VAN VLIET NEWS

Fall 2003

Some early season aquatic plant growth in Van Vliet brought out lots of discussion at the Annual Meeting.
(photo by Tom Olson)

New Board of Directors

At this year's annual meeting, elections were held for 5 positions on the Board – Secretary, Treasurer and 3 At-Large positions. Jim Sprester was re-elected Secretary, Nancy Frank was re-elected as Treasurer and 3 new directors were elected to the At-Large positions – Jeff Burke and Dick Novak for 2 year terms and George Kupfer for a one year term Barbara Novak was not re-elected. We wish to thank Barb for her service to the Association over the years.

There are now 8 Board members: Tom Olson, President; Jill Wilm, Vice President; Jim Sprester, Secretary; Nancy Frank, Treasurer; and Tim Bowler, Jeff Burke, Dick Novak and George Kupfer, At-Large.

Annual Meeting Sets New Agenda

This year's annual meeting was an extremely productive one. The revised By-Laws were adopted and elections were held.

But, more importantly, we had excellent reports by Jill Wilm and Jeff Burke on activities of the Association regarding exotic species and our water quality testing program.

Jill attended workshops on behalf of the Assocation and reported on concerns raised by such species as Eurasian Water Milfoil. This is a growing concern in Vilas County as several lakes now have milfoil present. With our new landing, it is more important than ever to be vigilant about cleaning trailers and boats before they enter the lake.

As previously reported, Jeff Burke has volunteered to conduct water quality testing. Several years back, Forbes Taylor, Jr. did secchi disc testing – which shows water clarity. In addition to this, Jeff is now collecting samples for additional testing of water chemistry. This will create very important data for us over a period of time so that we will have a better understanding of the changes in water quality on Van Vliet Lake.

During our open discussion, members raised concerns about a number of issues. To many, there appeared to be an unusual amount of floating weeds early in the year – and an abundance of new growth during the early part of the summer. There was a concern about general enjoyment of the lake but also a concern raised by some, particularly in the southwest bay, for access to their properties. Questions were raised about the causes and whether something should or could be done to manage these matters.

Another concern raised was about the lower water levels on Van Vliet Lake. Although the water levels were high in May, many felt that they had reduced significantly by late June. Questions were raised as to whether this was a normal change or due to possible manipulation of the water level by removal of beaver dams on the Presque Isle River (several checks of the dams showed that they seemed to be intact).

Another recurring concern is whether aging septic systems are having an impact on the health of the lake. Build up of silt is another recurring issue.

All of this led to a request that the Board look into the possibility of developing a lake management plan for Van Vliet Lake.

The meeting concluded with good discussion and snacks. Many thanks to the Franks for the hospitality.

Kudos

To Matt and Lorraine Pachi for installing a new septic system before the old one failed. That is good lake stewardship.

Lake Planning Process

A qualified lake association (which the Van Vliet Lake Association is) can apply for a grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the development of a lake management plan. The DNR will pay 80% of the cost of a plan with the Association covering the remaining 20% of the cost. Much of this cost is often covered by "in kind" activities of the Association in gathering data, writing portions of the plan or other activities specified in the plan. We have seen cost estimates on plans of this type run from $15,000 and up. Please remember that the grant covers 80% of this cost.

The purpose of such a plan is to gather data in a scientific manner to create a plan around such issues as water quality, aquatic plants, invasive species, fish management, silt, water levels, boater safety, education, history and other issues. The plan may serve as an educational document or as the first step in the development of a management plan for the lake. Some plans result in active management plans and some result in simply a plan to monitor a lake to assure its continued health.

At its organizational meeting later in the summer (all Board members attending), the Board accepted the charge from the annual meeting to review the planning grant process. The Board met with staff of DNR and UW Extension to gain a better understanding of the process and the potential value to the Association. At the conclusion of the Board meeting, the Board voted unanimously to begin the process.

A Planning Committee was appointed and given the charge to meet, discuss the issues identified at both the Annual Meeting and the Board Meeting, and report back with the outline of a process to move forward. They were instructed to have the Association ready to apply for a grant in time for the February due date for grant applications. That Committee is Steve Smithson, Chair; Jill Wilm, Jeff Burke and George Kupfer.

The Committee met and identified the key issues to be included in a plan – water quality, aquatic plants, exotic species, fish management, septic systems, silt, communications and a history of Van Vliet Lake. They have also begun to identify resources to aid in the development of the plan including outside consultants, experts from the DNR, UW Trout Lake Station, UW Extension, and lake residents with a scientific and planning background.

On October 11th, the Committee presented its first report to the Board, and the Board directed the Committee to prepare a request for proposal to be sent to consulting firms which can aid in the grant process (most consulting firms will charge no fees for assisting in the proposal process).

The Board also passed a motion to direct Jeff Burke to retain an expert from the UW Trout Lake station to conduct an initial survey of aquatic plants in order to increase our data in that regard. That study should be concluded this fall.

What happens next? The Committee will prepare a request for proposal and seek proposals from consultants for the grant process. Included in the grant request will be an amount to pay for the development of the plan. This will require us to specify those items we wish to have covered in the plan.

The grant request must be filed in February and will be awarded before summer. Those winning grants would presumably begin the data collection and plan writing over the following summer with completion likely sometime during the following winter.

