

# Crooked Lake

Noble & Whitley Counties

## Crooked Lake Association Board of Directors 2025-26 Report May 30, 2026

### Welcome

Thank you for attending our 2026 Annual Crooked Lake Association meeting. This year marks our 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 32<sup>nd</sup> year of being legally organized in Indiana as a public benefit corporation. Crooked Lake is more than just a lake, it is a community of people who care about our water, our wildlife and each other.

Outlined within this report is a summary of achievements undertaken by the Board of Directors this past year.

### Water Quality Assessment Findings for Crooked & Little Crooked

The most recent water chemistry averages for July & August 2025 from the Indiana Clean Lakes Volunteer Monitoring Program compared to 2024 are:

<u>Parameter</u>	<u>Crooked</u>		<u>Little Crooked</u>	
	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
Secchi Disc	16 ft.	12.6 ft.	4 ft	4.5 ft.
Chlorophyll	2.5 ug/L	3.5 ug/L	6.5 ug/L	11 ug/L
Total Phosphorus	31 ug/L	26 ug/L	48.5 ug/L	40 ug/L
Total Nitrogen	472.5 ug/L	520 ug/L	951.5 ug/L	978.5ug/L

Several years' worth of data is available on the CLA website for making useful comparisons. Looking at the above two years of data for Crooked Lake and Little Crooked you can see that there is variability from year to year, but a true evaluation of the trend requires examination of data over many years. The facts are that the high ranking enjoyed by Crooked Lake 35 or 40 years ago has diminished to the point where we now rank in the middle to lower half of all lakes tested for transparency, chlorophyll, total phosphorus and total nitrogen.

Why has our water quality been declining? There are many causes, including increased precipitation, greater variability in temperature, intensive agriculture production, soil erosion, stormwater runoff, nutrient pollution and manure runoff (from wildlife and domesticated animals). But what can we do about it?

We do not believe decline is inevitable. While these water quality findings are concerning, there is still hope for improvement and we believe that the Crooked Lake Association is on the right path. With time, we expect to see real water quality improvement due to the imminent completion of the Farm Ditch Project. This work was made possible by the generous contributions of Crooked Lake residents through our Beyond Clear—Return to Pristine fundraising campaign.

# Crooked Lake

Noble & Whitley Counties

Our future efforts will continue to focus on nutrient and sediment runoff into the lake through water monitoring, utilizing best management practices for shorelines, installation of appropriate remedial practices and educational programming.

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

Agendas for our Board of Directors meetings for the past several years have shown a major emphasis on shoreline enhancements and remedial practices to address sediment and nutrient runoff coming from various lake tributaries and inlets. In collaboration with The Watershed Foundation (TWF) and residents of Crooked Lake, we have been able to fund many water quality initiatives over the years. Here is an overview of the past year's progress:

### ➤ **The Farm Ditch**

In July of 2024, a \$100,000 Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) grant was awarded to the Crooked Lake Association for construction of erosion control practices on the Farm Ditch. This was combined with well over \$100,000 very generously donated by the Crooked Lake Community to pay the estimated project cost of \$205,000. Construction began in February 2026 and the project is nearly complete as of this writing.

The Crooked Lake Association would like to express our gratitude for the generosity of all who donated to this project. Without your confidence in the future of Crooked Lake, we would not have been able to attempt a project of this magnitude.

### ➤ **Pressler Road**

A comprehensive plan to address storm water and sediment runoff was developed in conjunction with Goshen College students and reviewed with residents in the Fall of 2023. Several Pressler Road residents are continuing to show interest in the development of bioswales, rain gardens and other aspects of the plan.

Collaboration of TWF and the DNR-Nature Preserve staff is ongoing to determine solutions to excessive soil-laden runoff on the 24-acres of land donated by CLA to the DNR-NP. This property is just north of Pressler Road. Plans call for further investigation of old, broken-down drainage tiles and the possible construction of grassed waterways interspersed with mini-French drains. DNR-NP expects to fund this project from their annual maintenance budget.

### ➤ **Spear Road/ Gatesworth Shores**

Our Lake Enhancement Priorities committee is currently evaluating inlets responsible for significant sediment flowing into the lake during heavy rain. The WASCObS installed on private property in 2015 which were originally the first of a two-part project are proving that there is a real need for the second part to be constructed.

Attention of the committee is also being directed towards the ravine draining into Crooked Lake near the Gatesworth common area. This will likely be a high priority project once construction on the Farm Ditch is completed.

