# PRAIRIE LAKE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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**May 2013**

Prairie Lake Improvement Association priorities support **responsible lake use, water quality and shore land management.**

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**Prairie Lake Improvement Association Meetings**

**Memorial Day Weekend**

**&**

**Labor Day Weekend**

**Sunday, 1:30 PM**

**Fine Lakes Town Hall**

**WANTED:** person/s to place, remove and maintain about eight **BUOYS** near shallow areas in **PRAIRIE LAKE.** Terms negotiable. **PLEASE** contact **Roger Hill at 218-476-2704**

**Eric Collman** has been managing the buoys for almost 20 years and now wants some relief.

THANKS to Eric for doing such a great job. All the lake users really appreciate this service.

We may also need some shore land space to store the buoys during the off season.

**JOIN the Prairie Lake Improvement Association NOW!**

Make **$10** checks payable to **Prairie Lake Improvement Association** and send to**:**

**Sandy Fontaine, Treasurer**

**3372 Stark Junction Road**

**Duluth, MN 55810**

**Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Home Phone\*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Email\*\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\* Please list if you want this information included in the Prairie Lake Directory.**

**JOIN and receive an updated directory of all cabin owner names, address, phone and their home address and phone!**

**THANKS to 65** out of **167** owners that joined in 2012

**VISIT** the **Prairie Lake** web site at[**http://www.prairielake.org**](http://www.prairielake.org)**. Corinne Moncur** is the siteeditor

at **moncur@frontier.net**.

**BIG SANDY AREA LAKES WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PROJECT** (BSALWMP)

BSALWMP’s main purpose is to reduce phosphorous and suspended solids in 49 lakes and 5 rivers in the 413 square mile watershed that drains to the Mississippi River. Programs include information, education, technical assistance, citizen water quality monitoring, shore land revegetation and protection, conservation easements and improved agricultural practices.

Best management practices are encouraged:

* Shore land revegetation
* Lakeshore protection – erosion & runoff control
* Rain Gardens and rain barrels
* Forest Stewardship Plans
* Conservation Easements

MCNA02446_0000[1]**Information and education** is also an important activity:

* Watershed wide newsletters
* Lakeshore Homeowners Guide
* Big Sandy Water Institute
* Lake association newsletters
* Participation in information fairs
* Small neighborhood meetings

**Compliance with state and local regulations** are reviewed:

* Special permits ▪ Comprehensive Plans

**Technical and Financial assistance is available for revegetation of shorelines with native trees, shrubs, and/or flowering plants. For more information or assistance, call Aitkin County SWCD at 218-927-6565.**

Barb Dahl is the current Chair of the watershed. Watershed meetings are usually held the second Wednesday of the month. The location varies so call 218-927-6565 for times and place.

***FINE LAKES TOWNSHIP*** Supervisors are Bill Dawson, Bill Kinnear and Bonnie Hall

***PUBLIC LANDING*** is under Moose Lake DNR management: 218-485-5410.

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**St. Louis Co. Rd 51 @ Outlet June 21, 2012 flooded cabins**

More pictures are at the web site: http://www.prairielake.org

**HIGH WATER LEVELS** exceeded previous records. Frequent rains in late May raised the lake level to match the previous high water mark of 1274.5 feet last recorded on May 7, 1938. About 9 inches of rain on June 20 & 21 raised the level of Prairie Lake 4’10” in 2 days to a new high water level that approaches 1278 feet. The June high water damaged many cabins, shore land sheds and equipment. Dock boards, wood and boats were floating across Prairie Lake. The heavy June rains washed out roads, driveways and beaver dams in Hasty Brook that caused the lowering of Blackwood Lake. DNR water level records for Prairie Lake begin in 1937 and are quite frequent through 1946. Records from 1947 through 1992 are sparse. Good records are available since 1993 thanks to frequent measurements currently by Roger Hill.

The “ordinary high water” level is 1272.8 feet. The lowest recorded level is 1270.64 on September 9, 2003. Water levels usually drop about 18” between May and August.

During periods of high water, boaters should slow down so that their wake does not erode shore land or cause further damage..

