

THE VERMILION



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To Protect and Improve Lake Vermilion

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Welcome to our May issue of the newsletter. It is time to start thinking about the fishing opener and to get the fishing equipment ready for the season. We have a new northern pike regulation for the opener, please see the article on page 19. Also please see the results of the DNR netting last fall on page 6. This is basically a snapshot of the health of the fishery. Walleyes have been a bright spot the last two years and there should be plenty of eaters with a good opportunity to catch a nice trophy.



Terry Grosshauser
VLA President

The Resort Association and our organization purchased another pit tag reader to help support a major effort by the DNR to catch and apply pit tags to more muskies this year and next year. The DNR is planning to set 45 nets to capture muskies this spring and the readers will be used to record information on muskies with pit tags (see page 11). We are working with the DNR to see if there are any projects that we could fund to support the fishery. Projects and funding requirements will be identified and communicated later this summer.

Cormorants still cannot be controlled this year. However, the state of Minnesota DNR is working with other states to model situations where the cormorant population exceeds a certain level which in the future may allow for a reduction of cormorants if the model were to indicate too many individuals. It is interesting to note that there is a bill in process in Canada to open a cormorant hunting season. We will continue to stay

informed on the progress of these initiatives.

Please see the article on page 3 on the award that was presented to the Vermilion Lake Association in March by a joint international group from the U.S. and Canada for protecting the watershed flowing north from Lake Vermilion into the Rainy River and eventually Lake of the Woods. We are truly honored to receive this award and it should be noted that our partnership with North St. Louis County Soil and Water has been key to our success in preventing new AIS in Vermilion. This partnership goes beyond AIS prevention as you can see with the articles in this newsletter.

This should be a busy summer with our many activities: Sucker Sales, April; Loon Count on July 15; Take a Kid Fishing, July 17; Annual Meeting, August 10; Starry Trek, August 17; Float the Pike River, August 4; and Take a Vet Fishing, August 22. We will be looking to expand the number of board members at the annual meeting this year along with some changes to the by-laws. This is year 51 for the organization and we continue to expand our membership and our activities while protecting and improving Lake Vermilion.

We always welcome your articles or stories for the newsletter. Please send them to a board member.

We are dependent upon our volunteers and we are always looking for volunteer help. Please contact plmichaelson@gmail.com. Have a great summer and remember to take a kid fishing.

CORRECTION: FEB. NEWSLETTER

The author's name for the "Bella: the Story of a Resort Dog" is Carley Tausk. We are sorry for the error.

Vermilion Lake Association Honored at Watershed Forum

Shares stewardship award at 2019 International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum

The Vermilion Lake Association and the Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association, a Canadian lake association, were each recipients of the 2019 Wilson Stewardship Award, recognizing their outstanding contributions to environmental stewardship in the Rainy-Lake of the Woods watershed.

The 2019 Wilson Awards were presented by the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation on behalf of the 160 researchers, resource managers and water stewards from the United States and Canada attending the 2019 International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum in International Falls on March 13, 2019.

“The Vermilion Lake Association and the Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association both have histories of over 50 years of engaging citizens in stewardship,” said Todd Sellers, Foundation Executive Director. “They have been very effective at raising awareness of environmental issues and actively pursuing solutions and partnerships to advance science and implement concrete stewardship actions.”

“I am honored to accept the Wilson Award on behalf of our lake association’s 2,500 members, our hundreds of volunteers, and numerous partners working daily to protect Lake Vermilion,” added Terry Grosshauser, President of the Vermilion Lake Association.

While the award recognizes the Vermilion Lake Association’s broad range of lake stewardship over 50 years, the Foundation specifically cited its extensive aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention work beginning in the 1990s, its 40 years of water quality sampling and support for actions to improve water quality, and its 36-year count of common loons, the longest running single-lake count in the United



States.

The Wilson Stewardship Award is presented annually by the Foundation to individuals, groups, or projects that have made significant contributions to environmental stewardship in the Rainy-Lake of the Woods watershed. The award is named in honor of its first recipient, Gerry Wilson, in recognition of her contributions to lake stewardship in the Lake of the Woods region.

VLA President Terry Grosshauser accepted the Stewardship Award on behalf of VLA.

Save the Date:

Vermilion Lake Association Annual Meeting

Our annual meeting will take place the evening of Saturday, August 10, 2019 at the former Tower High School in Tower, MN. We will have dinner, a short business meeting, and raffle prizes. Our featured speaker is Kevin Kenow. Some of you might remember hearing Mr. Kenow speak on his loon migration research at our meeting in 2011. He will share his most recent research on loons. I am sure you will enjoy his talk on this fascinating bird. Mark your calendar for August 10. We look forward seeing you.

Vermilion Lake Association Board of Directors

Frequently Asked Questions About Aquatic Invasive Species

Q1: I hear a lot about a new invasive called starry stonewort. Is it coming to Lake Vermilion?

A1: Starry stonewort has been found in 11 Minnesota lakes since 2015. All of those lakes have similar water chemistry which is quite different from Vermilion's. We're hopeful this macro algae will not like our habitat, but we're taking no chances. Our boat inspectors, our early-detection access sentries, and our AIS Detector teams are all paying close attention.

Q2: How often should I inspect my own boat for invasive species?

A2: We recommend you check your boat and trailer carefully before you begin your trip to Lake Vermilion, a second time when you reach your launch site (just to be sure), and again when you exit the lake for your trip home. We can't be too careful when it comes to inadvertently moving AIS from lake to lake.

Q3: How can I learn the best ways to self-inspect my boat and trailer?

A3: Check out online sources – including YouTube videos – especially those produced by the Minnesota

DNR. When you arrive at a Lake Vermilion public or private access, ask the inspector or dock attendant to show you what to do and where to look. These folks will be glad to pass on their knowledge.

Q4: Where can I go to find the latest info on aquatic invasive species at Vermilion?

A4: We recommend you frequently visit our website <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org> ... then go to the AIS Prevention section. It's also a good idea to LIKE our Vermilion Lake Association Facebook page. Lots of AIS info is posted there.

Q5: I have an idea for AIS prevention. Who should I contact?

A5: We like new ideas! Please contact Jeff Lovgren, VLA AIS Prevention Coordinator, 218-753-2413, lovgren.jeff@gmail.com.

