VAN VLIET NEWS

Winter 2004

The small island on Van Vliet – Christmas 2003.

Board Approves Seeking Planning Grant.

After many years of discussion, the Board of the Van Vliet Lake Association approved the seeking of a Lake Management Grant through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The vote was 6-0 in favor of seeking the grant.

The purpose of the grant is to develop a comprehensive plan for the management of Van Vliet Lake. The plan will seek to determine what, if anything, should be done to assure the best future for Van Vliet Lake. Details inside.

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!

Where Are We?

At this year's annual meeting, those present again asserted the need for looking into the protection of Van Vliet Lake – its water quality, fish populations, aquatic plants and cooperative usage patterns. The new Board took this direction and moved forward by appointing a Planning Committee to look into the process. That committee is composed of Board Members Jill Wilm, Jeff Burke, George Kupfer and Dick Novak. It is chaired by Steve Smithson. The committee is 2 permanent residents, 2 owners who are spending much more time on the lake since their retirements, and a consultant experienced in managing projects. One of the members has extensive scientific background in water quality issues. It is a great committee!

The committee investigated the process with the DNR. As reported earlier, the planning grant process is overseen by DNR (DNR represents the people of the state who are the true owners of the waters of every lake). DNR has grant money available to responsible organizations who will seek to develop a scientifically based plan for a lake. There are too many lakes in the state for DNR to do this by itself, so it needs this kind of a partnership with an organization. It is a great opportunity for us!

The committee contacted more than 2 dozen consulting firms on a list received from DNR to determine the help they could provide. The firms were told that we were looking for a plan which addressed water quality, aquatic plants, fish management, shoreland use and the need to assure a consensus of the owners on the lake.

Eight qualified bids were received by the committee, and it met to narrow the list and make a final selection of a consultant based on face to face meetings with 3 consultants. The consultant selected was Blue Water Science of St. Paul, Minnesota. This is a firm which the local DNR office has worked with successfully on plans for Plum Lake and Minocqua Lake.

The consultant has assisted us in applying for the grant. At this point, no money has been spent (other than on postage). It is likely that any real comprehensive plan may take a few years to build and that this initial grant application is just one in a series that we will be seeking (we won't really know this until we see what we learn from this initial plan).

The application was submitted on time for the February 2004 cycle with some great efforts by the committee.

One of the really exciting prospects is that George Kupfer is interested to see if a longer term data base can be developed for a truly scientific and truly long-term plan. This anticipates that the plan would be a living document. We will also be looking at that during the planning process.

At this point, it appears that our contribution to the costs of the plan will be primarily "sweat equity". There is a large amount of work that volunteers can accomplish to satisfy our requirement for the 25% of the costs required by DNR. We really believe that the final costs to the Van Vliet Lake Association will be minimal.

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.

To assure your input, we are including a survey. Please fill this out and return it to Nancy Frank as soon as possible! If there are 2 members at this address, please feel free to send in 2 responses.

Meetings for 2004

There will be several meetings during 2004. We want a meeting early in the year to get your additional feedback on the planning process. Please indicate the best time for this on the survey. We will set the meeting when we can get the best turnout. We will also have our annual meeting later in the summer. Once again, give us your thoughts on the best dates. Each meeting will contain information on the process.

Opposition

Although your president has received no direct communications on the subject, several members have advised me that there is opposition being stated to the development of this plan. We need to address this up front.

1. It has been wrongly asserted that there is an agenda to conduct general weed harvesting as part of this plan. That is untrue!

   There will be development of information and data regarding aquatic plants. Any plan which recommends any action will be developed as a result of this information. The committee and the Board are well aware of the complex interrelationships in a lake which need to be addressed before any action is taken. The reason for the plan is for everyone to understand these relationships. At this point, all that we have is the opinions of well-intentioned amateurs on the subject. Before any plan is developed, there will be many opportunities to discuss it.

2. It has been wrongly asserted that Steve Smithson has received compensation from the Association for weed harvesting. Once again, untrue!

   This Association has never conducted weed harvesting and has never paid Steve Smithson for anything at all. The only compensation ever paid to third parties is to printers for their services in printing the newsletter, to speakers for our annual meetings, for expenses incurred for our annual meetings, for attendance and expenses to attend one Wisconsin Association of Lake Conference and to a local scientist to conduct an aquatic plant survey.

If there is any other form of opposition, we would like to get it on the table now so that we can discuss it.

This newsletter goes to all individuals that we are aware of who have an interest in Van Vliet Lake and a potential for membership in the Association. We sincerely want the participation of all in this process

Blue Water Science

Our consultant for this project is Blue Water Science. Here are some facts about that organization, their approach to the planning process, and their performance.

Blue Water Science, is a two-person consulting firm in St. Paul, Minnesota. Steve McComas is the owner and has been working on lakes and streams for 25 years, specializing in lake management and lake restoration projects with an emphasis on innovative solutions to lake-related challenges.

Steve McComas has conducted over 300 lake-related projects and reports in the last 25 years and lake management/lake restoration projects have occurred throughout the midwest and especially in Wisconsin. He has experience with lake and watershed monitoring, and conducting aquatic

plant surveys as well as implementing or recommending techniques to enhance shoreland conditions, control algal blooms, control exotic aquatic plants, and improve sport fishing.

Steve has written two books on how to implement lake improvement and lake protection projects. He brings this experience of lake planning and lake project implementation to the Van Vliet Planning Grant process.

An Open Process

Please remember that this is an open process which will develop the best plan if we hear from all of you. Any plan will be best if we have your concerns in front of us. There will be lots of opportunity for discussion.

This Newsletter goes to about 100 names on our mailing list. It would be great if everyone responded.

One Opinion

As your elected president, I am taking this opportunity to give you my opinion on this process.

As a lake association, we are at a critical point. We have a great opportunity to develop a plan which will aid us all in better understanding our great resource – Van Vliet Lake. As an owner since 1977, I have watched the lake carefully (although through an amateur's eyes). I am encouraged that the quality of the lake seems to be quite high.

To me, when a lake is still in good shape is exactly the time to develop a plan. Let us learn about it now and create a plan now so that we will have the best chance to have a great lake during our lives, our children's lives and our grandchildren's lives. As a brand new grandpa, nothing would give me greater pride than to know that I had done what I could to make this lake better for my grandchildren.

We are proposing to learn more about our lake and develop a plan to make its future better. We are not committing to anything at this point – other than developing information from reliable sources and learning.

Please give us your strong support for this effort. We need to assure the future of Van Vliet Lake!

Tom Olson
President

MEMBERSHIP SIGN-UP

Name_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip Code_____

Lake Address (if different_____

_____

Phone Number (home)_____(lake)_____

E-mail Address_____

Other Comments_____

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Enclosed please find my membership check in the amount of (min. $10 per person) payable to the Van Vliet Lake Association, Inc. (Note – last year, the membership voted to make the dues $10 per person rather than $10 per family).

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

Mail to: **Nancy Frank, Treasurer**
Van Vliet Lake Assn, Inc.
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Madison WI 53705