Geneva Waters
Winter 2019 - Vol. 34, No. 1

“No Luck Today”
Geneva Bay
Photo By Fred Noer

Geneva Lake Environmental Agency
Quarterly Publication

Featured in this issue:
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Geneva Lake
Environmental Agency

Our Mission:
The Geneva Lake Environmental Agency is determined to maintain Geneva Lake's resources by protecting, preserving and enhancing a desirable lake and watershed quality.

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Winter 2019

Taking a month to arrive, winter eventually became the old-fashioned type of season with bitter cold and lots of snow.

It’s as if the weather is running a month behind. December was warm and without snow. Early in March there was a lot of snow on the ground, and we were in the single digits during the night. It’s been so consistently cold there is still a significant amount of snow on the ground and ice on the waters. The sun is getting higher in the sky, and the days are getting longer. The south-facing slopes and snowbanks are showing signs of melting. The snow is losing its whiteness and turning dark with dirt. Soon there will be the spring rains and as Bearclaw (Will Greer) said to Jeremiah Johnson (Robert Redford), “March is a green and muddy month. Some people like it . . . mostly farmers.”

December precipitation turned out to be above average with 2.68 inches compared to an average of 1.89 inches. The 2018 total precipitation of 53.35 inches is the wettest year since 1985 when precipitation recordings were started at the Geneva Lake Atmospheric Monitoring Station. January and February kept the above average trend in precipitation, with both months recording precipitation above average. January precipitation was 3.32 inches and February was 3.49 inches, both mostly as snow.
Lake Level

This winter the lake level has been above the spillway and above the 15-year average. The level peaked around the first week of February and hit the lowest point around the third week of December. Snowstorms and blizzard conditions on January 7 and February 5-6 got the lake rocking in its basin even under the ice as shown in the early February fluctuations.
Ice-On

The official Ice-On for 2019 was January 21. Ice formed in the bays prior to that date several times but went out after warmer weather and rains. The day before the cold front came through that froze the lake people were fishing from boats in Williams Bay. When the lake did freeze, it froze solid from the east to the west and in all bays. Despite snows covering the ice, its thickness was reported between 8-10 inches, with one report 18 inches. But that was a fisherman, and most anglers have a hard time measuring things. Not many cars were seen on the ice this winter, especially during Winterfest in Lake Geneva. Iceboating was spotty because of the snow.

Many anglers have been seen off Hillside Road on the south shore and in Williams Bay. The number of shacks/tents on Geneva Bay was not as high as past years. A few brave souls have been seen fishing on the west end but, again, not many.

There were five Ice-On winners in the annual Geneva Lake Environmental Agency/Clear Water Outdoor 2019 Ice-On contest. All five picked the same date, Jan. 21, as the Ice-On date. Differences between first and third place were a result of when their guesses were postmarked or received. There were two first-place winners, Samantha Feucht and Alyssa Bader, both from Brookwood Middle School. Jaely Speciale from Fontana Elementary School took second place, and Ginger Esarco and Oliver Schaid from Traver
School tied for third. Winners received Clear Water Outdoor gift certificates (1st $50, 2nd $25, and 3rd $10) and UW-Extension’s “My Lakeshore Field Journal,” an interactive journal loaded with fun facts about plants, insects, and wildlife in and around Wisconsin’s lakes.

2019 Ice-On Winners
From Left to right, Oliver Schaid, Ginger Esarco, Jaely Speciale, Lauren Harris (Clear Water Outdoor), Samantha Feucht, Alyssa Bader

Big Foot Creek Watershed Study Up-Date

Things are moving forward with the Big Foot Creek watershed study. The Geneva Lake Environmental Agency was awarded a Small-Scale Wisconsin DNR grant of $3,000 to help cover phase-one lab costs. Four Badger High School students and two Badger teachers will be hired by GLEA to conduct the fieldwork and laboratory supervision.
The project is scheduled to start with a spring sampling of five sites in the Big Foot wetland. Four students will collect the samples at each site, conduct field testing, and return to the lab to conduct additional analysis. Samples will also be shipped to the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene for additional analysis. The Environmental Education Foundation has awarded GLEA a grant to cover the cost of the students and their supervisors.

**Starry Stonewort Invasion**

As mentioned in the last edition of Geneva Waters, a new aquatic, non-native, invasive plant, starry stonewort (*Nitellopsis obtuse*) was found in Geneva Lake last August. Finding a non-native invasive species in any environment is troubling. Geneva Lake has withstood the invasion of several non-native aquatic plants. Because of the overall health of the lake and a good diverse aquatic plant population, the impact of the stonewort has not been as significant as in other lakes. How many times can this happen without causing some major problems to the biological community of the lake?

