



# Lake Views

*The newsletter of the Yahara Lakes Association*

Fall • 2003

## **YLA Seeks Weed Relief From Dane County Executive**

*The following letter was sent by the YLA Board of Directors to Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk on July 29, 2003. Her response is printed elsewhere in this newsletter.*

Dear County Executive Falk:

On behalf of our approximately 700 members, we are writing to express our extreme dissatisfaction with the County's weed harvesting efforts and to request your immediate intervention to address this problem.

Our Wisconsin climate effectively limits the time citizens can use the lakes. Generally, June, July and August are the only months when air and water temperatures are conducive for most lake activities. Unfortunately, this is when lake weeds are in their active growth cycle.

The abundance of weeds this year has significantly impaired the ability of boaters, swimmers, and lakeshore residents to enjoy our beautiful lakes. Uncut weeds along the shoreline prevent swimmers, canoeists, sailors and other boaters from using these areas. These conditions push boats into the center of the lakes where congestion creates safety issues.

Boaters who attempt to navigate through the weeds not only entangle their propellers but risk engine overheating from weed-plugged cooling intakes. The Sheriff's Lake Patrol has already towed a number of boats that overheated because of weed-clogged intakes. On July 7, one boat caught fire and burned because weeds caused overheating. In addition, the propeller-cut weeds then float in to shore where they decay and smell unless someone removes them.

We were pleased when we learned last fall that the County Board added \$32,300 to your budget of \$75,400 for weed cutting on Dane County's lakes. The former Public Works director had previously identified this amount as the funding necessary to hire additional LTE's to

operate a second shift of weed cutters. Two shifts of employees would allow the weed cutters to run from nearly sunup until sundown rather than sit idle for large parts of the work day as they previously did.

We were very displeased, however, when we saw the weed cutting equipment again parked along the shore each afternoon while significant areas of our lakes remained

*(Continued on next page)*

*If you are unhappy with the county's weed harvesting efforts, the YLA Board encourages you to write or e-mail County Executive Falk and your county board supervisor to share your own feelings and experiences. It will only be through our collective efforts that we stand a chance to improve how the county operates this program. Please send a copy of your correspondence to YLA (P.O. Box 44578, Madison, WI 53744 or email to [yla@mailbag.com](mailto:yla@mailbag.com)) so that we can keep track of our members concerns. THANK YOU.*



### *In this issue:*

**YLA on Weeds**

**County Executive on Weeds**

**State Journal on Weeds**

**Removal of Nutrients and Weeds**

**Rain Gardens**



## Thanks to our corporate members for their support

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## Letter to Falk Continued from page 1

clogged with weeds and unusable. We learned that additional LTE's had not been hired. We learned that instead of running two shifts of weed cutting employees as the County Board intended, two hours of overtime had been authorized for only 1 of the crews. Thus, while there was a 43% increase in weed cutting funds, there was less than a 25% increase in weed cutting hours.

We recently heard that the Public Works Department had been directed by your office not to spend the money that the County Board had authorized for additional weed cutting. We do not know if this is true and we invite your response. We did learn that as of mid-July, the County had only spent about 25% of the \$107,700 budgeted for weed cutting. Consequently, while much of the lakes were unusable because of the abundance of weeds, the tax dollars which were allocated to cutting the lake weeds remained in the County's treasury and the weed cutting equipment sat idle.

We are aware that 19 county supervisors recently sent you a letter noting that neither the letter nor the spirit of the additional weed cutting funding had been implemented. These supervisors asked that you direct the Public Works Department to add the second shift of weed cutting employees that the County Board approved. We join in that request.

We are also aware that the Lakes & Watershed Commission recently wrote you expressing its frustration and dissatisfaction with the County's weed harvesting operation. They requested that you intervene to improve the weed harvesting to a satisfactory level. We join in that request also.

We recognize that these are difficult budget times and that perhaps you elected to save some of this year's funds for the next budget year. If that is the case, you should accept responsibility for the inadequate weed cutting and the sad state of our lakes. Voters deserve to know the costs in terms of reduced services for any claims of fiscal responsibility.

