

# SWAN LAKE NEWS



SWAN LAKE FROM SOUTHEAST

## A NOTE FROM THE SLA PRESIDENT MIKE MEIKLE

This has been an unusual spring. After the ice went out, the lake's water levels were extremely low. Heavy April rains pushed annual precipitation above average and raised the lake nearly 20 inches which was within 6 inches of a slow no wake. Even so, the level dropped quickly because the river had little weed growth and the upstream wetlands were still very dry. Now, just days after Memorial Day, the lake remains unusually low for this time of the year.

We will not see weed growth in the Fox River to slow water leaving the lake, until water temperatures rise. With nighttime temperatures still around 40 degrees, the lake may take some time to warm.

One benefit of early spring is the water clarity. It is so interesting to stand at the end of a pier and watch fish swim by. Low water levels and the delay in putting in many piers have created excellent conditions for carp fishing.

If you have spent any time around the lake, you have probably seen white pelicans moving up and down the shoreline in search of food. They usually stop here briefly during their migration north, but this year they have stayed much longer than usual.

The Swan Lake Association (SLA) remains focused on supporting the lake in many ways. Over the past year, we stocked 6- to 9-inch walleyes to complement the Wisconsin DNR's efforts. We are already hearing about anglers catching some 10-12-inch walleyes from that release.

The Association is exploring several additional projects to strengthen and improve fishing on the lake. SLA also attended meetings at the Capitol this winter about wake boats. Although opinions differ on the best path forward, we are working hard to find a solution for everyone, read more later on.

With boat traffic getting ready to increase, please support the efforts to drive counterclockwise on the lake and mind the blue and white buoys that indicate the 100-foot mark from residents' docks.

I look forward to seeing everyone at our annual meeting on **September 12th at 9:00 AM at the Clubhouse at Saddle Ridge**. Until then I hope you have a great summer on the lake.

-MIKE

In this newsletter  
you can expect:

Fishing Report

2025 Annual  
Meeting Recap

Membership  
and Dues

Website  
Transformation

Committees  
-Lake Stocking  
-Water Quality

Watson Watch

And More!

# 2025 ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

## JOHN DRURY

The fall 2025 Annual membership meeting was held at the Clubhouse in Saddle Ridge with a very good turnout of over 40 members, SLA board members, and officials from the WI DNR and Columbia County Sheriffs office.

Current Board members Paula Greco and John Drury were both elected to new 3 year terms. The Board presented several recommended changes to the SLA Bylaws that reflect changes to the Swan Lake community and evolution of the board. These changes were approved by a majority of the membership present and included;

1. Eliminate the requirement to have one half of the Board of Directors reside on the north side of the lake and one half of the Board of Directors reside on the South side of Swan Lake.
2. Increase the number of Swan Lake association Board Members from 8 to 9. If approved, the first 9 BOD will be voted in at the SLA Annual meeting in 2026.
3. Add an amendment to create term limit for Board of Directors to a maximum of 3 full consecutive terms. (One full term equals 3 years).
4. Change the requirement which limits SLA officers from holding the same office for no more than 2 consecutive terms to allow SLA officers to hold the same office for 2 full consecutive term years. (One full term equals 2 years).
5. Change requirements for determining the annual dues amount from the SLA members to the SLA Board of Directors.

**Annual Membership Dues** - Members felt current membership dues are not enough to support the issues the Association should be addressing like water quality and fishery and need to be increased. The idea of having a lifetime membership was also discussed. At the fall Board meeting, the Board approved increasing annual membership to \$20.00 and offering a lifetime membership for \$250.00.

**Water Testing** - Terri Amend, long-time resident of Swan Lake does regular water quality tests on the lake. She is part of a group of WDNR volunteers who have been trained by the DNR to do water clarity testing using a Secchi Disk provided by the DNR. The test results are uploaded to the WDNR website which are then compared to satellite images taken days later by the WDNR. Terri noted she plans to do additional water quality tests on the lake. More information is available online at [WDNR.wi.gov](http://WDNR.wi.gov) remote sensing program.

