



WEST LAKE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

December, 2009

President's Message

Well -- another summer lake season has come and gone and winter is fully upon us!!

The past lake season started out with the Annual West Lake Improvement Association meeting held at Lake Center School where we reviewed activities from the past year, reviewed the lake management plan, discussed the next assessment period, and elected new members to the WLIA Board of Directors.

We then had the Annual Boat Parade on July 4 and the Annual Picnic the first of August.

In spite of the lousy summer weather all the lake residents appeared to have a great time enjoying our beautiful lake and for the most part acted in a responsible and safe manner.

As we start looking forward to the next year, here is a list of some the activities your board will be busy with:

Next assessment period

Our present assessment period expires at end of the 2009 and we must ask the Portage City Council to renew the assessment for the next 5 year period. Present assessment has been \$25 per year per property owner. At the annual meeting we voted to increase this to \$50 per year per property owner in anticipation of increased costs to maintain the lake and improve the public launch site at Shady Lane. The assessment renewal process has already started and you will be getting notices of public hearings from the City in the near future. Please use these hearings as an opportunity to support the Lake Association so that we can maintain our lake in a responsible manner.

Zebra Mussel Problem

I think we all have noticed the increase of Zebra Mussels in the lake during the past summer. To date there has been no effective way to treat the lake, however, recently we have been made aware of some new research that has been done which sounds promising as a way to control/eradicate these pesky creatures. We are actively working with the lake management company to further investigate this relatively new development.

New West Lake Web Site

We are in process of investigating a cost effective way to set up a web site so that we can communicate with all of you in a more efficient, timely manner. You will be hearing more about this in the near future.

Lake Management plan for 2010

We will continue to work with Jennifer Jermalowicz-Jones to implement the plan for next year. So far this plan has proven to be very effective at controlling our weed population as well as the costs to achieve the plan.

Annual boat parade

Shortly after the first of the year we will begin to work on plans for the boat parade planned for July 4, 2010 -- we would like to see participation at least double next year.

If you have any concerns, suggestions, criticisms, or comments you would like to pass on to your Association, please feel free to contact any of the Board members.

- by Bob Erikson, President, WLIA

Condolences

On Sept 8, 2009, West Lake lost one of her "treasures" - the Treasurer of the West Lake



Improvement Association - Diane Barkholz. She served as the Treasurer for the past ten years and will be sorely missed. She took her job seriously, was reluctant to

spend funds (her first answer for any request from the Board for funds was "NO" <g>), and seemed to know the family name of each and



every home on the lake. She LOVED living here; during the whole 15 years she lived here she would regularly tell us "I LOVE my lake." She also loved pontoon rides, Olive Burgers at the

West Lake Drive-In and was probably one of THE biggest fans of the Detroit Red Wings.

Mike Marshburn has graciously agreed to take over Diane's remaining term as Treasurer. Thanks Mike!!

Family Competition

As lake residents we enjoy many different types of activities on the water. For the Lutz family, their activity of choice would be water skiing, specifically slalom skiing. The Lutz's compete throughout the summer in slalom waterskiing at various lakes around the state. Competition slalom skiing involves skiing through a course made up of six turn buoys while using a rope at a set length while the boat travels at a set speed. As each pass is completed, the boat speed is increased until you reach your maximum

speed for your age division. Then the rope length is shortened each pass until a buoy is missed. The skier that goes their maximum speed and uses the shortest rope length while rounding the most buoys is determined the winner. There are age groups and male/female divisions for each tournament. Rachel, 14, competes in the Girls 2 division. This year Rachel placed 1st in the State of Michigan at the State Tournament held at Placid Waters in Hudsonville, MI. She then qualified for the 13 State Midwest Regional Tournament and went on to place 10th. This year's tournament was held at Waters Edge in Wilmington, IL. Rachel also received the Girls 2 Most Improved Midwest Slalom Skier award for 2009!

Jared, 12, competes in the Boys 2 division. This summer, Jared placed 1st in the State Tournament and went on to place 2nd at the Midwest Regional Tournament. The age division for this age group is very competitive in the Midwest. Jared qualified for the National Tournament this year for the second year in a row. In 2008, he traveled to West Palm Beach Fl. to compete in the Nationals. He is currently ranked 4th in the Nation in the Boys 2 division.

Adam, 11, also competes in the Boys 2 division. He placed 3rd in this year's State Tournament as the youngest competitor in the division. Adam also qualified to ski in the Midwest Regional Tournament and placed 16th overall. In 2008, Adam qualified for the National Tournament, placed 24th, and won the Boys 1 Most Improved National Slalom Skier award for 2008!

Larry, the dad and coach, competes in the Mens 3 division. This year he placed 10th at the State Tournament and 17th at the Midwest Regional Tournament. Larry qualified and skied in the National Tournament in 2006.

