

# THE VERMILION



Vol. 49, No. 4 • The Quarterly Newsletter of the Vermilion Lake Association • Fall 2022

*To Protect  
and Improve  
Lake Vermilion*

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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**H**i Lake Neighbors and Friends,

It's late September as we prepare for this fall edition of our Newsletter. The lake is too cold for my routine lap-swims, but avid fishermen and women are still enjoying these final few weeks on the water. The fall colors are just beginning but will soon grace us with their red and gold brilliance.



**Pat Michaelson**  
**VLA President**

In November you'll be receiving your Annual Membership renewal. At our August Annual Meeting, those present approved a change to our Bylaws to simplify our processes and move to two (vs 4) member categories; Household and Business at \$20 and \$50 respectively. When your renewal notice arrives in November, we hope you'll also consider the following;

Provide an email address if you haven't done so previously. We'd like to judiciously transition to more electronic communication. We promise, we do not sell our lists!

Sign up (on our website) for our Wednesday eVermilion highlights sent several times a year, with important information regarding lake endeavors, cautions, or concerns. See page 12 for information on signing up.

Add a donation to the VLA with your renewal. Our robust programs rely on member fees but also significant donations. Our volunteers are accomplishing impressive things on the lake with the funds you provide. Greater numbers of us are now required to take RMD's (required minimal distributions) from our retirement accounts. As a 501(c)(3), the VLA qualifies to receive (typically) tax-free disbursements from those types of accounts.

Check with your employer to see if they offer a matching program for donations.

Sign up for Smile Amazon and designate the VLA as the organization to receive reward funds....these quarterly payments add up.

One example of a donation and RMD funded project this past season is our Water Quality Sampling project headed by Board member Craig Beveroth. Recognizing the importance of having baseline data about the chemistry of our water throughout the lake, the Board approved extensive sampling carried out by volunteers under Craig's direction. You won't want to miss his article regarding the scope and outcome of that work in this edition.

As noted in every Newsletter...Volunteers are the heart and muscle of this organization. We recognized many of them who were able to join us at a casual gathering at the end of June. The various "teams" including AIS Sentries, Lake Stewards, Loon Counters, Shore Lunch Site care takers, Water Quality samplers and many more....met to learn from each other and share delightful stories. Note the extensive list of our volunteers in the Newsletter, and give those folks a big Thank You when you see them.

Enjoy these end of season days, and stay safe,

**Pat Michaelson**

**Volunteer Program Leader and President**

**Cover Photo by Carl Lemke**

**See more on the photo contest  
winners on page 6.**

# Whew! No Zebra Mussels found in Lake Vermilion this year!

A news release on August 1 by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reported a fishing guide snagged an adult zebra mussel on Lake Koronis outside of Paynesville in Stearns County. Lake Koronis gained notoriety in 2015 for being the first Minnesota lake in which starry stonewort, a highly invasive algae, was also discovered. While zebra mussels have not been found in Lake Vermilion, their northern advance has continued as evidenced by a growing list of area legacy mine pits where they are now found. Lake Ore-Be-Gone by Gilbert, a busy recreation area for sport fishermen, kayakers and divers, was placed



on the infested list in 2012. Boats are checked and there is an on-site decontamination unit. In 2021, zebra mussels were found in the St. James Pit adjacent to Aurora and this year in the Embarrass Mine Pit (also known as the Sabin Mine Pit) outside Biwabik and the Canisteo Pit adjacent to the cities of Bovey and Taconite. Both mines are stocked with stream trout and other fish species making them popular with anglers. In addition to the ecological impacts zebra mussels have on a waterbody, zebra mussels can cause expensive damage to water intake pipes reducing or blocking flow. Water containing zebra mussel larvae, called veligers, must be filtered and/or treated to eliminate veligers before it can be used for drinking water or discharged to prevent the spread of downstream receiving waters.

Zebra mussels thrive in slightly alkaline, nutrient-rich water which supports healthy populations of plankton and has substantial levels of calcium required for shell development. The lakes of northeastern Minnesota are on a geologic feature known as the Canadian Shield, a large area of exposed igneous and high-grade metamorphic rocks. As a result, they tend to have low calcium levels unlike lakes located on limestone formed by ancient sea beds. It is thought that calcium levels of at least 20 mg/liter is required for zebra mussel larvae to survive into adulthood and form a reproducing adult population.

Due to differences in local geology, many of the area mine pits have calcium levels well above 20 mg/liter making them an ideal nursery for zebra mussels. The Sportsmen's Club of Lake Vermilion, now known as the Vermilion Lake Association, started monitoring calcium levels in 2015 and noted levels around 25-30 mg/liter in East Two



River above the Tower harbor. Historically Vermilion's highest calcium levels are about 13 mg/liter in the east basin gradually falling off traveling west. The East Two River and Tower harbor have been considered a potential "hot spot" for zebra mussel development and intermittent monitoring of calcium levels as well as screening for veligers have continued over the years.

Sources for the increased levels of calcium noted in East Two River include water from Eagle's Nest which flows into Vermilion, Tower's settling ponds, and discharge from the Soudan mine. In a recent analysis, water from the mine gathered at Soudan's monument culvert noted a calcium level of 327 mg/liter. However, measurements noted downstream significantly decreased to 19 mg/liter as it entered Pike Bay. The higher calcium level of the area is still a concern. As a result, the AIS team of the VLA has placed four sampler plates in the harbor and along the river and conducts a yearly tow screening for veligers. With good boating and fishing practices, remembering to clean, drain and dry, it is hoped that East Two River does not become another zebra mussel nursery.