We are fortunate stonewort has only been found in two isolated locations on the southeastern shore. This makes plant management easier than if the invasive were found at several lake locations. It can be attacked aggressively and timely with the hope of controlling it and maybe even eradicating it.
The plan is to hydraulically dredge that portion of the lagoon where the plant has been found. It is desired to start the dredging as soon as possible this spring. Our goal is to remove the plant before it starts aggressively growing and before boat traffic in the lagoon gets busy.

As of this writing, we are finalizing the location of the dewatering site and permit applications. Three permits are needed: one to dredge, one to return the water to the lake, and one to bury the spoils.

We thank the Trinke Property Owners Association, whose members understand the seriousness of the situation and have been cooperative in addressing the problem in a timely manner. We also thank the Wisconsin DNR, which has committed time and staff to keep the project moving forward.

The project is estimated to cost around $150,000. GLEA has initiated a special fund-raising effort to help finance management of the stonewort. Donations to the agency for stonewort management may be made several ways:

- Visit the GLEA website at https://www.genevalakemanagement.com/ and click on the “GoFundMe” link on the home page under the starry stonewort picture.

or
Find GLEA’s Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/GleaGenevaLakeEnvironmentalAgency/, scroll down, and click on the foggy lake picture link that will take you to our GoFundMe page

or

Go to the GoFundMe site and click on search in the upper-left corner, enter “Williams Bay, WI,” scroll down, and click on “Starry stonewort management.”

or

Send a check directly to GLEA (P.O. Box 914, Williams Bay, WI 53191-0914) designated for starry stonewort.

Soil and Water, The Ingredients for Life on Earth

Soil is the wonderful combination of organic and inorganic materials that thinly cover the planet earth. Add some water, and we have life. We need both to survive on this third rock from the sun. Soil grows our food, absorbs carbon, and is the source of numerous antibiotics. Although water covers 71 percent of the earth, only one percent is available for our use. The unique qualities of water result in it playing a significant role in our existence on this planet.

It is perplexing that despite our dependence on soil and water to survive, we often disrespect both by mismanaging them. When mixed together in the wrong proportion, they are of no good to anyone. A stream or lake turbid with sediment and runoff is not a
recreational site of high priority and is hard on all life within the water. Researchers warn we are losing soil faster than it is being replaced through natural processes. The amount of water on this planet is finite. What we have is all we get. Changes in quality that limit the use of water will cost millions of dollars to make usable again. And we will need to use it again.

If we are to survive on planet earth, we need to take our soil and water seriously. We need to protect them and manage them for sustainability. Treat them for what they are – life-giving.

A Lake Book for Lake Residents—Residents
“Saving our Lakes and Streams: 100 Practical Things You Can Do Today”

Northwestern Wisconsin author Jim Brakken recently published a book loaded with practical tips, articles, and photos of his many years being active with lakes. Jim has spent more than 25 years as a lake volunteer. He is past president of Wisconsin Lakes Presidents and recipient of the Wisconsin Lakes Stewardship Award. Jim has committed to generously donating $1 of each copy of his book “Saving our Lakes and Streams: 100 Practical Things You Can Do Today” to Wisconsin Lakes. To ensure Wisconsin Lakes is credited, please mention us when ordering your copy. For more information and to order the book, go to badgervalley.com.
A New Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

With the election of a new governor, who has chosen a new DNR secretary and executive team, it appears the DNR is headed back in the right direction. The governor has said he wants to bring science back to the decision-making process when it comes managing our natural resources.

The new designated DNR secretary is Preston D. Cole. He served on the Natural Resources Board for 12 years, including two years as chairman. With experience and an education in parks and forestry, Cole supports traditional conservation activities and environmental protection.

Elizabeth Kluesner is the designated new deputy secretary, and Todd Ambs is the designated assistant deputy secretary. Both come with experience from within the DNR. They both enjoy outdoor activities and have been active in Wisconsin conservation. Kluesner comes with years of experience as a liaison between the DNR and other groups and with experience in working on policy and program development. Ambs comes to the executive team with years of experience as the DNR Water Division administrator. He has also been active in environmental policy field more than 30 years. There is a lot of positive anticipation by conservationists over the newly designated executive team. They all have been involved and trained in some aspect of natural re-
source management -- which may sound like common sense but hasn’t always been the case.

Save the Date

The seminar “Keeping it Blue: Reducing Phosphorus in Our Lakes” is 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Friday, May 31 in Room 214 of the Walworth County government offices along Hwy. NN, Elkhorn. The workshop is sponsored by Geneva Lake Conservancy, GLEA, and Walworth County. The event will present information for county homeowners, lake associations, and property owners about how they can help reduce phosphorus loading to lakes. More on this seminar as it gets closer.

