



# PINE VIEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
BIG PINE LAKES ASSOCIATION

**February 2022**

P.O. Box 190 Finlayson, MN 55735  
<http://minnesotawaters.org/bigpinelakes/>

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(Years of service noted in parenthesis)

## BPLA Committee Leaders

Boat Parade:

North lake - Lisa Drake

South lake - Dan Frey

Fireworks: Dan Frey

Logo wear: Roger Olson

Membership: John Mueller

Merchant Directory: Roger Olson

Newsletter: John Mueller/Dan Frey

Picnic: Ron Redding/Dan Frey

Projects: Don Roepke/Ron Redding

Road Cleanup: Dwight Benoy

Volunteer Committee:

Ron Redding

Water Quality: Dwight Benoy

Fish Habitat: Don Roepke

Website: Cathy Stevenson

## Chairman's Column

John Mueller

Welcome to 2022!

BPLA continues to thrive around the lakes as we strive in our efforts to "Preserve and Enhance the Quality of our Lakes". We began meeting again in person at our semi-annual membership meetings while offering a dial in option for those individuals who were unable to attend in person. We expanded the amount of time for the July 4<sup>th</sup> fireworks display based on the additional donations collected from our membership. With the leadership and guidance of Maria Gobely, we continued our buffer zone development program, addressing 6 additional shorelines to the program in 2021 including the BPLA Narrows. Through the efforts of Don Roepke, BPLA was able to purchase 3000 walleye fingerlings through a local supplier which were stocked in the lakes last Fall. This will help augment the efforts of the MN DNR. BPLA members remain actively involved in local water quality organizations on the lake's behalf. In December, we retired our BPLA website that was hosted by Minnesota Waters as they discontinued supporting website hosting as part of their support options. With input from a number of individuals, we developed a freestanding new website for BPLA ([www.BigPineLakes.org](http://www.BigPineLakes.org)). We continue to see great participation in our other volunteer activities and are excited about our future.

During our fall meeting in 2021, we said good bye to two BPLA Board members, Ron Redding (6 years served, including Co-Chairman) and Al Droubie (2 years served). Ron has committed to maintain his connection to BPLA by supporting our Project Day efforts and assisting in organizing the annual picnic. We thank each of these individuals for their volunteerism and time spent supporting BPLA as board members. During the election process, we welcomed Roger Olson back to the board representing Pine Lake. Additionally, Dan Frey has been elected Co-Chairperson for the BPLA Board representing Pine Lake.

We do have an open position on the board for a representative from Big Pine. If you are interested in meeting more association members and helping make an impact to our lakes, please contact one of our current board members to learn what is involved in serving on the board.

Thank you for your support of BPLA in the past; we look forward to a successful new year in 2022.

See you around the lakes.

*John*



# PINE VIEWS

February 2022

## Volunteer Project Days

Don Roepke

Ron Redding wants to thank everyone who participated in past BPLA Volunteer Days. It is through the efforts of our volunteers that we are able to accomplish the projects we have planned. Please consider volunteering again this year, the more volunteers we have on hand, the quicker the projects get completed. It's also a great way to meet your lake neighbors.

### Some of our completed 2021 tasks:

- Repaired creek signage around the lakes
- Cleared weeds around the BPLA dock and maintained the BPLA hiking trails
- Monitored for beaver dams and removed debris in Strawberry Creek and Hwy 18 dam area
- Placed the three loon platforms in the water after ice out and removed them in the fall
- Cleared invasive plants and added additional native plants to the BPLA buffer zone near the South Lake landing.

### Planned tasks for 2022:

- Putting in the BPLA Dock on the South Lake
- Put in loon platforms at ice out. Then removing after loon nesting is completed, repair platforms to have them ready for 2023. They need attention
- Clearing debris on the hiking trails near the S. Lake
- Replace the School House Creek sign which was run over in January

Please contact me if you have ideas on any other projects for the BPLA.

Volunteer / Project Days dates below (meet at 9:00 am, South Lake boat landing)

### **BPLA Calendar of Events 2022**

- Roadway Clean-up** Saturday May 21
- Project Day** Saturday May 21
- Membership Meeting** Saturday May 28
- Project Day** Saturday June 25
- Boat Parade** Sunday July 3
- Fireworks** Sunday July 3
- Fireworks Clean-up** Monday July 4
- Annual Picnic** Saturday July 16
- Project Day** Saturday August 20
- Membership Meeting** Saturday Sept 3
- Project Day** Saturday Sept 17
- Roadway Clean-up** Saturday Sept 17

## Buffer Zones

Maria Gobely

We're off to a great start for 2022 on our Buffer Zone efforts. We already have 3 projects in Aitkin County (1 is approved for funding) and 2 in Pine County that are submitted for funding approval. Depending on the scope of your project, we might be able to squeeze you in this year so please contact me if interested.

