



# PINE VIEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
BIG PINE LAKES ASSOCIATION

**February 2023**

P.O. Box 190 Finlayson, MN 55735

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

## BPLA Board of Directors

John Mueller, Co-Chair (6)  
[Johnmueller17@gmail.com](mailto:Johnmueller17@gmail.com), Big Pine Lk

Roger Olson, Co-Chair (2)  
[rbolson55@gmail.com](mailto:rbolson55@gmail.com) Pine Lk

Maria Gobely, Treasurer (5)  
[gobely@hotmail.com](mailto:gobely@hotmail.com) Big Pine Lk

Dan Frey, Director (4)  
[dnefrey@gmail.com](mailto:dnefrey@gmail.com) Pine Lk

Jim Corbo, Secretary (3)  
[james.a.corbo@gmail.com](mailto:james.a.corbo@gmail.com) Big Pine Lk

Don Roepke, Director (3)  
[drgrouse@yahoo.com](mailto:drgrouse@yahoo.com) Pine Lk

Dwight Benoy, Director (3)  
[dbenoy@comcast.net](mailto:dbenoy@comcast.net) Pine Lk

Sue Bonine, Director (1)  
[susan.bonine@gmail.com](mailto:susan.bonine@gmail.com) Big Pine Lk

(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: Sue Bonine

Volunteer Committee: Don Roepke  
/ Ron Redding

Water Quality: Dwight Benoy

Fish Habitat: Don Roepke

Website: John Mueller

## Chairman's Column

John Mueller

Welcome to 2023!

As we roll through the winter months and start thinking of Spring, Mother Nature continues to remind us that in Minnesota, with our snowiest winter in recent past, individuals who can't find snow related activities to explore will be spending a considerable amount of time inside (or traveling to a warmer climate!).

Our BPLA initiatives throughout the past year continue to support our efforts to "Preserve and Enhance the Quality of our Lakes". BPLA sponsored activities last year included the July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities, a summer picnic, two membership meetings and multiple volunteer days throughout the summer. BPLA Board Member, Maria Gobely helped coordinate 4 additional buffer zone improvement projects around the lakes, with support funding provided by Aitkin and Pine Counties. Board Member Don Roepke has been actively involved with numerous meetings related to the "1 Watershed 1 Plan" (1W1P) that is currently in the review/strategic planning stages. When completed, the 1W1P will help determine future improvement plans for the Upper St. Croix/Kettle River Watershed (our lakes watershed). Through Don's efforts we continue to press for inclusion of our Pine/Big Pine priorities in the plan.

BPLA has also continued our educational efforts on Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) avoidance. We've shared documentation and placed signage bringing the message forth of Clean-Drain-Dry, as it relates to boat maintenance while trailering boats. We encourage all boat owners (including lake guests) to take this to heart as a way to avoid future AIS infestations in our waterways.

During our fall meeting in 2022, we welcomed Sue Bonine to our BPLA Board, representing Big Pine Lake. Check out Sue's article in this newsletter to learn more about the Washenberger Clan and their lake history. Additionally, Roger Olson has been designated Co-Chair for the BPLA Board representing Pine Lake.

Thank you for your support of BPLA in the past; we look forward to a successful new year in 2023.

See you around the lakes. *John*



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## Volunteer Project Days

Don Roepke

The Snow and Cold make thinking of sunshine and liquid water seem far off in time. But spring is coming and along with it our "Volunteer Project Days". We are looking forward to seeing the friendly faces of past years' volunteers as well as meeting new volunteers to help us tackle projects around the lakes.

### Some of our completed 2022 Projects

- Repaired/replaced signs at School House Creek, Pine Lake Overlook, and Strawberry Creek
- Due to high water last spring, we removed a floating wooden bench and a large plank from the Narrows and also cleared flood debris from the BPLA Buffer zone.
- Pulled Loon Nesting Platforms and resealed one platform to keep it floating.
- Repaired, cleaned, and painted Kiosks.
- Straightened and reinforced the bridge clearance signs at the Narrows channel.
- Cleared downed trees and debris from the Overlook hiking trail.

