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**P.O. Box 494 Eagle River, WI 54521-0494**

**WINTER 2018**

## President's Welcome

Vilas County is truly special: with over 1300 lakes and rivers, more than any other county in Wisconsin, we have one of the highest concentrations of inland fresh water in the world. In fact, 35% of Vilas County is covered by open water or wetlands, with much of the rest covered by forests. The beauty and recreational value of our natural waters make them a true Wisconsin treasure and the backbone of our economy. More broadly, our state's 15,000 lakes are central to the tourism that contributes a total economic impact of over \$20 billion annually to Wisconsin.

We take for granted our pristine natural waters, but we are more the exception than the rule. According to the most recent surveys on national water quality from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, nearly half of U.S. rivers and streams and more than one-third of U.S. lakes are polluted and unfit for swimming, fishing, and drinking. That is the reality elsewhere, and why it's so important that we continue our efforts.

Lake Associations play a crucial role in protecting and preserving the magnificence of Wisconsin's many lakes and waterways. They represent a first line of defense to protect these resources, as well as a first responder to new threats. Collectively, lake associations provide an effective army of motivated and passionate volunteers that supplement the efforts of dedicated state and county lake organizations. Truly, Wisconsin's lake associations are the lifeblood of the lake stewardship movement in Wisconsin, and our remarkable partnership with WDNR, UW Extension Lakes, Wisconsin Lakes, and others is the envy of other states.

For VCLRA, the new year is especially noteworthy as we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. I'm very proud of the key role that VCLRA, along with our partner and supporting member families and lake organizations, have played in sustainably protecting and preserving our natural waters. While we are proud of our past and what we have accomplished together, we are even more enthusiastic about the future. Our passion for the natural beauty and vitality of our lakes and rivers and our vision for engaged communities that protect and cherish them continues to inspire us.

Best regards,

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Tom Ewing.

Tom Ewing  
President VCLRA



## Our Vision & Mission

We firmly believe that the natural beauty and vitality of our lakes and rivers are closely linked to healthy environments and vibrant economies. That's what drives our vision of a future where engaged communities protect and cherish these natural resources for the high quality of life they provide.

Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association was formed 25 years ago with the mission to sustainably preserve, protect, and enhance our lakes and rivers for the benefit of all. We accomplish our mission by working with partner and supporting member families and lake organizations to foster informed and engaged communities committed to the welfare of our lake and river heritage.

## Local VCLRA Scholarship Awarded

The Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA) was excited to award its inaugural scholarship to Lakeland Union student, Joseph Boyle. The purpose of VCLRA is to educate, communicate, and promote cooperation among organizations, individuals, governmental bodies and the general public of Vilas County; and to preserve, protect, and enhance our lakes and waterways for present and future generations. The annual VCLRA scholarship is awarded to a graduating senior and Vilas County resident aspiring to make a positive difference in the world by choosing to further their education in natural resources or a related field.

The 2018 scholarship winner stated that "in today's society, we as people are not doing enough to take care of our natural resources." The awardee sees that one solution is to bring the love of natural resources to our youth, which is very similar to the educational goals of VCLRA. The applicant was inspired to protect our natural resources through working a summer aquatic job. The applicant stated that this experience with nature showed him the beauty of the world, a world waiting to be discovered." We are reminded of a quote by a Sengalese poet, "In the end, we conserve only what we love, we love only what we understand, and we understand only what we are taught. VCLRA is excited to contribute to Joe Boyle's journey to discover and protect our natural world.

## Applications sought for Local VCLRA Scholarship

The Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA) is excited to announce that they are currently accepting applications for the inaugural Senior Scholarship. This annual \$500 competitive scholarship is awarded to a graduating **High School Senior** who **resides in Vilas County** who is continuing their education at a 2-year or 4-year college, university, or vocational/technical school in pursuit of a career in the **area of natural resources** (may have priority) or a related field. At the discretion of the scholarship committee, this \$500 scholarship may be divided between two applicants or a second scholarship may be awarded. Awardees will be selected by the VCLRA Scholarship Committee. Scholarship(s) will be awarded at a school or homeschool celebration in spring 2019. Completed applications due to VCLRA; PO Box 494; Eagle River, WI 54521 **postmarked by March 15, 2019**. For scholarship application or to learn more about VCLRA please visit our website: [www.vclra.us/](http://www.vclra.us/).

## Blue Heron Stewardship Award Nominations Now Open

### BLUE HERON



Shoreland Stewardship  
Award Program

Do you know someone who makes a conscious effort to preserve an outstanding natural shoreline?

We want to recognize them for their effort! The Blue Heron Award was created for exactly this reason.

It also creates awareness, educate lake property owners on the importance of shoreland stewardship, and showcases good examples of lake-friendly waterfront development.