# Watercraft Inspection

The North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) have continued to staff watercraft inspectors at 11 different boat landings around Lake Vermilion in 2022. The inspectors have conducted over 10,000 inspections from the fishing opener weekend to the first of September. A watercraft decontamination unit was staffed 7 days a week at the Hoodoo Point North access and provided decontamination opportunities for those entering and exiting the lake. They also provide courtesy decontaminations for anyone who would like to have their live well, hull and engine



**Jon Utecht**  
AIS Program Coord.  
No. St. Louis SWCD

flushed with hot water. Courtesy decontaminations only take a few minutes and can help reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species. As long as the weather allows, watercraft inspectors will continue to inspect entering and exiting watercraft until the 23rd of October. As a reminder, if an inspector is not present at an access it is still the boaters responsibility to conduct a self-inspection of watercraft, docks, or lifts. Report any suspicious invasive species to the Vermilion Lake Association, the SWCD AIS Program Coordinator, or the Department of Natural Resources. It takes all of us to stop the spread of invasive species. Always remember to Clean, Drain and Dry!

More information on decontaminations and their availability around Minnesota can be found at: [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/watercraft\\_inspect/courtesydecon.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/watercraft_inspect/courtesydecon.html)

[jon@nslswcd.org](mailto:jon@nslswcd.org) \* 218-288-6142

## Fall Clean Up: Time to Check for Zebra Mussels

Late summer or fall is a great time to check for zebra mussels. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has developed a program to track the spread of zebra mussels throughout the state. As docks, dock floats and supports, swimming platforms, boats, motors and anchors are removed, visually inspect all the hard surfaces. Zebra mussels may attach to trim tabs, rubber gaskets, grooves along the keel of pontoon boats and sailboat centerboards. During early infestations, zebras are likely to be small ( $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $\frac{1}{2}$  inches) and the number attached is likely to be low. Also inspect hard surfaces along the shoreline and in shallow water especially around boat accesses.

If you find zebras you can complete and send an online Volunteer Monitor Report Form at [https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteering/zebramussel\\_monitoring/index.html](https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteering/zebramussel_monitoring/index.html) by November 1 of each year. The report is helpful whether or not you found zebra mussels. Early detection for zebra mussels is important to protect Minnesota's lakes and rivers.



*Find this newsletter, along  
with previous issues at*  
[https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/  
latest-news/](https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/latest-news/)

# Lake Vermilion Loon Count 2022



By Joanne Bergman, VLA Volunteer

photo by Susan Moore, photo contest entrant

The count this year took place on the rain date, Wednesday July 13. Counters enjoyed a cool morning made delightful with sunny skies and light winds. We reported 94 loons on the east end of the lake, and 99 on the west end, for a total of 193. That is 48 fewer than last year's total.

Participants on the Pike Bay segment reported seeing no loons at all. Most of us have never experienced such a disappointing count; instead, we look forward to the certain thrill each time we spot a singleton or a pair. The thrill is heightened when we see chicks riding on a parent's back or following on the water. This year, volunteers reported 47 pairs, 67 singles, and 32 chicks in total. Compared with last year's counts, we observed 10 fewer pairs and 27 fewer singles. But the number of chicks sighted dropped by just one.

John and Claire Zwieg had the unusual experience of observing a family of geese, the fluffy goslings just learning to swim. Observers also sighted a distressed loon near Ely Island. The adult loon was unable to fly, apparently tangled in a fish line. Barb Boutto reported seeing especially tiny loon hatchlings aboard parents, seemingly too small for swim lessons.

Volunteer participants took in stride the alternative rain date, although the total number of participants was also lower than it would have been on a good-weather Monday. With 29 counters on the east end of the lake and 24 on the west, a total of 53 participated.



## VLA Caps

*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 [www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/caps](http://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/caps)

For more info, contact Sheri Sawatzky at 218-780-8178, or [sherisawatzky@gmail.com](mailto:sherisawatzky@gmail.com)

Thanks for helping us protect and improve our great lake.

# Photo Contest Winners Announced

**M**embers attending the Annual Meeting on August 6, 2022, voted amongst 70 entrants to choose 3 winners of the Vermilion Lake Association Photo Contest. Henry Loftus won First Place for his photo of the northern lights on Frazer Bay; Carl Lemke won Second Place for his photo from the Wolf Bay Shore Lunch site; and Rick Steblay won Third Place for his photo "Sky on Fire". Peter Tollefson was given an Honorable Mention for his "Lone Fisherman at Sunset" photo.



**FIRST PLACE:** Henry Loftus, 13, is an avid fisherman and budding photographer. He captured his photo from the dock of close friends on Frazer Bay. Henry used his iPhone 13 on the night feature to capture the beauty of the northern lights. His parents are thrilled to be new cabin owners on Lake Vermilion.



**SECOND PLACE:** Carl Lemke won second place with the photo on the cover of this newsletter. The photo was taken on Sept. 19, 2019 looking south from the Wolf Bay Shore Lunch site. I've been coming to Lake Vermilion almost every summer or whenever I can since 1981 when I was 6 years old. My parents bought a cabin in Wolf Bay then and it feels like a second home to me. I love the people, the scenery, taking pictures, and of course fishing on the lake. It's a magical place.



**HONORABLE MENTION:** Peter Tollefson earned an "Honorable Mention" for his photo of "A Lone Fisherman at Sunset". Peter was vacationing on a houseboat on Bystrom Bay when he learned about the contest.

When Peter is not enjoying Lake Vermilion, he enjoys spending time outdoors around the state... getting out on Lake Minnetonka as much as possible, camping with family, doing trail runs, and teaching their little kids how to fish!



