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VCLRA.ORG

WINTER 2020-2021

THE President's message

What a year this has been for the entire planet!

Each of us faced unprecedented challenges that truly reshaped our focus and priorities. VCLRA, like so many others, found new ways to connect with our community and coworkers so we could press on with our work and make an impact.

Due to the pandemic, we tailored our approach to engage and inform through zoom meetings, virtual events, and expanded online digital learning experiences. Fortunately, we had set a goal to strengthen our ability to connect with people by adopting new web technology even before the pandemic. While we look forward to the time when it is safe to return to in-person events, these new approaches will continue to provide alternate pathways to effectively connect with others (especially younger audiences). We will therefore continue to look for opportunities to improve our organization's virtual presence. You will find a sample of VCLRA's online offerings in our *VCLRA Primer* following this President's Message.

While we have not met face to face for many months now, I am proud to report that we still were able to award a youth scholarship to a local high school student, make a virtual presentation of a Blue Heron Shoreland Stewardship Award, co-host a virtual lakes workshop, roll out the new GREET initiative for Lake Associations, partner with Vilas County Land and Water Conservation to launch the Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters program, publish and distribute our two annual print newsletters, post a number of articles and videos on our website, and many other accomplishments.

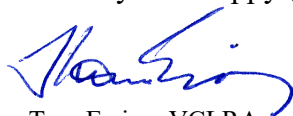
As we move into a new year, we look forward to continuing to work for the protection of our Vilas County lake and river heritage with our partners and supporting member families and lake organizations. Our world is certainly different right now, but we can still realize the value of working together. Connect with us today through membership and also share what's on your mind through email or our website contact form. We'd love to have a chance to get to know you better, hear about your ideas and concerns, and share some of our thoughts and plans.

Remember to renew your VCLRA membership! Much of our work is funded by generous support from our member families and lake organizations.

Continued on next page

As I close, there is a new sense of hope as effective Covid-19 treatments appear on the horizon. In the meantime, stay safe and enjoy our lakes and rivers responsibly.

I wish you a Happy (and normal) New Year.



Tom Ewing, VCLRA president

VCLRA Primer

A GUIDED TOUR OF INFORMATION
USEFUL AVAILABLE FROM [VCLRA.ORG](https://vclra.org)



Browse our initiatives and other useful resources at <https://vclra.org/initiatives/>. There you can learn about and apply for a youth scholarship; nominate someone for a Blue Heron Award; locate information helpful to first-time lake property owners; find tools that equip lake associations to locate new lake neighbors and build positive, lake-friendly relationships; check out the AIS map database developed by Vilas County Land and Water Conservation showing locations of AIS and associated planned monitoring, management, and detection efforts; look up POC and other information about Vilas lake organizations; find information about starting a lake association, locate numerous guides and aids to help you keep our waters clean and healthy, and much more.

We also have a news and article blog that you can view at <https://vclra.org/newsarticles/>. It supports multimedia, including educational videos and event presentations. You can subscribe from our VCLRA homepage or at <http://vclra.org/#gotosubscribe> to be automatically notified by email when new articles are posted. You can always unsubscribe later.

Recent newsletters (which are mailed to members as a benefit) can be found at <https://vclra.org/newsletter-archive/>.

Finally, you can join VCLRA or renew your membership online at <https://vclra.org/join-or-renew/> using a credit card or check. Of course, you can still use the mail-in form, located at <https://vclra.org/mail-in/>.

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Nominations Now Open for the Blue Heron Shoreland Stewardship Award Program

Photo by Tom Ewing

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 Shoreland Stewardship Award Program recognizes lake property owners who champion strong lake stewardship principles in the development and use of their waterfront property to minimize environmental impacts. VCLRA makes these annual awards to generate awareness and educate lake property owners on the importance of shoreland stewardship by showcasing good examples of lake-friendly waterfront development.

To obtain more information about the Blue Heron Shoreline Stewardship Award program or download an application, visit <https://vclra.org/blue-heron-program/> or contact us at VCLRA, P.O. Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521. 🐟

BLUE HERON



**Shoreland Stewardship
Award Program**

Local Applications Sought for VCLRA Scholarship

The Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association (VCLRA) is excited to announce that they are currently accepting applications for the VCLRA Senior Scholarship. This annual \$500 competitive scholarship is awarded to a graduating High School Senior who resides in Vilas County and 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 2021.

Completed applications are due to VCLRA, PO Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521 postmarked by March 15, 2021. For scholarship application or to learn more please visit <https://vclra.org/scholarship/>. 🐟

Support VCLRA through Membership



VCLRA is a 501c3 non-profit lake conservation and education organization. All of our work is funded by support from our member families and lake organizations, generous donations, and public grants. Support our mission through membership and help keep our lakes clean and beautiful.

