

THE VERMILION



Vol. 48, No. 4 • The Quarterly Newsletter of the Vermilion Lake Association • Fall 2021

*To Protect
and Improve
Lake Vermilion*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi Lake Neighbors and Friends,
What beautiful fall weather...one of my favorite seasons on the lake with all of its colorful splendor.

Just today (as I write this in late September), one of our Lake Steward volunteers was out doing final property assessments of the season, assisting with recommendations to those who might qualify. This team was busy all summer and, while we've awarded several signs to those who qualify, we have more to deliver come early spring when others return. See the accompanying article as we look forward to more of you becoming Lake Stewards next year.

You'll note while reading the other articles that our other teams have not been idle.

Our aquatic invasive species (AIS) team hosted a Field Day on the east end in August to highlight a few of the projects that represent our ongoing work from this past year. That team, expertly led by Jeff Lovgren for the past six years, welcomes two new co-leaders: Gary Haugen and Nancy Watkins, who are learning from the master before he "retires" after establishing a very highly regarded program in the state. They'll also be drafting our annual grant request to St. Louis County, which is accepting proposals to prevent the introduction or limit the spread of AIS at access sites. With 17 public accesses in addition to resort, marina, and private accesses, the need for public awareness and participation in prevention is critical.

Our Annual Meeting, held on August 7, included updates and new resources from our key teams. Many who attended left with fisheries conservation cards and towels, a map to help with navigation to a shore lunch site, a guide for Lake Steward plantings, an annual loon count reference table, or a new Get the Lead Out fishing lure. The appointment of five Directors to the Board was approved along with some minor changes to our Bylaws (which are available on

our website). I believe the highlight of our meeting, though, was the recognition of Cael Thompson, a 13-year-old Boy Scout, who led a project to build two loon nest platforms for the VLA on the path to becoming an Eagle Scout. Those of you who met Cael

and talked with him about "the build," no doubt noted his subtle confidence and pride. It was wonderful to have his family join us and to see many of you at our annual gathering.

Just a few weeks later, we hosted a casual pizza party to thank and recognize our many volunteers. Our organization, with all its projects and programs, has numerous opportunities

for a few hours annually or to lead a major project. A great example is Susan Bies, whom I term the Excel wizard. A couple of years ago, Susan first helped our AIS team to organize and analyze traffic data at public accesses to determine where and when we could best utilize our L1 inspectors. This spring I asked for her help in reconfiguring our volunteer data base, which has grown substantially, as you'll see on pages 10 and 11. It was something she could do on her own timeline, and she brings a valuable resource to the VLA. If you have a skill you think might be of value and you have some time to share, please reach out. We'll find a way to get you involved.

As we head into late fall and the lake takes on a serene (and chilly!) appearance, I hope many of you can enjoy all that it has to offer in its autumn glory.

Take Care and Be Safe,

Pat Michaelson

VLA Volunteer Program Leader and President



Pat Michaelson
VLA President

Cover photo by Lori Ptak, VLA Board Member

Lake Steward Award Winners

This past summer at an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Field Day, I had the pleasure of meeting Nancy Watkins, newly elected Board Member and AIS leader. In our conversation, I realized that Nancy was very enthused about the Lake Steward Program and very much wanted to be awarded a Lake Steward Sign.



Wayne Suoja
VLA Board Member

At lunch that day, I overheard Nancy talking about their sod roof boathouse (see article below). Nancy requested that I come over to evaluate their shoreline and to see the boathouse. After a few recommendations and seeing that Nancy and Doug had a good buffer to protect the shoreline and realizing that their boathouse would absorb much runoff, I reminded Nancy that they would have to take the Lake Steward Quiz. After receiving a high score on the quiz, Nancy and Doug were awarded the Lake Steward Sign.



The Green Roof Boathouse



When Doug and Nancy Watkins began working on their retirement home 20 years ago they had three goals. They wanted a small, Scandinavian style home which would be extremely energy efficient, tucked behind the trees on their shoreline. After many trials, the home was erected with structurally integrated panels (SIPS) and geothermal heat. To continue with a Scandinavian theme, Doug suggested the construction of a boat house complete with turf roof “just like the ones in Norway.” They both had studied and traveled in Norway and admired the old cabins with roofs of sod with an occasional tree. But they were also surprised to see so many new constructions with green

Continued on next page

Everything I Need To Know I Learned From My Dog

- ❖ **When loved ones come home, always run to greet them.**
- ❖ **Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride.**
- ❖ **Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy.**

Green roof...from page 3

roofs. Doug happened across a “hytte” store (cabin store) in downtown Oslo. The staff were extremely helpful explaining the modern construction process for small residences. The most popular technique was to use a shallow pitch roof of about 20 degrees. The roof is first covered with a waterproof, rubber roofing membrane followed by a waterproof dimpled membrane. Bales of compressed peat encased in plastic netting were then layered on the membranes and seeded. Minimal maintenance was required.

