

## QUIET LAKES IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

### Minutes of the July 28, 2020 Meeting of the Executive Committee

In order to avoid the risks associated with an in-person meeting during the COVID-19 pandemic, President Dave Neuswanger arranged a virtual meeting using Zoom's teleconferencing platform. EXCOM members Dave Neuswanger, Norm Bratteig (Vice President), LouAnn Phelps (Interim Treasurer), and Steve Fiala (Director-at-Large) participated in the full meeting starting at 10:00 a.m. and ending at 11:30 a.m. Jane Precht resigned her position as Secretary effective June 20, 2020 in order to prepare for a move back to Chicago by July 31, so Dave Neuswanger recorded the Zoom meeting and has submitted these Minutes based on that recording.

#### COVID-19 IMPACT ON 2020 ANNUAL MEETINGS/EVENTS:

- After discussion, the EXCOM voted not to hold an in-person annual meeting in 2020. The vote to forego the meeting was 3 in favor and none opposed, with 1 abstaining. The primary rationale for this decision was our collective belief that such a meeting could not be held safely due to the likelihood of non-compliance with unenforceable masking and social distancing guidelines, placing many senior members at unacceptable risk of contact with potentially asymptomatic spreaders of COVID-19. It was felt that our website at [www.quietlakes.org](http://www.quietlakes.org) would serve as an acceptable means of sharing important news and events with members until the pandemic subsides.
- After further discussion, the EXCOM voted not to hold a virtual annual meeting in 2020 either. The vote to forego a virtual annual meeting was 3 in favor and 1 opposed. One reason for this decision was concern over achieving a quorum of 10 participating members who would be comfortable using the new teleconferencing technology. Moreover, even the best teleconferencing platforms (like Zoom) cannot authenticate a vote. Zoom can "poll" meeting participants, but the poll lacks confidentiality, and there is no way to validate whether a polling response has been submitted by the sole authorized member of a family membership.
- The EXCOM voted unanimously to forego the traditional August picnic social in 2020.

#### OFFICER TURNOVER AND TERM ADJUSTMENTS:

- Jane Precht resigned her position as Secretary on June 20, 2020 after doing an outstanding job since taking office in July of 2019. Jane and her husband, Tom, are moving to Chicago. We wish them well, but we will miss Jane's high competence, enthusiasm, and innovative thinking. The EXCOM authorized Dave Neuswanger to contact prospective candidates to serve as Interim Secretary for the remainder of Jane's term through July of 2021.
- LouAnn Phelps has done a wonderful job serving as Interim Treasurer during the remainder of Gayle Little's term, which ended with today's meeting in the absence of an annual meeting of the general membership. LouAnn's sound judgement and conscientious attention to detail have kept QLIA fiscally sound without missing a beat. Seeking a bit more time for other volunteer activities and some serious musky fishing, LouAnn has begun orienting a new Interim Treasurer to serve until the election for Treasurer by the general membership in July of 2022 (even-year cycle under QLIA By-Laws). Perry Cowan (Lost Land Lake) is unanimously welcomed to the EXCOM!

- Norm Bratteig's most recent two-year term as Vice-President normally would have expired at a July 2020 annual meeting of the general membership. However, that meeting will not occur, and we know of no affordable way to conduct a legitimate, confidential vote for officers outside the framework of an in-person meeting. (We lack the resources to conduct a proper absentee vote.) With EXCOM encouragement and approval, Norm has graciously agreed to serve another two-year term as Vice-President until his office, like the Treasurer's, is up for election again in July of 2022.
- Under QLIA By-Laws, we must hold odd-year elections for the offices of President (currently Dave Neuswanger), Secretary (currently vacant), and Director-at-Large (currently Steve Fiala). These offices will be up for election in July of 2021, assuming we can safely resume in-person annual meetings of the general membership by that time. Nominations for these positions will be welcomed throughout the upcoming year.