### Planned tasks for 2023:

- Install the Loon nest platforms at ice out
- Putting in BPLA Fishing Dock on the South Lake
- Clearing brush and debris from the Overlook hiking trail
- Install sign on Kaeder Creek.

Please contact me if you have ideas on any other projects for the BPLA.Volunteer / Project Days

## Buffer Zones

Maria Gobely

Last year we completed 3 projects, replaced a few hundred feet of willow wattle, and squeezed in 7 fall site visits before the snows for 2023 projects in spite of spring ice heaves, extended duration of high water, and DNR permit delays. One of the plans has already been submitted to SWCD for funding.

It was also the largest amount of grants received, nearly \$24,000 leveraged from \$13,000 of volunteer labor. A giant thank you to all the helpers!! Without the community volunteers, this would not be possible to accomplish the physical work and receive this level of funding. Our lakes have become the model to other lake associations, SWCDs, DNR, and other conservation agencies because of our members' conservation commitment and efforts. This reputation is a great asset because agencies know we will put funding to good use, keeping us on the priority list for grant opportunities.

The Illi project was very large in size with elevation challenges and a variety of solutions. It was done in 2 phases. Ground contractors were used for waterline rock moving and angle of the ground. Plus a large area of geocell was installed on their access trail with a steep slope to stabilize for heavy use (even atv's). This is the 1<sup>st</sup> one I've seen or heard of on the lakes. I was very curious to see it in action as we're contemplating using it for a vertical application. Please reach out to me if you have interest in buffer zone information, project, volunteering, or if you have historical info or pictures at [gobely@hotmail.com](mailto:gobely@hotmail.com).

Geocell installed from near the dog to lower right corner of the picture. Slope checks are the 3 rows with plants in them that look and act like speed bumps for water runoff. They slow down and filter water coming down the hill to stop washout and erosion of the soil. The deep roots of the plants stabilize the soil and hill.



## "Lake Association gives generously to local food shelf"

Reprint of article published in the North Pine County News, Nov. 10, 2022, by Sara Goldstein

Through the winding picturesque roads just west of Finlayson, there is a small lake community on Pine and Big Pine Lakes that have taken their love of lake life to join together to help make life a little easier for others in the Finlayson area.

The Big Pine Lakes Assoc. (BPLA) presented Sonia Palmer, Director of Advancement for Family Pathways, with a check for \$4,140, to be used to purchase food and other items for the Family Pathways Food Shelf. BPLA has been donating to Family Pathways since at least 2007, which is as far back as records go. Palmer stated that donations and volunteers keep the food shelf going strong. "You never know who will come through the door, sometimes it's a regular who is on a limited income and sometimes it is someone you'll only see once, but they are all equally important," remarked Palmer.

John Mueller, co-chairman of BPLA, said that "he is super proud of the work that BPLA has done with Family Pathways year after year." Part of the membership with BPLA is choosing an option for giving back to the community and one of the options is a financial donation to Family Pathways, which allows BPLA and its members to give approximately \$3-4,000 per year.

BPLA is very service driven and besides their donations to Family Pathways, they hold volunteer days several times a year to make the lake area a beautiful and enjoyable place for everyone. In 2022, the BPLA has already completed several service projects which include and are not limited to; installing a fishing dock, cleaning up the buffer zones, clearing downed trees and caring for the hiking trails. They host an annual picnic, which had over 65 attendees this year, as well as regular meetings to plan projects, memberships and fun activities for the lake families including an incredible fireworks display and boat parade to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.



Dan Frey, John Mueller, Sonia Palmer (Director of Advancement for Family Pathways), Don Roepke, Dwight Benoy

### BPLA Calendar of Events 2023

- Roadway Clean-up** Saturday May 20
- Project Day** Saturday May 20
- Membership Meeting** Saturday May 27
- Project Day** Saturday June 24
- Boat Parade** Saturday July 1
- Fireworks** Saturday July 1
- Fireworks Clean-up** Sunday July 2
- Annual Picnic** Saturday July 15
- Project Day** Saturday August 19
- Membership Meeting** Saturday Sept 2
- Project Day** Saturday Sept 16
- Roadway Clean-up** Saturday Sept 16



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## Random Thoughts

Jim Corbo

Name that tune: "So he said let's run and we'll have some fun now before I melt away." Frosty the Snowman – you say? Ding Ding – you would be correct. While that answer might be quite obvious, the question remains... what day will it be when the sun is actually hot enough to send good ol' Frosty "hurrying on his way?" Well, according to Punxsutawney Phil, "No matter how you measure, it's six more weeks..." Six more weeks of snow and frost to look forward to. At least. Ooof-Duh!