Deadline for submissions is June 21, 2019.

To nominate someone, please visit our website: <http://www.vclra.us/home/blue-heron-shoreline-stewardship-award-program>

## Healthy Lakes! Funds for Shoreland Property Owners

### FOR RELEASE:

**CONTACT:** Catherine Higley, Lake Conservation Specialist, 715-479-3738 or [cahigl@vilascountywi.gov](mailto:cahigl@vilascountywi.gov)

Do you want to attract more fish to your shoreline? What about keeping your shoreline from eroding away? Or maybe you're interested in doing good for the water quality on your lake? Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department is seeking lakeshore property landowners wanting funds to improve lake water quality or shoreline habitat.

Practices would be installed primarily by private contractors. If landowners are willing to assist with labor, costs can be kept low. The Vilas County Land + Water Dept. helps waterfront property owners coordinate appropriate plans and use of contractors.

Vilas County Land & Water Conservation will be applying for grant funds from the DNR on behalf of interested landowners. The funding is available through a Healthy Lakes Grant, which is part of the WI DNR's Surface Water Grant Program. While Healthy Lakes are competitive grants, to date no project has been turned down for lack of funding.

There are some projects that will not be appropriate for Healthy Lakes. If you have a steep shoreline or excessive runoff, that may be outside the scope of Healthy Lakes. However, there may be other funding options available. Contact Vilas County Land & Water at 715-479-3721 if you would like to address critical erosion issues on your lakefront.

If you are interested in Healthy Lakes or would like more information, contact the Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Dept. at 715-479-3738. They can assist with getting these projects "shovel-ready" for 2020.

## VCLRA Membership Benefits

VCLRA is an informational education network that helps lake associations and individual citizens make wise decisions in their effort to preserve and protect the unique waterways of Vilas County, now and well into the future. From its inception, VCLRA has established and maintained strong cooperative relationships with the Wisconsin DNR, UW Extension, and Vilas County government. With the help of these partnerships, VCLRA is able to provide benefits to lake association members and individuals who do not have lake associations.

VCLRA provides the following to its member associations and individuals:

- Providing information and assistance on lake related problems and issues,
- Sponsoring and participating in educational programs,
- Providing yearly Blue Heron Awards for recognition of individual property owners' shoreline stewardship,
- Publishing newsletters for our membership,
- Developing Shoreline Covenant Program for property owners,
- Organize a yearly Lakes Day symposium for our members and partners to strengthen their partnerships and gain new knowledge,
- Helping in the formation of new lake associations,
- Assisting with direction to or interaction with partner agencies,
- Assisting with grant applications when an association may not qualify,
- And monitoring state and county government activities.

VCLRA is a constructive citizen group that has earned the respect of the local and state community. We encourage you to contact us with questions, concerns, or ideas. We will answer them to the best of our ability, or direct you to someone who can.

The purpose of the Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association is to educate, communicate, and promote cooperation among organizations, individuals, governmental bodies and the general public of Vilas county; and to preserve, protect, and enhance our lakes and waterways for present and future generations

*Anne Kretschmann*  
Treasurer





# Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL

*Preserving, protecting and enhancing our Vilas County lakes and waterways for present and future generations*

## Type of Membership:

☐ Individual/Family \$25   ☐ Lake Organization \$50   ☐ Associate/Supporting \$75

## Section A: Individual/Family or Associate/Supporting Membership

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Permanent Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Ph \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No  
 Wish to receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No  
 Name of Lake of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Lake Organization (if established): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other affiliation (i.e. town chairman, county commissioner, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

## Section B: Lake Organization (Lake Associations and Districts) Membership

Please submit the names and contact information of organization officers/ board of directors/commissioners, each will receive the VCLRA newsletter. If person and contact information is the same as prior year write "NC" after name. Please indicate a **Key Contact Person**, ideally with email, this is used occasionally when legislative updates or call-to-actions occur.

Lake organization name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Website \_\_\_\_\_  
 Approximate number of individuals represented by lake organization \_\_\_\_\_

Please attach additional  
board members, directors,  
or commissioners, if needed.

### President/Chairman

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Permanent Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No  
 Name of Lake of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No  
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

### Secretary

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Permanent Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No  
 Name of Lake of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No  
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

### Vice-President

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Permanent Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No  
 Name of Lake of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No  
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

### Treasurer

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Permanent Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Wish to receive newsletter via email? Yes No  
 Name of Lake of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Receive occasional email alerts on lake issues? Yes No  
 Key Contact Person? Yes No

Please make checks payable to: Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA)  
 Return completed form with annual dues before **June 1st** to: VCLRA; PO Box 494; Eagle River, WI 54521