**THIRD PLACE:** Rick Steblay's photo of a sunset on the west end of Frazer Bay was taken on Memorial weekend of 2010. Rick is donating his prize money to the AIS fund in honor of his late mother-in-law Mary Jo Blonigan. She and her husband were longtime members of the Sportsman Club (now Vermilion Lake Association) from the beginning. They bought the land Rick currently owns in 1967.

# VLA Annual Meeting 2022

Vermilion Lake Association (VLA) members gathered for their annual meeting on Saturday, August 6 at Camp Vermilion, located on the west end of Lake Vermilion. More than 100 members and guests attended.

A brief business meeting was held after a social hour and delicious buffet style meal of baked chicken, green beans, salad, and Camp Vermilion's wood-fired brownies. Members re-elected board members Lori Ptak, Dwight Warkentin, and Craig Beveroth. Jeff Lovgren was recognized by Nancy Watkins on behalf of the whole VLA board for his years of service on the board and heading the Aquatic Invasive Species program. By-law changes regarding membership categories and dues were approved. These changes will be available on the website.

Following the business meeting, a special presentation was given by Keith Reeves, Area Fisheries/Division of Fish and Wildlife for the DNR. His topic was "Let's Focus on Birds for A While". Keith spoke about birds in the Lake Vermilion area, where to go birding (Hunter Walking Trails mowed by the DNR), what to use to take photos (super zoom cameras), and apps to identify birds (Merlin).





**Gary Haugen and Bob Pearson manned the VLA booth at the annual boat show**

## 2022 Lake Vermilion Antique and Classic Boat Show

**T**he 30th anniversary of the Lake Vermilion Boat Show was held on Sunday September 4 at the Landing Restaurant. It was a gorgeous day, beautiful boats gleaming in the sunshine, a large steady crowd and the burgers were being flipped in record time!

Thank you to the Vermilion Lake Association for their continued support of the show. And to the Lake Vermilion Fire Brigade; their grill was sizzling hot all day, serving up hotdogs and brats. Ask them how many they served.

The date for next year's show is September 3, 2023 at the Landing Restaurant. Anyone interested in displaying their antique or classic boat, whether its wood, fiberglass or homebuilt, please contact: [lakevermilionboatshow@aol.com](mailto:lakevermilionboatshow@aol.com) for more information.



**Left: Congratulations to Jeff Stebbins winning the Captain's Choice award with Sadie, a 1928 Hack-er-Craft**

**Right: Congratulations to Chris O'Conner the winner of the Peoples Choice Award with "Nice, Eh!" a 1956 Shepherd Runabout**



# Studies confirm that walleye prefer certain colors

Research suggests that walleyes prefer certain lure colors depending on such factors as water clarity conditions, light conditions (sunny vs. cloudy/low light) and available forage. Other factors including but not limited to water temperature, method of presentation (trolling, casting, jigging, flipping), structure, depth and trolling speed also play a role in the lure selection process; however, there's not enough space in a one-page article to discuss each and every factor. Those and other factors may be discussed in future articles. This article will focus solely what lure colors walleye prefer during specific water clarity conditions, light conditions and when certain forage is available.

Data suggest that walleye prefer bright colors like metal, chrome, natural colors, orange, red, green, purple and white lures in clear conditions. On bright sunny days, the most effective colors are going to be metal, chrome and natural colors. In low-light conditions such as cloudy days, white, orange, red, green and purple work well. As the name walleye suggests, their odd pearlescent eyes make vision their key sensory method for hunting food. They can see colors and can see well in very low light.

When suspended sediment in the water causes turbid conditions, walleye prefer yellow or gold lures. When an algae bloom is in full swing, they prefer black lures.

Another factor regarding lure selection is to choose a color that closely resembles a color of what walleye are actively feeding on. Natural looking lures resembling perch minnows and shad are typically big winners.



John Yocum  
VLA Board Member



Terry Grosshauser  
VLA Board Member

Now what about Lake Vermilion in particular. Lake Vermilion is a large, mostly clear lake that lacks fast-flowing feeder rivers that cause turbidity. Small rivers and creeks bring tannin-stained water without a great deal of suspended sediment into the lake, but by the time it reaches big water areas like Big Bay, Frazer Bay and Wakemup Bay, it has become mostly clear. Additionally, Lake Vermilion doesn't have a huge problem with human-induced, nitrogen-rich agricultural runoffs that cause huge expansive algae blooms in the summer in, for example, Lake Erie. With climate change and if people aren't vigilant about protecting the lake from fertilizers, we may see algae blooms being an increased problem going forward, but for now, Lake Vermilion generally has clear conditions. As such, a good choice for lure selection for a clear lake like Lake Vermilion on sunny days would be metal, chrome and natural colors. In low-light conditions such as cloudy days, bright colors like white, red, orange, greens and purples are best.

Above are a few photos of some personal favorite lures. Each one has caught many fish in Lake Vermilion.

During certain times of year, like jig and minnow time in the fall, I'm convinced that jighead colors don't matter all that much. Fish are hungry at that time and will eat just about whatever presentation you put in front of them. However, at other times, the right lure color will dramatically increase your success rate.

