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April 24, 2020

## 2020 BFLA Annual Newsletter

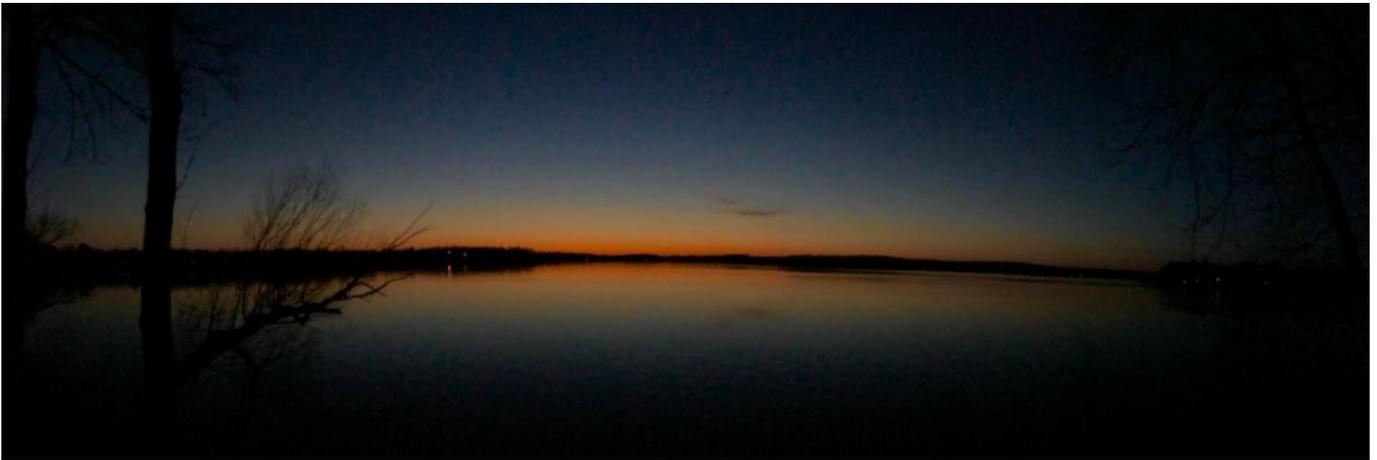


Photo taken by Luke Peters on April 17, 2020

Hello Family and Friends of Big Fish Lake;

The Big Fish Lake Association Board members would like to say that we are hoping all is well with you and your loved ones during these trying times. Please stay safe!

As some of you may or may not know, the ice was completely off the lake on Easter Sunday, April 12th. What a wonderful day to celebrate loved ones (at least some of them!) at our place of paradise. The loons are already here and talking which makes everything even more welcoming!

### **Big Fish Lake Access Now Repaired!**

Last week the lake access was not passable but now it is completely back to normal. All boats, etc. can launch now. Thanks to all who brought it up to my attention. The DNR moved pretty quickly on this so we should be very pleased. Earlier I was told that it could take "weeks" but that was not the case. Thank you to the DNR and the subcontractors who expedited the situation.

## 2020 Membership Drive

Last fall the 2020 Membership Drive was launched and it, once again, has been very successful. In March, another "gentle reminder" was sent out to those that had not donated at that point. There are 196 homeowners, 13 renters and 3 friends on our contact list. As of today, 143 had sent in their donations totaling \$26,266 which has surpassed our total that we had last year of \$25,631. Out of that total, \$3,451 was designated to be used for additional research. That is a 68% participation which is a fantastic percentage based on other lake associations in the state of Minnesota! Most associations only have about a 45% rate of participation so we should be very proud of our member numbers!

In looking at those that donated last year and have not for 2020 yet, we have a potential of another \$2,500 from 18 families to add to our budget. So please, if you haven't sent in your dues or donations yet, please do so.

We will be receiving \$3,500 from the Collegetown Township this year, and we are so grateful for them to help us in our fight against Aquatic Invasive Species.