## Water Clarity Can Have an Effect on Waterfront Home Sale Prices in Vilas and Oneida Counties.

As a follow up to investigations into the economic value of waterfront properties in Oneida and Vilas Counties, researchers from UW-Eau Claire, researched the link between water clarity and the sale prices of waterfront homes. This research project was proposed by the Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Dept. and the Oneida and Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Associations, and funded by grants from the Lumberjack RC&D and the UWEC Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Using home sales data from Zillow.com and Secchi data for 60 area lakes researchers found that home prices rose as water clarity improved. Depending on the lake, an improvement of water clarity by about 3 feet would increase average home sales prices by \$8,000 to \$32,000 dollars. Water clarity is an objective measurement of the depth at which a Secchi disk can still be seen. Water clarity can indicate water quality issues such as a high nutrient load or tannin stained water. The value of improving water clarity will depend on the natural environment of the lake.

On extremely clear lakes, an increase in water clarity would not add much more value. However, on a lake of limited clarity, improving Secchi results from 3 to 6 feet, has a significant impact on sales price. One follow up questions is whether the reverse holds true for monetary values: if water clarity diminishes does the sales price decline by the same amount? According to Dr. Thomas Kemp, this is a log relationship – so the values are similar but change more dramatically for a 6 foot change in Secchi depth than for a 3 foot change.

Past analysis of tax data shows that 75% of Vilas County's property tax revenue and 61% of Oneida County's property tax revenue comes from waterfront property. If property values can be affected by changes in water clarity, those changes can affect local government and school spending. More reasons to ensure that we play our parts in protecting and improving the water clarity of our lakes.

Copies of the water clarity study are available from the Vilas and Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Departments, the Oneida and Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Associations, the Walter E Olson Memorial Library in Eagle River, the Rhinelander District Library, Lumberjack RC&D and the Lac du Flambeau Natural Resources.

**Quita Sheehan**, Conservation Specialist, Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Department

**ARE YOU A GOOD LAKE STEWARD?**

- ✓ My lake property has a 35' natural vegetation buffer zone along the entire shoreline.
- ✓ I always leave natural woody items in the lake (trees, branches, leaves, twigs, logs, etc.).
- ✓ I have only the legal number of boat slips (lifts, etc.) allowed for my lake frontage.
- ✓ I never pull or rake native vegetation out of the water along my lake frontage.
- ✓ I have not created a lot of impervious surfaces within 75' of my shore (impervious means to not let water flow freely into the ground).
- ✓ I have created rain gardens or water diversion systems to prevent erosion run-off into my lake.
- ✓ I do not have any bright lights facing the lake from my property and do not leave any bright lights on long after dark that face the lake. I consider using motion detector or timed lights, light shields, and/or low wattage bulbs.
- ✓ I do not have a wet boat house.
- ✓ I do not let personal visitors from other lakes launch boats on my property without careful inspection and removal of aquatic vegetation from the boat and trailer.
- ✓ I do not use fertilizers or other strong chemicals on my property.
- ✓ I have my septic system registered on the county inspection list and maintain it regularly.
- ✓ I know and abide by all boating regulations for my lake.
- ✓ I volunteer to help my local lake association in preventing the spread of invasive species into our local waters.
- ✓ I do not create loud noise near the lake that will disturb my lake neighbors (radios, leaf blowers, chain saws, lawn mowers, etc.).
- ✓ I do not shoot off fireworks from my lake property.
- ✓ The surface area of my docks does not exceed the legal limit allowed.
- ✓ I do not rake or blow yard debris into the water in front of my lake lot (leaves, pine needles).
- ✓ I do not litter when boating – if I carry it in, I carry it out.
- ✓ I observe loons, eagles, turtles and other wildlife from a distance.

## Ten Great Things to Know About Your Favorite Lake

By Ted J. Rulseh

When you look out on your favorite lake, what do you see? Beautiful blue water? A place for a refreshing dip on a summer day? A surface on which to paddle a canoe or kayak? Favored spots to catch fish for sport or dinner?

Your lake is all this, but also much more. A lake is a fascinating living system, full of mysteries and things to discover, if you look closely. Here are ten things you may not know about the world beneath the waves.

**1. It all starts with the sun.** That's right. The walleye you fry up for supper owes its existence, first and foremost, to the sun. It's sunlight that enables plants and algae in the lake to manufacture food through photosynthesis. The food these primary producers make forms the base of the lake's food chain.

**2. Your lake's water is a thin soup.** The water is the broth; the meat and vegetables consist of tiny organisms called plankton. The vegetables are the cells of algae that float freely in the water; they're called phytoplankton. The meat is made up of small creatures, called zooplankton, that swim through the water, feeding as they go. They feed on the algae and in turn become food for fish in the very early stages of their lives.

