



Letter from your President - Kit Ferber

Wow, has it ever been an eventful year! It seems like it was only a few months ago when the last newsletter came out and here we are again, reaching out to each and every one of you that love and cherish our piece of paradise on Big Fish Lake. We are doing something a little different to try and save costs for the association and that is to now send the annual newsletter out via email through our Constant Contact service. When we have these printed and mailed out, it costs the association over \$200 each time! Our goal is to be more environmentally friendly by not using so much paper, thus, for those of you who have an email with us, you will get this newsletter and all future communications through the internet. IF you DON'T have an email listed with us, you will get this newsletter through the Post Office. Please let me know if we we should have an email for you and we can change that right away.

In January of this year, the Big Fish Lake Association Board members kicked off our Legacy Campaign in order to raise more funds to help combat Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Even though we have Zebra Mussels, we have bigger threats in Starry Stonewort, also known as the "Lake Killer" and Eurasian Milfoil since it is now in our neighboring lakes. These plants have caused catastrophic damage so we need to have funds to deal immediately with these if or when they come to our lake to survey the lake regularly, continue to have the maximum amount of boat inspections and to perform water testing diligently.

If we were to get either one of these AIS, we would need at least \$100,000 to contain these plants and try to eradicate them. With close monitoring we hope to catch this threat before it becomes a large, uncontrollable situation like what Lake Koronis is now going through. By creating our own "emergency fund" we can continue to be more aggressive partners against this fight. Board members will be calling you to help and we hope that you will see the importance of this challenge facing us and the future of our lake.

Annual BFLA Meeting - Saturday, June 22, 2019, 8:30 am at Collegetown Township Hall

The Annual BFLA Annual meeting will be held a little later this year due to scheduling conflict with another association. Part of the agenda will be the election of two new members. Nina Steil is stepping down and Allen Schmitz is willing to step aside for a new member if you're interested. It is for a two-year term and we meet about once a month in the spring, fall and winter. We have a strong 10-person Board with a legal advisor. Please contact Kit (320-249-4800) if you are interested in joining our team.

We will also have representatives from the Stearns County Water Patrol Department. Please come to give them your input and answer questions or concerns that you have.

There will be an AIS hands-on training event to help you recognize possible infestations on your shoreline or when you are out boating. We need you to be our eyes to help us catch a possible AIS sighting so that we can hopefully deal with it as soon as we can. We help you learn about identifying Starry Stonewort and Eurasian Milfoil which is very easily confused with our native species Northern Milfoil. Help be detectors for the future of our lake!

Josh Hirschfeld will be doing a short presentation on our new Legacy Campaign Fund Drive that was launched this year. He will show a wonderful four-minute video about Big Fish Lake that he put together. It is well worth it to come and see it.

Here's Some Fun Information:

Matt Peters has been a very instrumental part of the BFLA Board for many, many years and when he was going through some of his old records he found a very interesting bit of information. The original association was apparently started as the Big Fish Lake Sportsmen Club around September of 1959. We will soon be putting a list of the original members on our website along with some old pictures that we have acquired. Enjoy looking back on some of the history of our lake. It

is so much fun to see how this all started. The Club back then also included nearby Big Watab and Long Lake. Annual dues were \$1 and Life Memberships were \$20. The officers at that time were Rod Norberg, Roy Lundeen, Tim Rothstein, Al Wengert, Donald Gretsche and Elmer Eisenschenk. Their purpose when they started was "principally in the removal of rough fish, maintenance of water levels, stocking with game fish, prevention of poaching and general betterment of the lakes for fishing."

Zebra Mussels - by Ted Ruzanic & Chris Wenner

In October 2018 an independent contractor was engaged to assess Big Fish Lake for invasive species. Starry Stonewort was not detected. However, nineteen adult Zebra Mussels were detected in two distinct shoreline locations - near the public access and an area due southeast of the access. The independent contractor, Steve McComas, owner of Blue Water Science, performed the search and assessment which yielded recommendations for our lake association. After thoughtful study and information gathering, the assessment and recommendation provided was that the Zebra Mussels in Big Fish Lake would **not** respond to any of the indicated treatments available due to the spread of the mussels throughout the north bay. Consultation with experts at the MN DNR, Stearns County Environmental Services and the University of MN have unfortunately agreed with the consultant's recommendation. There are currently no treatments available for Zebra Mussels with the age and distribution of those seen on Big Fish Lake. Therefore, next steps will be small scale attempts at limiting mussels along shoreline and high use areas. Steve's report will be put on the website soon for all of you to view.