Vermilion Lake Association Caps Now Available



They're here! Wear your new caps proudly to show your support for your lake association. The price is right: \$15, plus \$3 shipping for any number of caps to one address. Free local pickup. Check out the three style choices at our website VermilionLakeAssociation.org/caps.

For more info, contact Sheri Sawatzky at 218-666-5512 or email sherisawatzky@gmail.com.



Where have all the decons gone?

OK. It may not have the same pizzazz as the song from the 1960s. But it's still a good question.

Beginning in 2016, Lake Vermilion's two trailer-mounted watercraft decontamination units – called “decons,” for short – were stationed at convenience store parking lots ... the Y Store on the Tower end and the Country Store on the Cook end. We wanted to make it easy for lake visitors to have their boats inspected and, if necessary, decontaminated while they were stopping for gas and minnows on the way to their destination.



Jeff Lovgren
VLA Board Member

And many lake visitors did just that. But the numbers never grew to a level we were happy with. So, in August 2018, North St. Louis SWCD and the Vermilion Lake Association decided to move the units to busy public accesses. One was stationed at the Hoodoo Point access, our busiest access on the Tower end. The second was moved to Black Duck Bay public access in the central part of the lake. In time, we may find a suitable location further west to provide more convenient support for west-end resorts and public accesses.

If your boat was last in a lake with known invasive species, we encourage you to stop at either decon station before you launch at Vermilion. No one wants to inadvertently move an invasive from lake to lake.

Status of the Lake Vermilion Fishery

2019 Angling Prospects

The Lake Vermilion fishery continues to be healthy and should provide both catch and harvest opportunities for several species. Walleye abundance is down slightly from recent years and anglers may notice differences in catch and harvest rates between the east and west basins. Compared to recent years, anglers may note a decline in the number of walleyes from 10 to 16 inches in East Vermilion. This is likely due to a weak 2017 year class and favorable catch and harvest rates over the previous two fishing seasons that reduced walleye abundance. However, modest numbers of fish over 16 inches should provide harvest opportunities. Anglers may also notice the strong 2018 year class which are mostly fish under 10 inches. For West Vermilion, solid numbers of fish over 14 inches should provide favorable catch and harvest opportunities.



Matt Hennen
Large Lake
Specialist DNR

Anglers seeking smallmouth bass should find good numbers as their abundance continues to increase especially in West Vermilion. However, the West Vermilion fish tend to be mostly under 13 inches compared to East Vermilion which has lower numbers but larger fish. Additionally, largemouth bass can be found in low numbers overall but certain areas, primarily in West Vermilion, provide the best catch opportunities. Above average numbers of yellow perch over 9 inches will provide harvest options. Although low in abundance, northern pike provide harvest opportunities with the possibility to catch fish up to 40 inches. New in 2019, the northeast zone pike regulation applies on Lake Vermilion which is different from the special regulation that was in effect from May 2003 to February 2019. Trophy opportunities exist for muskie anglers as fish over 50 inches are present in the population. Additionally, black crappie and bluegill will provide angling opportunities. Whitefish and cisco (tullibee) offer harvest opportunities primarily during the fall sport gill-netting season.

Fisheries Management

Lake Vermilion is comprised of two major basins, East Vermilion (area east of Oak Narrows) and West Vermilion (area west of Oak Narrows), that are significantly different in terms of habitat and fish communities. The lake is part of the DNR Large Lake Monitoring Program which includes annual fisheries population assessments, water quality monitoring, zooplankton monitoring, aquatic invasive species surveillance, and regularly scheduled creel surveys on the 10 largest lakes in Minnesota. Since 1984, standardized fish population assessments have included a variety of sampling gears to collect various fish species at different life stages. The gears include gill nets, trap nets, shoreline seines, and electrofishing boats. Fisheries assessments are standardized so that the sampling gear is used at the same locations during the same time of year to best track population trends. Length, weight, age, and other data are collected for fishes of management concern.

A new management plan for Lake Vermilion was finalized in March 2018 to guide fisheries management for a six-year period, 2017 to 2022, following input from the Lake Vermilion Fisheries Input Group and the general public. This plan is available online at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakevermilion/index.html>. Northern pike regulations for Lake Vermilion changed for the 2019 fishing season. The special northern pike regulation that had been in place since 2003 was repealed following review and public input in 2018. Therefore, starting on the May 11, 2019 fishing opener, the northern pike population will be managed under Minnesota's northeast zone regulations: Angling regulation: All northern pike from 30 to 40 inches must be immediately released. Possession limit two, only one over 40 inches. Dark house spearing regulation: Possession limit two, only one over 26". See Minnesota Fishing Regulations for further details at <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/regulations/fishing/index.html>.

Walleye

The DNR's 2018 annual fall gill-net survey had a lakewide walleye catch rate of 11.6 fish/net, falling below the 25th percentile of all surveys dating back to 1984. This was the 3rd lowest catch rate observed in the previous 25 years. The low catch rate was primarily driven by low numbers in East Vermilion that can partially be attributed to a weak 2017 year class. Additionally, anecdotal information from anglers indicated favorable walleye catch and harvest rates over the previous two open water fishing seasons which may have reduced walleye abundance. Finally, a strong cold front during netting on East Vermilion may also have impacted our catch rates. The East Vermilion walleye catch rate of 11.8 fish/net was the lowest catch rate observed since 1994 and fell below the historic 25th percentile. In comparison, the West Vermilion catch rate of 11.3 fish/net was above average for that basin.

The average length of walleyes captured in 2018 was 14.5 inches which was above average. Average length has increased since the implementation of the protected slot regulation in 2006. Historically, fish in East Vermilion have run smaller and their increase in average size over time has not been as dramatic as fish in West Vermilion. Below average numbers of walleyes from 11 to 15 inches were sampled lakewide in 2018. However, above average numbers of walleyes over 16 inches should provide harvest opportunity. In particular, catches of 12 to 15 inch fish were below average in East Vermilion, but average numbers of fish over 16 inches were found.



For West Vermilion, catches of fish from 11 to 13 inches were below average, but catches of walleye over 14 inches were well above average.

Walleyes captured in gill nets in 2018 ranged in age from 1 to 17 years. Catch rates of age-2 (2016 year class), age-6 (2012 year class), and age-7 (2011 year class) fish were above historic averages. Catch rates

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Typically, first year growth differences occur between the basins as larger YOY walleye are found in West Vermilion.

