



BIG PINE LAKE

ASSOCIATION
CROSSLAKE, MINNESOTA

www.bigpinelake-crosslake.com



2018 Holiday Newsletter

Season's Greetings!

With the holiday season on us and the leaves of fall rapidly becoming a distant memory, the Big Pine Lake Association's (BPLA) Board of Directors wishes all of our members a happy holiday season! We try to keep our twice-per-year updates as short as possible, but there is a lot to report, so we don't always succeed in that goal. That does appear to be the case with this update!

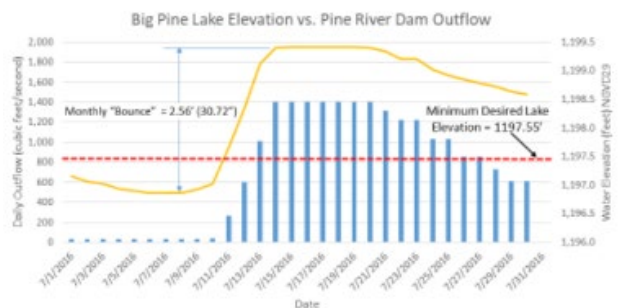
Membership - Next year's BPLA memberships begin on May 1, 2019 and annual dues will remain at \$25.00 per year. Additional donations are welcomed and always appreciated.

Annual Meeting - A fair number of members attended our Annual Meeting on August 18th at the Crosslake Community Center. The meeting featured guest speaker Carla White, Secretary of the National Loon Center Foundation (NLCF), headquartered in Crosslake. The NLCF is a non-profit organization currently working to develop an interactive National Loon Center near the U.S. Corps of Engineers' Crosslake Dam and Campground. If you missed the meeting, catch-up by reviewing the meeting minutes and Carla's presentation under the *Meeting Minutes* tab on our website at www.bigpinelake-crosslake.com.

Board of Directors - We are pleased to welcome two new members to our Board this year: Carolynn Duncan and Gary Swanson. Gary was elected to a two-year term, replacing Pam Graves, and Carolynn was appointed to complete the last year of Tom Veeninga's term. Tom and Pam both received *Certificate of Appreciation* plaques for their dedicated service on the Board. As required by BPLA's bylaws, the Directors met immediately following the Annual Meeting to elect officers for 2019. Contact information for BPLA directors can be found under the *Contact Us* tab of our website. Please don't hesitate to contact any Board member with a question, concern, or suggestion.

Ken Ormsbee	President
Bill Korchik	Vice President
Dennis Bengtson	Secretary
Ann Korchik	Treasurer
Scott Eichhorst	Director - Lake Management
Carolynn Duncan	Director - Social Events
Gary Swanson	Director at Large

2018 Summer Lake Levels – Enjoyment of our lake is often affected by the actual elevation or level of the lake surface at the time of use. When lake levels vary widely from week-to-week, or even day-to-day, it can be challenging for lake property owners to manage their shorelines, docks, and boat lifts – or to enjoy certain activities on the lake. Big Pine Lake has been and always will be subject to wide fluctuations in lake levels, simply because it is downstream of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers' (USACE) dam in Crosslake. That dam is operated during the summer season to maintain the water level of the Whitefish Chain of lakes within a specific six inch "Summer Band". Since the Whitefish Chain is 36 times larger in area than Big Pine Lake, even small elevation changes on the Chain create very large elevation changes on our lake. Daily measurements of our lake elevation over the past five years correlate directly with the daily outflow rate of the USACE dam in Crosslake.



2018 Summer Lake Levels continued:

The term we use to describe the difference between low and high lake elevations during any time period is “bounce.” From 2012 through 2017, Big Pine Lake has experienced seasonal bounces of 36, 24, 32, 28, 31, and 50 inches, respectively. However, the seasonal bounce in 2018 was the lowest on record at only 18 inches! While that is still three times what lake property owners on the Whitefish Chain experience, it is much more tolerable than the larger seasonal bounce seen in each of the prior six years.

Dennis Bengtson, immediate past president of BPLA, has worked diligently since 2013 to measure lake elevations, evaluate dam performance, and understand the contributors to high seasonal bounce. While Mother Nature will always dictate how high our lake elevations go, we can directly manage how low our lake elevations can go by maintaining proper elevations of our water control structure, which is currently the original rock dam. By carefully restoring the original permitted elevations of our rock dam, repairing breaches, and restoring and protecting the east bank, we have effectively lowered 2018 and future seasonal bounces by up to 18 inches. The combination of these physical actions along with frequent and moderate rain events throughout the summer of 2018, allowed us to enjoy lake elevations between our *desired minimum* and *desired maximum* levels for all but four days in mid-July! Maintaining our lake elevations at or above our *desired minimum elevation* of 1197.55' means that no property owner on our lake will suffer from insufficient water at their dock, lift, or shoreline.