As I write this, it is 64 degrees in Fresno, CA; -8 degrees in Finlayson – only a 72 degree difference. I just finished a wonderful week-long stay with my family in Puerto Vallarta where the average temperature was 80 degrees. And, I have several Punta Cana trips scheduled in the next month. For work, of course. Am I rubbing it in too much? Not to worry, by the time you are reading this it will already have warmed up quite a bit – a nice heat wave. I digress. Perhaps this gives you an idea of how I really feel about our lovely Minnesota winter at its current phase. But, hey, that's just me.

The Winter Fun and Activities committee (aka most of my neighbors on the north lake) is in full force these days and there always seems to be something exciting going on. This, again, is why I love being part of the Big Pine Lakes community (even if I'm not physically present). I'll even take a quick moment here to throw in a plug for our friends up at Denham Run as they prepare to host their 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Cardboard and Duct Tape Sled Race later in February.

All that said, it has been a fairly rough start to our winter with the heavy amounts of snowfall during the 2022 holiday season. The views were breathtaking, but the damage was extensive. Many mature trees have snapped in half or have lost huge limbs. Some will be completely lost. At one point, I could barely get my truck down my driveway because the trees were bent over so far. Roofs and other personal property damaged. The snow was so deep that it was hard to find places to move it. I have no doubt that spring clean up will keep many of us busy this season.

So, as we welcome the New Year and (in some cases) look forward to the summer nights on the lake once again, don't forget to reference the BPLA business directory for any clean-up or repair-related and any other needs that you may have. Whether you are a full time resident or a cabin dweller, there are a lot of local companies that help support the Big Pine Lakes Association and we always like to send business their way. Thank you!

Okay, here's one more for you: "Niblin' on sponge cake. Watchin' the sun bake. All of those tourists covered in oil." Now that's more like it!! You'll find me here... until summer, anyway.



## Fisheries Update

Don Roepke



There have been changes in the local DNR Fisheries Department. Leslie George, Hinckley Area Fisheries Supervisor, was promoted and has moved onto her new job as DNR Northeast Region Fisheries Manager. Leslie has been very helpful to the BPLA organization and we wish her well in her new position.

Deb Vermeersch, Assistant Area Fisheries Supervisor, updated me on the 2023 fall stocking of Walleyes by the DNR. The fingerlings were from another DNR area that had surplus fingerlings available. Big Pine Lake received 194 lbs. with an estimated 15 fish per pound and Pine Lake received 140 lbs. with an estimated 12 fish per pound. As an fyi, Deb will be in attendance at the BPLA May meeting to discuss the current status of our fishery.

# Water Quality

Dwight Benoy

Water, Water, Everywhere? That's the cover of the Winter 2023 University of Minnesota Alumni magazine. Minnesota is the Land of 10,000 lakes (11,842) so we don't need to worry about water, right? We take it for granted that clean water will come out of our tap when we open it. It's difficult to believe that there are water supply issues in Minnesota.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) notes that groundwater is the source of drinking water for about 75% of all Minnesotans. The groundwater in regions of the state is contaminated and is being depleted faster than it can be recharged. High nitrate levels have been found due to agricultural operations and failing septic systems. Other contaminants in groundwater are due to industrial operations.

Lead in drinking water is a nation-wide problem primarily due to pipes and solder used in service lines before 1986. There are currently approximately 100,000 lead service lines in Minnesota. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed in 2021 provides funding to eliminate lead service lines. It's estimated that Minnesota needs about \$4 billion to address lead in the drinking water infrastructure.