As lakeshore residents, we fully recognize and understand that it is not economically possible nor environmentally desirable that the lakes be weed-free. No one expects this. On the other hand, we do not expect nor desire that the lakes become unsightly, unattractive, and unusable. We all know how unsightly uncut weeds can be. Just take a drive along John Nolen Drive or around Monona Bay. We're sure no one wants to see these pictures on our "Number 1 City" poster.

Much has been written elsewhere about the high level of taxation in the State of Wisconsin. Lakeshore residents are among the highest property taxpayers in Dane County. It is particularly irritating and offensive: to have already paid significant county property taxes; to have significant additional

tax dollars allocated to weed cutting; to see the weed cutting equipment parked and idle significant parts of the work day; to have significant weed cutting funds unspent; and then, to have significant parts of the lakes unusable because of the abundance of uncut weeds. In our view, this is not an example of good county management.

You recently wrote that "The health and enjoyment of our lakes is a key factor in our quality of life in Dane County." We wholeheartedly agree. For the sake of the lake environment as well as lake users we need to control the non-native invasive Eurasian watermilfoil that have overwhelmed the lakes. Please see to it that the tax dollars already collected and already allocated to weed harvesting be immediately put to use. There has been sufficient funding to operate the weed cutting equipment from sunrise until sundown. This needs to be done immediately so that our lakes again become usable in what is left of this summer season.

We invite your response to these concerns and we are curious about your explanation of why this additional funding has not been used to harvest the weeds that are preventing Dane County citizens and others from enjoying our beautiful lakes.

Yahara Lakes Association  
Board of Directors  
By - Sal Troia, President

## County Executive Responds

Dear Mr. Troia:

Thank you for the Yahara Lakes Association Board of Directors' letter expressing concern about the weed cutting efforts on Dane County's lakes.

The 2003 Adopted Budget, with my support, increased funds for harvesting lake weeds by \$33,300, bringing the total amount available to spend to \$107,000. Harvesting activity has increased significantly in 2003. The Lakes Management Division is currently running 10-hour shifts to accomplish the necessary harvesting. This activity is reflected in increased expenditures this year compared to last year. Through the end of June 2003, \$42,000 of the \$107,000 had been spent; whereas, at the same time last year, only \$27,000 had been expended. I can also give you an absolute assurance on one of the points you raise: weed-cutting funds have never been frozen at any point this year. My sense is that Lake Management staff has worked hard to respond to citizen complaints and concerns and, when possible, direct weed cutting crews to areas where weeds are the worst. Given the current rate of expenditures at

approximately \$12,000 per pay period, the Division would have sufficient funds to run operations at the current level of intensity through September 6th. If the Division added a shift, they would run out of money much sooner.

Although budget amendments could be proposed to accommodate additional hours, other factors would limit the effectiveness of adding a second shift. For example, the Lakes Management Supervisor has indicated that Department of Natural Resource restrictions on the amount and types of aquatic plants that can be harvested limit any potential volume gains from adding a second shift. In addition, the Lakes Management Supervisor is only budgeted for 40 hours per week. Adding a second shift would require hiring another supervisor or lead worker but only for a short period of time when very intense harvesting is required. Again, this addition could be accommodated with a budget amendment, but the Department of Public Works also has concerns that a qualified candidate could be recruited for the position given its very limited term. The same concern applies to the limited term employees that would have to be hired and trained and then only employed for a very short time.

In terms of the scheduled hours of work, the Division has attempted to create a schedule that maximizes the utilization of staff time. The schedule has been arranged to start and end earlier in the day to avoid lake traffic and rush hour traffic as weeds are hauled from the lake to a compost site.

As someone who lives on one of the lakes (Lake Monona), I recognize that lake weeds have been, in some places, as bad as they have ever been. We worked hard and with more resources to control the problem weeds. I understand that we did not succeed to the satisfaction of every user or lakeside homeowner. We did make progress, though.

I remain committed to providing the resources necessary to harvest aquatic plants to preserve and maintain the use of lakes in Dane County. Please contact me if you have any additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
Kathleen M. Falk, Dane County Executive

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## Contacting the County Executive

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falk@co.dane.wi.us  
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# “Decision Time” for Dane County Lakes

By Tammy Liddicoat  
LakeViews Editor

The front page article of the Sunday, August 24th Wisconsin State Journal featured the headline “Can we Save our Precious Lakes?” with a large photo showing a weed infested Monona Bay and Lake Monona with Lake Mendota in the background. The article went on to explain how excessive weeds are just a part of the problems facing Dane County Lakes. A dangerous strain of E. coli and other bacteria have led to beach closings this summer and exotic invasive species are threatening the natural ecosystem. The Wisconsin article described the worsening problems and included comments from lake and environmental experts, government officials, lake property owners and more.