VCLRA 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 working relationships with the Wisconsin DNR, UW Extension, Wisconsin Lakes, Vilas County government and others. This allows VCLRA to provide benefits to lake association members as well as individuals who do not have a lake association.

VCLRA offers the following to its member associations and individuals:

- Provide information and assistance on lake related problems and issues,
- Sponsor and participate in educational programs, including awarding a scholarship annually to a local high school student,
- Provide yearly Blue Heron Awards in recognition of individual property owners' shoreline stewardship,
- Publish and distribute print newsletters for our membership plus blog articles year-round on our website,
- Organize a yearly workshop for our members and partners to strengthen their partnerships and gain new knowledge,
- Help with the formation of new lake associations,
- Assistance with direction to or interaction with partner agencies,
- Assistance 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

**NOW YOU CAN ALSO JOIN OR RENEW ONLINE
USING A CREDIT CARD AT VCLRA.ORG**

Lakes in the Time of Covid



ARTICLE BY
Susan Knight, VCLRA

Summer 2020 is now behind us and many people noticed changes in lake activity. To get a handle on these changes, I conducted a highly unscientific survey of eleven Northwoods residents with different backgrounds including a conservation warden, fishing guides, Clean Boats Clean Waters volunteers, a few lake-related business owners, and other lake enthusiasts. I was stunned by the passion and concern with which respondents answered my questionnaire. Their answers suggest considerable consensus, though some disagreement, about what happened on our lakes this past summer. Do you agree with their assessment?

Most respondents spend their time on one or a couple of lakes, including Little St. Germain, Mann, Black Oak, Little Crawling Stone, Big Portage, Lac Vieux Desert, while other respondents reported visiting up to fifty different lakes for pleasure or business in the Vilas and Oneida County area. Everyone agreed there was far more boat activity on the lakes this summer. One volunteer reported their data showed boat traffic up 30% from 2019. Some felt the biggest increase was in anglers, kayakers, and paddle boarders. Two noticed far more wake boats, as well as a big increase in personal watercraft “like a hoard of angry hornets”. At one landing, a monitor found many people rediscovering an old hobby, such as fishing or sailing, or exploring a new one, such as kayaking and birdwatching.

Continued on next page


Lakes in the Time of Covid — Susan Knight

The consensus on why there was so much more boat traffic and lake activity focused on three causes: Covid 19, social unrest and the closing of the Canadian border. Universally, respondents felt that people came north to get out of their primary homes for health and safety concerns. With many communities in lockdown, the Northwoods, with a sparser population and vast opportunities for recreation, was a draw. Since a great number of businesses asked employees to work remotely, and students were in virtual school, many families came to the Northwoods if their second home had adequate internet. There were also more people renting houses through Air B&B or as Vacation Rentals By Owner (VRBO). Some suggested people came north because they were worried about rioting and social unrest in their communities. Two of the guides felt that more anglers stayed in Wisconsin once the Canadian border closed.

While a few respondents did not see issues with increased use, most felt that the increased activity created problems. Though not shared by all, several respondents felt that wake boats were causing shoreline erosion and lake bottom disruption with a few calling for a ban on wake boats all together. Narrow lakes may be especially vulnerable to extensive damage from boat wakes pounding on the shore. High water may be exacerbating the shoreline problems. Eroding shorelines could contribute a pulse of nutrients into the water, causing more problems. Others worried that there was an increased chance of invasive plants and animals coming in on so many boats. Anglers worried there will need to be more stocking to compensate for the high fishing pressure.

Many comments spoke to the need for common courtesy on the lakes and at the landings. Several complained about boaters ignoring Slow-no-Wake zones, waterskiing and high-speed boats coming too close to shore, and loud music coming from the boats. One remarked that the boats keep getting bigger and more powerful, and that this is not sustainable on our small inland lakes. Several respondents, including a conservation warden, feel there is not enough law enforcement on the water, with wardens spread far too thinly across the area.

Erica LeMoine of LoonWatch reported a likely increase in lead poisoning due to lead tackle and that some people were feeding loons. She said, “A fed loon is a dead loon, because they beg for food from anyone and end up getting entangled in fishing tackle and/or lead poisoned.” One respondent remarked that their resident loons did not have a successful year, and that at least one boat got very close to the loons. Another could not imagine the loons were not affected by all the activity. LeMoine stressed that if this is the “new normal” we will need a big effort to educate boaters about loons.

