



Ripples

CROW WING COUNTY
LAKES AND RIVERS ALLIANCE
P.O. BOX 53, PEQUOT LAKES, MN 56472

March 2013

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Aquatic Invasive Species Videos

By: *Erika Johnson,*
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Aquatic invasive species such as zebra mussels, flowering rush, spiny waterflea and Eurasian watermilfoil are drawing attention across the nation and especially in Minnesota. Minnesota lakes and rivers are threatened by these invasive species that hurt fish populations and tourism, cause algae blooms and foul beaches, and wreak economic havoc by clogging boat motors, water supplies and drainage systems.

A series of eleven 30-second public service announcements have been professionally produced to educate residents and visitors on easy steps to

stop the spread of aquatic invasive species. RMB Environmental Laboratories and the Pelican River Watershed District led the productions, which were funded by the Central Region Sustainable Development Partnership, the MN DNR and a blend of lake coalitions, watershed districts, property owner associations, and foundations. It is vital to our current and future local, state, and regional economy to greatly increase our education efforts to inform the public about aquatic invasive species and steps to prevent their spread.

Can you help get these videos out to the public? Consider asking your local access TV station to air them or local newspapers to highlight them, or include information about them in your own newsletters and listserves, or share them via Facebook! To see the videos, download, share, and learn more, go to www.naturalinnovations.org. 🦋

The Ides of March Approacheth!

In Roman days, the Ides of March (March 15) was a festive day dedicated to the god Mars and a military parade was usually held. In modern times, it is best known as the date on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 B.C.

To the Crow Wing County Lakes and Rivers Alliance (LARA), the Ides of March is known as the date for mailing the new year's membership letter to county lake associations.

Watch for your association's letter. It should arrive the week after the Ides of March!

President's Message

By: *Phil Hunsicker*

I'm writing this the same day President Obama is giving his State of the Union address. He will be talking about gun violence, immigration reform, the debt ceiling and other issues he thinks the American people want him and our elected Congress to deal with. We do the same thing at LARA. We don't deal with the same issues, but we are always asking ourselves, "What do our members want us to do?" If you participated in our recent communications survey, you know that we value your opinions and we want to give you something of substance in return for your yearly dues that support this organization. From your responses, we've made it a priority to have better communications with you, and to do it in ways that matter to you. For example, you said that you want us to have a web site, so we are in the process of designing a new LARA web site that will provide you with tons of information about what is happening in our county when it comes to improving the health of our public waters. Furthermore, we are committing to actually getting out quarterly electronic newsletters every three months. And we now have a presence on Facebook.

Another bold initiative for 2013 is to work closely with the University of Minnesota Extension to create a learning opportunity that helps lake leaders like you become more impactful and helps mentor new leaders ready to step in and fill the shoes of those of us who are just plain tired and ready to step down.

So in the spirit of a State of the Union address, I can say that the state of LARA is strong — as long as you keep sending in your dues and we keep asking ourselves, "What do our members want us to do?" 🦋

Lake-Friendly Development Awards Recognize Six Deserving Projects

By: Philip Hunsicker



Phil Hunsicker

On October 25, 2012 at the Prairie Bay Restaurant in Baxter, Minnesota, about fifty-five people gathered to celebrate the tenth year of the Lake-Friendly Development Awards. Six deserving projects in Crow Wing, Cass and Morrison Counties were recognized. We also recognized the early efforts of one individual, who back in 2003 said, "Why don't we start an awards program to recognize folks who are trying to do it better?" All of the projects promote ecologically sustainable and sensitive development. The hope is that through these awards, we will change the way we think about development in our shorelands. The future health of the region's lakes and rivers depends on it.

