
VAN VLIET NEWS

Spring 2004



Van Vliet Aerial View.

Planning Grant Approved

We are very pleased to announce that the Wisconsin DNR has approved the planning grant sought by the Van Vliet Lake Association. It has been forwarded to Madison for final document preparation. This has been hard work for the Committee as we sought to avoid incurring any expense for the Association if the grant was not received. The grant approved is for a total of \$10,000. The Association membership must match this with in-kind activities valued at \$3,333 (or cash expenditures which will be small).

Thanks to Steve Smithson, George Kupfer, Dick Novak, Jeff Burke and Jill Wilm for their great efforts to get this grant for the Association

What Are the Main Purposes of Seeking a Planning Grant?

1. Develop a consensus to preserve the quality of Van Vliet Lake.
2. Develop the data to best understand Van Vliet Lake.
3. Based on the data, develop a plan to assure the long term quality of Van Vliet Lake.
4. Obtain assistance from the DNR and scientists to assure that the best plan for Van Vliet Lake is developed.
5. Take accountability for the future!

What's Next?

The Committee is in the process of refining the planning project. Work will begin on gathering data this summer. A plan report will be developed by summer of 2005. This will probably not be a final document, as the complexity of any lake will probably result in additional study being required.

There will be a special membership meeting at the Presque Isle Community Building on June 5th at 10 AM. The only agenda item will be a discussion of the plan. This will be an opportunity for all members to hear from our consultant on the project, Steve McComas of Blue Water Science. It will also provide all members with an opportunity to give feedback on refinements and additions to the plan. The meeting will conclude by 1 PM.

This year's Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, August 14th. That meeting will be the annual business meeting and will be the time for the election of officers and other business. We will provide information later on the time and place.

We got an excellent response to our earlier newsletter with the survey about lake concerns. **For those who didn't respond already, we have attached a copy to this newsletter. You can still give us your thoughts – and we really want to have them.** If you don't get a copy of the survey with this newsletter and don't think you have responded already, please contact Tom Olson either at (608) 831-0837 or at mailbox@vanvlietlake.com. Remember that, if 2 of you are members, we welcome two survey responses.

What's Included?

Water sampling to create a baseline for a long term tracking of water quality. We will then be able to watch the lake with good data and determine if there is ever a need to address water quality issues in a more proactive way.

Watershed analysis will be done to look into nutrient loading into Van Vliet Lake. Once again, until this is done, one cannot predict what issues will arise and what recommendations might be made.

A "macrophyte" (aquatic plant) survey will be completed. This will determine the nature and location of aquatic plants in the lake now and will compare it to past information based on what is available for comparison. This will allow us to better understand the aquatic plant community in the lake and determine what, if any, management is appropriate.

Specifically, we also need to address the concerns raised last summer by some residents about ability to navigate on the lake due to plant masses on the surface.

We will also continue our efforts to better understand the avoidance and tracking of exotics such as Eurasian milfoil.

A shoreland survey will be conducted to determine the current state of the shoreland and any "buffers" that exist or may be needed.

We will work with DNR staff to better understand their fish management goals for Van Vliet Lake and to communicate those goals effectively to the residents. We hope to be able to track the results of their management and report it to you in the future. This will also provide information for feedback to DNR Fish Management.

A wildlife inventory will be conducted to determine the current state of wildlife on the lake and its shoreline.

A lake history will be developed. This will include as much information about the history of the people on the lake and conditions on the lake as observed over the years. It will also include discussions of the geology and history of the Presque Isle area.

A program of ongoing education about the plan project will be commenced this summer. In part, our new website (see article in this newsletter) will be used to communicate this. This process will culminate in a report which is completed in by summer of 2005.

What Isn't Included?

There are a few items that the DNR would not fund in the plan as described. You need to be aware of these items and give us your thoughts on them.

The first is a very limited weed harvesting proposal that was deleted by DNR because of their policy to not provide funds for any weed cutting during the planning phase. This denial had nothing to do with the merits of doing or not doing any weed harvesting. Weed harvesting has been controversial on Van Vliet Lake as long as anyone on your Board can recall.

The idea was to do about a ½ day cut with the equipment owned by the former lake association not only to monitor its impact over the summer, but to address the needs of neighbors concerned about navigation and access to their properties. This would have allowed the Association to learn about the potential for this tool while impacting the lake as little as possible. It would also have provided important information about the real ability of the Association to undertake weed harvesting as part of an eventual plan (if the data and consultant's report supported that approach). Information sought would have been: effort required; area involved; disposition of weeds; and impact.

The Association will not be doing any weed harvesting as part of this initial plan. Individuals or groups can still apply for a permit to do this outside of the grant if they wish to conduct harvesting. Steve Smithson will work with individuals who may wish to do this on his own outside of the activities of the Association. Contact Steve directly for this at (952) 941-3442.

The second area had to do with sediment nutrient/silt sampling to better understand the impact of siltation in the lake. This was originally included because of the repeated concerns of the membership about levels of silt in the lake – and its impact. DNR staff was not satisfied that the information gathered was of sufficient value to warrant its inclusion. Some limited sampling will be done outside of the grant.

The final area had to do with “septic leachate” studies. This part of the project was to conduct “on the water” tests to determine if there is initial evidence of septic systems leaking into the lake. DNR staff felt that the project description did not give adequate discussion of the benefits to be gained from this. Given the time constraints in getting the grant approved, this was removed in an effort to allow us to move forward. It bears additional discussion at the meeting. Once again, limited sampling will be done.

