

Briggs Lake Chain Association

The Lake Report

Remembering the Past – Improving the Future...promoting the care, improvement, and general welfare of the Briggs Lake Chain [Julia, Briggs, Rush and Big Elk] and adjoining and connecting waters...

July 2014

Volume XXI, Issue V

BIG ELK Sunfish Stocking

Mark your calendar...

- July 3 Healthy Lakes— 6:30 PM
Palmer Town Hall
- July 14 Palmer Twp Board—7 PM
- July 12 BLCA Board Mtg—8:30 AM
General Meeting –10:00 AM
Palmer Town Hall
- July 15 Clear Lake Twp Board-7 PM
- July 26 Briggs Lake Flotilla—6 PM

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Insert: July 12 Meeting	
No Separate Green Sheet!!	
See Grn Sheet items below	



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Near the end of May, after the water warmed enough so they would go into traps, slightly over 1,500 sunfish fry were stocked into Big Elk Lake to help control carp, an invasive aquatic species. Our deep thanks to Tom Eilers who contracted with Ron Rademacher, a fish farmer. The sunnies were released in weed beds along the east shore of Big Elk Lake completing the BLCA Big Elk stocking for 2014. The area will provide them with good cover as they grow and close proximity to carp spawning areas where it is hoped they will voraciously eat carp eggs and reduce their population. These were big fry and might even spawn this year.

Tom suggested a sign be placed at the public access to inform fishermen of the stocking and the reason for it and to encouraging them to catch and release sunnies so they can keep on eating carp eggs. The DNR has said they will permit the placement of a 12 X 18 inch metal sign at the landing. Now all we need is some money to pay for it. The cost should be in the \$200 area.

Your donation is deductible. Make the check out to the BLCA, write Sunfish Sign in the memo section and mail it to the BLCA, Box B • 4180 105th Ave. • Clear Lake, MN 55319. Thank you for helping!



Eiler's and entourage stocking sunnies in Big Elk

They were big and ready to eat carp eggs!



Happy Independence Day!

Fireworks: Saturday July 5 on Briggs @ dusk.

President's Letter:

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS): Our lakes now have two AIS; Curlyleaf pondweed (CLP), that we have been dealing with in the upper three lakes since the 80's, and now Eurasian water-milfoil (EWM). EWM has been detected and confirmed in Rush Lake. The BLCA has gotten a grant and signed a contract to treat three acres of EWM on Rush Lake. Hopefully, it will be done before you read this.

CLP is a minor league AIS compared to EWM. EWM can reproduce by fragmentation, so the propulsion units of watercraft going through it can spread it to other areas and, in our case, lakes. The plant is so nasty that even birds swimming through the chopped up pieces can spread it when they fly to other bodies of water with a tiny piece attached. When anything is removed from our lake water for transport to any area away from our lakes, a strict cleaning and drying protocol must be followed. It's the law.

Because the infestation site is near the Rush Lake Dam, there is deep concern for it spreading into Lily Creek, then Big Elk Lake and then the Elk River. EWM's native cousin, northern milfoil, already grows in these areas so it seems probable that EWM could survive there as well. The other end of the site is near the Briggs channel. Not running watercraft between Rush and other lakes will help minimize the possibility of EWM spreading into Briggs and then Julia. If you boat on Rush, stay on Rush and keep away from the yellow buoys that mark the infested area.

Narrative: The EWM news has dimmed my outlook for the future of our lakes. The EWM can be controlled but that takes money and the money for projects on our lakes comes from donations. The BLCA organizes them but the BLCA is based on volunteers so things move at the pace of people who chip in according to their interests and talents and during periods they are free from their other responsibilities. Believe me, they have been doing a tremendous job but there are a very small number of people around our lakes that are active in the process.

Very few people enjoy begging others to become sponsors or make donations. We have maintained our funding campaign at previous levels but I am disturbed that the number of BLCA sponsors and our donations are dwindling. Less than half the people around the lakes sponsor the BLCA. Less than one-third of the cost to treat CLP in the upper three lakes was donated by property owners. (The Clear Lake Lions made a generous donation to help and the DNR provided a grant, but the BLCA needed to supplement these donations from its nest egg.) This way of paying for crucial projects cannot be sustained. The bulk of our funding could go out the window at any time.

