



SWAN LAKE NEWS

Swan Lake Association, Inc. Newsletter

November 2025



Swan Lake from Northwest

A NOTE FROM THE SLA PRESIDENT

By Mike Meikle

Here it is early November, and the weather has been beautiful. Like most of the year the weather conditions have been hot and dry. We had only one episode of slow no wake this year and I heard from many that instead of needing to secure their piers and take their boats out because of high water, they were concerned about being able to get their boats off their boat hoists. If I had to choose between the two, I would take the later any day.

Spring started early and the migration of birds was great to see. This year there were two active eagles' nests on the northeast side of the lake. It is always quite a sight to see the eagles fishing for their next meal. Speaking of fishing, everyone I spoke with said opening weekend was slow. We continue to see low numbers of walleyes being caught, but with the recent release by the DNR and the Swan Lake Association, we are hoping this starts to improve.

We have been working closely with the DNR and the Columbia County Sheriff for their assistance in policing the lake to make sure that everyone is safe. It was quite noticeable when their presence was there, and we thank them for making the lake safer for all. We have also been working with the Columbia County Emergency Manager who has been very helpful in regards to how we can best prepare for slow no-wake conditions.

The Swan Lake Board of Directors has increased its frequency in meetings to try and stay on top of issues that affect all of us. We are also working on putting committees together to work together on key areas in the lake such as water quality, fish stocking, safety concerns as well as how best to use the SLA dues that support our efforts. With that said, the board voted to increase the annual dues from \$10 to \$20 per household. This will allow us to continue our efforts to make sure the lake is safe and allow us to improve areas that are important to all of us.

I want to thank everyone who attended the recent annual member meeting held at the Saddle Ridge clubhouse. Attendance was up 50% compared to the prior year. As you can imagine, topics of discussion were all over the board. I thought the topics discussed were all valid and it was great to hear from as many people as possible about their thoughts about the lake.

I hope everyone has a great winter and I look forward to seeing everyone on the lake next year.

WALLEYE STOCKING IN THE LAKE

by John Drury-Board Member



It has been a long-term effort and goal of the SLA to bring the population of adult walleye up to guidelines recommended by the WDNR. 2025 has been an important year for the improvement of the fishery in Swan Lake. In the first part of November, 3000 6" – 9" fingerling walleyes were released into the lake. In the spring of this year the WDNR released approximately 16,000 1 to two inch walleyes into the Lake. The walleye released into the lake are required to be Lake Michigan strain and approved by the WDNR. The walleyes stocked this fall were hatched and raised in a pond in the UP of Michigan. A stocking permit was received from the WDNR along with a fish import permit from the State Department of Agriculture and Consumer Protection.

The SLA has worked with Fish Biologist, Nathan Nye of the WDNR on a fish stocking plan for Swan Lake. The WDNR plans to stock the lake in the spring on even years and the SLA plans to stock in the fall on odd years.

Swan Lake has historically had very low natural reproduction of walleye in the lake. To allow the lake to be an enjoyable and productive fishery for walleyes, the DNR has stocked the lake for many years. With the additional stocking of larger fish, survival rate of the walleye increases significantly.

In addition to stocking, the SLA is planning to install new fish habitat on the lake over the winter. This involves placing natural wood structures in predetermined locations to provide fish with natural habitat and protection.

The SLA will continue to work with the WDNR and private fish nurseries to support our goal of having a quality fishery in Swan Lake.



Swan Lake residents and several SLA Board members watch the release of 3000 walleye at the public boat landing on Saturday November 1st.



6"-9" Inch walleyes are netted and released in Swan Lake



Lake Michigan Strain Walleye

SLA DUES INCREASE for 2026 YEAR

The board voted to increase our dues to \$20 per year at our November meeting. We also have added a Lifetime Membership option for a one-time \$250 payment.

We hope to continue to mail less of our newsletters and email more of them to our membership as this is far less expensive.

For those of you that would like to pay your membership with a credit card, we have set up payment through SQUARE on our website (swanlakeassnportage.com). If you received this as a mailed copy and want to pay without accessing the link on the website, type the address below into your browser and follow the directions for easy payment.

