

LITTLE ST. GERMAIN LAKE PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION DISTRICT

1624 SHIELDS ROAD
ST. GERMAIN, WI 54558

Elected Commissioners

Steve Sward, President
Erv Stiemke, Treasurer
Ted Ritter, Secretary

Appointed Commissioners

Lee Holthaus, Town of Saint Germain
Jay Verhulst, County of Vilas

MEETING MINUTES SEPTEMBER 1, 2002

The 2002 annual meeting was called to order by Steve Sward at 9:30 a.m. at the St. Germain Community Center with approximately 125 people in attendance. All five commissioners were present.

AGENDA

Motion: Richard Engstrom, second Larry Acker to approve agenda.
Discussion: None
Action: Motion passed by unanimous voice vote

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

Motion: Jane Powell, second Craig Weberg to approve 2001 annual meeting minutes.
Discussion: None
Action: Motion passed by unanimous voice vote

FINANCIAL REPORT presented by Erv Stiemke (as mailed in advance with meeting notice)

Motion: Richard Engstrom, second Jane Powell to approve financial report
Discussion: Robert Nussbaum raised several questions regarding the financial report which were answered by both Erv Stiemke and Steve Sward.
Action: Motion passed by voice vote with one vote in opposition.

FISHERIES COMMITTEE REPORT presented by Larry Acker

The financial report of the Little St. Germain Lake District account maintained by the Sayner/St. Germain Fish and Wildlife Club Lakes Improvement fund is as follows:

Lake district 2001 contribution:	\$2,000
Town matching funds based on lake acreage:	245
Town matching funds based on district's contribution:	1,238
Chamber of Commerce room tax contribution:	357
Total available to lake district:	\$3,840
Carryover balance from previous year	\$3,483
Purchase of 1,500 extended growth small mouth bass	-\$3,300
Balance on hand	\$4,023

Larry recommended that the long standing annual purchase of extended growth bass and walleye be suspended indefinitely while other lake issues are being worked on. The bass that have been planted over the past several years are doing well on their own and continued stocking does not seem to be necessary to sustain a healthy bass population. Walleyes are not doing well. There seems to be little gain in the overall walleye population after many years of aggressive stocking. It is the belief of our DNR Fisheries Biologist, Steve Gilbert, that there is little hope of improving the walleye population until the problem of lack of winter oxygen throughout much of the lake has been corrected for a period of

several consecutive years. Larry shared a letter he had received from Don Hiller in which Don provided a brief history of how the walleye stocking program began with the original lake association and how it now appears to be ineffective. Larry then recommended that the stocking program be suspended and that the Fisheries Committee be disband indefinitely. Larry also noted that the \$4,023 on hand in the Fish and Wildlife Club Lakes Improvement Fund would not be in jeopardy by suspending the stocking program as that money can be used for any project that is intended to help the lake.

Larry also suggested that all anglers on our lake keep small pan fish, "hammer handle" northern and all bullhead rather than releasing them back into the lake. Removing them from the lake will help alter the food chain by reducing the numbers of small fish available as forage and will also help improve the quality of the pan fish population.

Motion: Hank Kosanda, second John Knowlton that the Fisheries Committee be dissolved and that stocking be discontinued with the understanding that the committee could be reinstated at any future time if deemed appropriate.

Discussion: Several comments in support of the motion were made from the floor.

Action: Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

Ted Ritter stood to recognize Larry Acker's many years of dedicated service as a one person committee and thanked Larry for being instrumental in the development of the Fish and Wildlife Club Lakes Improvement Fund which will continue to provide future financial benefit to our lake as the matching program does not restrict the funds to be used for fish stocking. The audience responded with a round of applause for Larry's contributions.

WEED CONROL UPDATE presented by Ted Ritter and Erv Stiemke

Ted reported that only 25 property owners applied for the spring chemical treatment of weeds and that a total of less than 1,400 feet of frontage was treated in East, No Fish and South bays. Reaction to the treatment program varied amongst the participants. Reaction from the DNR following treatment was also mixed although the program was originally suggested by and ultimately approved by the DNR. It is unknown whether the program will be offered again in the future due to the relatively low number of applicants and the varied response from the participants and the DNR. Ted also reported that coordination of the program was far more involved than had been anticipated.

Erv reported that weeds were cut in late July. The volume of vegetation removed was 24 harvester loads or approximately 72 tons. Cutting was done primarily in Upper East bay and to a lesser degree in No Fish bay and lower portions of East bay. No cutting was done in South bay because the weeds had not grown tall enough in that part of the lake to make cutting effective at the time harvesting was done. The original harvesting time frame for our lake was established last year when it was not known that the cold spring weather this year would delay the growth of lake plants by several weeks. The harvesting contractor adjusted his schedule as much as possible to delay coming to St. Germain in hopes that the weeds would grow more but he was not able to wait until conditions were suitable for cutting in South bay.

