and appreciated also. They can be designated for the Environmental Fund or Boat Landing Monitoring.

Do You Shop on Amazon?

By Dave Slezewski

by using AmazonSmile! AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support your favorite charitable organization every time you shop, at no cost to you. AmazonSmile is available at smile.amazon.com and can also be activated in the Amazon Shopping app for iOS and Android devices. When you shop using AmazonSmile, Amazon will donate 0.5% of your eligible purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. You can choose from over one million organizations to support. Why not make BPLROA your designated charity? Users can change their designated charity at any time.

BPLROA Financial Report, September 2020			
Assets			
Checking Account		\$ 5372.92	
Savings Account		15156.05	
CBCW Grant Account		415.80	
Lake Management Grant Account		520.55	
Fidelity Portfolio 9/21/ 2020			
Charitable Trust	\$ 7468.12		
Environmental Fund	1,861.02		
Working Capital	5,691.21		
		\$ 15,020.35	
Accounts Receivable			
CBCW	\$ 3,000.00		
LMP	6,175.05		
		\$ 9,175.05	
			\$ 46,080.72
Liabilities			
		\$ 0.00	
			\$ 46,080.72

Shoreline News is the newsletter of the Big Portage Lake Riparian Owners Association (BPLROA) and will be published twice a year in April and October as of 2020.

Association Officers

- President:** John Alt
- Vice President:** Adam Fahl
- Secretary:** Suzanne McCartin
- Treasurer:**

Alice Muehlethaler

Directors:

- Jill Edwards
- Dave Leifheit
- Lee Nielsen
- Steve Saewert
- Mark Schermeister
- Dave Slezewski

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Webmaster and Newsletter Editor:

Jill Edwards

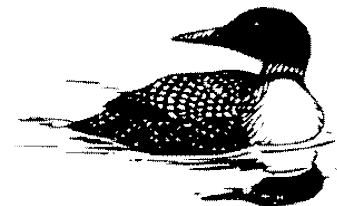
Lake Management Update Grant:

Susan Johns

Fishery Committee: Dave Leifheit

You may contact these individuals using information in the BPL Directory or via the Contact Us link on the BPL website at

www.bigportagelake.org



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