Buffer zones are a very beneficial and an economical way to enhance lake and shoreline quality by helping to control pollution and shoreline erosion into watersheds. Buffer zones include natural softscapes of deep-rooted native plants and materials. They provide a variety of plant colors and heights and can be customized for your needs and use, requiring little to no maintenance. Less work makes for more fun time.

I'm putting together a picture board of all the buffer zone projects that have been done on the lakes over the years and would love your historical help. Please send any info you have, such as address, project year(s), scope, results, and any pictures you have of before, during, and after to Maria at [gobely@hotmail.com](mailto:gobely@hotmail.com).

## Rain Barrels/Compost Bins

John Mueller

The Pine County Planning, Zoning, and Solid Waste Department is partnering with the Recycling Association of Minnesota this spring to provide a sale of home compost bins (\$76+tax) and rain barrels (\$90+tax). Orders can be placed online after March 1 at <http://recycleminnesota.org/work/compost-bins-rain-barrels/>. Pickup will be at the Pine County Administration building in Sandstone in late April.

Supplies are limited, so act fast if you are interested!



# Water Quality Update

Dwight Benoy

You may have noticed that the water clarity in the lakes has been relatively good this past year. This was confirmed with the Secchi Disk readings that my wife Pat and I have made when we sample the lake water for nutrient testing. Tests are done at three locations: near the south end of Pine Lake and in Big Pine Lake just north of the narrows and near the north end of the lake.

The Secchi Disk provides a measure of the water clarity. The black and white disk is lowered into the water until it disappears from sight at which point the depth of the disk is recorded. Deeper readings indicate better water clarity.

You can find the test results on the new BPLA website [www.bigpinelakes.org/water-quality-and-lake-information](http://www.bigpinelakes.org/water-quality-and-lake-information). This new website also includes lake information from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy (WRAPS) reports from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and water quality reports from the University of Minnesota.

Charlie Huber has also conducted Secchi Disk tests at one location in each lake since 2010. He typically tests 3-4 times a month from June through September. He has observed over the years, as we move into late summer, that Pine Lake tends to be more clear than Big Pine Lake. This concurs with our observations.

The recreational quality of the water remains good. Ongoing efforts through good septic system maintenance, minimizing or eliminating fertilization of your lawn, and installation of shoreline buffers should continue the trend toward improved water quality. These activities go toward the mission of the Big Pine Lakes Association, which is: To Preserve and Enhance the Quality of our Lakes.

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## Membership Committee

John Mueller

Our 2022 BPLA Membership enrollment is now under way. In 2021, BPLA membership included 221 property owners from around our lakes. BPLA members receive 3 newsletters annually; have their names included in the BPLA Membership Directory which is distributed in late May; and have access to the BPLA supporting Business Directory of local craftsman and businesses in the lake community. The membership fees collected help support activities around the lakes. In addition to the annual membership fees, last year members also donated over \$4000 to the Sandstone food shelf managed by Family Pathways. These donations will help many families in need. Additional donated funds were also earmarked for water quality projects and for our annual July 4<sup>th</sup> Fireworks display.

This year's membership forms are included with the mailing of our February newsletter which is sent to all families owning property on the lakes. To join the BPLA, please complete your registration form and return it in the envelope provided. For those who act early, you have the opportunity to participate in our annual **ICE OUT CONTEST**. To participate, simply identify the "official" date that the ice will be gone. Members who also donate to the Fireworks fund are eligible to submit 2 guesses for the contest. All Ice Out entries need to be postmarked prior to March 31, so act fast. If the Ice goes out prior to March 31, only entries postmarked prior to the official Ice Out date will be considered. The Ice Out "official" date will be determined by BPLA. All winning submissions will be identified in a future Pine Views Newsletter. Members submitting a correct submission date will be eligible for a free 2023 BPLA membership (\$25 value). For those keeping track, in 2021 the Ice Out date was March 30th.

Please encourage your neighbors to also support the BPLA so that we can continue to enjoy the activities around the lake and invest in its future.

For additional information regarding BPLA, check us out on our new website at:

[www.BigPineLakes.org](http://www.BigPineLakes.org)

Thank you for your continued support and confidence in BPLA!



# Is It Time To Scooper That Pooper?!

Jim Corbo

Last year, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency finalized a plan to restore and protect the Kettle River and Upper Saint Croix watersheds, which Big Pine and Pine Lakes belong to. This comprehensive strategy, known as the WRAPS report, has been published and is available via the BPLA and MPCA websites. Special thanks to John Mueller, Ron Redding, and Don Roepke for representing our lake association throughout this process. Big Pine and Pine Lakes are both considered "impaired" with Phosphorus being the major stressor currently exceeding normal levels. Though it will take a lot of time, BPLA will work closely with Pine and Aitkin Counties and the State of Minnesota to develop and execute action plans specific to our lakes to ultimately improve the water quality.