# Thank You to our 2022 Volunteers

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

<b>Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS)</b>	<b>Lake Steward Program &amp; Shore-line Restoration</b>	Swanson, Nancy	Suoja, Wayne	Watkins, Doug
Haugen, Gary - Co-Leader	French, Hugh - Coordinator	Teeter, Rick	Wallace, Doug	Yocum, John
Watkins, Nancy - Co-Leader	Forester, Jeff	Ulseth, Robert	Wied, Karl	Yocum, Jaynee
Graham, James	Lanigan, Kevin	Ulseth, Judy	<b>Fisheries</b>	<b>Board of Directors 2022</b>
Lovgren, Jeff	Litherland, Mark	Vagle, Scott	Grosshauser, Terry - Leader	Michaelson, Pat - President
McNamara, Bob	Simensen, Philip	Vagle, Terry	Deangelo, Richard	Beveroth, Craig
Pearson, Bob	Suoja, Wayne	Williams, Allen	Eisenhauer, James	Graham, James
Suoja, Wayne	<b>Shore Lunch Sites</b>	Williams, Mary	Wade, Al	Grosshauser, Terry
Vohs, Richard	Ptak, Michael - Leader-East	Zwiegl, Claire	Warkentin, Dwight	Hanson, Eric
<b>Communications</b>	Zwiegl, John - Leader-West	Zwonitzer, Dan	Yocum, John	Haugen, Gary
Ptak, Lori - Leader	Bonach, Edward	<b>Water Quality</b>	<b>Annual Meeting 2022</b>	Korpela-Bontems, Jill
Amundson, Steve	Bremer, Melvin	Beveroth, Craig- Leader	Warkentin, Dwight - Leader	Lepper, Jerry
Bergman, Joanne	Bremer, Corliss	Beveroth, Carol	Grosshauser, Terry	Pearson, Bob
Deangelo, Alan	Coplin, Wade	Cotter, Carrie	Grosshauser, Bonnie	Ptak, Lori
Grosshauser, Terry	Fossum, Ted	Cotter, Matt	Haugen, Gary	Sawatzky, Sheri
Lenertz, Steve	Fossum, Caren	Dahl, Robert	Heimann, Jeff	Warkentin, Dwight
Michaelson, Pat	Gribble, Jim	Dahl, Liz	Heimann, Terrie	Watkins, Nancy
Sawatzky, Sheri	Gribble, Ann	Dennie, Joe	Korpela-Bontems, Jill	Yocum, John
Yocum, John	Hartley, Tom	Forsline, Tami	Lepper, Jerry	<b>Navigation Lights</b>
<b>Volunteer Coordination</b>	Hartley, Sue	Fry, Robert	Michaelson, Pat	Jerry Bontems-East
Michaelson, Pat - Leader	Lahti, Brian	Fry, Peggy	Ptak, Michael	John Zwiegl-West
Bies, Susan	Lipton, Susan	Hunter, Peggy	Ptak, Lori	<b>Donor Volunteers</b>
Carson, Beth	Ptak, Lori	Lakmann, Jim	Rushing, Rachel	Cownie, Patty & Jim
Klapmeier, Patty	Saddoris, Tad	McNamara, Bob	Sawatzky, Sheri	Muhich, Mark & Denise
Towle, Pam	Schultz, Mark	Pohlman, Bob	Wade, Al	Niepagen, Lee & Ann
Wade, Ellen	Schultz, Sandy	Potter, Don	Wade, Ellen	Olson, Eric & Karen
		Potter, Laurie	Watkins, Nancy	
		Robertson, Dale		
		Stebbins, Jeffrey		



## Volunteers Celebrated

A casual evening of learning, sharing tips, and swapping volunteer stories was held at The Lake Vermilion Fire Brigade Hall on June 28. The Vermilion Lake Association Board, volunteers and their spouse/friend were treated to a pulled pork picnic dinner as a thank-you for the many hours of donated time in a variety of ways, big and small.

### Resort Ambassadors

Graham, James  
Haugen, Gary  
Tjaden, David

### Sentry Team

Korpela-Bontems, Jill – Leader  
Ankrum, Howard  
Bryers, Rob  
Clines, Larry  
Heimann, Jeff  
Heimann, Terrie  
Jackson, Byron  
Jackson, Penny  
McNamara, Bob  
Oberstar, Paul  
Oberstar, Sally  
Patterson, Rick  
Patterson, Sharon

Pohlman, Bob  
Siskar, Frank  
Watkins, Doug  
Watkins, Nancy  
Ulseth, Robert  
Zigler, Sandy

### Loon & Cormorant Count, Loon Cam & Loon Platform Teams

Allen, Jerry  
Allen, Lori  
Anderson, Joann  
Anderson, Warren  
Annen, Valerie  
Bergman, Joanne  
Beveroth, Carol  
Beveroth, Craig  
Blackwell, Laura

Blackwell, Tom  
Bonicatto, Marsha  
Bontems, Jerry  
Botruff, Barry  
Botruff, Penny  
Boutto, Barb  
Bremer, Corliss  
Bremer, Melvin  
Buccicone, Jenny  
Carlson, Cathy  
Carlson, Jim  
Conger, Bailey  
Conger, Bill  
Duncan, Jeffrey  
Duncan, Pam  
Dunphy, Steven  
Ferguson, Carol  
Freeman, Linda  
Freeman, Roger

Grosshauser, Bonnie  
Grosshauser, Terry  
Harelstad, Mark  
Hertog, Gary  
Hoffman, Ali  
Holmes, Sali  
Holmes, Stephen  
Housenga, Pauly  
Hujanen, Alvin  
Hujanen, Florette  
Irons, Willis  
Jeske, Greta  
Johnson, Don  
Johnson, Jane  
Johnson, Mariliyn  
Johnson, Tim  
Korpela-Bontems, Jill – East-Leader  
Kurtz, David  
Lenertz, Steve  
Levy, Mary  
Lindberg, Reany  
Lindberg, Steve  
Lipton, Steve  
Lipton, Susan  
Marbaker, Dottie  
Marbaker, William  
Mcgillivray, Elaine  
Mcgillivray, Peter  
Michaelson, Bill  
Miesel, Keith  
Moccio, Kathleen  
Moore, Rick  
Moore, Susan  
Nelson, Heidi  
Nelson, Norm  
Ojala, Linda  
Orr, Alan  
Orr, Karen  
Pietrini, Kevin

