

Lake Washington Improvement Association

Lake Management Plan

2005

VISION: A management plan that will provide long-range direction, sustainable decision-making, flexibility, and cooperation from all stakeholders to address the concerns and needs in a timely sensitive manner.

MISSION: A renewable plan to provide high quality sustainable practices of excellence to protect, maintain, and improve the water quality and value of Lake Washington as a resource for generations.

Introduction:

This management plan for Lake Washington is being developed to address long range, ongoing concerns and issues we are aware of at this time. This plan is intended to be a working document that will provide direction and aid in cooperative decision making for residents of the lake, members of the lake association, state organizations, county government, and the public at large with vested interests in establishing and maintaining high standards of water quality and sustainable use of this lake as a natural resource for generations to come.

The Lake Washington Board of Directors determined the original lake plan written in 1988 provided a useful impetus for organizing the members in a meaningful manner. The goals of improving the water quality will continue being sustainable because the Lake Association recognizes the need for yearly testing as a means for monitoring water quality. But the Board of Directors note many changes have occurred over the past seventeen years. With this in mind the decision was made to develop a long-range (5 to 10 year) renewable and sustainable lake management plan. The Board's intent is to review, evaluate, update, and improve this plan on a yearly basis.

Lake Washington has moved from a community of primarily seasonal homes (estimated 50-60%) to one of predominantly permanent homes in the past fourteen years. Our estimates are more than 70% of all lakeshore and lakeview properties are year round residences at this time. There continues to be improvement, additions or rebuilding of existing home-sites, along with the potential for additional building on undeveloped lakeshore and lakeview property. This presents many new and different issues for the management of Lake Washington. These issues include: maintaining high water quality, addition recreational use of the lake over longer more sustainable periods, shoreline management, education and communication with lake property owners, greater cooperation and partnerships with county and state organizations to do such things as identification and control exotic species, watershed management, septic updates/improvements, and fish management.

Geographical Characteristics:

Lake Washington is situated in the southeastern part of Meeker County, between the cities of Dassel and Darwin, Minnesota. The lake covers 2,639 acres with 10.6 miles of associated shoreline, of this acreage 2,449 acres are littoral. The lake is relatively shallow with a mean depth of 8.6 feet and maximum depth of 17 feet. The configuration of the lake is oblong, with a 3-mile long major axis oriented in an east-west direction and 1.5 mile north-south axis. The primary inlet from the surrounding watershed is on the west side of the lake. The outlet is located on the north-northeastern edge of the lake and discharges into Washington Creek. The watershed draining into Lake Washington is 22,063 acres. Several smaller lakes, streams, and creeks in the watershed eventually drain into the lake. The land in this watershed is a mixture of agriculture (primarily crops), with some larger stands of deciduous trees, and other large areas in Conservation Reserve Program acres.

Lake Washington provides opportunities for many uses by property owners and the general public. There is a public landing on the south shore maintained by the DNR. The lake association pays for year round lighting in the parking lot. They also pay for a seasonal portable bathroom on the eastern shoreline near an inlet for a small stream. On any given day during the spring, summer, or early fall, one can find people taking part in such water activities as: boating, waterskiing, tubing, parasailing, sail boating, jet skiing, canoeing, paddle boating, or fishing. Any water activity possible can be found on Lake Washington. It is the home of fishing tournaments throughout the year. In the winter there are numerous fish houses sprinkled around the lake.

The Lake Washington Board of Directors has determined the following seven areas to be essential to this lake management plan. They have developed goals in each area and specific strategies to help achieve these goals. Some areas we are actively working on right now, others are in the future planning stages, and many are in need of historical documentation so future generations will know what and how we attempted to tackle the problems of our day.

Water Quality:

This is truly the center-piece of our lake management plan. We fully understand the importance and need to maintain and improve lake water quality. The membership recognized this as the primary objective of the original lake plan from 1988. We fully intend to continue their goals while increasing the water samplings number and content we test for. The association recognizes the many additional pressures put on the lake since the last lake plan. Development has significantly increased and with more land to develop on or around the lake this will continue to put more pressure on maintaining and improving water quality. Improved enforcement of zoning and building rules brought about a more consistent and updated septic systems around the lake. The Board does acknowledge that sometime in the future the lake community is going to need to take a look at a much larger wastewater treatment plan, before the heavy use and increased population put unbearable stress on the water quality of Lake Washington.

Goal: To maintain and/or improve the water quality in Lake Washington.