## Update on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)

Last fall Steve McComas from Blue Water Science came to do another vegetation survey on Big Fish Lake. Matt Peters and I went on the boat with Steve and his son, and we were very pleased to not find any other AIS at that time. Steve will continue to come once a year to look for any other AIS. It is very important to do those surveys to find anything early and then be able to treat it as soon as possible. Grand Lake has Starry Stonewort and they have been able to contain the infestation by hand pulling the algae and monitoring it closely.

The U of M Research Center has been studying bacteria to kill zebra mussels. About three years ago, the Aquatic Research Lab opened at the University of Minnesota. Some of the research happening there is about combating zebra mussels using a specific pathogen or type of bacteria. What the researchers want to do is find a pathogen that targets the zebra mussel, but nothing else. Researchers have said, "We don't want to introduce any kind of pathogens that are going to target native mussels." In their lab on campus is a series of tanks. Some of them will be the control, or the tanks that won't be tested; the others will see an introduction of the pathogen and its effectiveness at different water temperatures. The BFLA contributes money to this research and we hope they will find a "cure" sooner than later!

BFLA has contracted with Stearns County to once again conduct AIS boat inspections this year. We are hoping that the inspectors will be at our access starting on May 4th but due to COVID-19 we may not have any there at that time. I was on a Webinar where the DNR Commissioner spoke about social distancing and how this was going to affect the inspectors. At this time, they are trying to come up with a virtual training program to get the AIS inspectors out on the accesses as soon as possible. Let's hope that we will get the help that we need. In the meantime, please encourage family and friends to make sure that there are no weeds on their boat and trailers as they come into the lake. Remember, Clean, Drain and Dry!

## Social Distancing This Summer

Governor Walz recognizes that outdoor recreation is a huge part of life in Minnesota and that outdoor activities benefit our physical and mental health. One key point is that while this order urges Minnesotans to get outside, citizens are strongly encouraged to do these activities close to home and continue to keep a safe distance from others as we are doing now.

The order reads, in part, "Minnesotans should stay close to home and are strongly discouraged from unnecessary travel, including long-distance travel to engage in outdoor recreational activities and travel to and from cabins, commercial lodging, and vacation homes or rentals."

By this order Governor Walz opens up fishing and boating on Minnesota lakes.

The MN DNR is currently working on guidelines and safe practices for AIS inspectors, and other DNR staff so that they may preform their duties.

Due to this pandemic we will be canceling our annual meeting that we usually have in June, the Fourth of July Dock and/or Boat Contest and the Annual Picnic. If this changes, we will be sure and let you know.

## Lake Service Providers (LSP)

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

## Update on Loons and their Nests - Matt Peters

Last summer in 2019 we had four loon nests out on the lake. Three of them were the aluminum platforms and one PVC platform. This is the second year we have had the aluminum platforms which were made by a welding class taught by Chuck House at St. Cloud Technical College. We paid \$270 per platform. Due to the high tariffs of aluminum today the platforms for the loon nests now cost \$640!

We had loons in three of the four platform loon nests, and had five baby loons last summer and one pair from Hermit lake. Jack & Rita Eickhoff were driving on the morning of June 5th at 7:35 am and witnessed mother and dad loons walking their two baby loons across County Road 50 by the old beach. Jack was able to video this remarkable crossing. You can see this on BFLA web site at [bigfishmnlakesanddrivers.org](http://bigfishmnlakesanddrivers.org). Thank you, Jack, for getting this unique video!

Thanks to the following people for putting out the nests this year: Matt Peters, Luke Peters, Ted Ruzanic and Mark Backes. They took the responsibility to store



the platforms during the winter and put them out as soon as the ice went off. You will find the nests next to the rearing pond in the north bay, two on either side of Ruzanics in the southwest bay, and the last one on the north side of the sand bar. All of the nests have been filled with swamp grass, dry leaves and dirt. Just a side note: Our three old wood loon platforms were donated to the Long Lake Association and Kalla Lake.

