



Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 173
Stoughton, WI 53589-0173
January 2024

President’s Message ~ George Corrigan

This is a quiet time of year for Lake Kegonsa – there is very little to no boating, and no ice-based recreation. Of course, our ice on contest is still undecided. The safety tip in this newsletter is about ice safety - perhaps it will be useful sometime in the coming weeks.

The very late, and yet to happen (as of January 7, 2024), freeze of Lake Kegonsa isn’t a record yet – and I suspect the ice on date may have occurred by the time you read this. It looks like it will not be a record - the latest ice on date was January 13, 2012. Forecasters are calling for overnight lows below freezing, with high temperatures above freezing, until Jan 11.

Given the lack of activity on the lake, I will bring up some off-lake activity. Wake boarding regulations are being proposed and/or discussed by the legislature. As a 501(c)(3) organization **FOLKS** does not lobby for or take positions on legislation. But we do occasionally notify members about legislation, and members can act or not act as they see fit.

There are two bills in progress – one introduced, and one proposed (i.e., not officially introduced). Both bills can be found online by searching for them. We are not providing links to avoid linking to a site that is in favor of or against either bill. The descriptions below come from the legislative reference bureau (LRB), which is a neutral organization.

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The introduced bill is LRB-3518 (WI 2023 Assembly Bill 656 and 2023 Senate Bill 680). According to the legislative reference bureau some of the bill relates to prohibitions on smaller lakes and thus does not apply to Lake Kegonsa. But, it also does address larger lakes. On lakes the size of Lake Kegonsa “The bill prohibits wakesurfing or wakeboarding within 200 feet of a shoreline or dock, pier, boathouse, or other structure located completely or partly on the water, though the bill allows a local ordinance to be less strict, but not more strict, than this prohibition.”

The second bill, according to the legislative reference bureau, prohibits wakeboarding “less than 700 feet from the shoreline or from any boat, swimmer, or other water user on a lake that is 1,500 acres or larger.”

As I stated above, **FOLKS** does not take a position on these bills.

Enjoy the Ice!
-George Corrigan

Lake Kegonsa Water Levels

As of January 7, 2024 the Lake Kegonsa level is **842.51'** (ft above sea level). In November, Dane County began to transition to winter lake levels as they do each year. The goal is to maintain the water level between winter minimum and summer minimum throughout the winter. Remember navigational and hazard buoys have been removed for the winter. At the moment the lake hasn't completely frozen over but we still have lots of beautiful swans and other migrating birds.

Lake	1/7/2024	Winter	Summer
	Lake Level (ft)	Minimum (ft)	Minimum (ft)
Mendota	848.45	848.20	849.60
Monona	844.04	842.20	844.70
Waubesa	843.80	843.96	844.50
Kegonsa	842.51	841.85	843.00

2024 **FOLKS** Membership

FOLKS membership renewal letters were mailed this week – watch for yours in your mailbox. We try to keep membership accessible by keeping our basic dues amount low (\$20 since 2005) but, of course, we welcome any additional donations you'd like to send.

We appreciate the ideas and support of our membership and hope you'll help us grow by talking to your neighbors and friends about **FOLKS**.

Winter Salt Awareness Week is January 22-26

With the expected winter weather coming at us this week we thought it might be a good time to remind our members about limiting salt use on driveways and sidewalks. Per the **WI Salt Wise Partnership**, "It only takes 1 teaspoon of salt to pollute 5 gallons of water to a level that is toxic to native aquatic organisms (395 mg/L)." Once you put salt down, it doesn't go away. Instead, it travels into our lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands, putting aquatic life at risk and endangering freshwater resources.

Use only what you need — and that's probably much less than you think! A coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20-foot driveway or 10 sidewalk squares. This is what the right scatter pattern should look like:



When pavement temperature drop **below 15 degrees F, salt won't work.** Switch to sand for traction or a different ice melter that works in lower temperatures.

Remember, using excess salt doesn't make sidewalks safer — it harms plants and animals, pollutes our water, damages buildings, corrodes vehicles, and weakens the concrete, brick and stone that make up our homes, driveways, bridges, and roads.

These tips are from the **WI Salt Wise Partnership** (wisaltwise.com) who is sponsoring Winter Salt Awareness Week, January 22-26 and is providing speakers each day on different aspects of salt pollution in Wisconsin. Go to their website to find more information.

FOLKS monitoring volunteers plan to test the chloride levels at monitoring sites around Lake Kegonsa after major run-off events this spring.