Since early 2000, green roofs have been gaining popularity in urban areas to provide aesthetic improvements, reduce stormwater runoff, moderate urban heat island effects and improve air quality. While in Europe, especially Germany, green roofs have been well established through government legislation and financial support, the benefits in the North American market are still maturing. Green roof technology is primarily seen in large urban landscapes on flat roofed commercial buildings. But flat roofs require complicated (and expensive) drainage systems. The shallow roof slope of the Scandinavian model avoids the need for a drainage system, and therefore is economically feasible for smaller noncommercial roofs like a boat house.

Doug initially had trouble explaining his vision to contractors until he was referred to Mark Sampson.

During a lunch meeting, Mark patiently listened to Doug’s explanation and looked at various cabins in a magazine devoted to “hyttes”, all of which was written in Norwegian. When lunch was over he looked at Doug and said, “I want this.” Mark was intrigued with the novel challenges of the project, and did further research looking for turf roof building techniques going back to the Middle Ages. To order materials from Norway was cost prohibitive. Area sources were found to improvise. With any building project there are always hiccups. Mark built the trusses on site as pre-engineered trusses were unavailable in a timely manner. Though an industrial engineer was consulted and felt the usual truss span was satisfactory, Mark put them closer so “he could sleep at night.” But by early fall the roof was ready. A peat mixture was transported from Elk River to provide a soil depth of six inches. It was then seeded with a mixture of native grasses, flowers and sedges recommended by Minnesota Native Landscapes, the “septic mix.” Nature was then allowed to take its course.

For Mark it was his “capstone” of a long career. The Watkins are thrilled with the success even when they see small birch seedlings growing on the roof.

**Article submitted by Nancy Watkins,
VLA Board Member and AIS Leader**

2021 Annual Meeting at Camp Vermilion



Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) members gathered for their annual meeting on Saturday August 7 at scenic Camp Vermilion in Cook, MN, marking 53 years carrying out their mission to protect and improve Lake Vermilion. About 100 members and guests attended.

Informational tables surrounding topics of the Lake Steward program, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), shore lunch sites, loon preservation/count, and fisheries conservation were set up on the deck outside with VLA program leaders and staff from the North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District available to answer questions.

Cael Thompson, at right, a Boy Scout from Iowa, displayed one of the two loon nest platforms that he built in support of our ongoing loon work. He spoke briefly about his project as a part of his goal of becoming an Eagle Scout. Cael has visited Lake Vermilion for many years with his family.

A brief business meeting was held after a delicious buffet style meal of pulled pork, potato salad, and wood-fired brownies. Members re-elected board members Sheri Sawatzky, Pat Michaelson, Gary Hauge, and Jill Korpela-Bontems, along with new board member Nancy Watkins. Bylaw changes regarding monthly board meetings and Annual Meetings were approved. These changes are available on the website at <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/about-the-association/by-laws>.



Eagle Scout Candidate makes loon nests for Vermilion Lake Association

Late last winter, Eagle Scout Candidate Cael Thompson, from Ankeny, Iowa, contacted us. Cael's parents have a cabin on Big Bay, where they enjoy the lake every year. Cael was proposing building two loon nests for the Vermilion Lake Association to deploy. I must admit that I was not familiar with what is required to become an Eagle Scout, so this was a learning experience for me.



Terry Grosshauser
VLA Board Member

The process is amazing and what an experience for a young person to learn many skills that will serve him well in the future. I was designated as Beneficiary Volunteer. Basically, I was one of those responsible for approving the plans that he developed and

helping to answer any questions that Cael had while working on the project.

First, the Eagle Scout Candidate must propose a project to the Scout Council and obtain approval to proceed. He must show a need that will benefit the volunteer organization, and demonstrate his plan-



ning and leadership capabilities in the development of the proposed loon nest.

Once the project is approved by the council, he must develop a plan showing the materials, costs, tools, logistics, and safety. He will also have to propose how he will fund the project and recruit volunteers to build the loon nests. Cael was responsible for fundraising to support his project. He developed detailed instructions on how to build the nests and recruited fellow scouts and friends to build the nests, demonstrating his leadership skills.

Cael was only 13 years old while running this project. I believe most Eagle Scouts are older, but they must complete a project like this before they are 18 to become an Eagle Scout. We celebrated the completion of the new loon nests at the Annual Meeting where Cael was recognized for completing this service project. It was my pleasure to be involved in this project and to see a fine young man demonstrate leadership. We are very close to finding a location for both loon nests which will be deployed next spring.

AIS False Alarm Tests VLA Team

In August, our AIS leadership thought we had a full-blown AIS crisis at hand. It was not a drill. It was not expected. An expert team from RMB Environmental Labs tentatively identified four small patches of emergent vegetation just outside the mouth of East Two River in Pike Bay as flowering rush.



Jeff Lovgren
VLA Board Member

Flowering rush is an aggressive invasive plant which has created problems in several central Minnesota lakes. It grows in shallow water and had not been discovered at Lake Vermilion previously. We were concerned.

Continued on next page



DNR AIS Specialist Rich Rezanka sends photo of recovered plants to a DNR botanist for real-time analysis.

No Zebra Mussels Found in East Two River in 2021

No veligers or adult zebra mussels have ever been found at Lake Vermilion, including 2021. When engaged in early detection work, zero and none are good numbers.