## "Get the Lead Out" Program

Let's Get the Lead Out! Loons, swans, cranes, and other waterbirds can die from lead poisoning after swallowing lead fishing sinkers and jigs lost by anglers. Sport anglers attach lead weights to fishing lines to sink the hook, bait, or lure into the water. Some anglers use lead-weighted hooks, called jigs. A sinker or jig may accidentally detach from a line and fall into the water, or the hook or line may become tangled and the line may break or be cut. Many ducks and other waterbirds find food in the mud at the bottom of lakes. Most of these birds also swallow small stones and grit that aid in grinding up their food. Some of the grit may contain lead from anglers' equipment.

Ask your local sporting goods store to stock non-lead fishing tackle. Discard old lead sinkers and jigs properly. Spread the word. Tell other anglers about the problem with lead, and encourage them to switch to non-lead sinkers and jigs.

## BFL Water testing Results - Bill Unger

Big Fish Lake Association has been a long-term participant in the RMB Environmental Laboratories Lakes Monitoring Program. We collect 4-5 samples throughout the Spring, Summer and Fall. The tests look at three parameters: Phosphorus, Chlorophyll and a Secchi disk reading which measures water clarity. RMB publishes our results and combines all three measurements into an overall view of Lake Quality called Trophic State Index. *The Trend in our TSI has been decreasing which is a sign of improvement in our water quality!*

**Years Monitored:** 2010 - 2019

**Total Phosphorus:** Improving with 99% confidence.

**Chlorophyll-a:** No significant trend exists.

**Secchi Depth:** Improving with 90% confidence.

**Trophic State Index:** Improving with 95% confidence.

This should encourage us to continue looking for ways to reduce fertilizer, detergents, sewage and other contaminant flow into BFL. Every bit makes a difference and helps to keep our Lake as one of the cleanest, most desirable in the

area.

Presently, Bill Unger has been doing the water testing for us and would be willing to step down if someone else wants to do it. Again, let me know if you would be able to help us with this!

## Dock Reward

Stearns County AIS Prevention Program: Will you be selling a dock, boat lift, a raft or any other water-related equipment (excluding a boat, pontoon or trailer)? Component parts will be considered. Did you know that MN law prohibits you from moving equipment with aquatic plants and zebra mussels attached? And that you are required to leave it out of the water for a certain period of time? Stearns County AIS Committee has a **REWARD** program for **YOU**. If you leave the equipment that is sold out of the water for **29 days** we will reward you with **\$150**. Go to the Stearns County website at [www.co.stearns.mn.us/Environment/WaterResources/Aq](http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/Environment/WaterResources/Aq) to find the application or call 320-656-3613 to find out how to apply. You can also call if you have any questions.

## Do You Know the Bait Law?

**Dispose of unwanted bait**, including minnows, leeches and worms, in the trash. It is illegal to release bait into a water body or release aquatic animals from one water body to another. It is also illegal to release worms in the state since they are not native to Minnesota.

A special thank you to Jeff Bertram who is the owner of the West Central Sanitation Company who provides a 90-gallon container for us to use at the landing for no charge in exchange for a free ad in our newsletters. We are so grateful for Jeff and his team! Thank you!

## Annual Board Member Elections

Every year there comes an opportunity to serve on your Big Fish Lake Association Board. There are presently 10 members and three advisors on the Board. This year all of the members whose terms are up in June 2020 have agreed to serve on the Board for another two years. If you think that this is something you would like to do, please let me know. We will make room for you!!!!

## Dock Space for Rent

Last week I sent an eNewsletter stating that a friend of mine was looking for a space to park her pontoon on BFL. A couple of members questioned whether we should encourage that on our lake since it is so busy already. I called Paul Steil, the BFLA Legal advisor and he said that he was afraid that there could be some liability issues and therefore we should not advertise these kind of articles in the future. Thank you!

If any of you have received this eNewsletter in error please unsubscribe. If you know of someone that would like to be added to our list, let me know that as well. Due to the high cost of sending over 200 newsletters via snail mail, we are resorting to this digital version. If you see something that doesn't appear correctly, contact me.

This annual newsletter will be mailed out to those that do not have an email address.

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

Kit Ferber

President

320-249-4800

kit@kferber.com (Note: this is a new email address for me!)



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