As part of the "restore" strategy, one of the focus areas is Subsurface Sewer Treatment Systems (SSTS)... also known as septic systems. For purposes of this article, SSTS, septic system, and other related terms will include all legal in-ground (gravity distribution), above-ground (mounds, drain fields), and non-conventional (holding tanks) systems.

According to the WRAPS report, failing septic systems can contribute high levels of nutrients, bacteria, pathogens, and other pollutants to ground and surface water. In fact, the sampling of nutrients in various lakes and streams within our watershed have identified that failing septic systems do exist and directly contribute to excess levels of phosphorus and other bacteria, such as E. Coli, in the surface water. The problem, however, is the exact number and location of these failing systems is unknown. Further planning is needed to determine the level of impact and put forth a solution.

This is where we as home-owners can help. Federal, state, and local ordinances usually mandate that every SSTS be properly maintained. Aitkin and Pine Counties will ensure compliance via inspections whenever a property is bought or sold and sometimes if a building permit is pulled. As you may have guessed, we do not see high levels of property turnover in our area, so those required inspections may not happen as frequently as one would hope. That's

why it's up to all of us to do our part. Routinely pumping and maintaining your septic system is the easiest and most cost-effective way to ensure that it is working properly, in compliance with all related ordinances, and protecting the surrounding surface and ground waters.

## A Few Useful Tips

Here are some recommendations for maintaining your system:

- Know your system and how it works. Maintenance is the key.
- Pump and clean your system every 1-3 years depending on its use. Summer is the best time to accomplish this task. Have the system repaired based on feedback from your maintenance provider.
- Minimize the use of household cleaners (such as Bleach), anti-bacterial soaps, water softener salts, and other hazardous materials. These products will kill the good bacteria in the tank that help break down the solids. Similarly, paints and other chemicals should not be disposed of in your septic system as they will inhibit the natural process of the system.
- Do not use septic system cleaners.
- **Avoid disposing of anything other than toilet tissue into your septic system.** This includes things like household trash, plastics, rubbers, grease, baby wipes and paper. These will clog your pipes and possibly burn out your pumps.
- Control your water use.
- Immediately fix any leaks in your faucets or toilets. Over time, leaks have the potential of overloading the system. Upgrade your fixtures as necessary.
- Help prevent the system from freezing in the winter. Place leaves, mulch, or an insulating cover over the pipelines, tank and drain field. Try to maintain some normal water usage if able. Insulate any cold air access points. Again, this helps keep the healthy bacteria alive in the system.
- Maintain your drain field, or mound, if you have one. Do not plant trees or deep-root plants near the system as roots can grow into the pipes. Grass is the preferred vegetation barrier. Do not drive heavy vehicles on the field. Avoid fertilizing in the area.

*Continued on next page.....*

## Resources

There are many resources available to septic system owners. Pine and Aitkin Counties have references and ordinance information on their websites. The University of Minnesota has an excellent collection of knowledge and resources at [septic.umn.edu](http://septic.umn.edu). It is really quite amazing the amount of information that is available. In the event that your system is in need of major repairs and/or replacement, contact the county to see if grants or low interest loans are available to help you out financially. The same applies if you are considering adding a new system or upgrading your current one. Many of the sites will recommend companies to contact during time of need.

In the last newsletter, BPLA featured American Septic in our business spotlight. Dale and Tami have been great partners and we always try to recommend their services to our local families and friends. I recently reached out to Dale about maintaining a healthy septic system and he reaffirmed much of what I have presented. American Septic is licensed to service all system types. During a routine pumping/cleaning, they will perform a basic inspection of your system and provide you with a condition report and a list of recommended repairs. It must be noted that American Septic cannot perform legal inspections (as required for a permit or purchase/sale of a property). That must be accomplished by the county or by a licensed septic inspector. Dale mentioned, however, that if you are in need of a legal inspection, he can provide recommendations and coordinate the inspection to be done during your regularly scheduled maintenance. Further, Dale boasted that he and his team have seen the inside of more tanks during their daily routines than some of these inspectors. They know their crap (no pun intended) and will provide you an accurate account of any issues with your system.

Here are a few interesting points that Dale made:

- Roughly 80% of the properties he services in our area have non-conventional systems (ie. a holding tank). The size of the tank and the amount of use ultimately determines the frequency of pumping. But Dale says never go more than three years without a pump/cleaning.