DNR continues to operate the walleye spawn take and hatchery at the Pike River. A portion of the walleye fry produced at the Pike River Hatchery will be put back into Lake Vermilion. In the past 10 years, between 5.7 and 15 million fry have been stocked into Lake Vermilion annually. DNR will stock approximately 5 million walleye fry into Lake Vermilion in 2019.

of age-1 fish (2017 year class) were below the 25th percentile. For the first time since 2008, catches of walleyes ages-8 and older fell below the historic average and were a relatively low percentage of the catch (3.5%). The overall lower catch of fish over age-8 was primarily due to a decline in older fish in West Vermilion.

The most recent strong walleye year class lakewide was produced in 2012 and preliminary estimates indicate another strong year class was produced in 2016. A weak year class has not occurred lakewide since 2009, however early indications suggest that the 2017 year class may be weak. In East Vermilion, a strong year class was produced in 2012 and preliminary estimates suggest a strong 2016 year class. Recently, a weak year class was produced in 2014 and preliminary estimates indicate a weak 2017 year class in East Vermilion. In West Vermilion, moderate to strong recruitment has occurred annually since the last weak year class in 2013.

Fall electrofishing provides useful information on abundance and growth of young-of-the-year (YOY) walleyes near the end of their first growing season. In Lake Vermilion, both the catch rate of YOY walleyes and average length of fish captured help predict future year class strength. In 2018, the 227.3 fish/hour lakewide catch rate of YOY walleyes was the highest rate observed since 2007 and was above the historic 75th percentile. The average length of fish captured was 5.4 inches which was near the historic average.

Yellow Perch

Yellow perch are a primary forage species in Lake Vermilion that also provide some incidental angler harvest. The 2018 lakewide gill-net catch rate of 24.9 fish/net was the highest catch rate since 2014 and was near the lake's historic average. Yellow perch catch rates tend to be extremely variable. The average length of yellow perch captured in 2018 was 7.5 inches, slightly above the historic average. Above average catch rates of fish 9 inches and larger will likely provide harvest opportunity. Fish captured in gill nets ranged from 1 to 9 years of age. The high proportion of fish age-3 and less captured in 2018 (62%) indicate consistent moderate to strong recruitment over the last few years which should continue to bolster abundance.

Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth bass are found throughout Lake Vermilion and they provide an important fishery. Spring electrofishing targeting smallmouth bass habitat has been conducted almost annually since 1989. The current management plan calls for electrofishing every three years. In 2018, the lakewide catch rate of smallmouth bass during spring electrofishing was 75.0 fish/hour. This was the highest catch rate ever observed for Lake Vermilion and continues an increasing trend. The high lakewide catch rate was

primarily driven by the highest catch ever observed in West Vermilion at 145.0 fish/hour compared to a historic average of 48.5 fish/hour. On the other hand, the East Vermilion catch rate of 40.0 fish/hour was just slightly above average.

The average length of fish sampled in 2018 was 9.2 inches. The number of fish over 12 inches has steadily increased during surveys. East and West Vermilion often display dramatically different length distributions and this was again the case in 2018. The majority of the catch in West Vermilion was less than 10 inches and no fish over 14 inches were sampled. In contrast, the majority of the East Vermilion catch was over 10 inches and several fish over 14 inches were sampled. Fish ranged in age from 2 to 12 years and each year class was represented indicating consistent recruitment. Recent strong recruitment appears to have come from the 2015 (age-3) and 2012 (age-6) year classes, while poor recruitment was observed for the 2013 year class (age-5).

Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass are a minor component of the Lake Vermilion fishery and are predominantly found in specific areas of West Vermilion with preferred habitat. The current spring electrofishing survey does not target largemouth bass habitat, however, two largemouth bass were sampled during the 2018 assessment in West Vermilion. Creel data indicates the population of largemouth bass may be expanding and fish over 20 inches have been caught.

Northern Pike

Northern pike have historically been present in relatively low abundance in Lake Vermilion but are an important gamefish for some anglers. Ice-out trap-net assessments have been done to obtain size structure information on adult pike and additional data is collected during annual fall gill-net assessments. In 2018, ice-out trap netting was not conducted, but

eleven northern pike (0.6 fish/net) ranging in length from 18.7 to 33.3 inches were captured in gill nets. The gill-net catch rate was below the historic 25th percentile. Beginning on the May 2019 fishing opener, the northern pike population will be managed under Minnesota's northeast zone regulations.

Bluegill and Black Crappie

Bluegills provide significant catch and harvest opportunity in Lake Vermilion while black crappies are generally a minor component of the fishery but on occasion produce very good fishing. Trap-net catches indicate greater abundance of both species in West Vermilion. In the past, summer trap-netting target-

ing panfish occurred annually however it was not conducted in 2018 and has been reduced to once every three years in the new management plan.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Aquatic invasive species are nonnative animals and plants that do not naturally occur in Min-

nesota waters and cause varying levels of ecological and economic harm. Lake users should follow Minnesota's Clean, Drain, Dispose laws to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species. Several invasive species are present in Lake Vermilion including Chinese mystery snails, curly-leaf pondweed, *Heterosporis sutherlandae*, purple loosestrife, rusty crayfish, and spiny waterfleas.

Spiny waterfleas are an invasive zooplankton first discovered in East Vermilion in 2015. They were sampled for the first time in West Vermilion in 2018, but have not been found west of Niles Bay. Zooplankton biomass has significantly declined in East Vermilion following the discovery of spiny waterfleas. This is similar to severe declines in native zooplankton communities that have been observed in



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nearby Rainy and Kabetogama lakes following spiny waterflea invasion. How this will affect fish populations remains to be seen.

Double-crested Cormorants

The double-crested cormorant (DCCO) is a native, fish-eating colonial waterbird. Historically, DCCO and other colonial waterbirds likely used Lake Vermilion for nesting, foraging, and loafing. Following continental declines of DCCO from the late 1800s to the 1970s, DCCO presence on Lake Vermilion was sparse and no nesting colonies were observed. A population resurgence has occurred throughout North America since the 1970s when DCCO began rebounding from decades of human persecution and environmental contamination. However, this resurgence has led to natural resource and societal conflicts of varying degrees. Within the last 15 years, the DCCO population using Lake Vermilion for nesting has increased 10-fold and the relatively rapid growth of the colony generated concern within the local angling and business community that higher DCCO numbers would negatively impact sportfish populations, specifically yellow perch and walleye.