"Find Your Mussels" Day - Saturday, July 13th, 2019

One of the recommendations told to us by Steve McComas, an Aquatic Biologist, was to make a little tool that **may** help find out IF you have Zebra Mussels in your area. He said to buy a 2" wide by 2' long white PVC pipe, drill a hole in it and hang it on the end of your dock. It is NOT a guarantee but if you do see some, then we need to record that data and add it to our research logs. On Saturday, July 13th, the Board members would like to conduct a "Find Your Mussels" Day to help us search your lake shore including looking four feet out beyond your shoreline. Zebra Mussels can latch onto your tires and poles on your docks or onto sticks and pop cans in the water. They will also cling on top of rocks and under rocks. Steve said if you want to help the lake,

pull these mussels out and put them in the garbage. Hand pulling will help deter the infestation. It will not get rid of them but it will help. We will help you learn how to recognize them at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, June 22nd which will be held at the Colledgeville Township Hall. Steve told us upon discovery of the Zebra Mussels, that we have the **lesser of the three evils** since Starry Stonewort has been dubbed the "Lake Killer" and Eurasian Milfoil which can be just as devastating causing thick mats of algae and can prevent boats to go through water.

****Remember to make sure that your dock and lift installer are AIS certified. If they are coming from another lake such as Grand Lake and/or Lake Koronis, make sure that they wash all of their equipment so they are not bringing in Starry Stonewort or Eurasian Milfoil into your shore! Be assertive for your lake and ask! Thank you!**

Stearns County AIS Committee Update - Kit Ferber

For over a year now the Stearns County AIS Committee have been working diligently to have a better communication between our third party boat inspectors (LAMB SERVICES) and those launching their boats in to Big Fish Lake. Len, owner of LAMB Services, have met with us time and time again to see what his employees can do better and how to better perform in the field. During normal weekdays the inspectors should be at the landing for 10 hours; approximately from 7 to 5. On weekends and holidays, they are there for 12 hours from 8 to 8. Also, they will now be looking at bunkers on the boat trailers IF they have time to seek out possible AIS. This has been quite the project to undertake with the DNR since it is not their usual protocol. We have also gotten permission from the DNR to have inspectors rake surface weeds at the landing if there is a rake available. I am in the process of working with other individuals on the committee to see how we can secure a rake and have it permanently available for the inspectors at the landing. This has also been approved by DNR. Some inspectors bring their own rakes, but, unfortunately, the poles are very long pieces and cannot fit into some of the employees' cars. Part of the communication with LAMB is to report things that aren't being done or to report when they are doing a great job. If you want to report something, let me know, and I will let the AIS Committee Coordinator know.

A Special THANK YOU to Jeff Bertram

Jeff is owner of the West Central Sanitation Company and every year

they bring a 90-gallon container for us to use at the landing for no charge. In turn, he gets to advertise free in our newsletter and our emails. We are very grateful for Jeff and his team. Unfortunately, DNR does not provide a way of disposing garbage so this is very helpful for us to keep the landing clean. Thank you!!!

Walleye Restocking

The last time the DNR stocked Big Fish Lake with walleye was in 2017 when they stocked 1,023 fingerlings and 800 adults for a total of 590 pounds of walleye. They stock our lake during odd numbered years and it is scheduled to be stocked again this fall with 368 pounds of walleye.

DID YOU KNOW?

Viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS) affects 34 species of fish, including walleye and bass. Its emergence has resulted in large-scale mass mortality events throughout the eastern Great Lakes and cost millions of dollars in management efforts. The virus is considered to be the most significant freshwater fish health threat in the world and has a history of large-scale fish kills. It is transmitted fish-to-fish from close contact of contaminated water or reproduction.

There are many steps you can take to prevent the spread of VHS, other fish pathogens, and aquatic invasive species. You are required to:

- Remove your drain plug and let the water drain out of your boat before leaving the boat access.
- Drain your bait bucket and replace the water with tap or bottled water before leaving a boat access, except when ice fishing (unless on waters designated infested with VHS).
- Dispose of any unwanted minnows in the trash, not in the water.

Mark Your Calendar for the 2019 Annual Social Picnic on Thursday, August 15th at Hidden Cove Orchard

We will be sending you more information in the future, so please keep it open. We would love to see you there and have a chance to meet more of your new neighbors that live on the lake.

Important Dates to Remember

*Saturday, June 22, 2019 ~ BFLA Annual Meeting. 8:30 am at the
Collegeville Township Hall

(Note that the annual meeting is later than usual this year.)

*Saturday, July 13, 2019 ~"Find your Mussels" Day

As always, it is such a pleasure to be your President!

Gratefully,

Kit Ferber
President
320-249-4800

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