Since the discovery of veligers (zebra mussel larvae) at Lake of the Woods (2019) and Rainy Lake (2021), the VLA team has been extra vigilant at East Two River, a tributary to Lake Vermilion emptying into Pike Bay.

East Two is a concern because its unique water chemistry varies seasonally and can have high calcium at times. Zebra mussels need moderate to high calcium to grow their shells. An RMB team and VLA early detection volunteers checked for zebras three ways in 2021:

RMB Environmental Labs looked for veligers using horizontal plankton net tows at the mouth of East Two. The contents were examined at their lab and no veligers were found.



During this year's low water, Doug and Nancy Watkins examined the newly exposed portion of the East Two River pilings by canoe. No adult zebras were found. Pro tip: This would be a good year to check your own property to see what the low water may have exposed.

This fall, Wayne Suoja and Gary Haugen examined the surfaces of two sampling plates hung from separate docks on East Two River. No newly settled immature zebras were found.

Our Vermilion AIS team will watch closely as DNR scientists study the Lake of the Woods and Rainy Lake discoveries. Until more is known, as a precaution, VLA volunteers will continue to check for zebras at Vermilion's East Two River, our only major source of elevated calcium.

2021 Lake Vermilion Loon Count

Monday, July 12, 2021, was a beautiful day to count loons on Lake Vermilion. Sixty-eight dedicated volunteers all began their search at 9:00 a.m. in their designated areas—looking for loon pairs, chicks, and singles. With the lake level low, eagles and gulls above and muskies below, there was still hope for spotting a good number of our state bird. And we did! Both the West end (Cook) and East end (Tower) numbers were up from 2020. Total count was 241. This is up 40 from last year's count of 201. The breakdown is as follows:

WEST END: Pairs = 23. Chicks = 16. Singles = 33. Total West end = 95

EAST END: Pairs = 34. Chicks = 17. Singles = 61. Total East end = 146

Total adults were up 40 and total chicks up 5 over last year.

At about the age of three weeks, chicks turn chocolate brown and in a few more weeks they become adolescents and grey counter feathers emerge. When chicks are about two-thirds adult size they begin fishing for themselves. Chicks born early reach adult size before migrating south while those born later in July or even August have to grow up fast in order to begin migration before ice-up.

Article submitted by Claire Zwieg, photo by Chris Woody



False alarm...from page 7

We dusted off our rapid response protocol. Both RMB and the VLA notified DNR AIS Specialist Rich Rezanka in Grand Rapids. We also put a cap on further communications until the DNR had confirmed the discovery, understood the scope of the infestation, and developed a response plan.

After two quick trips to Vermilion in 12 days, Rich and a DNR botanist had good news. Despite its similar appearance, the vegetation was NOT flowering rush but instead likely native bur-reed, which the DNR had earlier found in several places upstream during Rich's visits. The VLA team, which had already been planning its first manual removal steps, could stand down.

What did we learn from this false alarm? First, the DNR's response was fast, thorough, and professional. Second, limit initial communication. Not all discoveries turn out to be what was initially thought. Third, identify an incident coordinator to organize local efforts and assist the DNR team. Lastly, false alarms are OK. We would gladly handle 100 early detection false alarms than overlook a critical discovery.

We also re-confirmed how important early detection is. These four small 1-foot diameter "infestations" in shallow water might have been eradicated by manual digging had they really been flowering rush. Had they not been noticed until much larger ... probably not.

The VLA expresses its thanks to RMB Environmental Labs, to Rich Rezanka and the DNR team, and to all others involved with this incident. We view it as a "trial run" for a discovery we hope never happens.

We also send our thanks to all our Sentry early detection volunteers at our public and private accesses and to our three AIS Detectors who back them up when something suspicious is found. Early detection provides many more options for eradication or control.

If you would like to join the VLA's Sentry team, please contact Jill Korpela-Bontems at 218-753-6324 or jandjatbigrock@frountiernet.net.

AIS Project Focuses on Live Bait Use

Prevention of AIS infestations via boat inspection, boat decontamination, and boater education remains our first line of defense.