Prudence requires a pay as you go plan. The BLCA collects donations then spends it on the project it is earmarked for. Like our fireworks show, the more money collected the better and longer the show. But unlike the fireworks show, if the amount of money collected for AIS control is insufficient, then less CLP and EWM get treated. If not properly controlled, these weeds flourish and spread fast. (Check out the photo of CLP on Rush before it was systematically treated). EWM is a tougher plant so when it clogs props, they can stay fouled and the boat won't run. People tangled in EWM mats have drowned and it has taken days to locate and retrieve their remains. Both these AIS are important to control and, especially for CLP, the application period has a very narrow window.



CLP Rush Lake

Cont'd on page 3

Palmer Township

The Palmer Township Board meets the 2nd Monday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Township Hall. Let **Kathy Miller** know of agenda items by email at: palmertwp@gmail.com by noon on Tuesday before the meeting or call her at 743-2100. Our website is: www.palmer-townshipmn.org

Clear Lake Township

The Clear Lake Township Board meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Township Hall. Let **the Township clerk** know of agenda items by Thursday morning before the meeting. To contact Clear Lake Township, please call 320-743-2472 or email the Township Clerk at: clearlaketwp@hotmail.com Our website is www.clearlaketownship.org

Please attend your respective Township meeting and voice your concerns about matters relating to our lakes.

Both AIS can be controlled with spraying. The chemicals are applied at different times. Prior to chemical applications, surveys must be conducted to delineate the infestation sites for both plants. Having to survey each AIS separately and paying for two surveys are probabilities. So is surveying Big Elk Lake, Lily Creek and a downriver section of the Elk River for EWM. A treatment plan must be developed. Permits must be secured and contracts signed before applying for grants and spraying. Again, it is prudent to not sign anything without the cash in the bank first. So you can see, there are many potential impediments to timely or even treatment of our AIS. You can help our Healthy Lakes Committee control our AIS with your generous and timely donations.



Lake Improvement District (LID): As you know the BLCA and I see a LID as a reliable source for funding critical and expensive projects such as dealing with the above AIS. A LID, even though it is considered a form of government, is driven by the property owners within the boundaries. These owners meet once a year and approve projects. This includes how much the projects cost. If the majority doesn't think the project is worthwhile or costs too much it doesn't get done or it is scaled back.

If both the LID members and the County Board of Commissioners approve, the County makes an assessment on each property when it collects property taxes. Nobody has to beg for money. It's there after property taxes are collected and the projects the members approved have the necessary funding to be completed. If the LID is approved it will be nice to know ahead of time that starting around 2016 we will reliably be able to treat our AIS.

I am worried for our lakes in that the response to our request for signatures on our current LID petition is sluggish. There seems to be unfounded confidence that continued placement of the financial burden on the 16% -20% of the property owners who presently make donations for AIS will continue to finance AIS control. This is even after the discovery of EWM in our lakes.

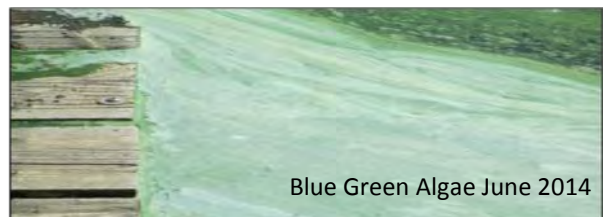
Some consider the LID assessment an additional tax and a symptom of a government that has gotten too large. Well, you do make your LID payment via your property tax statement but the amount is self-imposed by LID members at the annual meeting. Is it really the same as government gone wild?

Someone has circulated a conspiracy theory around Big Elk Lake. It is based on misquotes and wild speculation. It might be laughable, except it has people worried and has undermined

their faith and trust of the BLCA. Hopefully, they will reconsider their knee jerk reaction to what they read and sign our petition. Others have voiced strong objection to having to pay a fair share in expenses for projects that benefit them. Signing our petition could end "free riding" for projects approved by the LID membership.

