



# Lake Association News

A newsletter for the Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake

Fall 2017

## APCL Update

It has been a privilege for me to serve the as the APCL president for the last several years. Though there has been a good deal of transition in our partnership with the CLEAR Project and other cooperating entities, the gratifying constant has been continued improvement in Clear Lake's water quality by all measures. A "bonus benefit" has been enhanced relationships and communications with all partners, which will continue to be of utmost value in all our work on behalf of the lake.

I wish to thank our board members who have provided much energy and sage advice to me over the years. A special thank-you goes to John Lundberg for his *many* years of service as our secretary/treasurer—he is stepping down for a well-deserved retirement from that role.

I am thrilled to have Margo Underwood taking the helm as the new APCL president—she brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this role, and I know the board will be energized by working with her.

Speaking of the APCL board, please note there is still room for additional members, so if you are interested in becoming more involved, please contact either Margo or me. Though the era of "marquee" projects may be behind us for now, there is still much work the APCL can help enable, to ensure that Clear Lake remains viable for all who enjoy its beauty and rely on its bounty.

Thank you for your support of the APCL,  
Deb Tesar

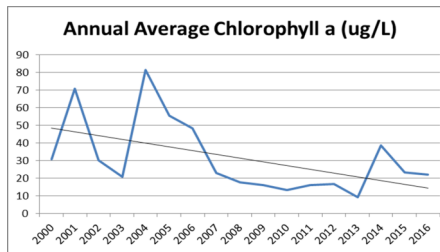
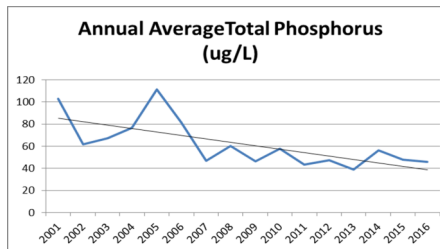
## Measuring Clean Water: Are We Making a Difference?

One of the greatest challenges to any watershed project is showing the impact our efforts to clean up the lake are having on the lake itself. We all believe our 'gut feeling' when we know a project we have invested time and money in is for a good cause, but do we see a return on that investment in the years to come.

Since the late 90's, the CLEAR Project has been working with Iowa DNR to collect water samples across Clear Lake and Ventura Marsh.

Those samples are then sent to the State Hygienic Lab in Ames for processing before results are sent back to us at the end of the year. As we look back on nearly 20 years of projects to clean up our lake and the water sampling that has been done along the way, we start to see the realization of all the hard work done by so many people over that time.

When potential clean water projects are brought to the CLEAR Project for consideration for support, we use modeling to determine the pollution reduction



potential for that project. The hope is that the money we invest into a project will lead to a reduction in nutrients getting to the lake. One of the biggest pollutants to Clear Lake is Phosphorous, a primary nutrient needed for plant and algae growth. Over the years, all those clean water projects have worked to capture those excess nutrients before they reach the lake. That decrease has been measured in a drastic decrease in algae blooms during that same time span (Chlorophyll levels).

To find out more about how you can work to protect Clear Lake with a clean water project on your property, please visit us online at [www.clearproject.net](http://www.clearproject.net).

## CLEAR Project Update — Jim Sholly — CLEAR Project Coordinator

The Clear Lake Enhancement and Restoration (CLEAR) Project is a community-led effort to clean up storm water before it reaches Clear Lake. This year we were able to help five landowners install several practices around the lake to capture pollution and protect our valuable lake resources. Individuals invested about \$75,000 while CLEAR Project partners and a series of grants brought another \$175,000 to the effort. Those projects will keep almost 70 tons of sediment annually from reaching the lake, as well as 160 pounds of nitrogen and 90 pounds of phosphorous each year. The CLEAR Project teamed up with Iowa Corn Growers and the Hancock Soil and Water Conservation District to host a Soil Health Workshop in Garner. That event drew in farmers and landowners from across North Iowa to discuss the benefits of managing your land for soil health both financially and logistically. We also teamed up with CLEAR Lake Earth Day Committee to bring in Dr. Adam Janke from ISU to lead a field day at McIntosh Woods State Park that highlighted the habitat restoration efforts currently underway. That event brought out over 60 people to learn how goats, prescribed fire, and a little bit of elbow grease are working together to restore a degraded forest ecosystem. With continued support, the CLEAR Project will keep working to bring conservation and education to North Iowa with a focus on protecting and enhancing Clear Lake.