Pohlman, Bob  
Pohlman, Kathy  
Porter, Jake  
Ptak, Lori  
Ptak, Michael  
Sawatzky, Bubba  
Schultz, Mark  
Schultz, Sandy  
Sederstrom, Chris  
Sederstrom, Noel  
Slick, Christina  
Smith, Sharon  
Suoja, Wayne  
Taitt, James  
Thompson, Cael  
Tode, Bruce  
Ulseth, Judy  
Ulseth, Robert  
Villnow, Dan  
Villnow, Liz  
Walker, Kern  
Walker, Mary  
Weller Smith, Mary Ellen  
Wied, Karl  
Williams, Allen  
Williams, Mary  
Yocum, Jaynee  
Yocum, John  
Zwieg, Claire  
Zwieg, John

*Thanks to others who accompanied our designated volunteer to assist with the '22 count*

### VLA Dock Signs

Lenertz, Steve  
Maki, Julie

If you are interested in joining one of these Teams.....contact Pat Michaelson at: [plmichaelson@gmail.com](mailto:plmichaelson@gmail.com)

# Navigation Lights Repaired

After notification of a missing navigation light “somewhere between St. Mary’s Island and Trout Lake portage,” VLA Volunteers Jerry Bontems and Jill Korpela-Bontems took off in their boat with a hammer drill, bolts, and a Honda generator on board. There they found the missing light in the water on a pile of rocks they call “Turkey Toes”. The damage to this light was most likely caused



during the “ice out”. These navigation lights were originally set into a tire rim with a rock on it. The Bontems have been improving this set up by drilling a hole and bolting

the mount to the rock. As you can see, maintenance of these lights can be hampered by water access only, and further delayed by high winds and precipitation.

As a community service, the Vermilion Lake Association maintains a series of flashing night navigation lights along the major travel routes on the lake. Inconspicuous by day, the lights assist boaters and snowmobilers traveling the lake at night by helping them visually locate the main routes of travel.



Over the years, the lights have been upgraded to improve reliability. All are now solar powered to minimize routine visits to swap batteries. The lights are placed at shoreline spots and island spots and are not intended to indicate navigational hazards.

For a map of navigation lights maintained by the Vermilion Lake Association, go to our website at <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/other-programs/night-navigation-lights/>. To report a problem, contact John Zweig at [jczwieglcp2.net](mailto:jczwieglcp2.net) (West End) or Jerry Bontems (East End) at [jandjatbigrock@frontiernet.net](mailto:jandjatbigrock@frontiernet.net).

## Subscribe to eVermilion

Are you getting email notifications of our newsletter postings, as well as breaking news regarding our loon cam and other exciting projects? If not, please subscribe via our website, under “News”, then “eVermilion” <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/latest-news/>

### Subscribe to eVermilion

SUBSCRIBE

# Cleanup at Black Bay hiking trail



On August 11, 2022, in a collaborative effort by Minnesota DNR Forestry Service and the Vermilion Lake Association, the Black Bay Shore Lunch site hiking trail got a much needed clearing. Challenges of weather made it necessary to reschedule the event, but luckily the industrious workers were able to accomplish the task in one morning of hard work.

Pat Michaelson, VLA President, said "The VLA is so fortunate to have a

solid volunteer group that is engaged in moving our various programs forward. The Shore Lunch Sites, one of the gems on the lake, are one of the most utilized and visible resources we promote." Thanks go out to Minnesota DNR Forestry Staff Penny Backman and Joe Worm, and Vermilion Lake Association volunteers Ted Fossum, Rick Teeter, Nancy Swanson, Eric Hanson, and Jim Gribble. Special thanks to Eric Hanson of Pehrson Lodge for helping ferry volunteers to the site.

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For more information about the trail, see a previous article in our Spring 2020 newsletter can be found at our website.

To find the Black Bay Shore Lunch site, as well as the seven other shore lunch sites, go to <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/>



# The Pike Speed Troll

**L**ake Vermilion can offer some great pike fishing, but a few change ups can produce a better sized pike! A few things to key in on is location, depth, baits, presentation!

One of my favorite ways to catch big pike is speed trolling. Here are a few key ingredients for bigger pike:

- Decent-size profile to bigger baits...6-13" baits
- 3-4 ounce keel weights
- 3-7 feet fluorocarbon leader
- Planer boards... big Churches TX-44 with lock jaw clip and me-



dium Off-Shore with OR18 clips

- Trolling rods with some good back bone
- 3.5-4.5 mph...this is key .

Look for weed edges in 10-14 feet of water...you want to be near the weeds, but not necessarily in them. Also try flats adjacent to weed lines, neckdowns, and scat-



tered rock flats. One of the best times of year to do the troll is when the weeds start to tip in late August and into September. The planer boards can be used as "bobbers" essentially, so you can control the

depth the lure is running. Only run a short length of line behind the boards (10-25 feet) to keep the baits clean while trolling...the fish will come and get the bait!!!

