



SWAN LAKE NEWS

Swan Lake Association, Inc. Newsletter

November, 2024

A NOTE FROM THE SLA PRESIDENT

By Mike Meikle

Here it is the middle of October, and we are still having high temperatures in the 70's. With another great season behind us it is time to look at what the needs of the lake are going forward and how do we get there. At the recent Swan Lake Annual Member Meeting, held in September, we discussed issues that concern all of us.

With that being said, we all know that we had an extended period where the lake was in a slow no wake period. We held a meeting in August to discuss high-water issues with attendance from the DNR, Pardeeville Director of Public Works, Town of Wyocena town chair, Town of Pacific town chair, Park Lake Management District, Columbia County Emergency Management and Columbia County Water Management. The primary cause of the high-water events in early summer were due to many large rain events in late spring and early summer. This required the lake to be in slow no-wake for extended periods of time. Notification and education to boaters is critical to minimize property and environmental damage during such events. Notifications by SLA through their web site as well as through the Emergency Management department and notifications at the boat landing were coordinated to inform as many people as possible.

The Department of Natural Resources continues to try and upgrade the boat landing ramp but at this point they have had no bids to complete the work needed. The DNR informed us that they have decided to bundle similar projects to hopefully get some interest in repairing the boat landing that many of you know is in serious need of repair. The DNR continues to look at other repairs at the boat landing like asphalt repair and striping which needs to be done as well. The DNR has informed us that there will be a new 40' pier at the landing next year to replace the current 20' pier that is there now. The DNR can't be on the lake as often as they would like so they have asked for all of us to assist with calling in offenses to the Columbia County Sheriff at 608-742-4166 or the DNR at 800-847-9367 to make sure that everyone is safe on the lake. If possible, just give them a description of the boat, as well as the registration numbers and what the boat is doing.

The SLA Board of Directors met recently to continue discussions on other areas that would improve the lake. We are reviewing the plans for a life jacket rack to stock with loaner jackets for those who forgot theirs or did not bring enough jackets with them. We are hoping that this will be completed in the spring. We continue to keep focused on updates to wake boat regulations and are continuing to find a source to stock walleye fingerlings.

It has also been asked by many to please reduce your outdoor lighting so that all can enjoy the serenity of the lake. Please look at reducing glare to make the lake as peaceful and relaxing as possible for all.

As a board, we are looking for other areas that you feel would benefit the lake. If you have an idea, please share with any one of the board of directors whose contact info is included in the newsletter.

I hope everyone has a great holiday season and I am looking forward to another great year on the lake in 2025.

WATSON WATCH

by Jim Watson

Swan Lake was very low this spring after 2-going on to 3 years of drought, some people had trouble at the public landing and getting onto boat hoists. That level is what we used to see during typical dry, late summer into fall, back in the 1960s-70s. People had smaller boats and no hoists back then. So, it was not a big thing to notice.

Once the water warmed up and plants began to grow down river, lake level began to rise, even with no significant rainfall. We started running the red boat down and up the river to keep level from going too high. Some heavy rain caused a quick rise to the SloNoWake mark but, it turned around in less than a day. Then later in June the whole surrounding countryside was flowing sheets of mud laden water, across the fields, down the ditches and streams into our river and lake. The lake rose and covered many piers and onto lakeside lawns. The few weeds down river had no effect on the high water and, the rapid flow soon scoured the river channel clear to the sand bottom. The lake was under the SlowNoWake order for a month even though it quit raining, and the drought resumed. It was just too much water filling all the wetlands in the watershed.

It should not have lasted that long.

