



PO Box 101
Presque Isle, WI 54557

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OLA Summer Events 2016

ANNUAL MEETING 9 JULY, 9:00 AM

We will hold our annual meeting at the Presque Isle Community Center on July 9, 2016. The agenda includes officer and board elections. Contact Jim Zientek if you wish to nominate someone for an office.

Annual Meeting Agenda

- 9:00 Registration
- 9:30 Annual Meeting
 - President's Welcome
 - Secretary's Report
 - Treasurer's Report
 - 2015-2016 Overview
 - 501(c)3 Application Status
 - Social Events
 - VOTE: Officers and (2) Directors
 - Open Discussion
- 10:30 Reception

FLOTILLA 20 AUGUST, 6:00 PM

The 2016 annual Oxbow Lake flotilla will take place on Saturday, August 20 at 6:30 PM. For the uninitiated, the flotilla is a social gathering on the water held on multiple pontoon boats lashed together with bungee cords and ropes or whatever we can find! Participants bring a favorite hors d'oeuvres to share (the variety has really grown!) and a beverage of choice. 2015 was a record breaking year with over 30 attendees!



If you need a ride to the event, several pontoon "water taxis" cruise the lake picking up participants beginning at 6 PM. You must make a reservation for a pickup if you need a ride.

- RSVP by filling out the box on the membership form or contacting Jim Zientek directly. Tell us if you
- Plan to bring your boat
 - Plan to attend and need a ride, or
 - Can volunteer to be a water taxi.

Don't miss this event! It is a ton of fun! Jim Zientek (jcz74@yahoo.com).



THE OXBOW UPDATE

Summer 2016 Volume 14, Number 1

Evolving thru the Past Decade by Otto Novak

Is it just me, or do you agree that each year passes by faster than the last? For me, it's hard to believe it's been 10 years since I was first elected President of the Oxbow Lake Association. Living on Oxbow Lake for the past 11 years and having spent approximately 95% of that time on or close to the lake, I've observed lots of things around the lake – some good, some bad but mostly good.

Over the course of these 11 years, I've seen the lake level drop to a point that hindered people from getting their boat to their pier, yet I've seen it rise to the point where piers couldn't even be placed in. I've pleasantly observed the 3 pair of nesting loons, each have twins in which most survived the course of the seasons. Yet in other years, I've seen the 3 pair combine for just 1 single successful hatch. I remember the time when an eagle sighting was considered a rarity and now a pair of eagles have built and raised their offspring on a main island nest. I've observed areas of the lake which were once considered to be bare, become full of native aquatic plants, providing food and shelter for numerous forms of wildlife. Smallmouth bass, muskies, walleyes and stunted panfish used to be the norm. Now larger panfish, largemouth bass and northern pike are also being caught on a regular basis.

Property owners continue to change and evolve. Here on Hiawatha Shores and just east, 7 of the 20, or 35% of the properties, have changed hands. Along with the new owners, lake use has changed which appears to be indicative of the vast majority of other property owners on the lake. There once was at least a dozen boats on the main body of the lake during the evening of the walleye opener, while the last few years, you can count the number of boats on one hand. A group of canoers and kayakers were a rare sight 11 years ago and when they were seen, it was usually the Presque Isle Lady Yakker's Annual Oxbow Lake Paddle. Now, it seems like every other property has at least one canoe or kayak near the shore-

line. In total, I suspect there are now more canoes and kayaks than properties.

A few years ago, I observed something new on the lake – a paddle boarder. Someone must have rented it because I only saw them a few times during the course of a week. This past summer, I saw at least a dozen different people paddle boarding. In fact, people were paddle boarding on the lake prior to the walleye opener in early May. A couple of years ago, I also observed another first – a rowing shell on the lake. I thought, man that thing can cover a lot of water in short order. Will the rowing shell be the one and only ever seen on the lake or will sculling go the route of paddle boarding? Who knows what will happen but one thing remains certain, recreational lake use will continue to evolve.

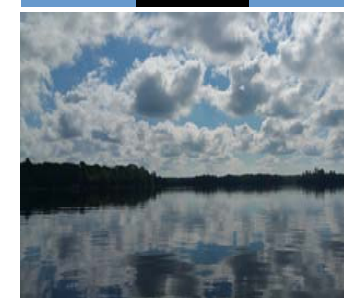
Some of you may recall receiving a comprehensive lake survey along with your 2007 property tax bill. For those of you who weren't owners then or don't recall, the survey contained a question regarding recreational lake use activities. Each respondent was to select and reply with 3 recreational lake use activities from the list of 12 provided. Of the respondents, 41% selected "Fishing" as either their 1st, 2nd or 3rd choice and 2% of the respondents selected "Canoeing and Kayaking" as either their 1st, 2nd or 3rd choice. Five years later, a similar survey was distributed to the majority of property owners in Presque Isle and the results showed a significant shift. Of the respondents, 28% listed "Fishing" as one of their top 3 choices – a 32% reduction and 12% listed "Canoeing and Kayaking" as one of their top 3 choices – a 600% increase. This was not exactly an "apples to apples" comparison and given that much time has passed, it is important that we understand how you use Oxbow Lake today. Please complete the two question survey found on the membership form and thanks!