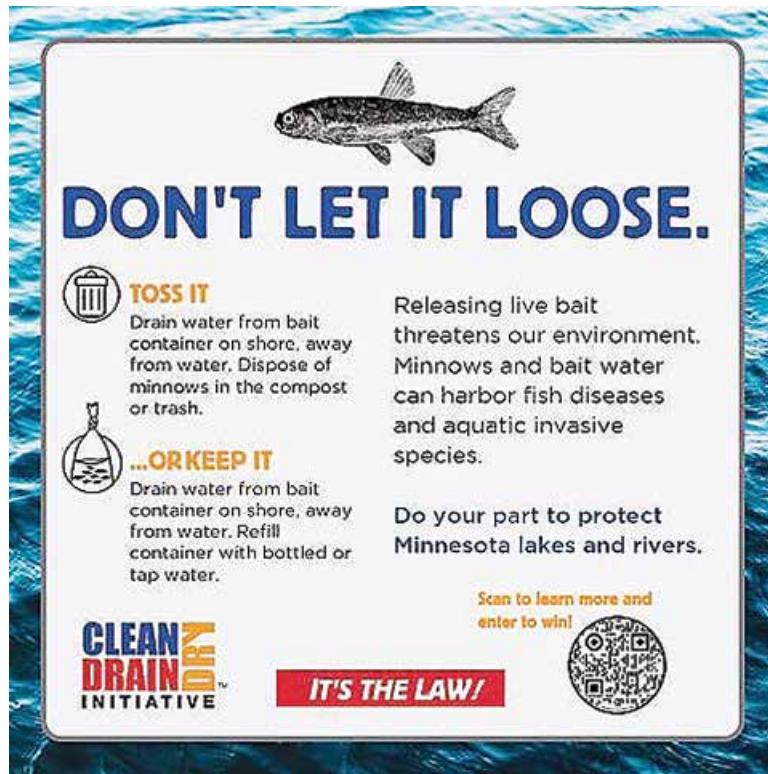


Natalya Walker
NSL SWCD AIS
Program Coord.

However, survey results have found not all boaters and anglers are aware of the nuance of proper bait transport and disposal. Through outreach efforts conducted by North St. Louis SWCD, funded by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, a behavior change initiative is taking place at the bait shops surrounding Lake Vermilion. You may have seen this graphic printed on bait bags near you.

Bait retailers in Orr, Cook, Tower, and Virginia were given boxes of bait bags with this graphic printed on the front, detailing the required actions to properly dispose of or keep live bait. Live bait and bait water can act as a vector of spread of aquatic invasive species and fish diseases. It's the law that unwanted bait must be disposed of properly either in the trash or in compost. Wanted left-over bait must be drained of lake water, and re-filled with clean tap water before transport. Live bait and bait water should never be disposed of in a water body.

Along with the distribution of over 7,000 informational bait bags, the North St. Louis SWCD AIS team have been focusing on expanding outreach and education events across the region by participating in 12 events via online platforms, classroom engagement, and by staffing booths at fairs and grand openings. These various events have proven successful as over 700 individuals have been reached. Most of those who were reached at these events don't visit the busy accesses with watercraft inspectors, and therefore were a new population of people to discuss AIS policies and protocols. These outreach events ranged from Zoom workshops, booths at fishing pier and mountain bike trail grand openings, AIS Land-



ing Blitz (a regional effort coordinated by MN Sea Grant), and classroom presentations.

At several events, visitors were asked to sign a commitment stating they would Clean Drain Dry their watercraft and equipment, and properly dispose of live bait. In return, they'd receive a towel designed to remove spiny waterfleas (designed by Minnesota AIS Research Center). Through this effort we've received 27 signed commitments.

However, more information needs to be gathered from anglers who use live bait about how to better reach them with important information. If you're an angler, please scan the QR code in the graphic, or visit <https://www.research.net/r/NSLAIS> to take a short survey to help us learn more, and sign a commitment!

For questions, please contact AIS Program Coordinator Natalya Walker (natalya@nslswcd.org).

Thank you, 2020 & 2021 volunteers!

The Vermilion Lake Association Board of Directors would like to express its thanks for your generous gifts of your time and skills to further our mission to protect and improve Lake Vermilion.

The Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) honored its volunteers with a pizza and cupcake party at the Lake Vermilion Fire Brigade Hall. Pat Michaelson, President, summarized the year's activities with a Power-Point Presentation and humorous stories.

The volunteers are listed by activity or project on the following list. If you would like to volunteer your services to help the Lake Association protect beautiful Lake Vermilion, please contact Pat Michaelson at plmichaelson@gmail.com.

AIS TEAM

Botruff, Barry
Bryers, Rob
Clines, Larry
Graham, James
Haugen, Gary- Co-Leader
Jackson, Byron and Penny
Lovgren, Jeff - Leader
Knox, Tom
Korpela-Bontems, Jill
McNamara, Bob
Oberstar, Paul & Sally
Patterson, Sharon & Rick
Pearson, Bob & Renee'
Siskar, Frank
Suoja, Wayne
Ulseth, Bob
Vohs, Dick
Watkins, Nancy- Co-Leader

COMMUNICATIONS

Amundson, Steve
Aro, Tom
Bergman, Joanne
DeAngelo, Al
Grosshauser, Terry
Jackson, Penny

Lenertz, Steve
Lovgren, Jeff
Michaelson, Pat
Ptak, Lori - Leader
Sawatzky, Sheri
Warkentin, Dwight

VOLUNTEER COORDINATION

Anderson, Emily
Bies, Susan
Michaelson, Pat - Leader
Towle, Pam

LAKE STEWARD PROGRAM & SHORELINE RESTORATION

Forester, Jeff
Lanigan, Kevin
Litherland, Mark
Simensen, Philip
Suoja, Wayne

SHORE LUNCH SITES

Bonach, Ed
Bremer, Melvin & Corliss
Bryers, Rob
Carlson, Jim & Cathy



Leader
Zwonitzer, Dan

WATER QUALITY

Ankrum, Howard
Beveroth, Craig & Carol
Dahl, Robert & Liz
Dennie, Joe
Forsline, Tami
Fry, Robert & Peggy
Hunter, Peggy
Kmett, Ron
Lakmann, Jim
McNamara, Bob
Potter, Laurie & Don
Robertson, Dale
Stebbins, Jeff
Suoja, Wayne
Wallace, Doug
Wied, Karl