I have noted during some past high-water events that lasted longer than the rainfall amounts would explain why it was not dropping, when the Wisconsin River was also very high at the same time. The Wis. River is 10 feet higher than Swan Lake and the Fox River below us goes to Portage. The broad wetlands between the rivers that extend from county highway P to near the Associated Bank on Wisconsin Street in Portage, slope towards the Fox River. Under the fairgrounds area of town and the thin, green cover of marsh grass and cattails in the huge wetlands, is Wisconsin River sand bar sand. The Portage levee keeps the Wis. River from overflowing across the surface of the landscape but, it still flows underground. At times you will see water bubbling up and flowing across highway 51/16, the ponds by the Portage sewer plant rise, ditches around the fairgrounds filled with water, people will have sump pumps running in some homes in that area. It is like an underground river, over 1 1/2 miles wide, flowing to the Fox River nearly 2 miles away. It may be slow, taking several days to a week to reach the Fox but it contributes a huge amount of water, that prevents Swan Lake from draining. This was just my theory until this year. The heavy rainfall runoff that caused the water rise in Swan Lake also carried a lot of freshly applied fertilizer from the landscape that caused a green algae bloom. The lake water flowing out of Swan was bright, pea soup, green. Before the first bend of the river, the left (south) side of the river was a thin line of clear water, stained the color of weak coffee. Continuing down the river this band of tea colored water became wider as more water oozing out of the marshy south side entered the channel. After 2 miles the whole river was running with clear, tinted water. No more green lake water. It was obvious the Fox was so full of the marsh water input, there was not much room for the water to flow out of Swan Lake. Once the Wisconsin River dropped and no more flow reached the Fox, Swan Lake level fell very quickly. There is nothing anyone can do about that. Reading some history of early Portage, before the levee was built, the whole area south and east of Edgewater St. would be inundated every time the Wisconsin River flooded. It is why many of the businesses that were in that area, which was the main business area of Portage, moved up to Cook Street and other places on higher ground. Water, several feet deep would flow over the fairground's neighborhood, highway, the railroad beds, the entire area to the RR crossing near county highway P. Swan Lake would back up to near the levels we saw in 2008 and 2018.

Other than those two short periods of heavy rain, the weather all spring, summer and so far, into late Oct. has been the best I can ever remember. More clear, blue-sky, sunny days, often glass calm lake water, that go on and on, week after week. The only gripe was the biting gnats, flies and skeeters but, they went

away by mid-August

While the bugs were biting, it seemed to me the fish were not. I don't go fishing as much as I used to but, I tried hard to locate the bluegills when they should have been up in shallow water as it warmed. Water was too cloudy to see them this year so, I had to just toss bait into the traditional spots we most often see them year after year. No luck with the blind search. Finally, on Father's Day weekend we found nice sized bluegills in a thin band of Big Leaved Pond Weed along edges of tall bullrush stems. It was tricky getting the hook and bobber in that edge without snagging the tough bull rush stems but, well worth it for nice fish fry the young friends took home.

The lake is infested with small yellow bass (stripers), again. They go in cycles, numbers increase, size goes down then, often population crashes. As they recover, they often grow to 15 inches or more and fight harder than most game fish. In the meantime, they eat a lot of stuff all the other fish need so it affects fishing overall for other species. And they steal all your live bait, often before any other fish can get to your hook.

Interruptions in the regular stocking of walleyes (due to Covid and hatchery problems) so, there are very few legal sized ones left in the lake for now. DNR is resuming stocking and Swan Lake Assoc. hopes to help boost the number too, if we can find a private hatchery that has the proper strain of fish DNR requires.

I have heard of some nice catches of large crappies here and there. LM bass are numerous but seem to run smaller than usual. More SM bass are showing up in the last few years.

Although most musky fishermen are secretive, I'm assuming they have some success, as I see many boats trolling and casting the large lures in all open water seasons and even in the nastiest weather (when musky are often most likely to strike).

Some mysteries we are looking in to are.

- ***Why has the lake been turning green as soon as it warms up to 70 degrees the last several years. It was staying very clear well into the middle of summer for many years, as long as we did not get a huge rain event (like we did this year) soon after farm fields were planted and fertilized, before crops could grow enough to use it and protect soil from erosion.***

- ***What has happened to the weed beds? Fishermen are noting their favorite places are empty of fish cover. Even the lily pad beds have disappeared or shrunk, The Eurasian milfoil is nearly all gone (good riddance to the foreign invader and is happening in many lakes). The native plants that have been recovering in recent years have disappeared for the most part also. Most fish need some weed cover and lack of weed beds leave fishermen casting, trolling, searching out in the empty void, wondering where to find the fish.***

The green alga blooms are maybe blocking the sunlight so, rooted vegetation can't survive? There is not much weed cover in Park Lake upstream either but that is due to the carp rooting out the plants and the disturbed silt blocks sunlight. Even though the weed growth in the Fox River downstream is less than previous years yet, it is growing thick near Portage and beyond. I'm trying to contact the DNR fisheries guys in Poynette and the regional DNR Lakes Biologist to see if they have any ideas.

Please, call the warden or sheriff's department any time you see bad boat driving behavior and violations. Even if you cannot get a boat number or description, the more reports they hear, from more than just one or two people, the more likely we can get more frequent law enforcement patrols on the lake.