- The ingredients in some medicines (especially antibiotics and those related to chemotherapy treatments) tend to stay in human waste and could potentially kill bacteria in your system. If you or a family member is on a long-term care plan, Dale recommends having the system pumped yearly. No need to panic though, it will take much more than a typical prescription to have a significant negative impact.
- The most common problem Dale has seen is a leaky or broken riser. Risers are large tubes (usually concrete or plastic) that extend up from the tank to the surface and provide access to the system. Often times, risers crack or move, which allows for water from rain, snow, or a run-off to leak into the tank. Not only will the bacteria be affected, but the tank will need to be pumped more frequently and the system could freeze in the winter since it is not sealed. So, always watch out when you're mowing or blowing your yard as bumping the risers is the common cause of damage.

So, there you have it – Septic Care 101. Whether you are a year-around resident, or a seasonal one; whether you have a complex system or a simple one – yes, it could very well be a tank with an outhouse attached on top— it is very important that you learn about your system and follow the available guidance to regularly clean and maintain it. I believe it is one of the small things each of us can do that will have a huge impact on the quality of the water in our lakes.

As the specific action plans from the WRAPS report evolve, BPLA will be tasked with educating our members and sharing details regarding what you can do to help. So, look forward to that, but in the meantime, when the weather gets nice again, stop dragging your stool because it might actually be time to scooper that pooper.



## Local Business Spotlight

### Town and Country Insurance

Emmelee Sundet



Town & Country Insurance was established in 1977. Over the years it has grown to 26 employees with offices in Finlayson, Hinckley & Mora. We strive to make sure that your insurance experience is as seamless as possible. All our agents work together, so if your agent is not available, there are a team of agents that can help you! As an independent insurance agency, we have over 20 top rated carriers. We write all lines of insurance such as Home, Auto, Life, Health, Business, and all your Recreational items. If you have any other unique insurance needs, we probably have a market.

*Town & Country Insurance* can be contacted at:

Office: 320-233-6684

Email: [info@townandcountry-ins.com](mailto:info@townandcountry-ins.com)



### Fisheries Update

Don Roepke



It was a tough summer for raising Walleyes to be stocked in the state of Minnesota. Both the Minnesota DNR and private Walleye raising companies experienced low water and the problems that accompany it. The problems were bad enough that the MN DNR came up short on needed fingerlings for stocking to their planned numbers. This forced the DNR to purchase walleye fingerlings from state approved vendors. They were hoping to be able to purchase enough to fulfil all their planned needs from this short supply.

I am happy to report we were able to have both lakes stocked as planned by BPLA. The stocking was done on October 29<sup>th</sup> by West Central Bait. John and Denise Mueller and I were there to observe the stocking process. We were lucky enough to be able to join in the stocking, by releasing the Walleye fingerlings into the lakes a dip net full at a time. The total number of Walleyes stocked was 3000 with sizes from 3" to 8". We released 1500 at each public landing. The fingerlings were healthy and very lively swimming off into their new home. That's more walleye than I have handled in my lifetime!

### Local Business

Please patronize the businesses  
that support BPLA!  
They are important to our success

A&M Pumps_____	320-676-3386
Aitkin County Sheriff_____	218-927-7435
American Septic_____	320-384-7300
Ausmus Floor & Furnishing_____	320-384-6101
Brett Paige Construction_____	320-630-6270
Chris' Food Center_____	320-245-2229
Complete Cabin Care _____	763-898-0474
DB Cleaning_____	218-341-9935
East Central Energy_____	800-254-7944
Finlayson Ag & Hardware_____	320-233-7372
Finlayson Storage_____	612-229-9205
Grace Construction _____	320-279-1552
Hayland Woods Native Nursery___	320-983-2584
Leach Electric_____	320-532-3277
Lindgren Land Surveying_____	651-303-9217
Man's Mowing_____	320-630-5336
Maple Run Orchard_____	320-279-1306
Matt's Sanitation_____	320-384-7137
Members Cooperative Credit Un._	320-245-5251
MJC Equipment_____	320-245-5127
Moose Lake Implement & Sports_	218-485-4486
MPJ Enterprises_____	320-245-5127
Northview Bank_____	320-233-7575
Old & New Staining & Painting___	218-341-7590
Paul's Portables_____	320-245-6802
Pine County Sheriff_____	320-629-8380
Pine Lake Mini Storage_____	320-233-6394
Purple Pumper_____	320-245-6812
Rapit Printing_____	651-633-4600
Sandstone Ace Hardware_____	320-245-2235
Sandy's Salon_____	320-233-6192
Schoenrock Construction_____	320-233-6192
Town & Country Insurance_____	320-233-6684
United Country Real Estate_____	320-245-2502
Xtreme Custom Canvas_____	763-647-0316

***Business Directories handouts are  
available at Membership meetings***

**BPLA Mailing address is PO Box 190, Finlayson, MN 55735**