

2018 Cochran Lake District Newsletter

President's Report by Scott Craven

As I write this in early April, there is still deep snow, thick ice, and frigid temperatures everywhere! The DNR "Winter Severity Index" is approaching the moderate range and could go even higher. Not good news for deer, turkeys, as well as other wildlife species. It could be May before we see open water!

Hopefully, when the lake does open, we will not see dead fish along the shoreline. The dissolved oxygen levels in the lake seemed dangerously low during late winter raising concern about a "winter kill" in the lake. Long-time residents seem to think we have had similar conditions before with no negative impacts. Time will tell.

The annual meeting of the Cochran Lake Management District will be held on **Saturday, May 26 at 8 am at the Pike Lake fire station.** Please try to attend. If you would like to bring a breakfast snack, please let Mary Kaminski know and thank you in advance. The minutes of last year's meeting and the agenda for this

year's meeting are included in this newsletter.

We need more people willing to help our organization..... My term as President of the CLMD ends at the annual meeting, May 26, 2018! We clearly need someone to lead the group for the next 3-year term. It would be ideal if we can have one or two candidates identified before the annual meeting which would avoid the awkward silence and staring at the floor when we begin discussing this issue. If you have any interest, please feel free to call me and I will answer questions and describe what the responsibilities and duties are of the president's position.

The Water Quality Committee created at last year's meeting has been very active. These actions are sent to you via an email newsletter thanks to Maggie Jungwirth who handles the committee's communications. I hope you find it useful and informative. PLEASE review the material when you see it in your "inbox".

You may receive this year's newsletter via email as well as US Mail. Obviously emailing the newsletter reduces our costs significantly.

LoonWatch- Protecting The Common Loon by Pat Schwai

LoonWatch is a program sponsored by Northland College located in Ashland, WI. The program is part of the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute designed to protect common loons and their aquatic habitats through education, monitoring, and research. As a volunteer Loon Ranger, I provide annual data to Loon Watch. In addition to the Spring arrival and Fall departure dates, I also collect data about loon nesting, hatch dates, nest loss, territorial disputes and other events. In order to capture this data, I need your input. Your observations are the best source of data since I cannot be on the water 24/7. If you observe any significant activity, please let me know as soon as possible by calling (715)762-3199 or emailing me pschwai@gmail.com.

In addition to reporting loon activity, LoonWatch requests that we all practice good loon "etiquette." In particular:

- Watch loons from at least 200 feet away. Get a powerful lens for your camera, use binoculars or a spotting scope, and never explore a loon nest site. Close encounters can be deadly for swimming and nesting loons.
- Be an ethical angler. Never fish or cast near loon nests or swimming loons, properly dispose of extra bait and trash, and pick up monofilament line.
- Keep dogs and cats away from loons and nests. Pets disturb nesting loons and can destroy loon eggs.
- Be a responsible boater. Never chase loons or run motorboats over areas where loons have been seen. Loons and loon chicks have died from being hit by boats and propellers. Boat wakes and waves may also wash eggs off of nests.

If we follow these few recommendations, we will continue to enjoy their haunting calls and increase our chances for loon chicks while supporting the LoonWatch program. For those of you that were residents in 2014, remember the fun it was to watch that little chick hitchhike a ride on mom's back, learn how to fish, and finally fly off. Let's hope we can replicate this experience this year after 3 summers with no successful nesting. High water, harassment by unmated loons, and predators have been problems

for several years. We shall see what this season brings.

Adopt A Road by Ray Schave

When the snow finally melts, and we have some resemblance of spring, I will make a request for Cochran Lake District volunteers to help clean up our 8.5 miles of local roads that we sponsor through the Adopt A Road program.

Thanks to the following members who participated in last year's spring and fall clean-up.

Ray & Diane Korinek
Dan & Jane Moldenhauer
Mark & Myra Le Grand
Warren Johnson & Sandy Dickinson
Ev & Sue Houkom
Rick & Pat Schwai
Sig & Mary Kaminski
Ray & Judy Schave

If anyone would like to participate, please contact Ray Schave. I have plastic bags and vests for those who would like them. In between times, to keep our roads clean and attractive, if you see some litter please stop and pick it up.