#### TREASURER'S REPORT ON FINANCE AND MEMBERSHIP:

- LouAnn Phelps has maintained and updated our QLIA financial spreadsheet, which shows that our total balance on hand as of 7/30/20 was \$8,451.34. Approximately 44% of that amount (\$3,702.72) is held in our checking account, which funds general operations. The remaining 56% (\$4,748.62) is held in our savings account, where we have deliberately segregated all funds donated specifically to support Eco-Harvester operations to control Hybrid Eurasian Water Milfoil in Lost Land and Teal lakes.
- Major expenditures since our 2019 annual meeting include our annual payment of \$560 for Directors and Officers Liability Insurance (required of all Wisconsin lake associations and due again in mid-September 2020); an annual storage and maintenance fee of \$750 for the Eco-Harvester aquatic plant puller; and our annual insurance premium of \$928 for liability and comprehensive coverage on the Eco-Harvester.
- LouAnn experienced considerable inconvenience and time delays in association with the buyout of People's Bank of Hayward by Frandsen Bank & Trust. We now have a new checking account number, and LouAnn has ordered new checks. LouAnn also procured a new endorsement stamp (for checks received) and a ledger for recording deposits.
- LouAnn reported that QLIA currently has 201 memberships.

#### HEWM STATUS AND COVID-19 IMPACT ON ECO-HARVESTER OPERATIONS:

Based on observations while fishing, Neuswanger and Fiala reported that Hybrid Eurasian Water Milfoil (HEWM) is still present, but they felt it was much reduced in certain areas. One of the worst HEWM infestations near the north shore of Wilson Bay where we harvested last year has been largely recolonized by desirable native plants like Large-leaf pondweed. But another area of Eco-Harvester operation west of Wilson Bay Lodge still exhibits dense growth of HEWM. Both EXCOM members reported reduced coverage by milfoil in Bailey's Bay and parts of Steamboat Bay where HEWM was previously dominant but has never been mechanically harvested. The same is true of a bay in NW Teal Lake that was choked with HEWM last year but almost devoid of it this year. Because these unharvested areas experienced a decline in HEWM from 2019 to 2020, it is not yet possible to conclude that harvested sites are improving because of mechanical intervention.

For reasons not clear to us, HEWM has been late in developing this year, so the tips of plants are only now approaching the surface, making it easier for our Eco-Harvester to pull plants out by the roots rather than breaking them part-way down the stem. Dave Neuswanger expressed serious reservations about placing volunteer operators at risk, because we have learned that efficient operations require two people to work in very close proximity to one another onboard the Eco-Harvester. Dave indicated he would not approve of placing a two-person operating team at such risk unless those two people were already in the same “social circle” – meaning they have frequently interacted in close quarters (such as husband/wife) and therefore have already been exposed to whatever virus the other may be carrying. If COVID-19 did not have the insidious trait of rendering people highly contagious for up to 48 hours before the onset of symptoms, this would not be such a constraint to operations. But since there is no way to know if the person we are working alongside is infected, we cannot risk pairing people who have not already made the conscious choice to share air space.

We lost a couple prospective husband/wife teams of operators due to job changes, so 2020 Eco-Harvester operations will be limited to a handful of volunteers who are already in the same “social circle” as defined above. After this meeting, Norm Bratteig plans to apply to the Wisconsin DNR for an annual renewal permit for mechanical plant removal. DNR will have 15 days to review and approve the application. So the earliest 2020 operations would be mid-August. Norm Bratteig and Steve Fiala are comfortable working alongside each other, and they may seek a couple other volunteers who are in the same social circle for whom Eco-Harvester operation will pose no elevated risk of spreading COVID-19. While awaiting the permit, Norm plans to modify a couple Eco-Harvester grease zerks so that all lubrication can be done above water line; and he will modify the sunshade mast to prevent strong wind from blowing it over.

#### COVID-19 IMPACT ON NORTHWEST LAKES CONFERENCE - JUNE 19, 2020:

Sponsors canceled the in-person meeting in Spooner and held a “Virtual Conference” instead. Dave Neuswanger canceled his keynote address on mechanical plant harvest and did not participate in the Virtual Conference. One recorded presentation from the virtual conference raised serious concerns about the ecological safety of 2,4-D aquatic herbicide, which QLIA decided not to use a few years ago when adopting a mechanical HEWM control strategy.