**Columbia County Sheriff** - Captain David Clark provided the members with an update on lake safety. He noted the department's patrol boat with two officers were on the lake several times in 2025 monitoring boaters. They also responded to a complaint related to jet skiers. They issued a couple citations/warnings related to jet skiers not maintaining 100' between jet skiers. He noted that anyone with concerns or complaints should contact the non-emergency number at the department. The captain also noted that all law enforcement on the lake is provided by the Sheriff department, not the DNR.

**New WDNR Warden** - Nick Engehardt is the new Game Warden in Columbia County. Nick provided input on a variety of issues; including the life jacket loaner program, comments related to wake boating, and boater safety on the lake.

**No Wake** - Board President Mike Meikle provided an overview on the process when a no wake is called on the lake. The Columbia County Emergency Management Director calls the No Wake when the lake water level goes above the benchmark, located adjacent to the pier and the public boat landing. Signs of the No Wake are put in place by the SLA on all main roads leading to the lake. Columbia County Sheriff Captain David Clark provided information on the new No Wake Notification program. The Sheriff's office has implemented a new notification system that will send out a text message to cell phones.

**Wake Surfing** - John Drury, SLA Board member, and Randy Rhode, Swan Lake resident addressed members and board on wake boat surfing. Several concerns about the impact of wake surfing on the lake were brought up at last year's meeting.

Randy noted there are some lakes where wake surfing should not be done, like Park Lake, due to negative impacts to the lake in shallow waters. He referenced a [recent study completed by the University of Minnesota](#) that recommends the depth of operation for cruising vs. surfing. Randy owns and operates a wake boat on Swan Lake. He presented a map that displayed a couple locations where wake surfing could be done with minimal impact.

Our lakes are for everyone to enjoy, until our use negatively impacts the enjoyment or property of others. - Jerry Rice

## WAKE SURFING UPDATE JERRY RICE

The debate over wake surfing boat usage on WI lakes reached the State Level over the Winter. There were Bills brought forward for hearings, debate, and votes. The Bills were supported either by Industry Lobbyists or Lake Preservation Associations. Ultimately, nothing moved forward for a multitude of reasons.

The mission statement of the Association calls for protection of the lake, its shorelines, and the fishery. The board will continue to educate and work with SLA members and Swan Lake municipalities.

We recommend all SLA members learn more about lake legislation, related events, and tips on lake protection from these organizations [Last Wilderness Alliance](#), [Wisconsin Lakes](#), and [Lakes at Stake](#).



## MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

### PAULA GRECO

The board voted to increase our dues to \$20 per year at our November 2025 meeting. We also have added a Lifetime Membership option for a one-time \$250 payment. We currently have over 230 active members.

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](http://swanlakeassnportage.com)).

We will continue to take checks for dues as well and they can be mailed to-

Swan Lake Association, P.O. Box 182, Portage, WI 53901

#### Member Benefits

- Contribute to preserve, restore, and beautify Swan Lake
- Increase the fish stock
- Meet your Swan Lake neighbors
- Participate in volunteer committees
- Attend the Annual Members Meeting
- Receive our Bi-Annual Newsletter

The board reached out to all its members over the last year to update their information and encourage members to receive information and newsletters through email. If you would like to make sure that we have your correct information or indicate you want an emailed newsletter, please reach out to me at [paulagreco1@gmail.com](mailto:paulagreco1@gmail.com) and I will be sure to update your information.

Be sure SLA has your email address and/or phone number, so you receive NO WAKE notifications and other urgent Swan Lake info.

We have around 70 members who have not renewed yet for the 2026 year. Your email or envelope will state the year your membership expires, so you will know if you are not renewed for this year. If it says 2025, you need to renew your membership now. Thank you for taking time to do this for our association.



