

# Crooked Lake Association Board of Directors 2023-24 Report

## Welcome & CLA Organizational Purposes

Thank you for attending our 2024 Annual Crooked Lake Association meeting. This year marks the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Association and the 30<sup>th</sup> year of our Association being legally organized in Indiana as a public benefit corporation.

Outlined below is a summary of priority achievements undertaken by the Board of Directors this past year in support of our organizational purposes to:

- Work together to keep Crooked Lake and Little Crooked Lake in Whitley and Noble counties, Indiana, clean and unpolluted and in their natural state.
- Acquire real estate for the protection and preservation of the natural beauty of the two lakes.
- And do all things necessary to promote the general welfare of the Crooked Lake community.

The Tippecanoe River originates from Crooked Lake and is considered one of the 10 Most Important Rivers in the US resulting in our having an enormous responsibility to protect against pollution.

## Water Quality Assessment Findings for Crooked & Little Crooked

Our collective goal is for a well-established and consistent ecosystem producing good water quality. First, some exceptionally good news. Last summer hundreds of freshwater jellyfish were found present along the southern shore of our waters. This is seen as a positive sign of clean water indicating that conservation projects undertaken are improving the lake's health. The mesotrophic state for deep-water Crooked Lake is scored 45 indicating moderate nutrient levels.

The most recent mean water chemistry parameter finding trends for July & August 2023 from the Indiana Clean Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Program compared to prior years are:

<u>Parameter</u>	<u>Crooked</u>	<u>Little Crooked</u>
Secchi Disc	16.5 Ft. Improving	5 Ft. Decreasing
Chlorophyll	3ug/L	12.5ug/L
Total Phosphorus	28ug/L	36ug/L
Total Nitrogen	660ug/L	812.5ug/L
Carlson's TSI	36 oligotrophic	53 mesotrophic

According to the IDEM 2024 303(d) List of Impaired Waters submitted to the U.S. EPA Assessment program the water quality of both our lakes are considered Category 5 Impaired. Little Crooked possesses poorer water quality than most lakes in Indiana in terms of transparency, nitrate-nitrogen, ammonia nitrogen and typical total and dissolved phosphorus.

What this means is that we need to vigilantly monitor and implement sustainable conservation investments to mitigate both natural and human-caused influences and curb nutrient and sediment runoff coming from lake tributaries by deploying shoreline best practices.

## **Lake Tributaries & Inlets Action Plans**

All our Board agendas for the past several years have included a major section on shoreline enhancements to address sediment and nutrient runoff coming from various lake tributaries and inlets. Here is an overview and progress update of this key focus effort:

### ➤ **The Farm Ditch**

A cascade of 15 check dams have recently been constructed to slow the velocity and catch nutrient runoff coming from the Crow property 14-acre row crop field to the north of the Nature Preserve Ravine.

Working collaboratively with The Watershed Foundation (TWF) team, along with the engineering firm Stantec and Don Crow, an amended INDNR Land and River Enhancement (LARE) Grant was submitted in January 2024. This grant requests \$151,000 for three major projects including the cleanup of 40-50 downed trees from the 2022 derecho. A funding determination is expected in July 2024. As previously mentioned CLA will be responsible for funding the dredging of the associated retention pond. When completed, all these related projects are expected to annually avoid 70 tons of sediment, including 120 pounds of phosphorus and 225 pounds of nitrogen from entering our lakes.

TWF is currently soliciting bids on behalf of the INDNR-NP engineering feasibility bids for preliminary Nature Preserve Ravine delta restoration plans consisting of 3-acres for the potential development of a wetland and other sediment containment measures. INDNR-NP has earmarked \$20,000 for this plan which likely will take several years to complete.

### ➤ **East Morsches Road**

A Water and Sediment Control Basis (WASCOB) with a blind inlet was recently constructed on the west side of E. Morsches Road to address sediment runoff from the former golf course and retention pond overflow. Thank you to Ben & Meredith Bishop for consenting to this conversation project on their property.

### ➤ **Runoff near Island**

Discussions are underway on how best to approach this troublesome situation which encompasses drainage from a nearby designated wetland, and from the former golf course flowing across private property along 1.3 acres of INDNR property ravine banks.

### ➤ **Pressler Road**

A comprehensive plan to address storm water and sediment runoff was developed in conjunction with Goshen College students and reviewed with all residents in the Fall of 2023. Meetings are currently underway to discuss the development of bioswales with residents.

TWF and the INDNR-NP staff have collaborated with the regional Natural Resources Conservation Services Technical Team to draft preliminary plans for the design of 3-5 WASCOBs and a new wetland north of Pressler Road on the 24-acres of land donated by CLA to the INDNR-NP. Plans call for further investigation of possible old tiles and the review of the option of grassed waterways interspersed with mini-French drains. Plans call for the INDNR-NP to fund this project from their annual maintenance budget.

