

Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 173
Stoughton, WI 53589

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Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 173
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President's Message ~ Bob Arndt

2009 was a real wake-up year for FOLKS members and the FOLKS board. Weeds and algae were worse than most of us can remember and once again we had to deal with high and low water problems. We could sit back and hope these were just cyclic or random events and assume we are due for some good years --- or we can try to do something about these problems.

We can, of course, complain and express our opinions to DNR and Dane County officials. The board and members have done a good job in this respect and it is apparent that this has had some impact, especially with regard to lake levels. And some may remember the battle to clean up the lake by lake residents over 50 years ago that led to changes in sewage handling by the Madison District.

Most of us (over 20% of our members have a primary residence outside the state) can also communicate concerns to, and vote for town, county and state representatives who are interested in our concerns. We could probably be more vigilant in this regard.

The FOLKS board has taken the position that we can do more than this and has initiated action on several fronts:

Weed cutting – We have met with county officials and discussed hiring the county "Aquatic Vegetation Scout" so more time could be spent identifying cutting needs and priorities, paying the county to use personnel and equipment to do more cutting on Lake Kegonsa, identifying additional weed cutting drop off points, and helping develop (and possibly fund) a new Aquatic Plant Management Plan for 2012 to submit to the DNR which would allow for cutting more acres on Lake Kegonsa.

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For More About FOLKS, Visit Our
Website at WWW.Kegonsa.org

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President' Message (Continued From Page 1)

Lake levels – Collect and analyze data on lake levels and river flow to assess the benefits (or lack of benefits) of the April, 2009 Temporary order to lower Lake Kegonsa. FOLKS recently funded and conducted a study of the Yahara River that involved measuring levels between Lake Waubesa and Lake Kegonsa. (See report later in this newsletter) This information will be shared with County and DNR officials as well as other municipalities that may currently support or disagree with the order that could be made permanent later this year.

Water quality – This is the most important and most difficult of the challenges we face. The subcommittee working on this issue has been collecting existing information and exploring ways to address phosphorus runoff. As of this time, no specific action steps have been developed.

We have also met with University and DNR officials and discussed ways to utilize services of the University of Wisconsin through student projects and possibly providing seed money or matching funds to secure grants for scientific studies of water levels and water quality.

FOLKS is obviously a volunteer organization and these activities require manpower. A number of members have become active on the subcommittees. In fact, two members (Harmon Ray and Craig Thompson) volunteered and were very instrumental in the Yahara River study. If you would like to get involved with a project or become a member of the board, please contact me or any board member for more information. Several board positions need to be filled at our annual meeting on January 23. While 22% of our members reside outside of the state we have no out-of-state representatives. While you might not be able to attend all the meetings, in these days of electronics much of our business is carried out through email.

You can also help direct us by taking the time to complete the survey that you will receive in a few months.

FOLKS Annual Meeting Scheduled

The annual meeting of FOLKS will be held at 9:30 AM, Saturday, January 23 in the lower level of the Stoughton Country Club. The agenda will include election of new officers and board members. Two one year and six 2-year positions are available this year. All members are invited to this meeting, which is expected to last about one hour.

Agenda

Annual financial report
Summary of years activities
Lake level project report
Election of officers and board members for 2010
Open floor for discussion, questions from members

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FOLKS monthly board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month and the public is welcome to attend. Next Meeting February 9, 2010, 5:30 - 7:00 PM.

Stoughton Country Club 3165 Shady Side Drive Stoughton WI, 53589

**Send news of interest to FOLKS to:
P.O. Box 173
Stoughton, WI 53589 or
DavidL@kegonsa.org**

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Aquatic Plant Management/Invasive Species Subcommittee

These are notes from a meeting on August 26, 2008. Tom McGinnis and Peter Foy from FOLKS met with Kevin Connors, Director Dane County Land and Water Resources Department, Darren Marsh, Director Dane County Parks. This is the first part of a two part article. The second part will be published in the next newsletter.

In response to our general weed cutting questions, we arrived at the following facts:

