

From your BFLA President, Jim Sand

2014 was a very active year for our lake, without going into all that happened I would like first to point out what I believe to be the most important outcomes.

1. We have a renewed commitment by property owners in protecting our lake from any Aquatic Invasive Species, (AIS) and from any other pollutants that could diminish the quality of our lake. 2. With the support of the DNR, along with BFLA funds we were able to have a significant effort in boat inspections at the DNR boat landing. These inspections help in our efforts to thwart any AIS into entering our lake. 3. With the renewed interest and commitment to the lake a number of residents have come forward and offered their time and expertise in making BFLA a stronger force in protecting our treasured lake.

Looking ahead to 2015 BFLA is actively working on expanding boat inspection program. Our goal is to have 10 hours of inspection time every day during the majority of the 2015 boating season, (May fishing opener through September 13th). The cost of this program will be nearly \$21,000.00. Through our membership dues and donations, along with possible grants from Stearns County and/or the DNR we will pay for the program. The last two years the Collegeville Township has given BFLA \$1,000.00 each year towards boat inspections. We are very grateful for their support. Speaking of Collegeville Township, BFLA is partnering with them on adding vegetation to accesses in the hopes of reducing any runoff pollution. Reducing the amount of phosphorus into the lake has been and will continue to be a high priority of the Association.

We are renewing our Fisheries Committee, look elsewhere in the newsletter for information on their efforts. If you have an interest in helping out with this committee or others please contact us and let us know.

Membership for 2015 is at an all time high and hopefully we are not finished yet. Below is a breakdown of our 2015 membership effort as of the 1st of the year. If you have not yet sent in your membership I encourage you to do so soon.

Amount Range	# of property owners within range
\$1 - \$35	34
\$36 - \$60	17
\$61 - \$100	60
\$101 - \$200	6
\$201 - \$400	4
\$401 - \$500	1
\$501 - \$999	1
\$1,000 +	2

That puts us at 125 members, we have over 224 properties on the lake.

Thanks to all who have paid their dues and or made a donation to BFLA, we can not do our job of protecting the lake without your support.

Interested in being a boat inspector? BFLA uses WaterGuards as one of our inspection contacts. This is great job for retirees, college students home for the summer and older high school students. If interested call or email:

Stephanie Johnson, WaterGuards, LLC

320-249-7550 or email at sjohnson@WaterGuards.net

As I look out on the barren landscape on the 26th of January, (when my report for the newsletter is due) I am ecstatic about the prospects for a low snow melt season come March. Time will tell. I say this because the large run-off events of phosphorous into our lake typically occur with the spring melt when the ground is frozen or in the monsoon season of May and June.

I have reviewed the last 4 years of inlet testing and will make the following observation: Amongst all the digits and numbers I focused in on what has happened to the phosphorous levels of the northern rearing pond over the years. I averaged the 8 tests before the lake association did the Alum treatments and the 3 tests since. The testing shows the average level of phosphorous before the treatments at .60 mg./l and .19 mg./l after the treatments began. Having done all the testing and knowing that it is this inlet that gushes water under certain conditions, I feel good about the apparent reduction in phosphorous loading into the lake as a result of the lake association proactive decision to treat the rearing pond.

You can find the complete data on our website. You can find the lake monitoring data at RMB lab web site where the records of the tested water in the middle of the lake are recorded. I did not see anything significant in that data. The association continues to test water, (by having me do it), but if you have an interest in doing it for the association, I will gladly train you. Bill Schnettler

This past summer I didn't get any calls of sightings of Eurasian milfoil weeds. I didn't see any algae blooms but doesn't mean there were blooms in other areas of the lake.

The average secchi dish reading for the clarity of the water this past summer was 16.81 feet deep. This was from my readings and Bill Schnettler's. The official average reading from the MPCA will come out this spring on their web site. The highest temperature of the water this summer I got was 74.1 degrees on 8/27/14. Ice on was 11/14/14, ice off was 4/14/14. Also concerning curly leaf pondweed, which is an invasive weed that has been in BFL for the past 15 years, is decreasing in population. This was the conclusion from the last survey the DNR did on BFL.