FISHERIES

DeAngelo, Rich
Eisenhauer, James
Grosshauser, Terry-Leader
Wade, Al

Coplin, Wade
Fossum, Ted & Caren
Gribble, Jim & Ann
Hartley, Tom & Sue
Kmett, Ron
Lahti, Brian
Lenertz, Steve
Ptak, Mike & Lori- East Leader
Stebbins, Jeff & Nancy
Ulseth, Robert & Judith
Vagle, Scott & Terry
Williams, Al & Mary
Zwieg, John & Claire- West

Warkentin, Dwight
Yocum, John

SUCKER SALES

Bontems, Jerry
Bryers, Rob
Forconi, Tom - Leader
Johnson, Don
Johnson, Dick
Leciejewski, Oz
Lovgren, Jeff & Kathy
Peterson, Roy
Suoja, Wayne

(Sales not held in '20-'21, but
longtime volunteers)

2021 ANNUAL MEETING

Graham, Jim
Grosshauser, Terry & Bonnie
Haugen, Gary
Heimann, Terrie & Jeff
Jackson, Penny & Byron
Korpela-Bontems, Jill
Lepper, Jerry
Lovgren, Jeff & Kathy
Michaelson, Pat & Bill
Pearson, Bob
Ptak, Lori & Mike
Sawatzky, Sheri
Suoja, Wayne
Warkentin, Dwight &
Rushing, Rachel
Watkins, Nancy & Doug

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2021

Graham, Jim
Grosshauser, Terry
Hanson, Eric
Haugen, Gary
Korpela-Bontems, Jill
Lepper, Jerry
Lovgren, Jeff
Michaelson, Pat
Pearson, Bob



Ptak, Lori
Sawatzky, Sheri
Warkentin, Dwight
Watkins, Nancy
Yocum, John

NAVIGATION LIGHTS

Bontems, Jerry - East
Zwieg, John - West

DONOR VOLUNTEERS

Cownie, Patty & Jim
Muhich, Mark & Denise
Niepagen, Lee & Anne
Olson, Eric & Karen

LOON & CORMORANT COUNT TEAM

Anderson, Warren & Joann
Aro, Renee & Tom
Aro, John
Bergman, Joanne
Bontems, Jerry
Boutto, Barb
Bremer, Melvin & Corliss
Carlson, Jim & Cathy
Dunphy, Steve
Ferguson, Carol
Forconi, Tom

Grosshauser, Terry & Bonnie
Jeske, Greta
Harelstad, Mark
Hertog, Gary
Hujanen, Alvin & Florette
Jackson, Mardy
Johnson, Don & Jane
Kerber, Richard & Betty
Korpela-Bontems, Jill-East
Leader
Kurtz, David
Lenertz, Steve
Lepper, Jerry & Colleen
Levy, Mary
Lindberg, Steve & Reany
Lipton, Susan & Steve
Marbaker, William & Dottie
McGillivray, Peter & Elaine
Nelson, Heidi & Norm
Pearson, Bob
Ptak, Lori & Mike
Smith, Sharon
Suoja, Wayne
Tode, Bruce
Ulseth, Robert & Judy
Villnow, Dan & Liz
Walker, Kern & Mary
Weller Smith, Mary Ellen

Wied, Karl
Williams, Al & Mary
Wood, Amy
Yocum, John & Jaynee
Zwieg, Claire & John-West
Leader

LOON NEST PLATFORM TEAM

Jeske, Greta
Grosshauser, Terry
Michaelson, Pat & Bill
Pertrini, Keven
Sawatzky, Lauren
Sederstrom, Chris
Sederstrom, Noel
Tait, Jim
Thompson, Cael
Warkentin, Dwight

RESORT AMBASSADORS

Graham, Jim
Haugen, Gary
Tjaden, David

*While we've tried to include
everyone, please accept our
apologies if we've missed
someone.*

Tell me something I DON't know!

This summer's low water levels not quite as low as record set in 1976

Lake Vermilion water levels this past summer became extremely low due to the drought. Lake users found many a rock and deadhead previously submerged. The prop repair/replacement businesses were busy! Many boat owners were finding it difficult to navigate away from their docks and therefore took them out of the water early. Docks were extended and more buoys were placed to mark hazards. Shorelines exhibited increased rocky "beaches" to walk. The lake bottom gave up "found" items, like the mysterious "broom" that emerged from the mud near VLA Member/Volunteer Mary Ellen Weller's dock.



Lori Ptak
VLA Board Member/
Newsletter Volunteer

Here is a little history on our historic levels over the years. In 71 years of lake level record keeping, our highest recorded level was 1359.26 on 5-28-2001.



Lowest recorded level was 1356.07 on 11-28-76. To put that into perspective it is a fluctuation of 3.19 feet. Our lowest level this year according to the DNR Cooperative Stream Gauge site was 1356.41 on 9-11-21.

The rains in the last few weeks of September brought some relief. As of 10-6-21 our level was 1356.58.

The data found in the above DNR link (<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/csg/site.html?id=73050001>) provides a clear understanding on how much evaporation occurs on a lake like Vermilion when we see prolonged periods of no rain and sunshine.

