

Lake Alexander Property Owners Association

NEWSLETTER

June 2024



Hello again Lake Alexander Property Owners Association (LAPOA) Members,

It's timer again for me to pen my President's Letter but this time for the open-water season of 2024! I hope that all of you have survived our near-record winter, with basically no snow and poor ice all season (?)... I had ice off marked on March 16, the earliest recorded in m modern memory! Memorial Day weekend has come and gone, and now the real summer can begin, but we've had a fair share of rain so the drought of the last 2 years, at least at the moment after heavy rains overnight prior to this writing, that is in the rear view mirror so we'll see where June leads...as always, if we didn't have some sort of weather phenomenon what would we have to chat about around Lake Alex?! Finally, water levels have returned with all the spring rains, so everyone should be able to get boats on-and-off lifts, like we're able to do as well, so I wish all a good summer season on the Lake!

Again this past winter I found little to no serious heaving damage around the Lake which makes the start of our 2024 season a much smoother transition. And, the Lake Alexander LID has had our Lake Service provider, Lake Restoration Inc., out already on April 30 (earliest recorded CLP treatment!) and treated 16.9 acres of curly-leaf pondweed, a 20% decrease from 2023. Further, we also have had our first LAPOA Board meeting in the first week of May and have decided on another in person Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 10 at 9 A.M. at the Scandia Valley Town Hall (further details in this newsletter).

It can be reported that there again have not been any new developments with the Pine Bluff LLC (former Weyerhaeuser property) but the Board will remain vigilant in following this issue as anything new may develop. And I would be remorse if I didn't mention floating bogs, which as of this writing none have been reported to the LALID. Finally, as I always like to ask, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of our 9 LAPOA Board members including myself regarding any lake-related issues and we will do our utmost to keep you informed of such as they arise....

Finally, allow me to close by saying that I hope to see you around the Lake as summer progresses or at least invite you again to our Annual Meeting at the SV Town Hall on Saturday morning the 10th of August. I can mention here we are planning to have a Fall (September) clean-up again this year so be looking for information on that in the Newsletter. And please, do get out on the lake and enjoy another summer season on Lake Alex and around the Lincoln Lakes area, keep well, and on behalf of the LAPOA Board our sincere thanks for your continued support!

In wildlife,

Dr. Bill, LAPOA President

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Mission Statement: To act as stewards of Lake Alexander in regards to water quality, fish management, and shore line conservation.

Where is the Water?

Cade Roberts, LAPOA Board Member

The question we all asked ourselves last fall as we embarked on the time-honored tradition of pulling out docks, winterizing boats, and storing our lake toys. Last year's "drought-like" conditions left some with boats stuck on lifts and others considering the purchase of more dock. What is a lake cabin/home without being able to leave your boat on the lake?

Some might be asking, where does the water go? Is Fish Trap stealing it? You might be surprised to find out that evaporation and its antithesis precipitation are the largest contributors to lake water level.

True, there is some loss through the culvert going to Fish Trap, but it is a literal "drop in the bucket" compared to Mother Nature herself, and we have several creeks and drainages that feed the lake to counteract the loss. We, as residents around the lake, have little to no control over the level of the water. Historically (levels on Alexander were documented starting in 1956) the lake ranges in level by just under four feet, the lowest ever being in 1961 and the highest in 2001 (see Figure 1). It is important to note here that water level is NOT the same as water depth. The depth of the water near your shoreline is a function of many variables including, but not limited to, vegetation growth, vegetation decay (muck), animal and human activity, and water currents.

According to Mark Anderson, a Hydrologist with the DNR office in Little Falls, the lakes' benchmarks are reset each spring. If you are not aware, Lake Alexander has two benchmarks, one at the culvert in Headleys Bay, aka West Bay or Thoroughfare Bay, and another at a private residence on the East end. This reset uses GPS technology to re-zero the benchmarks to ensure consistent measurements year over year. Then volunteers report the benchmark readings weekly to the DNR for storage in their database. This database is then used by state and municipal organizations to monitor flood levels, establish low-floor elevations for construction sites, and to determine the all-important Ordinary High-Water level (OHW). If you ever apply from a building or DNR permit, you will become familiar with the OHW as it is used to calculate everything from distance from the lake to bluff determination. You can access this information from the DNR Lake Finder site at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/lake.html?id=49007900>.

In stark contrast to last summer's limited rainfall and winter's absence of snow, this spring brought seven plus inches (and more still coming) of precipitation to the area, at least according to my rain gauge. This might have some of you worrying about the opposite problem, too high of a water level. Know that you are not alone in your struggles with water level or depth. Ultimately, it is not in our hands, and at times we will need to get creative to ensure we have the space to utilize the lake for its recreational joy, perhaps a story for another time.