Dave withdrew his fall 2019 request for authorization to purchase a digital data projector to use for presentations; and Steve Fiala generously offered to lend his personal digital data projection equipment if we decide to have presentations at future general membership meetings.

#### NAVIGATION HAZARD BUOYS:

At our October 22, 2019 EXCOM meeting, we voted to authorize purchase of five additional buoys at \$50-\$100 each – three to be placed at new hazard sites (e.g., the rock reef in Steamboat Bay) and two to keep on hand for quick replacement as necessary. John Grady, Program Leader for Shoreland Habitat Enhancement and Navigation Safety, was to be tasked with placing the buoys and will also be given a \$1,000 cap to purchase any necessary chains or replacement hardware as needed for installation. John had not yet been asked to pursue these purchases, so Dave will contact him in the near future to request his assistance.

#### COVID-19 IMPACT ON WDNR FISH SURVEYS:

All planned 2020 fish surveys were canceled by the Wisconsin DNR in the interest of crew safety as COVID-19 continues to pose a significant threat to people working in close proximity to one another. Results of all previous surveys, fish stockings, and other “fishy” news are posted in the “Latest News” slider or the “Fisheries” page of our website at [www.quietlakes.org](http://www.quietlakes.org).

#### COVID-19 IMPACT ON WATER QUALITY MONITORING IN LOST LAND AND TEAL:

The State Lab of Hygiene has been overwhelmed at times with requests for COVID-19 testing, so Bryan Neuswanger (Lost Land) and Carol Jarzina (Teal) have not collected and mailed monthly water samples to be analyzed by SLOH for total phosphorus and chlorophyll *a*. Fortunately, successful collection and analysis of samples from Teal in 2019 produced results that should lower the 5-year average for these indexes of eutrophication enough to trigger the removal of Teal Lake from WDNR’s “impaired waters” list. Water quality in both lakes is excellent. Bryan and Carol continue to exercise the option to document water temperature, dissolved oxygen, and Secchi disk visibility during summer of 2020, which does not require mailing samples to the State Lab. Details are in the “Latest News” slider at [www.quietlakes.org](http://www.quietlakes.org).

#### PIERS ON GHOST LAKE DAM:

Dave briefed other members of the EXCOM on a worrisome issue for two of our valued members – Terry and Michelle Conroy – who have often opened their facilities at the historic Boulder Lodge to host QLIA annual meetings and picnic socials. Piers owned by Boulder Properties, LLC have existed on Ghost Lake Dam for decades in order to provide water access to guests who rent cabins and camping spaces on the property. Since a 1997 agreement, the Town of Spider Lake, which owns the dam, has welcomed the piers in exchange for dam maintenance services by the owners of Boulder Lodge. Terry and Michelle have been excellent stewards of the dam, mowing it weekly and removing floating woody debris as it accumulates between the piers and against the trash racks on the drop outlet tower. Without seeking first to understand the history or onsite conditions at the dam, Wisconsin DNR responded to a casual inquiry about the piers by ordering their removal, ostensibly for dam safety reasons. As a former DNR fisheries supervisor with experience planning, building, maintaining, repairing, and even removing dams, Dave does not believe there are any legitimate safety concerns at the Ghost Lake Dam. The only option for the Conroys to provide water access to their guests would be to build several long, expensive boardwalks to piers across the wide wetland fringe along their frontage north of the dam, intruding significantly (but legally) on those scenic wetlands and adversely impacting their ecosystem function. Dave cannot understand why the Wisconsin DNR, of all agencies, would prefer that option to the current condition, especially when moving the piers would strain the finances of small business owners at the worst possible time, during a global pandemic.

As President of QLIA, Dave has taken a stand by informing his former employer (WDNR), in writing, that their position is indefensible, their handling of the situation unprofessional, and their order unacceptable. From a standpoint of dam safety, wetland ecosystem preservation, and small business survival, WDNR must reconsider and rescind their ill-advised order. There are no partisan politics involved here. Dams and wetlands do not know if their caretakers are Red or Blue. What we care about at QLIA is the preservation and wise use of extraordinary natural resources that bring us together as a thriving community of good neighbors living in harmony with nature. We are determined to set this right.