Strategies:

- Test water quality on a monthly basis during the summer months.
- Increase what we test for and maintain records for ongoing yearly comparisons.
- Maintain monthly secchi disk readings through out the year and share this information with the state.
- Monitor water levels.
- Analyze the data we gather each year on the state of the water quality in Lake Washington using this information to provide direction for planning.
- Continue exploring septic options that can minimize the impact on drinking and lake water qualities in the Lake Washington Community.

Education:

This is considered one of the most important areas of need because the Board recognizes the importance of keeping all stakeholders involved in the process of informed decision-making. This requires communication with all parties involved on issues and concerns. Education is considered a corner stone to our public relations with lake property owners, state and county organizations, and other interested parties. We are providing education about what is happening to the lake, the actions we see important to address these issues, and information about what is

good stewardship through our annual meetings in the spring, information sharing at the annual steak fry meeting at summers end, newsletters (two to three per year), other mailings when deemed necessary by the Board and sponsorship of meetings whereby state, county, and local individuals and organizations can provide information, answer questions and in general inform us the members of issues, concerns, laws, best practices, and more knowledge for making informed decisions.

Goal: To keep all stakeholders informed, knowledgeable, and involved in matters that impact the lake and surrounding areas.

Strategies:

- Update Lake Directory every 5-6 years
- Continue with 2-3 newsletters per year – informing membership of current issues, planned actions, and up coming meetings.
- Develop an email database to more easily contact and communicate with members and others.
- Form committees to learn more about issues, develop ideas and provide the knowledge necessary for constituents to make informed decisions.
- Maintain working relationships with the DNR and County Commissioners to keep members informed of changes to rules, laws, and new information that members can use to improve quality of life and maintain our high standards of always looking at ways to improve water quality for the lake.
- Use Lake Shore Captains as means to provide information and receive feed back from people directly to members.
- Invite local, county, and state officials to present the most current information on issues, subjects, and concerns of the lake community.

Aquatic Plant Management:

This has stepped to the forefront as one of the major concerns for the Lake Association and other interested parties. The discovery of infestation by Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) in Lake Washington in 1999 has been a learning and action experience for all. We were grateful the DNR took control of managing EWM from 1999-2002. This provided us with ideas, models, and time for us to generate interest in being a more active part in vegetation management. Through these first years membership stepped up and became involved with plotting sites of EWM

through the use of a GPS. Our purchase of one of these devices allowed members to do lake searches for EWM and plot their existence. Our lake monitoring for EWM and plotting the sites has become an ongoing fulltime venture, as some have actually monitored the presence during ice fishing in the winter. The membership also recognized the need to raise money for a milfoil treatment fund.

As the lake association moved to the forefront in EWM management it became evident we needed to consider vegetation management as a balancing act between: the importance vegetation is to maintaining sustainable aquatic life and the nuisance matted vegetation presents to lake users, property shore owners, and the impact this has on natural vegetation and fish populations which needs our protection also. The Lake Board recognized the need for a subset of individuals to become knowledgeable and capable stewards in our practices of EWM management. To this end a committee of four people took on this charge. This provides us with a group knowledge set that can be shared and passed on to newer members joining the group. During the summer, fall and winter of 2003 into the spring of 2004, this committee learned what needed to be done, how to do it, and the equipment we would need to provide treatment for EWM on Lake Washington.

With the cooperation of the DNR, providing Lake Washington with grant money and a knowledge base we could explore and learn from, our Milfoil Committee developed a plan to provide treatment for over 180 acres of matted milfoil left from the 2003 treatments. They also became skilled volunteer applicators thereby allowing the lake membership to better use funds for treatment. This group found a volunteered pontoon and motor. The association purchased a spreader and laptop computer for the purpose of chemically treating the worst areas of the lake. This group also devised a system of application that involved using a laptop computer connected to a global positioning system for monitoring the rate and exacting coverage for the chemical application. They continued monitoring the results of these treatments and in late summer did a second application on other areas of concern. Their feedback regarding the treatment process and successfulness of these treatments are: the earlier application did a much more thorough job of eliminating the milfoil than treatments conducted in late summer. This group is also aware of other options we need to consider when it comes to treating smaller areas that can possibly be pulled or hand treated.

As a result of infestation by EWM and the subsequent lead role the Lake Association has assumed in the treatment and management it has become abundantly clear that a lake vegetation management plan is needed. The Board realizes the latest vegetation survey (1993) is clearly outdated at this time and a

new survey is essential to our vegetation management plan. To this end the milfoil committee continues to chart the sightings of EWM plotting them on the GPS unit. This information will provide great data and help in better maintaining a clearer picture of the vegetation cover as it changes year to year.

Goal: To develop a long term, renewable aquatic plant management plan that aids in the control of EWM and encourages the development and growth of natural vegetation.