Cormorants are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the United States. However, following increasing resource conflicts in the early 1990s, an Aquaculture Depredation Order and a Public Resource Depredation Order (PRDO) allowed lethal control. The Depredation Orders allowed aquacul-

ture facilities and state, federal, and tribal management agencies to deal with cormorant issues locally under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service review. Cormorant control measures, including adult culling and egg oiling, were taken from 2013 to 2015 on Lake Vermilion to reduce the DCCO population present on Potato Island and limit their foraging in Lake Vermilion. However, cormorant control efforts were suspended in 2016 and remain suspended due to a U.S. District Court decision to vacate the PRDO.

In 2019, DNR will not conduct DCCO control on Lake Vermilion due to the court decision. However, the cormorant colony will continue to be monitored. Cormorant nest counts from 2013 to 2018 stabilized around 335 nests following the peak of 434 in 2012. No new nesting colonies have been established outside of Potato Island.

The response of walleye and yellow perch populations to cormorant control efforts remains unclear. There was an initial increase in yellow perch catch rates after the first year of control followed by a dramatic decline from 2014 to 2017 despite three consecutive years of DCCO control. In 2018, catches rebounded lakewide to near average. The initial decline in yellow perch catch rates lakewide following DCCO control efforts and subsequent increase in 2018 following three years of non-control have made the relationship between the two species increasingly difficult to understand. Clearly there are multiple factors at play in Lake Vermilion perch population dynamics. It is important to recognize that yellow perch are a primary prey source for the walleye population in Lake Vermilion and that these populations are closely linked. Walleye gill-net catches have been at normal to high levels and the size structure has shifted towards larger fish requiring more forage at the same time as DCCO colony expansion and control. We do not have any evidence indicating DCCO are having an impact on the walleye population at this time.

How many muskies are in Lake Vermilion?

The primary goal of a muskellunge (muskie) population survey being done by Minnesota DNR over the next two years will be to estimate the number of adult muskie in Lake Vermilion. Muskie provide an important recreational fishery on Lake Vermilion, yet biological information about the population is somewhat limited. Previous surveys of the Vermilion muskie population have primarily provided information on fish size but did not provide a population estimate. New survey techniques will be attempted beginning in 2019. DNR will use large-framed trap nets to capture as many muskies as possible during the spring spawning season in 2019. All muskies captured will be measured, weighed, and sex will be determined. Fish will be implanted with a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag in the muscle tissue below the fin on their back before release. The PIT tag, about the size of a large grain of rice, contains a microchip that when scanned with a specialized reader, produces a unique identification code. These are the same microchip implants that are put in pets. DNR will repeat the spring netting effort in 2020 and use tagged and untagged fish information to produce population estimates. Over time, we will be able to gather additional data such as growth rates, movement, and survival that will assist in managing the muskie population.



Matt Hennen
Large Lake
Specialist DNR



Fishing Tournaments

Historically, there have been relatively few permitted fishing tournaments on Lake Vermilion. Generally, between two to six tournaments occur each year. The DNR is responsible for regulating fishing tournaments and manages them in a manner that will protect fish populations and minimize conflict with other lake users. DNR permits are required for fishing tournaments that meet certain conditions and permits have been issued for the following tournaments in 2019:

May 18: City Auto Glass Walleye Classic

May 19: Minnesota Bass Federation Spring Fest

June 15: Bass Pro Shop/Cabela's North American Bass Circuit

July 13: Carpenters North Star Walleye Classic

July 27: Up North Bass Team Series

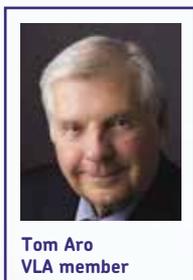
July 28: AIM Weekend Walleye Series

August 15 and 16: Champions Tour (walleye and bass)

August 25 and 26: Student Angler Tournament Trail (bass)

Summer's Small Sounds

*Vermilion sounds, some hard to find but so soothing to the ear.
Not the summer storm's roar of wind through the pines so near.
No, not the sharp crackling sky-born blast, from a bolt of lightning,
We're in search of the gentle sounds...soft sounds, sounds so inviting.
The small sounds, undisturbed sounds, sounds to relax by, to unwind.
The slow your heart down sounds; breezes and bird calls come to mind.
Sounds to close your eyes with...creating private time, time for reflection;
Rejoicing loved ones of today & remembering those the Maker has taken.
No harsh strident cawing from Crows,
Swallows and Warblers and Robins preferred for my floor show.
And listen for the humming of wings, from nature's little jet planes.
Marvel at their aerial acrobatics, virtual miniature hurricanes.
And what about frogs at night? What summer sound brings more delight?
The long sigh of the line cast through the air.
Soon followed by the far plunk of the lure and the sinker.
The dripping of oars and,
The knock and creak of them moving in rusty locks.
The rhythmic lapping of ripples caressing stones on the shore.
And how can you miss the call of the Loon?
Its mysterious, mournful, almost hypnotic, shout in the night.
These are Vermilion's sounds,
Sounds to be sure....to set your heart right.*



Tom Aro
VLA member

A complete life includes: love, family, friends, volunteering, and Lake Vermilion

There are many amazing people in the Northland who call Lake Vermilion their home. I have had the opportunity to meet some of these people and listen to them tell their stories. Don and Jane Johnson are two of those special people. Their story begins in the Biwabik area when they met in high school and fell in love. After high school graduation they both continued their education. Don became an Industrial Arts Teacher in the Fridley School District and Jane went on to be a Principal's Secretary in the Spring Lake Park School District. During this time their love for each other continued to grow. And like all good love stories, they got married. The year was 1961 and they headed north to Lake Vermilion for their honeymoon hide-away at Jane's grandparents' cabin. It was a perfect start for their life together and once more they fell in love. This time their love revolved around the lake and the little towns in the surrounding area.



Fast forward twenty-three years when they had the opportunity to purchase the same lake property from Jane's relatives. They worked hard at building their new life together. They tore down the old seasonal cabin and built a new home together. Don, who is very much the handyman/jack of all trades, has completed many construction projects to and around their home. In 1996, Don and Jane moved full time to their home on the lake. They are very happy here and enjoy not only the lake, but their two grown children, four grandchildren and old and new friends they have made along the way.