## WEBSITE TRANSFORMATION

In an effort to provide additional benefits to our members and the Swan Lake Community, the Swan Lake Association has invested in updates to our website.

[www.swanlakeassnportage.com](http://www.swanlakeassnportage.com)

#### Improvements Include:

- Site navigation
- Additional Content
  - Lake Temperature
  - Lake Depths
  - Current Fire Danger
- FAQs
- Swan Lake Gallery - The Swan Lake Association has been around since the 1960's, but folks have been enjoying the lake for much longer. Share your great Swan Lake family history photos with us!
- Transparency on SLA Bylaws
- SLA Committee section
- Promotion of surrounding communities



## FISHING REPORT

### JIM MORTENSON

Here it is springtime and with the water warming up fishing season begins to get going in high gear. On Swan Lake we have something to look forward to, maybe not as much this year as next, but restocking the lake with walleye has begun. Last spring fingerling and last fall much larger fish. Some of these fish have already been reported to have been caught and released. It will be at least next year before the larger walleye released last fall might be keeper length. The Swan Lake Association is planning to add fish every other year as funding is available. We who fish this lake and enjoy the experience should consider an extra donation with our dues to help fund a very worthwhile effort.

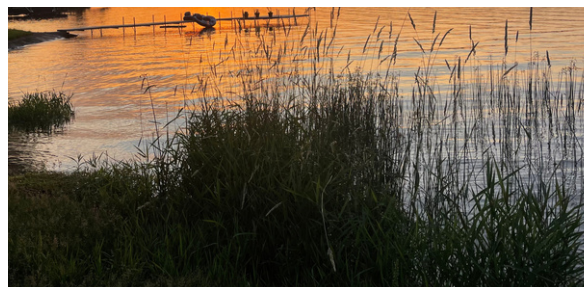
Ice fishing seemed a little slow this year as it has been the past few years. I have heard of some nice perch catches and as usual the white bass and stripers. The diehard fisherman were out many days a week taking advantage of the opportunity.

As many of you know there are challenges to the fishing quality on Swan Lake. I have fished the lake often for many years and have seen a decline in quality fish. The established weed growth on many shores and around the points is mostly gone. This habitat is important to maintain a healthy fishery. The question is why are the weeds gone?

It seems that the lake has more pressure than ever. There are more boats and bigger boats all the time. The wave action these boats create is probably one factor in the weeds disappearing. On a busy boating day, the shores are awash with waves that stir up debris from the shallow bottom and shoreline that cover the weeds and cloud the water many feet out from shore. This can't be good for weed growth that supports aquatic life.

Another factor is the population of carp in the lake. These carp are destructive to aquatic plant life. If they are to continue to increase population, the damage might be irreparable.

It seems like these two issues need to be addressed. The Association is aware of the problems and is looking for ways to improve activities for everyone who uses the lake for whatever recreation they enjoy. Have a good summer and let's keep Swan Lake a great place to have fun and enjoy nature.



# WATSON WATCH

## JIM WATSON

After summer we found bluegills and perch hanging in and around several of the woody fish attracting structures in the 12 to 25 foot depths. It was great action with a variety of sizes and a few nice perch in with them. We had good luck EVERY TIME we went out, often had a mess of panfish to clean after only a couple of hours on the water. And, that action continued throughout Sept., Oct., and Nov. Very impressive for Swan Lake. The weather was also pleasant, often as warm as summertime.

“The yellow and white bass and some smaller bluegills roam around [the deeper] areas.”