Ted reported that the large masses of a weeds growing in various parts of East and No Fish bays in early summer have been identified as curly-leaf pondweed. This in a very invasive exotic plant that was apparently accidentally introduced to our lake several years ago but was not identified until earlier this summer. Approximate 50 acres of lake surface were clogged with curly-leaf mats with as much as 50 additional surrounding acres where curly-leaf was found growing but had not yet reached the surface. It is anticipated that this weed will continue to spread rapidly if aggressive efforts are not undertaken to control it.

A unique characteristic of curly-leaf is that it dies and completely disappears during mid to late July. Just before it dies, it releases turions, or seed pods, that float around the lake and gradually settle to the lake bottom where they germinate in late fall. The new plants grow under the ice while the native plants are dormant, thereby getting a head start in taking over areas not previously dominated by curly-leaf. The plants that die in July drop to the lake bottom and decay. The decaying plants release nutrients

which contribute to the algae bloom. The high volume of decaying plants also smother the native vegetation resulting in substantial loss of "good" weeds needed for fish habitat and collection of phosphorous. In short, everything about curly-leaf is bad news including the cost to eradicate or at least control it.

Estimates start at \$400 per acre and higher to attack curly-leaf with chemicals. Initial advice from one contractor is that 50 or more acres is too much to treat chemically, at least in one application, due to the potential of killing fish. Another option that is being considered is allowing the plants to reach full growth next summer and then cutting them just before they begin to die and release their seeds. The objective would be to remove the seed pods from the lake before they have a chance to spread. However, no evidence has yet been found that this technique works. The frustrating part of developing an attack plan is that we seem to be re-inventing the wheel in spite of the fact that curly-leaf pondweed has existed in most of the continental 48 states for as long as 100 years. While the DNR has been unable to provide advice on how to proceed, we believe that there are people in this country with valuable experience who can guide us in an effective treatment program. We are continuing our search and, therefore, will not know for perhaps several months yet what our plan of attack will be.

Whatever methods are employed, they will come at considerable expense. It seems likely that curly-leaf control costs for next year alone will exceed \$20,000. The DNR has informed us that although Wisconsin lakes are publicly owned, there is no public money available from the state for the detection and control of exotic plants and that the cost will have to be born by the lakefront property owners. Jay Verhulst, our newly assigned lake district commissioner representing us at the county level, reported that efforts are underway to begin creating state funds specifically for control of exotic species in our lakes. One likely program will be a new registration fee for boat trailers. Jay will also be initiating efforts in late September that could provide our lake district with grant money from the state Land Conservation Committee. He is also looking into possibilities for help from Vilas County. However, there is question if any of those efforts will generate assistance in time to fund our attack on curly-leaf next spring. In the meantime, Ted has been appearing before the St. Germain town board requesting that \$20,000 be put into the town's budget next year to assist our district in paying for this unanticipated expense. His argument has been that the value of our lake is an asset to the town as a whole and that all taxpayers in the town should help pay to rid the lake of this nuisance which, if left uncontrolled, will seriously impact property values. Ted encouraged all property owners to attend the town's budget hearing this fall to support the effort of having the town budget for this expense. Lee Holthaus encouraged everyone to write letters to the town board expressing their opinions about the use of town tax dollars to help keep our lakes healthy. Letters should be sent to:

Town of Saint Germain, P. O. Box 7, Saint Germain, WI 54558.

Discussion then shifted to the algae bloom that developed in South and West bays late this summer as well as the tremendous weed growth in South bay. Erv explained that some of the algae problem was due to unique weather conditions this summer and that several area lakes experienced severe algae growth. This is probably the explanation for the green water in West bay and that hopefully that part of the lake will not experience algae problems next year or for many years to come. The South bay situation, however, might have been enhanced by the curly-leaf problem in East bay. Ted explained that the flow of water through the lake passes through a funnel situation in the lower part of East bay and No Fish bay where there is normally fairly heavy weed growth which attracts and holds on to phosphorous. In effect, the weeds normally filter out much of the phosphorous preventing it from entering South bay. However, when the heavy mats of curly-leaf died down in July, they smothered many of the native weeds. By late summer there were very few weeds growing in the funnel area thereby allowing free flow of the phosphorous rich water out of East bay and into South bay resulting in a heavier than normal algae bloom in South bay. Ted acknowledged that his explanation is simply a theory that has not been proven. In any case, there is little that can be done to address algae specifically. Algae is the result of nutrients in the water and favorable weather and water conditions to support it's growth. It is unknown if the algae problem will be as severe next year. Winter aeration and weed control programs should help reduce algae in future years.

WINTER AERATION UPDATE Presented by Steve Sward

Installation of a two leg aeration system was completed last fall in upper East bay. The leg running out near the big island did an excellent job of keeping the water oxygenated throughout upper East bay and

received high praise from USGS. The leg running out toward the Muskellunge Creek inlet provided limited and disappointing benefits. Consideration is being given to some low cost enhancements that should make that leg more effective. In the meantime, the DNR has approved a cost sharing grant for a system to be installed in the northeast part of South bay this fall. It is expected that the system will provide oxygenation benefit to all of South bay.