Fishing Contest 2018 by Sig Kaminski

Well it's another year. This year the fishing contest will be on ? **NEED YOUR INPUT. JULY**

4th is on a Wednesday. Do you want the contest day to be on **Saturday the 30th of JUNE or Wed. JULY 4th or Saturday the 7th of JULY**. E-mail or call ASAP. Your input will help to set the date at the **May** meeting. The fishing time will stay the same; fishing from 7am to 10am. Registration of fish at Sig and Mary's place from 10:00 to 10:30am, Lot #1 N16496 Springstead Rd. phone # 715-762-1823 or 715-661-3816. Remember this is a catch and release tournament and no live bait being used.

The cost is still \$10.00 per person. That covers a door prize and lunch. Lunch starts at 11:00 am. (Brats, hot dogs, and burgers) This is for lake residents and guests only. If you want to bring something to pass, please contact Mary. Soda, and water will be provided. You can bring your own alcoholic beverages if you want. You can E-mail us at marynsig@gmail.com. You do not have to fish to come to this event. Everyone is welcome to come for lunch and a door prize. Your cost is \$10.00 per person. It's a fun time and a great time to talk. Last year we had 59 people, 2016 we had 71, 2015 we had 56. It's a great time to meet new people on the lake. But, **please – please**, try to let us know at least the week before, so we can cover the prizes and food needed.

Trophy's will be given for the following:
Largest bass, **Largest** pan fish, **Largest** Northern, **Largest** Walleye.

Please take a picture of your fish to share at lunch. And, take other pictures, they don't all have to be of fish, just any great picture.

Any questions call Sig @ 715-661-3816 or 715-762-1823

Good Advice

Ted Rulseh, a writer from Harshaw, published a column in the Lakeland Times in February. He wrote about the importance of lake stewardship and suggested that for those of us lucky enough to live on a lake, it is our job to help keep the water clean, the ecosystem healthy, and the scenery beautiful. To this end, he offered a list of 10 things we can all do "to protect the lakes we love" – like Cochran – "and preserve "Northwoods magic". Here are his suggestions- reprinted with permission from the Lakeland Times and Ted Rulseh.

1. **Control Runoff**

When we build homes on our lakeshores, we create hard surfaces that cause less rain water to soak into the soil and more to run off – potentially carry sediment, pollutants, and algae-feeding nutrients into the lake. We should check our properties for runoff sources and then consider diversions, or an absorbent feature like a strategically placed rain garden. If developing a new property, the plan should include limiting hard surfaces and directing runoff away from the lake.

2. **Have a natural shoreline**

We should think of our property as viewed from the water – as part of scenic vista of trees and native plants. Limit the cutting of trees and shrubs, especially near the water. At the minimum, provide a buffer of vegetation extending back 30 feet or more from the shoreline. We can simply stop mowing that area and let nature do its work, or plant native shrubs and flowers to make the buffer more beautiful.

3. **Take care of the septic system**

A malfunctioning septic system can be a source of serious pollution. Work with a reputable contractor to have the tank pumped every three years and the system's integrity checked periodically. If the tank has a filter, have it cleaned every six to 12 months.

4. **Help fight invasive species**

Observe laws governing the handling and transporting of fish and minnows and other bait. Take time to learn about aquatic invasive species prevention.

5. **Respect the fishery**

The fact we're allowed to keep three fish of this species, five of that one, or 25 of another, doesn't mean we should. Be conservative. Practice catch-and-release.

6. **Respect wildlife**

Observe from a distance – use binoculars for close looks. For fishing, consider replacing poisonous lead sinkers and jigs with non-toxic alternatives.

7. **Limit light pollution**

A starlit night sky is a big part of Northwoods charm. Turn off unnecessary lights, especially at the lakefront and on the pier. Consider fixtures with reflectors which direct light downward. We can all do our part to promote quality star-gazing.