Best of all, we have been able to incorporate our knowledge, data, and experience into the design and verification modeling of the newly permitted rock riffle fish passage. The durability of that structure will far surpass our original rock dam and virtually eliminate the possibility of experiencing future lake elevations below our desired minimum level at any time of the year.

Pine River Fish Passage Project – Since BPLA’s Spring 2018 Newsletter was distributed, much has happened regarding what is known as the Pine River Fish Passage Project (PRFPP). As a reminder, following the east end rock dam breach that occurred over the winter of 2016, the PRFPP, which had previously been awarded a \$400,000 grant under the MNDNR Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) Program, was split into a two-phase project so that the dam breach could be repaired and the east bank fortified. Phase 1 of the PRFPP was completed in June 2017.



With Phase 1 complete, our attention turned to Phase 2, where virtually all work activity was focused on hydrological modeling, design specification, permitting, and contractor bidding. In March 2018, the MNDNR issued the Public Waters Permit that authorized the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to construct Phase 2 of the PRFPP. Also, in March 2018, SWCD issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for construction of the arched rock riffle water control structure that will replace our current rock dam. Multiple qualified bidders responded, but pricing came in much higher than the cost estimates contained in a 2013 feasibility study authored by SEH Engineers had forecast. Given that total project costs under the MNDNR CPL Grant are not allowed to exceed \$575,000, and all bids exceeded that amount, we were not able to proceed any further under the CPL Grant.

SWCD and BPLA quickly regrouped and in May 2018, SWCD submitted a Request for Funding proposal under the 2020 Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund (LSOHF). In September 2018, the PRFPP team, consisting of the SWCD, BPLA, MNDNR, Crow Wing County, and the City of Crosslake, participated in a formal hearing before the 12-member Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (LSOHC). The LSOHC reports directly to the Minnesota Legislature and consists of Minnesota House and Senate representatives and others appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House, and a Senate subcommittee.

Pine River Fish Passage Project continued:

The LSOHC is responsible for evaluating and scoring Request for Funding proposals received and recommending the value of grant awards to be made. The LSOHC received 45 proposals totaling over \$264 million under the FY2020 LSOHF. Of the proposals received, 38 have been recommended to receive partial funding, four to receive no funding at all, and three to receive full funding. Our PRFPP proposal is one of the three slated to receive full funding once final legislative approvals are provided in early 2019. Assuming that those final approvals are granted with no change in funding amounts, the PRFPP will be eligible to receive \$1,246,000 in grant funds. Those funds, however, do not become available until July 1, 2019, so the earliest timeframe for PRFPP construction to begin in earnest will be sometime in the fall of 2019 since we do not want to be constructing a new water control structure during the summer recreational season.



Also, SWCD will need to rebid the PRFPP since the bids received in March 2018 have expired. Our expectation is that there will be strong interest in the project since contractors will know that the project is already permitted and that construction costs are adequately funded, meaning that the project will have a high probability of being built. It should be noted that although we are confident that the remaining administrative and legislative activities will proceed smoothly, until funds become available in July 2019, funding for PRFPP is not 100 percent guaranteed.

The process that allowed us to get to where we are today began in 2010 with the formation of the Big Pine Lake Subordinate Services District (SSD) under the leadership of then BPLA president, Nancy Rudberg. The aforementioned feasibility study funded by Crow Wing County and performed by SEH Engineers in 2013, was also another key project enabler. And in the fall of 2015, Ken Ormsbee initiated dialogue with the MNDNR that led to the formation of today's multi-agency PRFFP team. From that time until the Public Waters Permit was issued in March 2018, BPLA's president over that entire timeframe, Dennis Bengtson, provided enormous assistance to SWCD's lead design engineer by providing invaluable empirical elevation data, modeling guidance, design validation, and permit acquisition support. Lastly, in an effort to prepare the PRFPP team for the September 2018 LSOHF legislative hearing, Ken and Dennis prepared a detailed presentation and coordinated communications with the PRFPP team and other stakeholders to best position the PRFPP for funding.

Assistance was also provided by other BPLA board members throughout the process, so the PRFPP has been a real team effort and a great example of a successful public-private partnership in action. We've accomplished a great deal, but as mentioned above, funding won't be 100 percent guaranteed until July 2019. In the meantime, we will do our best to keep BPLA members apprised of PRFPP's status.



Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Update - In June 2018, a *BPLA Breaking News Update* was sent to members to let you know that a moderate amount of Eurasian Watermilfoil (EWM) had been discovered in the upstream Pine River channel and in-and-around Big Pine Lake's inlet. And more recently, in September 2018, zebra mussels were confirmed to be present in Big Pine Lake. Unfortunately, Big Pine Lake is connected to and surrounded by numerous AIS-infested lakes and rivers, having made infestation in our lake nearly inevitable. Additional information on both types of AIS is provided on the following page.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Update continued:

Eurasian Watermilfoil - As of this summer, EWM had not been found within Big Pine Lake itself. However, based on what was found, we are suggesting a couple of methods meant to control and hinder the spread of the plant, especially in Big Pine Lake. In general, EWM found in a river is not effectively treatable with herbicides since river currents wash the chemicals downstream before they can be absorbed to the point where they kill EWM's root system. Therefore, our near-term emphasis is on attempting to keep EWM out of the lake and in apprising those who boat on the lake and the Pine River, of EWM's presence in the river basin. MNDNR AIS Specialist, Tim Plude's recommendation is to inform boaters on the Pine River to clean their props of aquatic plants before entering or returning to Big Pine Lake.



As you probably know, there is a "No Wake" sign posted at the junction of Big Pine Lake and the Pine River basin; that is the location where props should be checked for attached plant material. The correct method is to remove all aquatic plants from the prop, take them back to shore and dispose of them properly, which includes disposal in your garbage or drying them out away from the shoreline and burning or composting them. They should NOT be thrown back into the river or lake, as this will result in the unintentional spread of the plant. EWM has multiple methods of spreading; one in particular is individual leaves and stems floating until they find a shoreline where they can re-root.

The BPLA Board will continue to work with the MNDNR to perform shoreline inspections, physically remove plants where possible, discuss other possible control methods, and to identify educational information that could be provided. We have also begun to explore the possibility of getting additional signage from the MNDNR so that all users of Big Pine Lake will be aware of the presence of EWM and can help in preventing its spread. In summary, please be responsible when exiting the river by cleaning your prop appropriately, and if you see other boaters not doing so, inform them of the presence of EWM and the need for them to clean their prop before entering the lake proper.

Zebra Mussels: In the fall of 2018, what appeared to be zebra mussels attached to dock structures, were reported by three lake residents. Two on the south side and one on the north side. Photographs were sent to MNDNR's Tim Plude, who confirmed them to be zebra mussels. Zebra mussels were discovered in the Pine River, downstream of the Crosslake USACE dam in 2014, but unfortunately, they have now made their way to Big Pine Lake itself.

Two of the most challenging aspects of zebra mussels are that they can spread quickly and that no effective method has yet been discovered to control them. There is some reason for hope, however. In 2012, the University of Minnesota opened its Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) to develop scientific methods and protocols needed to properly identify, monitor, and control numerous forms of AIS. MAISRC is performing serious work in the area of genome research that focuses on uncovering "markers" that can be studied to identify genetic weaknesses in zebra mussels and other AIS.

MAISRC began working with the MNDNR in 2015 to develop pilot (lake) projects focused on controlling zebra mussels. There are precursors to being accepted into a MNDNR pilot



project, most of which are around having a structured monitoring protocol in place so as to provide measurable and empirical baseline data. Given that this fall's findings were the first confirmed evidence of the presence of zebra mussels in Big Pine Lake, no monitoring has yet been done. As such, the BPLA Board, under Scott Eichhorst's leadership as Director of Lake Management, will be developing an action plan over the winter so that we can begin monitoring for the presence of zebra mussels at various locations in the lake this coming spring.

Social Activities and Events - During the 2018 spring and summer seasons, BPLA organized and coordinated four separate social events:

- Spring Clean-up Day
- Family Fishing Tournament
- Independence Day Boat Parade
- Annual Meeting

We considered all four events to be successful in that each brought lake residents and BPLA members together while serving a beneficial purpose. There are images of the first three events posted to the *Events Gallery* section of our website.

2018 Spring Clean-up Day (May 26, 2018): As you can see from the picture, roadside trash, including items as large as a mattress and box spring, were picked-up and disposed of in order to keep the sides of roads surrounding Big Pine Lake clean and tidy. This clean-up event takes place every other year on a Saturday morning in the spring and concludes by noon. The next clean-up event will take place in the spring of 2020.



2018 Family Fishing Tournament (June 16, 2018): As some may recall, the weather for this year’s BPLA Family Fishing Tournament was less than ideal. The weekend weather forecast likely kept some of you away from your cabins, but those hardy souls who made it to the lake were able to fish from 8:00 a.m. until just before the 10:30 a.m. weigh-in deadline. And participants got to know their neighbors in a new way this year – under tarps and tents – as a brief thunderstorm passed through Crosslake around 10:45 a.m. Although, the total number of participants was down this year, everyone really seemed to enjoy the event and the many nice prizes that were provided. Several BPLA members made voluntary cash donations, so thanks to everyone who contributed to fund those great prizes!

Congratulations to the 2018 BPLA Family Fishing Tournament winners!