Some even deny there is anything wrong with our lakes. The 2008 placement of the lakes on the MPCA Impaired Waters List is ignored. They consider the fact that the water quality in our lakes fluctuates with water temperature and ice and snow cover as cyclical which is then construed as self-healing and not a problem. Thus, the BLCA and its recommendations cannot be trusted. This is a shame because our lake waters are in big trouble. There are plenty of nutrients to stoke algae blooms and prolific weed growth. Our lakes have experienced spurts of toxic and smelly blue-green algae already. I don't recall this happening until a few years ago. It has even been around already this year.

Appearing this early is pretty unusual because the high water we have had lowers water temperature and the no wake ordinance has almost eliminated the turbidity caused primarily by watercraft propulsion units that cloud the water so more solar heat gets absorbed. This absorption heats up the water and with the abundant nutrients the algae blooms. This is usually associated with the heavy July 4th Holiday recreational traffic and warmer weather.



Signing the LID petition will move us to a position where we might be able to be more effective in improving water quality. I say we, because everyone around the lakes can help do something to make a difference, but a LID could put more effective options on the table.

Some fear being "taxed" out of their homes. A LID isn't a blank check to spend someone else's money. The Directors and the LID membership are spending their own money too. All LID property owners vote to decide what projects to do, how much they will spend and if necessary how they will finance it. All LID property owners have to pay their share. Since there will be many more paying for projects than the 16% who pay now, payments can be kept at reasonable rates and are ultimately regulated by you, a LID property owner. If it becomes necessary to complete a very expensive project it could be financed, spreading the payments out and keeping them smaller. Any project would need to be justified so LID property owners would vote in favor of it. Rejecting the LID will not provide relief for precarious personal finances.

The Lake Report



Briggs Lake Chain Association

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The Lake Report is published for the benefit of BLCA members and lake residents. Please submit articles and feedback by the 20th of the month for inclusion in the next issue. Email or snail mail copy to the Editor.

This 'n That

Please send news about BLCA members to **Marilyn Humble** so that a card may be sent for such things as illness or a death in the family. Call her at 743-2741 or email her at: imhumble@midco.net

For those of you with shoreline restoration projects, Sherburne County will come out and help answer your questions about maintenance, etc., free of charge!

EVENTS:

July 2-3 & 5: Brat Sale McDonalds Meats

July 5: Boat parades / Prizes awarded!!
Briggs/Rush/Julia; line up at 11:30 am on the Briggs side of Cedar Point channel to participate.

Parade begins at Noon

Big Elk; line up begins at 1:45 pm

Parade starts at 2:00 pm

Fireworks: Briggs Lake @ dusk

Flotillas (a potluck party on the water) 6:00pm

Tentative dates:

Sat. night July 26--Briggs Lake

Sat. night Aug. 23--Big Elk

Sat. night Sept. 6--Briggs Lake

President's Letter, cont'd:

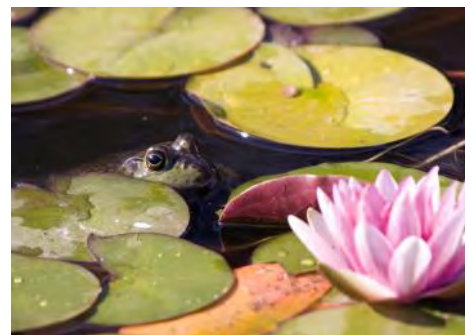
The Petition: The petition you are being asked to sign does not enact a LID, even if all property owners sign it. It is just the first step in the formation process. All it does is show the County Commissioners that there is a very strong interest to form a LID. If there are enough signatures on this petition, the process moves along with formal paperwork being completed. This paperwork is also called a petition but now requires no signatures. It is comprehensive and includes things like the opinion of the MN DNR on the merit of the LID. Our county commissioners will make the final decision after receiving this second formal petition and conducting a public hearing process. So, enough signatures on the petition you are presently being asked to sign just moves us closer to forming a LID, but if we cannot get enough signatures, the LID is dead.