Experts say it’s time to start to clean up the water and that it can be done. They say fixing the problems will take several years and require cooperation from everyone who lives in Dane County.

This edition of “LakeViews” concentrates mostly on the issue of lake weeds and includes our letter on the subject to Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk along with her response. In looking at the bigger picture, we have also included “snapshots” of information about the Dane County Lakes and their individual problems which were published in the WSJ article (see following listings).

According to the article it’s “decision time for people dealing with Dane County lakes.” As members of the Yahara Lakes Association, what we do have in common are the lakes. We come about as close as you can get to the issues and problems involved and pay (and pay) dearly to live where we live. We want to keep these resources beautiful and healthy.

Please help us make our voice bigger and stronger. Talk to your local officials about your concerns. Talk to your neighbors about why this is an important time to join or become more involved in the YLA. “It’s decision time.”

## Fixing the Lakes

*Reprinted with permission from the Wisconsin State Journal*

**The Yahara Lakes chain and the Mendota watershed make up a large portion of Dane County. Even though the lakes are connected, they each have individual problems.**

### Lake Mendota

**Shoreline: 21 miles**

**Average Depth: 41 feet**

**Gallons of water: 126 billion**

#### Problems:

- Spring Harbor Beach closed due to high levels of bacteria
- Phosphorus use a problem, causing excessive weeds

#### Solutions:

- Proposed county-wide phosphorus fertilizer ban
- Tighter storm-water regulations
- Weed cutting

### Lake Monona

**Shoreline: 13 miles**

**Average Depth: 25 feet**

**Gallons of water: 28 billion**

#### Problems:

- Excessive weeds
- Zebra mussels found, can clog boat intakes and reduce oxygen in water for fish
- The toxic and non-native Cylandro algae found

#### Solutions:

- Boater education to identify exotic species
- Weed cutting

### Lake Wingra

**Shoreline: 3.6 miles**

**Average Depth: 8.8 feet**

#### Problems:

- Vilas Beach closed because of a dangerous strain of E. coli
- The toxic and non-native Cylandro algae found

#### Solutions:

- Continued testing of waters for bacteria
- Proposal to use trained dogs to discourage bird populations

## Lake Waubesa

Shoreline: 9.3 miles

Average Depth: 14 feet

Gallons of water: 11 billion

### Problems:

- Excessive weeds this year
- Concern that if Lake Monona has zebra mussels, the non-native species will travel downstream

### Solutions:

- County weed cutting
- More boater education on zebra mussels and exotic species

## Lake Kegonsa

Shoreline: 9.6 miles

Average Depth: 14 feet

Gallons of water: 8 billion

### Problems:

- Excessive weeds
- Fluctuating water levels

### Solutions:

- County weed cutting
- Waste treatment systems have become much more efficient, helping keep pollution out of the water
- Flow meters were installed and some areas were dredged to help stabilize water levels

## Mariners Inn Plays Host to YLA

The Yahara Lakes Association annual meeting was held on June 26th at the Mariners Inn and attended by more than 70 members. After enjoying heaps of great appetizers, a delicious dinner included steak and lobster. A first for YLA, this year's meeting featured entertainment before and during dinner. A very talented Arianna Dybdahl of Black Earth played guitar and sang several original and popular songs. After dinner, Todd Amb's the recently appointed Administrator of the DNR's Division of Water gave a presentation on Wisconsin's key water issues.

If didn't attend this year, you missed a big opportunity to enjoy a delicious dinner, enjoy a talented up-and-coming musician, learn something new about the DNR and maybe even win a great prize. Make plans to come next year!

Thanks to von Rutenberg Enterprises, Aramark and D.L. Anderson for the generous raffle prizes.