The Lake-Friendly Protection Strategy Award recognizes an organization or a local unit of government that creates an ordinance or regulatory code or other initiative that seeks to preserve the environmental integrity of our lake and river systems. Two of these awards were handed out to the cities of Fifty Lakes and Crosslake in Crow Wing County. Both cities wanted to create demonstration projects around their communities to help landowners understand and see the benefits to using native landscaping and incorporating storm water best management practices. They worked with the Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) to use Clean Water Legacy Fund grant dollars to complete shoreline buffers, rain gardens, and shoreline stabilization projects. The City of Fifty Lakes initiative resulted in two rain gardens, three shoreline buffer projects (for a total of 150 linear feet) and three shoreline stabilization projects (for a total of 75 linear feet). In Crosslake, the results were four rain gardens, nine shoreline buffer projects (for a total of 580 linear feet) and one shoreline stabilization project (for a total of 50 linear feet). According to Melissa Barrick of the Crow Wing SWCD, "Fifty Lakes and Crosslake both went above and beyond what was required for this grant and they have integrated storm water management into their city ordinances. They both deserve awards for the hard work they did."

The Lakescaping Award goes to a homeowner or contractor who employs the use of native vegetation and mostly natural



The audience enjoying the program

materials to landscape their riparian property in a manner that not only complies with local shoreland regulations, but goes even further to protect the shoreline's environmental integrity in a way that can potentially improve water quality. The first of two lakescaping awards went to Ron and Claire Faust on Gull Lake in Cass County. The Faust property was clear cut 40 to 50 years ago. It is a sandy bluff subject to significant wave action. Some large trees have come back on their own and they have been preserved. Problem areas on the shoreline where the sand was exposed have been protected and enhanced with deep-rooted native grasses, wildflowers, tamarack and pine trees. Three biologs were used when natural conditions caused a small cave-in on the north side of the dock. According to Heather Baird of the DNR, "Ron and Claire have been citizen activists for shoreline restoration and they are great role models for the entire Gull Lake community."



Ken Anderson (L) and Mike Winkels

The second lakescaping award went to The Big Island Joint Powers Board and the Rollie Johnson Natural and Recreational Area volunteers. Big Island in Upper Whitefish Lake in Crow Wing County is a rare surviving example of an undisturbed old-growth maple/basswood forest. It has been designated a High Conservation Value Forest by the State of Minnesota. The Joint Powers Board recognized that action needed to be taken to preserve both Big Island and Steamboat Island to improve the habitat for fish, plants and wildlife. The high sand banks were slumping and the toe was being eroded by wave action caused by wind and boat traffic. In total, approximately 750 linear feet on Big Island and 400 linear feet on Steamboat Island were improved. Twenty-two days were spent on the islands with a total of 280 person days counted. Many grants were acquired to cover the cost of materials. The restoration was led by volunteers from the Rollie Johnson National and Recreational Area with

an average age greater than 70. Minnesota Conservation Corps and Sentence to Serve crews were available on many of the work days to do the intensive labor. The east side of Big Island is now flourishing. Vegetation is lush and the banks have been stabilized. The slopes of Steamboat Island are also showing growth through the mats and from the sod flats. With restoration, these islands should continue to provide high quality habitat for generations to come.

The Lake-Friendly Home Construction Award goes to a riparian property owner or contractor who has undertaken new home construction or major reconstruction while preserving the environmental integrity of the natural lakeshore or river shore setting. This award went to Jim and Cindy Lilienthal on Lake Alexander in Morrison County. Jim and Cindy's retirement home on Lake Alexander was completed in January 2010 by local builders Gottwalt and Gwost. With 125 feet of shoreline, a 50-foot wide natural buffer of upland has been protected and managed as such. There

are mature oaks, maples, ash, choke cherries and a few white pines that provide habitat for a variety of wildlife including humming



Ron and Clair Faust

birds, wild turkeys, deer and otters. The shoreline area has been left very natural with willow, cattail, lily pads and hardstem bulrush, which provide spawning and nursery areas for many fish, reptiles, amphibians and birds. The only disturbance to the emergent vegetation in the shallows is a minimal 15-foot wide dock corridor out to navigable water. Most of the runoff from the house goes into a small shallow wetland at the NW corner of the lot, which provides a natural rain garden and a frog haven. Jim says, "Cindy and I really enjoy the peace and quiet the year round."