Smart Water Management Decisions

In a recent edition of Lake Tides, the Wisconsin Lake newsletter, there was an article by Eric Olson, director and lake specialist for UW-Extension, on the valuing of ecological
services and what they mean to a community. The following article is summarized from Olson’s article.
As lake users, we all realize the value of lakes. We need to gain the support our elected officials in our protection efforts. In times of constant competition for the spending dollar we need to make a good case to spend public money on lake protection, to feed the goose that lays the golden egg.

In this process we need to know what lakes are worth and what return might be expected from investing in the care of lakes. We know lakeshore real estate brings higher prices than similar property not on the lake. Value of vacant lakefront property is not only a factor of the lot size but of the lake frontage. Owning lakefront property brings unique riparian rights that allow people to place a pier, direct and private access to the lake, and enjoy water view. There is also the scarcity effect with a limited supply and increase in demand. The size of the water body and the proximity to nearby populations also impact the value of lakefront property. The quality of the lake has a significant impact on the value of land within a watershed – especially lakefront property.

A study at UW-Eau Claire found that for lakes in Vilas and Oneida counties the improvement of water clarity by one meter could raise shoreland property values by $8,000–32,000. An interesting finding of this study was that the greatest gains were on lakes with lower water quality.
The spending of scarce public dollars on lakes has to consider whether there is a better return on protecting a clean lake or rehabilitating a degraded lake. Paul Radomski and Kristen Carlson recently published a study in the journal *Lakes and Reservoir Management* to try to answer this question. The authors looked at lakes most vulnerable to changes in nutrient loading, the cost-to-benefit ratio of carrying out protection and restoration, and the biological significance of lakes. Radomski and Carlson developed three different scenarios for allocating money and effort. In general, the pair found that more money should be directed toward protective measures on healthy lakes that are at risk from potential land-use changes.

**Nesting Wildlife Watching**

For some authentic reality TV, visit the links below to view live bird activities on their nests:

~ **Bald Eagle:**

*https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/features/webcams/eaglecam/index.html*

*https://www.raptorresource.org/birdcams/decorah-eagles/*

*https://explore.org/livecams/bald-eagles/decorah-eagles-north-nest*
~ Briess Falcon:

~ Osprey:

~ Red tail hawk:
http://cams.allaboutbirds.org/channel/16/Red-tailed_Hawks/

Lake Notes

~ The Ice Castles in Lake Geneva were popular. The number of visitors and the impact on local business have been positive. Let’s see how the beach responds.
Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Convention is April 11-12 at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Stevens Point. The theme is “Pay It Forward.” The Thursday keynote speaker is Dr. Kate Brauman, lead scientist of the Global Water Institute. She will speak about “Valuing Ecological Services to Make Smarter Water Decisions.” For more convention information, see: https://www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/programs/convention/default.aspx.

The Village of Williams Bay government is working on a new recreational plan that includes some new facilities.

According to a DNR report, 1.9 trillion gallons of groundwater and surface water were pumped in 2017 by business, industries, and agriculture.

If you have a private well, don’t forget to have your annual test for bacteria and nitrates.

A classic historical resource of Lake Geneva, long out of print, has been completely retyped and republished through the diligent efforts of Patrick and Mary Quinn and other helpful individuals. James Simmons' Annals of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin," covering 1835-97, is now available at the Geneva Lake Area Museum. If you have any interest in the history of Lake Geneva, this is a must read!
GLEA’s Geneva Waters Newsletter ‘Green Option’

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- Geneva Lake’s Budget
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- Geneva Lake Management Plan
- Groundwater & Geneva Lake
- Geneva Lake Book
- Groundwater Flow Model for Geneva Lake
- Groundwater Data Compilation for Geneva Area
- Groundwater Pumping Near Geneva Lake
- Swimmer’s Itch

Mail this form with your contribution to:

GLEA Contributions
PO BOX 914
Williams Bay, WI 53191

Geneva Waters Winter 2019
SAVE GENEVA LAKE

USE OF PHOSPHORUS FERTILIZERS IN THE GENEVA LAKE SHORELINE AREAS IS REGULATED.

Phosphorus is the most problematic pollutant in the lake. Most lawns in our area don’t need phosphorus. When lawn fertilizers run off into the Geneva Basin, they feed the **unsightly, smelly and potentially toxic** algal bloom and promote the growth of weeds in the lake.
Geneva Lake Environmental Agency

Village of Fontana  Town of Linn  City of Lake Geneva
Town of Walworth  Village of Williams Bay

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