They both believe that volunteering is important to their happiness. It makes life better, not only for those you help, but for yourself. It really does make you feel good. Jane volunteers some of her free time to the Vermilion Lake Association by helping with the annual Loon Count that takes place on the second week in July.

Don also volunteers some of his time each spring at



the Pike River Hatchery to help the Vermilion Lake Association with their annual Sucker Sale. He helps to transfer the suckers from the netted area into large trash cans to be sold to those in attendance. Many of the suckers are smoked, canned, or even used as food for sled dog teams. The suckers are the byproduct of the walleye trap during the spawn. Most years the sale lasts 2-3 weeks, however in 2018 the sale lasted only one day due to the huge amount of walleye that were trapped in a very short period.

In his free time, Don likes to hang out in the garage and turn on his welder. He is very artistic and uses the welder to cut shapes out of pieces of recy-

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pled metal that he in turn makes into works of art. These pieces can be displayed on your home, lawn, shoreline, etc. Many of his friends and neighbors have been recipients of his work and creativity. They proudly display the art objects that he makes. To Don, making art is his “constructive exercise” to create even more art objects. Many of these beautiful creations were donated to the Vermilion Lake Association and used as Door Prizes for their 50th Anniversary Party held last summer.

Don truly believes that through volunteering you get to know more folks, find out about them, and help them if you can. Because of this, volunteering will continue to be a big part of his life.

You too can meet new people, try new ideas and have a good time learning about Lake Vermilion and its surrounding area. Consider the opportunity to join Don, Jane and a host of others by volunteering for the Vermilion Lake Association. Maybe you have something in mind that you would like to do or have no idea of what’s even available. It’s easy, just contact Pat Michaelson, Volunteer Program Leader at plmichaelson@gmail.com or check out the website at <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org>.

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Shoreline restoration grants available

BREAKING NEWS: We will have some matching funds available to the five lakeshore owners who responded to our past article dealing with shoreline restoration. Please note



that the deadline for ordering wildlife shrubs and trees from the North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation is May 6. I encourage those interested parties to look at the pollinator pack of 25 plants for \$40. Please call 218-749-2000 to order your plants. If you have more questions, call their forester, Beth Kleinke, at 218-730-8002.

“Pollinator-friendly yards could get help from the state of Minnesota” as reported by Greg Stanley in the *Star Tribune* dated March 19, 2019. Homeowners who replace traditional lawns with wildflowers, clovers, and native

grasses in an effort to slow the collapse of the state’s bee population could soon get assistance from the state of Minnesota. Under a bill introduced by Rep. Kelly Morrison, DFL-Deephaven, the state would set aside \$2 million over the next three years to

help pay for lawn conversions.

The program would cover up to 75 percent of the cost of the project.

“When you look at (conventional) lawns, they’re just food deserts for pollinators; there’s nothing for them at all,” said Dan Cariveau, a professor at the University of Minnesota. “It could be a relatively cheap way to revive

these food sources.” Some of the best sources of food such as white clover, can grow and be mowed along with grass if people want to keep their yards usable, Cariveau said. Please contact board member Wayne Suoja for more details on restoring your shore at 218-753-2162 or wsuoja@frontiernet.net.



Is your membership Current ???

You can check your current enrollment status off the newsletter mailing label. We want to make it easy for you to know if your membership dues are up to date. The first line indicates your status.

For example, “Member 2019” indicates our records show you’re paid through calendar year 2019.



Please email or call me with mailing address or email address changes.

Sheri Sawatzky, Chair Membership Records , sherisawatzky@gmail.com or 218-780-8178.

Vermilion Walleye Fishing Tips

After talking to guides and fishermen on both ends of the lake, there is one consistent location that many anglers are having success and that is in the lake basin. The tullibee populations have been doing very good and the walleyes are roaming more in the lake basin chasing these large schools of bait fish. People fishing for these fish are having amazing success including very large walleyes. There are several techniques used to get in on this action and from some reports, those able to find the schools of bait fish and troll these areas are having amazing success for all sizes of walleyes.

I have asked Steve Amundson to write an article on one technique he uses and has had very good success with. Please read the article on trolling and using leadcore line on the next page.



Leadcore Basics: Where do the fish go when they are not on structure, and how do we catch em?

by Steve Amundson,
VLA Member

Leadcore Basics

Where do the fish go when they're not on structure and how can we catch 'em?

Everyone can probably attest to this scenario: You're out fishing your favorite structure spot one morning and you are catching fish, whether you're jigging,

lindy rigging, rip jigging, or bobber fishing and the bite just stops! The graph, that once had a pile of fish on it, just went blank with no more fish to be caught or seen. Many will stay there and try for a few more bites, many will go back to the cabin, and some will try to find out where they went. The main questions to ask are: How far did they go? Did they go shallow? Did they go deep? What were they feeding on?

Leadcore fishing has been around for a long time and can be very effective when basin fishing with crankbaits. When fish move off structure, they can be in the middle of nowhere. The problem is that the basins can be tough to fish if the fish are suspended. Crankbaits on a plain rod alone cannot get deep enough to come in contact with these fish. Leadcore line allows you to contact fish at a specific depth every time. A good example for the leadcore application would be trolling 25 ft down in 35 ft of water. There are many different brands/styles of crankbaits (shad style, minnow style, stick style, etc.) that work. The trial and error method works best as far as size/color (it takes some experimenting),

so start with a size 4 and work your way to bigger baits. It takes time to learn, but its very effective. Everyone's dive chart is a little bit different!! There are some good apps (precision trolling) and YouTube videos out there to help get started. The best way to make your own dive chart with each lure is to find a long enough flat basin to test multiple lures. Keep the speed consistent, zero out the line counter reel and let line out slowly, when the lure hits the bottom, the rod will lose its bounce, so reel in a few cranks 'til it starts bouncing again and write that line amount down to start your dive chart for that lure. Speed plays a huge factor in the dive curve (1.9-2.7 mph).... leadcore line sinks when you slow down and raises as you speed up. A general rule of thumb is 5 ft of depth for every 30 ft of line going 2 mph).

Another factor in trolling leadcore is the use of your electronics. A good graph with gps, color, side imaging, down imaging is key. A lot of times you won't be over fish, but on your side imaging 50ft to the right or left there might be a big school. Take note on the type of basin bottom you are fishing and catching

Continued on next page



fish... are you over, mud, sand, gravel, rock? A lot of times you can mimic spots in different basins... please note "leadcore line does NOT like rocks"!