Minnows – 10 and Under

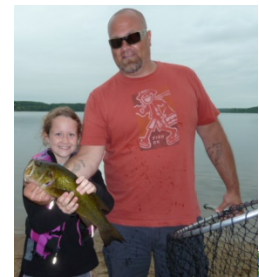
- First Place Ashley Lisser Total Weight: 5.29 lbs.
- Second Place Emmett Kittock Total Weight: 3.19 lbs.
- Third Place Hunter Theissen Total Weight: 2.79 lbs.

Juniors – 11 to 17

- First Place Garrett McClellan Total Weight: 6.41 lbs.
- Second Place Cameron Anderson Total Weight: 4.69 lbs.
- Third Place Abby Theissen Total Weight: 3.02 lbs.

Adults – 18 and Older

- First Place Chad Lisser Total Weight: 6.21 lbs.
- Second Place Tom Jelinski Total Weight: 5.70 lbs.
- (No third place)



2018 Family Fishing Tournament Volunteers: Eighteen volunteers took part in organizing and running the event, including Ann and Bill Korchik, who led the effort. Six of the eighteen people were either friends, visiting family members, or former lake residents. In order to continue the event in 2019 and beyond, we will need more help and additional volunteers. Participating as a volunteer doesn’t require a lot of time and is also a great way to meet neighbors and other folks on the lake.

Many thanks go out to volunteers, Randy & Linda Johnson & daughter, Megan Sherven; Lisa Ziegler & her mom, Georgia; Sue & Jim Heurung; Tom & Carol Veeninga; Dennis & Jane Bengtson; Pam Graves; Bill & Ann Korchik; Terri Hudoba & Terry Wander; and Richard & Terri Rammer!

Also, special thanks to Bill and Pam O'Brien for allowing us to use their property again this year – especially since they had already moved belongings out of their home due to the pending sale. They even had their caretaker put their dock out solely for our use during the fishing contest! Thanks, Bill and Pam! And another piece of great news is that the new owners, Gary and Erika Swanson, have generously offered the use of their beach for the 2019 fishing tournament. Thank you so much, Gary and Erika!

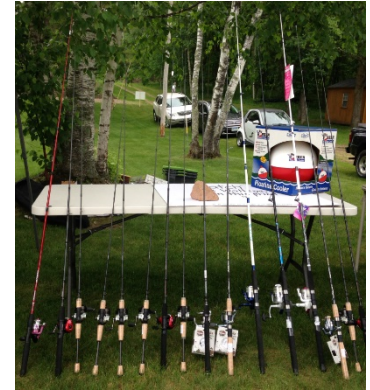
Social Activities and Events continued:

Family Fishing Tournament Timing: We decided to hold the 2018 tournament in the mid-June timeframe to spread out our social events a bit, but the weather, along with June weddings and graduations, may have prevented people from being at their cabins. So, for 2019, we are planning to hold the fishing tournament on Friday, July 5th, since those planning to be in Crosslake for the holiday weekend will likely have arrived on Wednesday with July 4th falling on Thursday in 2019.

Family Fishing Tournament Donations from Local Businesses:

Sincere thanks and appreciation go out to our local Crosslake business owners, who donated cash and prizes to our fishing contest! We appreciate their generosity and encourage you to frequent these businesses as much as possible!!

Donations were received from: Ace Hardware, Andy's Bar & Grill, Build-All Lumber Co., BTR Bait Shop, Cedar Chest, Dairy Queen, Grand Champion Meats, Denny's Lakeshore Aggregates, Judy's House of Gifts, Lakes Area Gallery & Frame Shoppe, Lake Country Crafts & Cones, Maucieri's Italian Bistro, McGarry's Barber Shop, North Aire Market, Passages of Time, Pine Peaks Restaurant, and the Riverside Inn. Again, thanks to our great local businesses for their generous donations!



2018 Independence Day Boat Parade (July 7, 2018):

Our second Big Pine Lake boat parade had a new and tasty twist, thanks to the Struck family. They surprised parade participants who passed by their dock with frozen treats for both kids and adults! There were eleven motorized boats and one sailboat that graced the lake. Even though the sail boaters had trouble staying with the parade, we loved seeing them out in the middle of the lake!

Every boat that participated added charm to the parade and all of the shoreline spectators made it fun for the people in the parade. We would love to see more families join us onshore or in their boats next summer. We had all levels of decorating, including one boat that was only decorated with its joyful riders. Lady Liberty, you are now a tradition! BPLA's 2019 Independence Day Boat Parade will occur on Saturday, July 6th, so mark your calendars and plan to participate in this fun and lighthearted event!



We hope the above information has been both interesting and useful to you. Please let us know if you have questions or suggestions regarding these and other lake-related topics.

Thanks for your interest and have a wonderful holiday season!

Your Big Pine Lake Association Board of Directors