This plan is something that the membership has sought for many years. In the past, we have not had the volunteers available to get it off the ground. We now have a new Board and Committee which is energized to get this done.

During the existence of the Association, the same questions about Van Vliet Lake have come up over and over – fish management, weed control, water quality, septics, silt, water levels and water safety. They have been answered with, primarily, amateur conclusions about very complex issues. Although many of those answers may be correct, they have also been conflicting. We now have a chance to get good scientific data and analysis of our lake. This should serve all of us well in better understanding the marvelous resource which is called "Van Vliet Lake".

At this point there are no preconceived notions as to what, if any, management would benefit Van Vliet Lake. There is no agenda to harvest weeds nor is there an agenda to let aquatics grow as they may. At this point, the agenda is to learn and to have professionals advise what should be done – if anything.

If something should be done, then a plan to manage and implement the plan would be a next step. Since we are not there yet, we cannot predict what that might be.

These actions by your Board are a result of discussions at the Annual Meeting and subsequent Board meetings. **We request your thoughts on the attached sheet. We look forward to your interest and involvement.**

Timetable

October 11, 2003 – Board directs Committee to prepare request for proposal from consultants and authorizes aquatic plant survey.

Mid-November, 2003 – Request for proposal to be approved by Board for delivery to consultants.

Early-December, 2003 – Proposals from consulting firms.

Early-January, 2004 – Decision on consulting firm to assist in grant request.

February 1, 2004 – File grant request with DNR.

May 2004 – Grant approved or denied. If approved, process for development of planning document is begun.

Annual Meeting 2004 – Progress report.

Treasurer's Report

The finances of the Van Vliet Lake Association are in very good shape. Here is the report from the Annual Meeting.

The balance on July 6, 2003 was $3,104.54 which then represented 34 paid memberships. Annual meeting expenses totaled $77.83. Additional dues paid have been $50. Current balance is $3,076.71.

Membership Report

The following are paid members for 2003. Thank you for your support.

Ken Alix
Jim & Carol Awe
Tim & Kim Bowler
Ed & Lavergne Brodsky
John & Dona Fagan
Lloyd & Sue Freckmann
Joe & Jean Galiardo
Peter & Joan Herr
Stan & Judy Kleinert
Carl Lekan
Paul & Kathy Nasenbeny
Barb Novak
Andy & Lisa Olson
Mark & Wendy Osberg
Jim & Margaret Rottman
Dick Rowe
Bill & Diane Schroeder
Dave Sidlo
Steve & Linda Smithson
Jim & Kathy Sprester
Rosemary Stewart
Paul & Grace Alix
Nick and Rita Andrew
Jeff & Jorga Burke
Paulette Cary
Steve & Nancy Frank
Don & Jan Funk
Dick & Karen Harris
Joseph & Noreen Janda
George & Pat Kupfer
Don & Susan Lynch
Bruce Nelson
Dick & Carol Novak
Tom & Barbara Olson
Matt & Lorraine Pachi
Matt & Linda Rottman
Ken & Nancy Ruffner
Doug & Jane Schwanz
Mary Ann Smithson
Paul & Sharon Specht
Robert Stewart
Jill Wilm

World Championship Musky Classic

If you fished in the Musky Classic this September and didn't stay on Van Vliet, you probably made a mistake. The 6th and 7th largest fish registered came out of Van Vliet including one by Frank Bradley. Five of the 66 fish registered came from Van Vliet. According to my count, only High Lake produced more. Interestingly, High Lake also has lots of aquatic plants and is not terribly deep.

On another front, Wisconsin Sportsman Magazine recently cited Van Vliet Lake as "an overlooked musky hotspot". For better or worse, we are no longer "overlooked".

Stocking News

On September 4th, the DNR stocked Van Vliet with approximately 146 muskies averaging 10 ½" long. This is in keeping with their pledge to put a representative share of the stocked fish in the Presque Isle Chain into Van Vliet. This is just more than 20% of the fish stocked in the chain.

It will take these fish 6 or so years to reach a length of 30 inches. On average, about 10% of the fish stocked survive until they reach that size – according to DNR Staff.

Earlier this year, your Board met with Steve Gilbert of the DNR who reported that the fishery in Van Vliet Lake was very healthy. He also commented about the fact that the chain gives us remarkable variety with the ability to fish very different types of water with differing species

Summer of the Loons

In your president's 26 years on Van Vliet Lake, I never recall being blessed by seeing a family of loons all summer. Does that speak to the quality of our life on Van Vliet?

MEMBERSHIP SIGN-UP

Name_____

Home Address_____

City, State, Zip Code_____

Lake Address (if different)_____

Home phone_____Local phone (if different)_____E-mail_____

Comments/concerns regarding Land Use Plan_____

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Other Comments_____

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If you haven't paid your dues yet please enclose in the amount of (min. $10) payable to the Van Vliet Lake Association, Inc.

Your membership is tax deductible. Your check is your receipt.

Mail to: Nancy Frank, Treasurer
Van Vliet Lake Assn, Inc.
4918 Fond du Lac Trail
Madison WI 53705

Thanks to Dave Sidlo for his contribution in printing this newsletter.