Leadcore rods: 5 - 12 ft trolling rods w/soft tip

Linecounter reels: size 27 (smallest size I use)... Size 47 (preferred)

Leader: 10-30 ft in length and 15 lb test fluorocarbon, mono, fireline, or braid... whichever you prefer

Leadcore line: 18 lb

Crankbait snap

The setup: fill the base of reel with 15 lb mono backing (not much) just enough so the line doesn't slip, strip the lead out of the line about a foot, tie a double-uni knot connecting the mono backing to the leadcore line, fill the reel with leadcore (30 ft per color), tie another double-uni knot connecting the leadcore line to the desired leader type, some like using small swivels instead, finish it off with a crankbait snap so you can change out lures quickly and frequently as the "BEST colors and size" change daily.

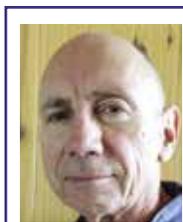
There are times when the fish are not on structure and can be found in the basin adjacent to structure. The fish follow the bait, so if you find the bait in the basin, try some leadcore!



Steve Amundson operates Spring Bay Resort and Guide Service and can be contacted at 218-780-5941.

Help Protect Lake Vermilion by Using Amazon Smile

Amazon has a great program that helps fund 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations such as the Vermilion Lake Association.



Rob Joki
VLA Board Member

When you shop at Amazon, simply go to their website Smile.Amazon.com rather than Amazon.com. Everything else is the same. No hassle. Same account. No extra cost. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the purchase price on eligible purchases to the Vermilion Lake Association.

If you wish, use this optional link <https://Smile.Amazon.com/ch/41-1311744> to make setup easy.

Our lake association has been working for 51 years to protect Lake Vermilion for all who live and play here. Explore our website. You'll see our top priorities today are fisheries management and aquatic invasive species prevention. You'll also see the many community service activities our volunteers have underway to make Lake Vermilion even better, including shore lunch sites, night navigation lights, water quality monitoring, shoreline protection and our annual loon count, now in its 37th year.

For additional information on ways to donate to the Vermilion Lake Association, please visit our website <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org> and click on "Donate".

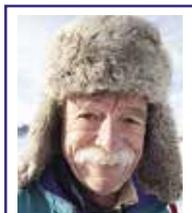
Labradog Update

Dogs may be full grown at six months but they surely haven't grown up. I lost count at the number of things that were chewed and destroyed by Charlie for the mere reason they were inadvertently left on the floor. My sarcastic response when I learned I lost another pair of slippers, "Aren't Puppies Cute." Charlie the "She Devil" had struck again. Charlie's full AKC Kennel name is "Sparky's Hurricane Charlene"; I guess she is only living up to her name.

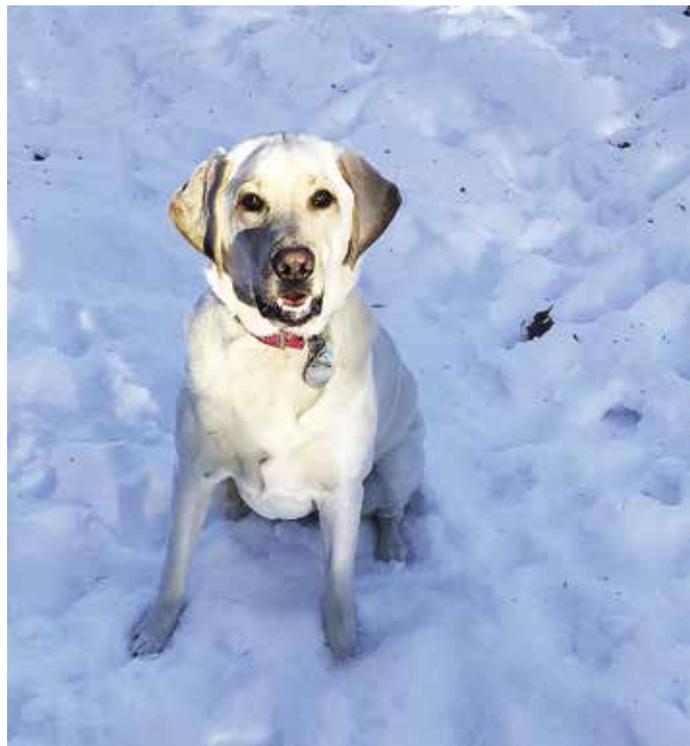
In a very short amount of time a dog goes through the phases of life it takes us humans decades; that my friends is the good part. She has gone from house training, the equivalent of diapers, to immeasurable exuberance, unbridled curiosity, to defiance. Now to a loyal and faithful companion, not without a few inevitable relapses though. She now exhibits the traits of a dog. For you dog lovers, you know the unconditional love dogs have for their human companions. She lies at my feet snuggled up under my desk as I write this piece. She even allows me to share the couch with her on my couch potato Sundays watching the news and later witnessing yet another Vikings' loss.

Is it all worth it? You bet it is. It makes me giggle when I reach for the tennis ball and the chucker to see her turn inside out at the joy of going out to play fetch. Debbie our mail carrier leaves dog treats in the mail box on Fridays. Charlie thinks everyday is Friday when I bring in the day's mail. Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy, she would say if she could only talk. When I ask her if she wants to go for a ride in the car, she beats me to it by a couple of minutes.

We were instant pals as you may recall from the previous article. We still are, with a few bumps in the road along the way.



Jeff Stebbins
VLA Member



Need a Summer Job at Lake Vermilion or Area Lakes?

The North St. Louis Soil & Water Conservation District and Always There Staffing, Inc, a local staffing agency, are seeking part-time seasonal aquatic invasive species (AIS) watercraft inspectors to work at public access sites on Lake Vermilion, Pelican Lake, Burntside Lake, Shagawa Lake, Ely Lake, and Gilbert Pit for the 2019 boating season. Inspectors will be greeting boaters, checking boats entering and exiting the lake for AIS, and teaching boaters how to self-inspect their watercraft. Inspectors will use a tablet (provided) to aid in the inspection process and to record inspection data.



tions. Starting Level 1 inspectors will earn \$12.50/hour. Starting Level 2 inspectors will earn \$13.00/hour.

For more information and to apply online, contact Always There Staffing, Inc at <https://www.alwaystherestaffing.com/>.