Speaking of the DNR wardens, we should thank Warden Paul Nadolski for his many years of special attention to Swan Lake and the Swan Lake Assoc. as, he will be retiring this November.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

This spring the SLA Board decided to change the dates of our annual dues to coincide with the annual calendar. Most people have stepped up and paid the \$10 annual dues already for 2024 or paid ahead.

Please send dues to SLA, P.O. Box 182, Portage, WI 53901, if you still need to pay for 2024, or specify that you are paying ahead for the year 2025. We will send envelopes in the spring newsletter for 2025 dues for those who get their newsletter by mail.

Our best way to enlist new members is by word of mouth. If you have any neighbors that are new to the Swan Lake area, please tell them about the Swan Lake Association and ask them to join. Any questions can be answered by anyone on the board, but please feel free to call Paula Greco, SLA Treasurer, at 502-500-5181 or e-mail her at paulagreco1@gmail.com. We always welcome donations as well and are a 501(c)3 organization.

Paula Greco

NEW BOARD MEMBER UPDATE

Hi, my name is Mike Nachreiner and I am honored to be a member of the Swan Lake Association Board. My wife Rachel and I, along with our 3 boys, Michael (16), Brekken (13), and Hudson (10), moved to the lake in December of 2019. We all feel like it was one of the best decisions we've ever made, as we love being on Swan Lake enjoying all of the great opportunities and activities the lake has to offer. It truly has been a wonderful place to raise a family.

I work in Portage as the owner of Zimmerman Plumbing. I am also a captain on the Portage Fire Department and have been an active volunteer there for the past 15 years. Between work, the fire department and family life, we are always on the go. Rachel and I are most often found in our vehicles taking our boys to practices, athletic competitions, or school events. When we do get some free time as a family, you can usually find us down by the lake as it is our favorite place to be together. I am looking forward to serving on the Swan Lake Association and being part of the board that does so many great things for the lake and everyone who is lucky enough to enjoy it.

SADDLE RIDGE MARINA

by Tom Benson

The Saddle Ridge Marina was purchased in 2013 by Saddle Ridge Association, LTD from Saddle Ridge Corporation. Since that time the marina was expanded and the marina park enhanced. Improvements to the docks and the shoreline have been an ongoing project for the Marina volunteers. The Marina currently has 72 boat slips and a waiting list for people desiring a slip. The Marina Park has been transformed over the years. The original two tennis courts now house the pavilion, a tennis court, two shuffleboard courts and one pickleball court. The pavilion continues to serve as an outdoor community center for the Saddle Ridge Association. It has hosted local community and non-profit events. The pavilion is also rented out for events such as graduations and parties. Last year (2023) new playground equipment was added to the park. The most recent improvement has been the renovation of the basketball courts.

SPECIAL UPDATE-WAKE SURFING BOATS-SWAN LAKE

by Jerry Rice-Board Member

Discussion about wake surfing boats has been ongoing for the last several years. I presented the issue at the Annual Meeting of the Association in September. While it's important that everyone has equal opportunity to enjoy the recreational aspect of Swan Lake in an equal fashion, there has been an effort throughout the country to regulate usage of a specific type of activity in a very specific type of watercraft. Wake surfers ride a wave generated by a powerful boat, with a prop angled downward, and internal bladders filled with water intended to generate very large waves. The wake boat generally travels at very slow speeds (about 10 mph). At this point, some communities with water bodies around the country have enacted local ordinances and/or advisories that limit usage of wake surfing boats. They range from complete bans to the requirement that they operate from 200' to 700' from the shoreline, and/or water at a minimum depth, plus certification of cleaned out bladders when moving the boat from one body of water to another to protect from transfer of invasive species. While there have been bans and restrictions in Wisconsin, as well as advisories, there is no current State Law. Legislators have proposed some restrictions, but there are coalitions of communities that have formed to demand stronger language and evolve around what are called The Four Pillars:

700 Feet from Any Shoreline

30-Foot Minimum Depth

Prevention of Invasive Species in Ballast Tanks

Local Control Maintaining a Right to Enact More Restrictive Ordinances than State Minimums

At our recent annual meeting, several attendees indicated concerns about safety, shoreline erosion, dock/boat damage, and disruption of lake enjoyment by others while on the lake. The Board has determined that it will provide informational updates, communicate safety concerns, and encourage discussion related to determining the best path for safe lake recreation while awaiting clear regulation provided by the State or local authorities. My sense is that within two years, there will be specific State Law. Ultimately, people are responsible for the wake that they create on the lake and litigation related to damage will probably expedite the process.