RESOLUTION TO BORROW FUNDS Presented by Steve Sward

75% of the cost to install the South bay aeration system will be reimbursed by the DNR. However, the reimbursement cannot be applied for until the expenses have been paid. Therefore, it will be necessary to borrow money on a short term basis to pay for the installation expenses. The loan will be paid off immediately upon receipt of the reimbursement from the DNR.

Motion: Boyd Best, second John Knowlton authorizing the board to borrow money in an amount not to exceed the DNR portion of the cost sharing grant for the purpose of paying expenses associated with construction of the South bay aeration system until such time that DNR reimbursements have been received.

Discussion: None

Action: Motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

PHOSPHOROUS REMEDIATION PROJECT UPDATE Presented by Steve Sward

We are in the final year of having data gathered by USGS regarding the sources of phosphorous entering the lake and contributing to the annual algae bloom. The data will be submitted to Foth and Van Dyke later this year. It is expected that a formal recommendation of what we should or should not do to reduce the phosphorous loading will be available for review at the 2003 annual meeting.

RESULTS OF LEGAL OPINION REGARDING BY-LAWS Presented by Steve Sward

Following the action item of the 2001 annual meeting concerning whether it is appropriate to offer an opportunity for all district property owners to vote via a mailed ballot following annual meetings to either ratify or overturn the budgets and other action items decided upon at the annual meetings, an opinion has been obtained from an attorney with excellent credentials and many years of involvement with legislation pertaining to Wisconsin lake districts. The opinion is that the conduct of Wisconsin lake districts is governed by the statutes regardless of what the by-laws of a given district might provide for. Tax levying governmental organizations such as lake districts must conduct annual meetings in accordance with various statutory requirements. The results of properly conducted annual meetings are final and cannot be overturned by post meeting ballots. Therefore, the long standing practice of offering post annual meeting ballots to all property owners will no longer be conducted.

PROPOSED BUDGET Presented by Steve Sward (as mailed in advance with meeting notice)

Ted Ritter requested that the 2003 proposed operating expense be increased from \$4,000 to \$5,000 so that some of the lake buoys can be replaced and other hazard areas be marked, thereby increasing the total budget and tax levy to \$52,000. Steve Sward suggested that a provision be added to the budget that would allow the levy to be increased by \$20,000 to \$40,000 at the last minute if no other source of funding is found for the curly-leaf pondweed problem.

Motion: Ted Nelson, second John Knowlton to increase budget and tax levy to \$92,000 with the understanding that the actual levy be reduced by whatever amount of funding, up to \$40,000, can be obtained from other sources for the treatment of curly-leaf pondweed next year prior to the deadline for filing the tax levy certification.

Discussion: Most comments from the floor favored the idea of being certain money is available next summer for attacking curly-leaf by whatever method is deemed appropriate. Some people felt that adding \$40,000 to the levy would be too much but that \$20,000 would be appropriate. Steve responded that any money collected but not spent would be carried forward into the following year thereby reducing the levy for the following year.

Action: Motion passed by a hand vote of 40 in favor and 16 opposed.

ELECTION OF COMMISSIONER TO FILL EXPIRING TERM OF STEVE SWARD

Steve Sward commented that he felt no one should serve endlessly in the capacity of a commissioner and that it is in the best interest of the organization to have new people serve. However, upon being asked if he would continue in his capacity, Steve agreed to stay on for one more three year term but

absolutely no longer.

- Motion:** Kay Kenny, second Larry Acker that Steve Sward be elected to serve for another term
Discussion: No other nominations were brought forth and nominations were closed
Action: Steve Sward was re-elected to another three year term by unanimous voice vote.

PUBLIC CONCERNS

Craig Weberg suggested that the time has come for our district to consider owning and operating our own weed harvesting equipment since it is too difficult to work with a contractor who must schedule time a full year in advance. Effective weed control requires flexibility in scheduling and cutting at two or three critical times each year. Ted Ritter thanked Craig for his suggestion and agreed that the idea is worth looking into. Ted also requested that Craig or anyone else consider chairing a committee to look into this as none of the three elected commissioners have time to take on more projects. The weed control programs, aeration systems, water quality studies and now the curly-leaf pondweed issue are already requiring more time of Ted, Erv and Steve than any of them can afford. Taking on new projects without more volunteer help is not likely to happen. No further action was taken on Craig's suggestion.

Larry Acker suggested that a multi-organizational fund raising event be considered for the purpose of raising money to help offset the cost to control curly-leaf pondweed. Steve suggested that Larry could organize the event since he will no longer be chairing the Fisheries Committee. Larry agreed to look further into the idea and share his findings with the board.

A Forest Hills subdivision resident complained about the excessive activity, noise and boating violations coming from an adjacent property that current St. Germain zoning laws allow to be rented to tourists. The board advised that boating violations should be reported to DNR and county law enforcement officers and that matters pertaining to zoning issues be taken up with the town's zoning commission. Neither aspect of the complaint are pertinent to the lake district's authority or purpose.

Robert Nussbaum requested that the board provide more detail for future budgets and proposed tax levies. He also called for an audit of the district's financial records. No action was taken on the suggestion.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Ted Ritter, Secretary