➤ **Spear Road**

Consideration is being given to how to effectively develop needed plans for two major inlets responsible for significant sediment flowing into the lake during heavy rains. The three WASCOBs installed on private property in 2015 are proving inadequate and secondly the damage caused by the 2022 derecho trees and elimination of ground cover have revealed another situation needing to be addressed when the wetlands overflow. Additionally, the INDNR has requested TWF advice on possible wetlands on Spear Road.

➤ **South Woodstrail Drive**

Written recommendations developed in 2023 to slow and filtrate excess storm water have been shared with residents along S. Woodstrail Dr. to mitigate sediment runoff at the intersection of S. Woodstrail & Hilltop Drives that in turn enters the lake.

➤ **Blind Inlets on Riddle Farm Fields**

TWF has advocated on our behalf for the installation of blind inlets on the John Riddle farm fields north of County Line Road. The Noble County Surveyor's office has taken this proposal under advisement and is trialing this sediment management option near Crane Lake. If proven successful we will again make this proposal to Mr. Riddle with partial funding from Noble County Soil and Water District.

➤ **Meetings with INDNR-NP & Representative David Abbott**

We have strengthened our working relationship with INDNR-NP officials during the past year and feel there is better alignment of our mutual plans to address the Farm Ditch and Nature Preserve Ravine drain issues.

Also, Rep. David Abbot has taken interest in our situation particularly with The Farm Ditch projects and overall funding of related conservation enhancements. We have presented him with a three-year capital budget for his consideration and are seeking his advice on how best to secure additional funding from the State government beyond LARE grants.

## **Fundraising & Social Event Results**

During this past year, several successful fundraising events were held including Pancakes on the Lake, the sale of lake logo wear, the sale of pumpkin & squash donated by Carol & Mike Johnson, along with a pulled pork sale donated by Sandy & Chuck Johnson. The results of these fundraisers and your year-end appeal generous contributions totaled nearly \$10,000. We also hosted two social events. Your suggestions are appreciated for other ways we can better mutually connect and seek greater engagement in Association activities.

## **IRS Not-for-Profit Status**

This past year the Board researched the pros and cons of establishing CLA as an IRS tax exempt, not-for-profit corporation. This designation gives access to new grant opportunities to fund lake conservation enhancements and gives donors the ability to claim their donations to CLA on their tax returns. The decision was made to develop the needed documents including amendments to our current Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, create new fiscal reporting systems, and develop policies that will enable CLA to pursue this status in the future if it decides to do so.

In the meantime, those who donate to CLA will continue to be able to claim their contributions as tax exempt through our collaboration with the Community Foundation of Whitley County.

### **New Lake Residents**

During the past year we welcomed several new neighbors to the lake. Others are discovering our lake's serene ambiance as Crooked Lake and the associated Crooked Lake Nature Preserve are considered destination sites.

### **Recent Area Developments**

The Bishop Ridge Subdivision has three new homes are under construction. We welcome these new neighbors. Recently one of the larger lots was approved for a split.

The former golf course clubhouse 1-acre parcel was rezoned from Rural Residential to Village Commercial with limited special exception uses including an online garage door spring business. Key commitments and conditions over property use and appearance have been legally recorded which will pass with the property. Note that the Association has the first right of refusal to purchase the property going forward. Plans are pending on the fate of the former clubhouse.

All Crooked Lakes roads are now 20 MPH with the addition of Woodstrail in 2023. Other recommendations to ensure public safety are always appreciated.

### **Status of Wake Boating & Wake Boarding/ Public Access Signage**

Despite wake boating causing shoreline erosion, damaging piers, and churning up bottom sediments which encourages overgrowth of algae and harming aquatic fish and plants the Indiana General Assembly again did not address wake boarding/surfing this past 2024 session. Instead, we are exploring the designation by INDNR as an Ecozone. This classification option would protect our natural shorelines and shallow waters areas. Ecosystems have been established on nearby lakes including Tippecanoe, Syracuse and Wawasee.

We have held off pursuing new Public Access signage pending legislation prohibiting wake boating on our lake. The Board has prioritized new signage at the Public Access site emphasizing our lake's restricted boating speed limit. It remains important to always respect our 10 MPH speed limit and should you observe suspected violations or other incidents take a photo of the boat number and call DNR Dispatch at 812-837-9536. The DNR has agreed to accept video recordings from the Osprey nest for tracking speeders.

### **Ospreys Have Returned...Please No Fireworks**

We are pleased that Whitley & Noble have returned, and their family rearing activities viewed world-wide on YouTube.

We ask the residents in proximity to the Osprey nest to refrain from using any fireworks as last year there were incidents on July 4th that we prefer not to be repeated for the sake of the safety of our feathered friends.