Lake Vermilion Angler ties state record for catch-and-release muskie

The DNR certified a 57.25-inch muskie caught July 23 on Lake Vermilion by Todd Kirby of Hudson, Wisconsin, as tied with a 2019 muskie also caught on Lake Vermilion.

With two Lake Vermilion muskies now tied for the state record, this well-known water body continues to prove itself as a top muskie fishing destination. Kirby had fished the lake a handful of times and was familiar with small pockets that muskie seem to inhabit.

“That Friday night we were up against the weather. There was a huge storm front moving through creating extremely unstable conditions. The humidity was high,



and storm clouds were building. It was one of those nights that the fish seemed to be super active; our boat had multiple chases, one resulting in a 48-inch fish in the net — at that time my personal best,” Kirby said.

They continued fishing into the night and around 10:30 p.m. he

had a large “thud” hit his line hard when his bait was no more than 15 yards from the boat.

“I compared it to reeling in a large moving ‘log’ and after a few dark splashes, she was in the net. Everything just happened so fast!” Kirby said.

Kirby and fishing partners John and Will Gavic thought the fish looked 50 inches and were amazed seeing they caught a fish even longer, and one that would earn state record status.

Excerpt from DNR News Release 9/8/21

2021 Cormorant Count

The Vermilion Lake Association counted cormorants on the lake during the Annual Loon Count in July. As mentioned in the Summer newsletter, we are using a drone to take pictures of Potato Island, the only place where cormorants nest on Lake Vermilion. In previous years we took pictures of Potato Island from the water and then tried to count the number of cormorants on the island. One picture never covered the entire island and we had to take pictures of both sides and then try to count them. The photos from the drones are much better but still require time to count. I am much more confident of the drone process for counting going forward to understand how many cormorants reside on the lake.

This year’s count was 720 cormorants versus 670 in



2020. While we have a small increase between years, we are still considerably lower than the count in 2012 at 1155 cormorants. After reaching the 1155 Cormorant level, the DNR started controlling the population in 2013. At the current level, there will be no consideration for control of the cormorants on Lake Vermilion.

Terry Grosshauser

Vermilion Conservation Fishing: Accomplishments, Reactions, and the Future

The Vermilion Conservation Fishing Recommendations were initiated in the spring of this year. We developed a laminated card with recommended harvest limits not enforced by the DNR. This approach is like Canada's sale of conservation licenses that are quite successful. This concept is new in Minnesota even though the Minnesota DNR sells a conservation license to residents only. The conservation license has regulations similar to the recommendations that we proposed. We had considerable support from resorts, guides, the Vermilion Lake Association and Bois Forte over the concern of the high level of fishing activities continuing into 2021, the increased use of improved electronics, generally smarter fisher people who can locate and improve their odds, and higher winter pressure.

Our efforts were widespread with copies of the conservation card given to resort owners, the guides league, local stores, bait shops, and marinas. Soil and Water Conservation District boat checkers distributed them at public landings. I am not sure we reached everyone fishing on the lake, but this was a very good effort. We also were interviewed on television, had our story about conservation recommen-

Recommended Conservation Limits are on a voluntary basis and do not reflect the regulations mandated by the DNR.

SPECIES	MDNR Regulations Possession Limit	Recommended Conservation Possession Limit
Walleye	4	2 (Min. 12", Max. 18")
Largemouth Bass	6 (any combination)	0 (Catch & Release Only)
Smallmouth Bass		3 (Less than 18")
Crappie	10	5 (Less than 13")
Bluegill	20	10 (Less than 9")
Perch	40	20 (Less than 12")
Northern	2	1 (Less than 30")
Musky	1 (54 inch or above)	0 (Catch & Release Only)

WALLEYE SLOT 20-26" 1 can be over 26"
NORTHERN SLOT 30-40" 1 can be over 40"

dations printed in key newspapers around the state, and posted in social media.

We have checked several blogs, along with personal feedback, and generally the concern and responses were positive in support of this initiative.

We know that not everyone agrees

with this recommendation, but thirty years ago "catch and release" was not even considered. Now it is common for muskie and bass fishermen to release almost all of the fish they catch. Many people are releasing walleyes over the slot because they know that they are spawners and are important to the future of the fishery. The panfish recommendations we used are gaining widespread introduction on many lakes in Minnesota by the DNR. It will take time for this concept to have widespread acceptance.

These organizations will meet this winter to evaluate the program and determine next steps. Your input is welcome. Please use our website to provide your input or email terrygrosshauser@gmail.com. We will respond to all comments and thoughts. Fishing for walleyes especially has been very good at times this year. Please respect our fishery and save a few for next year.

Help protect Lake Vermilion by using Amazon Smile



I would like to thank all of those who used Amazon Smile during this past year. I especially enjoyed reading your notes sent in with Membership Renewals stating how you were using Amazon Smile as much as possible

when shopping.

When you shop at Amazon, go to the [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.smile.amazon.com) website, designating Vermilion Lake Association as your charity.



If you have started to shop at Amazon.com and then remember you want to use Smile, leave everything in your shopping cart, log off Amazon and then log back in using Smile.Amazon.com. Your purchases will still be in your shopping cart and Vermilion Lake Association will receive the Amazon half-percent donation on qualifying purchases.