## The Double-Crested Cormorant — Brianna Sholly—Cerro Gordo County Conservation Naturalist

Visit any large wetland or lake in the summer and you'll probably see these crazy looking birds: cormorants.

Although they have a body similar to a loon and a neck like a goose, cormorants are actually relatives of the more coastal frigatebirds and boobies. Adults are a dark brown/black overall with a small orange patch of skin on their face.

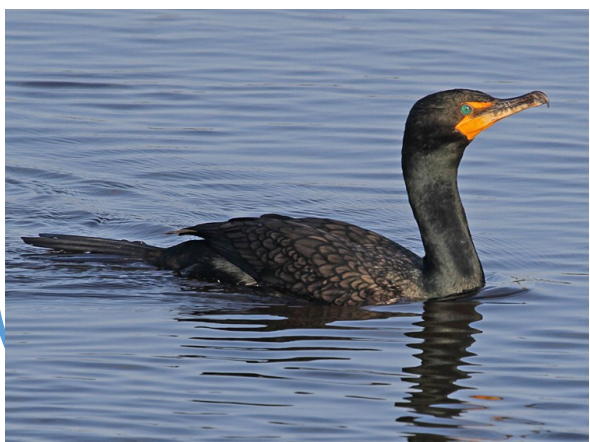
You might notice cormorants floating on the water then lose sight of them as they dive to catch a meal. They can dive up to 60 feet and stay under water for over a minute! Cormorants have been recorded

eating over 250 species of fish, as well as some insects, crustaceans, and amphibians. Their webbed feet help to propel them through the water and the tip of their upper bill is hooked to aid in catching fish. Many anglers worry that cormorants may eat large sport fish, but typically the fish they catch are less than 6 inches in length. If you get so lucky as to witness where the cormorant surfaces with a fish, keep an eye out for its open mouth – you'll notice that the inside of it is bright blue!

After fishing, or a rain event, they often stand on structures or in trees with their wings spread open to dry. Ducks, geese and swans all have a special oil gland on their back that the bird uses to preen their feathers with so they shed water. As for the cormorant, they have less preen oil than do their duck counterparts, so their feathers tend to absorb more water rather than shedding it.

While it seems like something that would be a problem for them, especially since they spend so much time diving for food, it probably makes their life easier as wet feathers could increase their agility and speed under water!

Although they can interfere with fish hatcheries and commercially reared fish, most of the time humans and cormorants live in harmony. In fact, these birds are an important regulator of the wetland's complex food web and often help to keep wild fish from overpopulating! They are also an important indicator species, meaning that biologists are able to use them to gauge how the environment is doing. Much like bald eagles, cormorants were affected by DDT in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, causing them to lay eggs with thin shells that did not survive incubation. But, since the 1970s, their populations have grown steadily. A healthy, thriving cormorant population often means that the environment is healthy and thriving as well.



## Welcome President Underwood!

I'm looking forward to serving as President of the APCL's Board of Directors and to continuing the great work that has been done to protect and enhance Clear Lake. I want to take this opportunity to thank Deb Tesar for her leadership as President for the past 6 years and to the Board of Directors for their continuing commitment and dedication to carrying out the mission of the Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake.

A bit about my background. I've been active in conservation work for the past 35 years. I grew up on a Century Farm in Scott County and received B.S and M.S Degrees from Iowa State University. I taught Biology at Marshalltown High School prior to our move to the Mason City – Clear Lake area and then became an adjunct faculty member at NIACC teaching Biology and Environmental Science and was the Founding President of the Lime Creek Nature Center Foundation.

Currently, I'm President of Underwood Consulting and provide resource management, grant-writing and public relations services to communities, businesses and non-profit organizations.

My volunteer activities include Clear Lake Earth Day Committee, Mason City Noon Rotary Club, the Iowa Natural Resource Commission and Trees Forever. Hobbies include fishing, boating and enjoying all the activities available in Clear Lake, Mason City and in the entire North Iowa region.