**Water quality testing** will resume again this year with the help of Ken Hallberg. Ken reported that 2012 Secci Disk water clarity readings in Prairie Lake were about 2 feet compared with previous years of about 5 to 6 1/2 feet due to sediment introduced during the flooding event. Total Phosphorus ranged from 28 to 54 and averaged 42 which is high.

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***LOON*** monitoring is regularly supported through an annual contribution to DNR non-game wildlife program.  **Please** don’t use your boat or jet ski to chase or bother Loons. **Do not** go within 100 feet of nesting Loons.

**Forest Tent Caterpillar** populations peak every 10-16 years in Minnesota. Based on past DNR surveys, it looks like these populations could be building towards a 2014 or 2015 peak. During the summer of 2012, 274,000 acres of defoliation were mapped. Past peaks in 1990 and 2001 identified 4 & 8 million acres defoliated by forest tent caterpillars.

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| --- | --- |
| **THANK** you to Kelli Rae Theiss  for painting and donating this  sign at the public landing to remind boaters to avoid transporting aquatic invasive species. |  |

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**People and Businesses** who install or remove water recreation equipment (boats, docks, boat lifts, etc.) must be trained, certified and permitted by the DNR.

**Boat decal** is no longer required. **Trailer decal** required in 2015 after the owner passes an online education course.

Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment and remove plants, zebra mussels and mud before leaving water access.

* **Drain** water from bait buckets, live well, bilge, transom and motor before leaving
* **Dispose** of unwanted live bait and worms in the trash
* **Spray/wash** your boat, trailer and equipment with high pressure or hot water before going to other waters, or
* **Dry** everything for at least 5 days.

**Rain gardens** are shallow depressions (6-9 inches) that collect storm water from roofs and driveways. The size of the rain garden should be 10% of the area of the contributing water. The rain garden will infiltrate, filter, evaporate and transpire the runoff. Rain gardens are typically planted with a diverse mix of native flowers, grasses, shrubs and trees.

The Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed offers design and financial assistance. For information or assistance contact: Janet Smude, 130 Southgate Drive, Aitkin, MN 56431, (218) 927-6565)

**Tamarack Trees**, once the most abundant tree in the state, have declined more than any other species due to exotic and native insects, logging, agriculture and settlement. The tamarack resource has been undergoing major mortality for the past 10 years due to eastern larch beetles. The DNR has established a diverse public-private team to report tamarack conditions and recommendations.

According to **Richard Rezanka**, DNR Invasive Species Specialist, Grand Rapids, MN,

**Chinese Mystery Snails** are a nuisance in Prairie and many other lakes throughout Minnesota. There is little published scientific literature describing ecological troubles caused by these snails. A frequent complaint is from mass die-offs and the resultant piles of foul smelling dead snails that wash ashore. Unfortunately, there are no selective control methods available for mystery snails. There are chemicals and heavy metals that will effectively kill ALL snails but these chemicals are regulated, costly and must be applied by permit only.

The 2012 season was good for snails throughout the state. Populations seemed to be at or near peak levels. The good news is that these snail populations go through cycles and their numbers fall off after peak seasons.

**MN Lakes & Rivers Advocates** (formerly MSRPO) monitors state legislative proposals working for tax fairness, control of Aquatic Invasive Species and strong incentives for shore land and forest habitat protection. Current topics of interest are:

* Cabins are included in the state business property tax and not subject to school district “excess operating tax levies”. This provides some relief for cabins.
* The previously proposed “blue waters” legislation is again supported to protect shore land through a property tax incentive.
* The updated DNR Shore Land Rules not accepted by Governor Pawlenty needs new legislation to restart the rules process. MN L & R A members are split on this issue: 1/3 support, 1/3 oppose and 1/3 don’t know what it’s about. About 80% of variances are approved and existing conditions are usually “grandfathered”.
* Jeff Forester, Executive Director was appointed to a new Aquatic Invasive Species Advisory Committee by the DNR Commissioner. The goal is to develop and enforce a statewide plan to slow and stop the spread of aquatic invasive species like zebra mussels.
* U of M has a recent AIS Research Center through a $8 million Legacy grant that is initially focusing on Asian Carp and looking to start on zebra mussels.

