



Lake Association News

A newsletter for the Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake

Spring 2017

APCL Update - Deb Tesar

If you've ever spent a quiet moment sitting by the lakeshore, you have undoubtedly seen some power boater cruising by too fast, too close to shore. Not only can this be a safety concern for swimmers, but in our shallow lake, this can stir up the bottom and re-suspend nutrients, especially when the boat is traveling at half-throttle.

But, how close is "too close?" On Clear Lake, it is illegal to operate a vessel at greater than 10 mph within 300' of shore. Unless you are next to a marker buoy, knowing where 300' is can be a tricky thing (it is generally well past the end of most docks).

Several area residents have expressed interest in purchasing and placing additional 300' markers around the perimeter of the lake. If you are interested in obtaining a buoy, contact DNR Conservation Officer Ben Bergman (ben.bergman@dnr.iowa.gov or 641-425-0828), who will evaluate whether your area is a candidate for buoy placement based on frequency, and provide additional information about dock permit type requirements, suppliers for official markers, and proper placement.

Last summer our neighborhood worked with Officer Bergman to place a 300' marker, and afterwards, were pleased to observe its positive impact on boaters' cruising habits close to shore.

Do You Need a Rainwater Audit?

Jim Sholly — CLEAR Project

As summer kicks off, we're provided the opportunity to explore our properties and conduct a rainwater audit. Typically the mention of the word audit brings a feeling of anxiety, but in this case a rainwater audit can actually be a pleasant experience. A rainwater audit involves observing how rainfall runoff moves through and off your property. By assessing water movement we can determine what things can be done to absorb and filter water.

A rainwater audit is part of a new movement in stormwater management that helps us better understand and control rain water at the lot level versus letting it enter the storm sewer system or lake. When you see a storm sewer intake adjacent to a street you are witnessing the collection point of water from multiple properties all convening at one location. Depending on the size of the drainage area options for practices can be installed to capture and filter that water. In instances where the area is too large it can be difficult to manage water before it enters the lake. Instead of trying to treat that water at the end of the pipe, we want to look at smaller scale practices that prevent water from getting to that primary drainage point in the first place.

To begin your audit, look at your downspouts that discharge rooftop water from your house. Since the hard surface of the rooftop does not allow any water to absorb, this is typically where the majority of runoff comes from. These points provide the perfect opportunity to install a rain garden or rain barrel to capture water. In some instances you can even combine both practices to maximize your water holding capabilities. Rain barrels can capture small rainfall events and overflow into a rain garden during larger events. Water stored in a barrel also can be used to water your yard or plants during dry spells throughout the summer.

Another practice that is gaining popularity across the state is soil quality restoration in lawn yards. The ability of a soil to absorb water is dependent on the amount of organic matter within the soil profile. Our historic prairie soils had plants with deep root structures and high organic matter that absorbed the majority of rainfall and rarely shed any water. Yards planted to turf grass have shallow roots and low organic matter content which sheds more water than it can absorb. With soil quality restoration we incorporate compost into the soil to boost organic matter. This can be done on a new yard or an existing one. Along with the benefits of water absorption, this compost also acts as a fertilizer to the grass and enhances the appearance and natural health of your yard.

Similar to seeking advice from a tax professional with a tax audit, the CLEAR Project is here to help you with your rainwater audit! We have a stormwater expert in our office that can meet with you at your home and offer suggestions, tips, and expertise on how you can promote water quality for Clear Lake. Contact us online at www.ClearProject.net, by phone at 641-357-2200, or stop by the office at 800 1st Ave South in Clear Lake.



Clear Lake Crappie Fishing By: Tim Dekoster—IDNR Fisheries Bureau

Crappies are highly prized fish by most anglers because of the high quality fillet they produce on the table. Clear Lake Crappie population has a strong year class with sizes ranging from nine to twelve inches in length waiting for you to catch them! Crappies are by nature nomadic and are constantly on the move traveling around the lake. However, they can be easily targeted near aquatic vegetation and docks using either a cane or telescopic fishing poles. Small minnows, on a size four or five hook, are the go to bait for even the most avid and experience crappie angler. If you decide to use artificial bait, then use small jigs that come in kits that can be purchased at bait shops. Fishing depth is critical when fishing for crappie, and using a slip bobber can help determine what depth crappie should be targeted in the water. For information on fishing in the north central Iowa area, contact the Clear Lake Fish and Wildlife office at 641-357-3517.

Phosphorus is one of the most troublesome pollutants in storm water runoff. Phosphorus comes from many sources, and it is the primary cause of water quality problems in our lakes and streams.

Everything that is or was living contains phosphorus. It is in leaves. It is in lawn clippings. It is in animal wastes. It is an ingredient in most lawn fertilizers. It is even attached to soil. When leaves, lawn clippings, animal wastes, fertilizers, and soil are picked up by storm water runoff and are carried directly to our local lakes and streams, they provide the lakes with excess phosphorus. This excess phosphorus causes increased algae growth.

Algae are small green plants that live in lakes and streams. Increased algae growth is observed as green algae blooms or “scums” on lakes. Too much algae is harmful to a lake system. It blocks sunlight and prevents other plants from growing. When it dies and decays, it also takes much needed oxygen away from fish. Limiting phosphorus reduces algae blooms.

You can reduce the amount of phosphorus entering a lake or stream by:

1. Keeping your leaves and lawn clippings out of the streets and gutters. Leaves and lawn clippings are a major source of phosphorus. When they are swept or washed into the nearest street or storm sewer, they end up in your local lake or stream. Keeping your leaves and lawn clippings out of the streets and gutters will have significant benefits for your local lake or stream.
2. Applying only the amount of fertilizer your lawn needs. A soil test will tell you how much-if any-fertilizer your lawn needs. Excess fertilizer may harm your lawn or pollute surface water. Fertilizer applied to your streets or sidewalks will get into the nearest lake or stream. Phosphorus from fertilizers can cause algae blooms. Use only low-phosphorus or phosphorus-free fertilizers.
3. Fertilizers containing phosphorus may be used on lawns if a soil test indicates that it is needed or if you are establishing a new lawn. These restrictions do not apply to fertilizers used for agricultural crops, flower and vegetable gardening or on a golf course by trained staff. A soil test will inform you of the amount of phosphorus in your soil and the appropriate application rate.
4. Controlling soil erosion around your house. When soil is left bare, rain water will run quickly over it. The moving water picks up soil particles. These soil particles have phosphorus attached to them. Some soils are high in phosphorus and are another source of phosphorus in storm water runoff. The soil in storm water runoff will end up in your local lake or stream and contribute to algae growth.

What can I do to help my watershed?

You can help your watershed by understanding that you are part of the solution to water quality problems. Your actions affect the water and environment around us. Keeping your lawn healthy is beneficial to water quality. Plant and maintain grass and natural vegetation to help water quality by soaking up rainfall, reducing runoff, and retaining sediment. Use phosphorus-free fertilizers. Keep your leaves and lawn clippings out of the streets and gutters. Pick up your pet’s wastes. It all adds up to better water quality. And that means water that is fun and safe to swim in, and enjoy.



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