To reiterate our earlier newsletter statement:

In our view, there is absolutely nothing to lose and everything to gain in this process.

We will get:

1. Data for a comprehensive look at the lake.
2. A professionally developed plan for the lake with input from the DNR.
3. A plan which addresses the concerns which you have raised in the past.
4. In all probability, a living plan which we can use and contribute to for years to come.
5. A way to assure the quality of Van Vliet Lake for future generations.

Help Needed!!!

On June 4th (the day before our June 5th planning meeting), there is an opportunity to work with Steve McComas on some of the initial data collection. It should be interesting and fun!

At Noon on June 4th, Steve will need 3 volunteers to help with the shoreline survey. This will involve assistance in taking photos, taking notes and driving the boat he will be using. Additional volunteers may observe the process. Please contact Steve Smithson either at (952) 941-3442 or through our e-mail box mailbox@vanvlietlake.com.

There will be additional opportunities to work with Steve McComas – doing aquatic plant surveys in July and August and looking at water levels, surveying beaver dams, and taking sediment samples. Times and specifics for these will be presented at the meeting on June 5th (and in a subsequent newsletter or at our new website – see article later in this newsletter).

Wildlife Survey

As part of the management plan, we are conducting a wildlife survey. A form is attached to this newsletter. Please return it to the address shown. There is also a form on the website in the section for the Management Plan. You may print additional copies from that or request them by calling Tom Olson at (608) 831-0837.

June 1, 1604

400 years ago, or so, hemlocks were sprouting amongst the trees then standing in what is now Section 16 of Presque Isle Township [Town 43 Range 6 East in the southwest part]. Many of those trees are still standing there today in what, we are told, is one of the finest stands of “old growth” hemlocks in north central Wisconsin.

That is part of the treasure that exists on Van Vliet Lake and Averill Lake – and something that many of us know very little about.

If you go all the way around West Van Vliet Road to its end, or all the way up to the end of East Van

Vliet Road, there are approximately 400 acres of land owned by the State of Wisconsin, Board of the Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL). They call it “Van Vliet Hemlocks”. These are lands open to the entire public for their enjoyment and use.

According to the BCPL, it includes nearly 2 ½ miles of undisturbed shoreline most of which is on Van Vliet and Averill Lakes but also on 3 smaller lakes mostly within the acreage.

The land has never been in private ownership. It was granted by the federal government to the State of Wisconsin when it became a state. It has been managed ever since by this BCPL as part of its duties in managing state trust lands. As section 16, it is part of the “school section” lands designated by the Federal congress in the Ordinance of 1785. Records indicate that it was first surveyed in October of 1862. For the most part, most of the other trust lands have been sold off over time.

There are logging trails back in this tract in the portion off East Van Vliet Road. Many of you were aware of this treasure before, but some have only learned of it lately. It is there for all of us to enjoy.

It is also very important to all of us. With the undisturbed shoreline, it represents an important part of the future health of Van Vliet and Averill Lakes. It is also the home to eagle and osprey nests. Its near shore waters have held loon nests in recent years. The very beautiful island in Averill is part of this land. Some of our members have hunted deer on this land over the years. It is a great place to snowshoe.

We will talk more about this important land in future articles.

Website

We are in the process of developing a website for the Van Vliet Lake Association. It will contain old newsletters, news of the area that is important to the purpose of the Association, our basic documents and important letters, access to ordinances and information that members request, updates on the planning process and more.

You can find the website at <http://www.vanvlietlake.com> .

Among other things, you will find a map to the “Van Vliet Hemlocks” parcel mentioned in this newsletter.

The website is for your benefit. We need your feedback on ideas for improvement. Please contact Tom Olson through the “Contact Us” portion of the site.

Dues

With this newsletter, you will find your Membership form. Please note that dues are now \$10 per voting member – rather than \$10 per family. All who are eligible for membership may join (anyone who owns or resides on property within 1 mile of Van Vliet Lake).

To vote on issues at any meeting or be on the Board, you must be a member.

If You Can't Make the June 5th Meeting and want to provide some feedback, either send a letter to:

Steve Smithson
6800 Galway Dr,
Edina, MN 55439

Or send an e-mail to:
mailbox@vanvlietlake.com

Al Orel

Al Orel, who lived on Van Vliet Lake (on Crab Lake Road) for the past decade, died after surgery on April 6th. Those of us who knew Al always found him to be a gentle, friendly, smiling man.

In the summer, you could see him frequently in one of his two avid pursuits – walking and fishing. He always had time to chat. We will miss him.

MEMBERSHIP SIGN-UP

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip Code _____

Lake Address (if different) _____

Phone Number (home) _____ (lake) _____

E-mail Address _____

**Other
Comments** _____

Yes, we are still working on the Van Vliet Lake Directory! We are hoping to be able to give it to Association Members in the near future. If you would like to be included, please check below.

_____ No – don't include me.

_____ OK to include the following: (check which)

_____ Name(s) _____ Presque Isle address _____ P.I. phone

_____ e-mail _____ other address _____ other phone

Enclosed please find my membership check in the amount of (min. \$10 per voting member) payable to the Van Vliet Lake Association, Inc. (Note – last year, the membership voted to make the minimum dues \$10 per voting member rather than \$10 per family – membership is open to all property owners within 1 mile of Van Vliet Lake or persons resident within 1 mile for at least 30 days per year).

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(clip here for your records)

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**

2004 Van Vliet Lake Association Dues
check # _____; amount _____