



**Lake Ripley Management District
Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 21, 2020
9:00 A.M. at Oakland Town Hall
N4450 County Road A, Cambridge WI 53523**

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Jimmy DeGidio, Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. Board members present in addition to DeGidio: Doug Maurer and Walt Christensen. Present via teleconference: Keith Kolb, Deb Kutz, Georgia Gómez-Ibáñez, Craig Kempel. Also present: Beth Gehred, Lake Manager.

II. Public Comment

None.

III. Approve Minutes of February 15, 2020 meeting

Christensen moved to approve the minutes of the Meeting of the Board on Feb 15, 2020. Second by Gómez-Ibáñez. Passed.

IV. Treasurer's Report

Kutz distributed to the Board copies of the Treasurer's Report ending February 29, 2020. As of that date checking account balance was \$162,410.66. Income for the month was \$40,209.77 Town of Oakland tax payment #2 (of 3). A \$1,000 Restricted donation from Georgia Gómez-Ibáñez for land purchase, and \$148.75 Village of Cambridge tax payment. There was also \$122.08 in interest. Expenses were to Leader Printing for the 2020 Winter Ripples, \$150 in legal fees, and operational expenses for the District that amounted to \$8,223.18. End of year reports are not available this month due to health and pandemic causing delays with her training.

Kolb moved to accept the treasurer's report and enter it into record. Motion seconded by Gómez-Ibáñez. Motion carried.

V. Lake Manager's Report and Correspondence –

Gehred highlighted activities as outlined in her written Lake Manager's Report. Most notable were assisting the Hiring Committee with the hiring of Dwight Osmon as summer Field Tech, and Lianna Spencer as LTE Field Researcher. Research and partnering with the Town of Oakland Planning Commission allowed us to offer suggestions for going beyond minimum conservation agreements in a reclamation plan and stormwater management plan for the re-opening of the non-metallic mine within the watershed. A grant was submitted to Alliant Energy for land acquisition. Management contracts for the east-side Preserve prairie burn in April and the June Near-Shore Non-Game Fish survey were signed. Making adjustments to operations to react responsibly to the COVID-19 directives took some unexpected time. The Lake District operated with normal office hours, but took precautions to minimize contacts, practice hand-washing and office cleaning, and social distancing when more than one person was gathered.

VI. New Business

a. Lake Management Plan Update

Gehred summarized the work advancing the Plan Update. A request for an advance payment of \$18,700 was submitted to the DNR to help finance the surveys and studies required by the grant. Six sections of the update

were handed to the Board for review in draft form. It was requested that Gehred use a “track changes” format when handing out the next sections of the update for review.

b. Critical Habitat Area Designation Progress Update

Susan Graham provided a statement to accompany the publishing of the DRAFT form of the *2020 Critical Habitat Area Designation: Lake Ripley, Jefferson County, Wisconsin* Report on the Lake Ripley website. The statement is attached in full as an addendum to these minutes. People are invited to read the draft and submit comments to the DNR via her email susan.graham@wisconsin.gov. Another chance for input will be provided at the April 18, 2020 LRMD Board meeting.

c. Lake District LTE Field Researcher and Field Technician Hiring Updates

DeGidio summarized the process that went into hiring Spencer and Osmon for these positions that are critical to the Plan update data gathering and general District function during open water season. Board made a general statement of welcome.

d. Discussion and possible action on Weed Harvesting Operations Policy revisions

Board reviewed changes made to the Weed Harvesting Operations Policy. DeGidio outlined changes allowing a single operator to run the harvester if conditions would require it, and the addition of a minimum number of hours needed to be worked in one season in order for a returning employee to be eligible for the \$1/hour experience wage increase. Concern for safety of the operators was expressed by Kempel and Gómez-Ibáñez but was thought to be partially allayed by the likelihood that they’d have their cell phones with them while running the harvester.

Christensen moved to approve the Weed Harvesting Operations Policy revisions. Second by Maurer. Passed.