Matt Peters

It's been confirmed – the annual social will be held on the 3rd Thursday in August or 8/21/15 – 6 p.m. at Hidden Cove Orchard. Dave & Gary are allowing us to use their facility. The music will be provided by Max and Deb. My co-hosts Mike and Mary Juergens will be on hand to welcome all.

Rena Weber 320.685.8344

From your Membership Chairs: Patti Delano & Kit Ferber

When we agreed to co-chair the Membership Committee for Big Fish Lake, we were excited to see what our joint efforts would accomplish. To date, we have raised almost \$14,000 which included membership dues and contributions up and beyond the dues. We are so happy with those that participated in our annual drive and we are very grateful for your help. We were able to get approximately 56% (see Jim's breakdown) of property owners to join us in our efforts and **we would like to see 100% participation.** Everyone's participation is vital to our program in maintaining the excellence of our beautiful lake, our Lake Association and its goals.

If anyone would like to still be a member of the BFLA, please contact us and we will be happy to help you. It is NEVER TOO LATE TO CONTRIBUTE!!! Please seriously consider your membership.

For those of you who have stepped forward to be on our committee, we are so excited to have you on board. There will be projects coming up where we will contact you for help and ideas. If anyone else wants to be a part of our effort or has fundraising ideas, please contact us at pdelano@ccsi400.com or kitbigfishlake@hotmail.com or call Kit at 320-249-4800. Thank you!

Fishery Facts from the DNR by Tom Schnettler

The following stats came from the DNR fisheries website for Big Fish Lake. Most of the data was gathered from a survey done in 2010, so it's a bit dated, but, it's the most recent data we have available to us.

Annual Stocking for Big Fish Lake

Year	Species	Size	Number	Pounds
2012	Walleye	yearlings	2,384	294.0
2010	Walleye	fingerlings	3,470	204.0
2008	Walleye	fingerlings	4,865	211.5
2006	Walleye	adults	6	8.5
2006	Walleye	fingerlings	682	110.5
2006	Walleye	fry	200,000	2.0
2006	Walleye	yearlings	67	60.0
2005	Walleye	fry	200,000	2.0

Stocking Definitions:

Fry - Newly hatched fish that are ready to be stocked usually called "swim-ups". Walleye fry are 1/3 of an inch or around 8 mm.

Fingerling - Fingerlings are one to six months old and can range from a size of one to twelve inches depending on the species. Walleye fingerlings range from three to eight inches each fall.

Yearling - Yearling fish are at least one year old. A one-year-old fish can range from three to twenty inches depending on the species. Walleye yearlings average from six to twelve inches.

Adult - Adult fish are fish that have reached maturity. Depending on the species, maturity can be reached at two years of age. Walleye reach maturity between the ages of four and six years.

Based on feedback the BFLA Board has received, residents are somewhat divided on whether to increase fish stocking (over and above what the DNR already does) or just continue with DNR-funded stocking. Per the DNR: *“In many ways the fishery at Big Fish Lake is unbalanced. Northern pike are too abundant and consist mainly of small “hammer handles”. Northern pike over-eat their prey which consists largely of yellow perch and small walleye. This is likely why there are very few perch in Big Fish Lake and why walleye stocking has met with limited success”*. The Northern slot limit for Big Fish Lake is 24 to 36 inches, which means you must return to the lake any fish within that range. However, because of the excessively high number of northern in the lake, we encourage you to keep ALL northern outside of the slot limit to help reduce the population. We also welcome your feedback on how you think Big Fish Lake should be stocked in the future. You can share your thoughts with any of the board members via email or phone using the contact info listed in this newsletter.

Source: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/showreport.html?downum=73010600>

ADVERTISE HERE TO HELP BFLA!!!!

In an effort to raise money for the BFLA it has been suggested that we offer an opportunity for local businesses to advertise in our newsletters. The price structure on a legal size sheet of paper divided up into 12 sections, approximately 4-1/4” x 2-1/4” each, would be as follows for an annual fee:

1 section: \$50	1/2 page: \$225
2 sections: \$85	2/3 page: \$275
3 sections: \$125	Full page: \$350
4 sections: (1/3 page) \$150	

Please note that these ads will be available on a first come, first basis. Ads would be included in our future annual newsletter and all of our emails that will begin in the spring. Ads should include the name of your business, address and contact information. If you have any questions, please call Kit Ferber at 320-249-4800.