Finally, I asked respondents about positive effects of the increased boating activity. Most recognized that lake-oriented businesses including boat sales and rental outfits had a great year. Many restaurants that chose to stay open also had a good summer. Perhaps most importantly, several remarked that this was a wonderful chance for the Northwoods to showcase its countless opportunities to enjoy beauty, relax and recreate, and will encourage more people to appreciate our natural resources. But most emphasized that these positive effects may come at the expense of the degradation of our fragile ecosystems. Please help encourage residents and visitors alike to live lightly and thoughtfully on our lakes. 

2021 Trial Year for *Northwoods Businesses* for Clean Waters Program



ARTICLE BY

Catherine Higley, Vilas County Land & Water Conservation

If you are sick of reading about COVID-19, read on...it gets better. My only COVID-19 comment is that the pandemic's impacts have touched everyone, including many local businesses. Whether it's a family or a business, when penny-pinching becomes a priority, that's when conservation practices that cost money or demand our time get shoved to the backburner. Afterall, these are not the things that keep our homes warm or feeds our children. Motivated by conserving our waterways, late last year several local lake conservation partners made a strategic assessment and determined there is a need to build more bridges between the Northwoods lake conservation community and local businesses. It seems there has never been a better time to do so.

VCLRA, in cooperation with Oneida County Lakes & Rivers, Vilas County Land & Water Conservation Dept., Oneida County Land & Water Conservation Dept., and the North Lakeland Discovery Center, is launching an initiative called "Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters" to build relationships with local businesses whose existence depend on our surface waters. The initiative is still evolving, but is anticipated to include marinas, dock & lift shops, canoe/kayak/paddleboard/tubing rentals and fishing guides initially.

"We want our local businesses to know that they have an ally," notes Tom Ewing, VCLRA's president. We totally get it – thriving local businesses are essential to a vibrant Northwoods! However, it is well studied that the natural beauty and vitality of our natural waters is what draws people to the Northwoods and drives the local economy. It stands to reason that it's a win-win when we work together to identify and implement conservation practices that help both the Northwoods businesses and our lakes & rivers thrive," Ewing adds.

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“That’s what this partnership is all about.”

The program will focus on preventing aquatic invasive species spread, preserving water quality, controlling stormwater and runoff, and preserving shoreline habitat. “These are key factors that I think we all can agree on as important to get things rolling,” Ewing suggests. The 2021 spring-fall period will be the program’s trial-run timeframe. It is hoped that about twelve business partners will take part in the trial. The trial group of businesses may have different needs, but each of the “Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters” will have a shared understanding that *clean waters is good for business*.

A key goal is to offer readily available, sound expert assistance for participating businesses to support planning and implementing of conservation practices that support the win-win strategy. For example, VCLRA and its partners may be able to create pathways to help businesses implement conservation goals by coordinating funding on collective projects on behalf of businesses. VCLRA and its partners are also planning ways to provide public recognition for its business participants. Consumers are increasingly making more conscientious decisions in relation to health and environment (note the soaring popularity of organic products). It is hoped that “Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters” will provide positive branding for lake stewardship-minded consumers. Look for more updates in the VCLRA summer newsletter on this developing initiative. For more information on “Northwoods Businesses for Clean Waters” contact Tom Ewing at president@vclra.org. 🐟

MORE ARTICLES ONLINE

HERE’S A LIST OF RECENT ARTICLES
YOU CAN FIND ON VCLRA.ORG



[Coordinating Collective Action: Why Lake Organizations are Like Cookouts](#)

[Debbie Millar \(Ballard Lake\) receives Blue Heron Award](#)

[Beware of the New Zealand Mud Snails](#)

[Lake Turnover: Seasonal Nutrient Cycling in Lakes](#)

[Dissolved Oxygen in Lakes](#)

[Six County Lakes & Rivers Conference Video](#)

Mark your Calendar

March 8-12, 2021 Wisconsin Lakes and Rivers Convention virtual event. For more information, visit www.uwsp.edu/uwexplakes

April 5, 2021 VCLRA Board Meeting via Zoom or at Trout Lake Station @ 9am.

July 2021 (other details TBD) North Central Counties Lake Associations Conference via Zoom or at Nicolet College Rhinelander, WI. Check our website: vclra.org or contact Tom Ewing, president@vclra.org, for more information.

TBD Lakes Fest in Lac du Flambeau, WI. Contact Celeste Hockings @ 715-588-4163/Chockings@ldftribe.com for more information.

Renew your membership or join VCLRA Today!

See membership form inside this issue or go to our website at vclra.org and register online. **Your support helps protect our lakes and rivers!**



Lake County Journal
Volume 27 Issue 1 WINTER 2021
Vilas County Lakes and Rivers Association, Inc.
PO Box 494, Eagle River, WI 54521
Website: vclra.org
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