Strategies:

- Develop a yearly management plan for EWM to identify needs, determine treatment options, and provide treatment earlier in the year to obtain maximum benefits of the treatment.
- Conduct whole lake vegetation survey to establish a blue print of what the lake looks like now.
- Establish core group of individuals on the milfoil committee, adding new members regularly with a plan for the future.
- Continue partnership with local and state units to work together providing information, expertise, support, and knowledge about needs and updated technologies.
- Do ongoing EWM surveys throughout the year to provide good data that can be used to develop yearly treatment plans.

Fish Management:

Where there is water in Minnesota there are fish. The cleaner and healthier the water is the better the fishing will be. So it stands to reason if we are so invested in establishing and maintaining clean water in Lake Washington, we are also supportive of maintaining and improving fish populations. We recognize fishing is a very important part of the culture of Lake Washington. There is a long and illustrious history detailed in the over fifty years of records kept by Lake Washington Improvement Association. Much of this history provides insight and historical data about fishing and fish populations on Lake Washington. The area DNR Fisheries Department has conducted numerous fish surveys over the years, been responsible for stocking of Lake Washington and developed an action plan for fish management. They have provided much information and knowledge to the lake community. This plan needs to detail our belief that fishing and fish management is a very vital part of any lake management plan.

Goals: Support and be active members in the local Minnesota Fisheries plans for monitoring and managing the fish populations in Lake Washington.

Strategies:

- Support fish surveys.
- Stay informed of the fish populations and what we as association members can do to support fish management.
- Maintain open communication with the DNR and support their fish management plans for the lake.

Shoreline Management

This may be one of the defining pieces of this lake management plans that we are able to look at five, ten, twenty years down the road and determine how effective stewards of the lake we have been. This is part of the lake management plan that does hold significant importance, because each property owner assumes responsibility for implementation. Shoreline management practices currently have a significant impact on runoff, filtering of waters entering the lake, and maintenance of shoreline and their structural importance to the lake.

The association will continue to promote and support efforts by local and state organizations to enhance shoreline management. To this end the Lake Association will continue the practice of education for property owners by sponsoring speakers, joining the DNR in sponsoring and developing lakescaped properties around the lake, and providing in-kind services to achieve this end.

Goal: Encourage development of improved shoreline management practices.

Strategies:

- Provide continued education and up dates about lakescaping and shoreline management.
- Support plans and encourage projects that enhance and provide for stabilization of lakeshores.
- Provide resources in the way of plans, nurseries that provide high quality stock for planting (be sure plants are intended for lake).
- Share books, CD's from the DNR, and videos we have or know about.
- Provide in-kind services to encourage the sponsorship of projects by local and state organizations.

Communication:

This is one of the more important tools we have as a community and association to become better organized, informed, committed, and connected. The waters of Lake Washington touch us all. We have a very common thread that we have chosen to be a valuable and very important component in our lives. It is by choice we are all gathered in this community surrounding this great body of water. This is one of the few natural resources that truly facilitates bonding at a community level. We are just that a community of Lake Washington. The fact four different townships intersect in the Lake, or that some would rather fish than ski, or swim than sail... all things we do connected to Lake Washington are dependent on the water. That is the focus of our conversations when we gather to talk about what we should or need to do to protect our one shared and valuable resource. This requires communication amongst all people with interests in Lake Washington. A lake management plan cannot be complete unless we define how and what we are going to talk about and how we plan to facilitate communication between us. For it is through communication we have heard the stories of Lake Washington and we will share the stories with future generations.

Goal: To develop more direct lines and means of communication with all people concerned with the life, health, and well being of the Lake Washington Community.

Strategies:

- Find ways to get information out in a more timely manner.
- Provide up to date current contacts for members.
- Use Shoreline Captains to gather information and provide communications to the members directly connected to them.
- Look at ways to increase information in newsletters.
- Conduct surveys to get more and better feed back that can help the Board make better decisions.
- Improve and update regularly the Lake Washington Association Webpage. (www.lakewashingtonassn.com)
- Develop more effective emails lists.
- Provide area newspapers with more information about things happening on or to Lake Washington.
- Maintain open ongoing dialogues with local, county, and state organizations.

Watershed District:

The development of a watershed district has come up in several conversations with county and state officials. The Board sees this as a vital tool that needs development to further our goal of maintaining and improving water quality for generations to come. We recognize this as a very specific organizational tool to better manage water quality before it reaches our lake.

Goal: Assist in beginning development of this idea.

Strategies:

- To continue conversations with the Meeker County Commissioners
- Determine interest, help in formation of committees.