When you are on the lake next summer, congratulate our lake's young skiers when you see them out on the water training!

Way to go West Lake skiers!
- by Brian Somers

Purple Loosestrife Roundup

The big purple monster reared its ugly head late this summer. Actually its a beautiful flower, but very harmful to our lake and bog area. Purple Loosestrife will overtake native plants by choking them out and changing the habitat that will affect all plants and wildlife. If not contained it will spread very quickly as it drops its seeds in July and August.

Our former drain commissioner, Bill French, recommended that our Association generate a yearly Purple Loosestrife round-up to control the plant here at West Lake. Over the years, the city of Portage has released some beetles to attack the purple loosestrife in the wetlands. I have personally noticed a growth in the number of plants around our shoreline and within the bog. Beginning the summer of 2009 our Association started our first Annual Purple Loosestrife Round-up to try to eliminate as much of it as possible.

In early August of this year five brave Purple Loosestrife Eliminators ventured out onto West Lake on a hot, humid day. For nearly four hours these five souls were digging up plants from the southwest side of the lake all the way to the Drive-In end. Board members Larry Lutz and Patrick Duggan along with Larry's three children (Rachel, Jared and Adam) bagged 41 large trash bags of the invasive plant for removal. The work ethic that Larry's children had was very much appreciated and impressive.

We had fun and enjoyed the sun and company and wondered why more of us weren't doing the same. Maybe next year we can have more participate to make sure we cover all areas that need attention to eliminate this horrible plant. It's always better to be proactive and have the purple loosestrife in a manageable state, rather than be reactive and never get it under control.

One final thought was that several lake residents were very friendly and commenting on how nice it was for those 5 people to invest one afternoon in helping everyone by removing the Purple Loosestrife. Our unanimous favorite was Kurt Salters and Judy Kangas as they gave all of us frozen ice pops. It was greatly

appreciated as we were very hot and nearly done for the day.

- by Patrick Duggan



Board Member Larry Lutz and his daughter Rachel and sons Jared and Adam after digging up purple loosestrife on west Lake's shore

Portage Mayor Visits West Lake

At a meeting during the summer, the WLIA had the Honorable Mayor Peter Strazdas as a guest. The Mayor was invited by Director Fred Welser to attend and discuss lake issues. During the pontoon boat ride, the Association was able to show our successes and mention future plans and projects. The Mayor stated that our Association was a "model" Association and that many City Officials agreed with him. The Mayor also said "what you guys are doing here, keep doing, there are not many problems on your lake because everyone seems to be very informed and working together." We appreciate the Mayor taking time from his schedule to meet with us and become more informed of the issues facing our lake and residents.

- by Patrick Duggan



Mayor Peter Strazdas on West Lake pontoon

History of Water Quality Initiatives on West Lake

The other day I was going through a box of material that was collected over a number of years by former Director and Treasurer Juanita Everett. She and her husband Dick Everett have lived on the lake for over 36 years.

Going through the box of old records and newspaper articles, I decided to put together a history of weed control and water quality on West Lake. My main reason for this task was to educate myself and the current residents of West Lake whom hadn't experienced it first-hand like many of you have.

In the mid 1960's the West Lake Improvement Association was formed. I have seen the dates stated as 1964 and 1966, so let's just confirm it as the mid-sixties. According to the Bylaws, the reason for the WLIA formation is described as follows: "a non-profit organization to preserve and protect the beauty of West Lake, through conservation and water quality control; and *to protect land values of property owners.*" (emphasis added)

This Association is strictly a volunteer organization and when it started it only required a five dollar donation yearly to have voting rights as a member. Today it is still volunteer run and it requires a twenty five dollar membership fee..... *very reasonable to help and protect the lake and property values.*

Records show that in 1964, an expenditure of \$210.00 was made for a weed cutter; that's the first cost associated with trying to control weeds on West Lake. From 1964 through 1988, the WLIA has spent a total of \$114,665.47 controlling weeds. Please remember this was all done by *volunteers: the collecting of donations* and the application of the herbicides. I am truly impressed with those individuals who cared enough to invest their precious time for improving the condition of West Lake. During the eighties, there were several attempts by the Association to get governmental help.

1983 was a very bad year for weeds and a study was done that showed the weeds had surpassed the lake's ability to handle them and more plants die than can

be broken down naturally by decomposing. If left unchecked, the lake was predicted to have a life of 90 more years.



Sept 1983 West End of West Lake

The study examined the possibility of dredging to remove 6 feet of silt to increase the average depth of the lake to 14 feet and extend the life of the lake an additional 150 years. That plan was never implemented, but it brought a lot of attention to West Lake which was now becoming known as "Weed Lake." The following year, the Association raised the largest amount they had ever raised for weed control - \$13,176.60 for herbicides. This money allowed WLIA to treat 90 of the 335 acres of West Lake. Treatment was very successful, but they didn't have enough money to treat all the areas of need.