Most of Swan Lake was ice covered by December 8th, which is very early for our deep-water basin (82 ft.). It takes a long time to turn over and cool the large volume of water, unlike most other lakes in the area that are mostly only a few feet deep. Some snow and slush kept us off



for a few days, we were able to walk on the 13th, and with ATV by Dec. 16<sup>th</sup>. We started catching bluegills and a few perch mixed in, at the same spots as the fall. A great start to the ice season. That action continued through the whole winter other than the sub-zero blast the last two weeks of January. Others were doing the same in similar locations with a few northerns and bass on tip-ups in shallower areas. Some fishermen roamed around in deeper areas of 40-50 feet or more where the bottom is soft silt. The yellow and white bass and some smaller bluegills roam around those areas.

The cold northerly winds made a lot of ice, enough for a few pickup trucks to cross the lake at times. But those winds also created waves on the little area of open water that often remains in front of the ditch entering the lake near the Osprey nest pole. Waves don't freeze and the churning whitecaps kept eating away at even the ice up that was 8-10" thick. The open area eventually reached over 80 acres in size, running from the back of the bay, northwest of the narrows all the way to the south shore and east, nearly to Blank Road. It was shore to shore across the narrows. While it was open, you could see blue waves. But, with a little ice and snow cover, it was invisible. While the rest of the lake had nearly a foot of ice, this area would not hold up a person walking, let alone any vehicles. Signs were posted at access points and on the ice to both the east and west of the danger area with red flags marking well back from the perimeter. Lucky again, that nobody fell through as has happened in the past. This danger is quite common on Swan Lake. So far, no lives have been lost, only a couple vehicles.

The arctic blast made ice fast and soon the danger area became thicker and smoother than the rest of the lake. With some plow trails to travel over the rougher ice, it was a good place to ice skate for a time.

More good fishing news; the many thousands of 1 1/2" walleye fry stocked

by DNR in June had a great survival rate as they were being caught and released at 6-7 inches, while pan fishing all through the fall. The truck load of larger size walleyes stocked by the Lake Association in Nov. were already 7 or more inches, so some of the young walleyes were pushing over 9" by late winter. We are just hoping all the loons, big flocks of cormorants and the huge, white pelicans are eating the rough fish and not our walleyes! These fish-eating birds arrived soon after ice thaws as they migrate through and the Pelicans (as many as a hundred or more most days) are still here. They can eat several pounds of fish every day and carry more in their neck pouch, back to the mates and young at the nesting areas. I really doubt the Pelicans can catch many walleyes, since they don't dive like the loons and cormorants. Walleyes are usually in water too deep. But if you watch, you will notice the big, white, yellow billed, birds will follow other diving birds all day long and pounce on them, steal the fish that are brought up to the surface.

Ice cover was in early Dec. and all gone by March 10th, that is a month earlier than average. April showers were excessive and even though the lake was lower than ever all winter and all the wetlands were dry and ponds at mud bottom low, those rains raised the lake fast. We did get within 6" of the SlowNoWake level, but looked like it would go right over top the banks and cause trouble with the docks that were already in the lake. The weeds downstream had not grown back yet, so the water came and went on downstream quickly. The vegetation downstream does not get growing until the water reaches 70 degrees. Now, the lake is TOO low again. As the water warmed up into the 50-60-degree range, it cleared up and many fish have moved into the shallows to warm up, get their metabolism up to speed for feeding and spawning activities. May is a good time to put on polaroid sunglasses to see what lives in the lake. It should stay clear until it warms into the 70s in June.



## FISH STOCKING UPDATE

### JOHN DRURY

Last year was a big year for stocking walleye in Swan Lake. There have been many reports of fishers catching small walleyes on the lake this year along with sightings of small walleye schooled up in the shallow towards dusk.

Swan Lake is part of the Department of Natural Resources fish stocking program and is on a stocking schedule every other year. The DNR's next scheduled stocking is in the spring of 2027. The SLA completed a 6"-9" size range walleye stocking in the fall of last year. We are currently looking at completing a second stock in the fall of this year.