<https://square.link/u/hGYgM16u>

We will continue to take checks for dues, and they can be mailed to-
Swan Lake Association, P.O. Box 182, Portage, WI 53901

The board tried to reach out to all its members this summer to update information and encourage people to receive information and newsletters through email. If you would like to make sure that we have your correct email address, please reach out to me at paulagreco1@gmail.com and I will be sure to update your information. If the SLA has your email address, you will not only get Newsletters through email, but you will also get occasional informational updates about Swan Lake. If SLA has your phone number, you could receive NO WAKE notifications and other urgent information.

Paula Greco-SLA Board Member, Treasurer

WAKE SURFING

by Jerry Rice, SLA Board Member

Over the last year, there has been enhanced communications concerning Wake Surfing throughout the State of Wisconsin. It's been a topic at Town Hall meetings and in the State Legislature, as well as amongst those enjoying Swan Lake on a regular basis. There have been more studies released by Terra Vigilis Environmental Services related to Lake Beulah, The University of Minnesota Saint Anthony Falls Laboratory (a 2-phase report) and Wisconsin Greenfire's Voices for Conservation. I won't recap that information here, but I encourage you to hop online and do your own review of those studies, and more, such as the National Marine Manufacturers Association (2022), and a 2015 study by Cliff Goudey funded by the Water Sports Industry Association.

Of further interest, two organizations that have been in the forefront of encouraging some rules associated with Wake Surfing have joined together in requesting bi-partisan action at the State level around environmental issues and the rights of lake users. Again, I'm not going to recap their specific call to action but would refer you to explore their position online. Do your own research, reach your own conclusions. The two organizations to explore are Last Wilderness Alliance, and Wisconsin Lakes.

I leave you with one additional bit of guidance while you explore this issue, be aware of which studies were based on simulations and which are based on actual real-life testing using various watercraft, scientific measuring devices, cameras, and sponsored by residents and/or academic institutions. "If you have immediate safety concerns, contact the Sheriff's office. If you want enhanced regulation, contact the president of the Town of Pacific Board and the President of the Village of Wyocena.

Here's to safe and fun time on the lake for everyone!

Fishing Comments

by Jim Mortenson

Swan Lake fishing report for 2025.

I have lived and fished on Swan Lake for 13 years. When I began to retire, I looked for a lake that I could connect to and do some fishing and relaxing. I decided on Swan Lake. Great fishing and close to Madison. I thought this was the perfect place. The fishing and wildlife were exceptional.

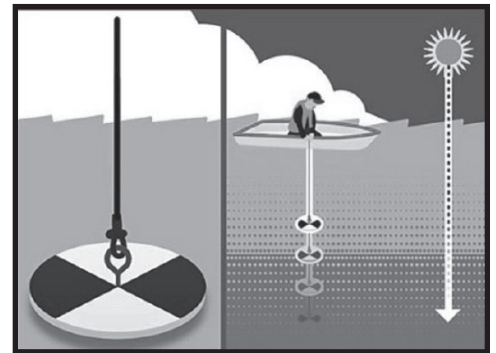
I am a catch and release fishing person. Especially on Swan Lake. I want everyone who fishes here to have an enjoyable experience. The fishing has declined over the past few years. This year was the most disappointing of all the previous years. The weed beds seem to be mostly gone. They were always the places where you would catch fish. The game fish, walleye, pike, flathead catfish were few and far between. If you wanted to catch some small striped bass, you could easily do that.

I don't want to be negative but fishing this year has been disappointing. I think we need to make some difficult decisions about the environmental health of Swan Lake.

Water Clarity

by Terri Amend

Swan Lake has been the subject of ongoing environmental monitoring efforts, particularly with respect to its water clarity. One of the key indicators of its quality is the depth at which a standard Secchi disk disappears from view, commonly referred to as the 'Secchi depth'. In Wisconsin, volunteer monitors through the Citizen Lake Monitoring Network have collected this data on Swan Lake since 1988.



The Secchi depth measurement is a simple method that involves lowering a black-and-white disk into the water until it disappears. The depth is then recorded. The disk is further submerged and then brought up to the surface. Once the disk appears, that depth is recorded. The two numbers are averaged to collect the data point. This measurement reflects factors in the water, namely sediment, algae, and organic matter.

For residents and recreational users of the lake, clarity has obvious important implications. Clearer water supports better fishing, swimming, and boating experiences. The ability for light to penetrate beneath the water surface influences aquatic plants, which are critical for fish and other lake life. If clarity is declining, this would suggest the need for management action.