In 1984 Lorraine Beebe, a former West Lake resident became the Chairperson for the Austin/West Lake Restoration Committee. That committee was instrumental in getting former Representative Paul Wartner's attention. Rep. Wartner was able to get \$18,000.00 from the state coffers to field a study on cause and solutions to the deterioration of both lakes. Wartner's main goal was to find more permanent solutions to protect the lakes. The findings from that study found a herbicide treatment program to be the best solution. Our WLIA kept treating the lake as in years past.

In 1986, the Portage City Council members requested a study from Midwest Water Resources Management because of the level of nutrients in the water causing much weed growth and the lakes being choked. These

sources of nutrients were identified as septic systems, lawn fertilizer, animals, runoff from roads and storm sewers, leaves and grass clippings. The Council approved plans for intermediate and long term management options detailed in the plan. By 1989 all the homes on West Lake were hooked up to city sewer, which greatly improved water quality.

In 1988, The Portage City Council approved WLIA and residents request for a Special Assessment District for weed control. WLIA then President Stephen Chapman said "If a total of the benefits is looked at, it increases property values and the appearance of the community." It was this time that the WLIA asked the City to buy the 80 acre bog for the West Lake Nature Preserve, which was established in 1989.

In 1989, The WLIA contracted Aquatic Services for the professional application of herbicides to control the weeds. President and owner of Aquatic services Jeff Knox has treated our lake for the past 21 years. This was the year that the WLIA had their first of three different lake management plans conducted. By 1990, the Kalamazoo Gazette and local realtors claimed West Lake was back to a beautiful, vibrant lake and home values were going up.

In 1999, WLIA had another lake management plan conducted by Kieser & Associates. This report acknowledged the water quality improvements by the city sewer around the lake. It did however, point out the problems of several storm drains that dumped directly into the lake. A 1995 article in the Kalamazoo Gazette stated that the City of Portage had put a plan together to address all storm drains that empty into local waterways. These improvements started when the City of Portage put on a storm separator and drain basin on the John Street Drain and the new separator near the Maverick building on Portage road.

In 2006 the Austin Extension drain outlet was cleaned and Drain Commissioner Bill French suggested an idea to create a catch basin to "naturally" clean the water coming into West Lake from the Sugarloaf Drain. The WLIA along with Drain Commissioner Bill French, designed a plan and began implementation. It needs to be pointed out that the appointed Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner, Patrick Krause, was the main muscle in getting the Austin Extension drain

outlet cleaned and the natural basin constructed after Bill French's illness (which prevented him from completing the project.)

In 2008, the City of Portage redirected the Lovers Lane Storm Drain to drain into the city sewer. WLIA President Bob Erikson and Patrick Duggan had a meeting in November 2009 with City Engineers Dallas Williams and Chris Barnes to discuss the upcoming new five year weed assessment. During those talks, we discussed the City's plan to address the last two remaining culprits of storm drains that dump contaminants and nutrients into our lake. The City plans to redesign both the Barberry drain and the Ames Drive drains in 2011/2012. Both Bob and I were excited that we are at least in their Budgets and Build Schedule. Once these are complete, the water coming into West Lake will be greatly improved.

Our next hurdle will be to get a phosphate ban for all fertilizer for Kalamazoo County. Current Kalamazoo County Drain Commissioner Patricia Crowley is working on a ban similar to what other counties have already accomplished. Any fertilizer applied within the drain basin can eventually run off into our lakes and fertilize the weeds which we are paying money to kill. According to experts, there is already enough phosphate in our soil to last over *90 years*.

In 2008, Lakeshore Environmental was hired by WLIA to provide a new lake management plan with a snapshot of current conditions on West Lake. The results were similar to the past plans, but did show improvements from the actions of our residents and the Association. We have controlled the Eurasian Milfoil and have improved water quality. We still need to follow-up on the storm drains, phosphate use around the lake and now attack the Zebra Mussel issue.

Plans for 2010 will involve the acceptance and renewal of a five year Special Assessment District, improvements to the Shady Lane launch to prevent soil erosion and road run-off into the lake (another identified huge contributor to reduced lake water quality.) All of this will be performed through the WLIA using industry Best Practice methods to accomplish these improvements.

- by Patrick Duggan

2009/2010 WLIA Board of Directors

President	Bob Erikson		
Vice-President	Ralph Colwell		
Secretary	Mike Granchi		
Treasurer	Mike Marshburn		
Directors	Brian Somers		
	Janeene Hobbs		
	Chuck Nelson		
	Thom Phillips		
	Fred Welser		
	Larry Lutz		
	Patrick Duggan		

2010 WLIA MEMBERSHIP FORM

I want to be a member of the West Lake Improvement Association for 2010 and support our organization for lake improvement. Enclosed is \$25 for membership dues. (*If the \$25 Membership fee is a hardship, please call Bob at 324-4937. We still want you to join!)