During the past year, the purchases you made using Amazon Smile have contributed \$593.38 to the Vermilion Lake Association. Your continued support is greatly appreciated.

Minnesota Wildfires Sparking Conversations on State's Past, Present, and Future Flames

With the severe drought and wildfire conditions we experienced this summer in Minnesota, it is all too appropriate that August 11, 2021, marked 10 years since the Pagami Creek Fire (pictured at right) was ignited by a lightning strike in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area



Lauren Soergel
North St. Louis SWCD

Wilderness (BWCAW). Lawless flames devoured the landscape and anything in its way, forcing outdoor recreationists to leave the area, roads to close, homeowners to prepare for the worst, and 900 wildfire responders to bravely attempt to control its spread. It took until October 22 for 94-percent of the fire to be contained

and extinguished, leaving 93,000 acres of charred landscape. For comparison the Greenwood Fire was started by lightning on August 15, 2021, and has burned nearly 27,000 acres. As of September 15, about 75-percent of the fire had been contained.

Foresters and land managers reflect on the sequence of events and decisions that led to such a devastating forest fire. So what's to blame? Fuel loading. This is when there is an abundance of "fuels" in the forest, including: downed trees, standing damaged trees, and branches. This same issue is what has led to the fires we've been experiencing this summer including the Greenwood Fire. The buildup of these fuels is an unforeseen byproduct of fire suppression over the last century.

Historically, Minnesota's forests experienced low intensity wildfires every 50-100 years, which would burn up dead plant material and encourage regeneration of native trees and shrubs. Many native plants and animals of Minnesota are adapted to more frequent fires, from jack pine cones needing heat to open and disperse their seeds, to plants having large root-storage abilities that allow abundant re-sprout. Native American tribes in the area realized the benefits of fire and would purposely burn areas to promote growth of edible plants, like blueberries, and attract wildlife, like moose.



Thankfully, foresters of today have realized the benefits of fire on the landscape and occasionally conduct prescribed burns. Fire restarts succession, resulting in young plant growth and a diverse matrix of wildlife habitat by creating places for foraging, camouflage, and nesting. Furthermore, prescribed fires are conducted on days when weather conditions are appropriate, producing less intense fires and less smoke. There are many obstacles that keep land managers from conducting prescribed burns so they must turn to other strategies. Thinning a stand of trees and piling the downed wood to burn later, emulates the disturbance of wildfires and produces similar results in plant regeneration and wildlife habitat.

Fire can be an effective tool and there are things we can all do to ensure we do not lose homes, cabins, or lives to future wildfires. We can start by educating ourselves. The Firewise® program is excellent at teaching home or cabin owners how to reduce the risk of a wildfire consuming their structures (www.minnesotafac.org). Steps we can do today: remove potential fuels from the property by cleaning gutters and removing stacked wood from under the porch or near the cabin.

Please refer to www.nslswcd.org for more resources. Or schedule a visit with me by emailing lauren@nslswcd.org or by calling 218-288-6146.

The Deep Troll: For the big ones

Fall fishing can yield some of the best fish of the season...as fall approaches, the trolling bite increases substantially. Leadcore trolling has been a great way to catch keeper size walleyes, but it is often overlooked for specifically BIG walleyes and BIG pike!

On a typical leadcore trolling day...trolling size 5,6,7 flicker shads and shad raps are the ticket for walleyes. The one thing that's overlooked is the BIG pike and BIG walleyes that are sharing the same basins. Sure they can be caught on these normal lures, but your chance for the best fish in the basin are on these bigger more aggressive baits:

The Setup: 18 lb leadcore, trolling rod with soft tip, 20 ft leader, lindy crankbait snap...connect the leadcore line by stripping out 18 inches of lead and tie a double-uni knot...troll 2-2.6 mph.

Where: Any basin...mud to sand transitions...edges of reefs (it is dangerous but pays high dividends when skipping over rocks!!)

Dedicating one rod towards big fish is a must while doing the leadcore troll...keep switching out baits on this rod to find the next hot bait, and most likely one of your best catches of the season!



Lures pictured below from top to bottom:

Rapala Deep Tail Dancer, Bandit, Flicker Shad, Shad Rap, Glass Shad

**Steve Amundson, Spring Bay Resort & Guide Service,
218-780-5941**



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For more info, contact Sheri Sawatzky at

218-780-8178 or sherisawatzky@gmail.com

Thanks for helping us protect and improve our great lake.



How anglers should deal with Spiny Waterfleas

As you know, Lake Vermilion contains spiny waterfleas and has had them for the last five years. They are an invasive zooplankton that originated from Europe and entered the Great Lakes via ballast water from large ships. They have spread from the east end of Lake Vermilion into the west end. So far spinys like the clear, clean waters of the northern part of Minnesota and are currently not found south of Lake Mille Lacs.

Because spiny waterfleas replace some of the natural zooplankton, the fish will feed on them; however, the spines make it difficult for smaller fish to eat them. One study by the University of Minnesota indicated that lakes with spiny water flea infestations can have smaller and fewer walleyes than non-infested lakes, although



Terry Grosshauser
VLA Board Member

this does not seem to be the case for Rainy Lake and Vermilion so far.