The Lake and River Stewardship Award is to recognize a riparian property owner who protects water quality by simply leaving their shoreline in a non-disturbed natural state, which can include maintaining shoreland and aquatic vegetation, tree canopy, screening of structures for aesthetics, and non-removal of woody debris from the water. This award could also be used to recognize the use of a conservation easement to permanently protect a significant piece of shoreline.

Cabin Coffee Table Essentials

By: *Mike Duval*

This pairing of books can't be beat and are an essential for any lakeshore homeowner.

Available in hardcover and Kindle, *Beyond Walden* (Walker & Co, NY) examines kettle lakes, a distinctive type of lake spawned from the continental glaciers that once covered vast portions of North America. Robert Thorson is a

professor of geology at the University of Connecticut but he has roots that connect him more closely to the Midwest and Lake Plantagenet near Park Rapids, in particular. I had the opportunity to talk with the author during his book release tour and found him to be a delightful story teller and extraordinarily passionate about lakes. Thorson applies these traits to weave a very interesting story that begins with glaciers and the tremendous forces of ice and flowing water that created tens of thousands of these unique lakes which occur across the northern tier of the United States and southern Canada. From glacial origins, Thorson then exposes the reader to 10,000 years of human interaction with lakes, from early Paleolithic hunter gatherers continuing through the woodland Indian period and ending with the lakeside cabin owners of today. The closing chapters of the book are an introduction to kettle lakes as a complex ecological system and how humans today threaten the delicate clockwork of these fascinating systems. The author successfully translates highly technical scientific information into very comfortable and informative reading. This is not a fluff kind of book but rather one that leaves the reader with a deepened understanding and appreciation of the ecological and social importance of the lakes that Thoreau famously referred to as "...the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature." For more information, visit the author's web site: www.thor.uconn.edu/walden.html.

For Love of Lakes takes you along on the author's quest to examine different lakes as he seeks to understand the root causes leading to declining water quality and lake health. Darby Nelson is an aquatic ecologist and educator by profession, but he has also served as a three-term Minnesota state legislator, board president for Conservation Minnesota, and more recently as a member of the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council. Nelson sits the reader down in his canoe as he paddles a series of lakes around Minnesota and elsewhere, too, including Lake Winnipeg and those acclaimed in Thoreau's writings. You paddle along the shorelines, maybe fish a little bit, but Nelson mostly has the reader peer over the gunnel, look into the water and measure clarity with his Secchi disc. He compels us to look deeper into lakes, below the surface, to experience them up close. Why does water clarity differ between lakes? Why is Diamond Lake green as pea soup when its name would imply otherwise? How have these lakes changed in recent human time and what could be responsible for that change? The author teases each of these questions apart and provides compelling evidence that, perhaps, our human desire to live near lakes is leading to their demise; maybe we are loving our lakes too much. This book is an excellent companion to *Beyond Walden*, taking the reader more deeply and personally into the history and workings of individual lakes. *For Love of Lakes* (Michigan State University Press) is available in paperback and Kindle. For more information, visit the author's web site: www.darbynelson.com/the-book/. 🐾



The 2012 Lake and River Stewardship Award went to Merv Eisel on the Nokasippi River and the Twin Lakes in Crow Wing County. Merv enrolled all of his property, which includes over 1500 feet of the Nokasippi River (both sides) and the entirety of the Twin Lakes, into the ACUB (Army Compatible Use Buffer Easement Program). This act of generosity and forethought will permanently prohibit future development that might negatively impact the environmental integrity of the land and water as well as the training activities at nearby Camp Ripley. In 120 years, the property has had only two owners. As a horticulture teacher and former Department of Agriculture Horticulturist, Mr. Eisel has preserved his property as an historic treasure. Besides planting thousands of trees, he has many rare and beautiful plant communities preserved and established. He wanted to guarantee that his magnificent property would forever remain as is. The banks around both lakes are maintained in natural habitat, as is the river frontage. His goal is to eventually leave the property to The Nature Conservancy for a permanent legacy of land protection.