Applications are open until all positions are filled.



All inspectors hired must receive Level 1 MNDNR Watercraft Inspector training (paid). All inspectors operating decontamination equipment must also receive Level 2 DNR Watercraft Inspector training (paid). Work assignments will run early May through September/October, and will include working weekends, Memorial Day, July 4th, and Labor Day. Applicants do not have to be available for the entire season and can express a preference for assignment loca-

Northern Pike Regulation Change on Lake Vermilion

By Terry Grosshauser, VLA President

The current special northern pike regulation will change for the May 2019 fishing opener. Previously the regulation was a slot from 24-36 inches where all northern pike had to be released. The limit was three northern pike with only one over 36 inches that could be kept.

The new regulation conforms to the northeastern regulation for northern pike used for all lakes that do not have a special regulation. The regulation will have a slot from 30-40 inches where all northern pike must be released. The limit will be two northern pike with only one that exceed 40 inches.

Spearers also can take two northern pike but only one can be over 26 inches. The northeast zone is



the area of Minnesota north and east of Highway 53 from Duluth to International Falls.

The regulation options were discussed with the public last summer and the DNR decided to implement the northeast region standard regulations from the public input. Many people consider the northern pike as an excellent meal and the new regulations will allow for keeping larger fish which should provide an excellent opportunity for a nice meal.

Dock Fishing

It is The Antique Angler here again with a spring fishing story. I was going back in my memory bank trying to figure out how I got started in fishing as young kid. Before I could cast a lot, fishing off a pier was what I liked to do. For me, a cane poll, a bobber and some crawlers and I could almost make a full day on the dock, not even interested in eating lunch.

Fishing on the dock is a great way to start the youngest potential fisherpersons. The fight on a snoopy rod can be amazing, everything seems like a whale at a young age. It is easy to graduate them to a slightly longer pole when they can handle it. When I think about it, that is how I learned to take a fish off the hook too. You learn quickly with a couple of fins in the hand that sting. Have you ever noticed how attracted young kids are to a dock? Sometimes they like to watch the fish under the dock and get excited about catching different types of bluegills or sunfish. Keep a few panfish in a basket and young kids will be picking up that basket all of the time to look at their fish.

We had some relatives up a couple of years ago and I was amazed that from morning to evening they were on the pier. The youngest one, at two, would practice casting a dummy lure with no hooks. When an older kid caught a nice northern off of the dock, the five and six year olds would not quit fishing until they had some luck. The more I thought about it, when I was young I had more fun fishing off of the dock than going out in the boat. I was always interested in casting to new areas from the dock at different depths, near rocks or near weeds to see

where the fish were. The lake I was on had natural reproduction of muskies and believe it or not I would catch some that were 6 to 8 inches long. I can remember how strong they were and I could not hold them very long. I would keep track of what I caught and I would indicate muskie but never put in how long it was. I would always catch more muskies than my father.

The more I think about it, every spring before the boats are in the water, I am out there casting or fishing off of the dock. We are lucky to have just about all types of fish from time to time around the dock. Last spring, casting a minnow lure for walleyes, I hooked and landed a 44-inch muskie. Later in the summer, from time to time, we have crappies around the dock and my 93-year-old mother-in-law will sit out on the dock trying to catch a meal of crappies. She can get pretty excited when the crappies are really biting well but she gets frustrated catching rockbass and perch.

Well I guess dock fishing is not only for kids but all kids at heart no matter if they are 90+ years old or five years old. Don't forget to take a youngster fishing this year; it can result in a lifetime of being outside and enjoying our beautiful surroundings.



The Antique Angler



Annual Tree Sale: Still time to order

by Beth Kleinke, North St. Louis SWCD Forester

In the Lake Vermilion area, trees are available for your spring planting needs from North St. Louis SWCD. Trees help reduce erosion, protect water quality, increase energy conservation, improve wildlife habitat, and may increase the value of your property.

Take your choice of over 20 varieties of trees in bundles of 15 or 25. There is a nice assortment of shrubs, deciduous trees, and conifers. New this year are river birch, black chokeberry, and peachleaf willow. If you have questions about what species to plant, contact



North St. Louis SWCD Forester, Beth Kleinke, 218-730-8002, or email info@nslswcd.org.

Quantities are limited. Deadline to order is May 6, 2019. Pickup will be in Eveleth on May 9 and 10, 2019. Trees are reasonably priced between \$30 and \$45 per bundle. All proceeds are used for conservation efforts in the northern part of St. Louis County.

Order forms and information are available at www.nslswcd.org/programs-services/annual-tree-sale/, via email to info@nslswcd.org, or by call/text to 218-749-2000.

Spring Tree Care Tips

Spring is a great time to do work that will improve the health of your trees and woods. Here are some tips for a healthy growing season.

Inspect your trees for damage: Trees may have broken branches from the heavy snow, cracks and wounds from the cold, damage from hungry wildlife, or old wounds and infections. It's easier to spot these before leaves come on.

Do some pruning: Prune off dead branches and try to clean up wounds. Ragged edges and branch stubs are hard to heal over. They can collect water and debris which makes it easier for rot to get started. Do what you can to smooth out the wound. Ideally, pruning should be done before the spring flush of growth, but most trees can be pruned any time of the year, especially if you are working on existing wounds.

Give them a drink: Water your trees, especially if there hasn't been much rain. Trees do most of their growing in the spring, and that means they need more water. Recently planted trees are the most at risk because they are still establishing good roots.

Other maintenance: If you have cages or tree tubes up to protect your trees from deer, now is the time to check on them and fix any damage from winter wind and snow. Mulch can help retain moisture and protect tree roots, if you wish to use it. Most trees don't need fertilizer, but if you are going to use it, apply it in the early spring (trees given fertilizer need more water to support extra growth, don't wait until summer when it's hot and dry).

Planting trees: Spring is the best time to plant trees, and for good reason. Summer heat is stressful for new trees, and it helps if they have some time to recover from transplant shock during cooler spring weather. This is especially true for bare root seedlings, because they can dry out quickly – even while being planted. Fall is also a good time to plant to avoid heat and moisture stress.

Beth Kleinke is a forester with North & South St. Louis SWCD's. She works with concerned landowners to plan and manage their wooded property as they want it. She can help with invasive species and pest questions. Limited cost share funding may be available though it will not cover ornamental trees, shrubs or landscaping. You can reach Beth at 218-730-8002.