Since the spinys are already in Vermilion, you are not going to kill enough of them to do any good by reducing the population. You just don't want to take them to another lake.

Dr. Brady from the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) focused her research on known risks for spreading spiny water fleas through different methods of fishing and types of gear. Their findings indicate that anchor lines and downrigger cables were too thick to accumulate spinys on them; however, fishing lines, live wells, and bait buckets accumulate the most spinys.

They were also able to determine that spiny waterfleas spend most of the daylight hours down deep, and in low light periods they will rise in the water column and are more accessible to the fishing lines of anglers. They are most prevalent from late June through the end of September, although this can vary on some lakes.



MAISRC launched a campaign at the beginning of this fishing season printing tips for stopping the spread of spiny water fleas by using special cloths that can be used to wipe down equipment. The last cast of the day should be a long one and run your line

through any cloth. If you dry your rods and reels for six hours, and they stay dry, the spinys will be dead. You should also wipe down your live well after draining it, and wipe out your bait bucket that is drained. If you can dry your boat and fishing equipment overnight using these tips before entering another lake, you can help prevent further spread of spinys to other lakes. What is not known is how long they can live on wet lines or in a little bit of water. This, more than likely, is the way they were spread to new lakes.

The last zooplankton netting on Trout Lake that I am aware of still did not have spiny waterfleas. We need to protect every lake, since the addition of invasive species can negatively impact the fisheries, and we do not have the ability to offset the damage that they cause. Do your part to protect our northern lakes.

Photos courtesy of MAISRC:

<https://maisrc.umn.edu/stopspiny-resources>

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.

How to Make a Donation

If you'd like to send a check, please make it payable to "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/>

*Your Supports Helps the Vermilion Lake Association
Make a Beautiful Lake Even Better!*

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Don't Forget Those Old Fishing Lures

How appropriate for the Antique Angler to remind fishermen that those old baits just might be the key to a very successful fishing outing. Have you ever been out fishing with someone who does not have the latest baits and out-fishes you when you are using the newest techniques available?

I have noticed over many years especially for bass fishing that lures seem to be very effective for a few years and then it seems like the next hot lure takes over only for a while. I can remember one area on Vermilion where we started catching a lot of bass on spinnerbaits and then catch rates slowed up. We started using Texas rigged worms with curly tails and that was hot. We then went to Texas rigged lizard plastics and they were hot for a couple of years. Then along came senko worms fished wacky style and lately even this approach has slowed after a very successful run.

Now there are new techniques for bass, and I have tried some of them. Sometimes I think the manufacturers develop new lures to sell the latest hot bait which has been the history of lure manufacturing.



The Antique Angler

I must admit that I am a sucker for those new baits, but I still bring some "oldies but goodies" out every once in a while, just because they still work.

Some of the latest new baits include Ned rigs, Toyoko rigs, swimbaits, drop shots, Alabama rigs, suspending crankbaits, jigging raps, and the latest frog version. While these new baits or techniques all seem to work, I have trouble giving up on the one or two techniques that have been successful for me. I guess I am just not patient enough and I try them for a while and then revert to the ones that work for me.

When you think about it, a lot of the older lures are rarely used by the young fishermen and maybe the fish are not wise to them anymore. Lures like the original floating Rapala, lizard plastics, hair jigs, spinnerbaits with marabou, Mr. Twister originals, Mepps, and never forget a popper or jitterbug. Some manufacturers are bringing back some of these baits too.

The old, original wooden bass baits had their time and are mainly used as conversation pieces or stored in display cases. If you have some and are not afraid of losing one, it might be interesting to see if it will still trigger strikes out on the lake. It just might offer a blast from the past.

Lake Vermilion Antique & Classic Boat Show

This year we tried, for the second time, to celebrate our 30th Annual Lake Vermilion Antique and Classic Boat Show, held at The Landing Restaurant on Labor Day weekend. Unfortunately, this event had to be cancelled because of the low water level on the lake.

However, not all was lost! For those who kept their reservation and the folks who live on Lake Vermilion, we carried forth with a sunset cruise, the boat flotilla on the west end, and capped it off with the Captain's Dinner.

We are always delighted to have the Vermilion Lake Association as an honorary sponsor. Their presence at the show allows the Association to display and educate the public of its achievements, goals and plans for the future, and maybe sell a hat or two. We are fortunate that Lake Vermilion has an organization

that is so dedicated to the welfare of the lake. It is so important to keep supporting the lake association through direct donations so they may continue all their wonderful work.

The Boat Show committee of Sandy Jackson and Mark Ludlow would like to welcome aboard two new committee members, Jeff Larson and Dana Hein of Sunrise River Boatworks in Tower.

We look forward to 2022 and the return of the Lake Vermilion Boat Show, our fabulous sponsors, and most of all the boats and their owners!

Mark your calendar for the weekend of September 3-4, 2022 when we will try to celebrate our 30th year, for the third time!!

Article submitted by Sandy Jackson



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

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Membership year runs from Jan 1st through Dec 31st

☐ 2022 New Member ☐ 2022 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.