8. **Pick up junk**

A good lake steward would never litter. A great lake steward goes further, removing any bottles, cans, paper, and other trash encountered along the shore or in the water – if it can be done safely. It can be thought of as littering in reverse.

9. **Keep it quiet**

Avoid running noisy equipment in the morning or evening. That applies to motor boats and personal watercraft. There is nothing wrong with pleasure boating but respect the quiet times and the neighbors who prefer silent water activities.

10. **Be active in the association**

A lake association (or lake district, or a friends group) can be a powerful advocate for lake protection. Don't just join and pay dues. Go to the meetings. Volunteer as an officer or director. Take part in volunteer lake betterment projects.

**Cochran Lake
Fishery
By Scott Craven**

Most of us on the lake enjoy the good fishing we have. We allocated Lake District funds to stock walleyes. We are working hard to protect water quality. And --- we have promoted catch and release fishing whenever possible.

But is there a sound biological basis for releasing fish, or is the supply so great that regular fish fries will not reduce the population? To answer that question, I spoke several times with DNR fish managers Jeff Scheirer (Price County) and John Kubisiak (Oneida County) to get a feel for how many fish are really in Cochran Lake. We have not done any shocking surveys for several years and no walleyes have been stocked in the past 2 years, but we have data prior to 2016 and, according to the fish managers, Cochran can be compared to many other lakes in the area.

Here is the fish managers' assessment of the 2 most popular fish species in the lake. Jeff concluded that Cochran has a "moderately high" density of adult bass, that is fish greater than 8 inches. This translates to about 13 adult bass (>8 inches) per acre or perhaps 1300+ fish in the entire lake (not considering that there is competition among the fish and the lake is not uniform habitat). This may seem like a lot but consider the age/growth data for bass. In northern Wisconsin, a 3-year-old bass averages 8-9 inches, 10.5 inches at age 4, up to 16.2 inches at age 9. The 20-inch bass we

catch occasionally are likely 12-15 years old! As fish manager John Kubisiak told me: "when I fished with my kids at age 9 or 10, I told them they could not kill a fish older than they were"! Given the age distribution for bass in the Northwoods, it seems unlikely there are more than a couple dozen 20-inch bass in our lake. Furthermore, growth rates and numbers are affected by other species present which means the walleyes, pike, and bass all share the same food resources. John agreed with Jeff's determination of a moderately high bass population, but went on to say that in most of the high bass population lakes he manages, the majority of the fish are 10-14-inches long.

What about walleyes? An average adult walleye population (sexually mature fish and all fish over 15-inches) for lakes supported by natural reproduction is about 3.5 adults per acre, 6 or 7 is quite high and such a population would be dominated by 12-13-inch male fish. For a stocked population, the managers consider 2 adult fish/acre a good number. Cochran has a few large walleyes suggesting some limited reproduction and we stocked for 3 years. However, it appears that the best we can hope for in our lake would be 200+/- adult fish.

What does all this mean? You can interpret the information as you wish. My own interpretation is that some legal walleyes have been and will be caught. What is done with them then is up to the

angler. A deeply hooked or injured fish should be eaten and enjoyed. Since one of the goals of the walleye stocking was to improve panfish size and the jury is still out on that, perhaps most walleyes will be returned to the lake. It is all a numbers game really. If the managers are correct, and we have 200 or so adult walleyes, only 3 fish "in the pot" for each residence and they will be gone quickly.

The same holds true for the big old bass – there really are not very many of them!

This information is not meant to be discouraging. Those big old bass have probably been caught many times and may be caught many more times. The really good news is that there are lots of bluegills, crappies, and what seems to be a growing perch population in the lake. Those panfish can provide plenty of action and plenty of fillets for a fish fry. And the northern pike are sort of a fun bonus; fun to catch and pretty good eating if you can handle the bones.

We have a great fishery. Enjoy it. If we work together, we can maintain it for many years.

Good Fishing!

Scott Craven, President CLMD