Save the Date for a Spring Migratory Bird Event

FOLKS is planning an educational event about the migratory birds on Lake Kegonsa. Please mark your calendar for **Saturday, April 27, 2024, 9 – 11am** and plan to bring your family. It's at Springers and we'll have speakers from WDNR and plenty of activities for a younger audience.

The **FOLKS** Fall Update was held at Springers on October 26th. Over 70 people came together for a fun evening, visiting with new friends and old and getting the latest lake updates from our **FOLKS** Board President, George Corrigan. This event was well received and most members expressed an interest in having **FOLKS** conduct additional social/educational events-stay tuned.

Fish Camp Park and the Lower Yahara River Trail

Exciting changes are coming to Fish Camp Park. Work is progressing with machinery, equipment and crews busy at the Net House, Door Creek and in the area near Springers and the State Park. Soon we will have an accessible kayak launch and fishing piers available as well as an extension of the Lower Yahara River Bike Trail.

FOLKS has made repairs to the interior of the Net House and then contracted to paint the entire south end of the building with the help of a grant obtained from Dane County. We will also be adding educational posters to the interior next year. The upgraded space will then be available for public use such as the **FOLKS** events we have held there in the past.

The plans call for a new rain garden to handle runoff from the parking lot. **FOLKS** will help with that maintenance. We've had fun crews of volunteers doing an exceptional job of maintaining the three educational gardens currently at the park this past year. The area between the Net House and the boat launch is undergoing restoration as well. Next week a few volunteers will help Dane County do some seeding in this area. **FOLKS** is also looking for **volunteers** who are interested in invasive species brush cutting at Fish Camp. We plan to do invasive species work during February and March on Thursdays at 1:00 pm when the temperature is 15 degrees or higher. We'll send out notice of how to sign up. **FOLKS** will have many gatherings of volunteers for these projects in 2024.



Construction on the Lower Yahara River Trail

We look forward to many more opportunities in the future for all of us to enjoy Fish Camp Park in new ways.

2023 Leaf Pick Up

FOLKS worked with the **City of Stoughton**, the **Town of Pleasant Springs** and the **Town of Dunn** again this year to provide leaf pick up around Lake Kegonsa. The leaf collection program is very popular with our membership. In 2023, 95% of **FOLKS** survey respondents said the program was worthwhile and 61% of respondents reported using the program.

FOLKS works with both towns and the City of Stoughton to coordinate equipment sharing and collection dates and provides grant funding for the program. Each year more leaves are collected, which means less phosphorus going into our waters. **Thank you** again for your efforts to reduce the phosphorus entering our waterways.

Aquatic Debris Collection and Dane County Aquatic Plant Programs

Aquatic Debris Collection

2023 was the fifth year of the aquatic debris collection program sponsored and paid for by **FOLKS** in cooperation with Dane County Land & Water Resources Department (LWRD). There were a total of seven weeks of debris pick-up on Lake Kegonsa from June through September. In response to several requests by residents, we added two days of extra pick-up in September which were not on the original schedule. We plan to schedule a week in September 2024 to collect plants resulting from end-of-season harvesting.

The pick-up barge was on the lake for a total of 168 hours and collected **29 barge loads of debris** that were placed on the end of piers by lake residents. Based on a formula developed by LWRD, that equates to 43,500 pounds of wet debris, 4,350 pounds of dry material (10% of wet debris) or **12 pounds of phosphorus** which was diverted from the lake. Twelve pounds of phosphorus may not sound like much, but lake scientific experts have determined that for every pound of phosphorus up to 500 pounds of algae can be generated. So, in 2023 the barge pick-up program, through the efforts of lake residents and LWRD, diverted about 6,000 pounds of algae from Lake Kegonsa. This is a valuable accomplishment!

Based on comments and survey results from the 2023 **FOLKS** survey, the barge pick-up program continues to be well utilized and popular among our members. In the 2023 **FOLKS** survey, 91% of respondents believed the program was worthwhile and 48% of respondents reported using the program. We recognize that it takes hard work and dedication from lake residents to collect and place debris on their pier. The **FOLKS** Board appreciates everyone's support and sends a "big thank-you" to those who utilized the program to keep the lake clean and beautiful!