## REPORT FROM LAKES & WATERSHED COMMISSION

By

Mark Pernitz, YLA Representative

**Weeds and Weed Cutting (or lack thereof):** For several years, the Budget, Finance and Recreation subcommittee has been working with the Public Works Department in an effort to improve the county's weed harvesting program. Supervisor Bill Graf, a subcommittee member, led a successful effort last fall to get approximately \$32,000 added to the budgeted \$75,000 for the county's weed cutting program. Unfortunately, this additional funding has not resulted in any noticeable improvement in either the amount of weed cutting hours or the condition of our lakes.

The Commission recently sent a letter to County Executive Kathleen Falk expressing its frustration and dissatisfaction with the county's weed harvesting operation. We will keep you posted on any new developments. We would encourage you to contact your county supervisor to express any opinions you might have on the adequacy of the county's weed harvesting efforts and to enlist your supervisor's assistance in our efforts to improve this program.

**Zebra Mussel Alert:** A study group of the Commission recently investigated the discovery of adult zebra mussels which were found in Lake Monona in 2001. You will find an "Alert" from that group in this newsletter. A link is provided to the complete report of that group and we would encourage all of our members to read the full report.

**Pier Numbering/Lake Addresses:** Although the abundance of weeds has made it nearly impossible to motor near the shoreline of some of our lakes, it does appear that we have had a very positive response to this program. Several municipalities ran out of their initial supply of signs. It is not too late to pick up your sign and post your address yet this season. The LWC website has a photograph showing an example of a pier sign in place.

**County Budget:** We have recently met with county departments in preparation for developing next year's county budget. We will again be advocating for the replacement of one of the sheriff's patrol boats. Funds were approved for this last year but were subsequently frozen by the County Executive and a boat has not yet been purchased in 2003. We are hoping to rectify this so that the boat replacement schedule remains intact. There are very few decision items this year as all departments have been directed to reduce their budgets significantly.

# **Save Money!**

## **Save The Environment!**

### **Grow A Rain Garden!**

By Ellen Rulseh

People who want to save money on lawn maintenance and who also want to help save our local and global environment (Today's east coast meltdown strongly suggests: let's cool things down!) can make their wishes come true by growing a rain garden!

Easier said than done? A pair of women - Ellen Rulseh and Susan Priebe of Partnership for Rain Gardens, LLC - have been helping residential and commercial landowners transform bland lawns into lively landscapes, accented by energy-saving, infiltration-promoting, rain gardens.

Rain gardens are a relatively new idea in Madison. As recently as this past February's Garden Show in Madison, less than 5% of the hundreds of people talked to had ever heard of a rain garden. This June, thanks to the "Better Lawns and Gutters Tour" sponsored by the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission, the benefits and beauty of rain gardens and natural areas planted with native plants is becoming better known.

What is a rain garden? The simplest definition, says rain garden expert Roger Bannerman of the DNR, is "a dug-out or natural depression where native plants are established." Typical rain gardens are designed to utilize runoff from rooftops, although they can also be planted at the base of any downslope or natural swale where runoff is directed. By using stormwater runoff that would otherwise wash onto sidewalks, driveways and lawns (not much better than concrete after saturated by one rainfall) and then into our lakes, rain gardens promote infiltration back into the ground.

Because native (prairie/woodland) plants are relatively self-sufficient and drought-resistant once established, rain gardens provide a savings - of labor, water and fossil fuels. With rain gardens you have less lawn to mow and water.

Rain gardens provide a number of other benefits. They immediately add value by creating visual interest and a "destination" for a stroll around your business or home landscape. Butterflies, birds and mosquito-eating insects are attracted to native plants. Neighbors comment favorably.

This spring, Partnership for Rain Gardens was a recipient of the "Mayor's Award" for the successful efforts made, in keeping with the City of Madison's Climate

Protection Plan, to conserve energy and reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. In June and July Partnership for Rain Gardens successfully completed five commercial rain gardens in Milwaukee through a "Best Management Practice" contract with the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District.

Partnership for Rain Gardens is scheduling rain garden installations through the end of September. For more information, either visit [www.partnershipforraingardens.com](http://www.partnershipforraingardens.com), send a note to [info@partnershipforraingardens.com](mailto:info@partnershipforraingardens.com) or call (608) 240-9424 to find out how a rain garden can produce beauty and savings for your home, business, the environment and you!

## **Removal of Nutrients & Weed Harvesting**

By  
Steve Morton

It is frequently stated that weed cutting and harvesting can remove a significant amount of nutrients from a lake. Rooted lake weeds obtain their nutrients primarily from the nutrient-rich sediments. When weeds die, whether naturally beginning about the end of July or from herbicide application, they release their nutrients to the water.