2024 Clean-Up Day

Jim McGonigle, LAPOA Board Member

Saturday, September 14, 2024 9:00 AM-Noon

Once again our lake association anticipates sponsoring a clean-up day. A great time to dispose of your old mattresses, tires, appliances and electronics etc. you just want to get rid of. Our last clean-up day was September 18, 2021 and was a huge success. We like to have one about every three years.

We are still negotiating costs with the sanitation/recycling vendors and will have finalized details at our annual meeting. In 2021 the LAPOA member credit was \$10, e.g. if the cost for dropping off a mattress was \$15, you would only pay a net \$5 for that item. The clean-up day will be open for all area residents, however, only the Lake Alexander Property Owners Association **members** will get a credit toward item(s) disposed of.

Important-we all have experienced the inflationary pressures over the last few years. Detailed disposal costs for items and possibly the credit members receive may be slightly higher than what we experienced in 2021. We will have final plans announced at our annual meeting August 10, along with detailed pricing on the most common disposed of items. In addition we will have fliers posted in advance at most lake area retailers.

We do not view this as a revenue generator. Actually we will likely lose some money on this program. We as a board, however, feel that the elimination of these materials in our area outweighs the cost of putting the program on. More to come this summer.

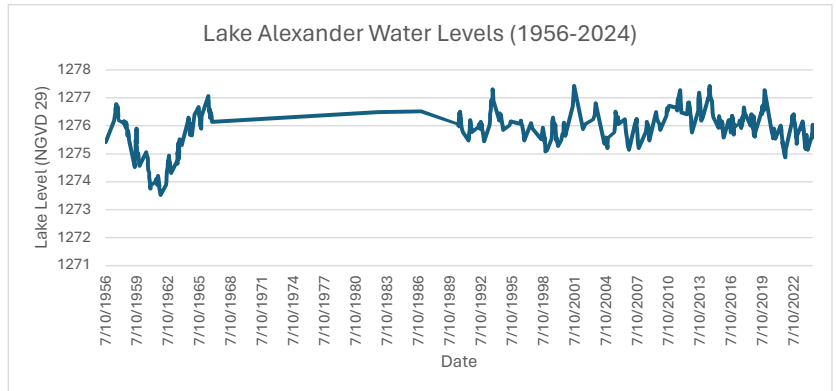


Figure 1: Sourced from data at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/showlevel.html?downum=49007900>

Lake Alexander Fishery: Spring Brings Natures Bounty

Gene Champeau, LAPOA Board Member

As many of us know, Lake Alexander is an exceptional fishery supporting a wide variety of fish species. In fact, compared to many lakes in our region, Lake Alex hosts a multi species roster that isn't found in many other lakes. Thanks to the survey work of our regional fisheries management folks at the Minnesota DNR, we have a pretty good understanding of types, prevalence and size of each sampled fish species. While Lake Alex has an active stocking program for walleye fry and musky fingerlings, most fish reproduction in the lake occurs naturally. Fishing seasons are established in a manner that protects fish during their peak spawning activity and while panfish like crappies can be caught year round, their spawning success is well established despite harvesting throughout the year. Most crappies harvested in the spring are in fact, not spawning, but staging in shallow water to feed prior to the spawning cycle. Crappies in particular can be subject to huge variability in spawning success due to weather conditions and spawning habitat, hence the reason we see huge year classes of fish at times and years with smaller reproduction. The good news is that all of the bass, sunfish and crappies in Lake Alex are wild fish subject to the normal variation that comes with natural reproduction.

The first species to spawn is the northern pike, which typically occurs while ice is still on the lake. Lake Alex has a modest population of northern pike, not characterized by exceptionally large size. Their relative in the *Esox* family is the Muskellunge, which is also prevalent in Lake Alex and also spawns early in cold water. The difference here is that the muskellunge population in Lake Alex is robust with a large average size, making Lake Alex a destination lake for Muskie anglers from around the area including the Twin Cities metro. Northern Pike and Muskie spawning is followed by walleye, perch, bass, crappie and bluegill, mostly in that order. Other less known species like suckers, bullheads and bowfin also spawn in spring but may also spawn at other times of the year.

One advantage for "young of the year" northerns and muskies is that they get to prey on species that spawn after them, giving them a virtual smorgasbord of fry to feed on. Panfish and bass fry typically rely on phytoplankton and zooplankton as food and this is where things get interesting, especially for lakes like Lake Alex that have zebra mussels. It is well established that filter feeders like zebra mussels compete with newly hatched fish for food, which can have an impact on survival and growth rates of native fish. As most of our residents on the lake can attest, the Zebbs are well established and are altering the lake's food chain.

Bluegills spawn late in the spring when water temps are solidly into the 60's and above. The spawning cycle may run several weeks and often beyond a month which allows bluegills to stretch out the spawning cycle thereby enhancing spawning success. The Lake Alex smallmouth population continues to thrive and makes the lake an exceptional standout for bass anglers seeking more than just largemouth bass.