Join the Vermilion Starry Trek Team on August 17

by Mary McNellis, VLA Board Member

The Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) will be hosting a 2019 Starry Trek event on Saturday, August 17. Starry Trek is a statewide program named after one of Minnesota's newest invaders – starry stonewort. The program is sponsored by University of Minnesota Extension and by Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC).

Over the summer months, hardworking VLA volunteer Sentries will be inspecting 17 public boat accesses and over 20 private boat launch sites looking for early infestations of AIS such as Eurasian watermilfoil and its hybrids, starry stonewort, and other invasive vegetation. These invaders hold the potential to radically change the environment of our lake. Experience tells us that early detection is key in attacking these invaders.

The Sentries' work effort will culminate in the Starry Trek event held August 17 statewide. This will be the first year for VLA involvement. The event includes volunteer training, shoreline inspections, and fun. Many volunteers are needed to make this event a lake-wide success.

If you are able to volunteer, please contact VLA board member Mary McNellis, mmcnellis@stcroixre.com, regarding the early planning of this important and festive occasion.

Take a Kid Fishing

Take a Kid Fishing is sponsored by the Guides League again this year. I have been a boat operator/ guide for this event for the last eight years. The event is for kids between 10 and 15 years old. Usually there are 100 kids that get an opportunity to go fishing with a guide or boat operator. This year the event will be at Fortune Bay. The kids sign up this year at 8 a.m. and they leave with the boat operator at 9 a.m. and fish between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. when they return for lunch and a drawing. The kids get to go out on the water in a boat with an experienced guide and have a great fishing experience. There are usually 50 boat operators with two kids per boat. There is a need for boat operators and staff to help organize the kids before they go out in the boats. Please see the <https://lakevermilionguidesleague.com> website for signing up to volunteer for the event and for signing your kids up.



Take a Vet Fishing

The Take a Vet Fishing event will be held August 22 at Fortune Bay. I have been a boat operator for this event also and it is an honor to show our respect for vets who attend this event. They plan for 100 vets and there is a need for boat operators to take the vets out fishing. There were eight vets from World War II at the event last year and there are pontoons to insure that all vets can go out on the water. The sign-in for this event is 7:30 a.m. and the boats will leave at 9 a.m. and fish until 1 p.m. There will be door prizes and dinner served after the fishing. Again please indicate your interest to volunteer or sign up as a veteran on the website <https://lakevermilionguidesleague.com>.

Canoe the Pike River on Sunday, August 4

Did you ever wonder how we know if a water body is of high quality for things like swimming and fishing? If you are interested in learning more about the local watershed while traveling down a river, then join us for this canoeing event on Sunday, August 4 from 7:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. You will travel down the Pike River, a tributary of Lake Vermilion and a part of the Vermilion River Watershed. You will learn from natural resource professionals about watershed health and monitoring. You will also have the opportunity to sample water quality first



Becca Reiss
VLA Member

hand! Most likely you will even have the chance to wildlife watch along the way. River canoeing offers additional challenges, such as currents, so canoe experience is required for this program. This event is a partnership between Lake Vermilion-Soudan Underground Mine State Park and the North St.



Louis Soil & Water Conservation District. Meeting location will be given upon registration. Dress appropriately for being outdoors and in the water. Bring your own water and snacks. Call the North St. Louis SWCD at 218-471-7288 to register, as space is limited. **Registration deadline is Wednesday, July 31, 2019.**

Canoes and equipment will be provided. The program cost is \$10 per person which includes a bagged lunch. Youth under 13 may be allowed to ride in the canoe, please call 218-471-7288 for details.

Donations

The Vermilion Lake Association has qualified as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3). Your charitable gifts



and membership dues are generally tax deductible for federal income tax

purposes. Please consult your tax professional.

To accommodate a wide range of donor interests, the Vermilion Lake Association has three funds to which gifts may be directed. Any size gift is appreciated and acknowledged.

General Fund: Gifts to this fund are used for a broad range of lake association activities.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Fund: Gifts to this fund are used to prevent new AIS infestations and to manage infestations already present.

Shore Lunch Site Improvement Fund: Gifts to this fund are used to improve and maintain Lake Vermilion's eight shore lunch sites.

"Vermilion Lake Association, Inc." and mail to the address below. If you wish, you may direct your donation to a specific fund.

All gifts are appreciated and acknowledged. Please include your name, email, and mailing address.

If this is a memorial gift, please let us know who the gift is in memory/in honor of.

**Vermilion Lake Association,
Jerry Lepper, Treasurer
P.O. Box 696, Tower, MN 55790**

Donate online at <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/get-involved/donate/>

How to Make a Donation

If you'd like to send a check, please make it payable to the



Vermilion Lake Association
PO Box 696
Tower MN 55790

Volunteers Make the Difference

The Vermilion Lake Association has been fortunate over the years to have a dedicated group of leaders and volunteers to staff our important activities. We are grateful for their help.

Please consider joining this team. We have needs for both workers and leaders, for those with only a few hours to spare, and for those who can make a larger time commitment.

If you think you may be interested, please contact Pat Michaelson, VLA Volunteer Program Leader, at 612-306-7702 (cell) or plmichaelson@gmail.com.

Vermilion Lake Association

Sheri Sawatzky, Member Records • P.O. Box 696 • Tower MN 55790
sherisawatzky@gmail.com • (218) 666-5512

Membership year runs from Jan 1st through Dec 31st

2019 New Member 2019 Renewal

Membership level

\$15.00 Individual \$20.00 Couple
 \$25.00 Family \$50.00 Business or Organization

Member Name _____

Spouse Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email (requested) _____

Phone (requested) _____

Please clip or copy this form and send to the address above.

Become a Member

Join those who love Lake Vermilion as much as you do. Help us continue the many activities you've just read about.

Not sure? Check us out at our website VermilionLakeAssociation.org. We're pretty sure you'll like our vision for the future and the work we have underway now to make Lake Vermilion even better.

Please mail a check with the form on this page or join at our website using PayPal or a credit card.

The Vermilion Lake Association is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization.

Do You Qualify?

Trick question. Anyone can join the lake association whose mission it is to protect and improve Lake Vermilion. No need to be a property owner. No need to be a fisherman or a kayaker. Just someone who cares about our great lake and wants to protect her for the next generation.