**Steve Amundson**

**Spring Bay Resort & Guide Service**

**218-780-5941**

## Reduce Your Tax Bill by Making a Charitable Gift



**T**he Vermilion Lake Association has qualified as a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization under IRS Section 501(c)(3). Your charitable gifts and membership dues are generally tax deductible for federal income tax purposes. **Does your employer offer a matching gift**

**program?** VLA may qualify.

If you are 70 or over you are likely familiar, or getting familiar, with the IRA required minimum distribution (RMD). Each year, the IRS requires you to withdraw a certain amount from your IRA, **whether you need the funds or not.** You pay income tax on every distribution you take; this can be a significant burden and may even bump you into a higher tax bracket. Rolling over part of your RMD to a nonprofit like the Vermilion Lake Association can help **reduce your tax bill and support a brighter future.**

If you are 70-1/2 you can roll

over up to \$100,000 from your IRA to charity. You won't be taxed on the transfer, and it may count against your required distribution. **It's a simple process!** Contact your IRA administrator to see how you can rollover into tax savings and make a charitable contribution to the VLA today.

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.

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

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

# Water Quality of Lake Vermilion

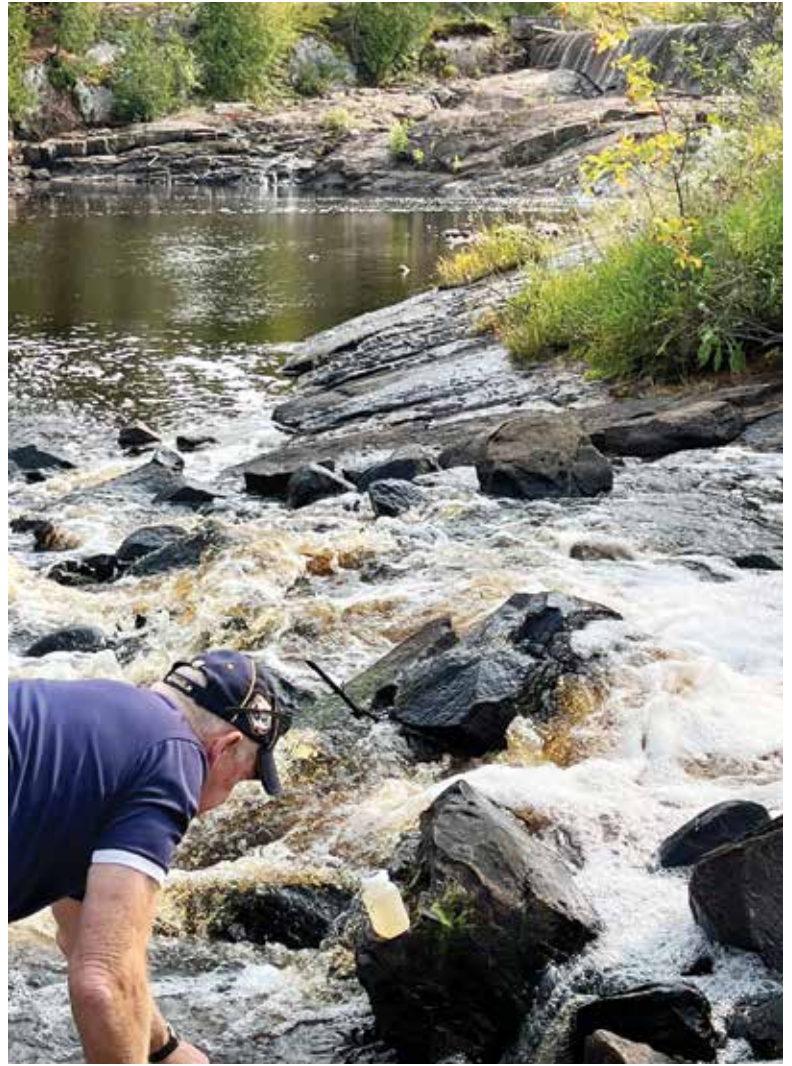
**A**s a follow-up to the summer Newsletter, we're happy to share the results of the VLA's extensive water chemistry analysis completed in June and presented at the August 6 Annual Meeting. At the risk of oversimplification, it's fairly safe to say that Lake Vermilion is a picture of good lake health from an elemental and chemistry standpoint (keep in mind that this study did not include biological sampling of aquatics or bacteria).



Craig Beveroth  
VLA Board  
Member and  
Water Quality  
Team Leader

Of the seven EPA priority pollutants that we tested for, all seven were well below the EPA concern limits (arsenic, cadmium, copper, mercury, nickel, lead, and zinc). Of the other nineteen elements and compounds evaluated, we saw slightly elevated amounts of aluminum (Breitung culvert, Black Bay) and iron (Breitung culvert, Pike River below the dam, West Two River under the Hwy. 169 bridge). We will be monitoring these locations going forward.

Before we raise the champagne glasses to the health of Vermilion, we should note that there are two "hot spots" which have been known for years—one for calcium as it pertains to possible zebra mussel growth, and the other for sulphates as it pertains to wild rice growth. East Two River has been known for years to be a major calcium contributor to Pike Bay. The good news is that the calcium appears to get diluted to almost acceptable limits before it reaches the mouth of Pike Bay at the east end. Our sulphate issue is at the other end of Pike Bay as the Pike River flows over the dam and into the lake. For everyday recreation and aquatic health, the sulphate levels are fine lake-wide; however, for wild rice growth, Vermilion is listed by the EPA as impaired (impairment being sulphate levels greater than ten parts per million, ppm). We saw levels of 94 ppm at the Breitung culvert, 19 ppm just below the Pike River Dam, and 13 ppm in Big, Cable, and Stuntz bays on the east side. As we know



wild rice is Minnesota's state grain and it is culturally important to native tribes in the state. We will continue to monitor these locations.

If you have family or friends in the Rainy Lake watershed, you may have them thank you for the quality of water Vermilion is sending their way. Our analysis near the Vermilion dam in Wolf Bay (where Vermilion begins its journey to Hudson Bay) showed no elevated levels of anything that we tested for exiting the lake.