This past season Secchi depth measurements and water clarity measurements were taken at the deepest part of the lake. The Secchi depth data points ranged from 3 feet to 11.5 feet. The 11.5 data point was from the spring, and the 3 was taken during the high-water event in July.

Water clarity is assessed using a rating scale of one to five. A rating of one indicates excellent clarity ("beautiful"), while a rating of five signifies that algae growth limits recreational enjoyment. This past season, data points varied from 1 to 4.5. The highest measurement (4.5) occurred during the high-water event.

In short, monitoring Secchi depth on Swan Lake offers a cost-effective way to track lake health over time. The long history of monitoring provides a foundation for understanding how clarity is changing and how aquatic life is being affected. For more information, visit the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website.

NEW BOARD MEMBER UPDATE

Hi, my name is Mark Waitkus. I'm a new member of the SLA.

My wife, Kim, and I live in Saddle Ridge on the lake, at the west end facing south. We've lived here since 2019. We love it here on the lake. Two golf courses, and if you face the water every morning, ya gotta have a boat. It's taken a few years to clean the land along the shoreline, a work in progress. We can fish, swim, take the grands on a boat ride & go tubing, wave at others boats with a beverage or two in your hand. How'd we ever find this place! The marina here at saddle ridge has improved each year. New deck boards on the dock and slips. Repaved the access road. Installed new swing sets, basketball area, golf chipping and pickleball.

We both grew up in the Detroit area. Loved to go down to the river and watch the freighters go by. My job took us to South bend. We lived on the Saint Joseph river. Moved to Madison, Sun Prairie actually. Lakes on an Isthmus, who knew! I earned an Eng degree from UW. Started my own home remodeling business. And I am now retired to a peaceful lake.

Kim worked in many different hospitals, at various positions along the journey to here to Wisconsin. She's a retired surgical nursing from UW Madison. So we spent some time at the union terrace.

Seems we've found ourselves surrounded by water a lot over the years.

I joined the SLA just a few months ago. You know, don't know much about the lake if you don't get involved. I have seen fish stocked already. Someone who was doing water clarity tests, each year someone takes out & in the bouys, goes up and down the river to keep in navigable. I know I'm forgetting other things as I write this. It's nice to see a community on this lake that cares for it. I would not have known any of that if I didn't get involved.

I still consider myself a newbie here. But I know more people living here in such a short time then I knew in my old neighborhood. And I lived there 20 years. I guess I think that if we care about the people here so much, we must at least care for our lake too. It's where we have our fun.



To Pay your Dues this year, you have 3 options.

1-Type this in your web browser and use our secure Square method with your credit card

<https://square.link/u/hGYgM16u>

2-Go to our website swanlakeassnportage.com, and access the link under Membership.

3-Mail a check to Swan Lake Association, PO Box 182, Portage, WI 53901

Thanks for your continued support!

WATSON WATCH

by Jim Watson

Wow! what a beautiful spring, summer, fall, into the first week of November now, and I don't remember a year of overall nice weather, as we've had this year. More blue sky, sunny days, than ever, starting in early spring. September and October were like a continuation of the long summer with the addition of the long, drawn-out color change of the trees, that I was able to view on travels from the shore of L. Superior to the far southwest corner of the Driftless Area hills, of Wisconsin into Iowa. In addition to the pleasant temperatures and sunshine, the few rains seemed to come just in time to keep the crops growing. Only one heavy rain event that raised the lake to the Slow No Wake Level, but only for a few hours (and a little confusion with posting signs, that should never occur again).

In addition to the nice weather, we were able to enjoy it with little interference from the biting insects. There have been less mosquitoes and deerflies the last few years due to draught but, in 70 years living here, surrounded by open water and marsh lands, this season had the least amount of the pests than I can remember. Used less DEET by far, than usual.

Among the other flying creatures, it is still amazing the eagles and osprey populations are still increasing everywhere. Great to be able to watch them daily when we used to only see an eagle, if we drove four hours north. One thing I'm missing this year so far, I'm not seeing any ducks flying around our lake and ponds. Plenty of geese and sandhills though, and there is one lone, immature loon feeding up on Swan Lake during his migration, but no other waterfowl? I hear there are plenty to our south on the fields and ponds and likely the northern birds are waiting for the weather to cool?