Aquifers, which are the subterranean areas where groundwater is found, are being overused in some regions such that they cannot be recharged as fast as they are being drawn down. This makes these aquifers more susceptible to contamination and can adversely affect surface waters. This is not a sustainable situation which will require better management to ensure suitable drinking water sources for the future.

If you have a well it's wise to have the water tested every one to two years. Aitkin County Environmental Services Water Lab offers test kits and testing for coliform bacteria and nitrates. Pine County Soil and Water Conservation District has suspended their well water testing service until a new laboratory can be found that services this area.

If your primary residence is in another county, many counties or soil and water conservation districts offer water testing services along with private laboratories. You can bring your water sample from the cabin to one of these other service locations for testing. In addition to nitrates and coliform bacteria, you may want to consider testing for arsenic, manganese and lead. Up-to-date information can be found on county websites. It's time to take a fresh look at how we use one of our most precious resources.

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## Membership Committee

John Mueller

Our 2023 BPLA Membership enrollment is now under way. BPLA members receive 3 newsletters annually, have their names included in the BPLA Membership Directory, 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. 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.

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 2024 BPLA membership (\$25 value). For those curious, in 2022 the Ice Out date was April 28<sup>th</sup>. As of February 1<sup>st</sup>, there is approximately 18" of ice on the lakes, covered by 2-4" of slush and then 10-15" of snow.

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 out our website: [www.BigPineLakes.org](http://www.BigPineLakes.org). Thank you for your continued support and confidence in BPLA!

# Our Family History on Big Pine Lake

Sue Bonine

Hello, I'm Sue, and will first share a bit of our family's history of how we landed here on Big Pine Lake in Finlayson, MN. It was Grandma (Katie) Washenberger's love of family that prompted her to convince Grandpa (George) to look for a location where their family could gather and share leisurely times together. Family meals, time spent fishing and swimming, playing games from Jarts and Stick Ball during the day to late nights of board games and poker were favorites.

Our family's lake story begins in the mid-1960s when Grandma and Grandpa Washenberger and Mike and Lillian Elle began looking for a spot they could afford to buy. In the spring of 1968, they each purchased a single lot from Robie and Stella Robinson, with lake access on Big Pine Lake.

Over the past 55 years our family has expanded and spread across 20 acres of adjoining properties where George and Katie's two living children (two others have gone on to their eternal reward), their children's children, and their children's children's children, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins, new and old parents, and grandparents have become known and remain friends across four generations.

Sharing a common memory and legacy is at the heart of the Washenberger Compound.

I am the oldest granddaughter and more grateful than ever now, with grandchildren of my own, for the opportunities we have to cultivate and care for the land and water, share it with one another, and live with gratitude that "If you're lucky enough to live at the lake you're lucky enough!" We're lucky enough to steward a cherished slice of God's beautiful creation on the east shore of Big Pine Lake as friendly neighbors.

I joined the BPLA to represent our family who want to contribute our time and talent to give back to this community that has meant so much to all of us over the years and we hope to leave it even better for future generations to enjoy! As we did before them, our grandchildren are watching and learning and also teaching us—we will all do better together.

Thank you for this opportunity. I enjoy being outside and doing projects at the lake, so it will be fun to extend that enjoyment to the BPLA initiatives I'll be lucky enough to work on with the other board members and friends of BPLA.

# Local Business Directory

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
Custom Portable Docks & Lifts__	320-384-6296
Double W Tree Service_____	320-279-1472
East Central Energy_____	800-254-7944
Finlayson Ag & Hardware_____	320-233-7372
Finlayson Storage_____	612-229-9205
Grace Construction _____	320-279-1552
Gruve _____	763-438-9365
Hayland Woods Native Nursery__	320-983-2584
LaRose Greenhouse & Nursery __	320-233-7455
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
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_____	320-279-3899
Purple Pumper_____	320-245-6812
Rapit Printing_____	651-633-4600
Re/Max Select, Inc._____	320-679-2594
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
The Vintage Pub _____	320-279-2622
Xtreme Custom Canvas_____	763-647-0316

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