Dane County Aquatic Plant Harvesting

Dane County LWRD operates the plant harvesters that cut plants during the summer under a program approved and permitted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). During most of 2023, there were two harvesters operating on Lake Kegonsa from mid-June to late August. The LWRD harvesting program applies throughout Dane County to a total of seven area lakes and the Yahara River. According to the LWRD 2023 annual report, the plant harvesters were on Lake Kegonsa for 611 hours which was about 12% of total harvester hours for all seven locations. **The harvesters collected 134.5 loads of cut plants.** Based on the LWRD formula, that is 619 tons of wet-weight plants and 62 tons of dry-weight (10% of wet-weight). That calculates to **353 pounds of phosphorus** that was diverted from Lake Kegonsa in 2023 through the plant harvesting program.

In the 2023 **FOLKS** member survey, 83% of respondents reported abundant aquatic plants on average around the entire lake. This ranged from a high of 98% of respondents who reported abundant aquatic plants on the northeast shore of the lake (Sunnyside and Williams Point area) to a low of 72% of respondents who reported abundant plants on the southeast shore (Skyline and Shadyside area) and the southwest shore (Aalseth, Brooklyn, Quam Pt, Quam Dr, Mallard, Barber Dr, Hwy 51, Colladay Pt). So, there were abundant aquatic plants over the entire lake. Regarding the amount of plant harvesting on the lake, opinions were split – 42% of respondents felt there was enough harvesting this summer and 58% of respondents felt there should have been more harvesting.

In the comments section, a number of residents expressed frustration with the efficiency of the harvesters in collecting floating cut plants. The reality is that the harvesters are about 80% efficient in collecting cut plants so there will always be some plants floating on the lake. That is one reason

FOLKS and LWRD implemented the barge pick-up program. The harvesting crews try hard to collect cut plants, but there will be some that are missed. Overall, the aquatic plant harvesting program provides a valuable service to Lake Kegonsa. **FOLKS** appreciates the hard work and efforts of the aquatic debris pick-up and plant harvester crews and the support of LWRD for these programs that benefit our lake.

History and Status of Common Carp Removal Project on Lake Kegonsa

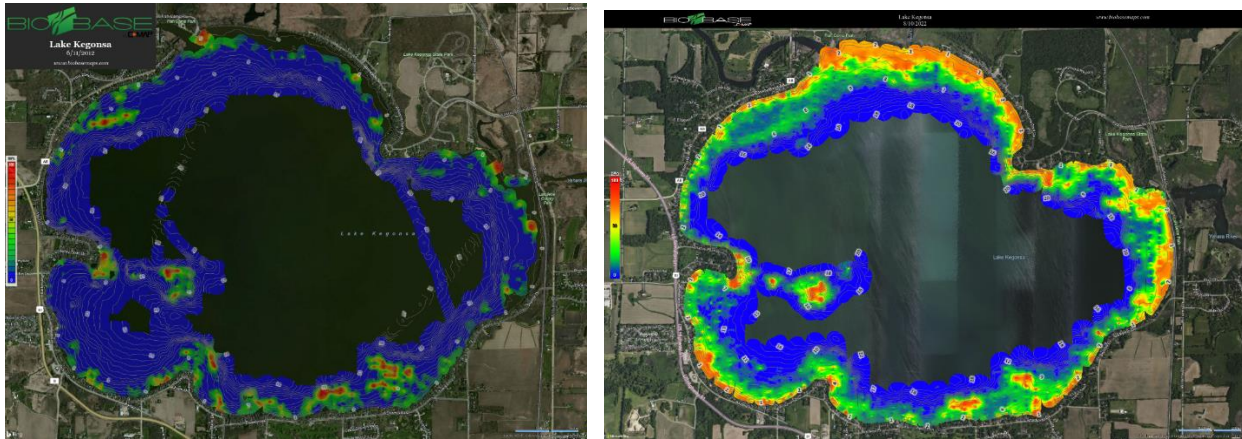
David Rowe (DNR Fisheries Supervisor for Fitchburg Fisheries Team) and Pat Guiney (Chair - **FOLKS** Fisheries Committee)

FOLKS began discussions for removing common carp in Lake Kegonsa in 2015 with the goal of improving water quality, fish habitat, and the Lake Kegonsa recreational fishery. Common carp are non-native fish that were imported to Wisconsin in the late 1800's and stocked into lakes including Lake Kegonsa by European immigrants who desired this well-known fish from their homelands. They quickly realized their mistake as carp became overabundant in North American lakes and adversely changed the character of the lakes they inhabited.