Merv Eisel

For our 10th year, we thought we would do something special. We started these awards back in 2003 after a home built locally won a national award. The home was gorgeous, but the landscaping between the home and the lake was anything but lake-friendly. All natural vegetation was removed for better lake views and the denuded hillside right down to the water was then terraced in rock. A bunch of us saw the



Dave Fisher (L), Judy Topinka, and Jim Brandt

article and picture in the Brainerd Dispatch and we were all somewhat disgusted, but one person stepped forward and said, "It seems like we're always pointing our fingers at the bad stuff. Wouldn't it be more fun to point our fingers at the good stuff – the homeowners, the contractors, the local units of government and the organizations that have chosen to develop or redevelop their lakeshore or river shore properties using ecologically sustainable and sensitive principles?"

That person was Mike North of the DNR and 10 years and 51 projects later, Mike's original idea has become a fun, uplifting couple of hours to pat some folks on the back for jobs well done and for thinking of more than their own desires.

Prizes for winners included framed certificates of achievement, books, and framed prints generously donated by Nisswa watercolor artist, Jerry Raedeke. The awards are collaboratively sponsored by Envision Minnesota, the Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society (BLAAS), the Crow Wing County Lakes and Rivers Alliance (LARA), the DNR Nongame Wildlife Program, the DNR Section of Fisheries, the Minnesota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, The Nature Conservancy, A.W. Research Laboratories, the Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the University of Minnesota Extension. 🐾



Mike North

Crow Wing County Water Plan Newsletter

The current issue of the Water Plan newsletter has been posted to the Crow Wing County web site. You can find it at:

www.co.crow-wing.mn.us/index.aspx?nid=241.

Just scroll down to "additional information."

Rain Garden At Fairview Office Park In Baxter – Five Years Later!

Jackie Froemming, Extension Educator,
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What I believe to be the largest rain garden in the Brainerd Lakes Area was planted at Fairview Office Park, an award-winning, conservation-design commercial site in Baxter, Minnesota in May of 2008. We were all excited, including the site owners, this Extension Educator who provided technical assistance with plant selection and landscape design, and the many volunteers that assisted with planting. We were excited about installing a rain garden to infiltrate storm water runoff generated at the 4.5 acre commercial development rather than a retention pond. We were excited that this +8,000 sq. ft. rain garden would add natural beauty to this site and serve as a model for other commercial sites. (View original article about this rain garden in the July/ August issue of 2008 of From Shore to Shore: www.shorelandmanagement.org/shore_shore/newsletter_archive.html). Are we all still excited about this rain garden? Yes! This rain garden is working like it should... it's dry within 48 hours, including following some intense, high volume rain events these past five years.

Having monitored this rain garden over five growing seasons, I would like to share some observations:

- **LANDSCAPE DESIGN.** People doing the weeding were not familiar with what the desired plants look like when they are emerging in the spring. A design that incorporates mostly native shrubs and native grasses will be easier to weed than one with mostly herbaceous perennials (forbs). A design with larger areas planted with a single species will be easier to weed since anything that looks different from everything else in that one area most likely will be a weed.
- **MATERIALS.** The mulch used should be finely shredded to avoid mulch displacement during flooding episodes. Finely-shredded mulch tends to form a mat that rises and lowers with the different water levels. Chunkier types of mulch will float away and pile up wherever the wind blows them. Also, the size and the quality of the specimens to be planted are important. Although more expensive, larger potted plants had more root mass and a higher rate of survival after the first year.
- **MAINTENANCE.** Although natives are low-maintenance plants once they are established, there is always some maintenance to be done, such as weeding, replacing dead plants and adding mulch. Maintenance is less confusing and easier if there is continuity of the people doing the maintenance year after year. They become familiar with the site and plant material enabling them to distinguish desirable species from weeds.
- **DISEASES.** It was observed that Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) and Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)



Rain Garden at Fairview Office Park, Summer 2012

had been affected by powdery mildew every season since they were planted. Although powdery mildew doesn't affect the health of the plants, just their cosmetic appearance, this should be considered when creating landscape designs for rain gardens at highly visible commercial sites as appearance may be of high importance to property owners as well as visiting clients or customers.

