



At this time of year we share with you the activities that the Friends of the Eau Claire Lakes Area has been involved with during the past year and ask you for your continuing support by renewing your membership and volunteering time towards our efforts. *Our efforts are guided by our mission: "To protect, preserve and improve the environmental and esthetic quality of the Eau Claire Lakes Area Watershed including the lakes, rivers, shorelands, wetlands, forests, and attendant wildlife resources."*

During 2016 our focus has been on:

- Providing education
- Being an active voice in public policy as it affects the environmental and esthetic quality of the Eau Claire Lakes area
- Participating in and sharing the results of lake quality monitoring activities
- Community Involvement

Education:

The Lake Ecology Education Program (LEEP) continues to be a vital environmental education program. This is a collaborative endeavor with the Drummond Public Middle School that we organize and carry out to develop future stewards of our lakes and watershed. Each year the curriculum includes classroom study and lake field trips for 30-36 students with a similar number of professional and volunteer community educators.

Our annual community educational event this year centered on wild Edibles. Joan Jacobowski and Yulia Welk shared with us how to harvest, prepare and enjoy the many wild edibles we have the opportunity to partake of right out our doors, in the woods, lake shores and stream sides that we enjoy.

Active Voice in Public Policy:

We continue to encourage and interact with Bayfield County for protective ordinances to lessen the impact of the proposed swine concentrated animal feedlot operation for a 23,000 of hogs on the quality of streams, ground water and lakes and on its public health risks. ~~This has been~~ proposed to be sited in the Fish Creek Watershed, less than 8 miles upstream from Lake Superior. We will be working proactively with Douglas County in 2017 for developing similar new protective ordinances.

We also continue to monitor activity at the Wisconsin legislature level that has restricted counties in their efforts to protect the water quality of lakes. We have joined in an effort to return control of the shoreland zoning to the county level where it belongs.

There has been discussion this year concerning the decade's old Town of Barnes Ordinance, Chapter 8, Section 4 which currently reads as follows: "No person shall water ski, operate a motorboat or other power propelled device pulling and object and/ or a person or use a jet ski on the waters herein described after the hour of 5:00 pm and before the hour of 10:00 am"

We recognize that there are different perspectives and thus brought this discussion to the membership via a poll. The membership, by a margin of 83% to 17 % supported the continuation of this Town of Barnes Ordinance. This information was shared with the Town of Barnes Supervisors. The ordinance remains in place.

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Participating in and sharing the results of monitoring activities:

Our membership remains an active participant in monitoring the quality of our lakes and streams via Shoreline Monitoring for aquatic invasive species (AIS). We have provided financial assistance for training Shore Line Monitors and both volunteers and funding for the Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) initiative. In 2015 CBCW volunteers inspected 3,766 boats and educated 8,573 people, the most in Bayfield County.

There are continued populations of Curly-leaf Pondweed and Eurasian Water-milfoil in our lakes as well as a recurrence in Tomahawk Lake, which had been treated chemically. The Barnes AIS committee has built and operates a diver assisted suction harvester. This effort was supported financially by our membership. This pontoon boat mounted device collects aquatic invasive species, which have been hand pulled by divers thus reducing their population and limiting their spread. This method avoids the need for chemical treatment and is more selective.

A summary of the last three years of Secchi Disc monitoring suggests a modest decrease in water clarity. Further monitoring will help us understand if this is a trend or an anomaly. This is a call for us to be diligent with reference to our shoreland environment and phosphorus contributions to our lakes.

Community Involvement:

We continue our liaisons with the Town of Barnes AIS committee, the Eau Claire Lakes Conservation Club and the St. Croix Headwaters. Board members have volunteered to attend the Town of Barnes and the Town of Gordon meetings.

The Friends of the Eau Claire Lakes Area was actively involved in the Vatten Paddlar event as course markers and monitors. This re-emergence of a past canoe and kayak race was a successful community event that we are pledged to support in 2017.

We hosted our Second annual Beer Tasting Social. This event was an informal activity to share information with both residents and visitors about our organization and the beautiful area that we call our home.

Over this past year we have seen an increase in our membership and we are thankful for that. We are fortunate to live and visit this area. Our waters remain pristine; there remains here a gentle beauty in our lakes, streams, wet lands and forest. This is not a fortunate accident. This requires effort. We are mindful and thankful to the many individuals who spend considerable time and resources endeavoring to see that this is present now and remains so into the future. Your continued support and participation makes all of this possible. Your tax-deductible membership contributions provide funding for our activities and the support we provide through community involvement. Your participation and input gives validity to our voice in public policy. Your willingness to volunteer time and effort is the fuel needed to preserve the qualities we treasure in life in the Eau Claire Lakes Area.

Please take a moment to submit the enclosed form to renew your membership or go online to:

www.friendsofeauclairelakesarea.com

As the year progresses we will use this website and e-mails to solicit your input and keep you posted on ongoing activity.

Carl E. Heltne, President of the Friends of the Eau Claire Lakes Area

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