Our complete analysis is available on the VLA website under the Water Quality section, at <https://www.vermilionlakeassociation.org/>. It's a rather large spreadsheet, so having a large display screen will be helpful.

# Memories abound for 9th annual TAVF

**I**t never gets old—at least that was the reception Phil Bakken received when giving his traditional opening remarks at the recently conducted 9th annual Take a Veteran Fishing event.

“Hey, they didn’t boo me this time,” said Bakken with a big smile as he finished telling a joke that he does every year before guides take out our veterans for a morning of fishing on Lake Vermilion.

The joke is aimed at those veterans who never had to deal with rough waters while serving their country.

“I checked the weather this morning, and we are due for some heavy seas,” joked Bakken as he prepared to deliver his punchline that is now synonymous with the event. “They are calling for waves of five inches, so all of you ground pounders may want to pick up some seasick pills before you head out.”

In years past, Bakken’s joke would garner some boos, but perhaps this year’s much better forecast put the crews in a better mood as they hit the waters to spend quality time on the lake. Over 100 veterans took part in the event, which is a highlight for the veterans and for all the guides from the Lake Vermilion Guides League and other boat operators who volunteered to work the event.

In 2021, those working the event were blessed to have been joined by six World War II veterans; however, that number dwindled to only two this



**World War II Veteran Jim Charles and his son, Jim, share a laugh shortly before heading onto Lake Vermilion for the 9th annual TAVF event.**

year. One of those World War II vets was 99-year-old Navy veteran Jim Charles, who was spending the day on the lake with his son, Jim.

“It’s great, just really great,” said Charles of the event. “Just the fact that at my age that I am able to get out here and fish like a normal person. I have been looking forward to this for the past six months.”

While Charles might be slowing down a tad, he still kept his sense of humor, as evidenced when he gave an answer to explain his longevity in life.

**Continued on next page**

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## *New Dock Signs Show Member Support for our Mission....to protect and improve*



**T**hese striking aluminum signs with UV protection can be ordered on our website. Please check the website for current prices.

The 12x18 inch sign is designed to attach in either corner of dock front with self-tapping sheet metal screws or stainless hose clamps. Note: many of the dock installers will install the sign at no cost. Please contact your installer for details. Some members are choosing to mount them on their boat houses as well.



**BIG CREW—This is the group photo of all the veterans, guides and boat operators as they get ready to hit the lake Thursday, August 25th. Unlike 2021 when the smoke from the BWCA fires wreaked havoc with the event, Mother Nature was much kinder in 2022!**

“I’d like to say it is because of whiskey and women, but I’d be lying,” he said with a smile as he prepared to take off from the marina with his son and guide.

The event also holds special meaning for Charles’ son, Jim, who has been attending the event with his father for the past three to four years.

“I used to spend a lot of time up here with my dad as a kid,” said Charles of time spent with his father, who was a game warden before retiring in 1982. “It’s just fun to come back and enjoy what these guys do and what Fortune Bay does for them.”

And for Fortune Bay, they too are proud to be part of such a special event that means so much to so many people here in northeastern Minnesota.

“While the day includes some quality time on the lake, it also represents something more than that,” said Fortune Bay’s Brian K. Anderson in his welcome address. “It is a day for all of us to be able to walk alongside our heroes from yesteryear and today.”

While Anderson said that all veterans deserve our respect, it is truly amazing that in the year 2022, we still are blessed to have some World War II vets in our presence.

“We are truly humbled to be able to enjoy your company for another year,” said Anderson, who thanked the Take a Vet Fishing Committee and the Lake Vermilion Guides League for all the work they do to make the event possible. “Thank you, and enjoy your special day.”

The Vermilion Lake Association would like to thank their partners, the Guides League and Fortune Bay for coordinating this excellent event. Some VLA members volunteer their time and boat to take the vets fishing and we know that the vets really appreciate a day out on the water. It is not just about fishing, but telling stories and enjoying the company of fellow vets. A special thanks to Fortune Bay for continuing to provide their facilities for this growing event

# A Loon Story

One of the older Vermilion Lake Association loon nests has been maintained and deployed by volunteer Greta Jeske. The loons have used the nest for two years; they abandoned the nest one year, and the eggs did not hatch the second year.



**Terry Grosshauser**  
VLA Board Member

With low water levels resulting from the drought last year, we were unable to retrieve the nest, so it was frozen in for the winter. The muskrats chewed on some of the Styrofoam in the base, damaging the nest. Fortunately, with the high-water levels after ice-out, a pair of loons claimed the nest almost before the ice was completely gone. The mating ritual included circling the nest and cooing before the pair moved onto the nest together, and the female laid two eggs by the end of May.

The dedication by the adult loons was very apparent, and you could hear them calling to each other at different times throughout the night to protect the eggs. On June 25 one egg hatched, and the second egg hatched later that day. Unfortunately, by Sunday morning June 26, both chicks had disappeared most likely to a land predator or even a large fish. The adults spent the day diving under the nest and circling the nest looking for the chicks. It was a sad day and it looked like another year would pass with no success in our bay. Shortly after the loss of the chicks, Greta was able to add more grass and fix a hole in the nest.

Greta continued her watch and, to her amazement, the courtship process began again, and they were both on the nest soon after losing the two chicks. On July 10th, the female loon laid two more eggs. This meant that loons had to incubate the eggs for another 25 to 26 days before they would hatch. They were intense, rarely leaving the nest and always protecting the eggs. Since the nest was only thirty feet from her dock and twenty feet from the shore, Greta would be in the area often. The loons would not leave the nest when she was near the dock, but if someone was with her, the loon would leave the nest. It was as though



**Greta Jeske and one of the other loon nests used on Vermilion.**

the loon knew Greta was not a threat.