We would like to hear your comments . (If you elect not to join WLIA, PLEASE let us know why. We cannot correct "issues" if we do not know what they are. Thank You!)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Name: _____

Address: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Please mail this membership form to:

Mike Marshburn, OR: drop it off at any one of your West Lake Director's homes

COMMENTS:

SPECIAL THANKS to our PAID 2009 MEMBERS

Allen, Larry & Irma Bowden
Austin, Dr. Robert & Jean
Barkholz, Chuck & Diane
Barton, Michael & Adele
Bates, Keith & Mandy
Bauer, David & Barbara Sneath
Beer, Bruce & Lois
Behm, Harley & Mary Ellen
Bennett, Tim & Betsy
Berner, Kevin & Michele
Beuker, Steven & Pamela
Blostein, Dr Paul
Bogataschow, Helen
Bower, Todd & Mary
Bowman, John & Renee
Bray, James & Carrie
Brenner, Boyd & Laura
Brewer, Dr Douglas & Aimee
Brink, Kenneth & Jeanne
Brockie, William
Burruss, Mary
Caley, Mark
Camp, Bill & Sandy
Campagnano, Lawrence
Caporal, MaryLouise
Cartier, Michael & Julie
Clancy, Michael & Julie
Clapp, Raymond & Ellen
Colburn, John & Nancy
Colwell, Ralph & Pat
Cornell, Jr, William & Shelly
Crawford, Justin & Melissa
Croden, Peter & Judy
Cross, Thomas & Heddy
Davenport, Barb & Nancy Crowell
Dehaan, Jonathan & Christina
Doornbos, Ray & Virginia
Dragoo, John & Lynn
Duggan, Pat & Kelly
Duncan, Robert
Ensfield, Robert & Kay
Erikson, Robert & Sandy
Everett, Dick & Juanita
Flynn, Thomas
Ford, Todd
Forrester, Alan & Mary
Foss, Enos & Teresa
Furgason, William & Esther
Geiger, Evelyn
Gleesing, Kevin & Marie
Granchi, Mike & Denise
Green, Rod & Amy
Grosser, Gerald & Nellie
Guichelaar, Philip & Alyce
Hall, Andrew & Evie
Hanchar, Alexander & Linda
Haner, Mary
Harris, Judith
Hartgerink, Jay & Ruth
Hobbs, George & Janeene
Howland, Mark & Gigi
Imus, Neysa
Jager, Richard
Jariwala, Adelfa
Jones, Gerald & Sharon
Kaminski, Linda
Klinge, Jerome & Dorothy
Knapp, Kier & Cynthia
Kropf, Rob & Jean
Kuiper, Jane
Lalomia, Brent & Melissa
Lang, Beverley
Laporte, Larry & Judy
Leedy, Tammy
Lemmer, Paul & Elaine
Lincoln, Robert & Regina
Linn, David & Karolyn
Lutz, Larry & Tricia
Malz, Donald & Diane
Manning, Ryan
Marks, William
Marshburn, Michael & Janet
Martin, Thomas Jr & Karen
McGavin, David & Janine
Meyers, Terry & Bonnie
Nelson, Charles & Jim Weessies
Nelson, Mark & Nell
Nelson, Norman & Carol
Newland, Mark & Sally
Nuyen, Eric
Osborne, Charles & Marge
Pearson, Charles
Pedraza, Dr Gabriel & Priscilla
Pelc, Ronald & Diane
Phillips, Thom & Lane
Pochyla, Gerald & Inez
Predum, BJ & Leah
Rich, Chad & Erin
Robertson, Keith & Ardath
Seim, Ryan & Alison
Slager, Douglas & Deb
Smith, Orville & Linda
Somers, Brian & Lindsey
Sprague, Al & Shirley
Stermer, Sandra
Stuut, David & Maryette
Taylor, Dan & Beth
Taylor, Kyle & Joy
Terburg, Joyce
Tulloch, Jon & Robin
Ufkes, Robert & Dorothy
Vanderbor, Todd & Anne
Vandermay, Bill & Joyce
Vandermay, Jack
Vanwalbeck, Craig & Patti
Vlieg, Douglas & Judy
Wahl, Bill & Elaine
Warner, Carol
Waterhouse, Edward & Helen
Watson, William & Cathy
Wedel, JC & Lena
Welser, Fred & Sandy
Wheatley, Tom & Theresa
Willard, Louis & Pauline
Williams, Barry & Jennifer
Woods, Thomas & Sharon
Wylie, Jackie
Zull, John & Arlene

- As of 12/1/09
128 members paid



**MERRY CHRISTMAS &
HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM
THE WEST LAKE
IMPROVEMENT
ASSOCIATION**