2016 BOARD

- Otto Novak, President (715) 686-2628 wefish2@hughes.net
- Jeff Kenkel, Vice President (262) 751-8773 (715) 686-2324 jnbkenkel@gmail.com
- Linda Novak, Treasurer (715) 686-2628 wefish2@hughes.net
- Jim Zientek, Secretary (715) 686-7115 jcz74@yahoo.com
- Paul Cieslak, Director (480) 802-0805 (715) 686-2621 oxbow50@aol.com
- Cheryl Martin, Director (715) 686-7696 cheryl46martin@hotmail.com
- Stu Whipple (715) 686-7793 pswhip@yahoo.com

IN MEMORY

Last year marked the passing of three long time members: Peter Stohr, Ron Barnes and Amy Barnes. Peter loved hosting the OLA picnic on his beach, which he was very proud to share. Ron and Amy loved their peaceful bay, watching the abundant birds and wildlife. We will miss them all.





A Mediocre Year, but Some BIG Fish! by Paul Cielsak

Overall the fishing on Oxbow Lake in 2015 could be characterized as ME-DIOCRE! Local sources say the same can be said for most of the lakes in the Presque Isle area. There was some successful fishing, but it wasn't a great year. Even the perch were uncooperative.

So why the down year when 2014 was so productive? If you know the answer please let me know because after fishing Oxbow Lake for 40 years, I still can't figure it out!

Despite that, Oxbow continued to produce the largest numbers of walleye caught in the annual Presque Isle area Walleye Tournament. While our lake is noted for its smaller sized walleyes (11" to 14"), we do harbor some large fish. The largest fish in

last year's tournament (26") was caught on Oxbow. Other large catches include a 27" walleye caught by my oldest son in May, a 24" walleye caught by yours truly in June, and in August another of my sons caught the biggest Walleye to ever enter my boat - a beautifully perfect 28" female!

All those fish (and many others!) were released unharmed to the lake. This is a recommended practice, particularly when catching any walleye over 19". These fish are probably female and important to the future of our fishery. The little ones taste better anyway!

I would also like to welcome Gary Hughes as a contributing member of the OLA Fishing Committee. We

have now doubled in size to two! Gary and I will collaborate on the Fishing Report, which will be distributed via email approximately every three weeks beginning at the end of June. The newsletter will contain fishing stories and experiences shared by Oxbow Lake fisher-people. Each report will also feature an article about a species of aquatic life inhabiting our lake.

We want to hear from you! Please send your fishing tales to us!

Paul Cielsak
oxbow50@aol.com
715.686.2621

Gary Hughes
gazzoo123@sbcglobal.net

OLA Applies for Non-Profit Status by Jeff Kenkel

Two years ago, some perceptive members at our annual meeting started a discussion concerning whether the OLA could benefit from 501(c)3 non-profit status. This status would encourage larger, tax-deductible gifts, allowing us to augment our savings account that we are building to fund water quality projects and for protection from and fighting aquatic invasives (if they are ever found).

At the 2015 Annual Meeting, consensus amongst attendees was that the OLA should proceed with the process and apply for non-profit status under IRS Section 501(c)3

We explored whether a local, regional or state-wide foundation or land trust might be able to host our funds under their non-profit status. Unfortunately, this approach posed a number of administrative roadblocks and logistical issues.

Carolyn Scholl, head of the Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Division, advised us to follow the lead of several local lake associations and pursue our own non-profit status. Critical to the process was whether the

OLA had been incorporated properly under state statutes.

Fortunately, our founders were wise enough to assure that our Articles of Incorporation were filed in conformance with state statutes and our by-laws, adopted in 2002, were also written in accordance with State Statute 181 for non-profit, non-stock corporations. We owe a big thank you to our founders and original board, including Roger Nelson, Merrill Horswill, and Pat Ripkey who had the foresight to organize OLA the right way!

