

## Rice Lake Area Association 2021/2022 Winter Update

Dear RLAA Members,

Thanks for your support and stewardship of Rice Lake! Wow – so much going on!

**Drawdown:** Exposing additional lake shoreline to Minnesota's frigid winter weather helps combat invasive Eurasian watermilfoil and curly leaf pondweed. So, with the approval of affected Rice Lake and Elm Creek waterfront property owners, the Minnesota DNR, and the City of Maple Grove, the spillway of the dam was opened to draw the Rice Lake water level down almost six feet for the winter. Drawdown timing was critical to make sure turtles (potentially including the endangered Blandings turtle) had time to adjust their hibernation to the bottom of the remaining lake rather than being stranded under the newly exposed increasingly frigid shoreline.

**Aerator:** The low water level means there will be less water available for fish beneath the ice this winter. The RLAA will start the aerator on the Northwest side of the lake once the ice thickens. This is expected to keep an area of open, well oxygenated water available to reduce winter fish mortality.

**Hazards:** Despite a shallower lake, everyone needs to take the thin ice warning signs around the aerator just as seriously as any other year! In addition to watching for thin ice, please avoid the shoreline near the aeration system to avoid damaging the shallow hoses running to the various aeration diffusers. Also, snowmobilers need to be aware of the many tree stumps and rocks exposed during the drawdown.

**Boat Ramp:** Dick and Joyce Drangeid generously allow RLAA members with lake access properties, as well as the City and Emergency Services, to use their private 87<sup>th</sup> Ave boat ramp. RLAA members with boats and lake access properties will be issued new 2022 Rice Lake boat stickers and individual boat ramp access codes with their 2022 dues payment.

**Channel Dredging:** Unfortunately, the channel connecting the boat ramp bay to the lake has eroded wider and shallower over the decades. The drawdown provided a great opportunity to dredge the channel to the same depth as the bay and stabilize the shore with riprap. The area was surveyed for a Minnesota DNR dredging permit and George Patras of Three Dogs Trucking hauled away approximately 133 cubic yards of material by truck; mostly from the shallower lake-end of the channel. The channel cross sectional profile was modified to a flat bottom with sloping sides that meet the 3:1 DNR recommendation for reasonable erosion stability. A bit of rain after the dredging created a tiny "trickle trench" down the entire length of the channel, demonstrating the dredged channel is now indeed as deep as the bay!

**Shore Work:** The City of Maple Grove and shoreline residents are taking advantage of the drawdown period to remove debris, trim trees, stabilize shorelines, repair docks & lifts, repair storm drain outfalls, and so on. Scouting organizations and others have helped remove trash from the exposed shoreline.

**Wildlife:** Despite the significant habitat challenges of an urban lake setting, wildlife still calls Rice Lake home. That includes fish, frogs, toads, snakes, turtles, egrets, cormorants, eagles, owls, osprey, heron, turkey vultures, hawks, ducks, geese, gulls, coots, cranes, bats, beaver, fox, squirrels, deer, mink, racoons, coyotes, muskrat, and many more. Keeping Rice Lake healthy means helping them survive and thrive!

**Freeway Walls:** MnDOT is finishing up the impressive concrete walls designed to reduce noise while also visually isolating freeway traffic.

**Drawup:** This spring, when the ice has melted, the City of Maple Grove will restore the dam spillway settings to normal and allow the lake to fill up as rain hits the huge watershed that feeds Elm Creek. Mother Nature is in control, but it typically only takes a few weeks to refill the lake.

**Ecology Surveys:** Ongoing water quality monitoring, as well as fish and vegetation surveys, are important monitors of Rice Lake's health. They help reveal emerging issues and check the intended results of drawdowns, winter aeration, shore stabilization, and so on. The Minnesota DNR and other experts contribute great analysis and regional expertise.

Last summer's drought demonstrated how important regular rainfall is to diluting and flushing farm, lawn, and street chemicals downstream. Aquatic weeds and algae flourished under those stagnant, low-water level conditions and water quality suffered. Rice Lake isn't blessed with pristine upstream water, so limiting the pollution added in our small portion of the watershed may be all we can do – so let's do that part well!

Thanks for being part of the Rice Lake Area Association and for your stewardship of this precious recreational and natural resource!

Best Wishes,

Your RLAA Board

Hente Braam	Jeremy Coenen	Mark Ellingson	Luke Johnson	Nick Mannel
Curt Putland	Scott Roeglin	George Schneider	Rick Stulac	Mike Thiede

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