The SLA is also planning to install new fish habitats on the lake over the winter. This involves placing natural wood structures in predetermined locations to provide fish with natural habitat and protection. We are looking for volunteers to assist with the construction and placement of these structures. If you would like to volunteer please contact SLA Board member John Drury at 608-235-0233 or send us a message on our website [swanlakeassnportage.com](http://swanlakeassnportage.com).

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



**02 August 2026**

### PORTAGE BOAT CLUB

Portage Boat Club is a Membership only boat club on Swan Lake with a club house, beach area, campsites, sand volleyball court, and pier system with boat slips for members to use. Reach out to [portageboatclub@gmail.com](mailto:portageboatclub@gmail.com) to learn more.

Their Annual Pancake Breakfast will be held on Sunday, August 2nd. Serving from 7:00am - Noon. All are welcome!



**04 July 2026**

### INDEPENDENCE DAY

#### **City of Portage**

Fireworks - Fri., June 26

#### **Swan Lake**

Celebration - Sat., July 4

#### **Village of Pardeeville**

Parade and Fireworks - Sat., July 4

## IN THE COMMUNITY

Swan Lake is nestled between four wonderful communities: Pacific, Portage, Pardeeville, and Wyocena. We are looking to include more community featured businesses, events, and local listings in our newsletter. Please reach out to the SLA board on our website if you are interested.

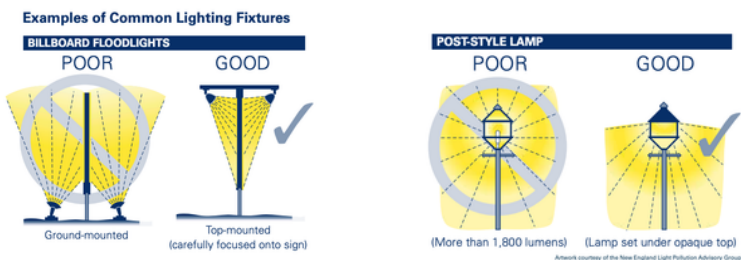
We would love to feature local:

- Restaurants
- Boutique and Gift Stores
- Coffee Shops
- Classifieds to sell boats, lifts, houses, jet skis, etc.
- Farmer's Markets
- Live Music

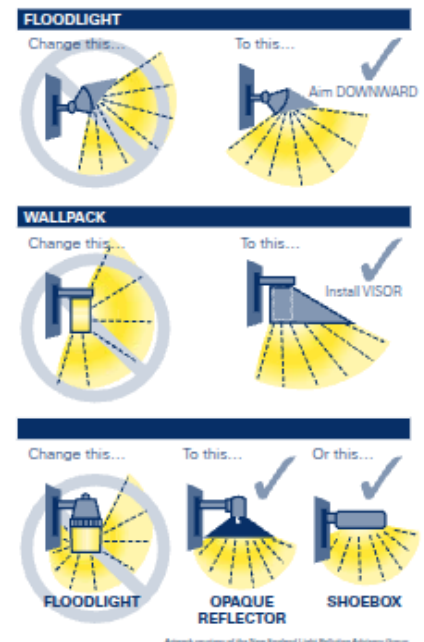
## SHORELAND LIGHTING TIPS

- Use motion security lighting instead of dusk to dawn security lights
- Choose the lowest light possible for your intended task
- Eliminate glare by shielding light fixtures from direct eye contact and using full cut-off fixtures
- Retrofit existing fixtures with shields to reduce glare
- Position lights above or in front of items and pointed down to remove sky glow. In fact pointing lights skyward is prohibited in Columbia County ordinances.

Read more information from the [WDNR Shoreland Management Program](#).



### Modifying Existing Fixtures



## COMMITTEES

Swan Lake has created two new member committees - Fishery and Water Quality. Reach out to the board if you are interested in helping to build or want to participate on these committees.



### FISHERY

Swan Lake Association partners with the DNR to restock the lake.



### WATER QUALITY

Swan Lake has been the subject of ongoing environmental monitoring efforts, particularly with respect to its water clarity.