PORTAGE COUNTRY CLUB

by Mark Braska, PGA/GM

As the 2024 golf season is winding down, we are currently receiving some beautiful weather. The season opened March 1st, our earliest opening ever and was a very good golfing season. We were able to plant numerous maple trees to beautify our golf course. In 2025 we will have our irrigation system fully automated keeping the fairways, greens and tees watered as needed. Many of you reading this may be thinking about joining as we do have openings. Our new membership rates, \$950 for a single and \$1500 for a family are very competitive. This rate is the same rate for your first 2 years and does include carts. If interested, please call Mark Braska 608-742-5121.

PORTAGE BOAT CLUB

Thanks for reaching out to the Portage Boat Club. We are having our annual Pancake Breakfast on August 3rd, 2025, from 7AM till noon. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$7.00 Hope everyone has a great year in 2025!! If anyone is interested in becoming a member of the Boat Club, they can receive an application by submitting a letter to the:

Portage Boat Club

P.O. Box 5

Portage, WI 53901

Thank you, Mike Proebstle

WALLEYE STOCKING IN THE LAKE

by John Drury-Board Member

Have you cast a line in the lake recently for a walleye with no luck, or heard from someone that the walleye fishing on Swan Lake isn't what it used to be? Well, they are right.

The walleye population in Swan Lake is down considerably and the WI Department of Natural Resources fish studies confirm it. DNR fish surveys show a significant drop in adult walleye per acre on the lake.

The DNR has conducted fall fishing surveys every year on Swan Lake since 2016.

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 stocks the lake with fingerling walleye. Stocking on the lake has typically been done every other year with thousands of 3"-4" fingerlings placed in the spring. Unfortunately, the DNR had a couple of missed years of restocking due to issues at the ponds where the DNR was getting its walleye fingerlings. This combined with increased fishing pressure on the lake during the pandemic resulted in a significantly lower population of adult walleye in the lake.

The good news is the DNR has informed us they plan to stock the lake in the spring of 2025 with approx. 14,000 walleye fingerlings. The SLA has also been discussing stocking options with the DNR that includes the SLA doing additional stocking of larger fingerlings, allowing the lake to get back to a healthy population of adult walleyes sooner. The association has been working with a WI fish nursery to secure larger walleyes for a stocking in the fall of 2025.

In addition, the SLA is planning to install some additional fish habitat on the lake over the winter. This involves placing natural wood structures in predetermined locations to provide fish with natural habitat areas throughout the year

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.

SADDLE RIDGE GOLF COURSE

by Rusty Grimm

We are currently offering discounted pricing on all our memberships. Buy before 12/1/2024 to get in on the special pricing!! We will have newer golf carts coming for 2025, so that's exciting news!! We anticipate having another great year with lots of events being offered to add to the fun. There are still many clothing items being offered at 50% off. And, for special occasions, we offer gift certificates of any denomination. Stop in to see us or give us a call, 608-742-2181, ext. 1 Or, visit our website: <https://saddleridgegolfcourse.com>

HELLO FROM NORTHSORE!

- This year has been amazing, and we are all so thrilled to continue to be a part of this community! We
- celebrated our 10-year anniversary this year so thanks to everyone who came to the party. Hopefully
- everyone continues to be happy that we are here, and we have some big stuff planned for 2025! I just
- want to thank the community for their support over the last decade and most of all our wonderful staff
- who continue to be amazing year after year.

• Thanks, Chad Kruswickic

SLA, INC. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Mike Meikle (S) 2145 Southern Court, Cottage Grove, WI 53527	608-839-4096
Vice President: Don Sabey (N) W7501 2nd Ln., Portage, WI 53901	608-742-1157
Secretary: John Drury (S) 6990 Portage Rd., Deforest, WI 53532	608-235-0233
Treasurer: Paula Greco (N) W7393 2nd St., Portage, WI 53901	502-500-5181

Board Members:	
Robert Barth (S) PO Box 764, Pardeeville, WI 53954	608-697-5613
Mike Nachreiner (S) 303 E Albert Street, Portage, WI 53901	608-697-6836
Jerry Rice (N) 1090 Saddle Ridge, Portage, WI 53901	262-527-1956
Jim Watson (N) N7581 W. North Shore Dr., Portage, WI 53901	608-617-9819