Making the decision to go forward with the application process was the easy part and the hard work of completing the process began. Over the ensuing months, and after a few detours, the paperwork was completed. Application Form 1023 requesting tax-exempt status for the Oxbow Lake Association was filed with the IRS in March 2016. It was 46 pages long, included exhaustive background information about our history, mission, membership, and years worth of detailed financial data.

As of this writing, an IRS determination has not yet been made, although we have been advised that approval is likely. We hope to have a final determination to report at the annual meeting in July.

Once approved, it will not much change our business conduct, except that some annual reporting will be required. The biggest benefit is that once 501(c)3 status is achieved, membership fees and donations to Oxbow Lake Association will be tax deductible, and our savings will earn interest tax-free.

Critical to maintaining our status will be to remain true to our mission to protect the lake, which is no hardship for this organization.

Please take a moment to thank Jeff Kenkel for undertaking this enormous task for us. It required much time and effort to research the process and complete the application.

Resurgent! Adopt-a-Shoreline 2015 by Jeff Kenkel

The Oxbow Lake Adopt-a-Shoreline program monitors near shore waters for exotic or aquatic invasive species (AIS). I was concerned the Adopt-a-Shoreline Program was getting old and tired, given the drop in numbers over the years. But 2015 saw a renewal in interest for the program and I am happy to report the it is not ready for the rocking chair. Better still, no evidence of AIS has been noted!

AIS are present in a majority of Wisconsin lakes, including nearby waters such as Harris Lake and parts of the Manitowish Chain. Infected waters

Adopt-a-Shoreline Annual Activity		
Year	Persons	Hours
2010	8	30
2011	7	37.5
2012	9	89
2013	3	22
2014	4	19.75
2015	7	45

The Eagles Have Landed by Stu Whipple

After several flyovers beginning in February and checking out how their nest fared over the winter and the extent of Oxbow's ice cover, last year's nesting eagles returned for the summer, occupied their nest and are now incubating one or more eggs. Two years ago they built their nest on Eagle Island (now named) just south of Serenity Bay and last year they claimed it for domestic purposes, a wonderful renewal of eagles nesting on Oxbow.

You may have been aware of the Wisconsin DNR flying tree hugging reconnaissance missions last year to check on the brooding. They are flying low again over the island awaiting the hatching(s) and fledging(s) marking another addition to our National Bird population. Female eagles are larger than males. If a female

are plagued with choking mats of vegetation on the lake surface. These clog boat motors and render the lake unappealing for swimming, skiing and other water sports. Fishing deteriorates. Wildlife is affected.

Early detection is the best defense. Monitoring data provide a valuable historical record, and documented lake stewardship helps in obtaining state aid for remediation of AIS should they occur.

Lake vegetation is a valuable indicator of lake health and water quality. Several lake monitors have noted that lake plants are increasing. Aquatic plants produce more oxygen in the areas where they grow which provides a better habitat for fish. Good + many weeds = good fishing!

A few years back, a number of persons reported sightings of a large crop of a long-stranded, bright green water plant. It was confirmed to be elodea, a native plant, with beneficial qualities and has not been seen much since that year. The quantity of reports was encouraging, because that points to our vigilance!

Oxbow Lake has avoided AIS so far. The threat of invasive species, in particular Eurasian Water Milfoil and Curley Leaf Pondweed, is real. When you volunteer for Adopt-a-Shoreline, you are pledging to spend time on the lake observing the waters and shores, and recording the time spent doing so. Here's how you can help:

- Fish, swim, wade, paddle, kayak, canoe, or motor slowly along the shore, keep your eyes open for unusual plants and report anything you see that is unusual or suspicious. **Is it possible there could be a better volunteer activity?!**
- Keep track of the time you spend and report it to Jeff Kenkel. This can be as detailed as you wish, but need be nothing more than a total of hours for the season.

If you are interested in participating, fill out the form found on the back of the membership form, or contact me directly at 262.751.8773 (voice/text) or jnbkenkel@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

is hatched first it often overwhelms the male (second) and it dies of starvation. That is what may have happened last year as I watched the second eaglet become less and less active and one day no longer appear above the rim of the nest.

Last year our eagles produced two hatchlings. One survived and fledged safely. Most fledges result in death by unsteady birds drowning or injury when flying into trees and other objects. Our good news is the overflying of an immature eagle this spring. I am taking that as successful wintering over of "our" eaglet. Within three years our immature eagle will transition from brown and black feathering to the white and dark brown of our National Bird and secure its own territory with its mate.

Fortunately Oxbow is a quiet lake occupied with people whose lifestyles tend towards accommodation with wildlife therefore we have a wide variety of birds, mammals and fish with which to share the bounty of a vibrant and primitive nature.