- **INVOLVEMENT FROM SITE OWNERS.** From accepting the idea of installing a rain garden instead of a retention pond, to making sure that the site is well maintained, to promoting this and other environmentally- friendly construction practices among fellow members of the local business community, the involvement of site owners is critical.

Speaking of involvement from site owners, recently I met with Janelle Riley, co-owner of On the Wing Investments, the real estate investment company which operates Fairview Office Park, to discuss the rain garden at this site. Here are some excerpts from our discussion:

Are you happy with the results? I am thrilled with the results. The garden is beautiful. Office park tenants and neighbors regularly walk and bike through the area to view the garden.

What does maintenance involve after five years? As the plants have matured, less and less maintenance is necessary. We have not needed to water in the last two years. The only maintenance that is now required is occasional plant replacement and weeding.

Would you recommend rain gardens to other business owners? I would absolutely recommend rain gardens to other business owners. They are beautiful, they increase property sales, and they cost less than traditional methods. *What's not to love?*

I agree with what Janelle said, "What's not to love?" About rain gardens. If designed properly and well maintained, these landscape areas will assist in keeping your local water resources clean while adding natural beauty to your surroundings. 🐦

Get to know your Board Members

Ann Beaver

What prompted you to become a member of the LARA board?

One of the founders of the organization, Ted Soteroplos, was on the Cullen Lakes Association (CLA) Board with me back in 1997. He decided the LARA Board needed more women (there was one woman on it at the time) and he invited me to attend a board meeting that summer, shortly after my husband and I moved to our lake home. After the meeting he pretty much insisted that I join the LARA Board. He was a pretty hard person to say "no" to.




What lake or river are you most connected to (in Crow Wing County)?

I am joined at the hip with the Cullen Lakes – Lower, Middle, and Upper. I live on Lower Cullen Lake and have been a member of the CLA Board since 1996 and its president since 1999.

What lake or river environmental issue is most important to you, and what are you doing to help the cause?

I would have to say that shoreland development and its related Best Management Practices are the most dear to my heart. What we do on land has so much to do with what happens to the quality of the lakes and it is such an easy way for each of us to make a positive difference. Unfortunately, far too many people don't see it that way; they see lake friendly development and shoreland management as an infringement on their personal property rights. During the six years I served on the Crow Wing County Board of Adjustment, I did my best to make decisions that were in keeping with shoreland Best Management Practices and in accordance with the Land Use Ordinance in place at the time. I recently began my second eight-year stint on the Nisswa Planning Commission/Board of Adjustment, where I try to do the same thing. Also, I am proud of the Cullen Lakes Association for all it does in promoting good stewardship of its shorelands.

What can others do to help with this cause?

First and foremost, practice and encourage others to practice shoreland Best Management Practices. Get involved in your lake association, whether it be by serving on the board or volunteering to help with specific projects. Speak up for and do what is right for the protection of the lakes, rivers, and wetlands. Humans are the invasive species that has been doing damage to the area's lakes for decades. 

Cost-Share Funding Now Available

Forest Stewardship Plan

An opportunity is available for landowners in Crow Wing County with forested parcels greater than 20 acres in size to receive cost-share funds to write forest stewardship plans and implement forestry practices.

Cost-share funding is available to cover up to 50% of the cost of forest management practices for each landowner who has a current forest stewardship plan for his or her property. Examples of eligible practices include tree planting, selected harvest, and wildlife openings. For landowners without forest stewardship plans, funds are available to receive a plan at a flat rate of \$200.

Interested landowners should contact Darren Mayers, District Technician with the Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District, at 218-828-6197.



**2013
Garden Expo**

**Saturday,
April 6**

For more information, visit:
www.z.umn.edu/crowwingmgs

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