- The County has 10 harvesters. They added three new ones in the last 3 years. Two they built and one they purchased. A harvester costs between \$160-\$180k. and they weigh about 18k lbs.
- This summer they had six people to run the harvesters.
- They have four trucks that typically take about 10 loads a day each from the various drop off points. One truck can handle 2-3 harvesters.
- There are six weed drop off points on Lake Kegonsa; Fish Camp, Barbers Bay, Amundsen boat launch, Two at Lake Kegonsa State Park and Pleasant Branch. It would be appreciated if we could identify any other locations that could be used as pick up points.
- They do not know the mix of weeds that are being harvested.
- The weed cutting priority is set by a county employee they call the Aquatic Vegetation Scout. This person is on the water every week evaluating the highest priority areas for cutting. It is important to understand that the DNR doesn't want to clear all the weeds; they just want to clear paths for navigational purposes. A navigational cut is 20ft across about 3-4 ft out from the docks. They then cut out to that navigational cut every 7-8 houses. The cutting depth is 4 1/-5 1/2 feet if it is deep enough. They are not supposed to cut between docks, but if there is a major problem and room to do it they will cut between docks. The river is always the top priority, followed by navigation routes, with public access first.
- The DNR puts out permits for the number of acres that can be cut. Lake Kegonsa only has 10 acres, while Lake Windsor has over 100 acres. Monona has 220 acres. This is because of historical experience. If the weed scout notices significant changes they will apply for more acres from the DNR. The current permit for Lake Kegonsa expires on 12/31/11.
- 2007 was a great cutting year because they had the budget to keep all 10 harvesters going and because the water level in the river was so low they were all working the lakes. 2008 and 2009 were not as good due to high water and budget issues.
- How the harvesting works;
 - The harvesters cut weeds until they are full. They then must take them to the closest drop off point. When they are proceeding to the drop off point they pull the cutters out of the water. From the shore it might appear as though they are still cutting, but aren't getting anything. This might be the reason people sometimes complain about seeing the cutters moving, but they weren't picking up any weeds. If they are going to unload they aren't actually doing any cutting.
 - At the drop off point the harvester moves the weeds to a conveyor belt which puts the weeds in a truck. The weeds are never dumped on the ground.
 - The truck takes them to the closed compost site. These weeds are in demand by farmers and others and they have no problem getting rid of them.
- The harvesters are designed so that all the weeds that are cut should be picked up by the cutters. A problem for people that live by the Yahara River is that when they are cutting in the river Wild Celery comes up from the river bottom and floats down the river. Mats of Coon Tail also will move down the river, while they are cutting. They try to collect these, but obviously don't get them all.

FOLKS' Study of Water Levels of the Lower Yahara River

The Lake Level Subcommittee conducted a detailed study of the Lower Yahara River in Sept. 09. The objective of the study was to determine changes in water levels along the river from Lake Waubesa to Lake Kegonsa. Ten recording transducers were placed in the river to record water levels every 30 minutes for roughly two weeks. Fortunately, the recording period included a significant rain event. Over 5,000 readings were recorded.

After preliminary analysis of the data, a single point crosscheck was made in November 09. The crosscheck confirmed the validity of the original data with the exception of one transducer's data.

At FOLKS' Annual Meeting, a presentation will be made on the results of the study. Also, a presentation of the results including the technical aspects will be made to representatives of the DNR, Dane County, and UW. This is the first technical research study on the behavior of the water levels along the Lower Yahara River.

Water Quality Subcommittee Report.

The Water Quality Subcommittee has met 4 times during 2009. Members have been discussing possible approaches for FOLKS to address water quality issues. Phosphorus has been identified by experts as the primary influence on water quality such as water clarity and algae blooms on inland lakes. UW research shows the principle source of phosphorus in the Yahara lake system is the North Mendota watershed. Mendota phosphorus is distributed down stream to all of the lakes including Lake Kegonsa.

The question before the Subcommittee is whether FOLKS' efforts should be directed towards reducing phosphorus levels in the entire Yahara Lakes systems or concentrating on local water quality issues recognizing the overall impact of the phosphorus levels. A combination approach is being discussed and may be very practicable.

To date, a review of the articles and papers on Lake Kegonsa' water quality has been conducted. The significant runoff situation by the Kegonsa Sanitary District office on HWY 51 & AB is being discussed with the appropriate governmental parties. Various grants available for lake management and/or water quality projects have been explored for possible funding opportunities.

Lake Kegonsa Fisheree

The Stoughton Conservation Club is hosting the Lake Kegonsa Fisheree and Bounty Hunt on Sat. Jan 30th. Headquarters will be at Springers. Contact Roy Quam at 575-6633 with any questions.

FISHING IN THE OLD DAYS A FAR CRY FROM NOW

By Lorraine Hawkinson

It was almost forty-five years ago, in 1965, that I sat down with an old-time Kegonsa fisherman named Olaf Anderson and interviewed him for a story about what fishing was like on Lake Kegonsa in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Olaf was 92 years of age at the time of the interview. The late Olaf Anderson was a long-time Stoughton area farmer but he spent many, many days fishing on Lake Kegonsa. Because of these fishing days, he was able to relate to this writer many very interesting things.

Fishing methods of Olaf and his friends during those years would never have passed today's DNR's rules and regulations. Fish, at that time, were pulled out of the lake by the tubful and not by today's conventional methods.