The DNR has already conducted electrofishing surveys earlier in May, has stocked 2.5 million walleye fry and will be conducted gill net surveys of various species on August 19-23, 2024. This fall they will conduct another electrofishing survey to assess the stocked walleye fry survival success and will be (potentially) stocking 12"-14" muskies pending availability.

Spring brings an explosion of new life into the lake and Mother Nature sequences her activities to maximize the potential survival of all the different species in the lake. Our continued stewardship of this precious and valuable resource should create angling opportunities of exceptional quality for years to come.

Two Separate and Unique Organizations Serve Lake Alexander Year-round.

Jim McGonigle, LAPOA Board Member

The **Lake Alexander Property Owners Association** is a voluntary group to which members pay annual dues – currently \$15 a year to belong. This group purpose includes lake conservation, wildlife habitat concerns (fish, loons ...), lake water quality & clarity monitoring, roadside & boat landing clean up and general community building.

The **Lake Alexander Lake Improvement District** is chartered by Morrison County and is under their governmental jurisdiction. If you have waterfront/riparian property on Lake Alexander than you can be assessed a real estate tax levy to help deal with aquatic invasive species (curly leaf pondweed, milfoil, zebra mussels...) and larger floating bogs.

TRIVA LOVER'S - Statewide Minnesota has a population of approximately 5.73 million people, 900,000 registered boats and 300,000 people own lake homes and cabins in Minnesota.

THANKS!

Ron Wieber

Are You a Lake Steward?

Doug Cook, LAPOA Board Member

Is good fishing important to you?
Do you enjoy boating, water sports, cruising on a clean lake?
Are loons and wildlife important to you?
Do you want to preserve your property value?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be interested in becoming a Lake Steward and become recognized as a protector of Lake Alexander. The first Lake Stewards, Pat and Alan Sandvol, were recognized last fall with this attractive sign. To learn more about the program and to apply, visit mnlakesandrivers.org or just search for Minnesota Lakes and Rivers and click on the result. Then click on Lake Associations/Member Programs/Lake Steward Program. From there you can take a 10 question quiz or enter your contact information and a representative will get in touch with you to explain the program and next steps. There are some on the lake already doing the things the program is requesting. If you are, please consider becoming a Lake Steward to help encourage others to look at ways they can help keep our lake healthy. If you are interested but unsure you want to make the commitment, there are financial incentives available should that be necessary.

You can always contact me if you have questions or need help working through the process. My contact information is on the front page.



LA LID Summer 2024 Article

Ron Wieber, LAPOA Board Member

At our last August 2023 public Annual Meeting at Scandia Valley Township Hall a return back to our annual Lake Alexander Lake Improvement District / "LA LID" assessment of \$200 for 2024 was voted upon- the levy increase being solely due to increased costs associated with invasive weed treatments. Although this is a significant increase from recent past annual assessments at one time they were as high as \$296. This \$200 amount was overwhelmingly approved by those present voting, an amount previously recommended by myself to the approving all volunteer and elected LA LID board and later reviewed by the Morrison County auditor's office & final approval by the county commissioners. The past few years while steadily reducing the amount of the LA LID levy amount, we increasingly funded rising invasive weed treatment costs by a significant erosion of our savings – impractical short-term and which proved an unsustainable solution. It is anticipated that the return to the traditional \$200 annual levy will remain the benchmark moving forward in the near future.

It may be interesting to note that of the 585 Lake Alexander Morrison County documented waterfront properties 487 assessments were levied on 2024 due property taxes – as approximately 20% (98) of the waterfront property owners own more than one parcel on the waterfront and pay for just one parcel LID assessment annually. In 2023 we had 485 assessments to our waterfront property owners with only 86 owning more than one waterfront parcel. Slightly one more lake property owner and increasingly significantly more owning more than one lake parcel – our neighboring folks love it here and their demonstrated wise real estate investment!

We also benefitted from a grant application written by our local hero LA LID & LA POA president Dr. Bill Faber resulting in our receiving \$7,000 from Morrison County's distribution of DNR funds in April 2024. Plus, a generous increase in our earned +5% interest paid from Randall State Bank on our Certificate of Deposit reserve. Although not directly impacting our local LA LID budget, the State-wide Environment & Natural Resources Trust Fund (our lottery proceeds going to work for our lakes) helped with two years of funding related to early detection of aquatic invasive species and studying zebra mussel control. Hopefully this appropriation will continue longer term. In my opinion, as your treasurer, the LA LID is returning to a solid financial standing and enhanced environmental future.

Collectively this and our own individual efforts will help us meet our invasive weed and bog control obligations to lake taxpayers in these inflationary times.

In closing I would also write "THANKS" to Matt Skjonsby in recognition of his efforts in keeping our web site <http://LakeAlexander.mnlakesandrivers.org> up to date. Here is to the Summer of 2024 – may it be your best on Lake Alexander!

THANKS!

Ron Wieber