The maximum phosphorus level in lake Mendota occurs at ice-out and spring turnover and is about 150 parts per billion. This is the only time of the recreational season that the phosphorus concentration is the same from top to bottom. This corresponds to about 75 tons of phosphorus in Mendota which contains about 130 billion gallons or about one trillion pounds of water.

Lake weeds which have been heated to about 220 degrees Fahrenheit to eliminate all internal and external water contain about .5% phosphorus. Wet weeds are 5-10 times as heavy as dry weeds. To remove phosphorus equivalent to 10% of that in the water would therefore require the harvesting of 15,000 tons of wet weeds. However since this phosphorus comes from the sediments and the sediments recycle nutrients to and from the overlying water, there would be little effect on the nutrient concentrations in the water and the growth of algae. The total amount of wet weeds harvested from the Yahara Lakes has been about 1,000 tons per year.

It can be seen that weed cutting and harvesting is much like the cutting of grass in a park. It is done for aesthetic and recreational purposes and must be done on a regular basis. It does not eliminate the causes of excessive algal and weed growth.

# Who to Call About Lake Issues

Dane County Sheriff's Office	Emergency	911
	Non-emergency	255-2345
	Tenney Park office	246-3888
	TDD	266-1111
DNR Violation Hotline	Available 24 hrs/ day	800-847-9367 Or Cell phone # 367
Lake Information & Coordination	Dane Co. Watershed Mgmt.	267-0118
Weed Spraying and Plant Mgmt.	Madison DNR	273-5955
Fish Management	Madison DNR	273-5955
Lake Levels and Weed Harvesting	Dane Co. Public Works Dept.	266-4018
Tenney Locks		266-4364
Beach Monitoring Information	City of Madison Health Dept.	266-4842
Shoreline Permit Information	Madison DNR	273-5955
Shoreline Zoning	Dane Co. Dept. of Land Reg.	267-0118

## Don't Put it Down the Drain



Chris Helt (above left) and Luke Sackash, members of Boy Scout Troop 46 helped Dane County Supervisor Eileen Bruskevitz mark storm drains in Waunakee recently.

The troop applied stickers warning people against dumping and polluting waterways. The stickers say "Dump No Waste, Drains to Lake."

*Photo taken by Waunakee Tribune photographer Roger Hamilton.*

## Call for Board Nominations

If you know of someone (including yourself) who might be interested in serving on the Yahara Lakes Association Board of Directors, let us know! Our next newsletter will have a ballot for open positions so we need to hear from you soon if you have a nomination to make. Mail or email ([yla@mailbag.com](mailto:yla@mailbag.com)) information about your nominee by October 10, 2003.

## Sheriff Patrol Fundraiser

A group formed last year to raise money to pay for increased patrolling time by the boats of Marine and Trail Enforcement (formerly the Sheriff's Lake Patrol) had another successful outing this summer.

The organization, known as "Friends of Marine and Trail Enforcement," raised more than \$9,100 on August 10th during a fundraiser at Nautigal's

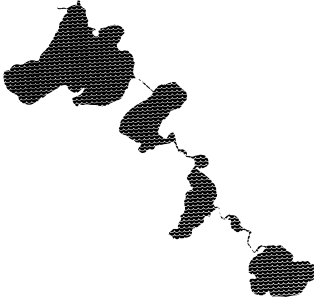
If you would like to make a contribution, you may send your check (payable to "Friends of Marine and Trail Enforcement") to Yahara Lakes Association, P.O. Box 44578, Madison, WI 53744.



## NEWSLETTER

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**Yahara Lakes Association, Ltd. is a non-profit organization of over 700 members dedicated to protecting and representing lake property owners and improving the environment of Lakes Mendota, Monona, Waubesa, Kegonsa and the Yahara watershed.**

### **2003 YAHARA LAKES ASSOCIATION, LTD. BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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### **COMMITTEES**

Communications Committee  
Lake Quality Committee  
Legislation and Legal Committee  
Membership Committee  
Water Safety Committee

*Call 848-1450 if you would like to become involved in any of the above-listed committees, or if you have concerns you would like a committee to address.*