**Big Fish Lake Association January Board Meeting**

**February 21, 2024; 6:00 pm at Mark’s home**

In attendance: Mark Backes, John Ronning, Kit Ferber, Hailey Bayer, Matt Peters, Nancy Van Erp, Doug Adamek and Allen Schmitz

1. Call to order (6:03 p.m.)
2. Minutes from 11-15-23 & 1-24-24 were reviewed. John made a motion to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Doug.
3. Finance Report presented by Matt

* Current BFL account balance: $58,695.61
* Blue Water Science was paid $800 for the AIS Survey done in September.
* Matt will contact the Collegeville Township to be put on the next meeting to request a grant from them to be used towards our costs.
* Last month Mark & Matt took out two 6-month CD’s at $20K each which will generate 5% at Granite Bank.
* Since we have a 10-year contract with the Hamanns for keeping their CRP on their farmland in place we will once again pay them $1,000. This has really helped the lake’s ecosystem.

1. Membership Drive update – Kit

* $33,290.60 raised so far this year from membership dues. Based on previous years, there is approximately another $14,000 that **could** come in. Gentle Reminders will be mailed in March for those that have not paid their dues/donations yet. 142 out of 253 members have contributed and 43 members decided to donate this year who have not donated for several years. This is a 56% participation at this time. Our goal is reach at least 80% participation.
* $1,450 has been collected from our Business Vendors that advertise in our newsletter. Nine companies have paid so far out of 18 advertisers. Last year $2,650 was contributed.
* $13,290.60 is in the Additional Research Fund. Next meeting we will vote on the amount of contributions to be sent to the U of M Research Center and Minnesota Lakes & Rivers.
* The first draft of the map of Big Fish Lake with its coinciding numbers is done. It will be

11”x17”, laminated and folded for easy reference while on the water. Revisions will be done on the legend and pictures of Starry Stonewort and Native AIS (Chara) will be added. These maps will be available at the Annual Meeting. The maps will cost $15 at the meeting or $20 if they have to be mailed.

1. Collegeville Township Update – John

The Annual Township Election & Meeting is scheduled for March 12 at the Town Hall.

1. Stearns County Environmental Services - Mark

Due to more applicants requesting Aquatic Invasive Species grants, our requested hours for boat inspections at the landing are being cut back approximately 200 hours. Mark is working with Kyle at SCES to get these hours reduced in April and October. The reduction in hours will be based on Water Guard’s report from the 2023 season. After this task is completed, Mark will send out the revised schedule to the Board.

1. Outlet update – Allen

Due to the unusual warm weather, the project will be postponed until next winter since the ground has to be frozen to work. We will have to extend the timing of the permit that was paid for by the Township.

1. BFLA Annual Meeting agenda planning: This year’s theme: “Own Your Wake & Prop Wash!”

* Matt has reserved the town hall for the third Saturday on June 15, 2024.
* Jeff Forester from MN Lakes and Rivers is confirmed to speak at the meeting. Jeff needs a stipend to pay for his transportation costs for 69 cents per mile. Hailey made a motion to allot up to $200 for this expense. Matt seconded it.
* Nick Newman from Environmental Services will also be on the agenda.
* Boat safety courses for kids
* Education committee
* Matt Peters’ family story on the lake
* Doug will donate cutting boards for the drawing
* Kit will send out postcards around May 1st.
* The option to have each of the board members will get a list of people to call to remind people about the meeting will be reviewed and decided on at the March meeting. The goal is to generate a larger number of attendees.

1. March Newsletter - Kit

*For sale* section if needed, history of the lake stories will be eventually posted on our website, membership drive update, , DNR Boat Training for young adults and the Stearns County Five Star Program.

1. Floating Signs for SENSITIVE Areas – Mark

At the last meeting Mark brought up an idea that another local lake is doing and that is to place floating PVC signs to mark areas that are sensitive to boaters including spawning areas and possible AIS infestation areas if needed. Mark and Matt will work on making a couple of prototypes.

1. Board member status, terms up in 2024

* There will be two board openings in 2024 due to Bill Unger & Doug leaving the board. The board also needs to fill the Vice President position.
* Kit, Megan, Doug and Bill have terms ending in 2024. Mark, John, Matt, Hailey and Nancy have terms ending in 2025.

1. Matt has been recording ICE ON and ICE OFF since 1994. The earlies time that ice went off the lake was on March 24, 2000 and March 25, 2016. Ice is currently 11’ thick. May 4, 2018, was the latest the ice was completely off of the lake.
2. AIS Emergency Response Plan – Kit

The Board reviewed the first draft AIS emergency response plan drawn up by Kit detailing the steps to take should any AIS be found on BFL. Nancy will edit this draft to make it easier to understand.

1. Adjourn (7:35 p.m.) Motion was made by Kit and seconded by John. Next meetings are scheduled for March 20th and May 8th. There will not be a meeting in April since Mark will be gone.