Members are requested to respond to legislative alerts and contact their legislators via email or better yet personal letter.

**Aquatic plants** growing in lakes are protected by laws and regulations. Permits from DNR Fisheries are required before altering shore lines. Landowners do not need a permit to remove some plants to gain reasonable access to the lake. **Without a permit, shore land owners may:**Cut or pull submerged vegetation in a limited area (not more than 2500 square feet and extending not more than 50 feet along the shore or half the owner’s frontage, whichever is less. A boat channel up to 15 feet wide may also be maintained.)

* Cut or pull floating-leaf vegetation (never control yellow lotus) to maintain a boat channel up to 15 feet wide as long as the channel remains in the same location from year to year.
* All cut or pulled vegetation must be removed from the lake immediately.

**FISHING --** Information from Dan Wilfond, DNR Fisheries Specialist, Duluth, MN

**Tullibee** assessment with vertical gillnets will be conducted the week of **June 24, 2013**.This a new assessment of cold water fish.

**Northern Pike** special regulation (only one 30” or over) is monitored by an ice-out trap netting assessment every third year. The next assessment is in 2015.

Northern pike do not impact the walleye population in a significant manner. Northern pike prefer soft-rayed fishes when available. Prairie Lake has a decent population of both white sucker and shorthead redhorse that fit this preference. On occasion, a walleye may be consumed by a northern pike but it’s generally not a significant portion that may affect the overall walleye population. Environmental conditions following walleye fry stocking or angler harvest play a much greater role in determining the success of a walleye year-class. In addition, northern pike are not in great abundance in Prairie Lake. The latest gillnet catches in 2010 for northern pike were about 2.2 per lift, which is below the 50% quartile for lakes of similar type.

Winter darkhouse spearers must adhere to the northern pike special regulation (only one 30” or larger).

**Walleye** spawning may improve with the June 2012 high water blow out of the beaver dams in Hasty Brook. However, the beavers may rebuild their dams. Walleye require firm substrate of sand or gravel for successful spawning. Northern pike prefer flooded vegetation for ideal spawning habitat.

Walleye size limits (slot limits) have been a resourceful management option in many bodies of water across the United States. However, before such regulations are put in place, the three dynamics of a fishery (habitat, fish and human user) must be evaluated to determine the appropriate action. Casual application of size limits to alter fish population dynamic may range from devastating to totally insignificant if the proper biological and social data is not collected prior to implementation. Walleye harvest and fishing pressure estimates are possibly the most important pieces of data needed by fisheries managers when considering new harvest regulations. Currently, the DNR has no estimate of walleye fishing pressure or harvest for Prairie Lake. This information could be obtained by a creel survey which is quite costly. DNR Fisheries does not currently have much extra money for creel surveys at this time. Information gained from a creel survey would provide data that allows use of models to predict what will happen to walleye size structure given different slot or size limits.

**LAKE CONTOUR MAPPING --** updates may be requested from private providers of lake maps through their web sites. The more requests, the more likely to get attention. **Lakemap.com/requestalake.asp** or **Navionics.com/LakeCatalogFavoriteLakes.asp**

**LEAD FREE** fishing tackle are strongly encouraged to avoid lead poisoning of loons, eagles and other wildlife.

**Prairie Lake Improvement Association Officiers and Directors**

**President:** Merritt Linzie (2013), **Vice-President:** Roger Hill (2013),

**Treasurer:** Sandy Fontaine (2013) ,**Secretary:** Bob Sanft (2013),

**Directors:** Roger Miller (2013), Bob Stemwedel (2014), Ken Hallberg (2015)

**Elections** are held at the Memorial Weekend meeting. Participation is encouraged.

* **Water Quality** monitoring and reporting
* Placement of **buoys** at most shallow areas
* **Walleye stocking** every other year
* **Directory** of property owners and their home address
* Participation in the **Big Sandy Area Lakes Watershed Management Project**
* **Public meetings** twice each year on Memorial Day weekend and Labor day weekend
* **Weed cutters** for use by cabin owners
* Membership in **“MN Lakes & Rivers Advocates”.**