Olaf said that to get to the lake by land, one had to cut and push through a wide stretch of dense underbrush. Getting boats into the lake that way was a difficult task. Olaf usually made the trip to Kegonsa by water. Starting at the mill dam in Stoughton, he could make it in one hour, even though the trip necessitated going through some very weedy areas. "It took a stiff row," he said.

Usually three or four men traveled together to the lake. Once there, the first thing they did was pitch a tent. There was much work to do. Setting up cooking facilities and preparing the fishing gear was the order of the day.

Fishing in those days was not done with a pole, line and hook. It required several boats, a set line with floats, hooks, anchors, and three or four strong men to set the lines and maintain them. At that time the use of set lines was accepted and permitted. A set line was an unattended fish line anchored about 20 yards from shore. Olaf's set line was usually 800 feet long, made of heavy mason line, and had at least 100 hooks dangling from it on lighter-weight 3 foot lines. The set line, with its 100 hooks, had to be checked at least twice a day to remove the fish and re-bait the hooks. Anchored at both ends by large flat rocks, the line had two-foot long, twelve-inch wide boards at each end which acted as "floats." These "floats" efficiently marked the location of the set line.

Every morning and every night, the men went out in boats, pulled up the line, removed the fish, and re-baited the hooks. New minnows, or "minnies," as Olaf called them, were placed on the hooks. Keeping a ready supply of "minnies" kept the men busy for at least three hours of every day, usually seining for them near Lake Bridge. Olaf said no matter how rough the lake was, or from which direction the wind was blowing, the lines had to be tended and the trips for minnows made.

Olaf's favorite fishing spot was off the shore near the site of the present Stoughton Country Club. This was a good place to fish for more than one reason. Since refrigeration had not yet been invented, it was necessary to find a way to preserve the fish. This was done by shoring up the ends of the gully found to the west of the country club site. At that time the gully was a spring fed trough spilling water out into Lake Kegonsa. Each day the daily catch was dumped into the cold water of the gully. Though water spilled over the rock filled ends, the fish could not get out. The men could easily catch the fish with their hands or nets as they were needed.

Many of the fish were sold to area residents who liked the idea of buying fresh fish. Others were taken home for family use. Olaf recalled one "great sale" that he had. He sold a 22-pound northern for fifty cents, a very large price in those days! The most common fish in Lake Kegonsa at that time were perch, bullhead, pickerel, walleye, northern and crappies. Blue-gills were there but they were never caught on minnows, Olaf said.

FISHING IN THE OLD DAYS A FAR CRY FROM NOW

(Continued)

During these early fishing days on Kegonsa, Olaf remembered that not a house could be seen. "Not even a boathouse!" he exclaimed. The first house that did appear was a summer cottage built by T. C. Lund on Quam's Point. Mr. Lund was a Stoughton Wagon Works official. Olaf remembered that land around Lake Kegonsa during the late 1800's and early 1900's could be bought for \$50 an acre.

Anderson also told about a sand bar that once was very visible on Lake Kegonsa. The sand bar seemed to be located in about the center of the lake. It was at least an acre in size and rose out of the water very substantially. It was covered with growing vegetation. During prohibition days, a bootlegger set up a flourishing business on the sand bar. Evidence (the liquor) could easily be "put under" when agents were observed. Olaf recalled that officials finally got to him and he was evicted and fined. With the building of the Kegonsa locks, the water level of the lake rose and the sandbar disappeared under the water.

Olaf, in assessing his fishing days, says he couldn't have fished Kegonsa had it not been for his very well-made boat. He remembered it had been built by two veteran boat builders, Henry Beatie and Anton Peterson, both of Stoughton.

Though fishing on Kegonsa was usually very good, Olaf had this to say, "Some days you couldn't catch a fish to save your neck - the next day you could catch washtubs full!"

DNR's Changes to Shoreland Zoning Rules for 2010

New DNR shoreland zoning rules are expected to be in place on January 1, 2010. The proposed shoreland zoning rules have been discussed by the DNR and interested stakeholders for over 5 years. FOLKS has been continually reporting on these meetings and proposals throughout the discussion period.

Although there are many technicalities within these shoreland rule changes, the most specific change is:

For existing substandard parcels and structures within the shoreland zone, all improvements are allowed if they are confined to the existing footprint of the structures.

For changes outside of the footprint, some type of mitigation is required. The entire DNR 2010 shoreland zoning report is available at the FOLKS webpage.

The next step in the process is for the counties to enact changes to their respective zoning ordinances to reflect DNR's changes. How the Dane County's Board implements these changes is unknown at this time.