Prairie Lake Improvement Association

 Meeting Notes September 6, 2015

 Fine Lakes Town Hall

**Attendance** was 32. **Memberships** to date are 99 (later 100).

Secretary, Bob Sanft reported the **minutes** of the May 24, 2015 meeting.

Treasurer, Sandy Fontaine reported the **financial status**. Income of $948 and expenses of $398 resulted in a balance of $3324.

**Website Domain Registration** (Lunarpages Hosting/Weebly) will be changed from annual renewal ($27.90/yr) to 10 year renewal ($18.90/yr) depending on Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project reimbursement issues.

Ken Hallberg displayed **water quality/clarity** trends and current results for Prairie Lake, Hasty Brook and Prairie River. All readings were good and about the same as last year and about the best that can be expected for Prairie Lake due to watershed characteristics.

Ken also reported on **Loon activity**. There was 1 hatch on Ken’s nest, 1 hatch on the small Island and unknown on the grass island nest. One young Loon died in August due to fishing line tangled around it’s beak. The audience reported seeing 2 young Loon chicks recently.

Kelli Rae Theiss reported **water level** increases of 0.8 feet from mid-May to Labor Day. (Some of the August-September increases may be attributed to the beaver dam at the Prairie River outlet.) (Kelli Rae also has a display of her paintings at the U/M Bell Museum. Most of the nature subjects are from the Prairie Lake area.)

**Beaver management** discussion continued from last spring’s meeting. Beavers have dammed the outlet weir and cut some shore land trees. Shore land trees can be protected with 12 gauge fence. After much discussion, the membership decided to hire Wayne Thom of Thom’s Nuisance Wildlife Control, 173 Prairie Lake Road, Wright, MN 55798, 218-644-3593; cell 218-390-7201. Wayne will trap Prairie Lake beavers up to a total cost of $500 beginning at the outlet weir dam and continuing to other sites on the lake. Beaver control will cost $40 per location set-up and $40 per beaver. Wayne will obtain permission from private land owners and cause the weir beaver dam to be opened up. The program will be discussed again next spring.

**Buoys** at shallow areas will be placed (early May) and removed (late September/early October) by individual volunteers. Four groups have signed-up for individual buoys and more will be recruited.( Ed & Anne Lundstrom, Tom & Renee Sheetz, Kris & Cheryl Beck, and Mike Newman& Dave Johnson)

MPCA may have completed **water quality testing** this summer.

DNR has recently completed sampling/netting for their **5 year fish assessment**. The report may be available next spring.

DNR is proposing changes to the **statewide regulations for Northern Pike**. Three areas or zones will have different regulations appropriate for the characteristics of Northerns in each zone rather than lake by lake regulations.

 The **Northeast zone** (east of highway 53) generally has low numbers of pike at relatively large sizes growing slowly and under limited fishing pressure. The proposal is to limit catches to 2 Northerns under 30” (none over 30”).

 **Southern MN** zone (generally south of the Minnesota River) has low numbers of Northerns growing fast under high fishing pressure and harvest rates. The proposal would allow 2 Northerns over 24’’ while increasing stocking of Northerns.

 The **North-Central** zone has too many Northerns growing slowly under high fishing pressure and high harvest of medium and large Northerns. The proposal would allow a total catch limit of 10 Northerns with a protected slot of 22”-26” and only 2 over 26”.

**Special Regulations** currently in place would remain **(Prairie Lake**) unless evaluation dictates that they be modified or dropped.

**Spearing regulations** will also be affected.

Although there was limited interest of the meeting attendees, there was general consensus that Prairie Lake fishing should allow 1 or 2 Northerns under 30” and maintain a limit 1 large Northern, maybe increasing the large limit to 36” or 40”. Prairie Lake appears to be more like the lakes in the Northeast zone. Attendees also recognize that changes would not be made until this year’s fish assessment was evaluated and would like to be informed before the **Special Regulation** is continued or changed. **Comments** will be sent to the DNR.

Association leadership will inquire about the plans for Co Rd. 51 or the adequacy of the **Prairie River culvert under Co. Rd 51.**

Last spring’s membership registration included a request for **comments**. Nine members offered comments that were summarized and distributed at the meeting. Topics included geese, large snails, beaver dams, Northern Pike limit on other game fish, promotion of peaceful evenings (music, fireworks, jet ski), July 4 pontoon parade, fun fund raisers, cost of buoys and placement, good memories and map corrections.

**Next Meeting**: Memorial Weekend Sunday

Notes by Merritt Linzie