VII. Old Business

a. Update on Legislative Action Alerts

Lake Manager reported on the focus of local actions – attending the Town of Oakland planning commission and the Town of Oakland Board meeting in March, in order to speak about the Conditional Use Permitting for the reopening of the quarry. The other focus was to write a letter of support to our federal representatives for the Alliance For the Great Lakes’ 2020 Federal Policy Priorities.

b. Discussion and possible action on land purchase

Christensen made a motion to take a roll call vote to enter closed session for agenda items VII (b). Second by Gómez-Ibáñez. At 9:58 am there was a roll call vote to enter closed session. All votes of members present and on teleconference were nay. Motion failed.

c. Discussion and possible action on closed session items.

None taken.

Adjournment

Christensen **moved to adjourn. Second by Gómez-Ibáñez.** Meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.

Next meeting: April 18, 2020, with start time of 9 am, at the Oakland Town Hall. Modifications due to the COVID-19 pandemic response are anticipated and will be announced with the official noticing of the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

**Critical Habitat Designation Report Update
for Lake Ripley Management District
3/21/2020**

By Susan Graham, Lakes Management Coordinator, Southcentral Region, Wisconsin Dept of Natural Resources

Critical Habitat Designation is a process by which the department identifies in a lake the places where there is critical or unique fish and wildlife habitat, or specific public rights features.

Every waterbody has critical habitat - those areas that are most important to the overall health of the aquatic plants and animals. Remarkably, eighty percent of the plants and animals on the state's endangered and threatened species list spend all or part of their life cycle within the near shore zone. As many as ninety percent of the living things in lakes and rivers are found along the shallow margins and shores. Wisconsin law mandates special protections for these critical habitats. Critical Habitat Designation is a program that recognizes those areas and maps them so that everyone knows which areas are most vulnerable to impacts from human activity. A critical habitat designation assists waterfront owners by identifying these areas up front, so they can design their waterfront projects to protect habitat and ensure the long-term health of the lake they where they live.

Areas are designated as Critical Habitat if they have Public Rights Features, Sensitive areas or both. Public rights features (defined in NR 1.06, Wis. Adm. Code) include the following:

1. Fish and wildlife habitat;
2. Physical features of lakes and streams that ensure protection of water quality;
3. Reaches of bank, shore or bed that are predominantly natural in appearance;
4. Navigation thoroughfares.

Once critical habitat and public rights features are identified, the department's staff (those with water quality, wildlife, fisheries and zoning expertise), recommend practices to protect these features for the benefit of current and future lake users.

How does this program affect Waterfront Owners? Critical Habitat Designations provide advance information to waterfront owners, to clarify the regulations that will apply when they want to do a construction project or activity along their shoreline. If a project is proposed in a designated Critical Habitat area, the permit jurisdiction or the permit process may change. This allows DNR to ensure that proposed projects will not harm these sensitive resources.

To review the history of this project, a critical habitat evaluation, or designation was first written for Lake Ripley in September, 1992. About 10 years later, around 2003, the department compiled guidance for standardized methods of monitoring lakes, which staff should be involved, and public information and input to these reports. The 1992 report did not meet most of these new criteria, so to bring it up to standards, staff decided to redo the CHD report for Lake Ripley following the new criteria and standards.

So monitoring of the required lake features began anew in 2004 to 2008, as staff time permitted. Unfortunately, in 2008, we lost staff, and when new staff were hired, new projects with added workload prohibited us from completing the report.

At this time, there are 168 completed CHD reports for Wisconsin lakes, and 52 in progress (including for Lake Ripley's). With District support, we'd like to complete this report for Lake Ripley. We gave it another round of edits, and are now requesting public input. Since the assessment is based on factual data about plants, large trees in the water along the shore, rocky or gravelly substrate in the lake, and natural vegetation, factual information is invited from interested citizens familiar with the lake and shoreline. Have you seen any wildlife using particular areas of the lake that are not mentioned in the report, or are you willing to share where some particular fish spawning beds are located?

Lake users, riparians, and District board members can read a draft report on the LRMD website, and submit comments by email to me at susan.graham@wisconsin.gov. The comment period will close in 30 days, on April 20, 2020. Thank you for your understanding that this draft is a work in progress. Aerial photos of individual sites will be added, along with photos taken of the lake and the plants and animals that call it home.