On August 5, one of the eggs hatched and the chick was swimming in a short time; however, the second egg never hatched. Quickly the chick was on the back of one of the adult loons. The family continued to stay in the bay where the nest is located and would return frequently. It is highly unusual for a new chick to be born this late and be able to fly south before ice forms on the lake. The loons for all of August could be seen feeding the chick continually, probably realizing that growing quickly is important.

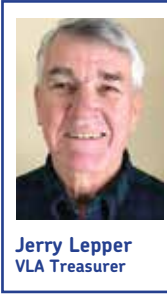
In early September, only one of the adult loons was feeding and protecting the chick. I assume the other adult started its flight south. A lot of loons on Vermilion fly to the Great Lakes for a month prior to heading south to Florida or the Gulf.

In the middle of September, I was out in the boat and the chick swam over near the boat while the remaining adult was about 70 yards away watching carefully. The chick was diving for food and looking for food by putting its head in the water. I thought it was starting to feed on its own, but the next day the adult was feeding it again.

The good news is that on September 30, I could see the chick and the adult. The chick raised up on the water and stretched its wings, which looked completely formed. On October 9, the adult loon left the young one alone. It has been seen still feeding in the bay. Since our articles must be complete by early October, we will have to wait to see if the chick leaves

**Continued on next page**

# Help protect Lake Vermilion by using Amazon Smile Part VI



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



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.

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When you shop at Amazon, go to the amazon website, designating Vermilion Lake Association as your charity: <https://smile.amazon.com/charity?orig=%2F>

If you have started to shop at Amazon.com and then

In 2021 the purchases you made using Amazon Smile has contributed \$613.21 to the Vermilion Lake Association. While this is a great help, if those of you that are not purchasing through Amazon Smile just log into "Smile.Amazon.com" instead of using the regular amazon log-in, the Amazon Smile contribution could increase considerably.

## Loons...from previous page

prior to ice forming; however, I am optimistic it will make it. I am impressed by the one adult loon's dedication to this chick in protecting and feeding it. Considering we have at times three eagles in the area and several different land predators that could have raided the nest, it is amazing that the loon chick survived. Our nest needs a lot of repairs before next

year, and we know that it must be in place early if there is a late ice-out. I have nicknamed Greta the "loon grandma." Her dedication in adding moss and green grass along with sticks to protect the nest from eagles has been amazing. She thoroughly enjoys watching the loons right in front of her house.

## Board of Directors and Officers 2023

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**Sheri Sawatzky, Secretary/Membership**, 2750 Wakemup Village Rd W, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-5512, 218-780-8178, [sherisawatzky@gmail.com](mailto:sherisawatzky@gmail.com)

**Eric Hanson**, 2746 Vermilion Dr, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-5478, 218-780-1563, [eric@pehrsonlodge.com](mailto:eric@pehrsonlodge.com)

**Dwight Warkentin, Vice-President**, PO Box 97, Cook, MN 55723, 651-269-0674, [dhwarkentin@hotmail.com](mailto:dhwarkentin@hotmail.com)

**Terry Grosshauser**, 7307 Oak Narrows Rd, Cook, MN 55723, 218-666-0580, 608-207-1509, [terrygrosshauser@gmail.com](mailto:terrygrosshauser@gmail.com)

**Pat Michaelson, President**, 2384 Deerwood Lane, Cook, MN 55723, 612-306-7702, [plmichaelson@gmail.com](mailto:plmichaelson@gmail.com)

### Tower

**Bob Pearson**, 5773 Puncher Point Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-4212, 218-348-1938, [rpearson@duluthlaw.com](mailto:rpearson@duluthlaw.com)

**Gary Haugen**, 1903 Westhaven Dr, Tower, MN 55790, 612-720-2853, 218-753-3021, [ghmedrep@gmail.com](mailto:ghmedrep@gmail.com)

**Lori Ptak**, 3505 Downers Dr., St. Anthony, MN 55418, 612-247-3751, [lori@ptak.org](mailto:lori@ptak.org)

**Jerry Lepper, Treasurer**, 3087 Old Hwy 77, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-2629, 218-404,2320, [jnclep4@frontiernet.net](mailto:jnclep4@frontiernet.net)

**Jill Korpela-Bontems**, 4437 Big Rock Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 218-753-6324, [jandjatbigrock@frontiernet.net](mailto:jandjatbigrock@frontiernet.net)

**John Yocum**, 4102 Hoel Rd, Tower, MN 55790, 407-873-3883, [snootman@aol.com](mailto:snootman@aol.com)

**Nancy Watkins**, 5981 412th St, Rice, MN 56367, 320-291-2363, [2bitfarm@gmail.com](mailto:2bitfarm@gmail.com)

**Craig Beveroth**, 9416 Hearthside Dr, Tower, MN 55790, 952-428-9155, [cbeveroth@comcast.net](mailto:cbeveroth@comcast.net)



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](mailto:plmichaelson@gmail.com).

### **Vermilion Lake Association**

Sheri Sawatzky, Member Records • P.O. Box 696 • Tower MN 55790  
[sherisawatzky@gmail.com](mailto:sherisawatzky@gmail.com) • 218-780-8178

Membership year runs from Jan 1 through Dec 31

☐ 2023 New Member    ☐ 2023 Renewal

Membership level

☐ \$20.00 Household membership  
☐ \$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](http://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) nonprofit 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.