Carp feeding behavior suspends bottom sediments and uproots aquatic plants causing turbid water and reduced plant abundance. This results in cloudy water preventing both the growth of aquatic plants and prevents native sight feeding fishes like bass, perch, and bluegills from preying on juvenile carp, so they become even more abundant. Aquatic plants absorb nutrients from the water, competing with single celled algae and bacteria. Aquatic plants create habitat and structure for fish and aquatic organisms. Shallow lakes where carp become dominant can be flipped from a clear water state with abundant plants to an algae dominated turbid lake. These turbid lakes can also have Harmful Algae Blooms (HAB) making it unsafe for people and pets to use the lake. HAB can also cause fish kills by using the available dissolved oxygen in the water and suffocating fish. An ecological threshold for carp in shallow lakes predicts that if there are more than 100 pounds per acre then they are likely to flip the lake into a turbid state (Bajer et al. 2009, Jackson et al. 2010).

In 2016 and 2017 DNR staff conducted a study to understand the seasonal movements and patterns of carp in Lake Kegonsa. **FOLKS** financially supported this project. Carp were implanted with radio transmitters and followed around the lake for a year recording their locations. During this study DNR did not use quantifiable observational data to estimate the density or biomass of carp in the lake however, DNR made a guestimate of a million pounds of carp if there was around 400 pounds per acre. Using the information learned in the telemetry study and with some fish still carrying active transmitters DNR issued a contract to a commercial fisherman to remove the carp from the lake starting in the spring of 2017. **FOLKS** resources were used to fund and subsidize this carp removal project as well as subsequent removal efforts. The fishermen were able to sell the carp and they were sent to fish markets in New York City to become gefilte fish for the Passover Holiday or to a processing facility in Illinois. The fishermen were able to remove a total of 449,551 pounds of carp in the four years that they fished (2017-2020). If 449,551 lbs. of carp were removed and we use the DNR's estimated average weight of 4 lbs. per carp that equals 112,388 carp removed from our lake. An adult female common carp can lay 300,000 eggs in a single spawn and up to 1 million eggs in a season. If we assume that many of the carp that were removed were adult female carp, we can appreciate the impact this project will have on the future carp population in our lake. 27,374 pounds of bigmouth buffalo were also removed. After the spring of 2020 with the catch of carp becoming more difficult as well as the uncertainty with the COVID-19 Pandemic, and a reduced ability to market the carp, the fisherman asked if DNR would agree to end the contract since they believed it was no longer a profitable endeavor for them. DNR agreed to this request and has not granted any subsequent fishing permits for Lake Kegonsa.

During this time there was also an outbreak of Koi Herpes Virus that killed many carp in Lake Kegonsa. Koi Herpes Virus infects common carp, goldfish, and Koi, which are domesticated carp that are popular in the aquarium and decorative pond industry. The virus was first detected in Wisconsin in the Rock River in 2014. DNR does not have an estimate of how many carp died during the outbreak on Lake Kegonsa, but it was significant. The virus spread up the Madison chain of lakes and was also detected on Waubesa and Monona but not Mendota. DNR has also been monitoring the abundance and distribution of the aquatic plants in Lake Kegonsa as increasing plants was one of the desired outcomes from reducing the abundance of the carp. DNR uses underwater sonar to assess the plant volumes in mid-summer. Since 2012 the plants have become more abundant.



2012 (left) and 2022(right) heat maps of submerged aquatic vegetation of Lake Kegonsa. The blue end of the spectrum shows plants are absent in the water column, red shows plants are filling the water column. There has been a clear increase in the number of plants during the time that common carp abundance has been reduced.

So where are we now?

On August 8, 2023, DNR conducted an electrofishing survey of Lake Kegonsa targeting carp and followed the methods described by Bajer and Sorensen (2012) to estimate density using the electrofishing catch rate. DNR surveyed three 2 mile long transects along the north shoreline of the lake, the western shoreline, and the southern shoreline. The catch rates included carp that were netted as well as carp observed that could have been netted. The catch rates of the three stations were 0, 17.5 and 9.4 carp per hour. The average catch rate for the three stations was 9.0/hour. That estimates a total carp density of 18.3 carp/acre. DNR estimated an average weight of 4 lbs. a carp for a total biomass of 73.3 lbs. of carp/acre which is below the ecological threshold of 100 lbs./acre. Because the estimate was calculated using both netted and observed carp, this estimate can be considered to be on the generous side, too. With the current estimated density of carp below the target goal of 100/lbs. per acre, and water clarity at least functionally improving as evidenced by an increasing abundance of native aquatic plants, DNR has discontinued any active removal of carp on Lake Kegonsa. DNR will continue to monitor the fishery on the scheduled 5-year interval. A comprehensive fisheries survey was completed during the spring of 2023 and a report will be forthcoming.