The BLCA and the LID: LID or not, the BLCA will keep operating as usual. Volunteers will still beg for funds, write grants, and donate their time to keep doing the things they presently do to help fix our lakes. Social events will continue to be sponsored. Eventually something will happen; the 1932 Rush Lake Dam might need major fixing, or the lakes will be choked by current AIS, or another AIS is introduced. If the LID doesn't get formed, then property owners will look around for help and realize that fixing it will pretty much fall on their own shoulders and the BLCA. The DNR owns the Rush Lake Dam but takes no responsibility to maintain it. If there is funding help available it will be in the form of reimbursement so someone will have to front the money and sign contracts to get work done. If the necessary project is very expensive and payments need to spread over several years, someone will personally have to underwrite a loan or the project is delayed until the BLCA manages to collect the necessary funds. A LID would help in these cases because a LID can enter into long-term contracts and funding.

Please Sign The LID Petition (enclosed):

If we get enough signatures we can submit the LID for consideration by the County Board of Commissioners. If we are successful in getting them to approve a LID, we will have a process in place that can fund AIS control, water level stabilization and water quality.

Being able to adequately address these issues financially can help protect property values, benefit the recreational experience and health of lake users, and help preserve the legacy we leave for future generations.



'Learn how to see. Realize that everything is connected to everything else.' Leonardo DaVinci

DOUBLE FEATURE All are welcome!

July 12: BLCA Members Meeting at the Palmer Town Hall / 10:00 AM

First Feature: The Emerging, Unfortunate Story of Rush Lake's Eurasian Water Milfoil with Steve McComas; The Lake Detective. [Well known aquatic ecologist, radio personality and columnist.]

We hope you have already heard of, or read about, the latest challenge to our chain of lakes. Following our annual aquatic lake survey to determine the location of curly leaf pondweed [CLP], we were notified by the researcher of the study that he also found two locations of Eurasian water milfoil [EWM], a very aggressive and awful aquatic invasive species. As he is required to do, he notified the DNR of the new EWM finding. The DNR in turn did their own delineation study, which they are required to do. The unfortunate news: they found EWM in 5.4 acres on the south end of Rush Lake.

The BLCA board acted quickly and allocated up to \$5000 for an initial herbicide spraying, and a second application as needed. The BLCA also worked closely with Palmer Township supervisor Steve DeMeules and Sherburne County Water Patrol office Joe Shannon to mark the areas with buoys.

Join us and **Steve McComas; The Lake Detective** on July 12, 2014 at 10:00 AM at the Palmer Town Hall to learn more about this nasty, persistent aquatic invasive species. What we don't know: Whether Big Elk, Briggs, and Julia are also infested. What we hope to learn: What is EWM? What is the threat? How does it spread? What conditions does it like? How do we control it? What are the experiences from other lakes? What can we do? What help is available?

Second Feature: Put A LID On It! [Lake Improvement District]. A Structural Response to the Unfortunate Story of Rush Lake's Eurasian Water Milfoil [and other lake problems]

You have read it here before, and we repeat it again: We must have a more effective and efficient structure to deal with the chronic and mounting lake problems facing the Briggs Lake Chain, e.g. Eurasian water milfoil. The BLCA is proposing and supporting the establishment of **The Briggs Chain Lake Improvement District [LID]**. Yes, the LID is a unit of county government..... **BUT**.....any and all projects proposed by the LID directors [elected by property owners] **MUST** be approved by the membership [property owners] at the annual meeting the **YEAR BEFORE** the project is scheduled. This is the purest form of citizen participation and bottom up governance. No projects happen without the approval of the membership [property owners].

We hope we have your attention. Now we need your signatures on the petition. Come to the meeting and learn more about EWM, and how the proposed LID can work for you and our beautiful chain of lakes.

Submitted by: Kenzie Phelps