Although the aquatic vegetation in the lake is still lacking, there was more than the last few years. In some areas a variety of dense fibrous plants, so thick in knee deep shallows, can barely walk through them. Even in areas where the waves pound the hardest, hmmm? But, down the river, every variety grows like crazy. I assume they get a head start as, the shallow, slow moving, river warms up faster than the lake. The lake has been getting green alga blooms in June, even without big rainfall events. Once it blooms the sunlight is blocked, making it hard for the rooted plants to grow. There are so many factors to sort out, with the balance between the algae, zoo plankton that eat algae, fish that eat the zoo plankton, bigger fish to eat the little fish etc. Who has time to sort it all out?

At least we have plenty of, and a good variety of quality of fish in Swan Lake to go after. Large Mouth Bass (a few Small Mouth Bass show up now and then too) are the primary gamefish in the lake in recent decades as they were during the early half of the 1900s. Northern Pike were the big fish to go after until the late 1980s. That population crashed in most of the lakes in our area and prompted the formation of the Portage Area Musky Club to convert the old sewer plant tanks, to raising predator fish. The people in the club were musky fishermen so, they worked to raise musky. We considered raising Northerns also, but Musky were "more bang for the buck" I guess. Walleye are desired by most fisherman in Wisconsin, but Swan Lake does not have the proper spawning habitat so, they have to be brought in from hatcheries. The survival rate was tremendous in the late 80s through the 90s. The walleye population is pretty low at this time after no stocking during Covid followed by problems at the hatcheries. A few fishermen have caught some nice sized ones this past summer, when they could find a school. In September and October some 6" walleye were being caught by pan fishermen, along with perch. That showed the small fingerlings put in the lake by DNR in June were surviving and growing. Then, on November 1st the Lake Association was able to put in some large fingerling walleye, of the correct strain the DNR required. These babies are already 7-9", so should have a good chance to grow to legal size in the next couple years.

Continued on page 7

WATSON WATCH

by Jim Watson

It is sad to have to keep reminding people to stay 100 feet away from shore, piers, swimming rafts. Why would anyone go closer? even at slow no wake speed, your propeller is still spinning! Keep out of where someone might be swimming, whether you see someone in the water or not. The one you hit is the one you didn't see. (in August as I walked out alongside our dock to take a step out and swim to the raft, a pontoon boat going about 15 mph came from the other side of dock and only missed running me over by a few feet! Right where my son and granddaughter had been standing only moments before! wonder why I yell at people who drive too close?)

I am getting requests to put out more buoys. Seems boats go out around the buoys, then turn back in closer to shore and piers where there is not a buoy. We can't put buoys 100' out in front or **every pier** on the lake. In fact, the white/blue buoys cannot be more than 150' from shore unless lighted every night (lighted buoys need permits and are very expensive). So, if your pier is over 50 feet long, the buoys do no good.

SWAN LAKE SUPPORTERS AND AREA BUSINESS SECTION

Johnny B's
214 N Main St. Pardeeville
608-429-8020

Open Thurs- Sunday @ 11
Thursday nights pull tab draw is at 6:30pm.
Friday Fish Fry is between 11am-8pm

We have a few special events in December!

Saturday, Dec 6th 10am-1pm

Donuts with Santa bring your loved ones with 2 legs and those with 4! Santa loves them all!
PJ's or dress up! This could be your Christmas card photo!!
Remember your camera! This is a FREE event!
Plus!!!!-Ugly Sweater Contest and Cookie Exchange at 3pm!

Sunday, Dec 14th

Dust off your ladles and crock pots
Have your chili warm and ready to Johnny B's by NOON.
Chili Cook Off! Last year we had 14 different chilis. \$5 per person to taste and judge. Proceeds go to the caring tree.

-Liz Bliese

All area businesses are invited to contribute info and be a part of this section!

SLA, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Mike Meikle

608-839-4096

Vice President: Don Sabey

608-742-1157

Secretary: John Drury

608-235-0233

Treasurer: Paula Greco

502-500-5181

Board Members:

Robert Barth

608-697-5613

Mike Nachreiner

608-697-6836

Jerry Rice

262-527-1956

Mark Waitkus

608-335-1898