# Crooked Lake

Noble & Whitley Counties

## ➤ **South Woodstrail Drive**

We applaud residents' efforts to slow and filter excess storm water as it flows over their properties. Improvements made in plantings and water diversion will help to mitigate sediment runoff into the lake.

A continuing concern is the overflow of stormwater across Woodstrail in several locations as well as at the surface inlet near the intersection of S. Woodstrail & Hilltop Drive. Several water sources contribute to the problem, so this complex problem is also one that the Lake Enhancement Priorities Committee is investigating.

## ➤ **Blind Inlets on neighboring farm fields**

TWF has advocated on our behalf for the installation of blind inlets on farm fields north of County Line Road. Once the Noble County Surveyor approves of this practice, we will again make this proposal to the landowner with partial funding possible from Noble County Soil and Water District.

## ➤ **Progress in the Crooked Lake Nature Preserve**

We have strengthened our working relationship with DNR-NP officials during the past four years and feel we have a good relationship with the new NP manager, Adam Balzer. Crooked Lake and The Crooked Lake Nature Preserve are fortunate to have Adam overseeing the property situated along most of the north shore of the lake.

Adam's eagerness to seek solutions to soil-laden runoff has resulted in several improvements to the NP over the past two years. While these are not CLA-initiated projects, they are designed and constructed to positively impact the water quality of Crooked Lake.

NP projects completed in the past year include the construction of two large wetlands, two water holding basins, some natural wetland enhancements, check dams and bank stabilization in the "Barn Ditch" ravine. These projects combine to intercept old drainage tile flow as well as surface runoff, provide temporary water holding capacity, reduce excess waterflow and prevent further erosion of the banks of the ravine. Situated east of the NP house and barn, these projects are not visible from the trails.

## **Invasive Species and Nuisance Animal Control**

The Crooked Lake Association Board of Directors has a long history of protecting the lake from invasive plants and nuisance wild animals. For over 20 years, relying on accepted scientific research and dependent on governmental recommendations and official approval, CLA has tried to control invasive plant species such as Purple Loosestrife by pulling and spraying, and nuisance wild animals such as Canada Geese by egg oiling. In 2025 we addressed the threat to Crooked Lake of the invasive Mute Swan.

The culling method used to control the swans was controversial and the effort was not fully explained in advance to board members or lake residents. This resulted in expressions of anger, bad feelings, and alienation of some long-time members from the association. The outcome was that CLA directors spent much of the winter evaluating what led to this action and created two new policies. They will guide the board when considering nuisance wild animal control in the future, accentuate transparency by posting Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes on the CLA website and will create greater clarity and accessibility in the election of directors for the association. The Nuisance Wild Animal policy and the Directors and Officers policy will be available for viewing on the CLA website.

# Crooked Lake

Noble & Whitley Counties

## **Fundraising & Social Events**

During this past year, several successful fundraising events were held including Pancakes on the Lake, the sale of pumpkin & squash donated by Carol & Mike Johnson, and a pulled pork sale on Pressler Road. The results of these fundraisers have been dedicated to future water quality projects.

We continue to seek your assistance and suggestions for ways we can improve links between lake residents and how to pursue greater engagement in Association activities.

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

While CLA has not yet formally sought NFP status, this designation may give access to new grant opportunities to fund lake conservation enhancements and give donors the ability to claim their donations to CLA on their tax returns. In 2025, the Not-For-Profit Committee's recommendations for revisions to our current Articles of Incorporation and to our Bylaws were approved.

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 (WCCF). Simply make your donation out to the WCCF with instructions that it is for support of Crooked Lake, and they will pass the amount through to the Crooked Lake Association treasurer.

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

This winter the Indiana General Assembly addressed wake boarding/surfing and passed legislation prohibiting Wake Boating and Wake Surfing on small lakes (<300 acres) without ski exemptions and restricted use of these boats on ski lakes and larger lakes. Thanks to many letters and emails of support from area lake residents and significant efforts by TWF, Indiana Legislators have authorized the new law to go into effect on July 1, 2026. As many of you know, wake boating causes shoreline erosion, damages piers, and churns up bottom sediments encouraging overgrowth of algae and harming fish and aquatic plants.

The Board has recognized the need for 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.

## **Ospreys Have Returned, Again...**

We are pleased that Crooked Lake's osprey family has returned for 2026. Noble and Mom and their family rearing activities have been viewed world-wide on YouTube for much of the past 9 years.

**Thanks for taking the time to learn about the Crooked Lake Association's activities and what we expect to do in the future!**