Bajer, P.G., and P.W. Sorensen. 2012. Using Boat Electrofishing to Estimate the Abundance of Invasive Common Carp in Small Midwestern Lakes, *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*, 32:5, 817- 822.

Bajer, P. G., G. Sullivan, and P.W. Sorensen. 2009. Effects of a rapidly increasing population of common carp on vegetative cover and waterfowl in a recently restored Midwestern shallow lake. *Hydrobiologia* 632:235–245.

Jackson, Z. J., M. C. Quist, J. A. Downing, and J. G. Larscheid. 2010. Common carp (*Cyprinus carpio*), sport fishes, and water quality: ecological thresholds in agriculturally eutrophic lakes. *Lake and Reservoir Management* 26:14–22.

Lathrop, R.C., Liebl, D.S. and Welke, K., 2013. Carp removal to increase water clarity in shallow eutrophic Lake Wingra. *Lakeline*, 33, pp.23-30.

KSD Force Main Sanitary Pipe Relocation

As you drive north on Highway 51, you may have noticed work that was recently performed at the Kegonsa Sanitary District (KSD) office. This work was part of plans for the new Highway 51 roundabout that will be constructed by the Wisconsin Highway Department in 2024.

The following information was in the December 2023 Newsletter of the Kegonsa Sanitary District and is reprinted by **FOLKS** with permission.

The District was required by the WisDOT to relocate approximately 700 feet of force main for the roundabout project at the intersection of US Hwy 51/County Road AB/County B. This work was completed in early November. There is a conveyance of rights in place between the District and the WisDOT. Ninety percent of this project was paid for by the WisDOT and the remainder was the District's cost. The entire system was shut-down to make the new connections. Thank you to R.G. Huston Company, Inc for doing a great job!

The force main sanitary pipe is used to pump sewage to the Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District where it is treated. R.G. Huston covered the exposed dirt to protect Lake Kegonsa from run-off by putting down thick landscape mats that contain seed and straw and that will grow quickly in the Spring. The contractor also placed plastic barriers to keep run-off out of culverts going to the lake. **FOLKS** appreciates the efforts of the Kegonsa Sanitary District and R.G. Huston to protect Lake Kegonsa.

Water Information and Safety – Ice Safety



Given today's lack of ice, this tip might be premature, but by the time we publish our next newsletter in the spring, the ice will be off and we will be thinking about putting piers in.

The WI DNR tells us **no ice is 100% safe**. Guidelines for how thick ice should be varies by source, but common ones include:

- under 4 inches – stay off the ice,
- four inches is needed for ice fishing or other activities on foot,
- five to seven inches is needed for snowmobiles or ATVs, and
- seven to eight inches is needed for side-by-side ATVs.

The strength of ice also depends on its quality. Clear ice is generally stronger than cloudy or slushy ice. Cracks, holes, or dark spots may indicate weaknesses.

Over the last decade or so several ATVs, a few walkers, and an ice boat have gone through the ice. In most of the cases the people were experienced on the lake – but even people who know the lake can unexpectedly come across thin ice.

You can keep safe by checking ice thickness (drilling or asking an ice fisherman). An inflatable vest can help keep you afloat if you do fall through. However, hypothermia can be an issue if you are in the water for even a short time, and ice picks can be used to pull yourself out.

Enjoy the ice, but please be careful. Last year a person died in Lake Waubesa, presumably because thin ice gave way. We want to see you all safe this spring.

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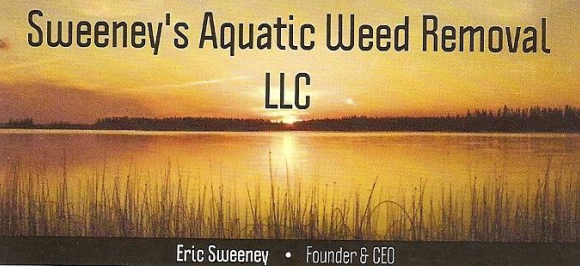
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This year's dues remain \$20.00 for households
and \$30.00 for businesses.

If you have any questions regarding
membership, please contact:
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FOLKS Lost and Found

List lost and found items on the Website
(www.kegonsa.org), Facebook page or contact
Eric Olson at eolson.folks@gmail.com

FOLKS board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month except for a
couple of months in the winter. The public are always welcome.
Next Meeting is April 9, 2024, 6:00 – 7:00 PM, Stoughton Country Club

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