

Hello Rice Lake and Elm Creek shoreline residents!

Rice Lake offers ideal growing conditions for invasive Curly Leaf Pondweed and Eurasian Water Milfoil: shallow water with plenty of carp to stir up the overabundant phosphorus and nitrogen in the weed beds. This year's plant survey verified what we've all observed – the weeds are thick! Fortunately, our lake is actually a reservoir by virtue of the dam, and lake level drawdowns during Minnesota's hard winter freeze have proven extremely effective in killing the exposed invasive aquatic plants and giving native species a chance to compete again. Timing of the drawdown is dictated by turtles. Yes, turtles. They start digging into the mud mid-September to brumate (the reptile version of hibernation), so the water level needs to start its gradual decline by then to avoid leaving turtles high and dry and frozen over the winter.

With the approval of at least 75% of shoreline (lake and creek) residents, the Maple Grove City Council can apply for a Minnesota DNR drawdown permit to open the dam spillway on September 15th (expecting the lake level to gradually drop to its lowest point by October 1st). Shoreline residents planning to remove their boats for the winter will need to do so by September 15th to avoid being stranded by low water.

***If you support a 2025/2026 Rice Lake drawdown, please click "reply" to this e-mail, type your name, street address, and an "X" indicating your support. Click "send" and your work is done! Thank you!***  
***Please reply no later than June 17<sup>th</sup>!***

**Your Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street #, Street Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Yes, I support a 2025/2026 Rice Lake drawdown (mark with an "X"):** \_\_\_\_\_

## Questions & Answers

**Do drawdowns really help?** Yes. Below are the plant surveys before and after the previous (winter 2021/2022) drawdown. Four years later we need to make good use of our frigid Minnesota winter again.

**2021 Curlyleaf Pondweed Delineation**  
Rice Lake (# 27-0116)



**Rice Lake (# 27-0116)**  
**2022 Curlyleaf Pondweed & Eurasian Watermilfoil Delineation**



**Isn't a drawdown inconvenient?** Yes, absolutely. But a lake infested with invasive weeds is far worse. Getting boats, lifts, docks and buoys out mid-September clearly reduces our already short boating season, but is a non-negotiable DNR requirement. Drawdowns have typically only been needed every 4 or 5 years. Let's take the silver lining that they provide convenient access for shoreline cleanup and stabilization projects.

**What about fish kill?** RLAA runs a winter aerator to reduce potential fish kill and the DNR requires annual fish and plant surveys to make sure the drawdowns are effective and don't cause other problems.

**How much do drawdowns cost?** The costs are trivial. The city pays for the DNR permit and they handle opening and closing the dam controls.

**What about mechanical weed harvesting, or chemical solutions like alum or herbicides?** Mechanical weed harvesting would be expensive and frequent – the weeds grow back so quickly. Rice Lake is just a shallow, 300-acre wide spot in Elm Creek with enormous amounts of over-fertilized water flowing through. Chemical treatments would be extremely expensive and largely ineffective since the chemicals would dilute and wash downstream soon after application. Fortunately, we don't need to add chemicals since drawdowns offer an organic proven solution.

**What about my hockey rink?** Creekside residents probably won't have enough water for a hockey rink during winter drawdowns. Lakeside residents will just need to walk a bit further to reach theirs.

**How long will it take to fill the lake in the spring?** That depends on snowmelt and rain. Rice Lake draws water from 16,000 upstream acres, so it typically takes just a few weeks.

**Do drawdowns improve water quality and reduce algae blooms?** No, drawdowns don't reduce the phosphorus and nitrogen runoff from farms and lawns that can generate algae blooms.

**What about zebra mussels?** Invasive zebra mussels outcompete native creatures that also eat algae. Less algae results in clearer water, greater sunlight penetration, and deeper, more vigorous aquatic plant growth. Again, winter drawdowns are proven to reduce invasive plant growth in Rice Lake's chronically over-fertilized waters.

**When will the vandalized dam spillway mechanism be repaired?** The city plans to make those repairs during a 2029/2030 winter drawdown. For the 2025/2026 winter drawdown the cumbersome makeshift (sandbagged) spillway control will have to be used.

**Should I join the Rice Lake Area Association?** Yes, if you aren't already a member, we encourage you to become one! This is a lovely lake that deserves good support. Visit [www.ricelakemn.com](http://www.ricelakemn.com)

**Other questions or concerns?** Please ask. We'll search for helpful answers!

Cordially,

Your volunteer Rice Lake Area Association Board