**3. Your lake has 'fleas.'** Tiny creatures called *Daphnia*, crustaceans from the same family as crayfish and shrimp, float in the thin soup. They're often called water fleas because their herky-jerky swimming patterns remind observers of the jumping of fleas (those you hope never infest your dog). *Daphnia* are an essential food source for baby fish (called fry), water insects and the immature forms of frogs and toads. You don't need a microscope to see them – they're about a millimeter long. So if you scooped up a jar of lake water and looked through it, you'd probably see a *Daphnia* or two kicking about.

**4. Your lake has layers.** The water is not a pool with a uniform temperature, at least not in the warm months of the year. As spring turns to summer, the lake separates into layers. Cold water lies at the bottom. Warmer water, being less dense, floats on top. The zone where warm water meets cold is called the thermocline. You can experience the thermocline by swimming out into fairly deep water, then doing a feet-first surface dive. When your feet reach a depth of about 12 to 15 feet, you will feel a sudden change from warm to cool. You've penetrated the thermocline.

**5. There's only "one water."** There are lakes, rivers, and the vast resource known as groundwater. These are not really separate entities. They are all part of the same system. The top of the groundwater is called the water table. In an important sense, a lake is a depression in the land that intersects and exposes the water table.

**6. Your lake has a "skin."** You've seen the rounded shape of water droplets on a lakeside leaf. What gives that droplet its shape is something called surface tension – it's as if the water had a very thin, invisible skin. That's why the insects called water striders can skim across your lake's surface on their

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long, spindly legs: The surface tension keeps them from sinking.

**7. Water has a unique behavior.** Most liquids, as they cool, become progressively denser. Water is different. It becomes denser until it reaches 39 degrees F. Below that temperature it becomes less dense, until finally it becomes ice, only about 90 percent as dense as water (this is why ice floats). That's important, because imagine what would happen if ice were denser than water and would sink. Through the winter, ice forming on the lake's surface would drop to the bottom, and eventually the entire bowl of the lake would be frozen solid. It might never thaw; almost everything in it would be dead.

**8. Making ice is hard work.** Your lake can take a long time to freeze, even with a number of cold and wintry days and nights. Because of a property of water called the heat of fusion, it is eighty times harder to freeze a given volume of water than to lower its temperature by one Celsius degree. Put another way, a drop of water has to give as much energy to freeze as it would give up to lower its temperature by 80 Celsius degrees.

**9. Your lake breathes.** Dissolved oxygen in your lake is the single most important component of water quality, because without adequate oxygen, next to nothing could live. Your lake breathes by taking in oxygen from the air (with help from the stirring action of waves) and as a product of photosynthesis, the process by which algae and plants use sunlight to create food. The air we breathe contains about 20 percent oxygen. By comparison, the amount in lake water is tiny. A healthy lake contains 6 to 8 parts per million of oxygen – or 0.0006 to 0.0008 percent. Yet, that's enough to enable fish to breathe, because of the miraculous structures they have called gills.

**10. Your lake is aging.** All lakes go through a long, slow process of getting older and filling in. Every year, silt enters the lake with runoff from rainfall. Water plants grow and die, and their remains sink to the bottom. Gradually the lake takes on more nutrients, and more plants grow and die. It's called eutrophication. We can all help slow this process down by keeping nutrients out of the lake. We do this by forgoing the use of fertilizers on our lakefront lots, keeping our septic systems maintained and in good repair, and limiting runoff into the water by keeping land near the water's edge in a natural condition.

The closer you look at your lake, the more you'll discover, and the more you will treasure and want to protect that natural wonder.

*Ted J. Rulseh writes the newspaper column, "The Lake Where You Live." An advocate for lake improvement and protection, he lives in the lake-rich region of northern Wisconsin. This article is adapted and excerpted from his book, A Lakeside Companion. It is printed by permission of the University of Wisconsin Press. © 2018 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved.*

# Mark your Calendar

**April 10-12, 2019** Wisconsin Lakes Partnership Convention @ Stevens Point, WI.  
[www.uwsp.edu/uwexplakes](http://www.uwsp.edu/uwexplakes) Registration opens in February.

**April 22, 2019** VCLRA Board Meeting. @ Trout Lake Station @ 9am.

**July 2019** (other details TBD) North Central Counties Lake Associations Conference @ Nicolet College Rhinelander, WI. Check our website, or contact Tom Ewing, [tomewingjr@aol.com](mailto:tomewingjr@aol.com), for more information.

**June 15, 2019** LakesFest in Lac du Flambeau, WI. Contact Celeste Hockings @ 715-588-4163/[Chockings@ldftribe.com](mailto:Chockings@ldftribe.com) for more information.

## Join VCLRA Today! Forget to Renew?

See membership form inside this issue or go to our website at [www.vclra.us](http://www.vclra.us) and print the membership form.

**Your support helps protect our lakes and rivers!**



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Website: [www.vclra.us](http://www.vclra.us)

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