

Oct. 22nd 2020

The Muskrat Minute

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance

www.mccarronslakefront.org

THANKFUL FOR LAKE MCCARRONS

Welcome to the fall 2020 edition of the Muskrat Minute, the sporadic newsletter of McCarrons Lakefront Alliance! We don't know about you, but this summer of social distancing made us more grateful for Lake McCarrons than ever. We feel so lucky to be able to enjoy the lake and connect with nature at a time when things feel uncertain and all of us are doing our best to stay safe. We hope you all feel the same -- however you enjoyed Lake McCarrons this summer! Now, let's get to some long overdue updates!

E. COLI UPDATE

We have some good news/bad news on the E. coli front. The good news is that aside from two brief beach closures, the levels of E. coli in Lake McCarrons were safe for most of the summer. But sadly, this is because Ramsey County decided the huge number of geese at McCarrons beach was becoming unsafe for the public, so the geese were rounded up and euthanized. We were told that Ramsey County staff just couldn't keep up with cleaning up all of the feces to keep the beach safe. At one point, we counted more than 50 geese at the beach! And we were told workers were carrying "loads and loads" of feces away from the beach daily.

The county will be coming up with a plan for 2021 sometime in coming months. Some of what can be done will depend on budgets, which are hurting for everyone due to COVID-19. But we will try to stay on top of these discussions and give input when appropriate so we can hopefully have a better management strategy for 2021 and beyond.

One neighbor suggested redoing the terrain over at the beach, to make it less attractive to geese. We are told that the beach and park are due for a master plan update. McCarrons Lakefront Alliance hopes to be part of those discussions as well, to help come up with more long-term solutions. As always, if any of you have ideas, please send them to info@mccarronslakefront.org

For a summary of how the E. coli levels played out over the summer, you can find weekly bacteria test results on the county's web page: <https://opendata.ramseycounty.us/stories/s/qk94-4yn9>

BECOME A MEMBER

If you are interested in becoming an official member of McCarrons Lakefront Alliance, visit our website and fill out an application. Donations are welcome, but not required.

<https://www.mccarronslakefront.org/membership-application/>

If you know of neighbors who might be interested in receiving our information, refer them to our website ([link](#)) and we'll make sure to connect with them!

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ZEBRA MUSSEL UPDATE



It's been a year since zebra mussels were discovered in Lake McCarrons. Since then, we have partnered with the Ramsey County Invasive Species Coordinator to better understand the impact on Lake McCarrons and share knowledge with the community. We worked to design a plan to monitor zebra mussel population density and growth in the lake.

Funded by donations to McCarrons Lakefront Alliance, board secretary Chris Sluis volunteered to build zebra mussel samplers and install them at different depths in the lake. The samplers will remain in the lake through the winter for year-to-year zebra mussel comparison.

On Oct. 12th with frigid 58 degree water temperature, the samplers were checked after four months in the lake. Great news is that they are working, bad news is that there were a lot of zebra mussels attached. The significant collection also matches with what a diver found during a separate survey of the lake.

All of the data we collect will be shared with the Ramsey County Invasive Species Coordinator to help support the overall research of the lake. We look forward to sharing the results from this monitoring program each year and more about what it means for the lake.



WATERGUARDS

To help prevent the spread of invasive species, the boat launch at Lake McCarrons was staffed periodically by members of the WaterGuards program over the summer. The inspectors trained by the DNR were at the boat launch at random times, to ensure that no one entering or leaving the lake had invasive species on their boat. They also educated boaters about things they can do to stop the spread of zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species.

The WaterGuards don't have the authority to issue citations, but they can deny launch if someone tries to enter the lake with invasive species on their boat. For more information on the WaterGuards program, visit <http://www.waterguards.net>

Separately, some of you may have noticed some new tools at the boat launch!!! These were placed at the launch by Ramsey County, to make it easier for boaters to clean their watercraft. Feel free to use them!

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OUTLET MAINTENANCE

Board secretary Chris Sluis met with officials from Ramsey County to talk about lake levels and general cleaning and maintenance of the outlet. We are really lucky at Lake McCarrons to have an outlet that helps control lake levels – but as many of you know, that outlet can get clogged, which can lead to higher lake levels.

After our meeting, the county said that they would be responsible for cleaning and general maintenance of the outlet on a weekly basis during the summer (May through August) but they would be monitoring the outlet less frequently starting in early September. We agreed that McCarrons Lakefront Alliance would provide help with cleanup in September, October and in April. The county is also going to work with the Capitol Region Watershed District to see if they can support some maintenance efforts.

The county and Chris discussed removing the grate from the outlet side of the culvert so debris does not accumulate. Typically, a grate is not installed on the outlet side of culverts to prevent someone from getting trapped by water flow but it was decided to keep the grate to prevent unauthorized entry if the culvert dries out.

The county agreed to discuss restoration and improvements to the outlet with the Capitol Region Watershed District. Those discussions will likely happen in the fall or winter, and McCarrons Lakefront Alliance will be part of the process. Before any restoration can happen, we need to get the existing outlet plans from the CRWD. A survey of the current outlet also likely needs to be completed to ensure proper elevation and set boundaries and depths for restoration. Ramsey County will organize restoration efforts to excavate vegetation and sediment from the outlet channel based on survey assessment.

We also discussed the possibility of a grate redesign and an outlet redesign. We will keep you posted on updates. For now, the 2020 CRWD plan has a redesign assessment anticipated for 2028.

HELP NEEDED!



We are looking for a handful of volunteers to help clean out the lake outlet once or twice this fall. Leaves clog the grate quickly and raise lake levels. It takes less than 10 minutes to clean and has a huge impact. If the lake freezes high, ice heaves into the shoreline causing significant damage and erosion. Help protect our shoreline and let us know if you are willing to help!



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ALLIANCE FUN

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance had some grand plans for social events and lake fun during our first year. But like everything, those plans got scuttled due to the pandemic. We are already looking ahead to some fun plans next year! And if it's safe, we'll definitely be hosting our winter gathering again in February. Stay tuned!

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

In an effort to avoid junking up your email inboxes and keeping everyone informed and better connected, McCarrons Lakefront Alliance started a Facebook page. Like and follow us at <https://www.facebook.com/McCarronsLakefront> for periodic updates on projects, news on bacteria levels and other information. Urgent updates, such as beach closures, will also be sent to everyone's email. IMPORTANT NOTE: We originally started a Facebook group, instead of a page, and found that wasn't the best way to go forward. We will be deleting the group, so if you joined that, please make sure to follow the "page" instead (it has a photo of a loon as the profile picture.)

Our website, <https://www.mccarronslakefront.org> remains the best way to get official board business like our meeting minutes, agendas, membership info – and information about the lake and other resources. You can also find a membership application there. If you aren't on our email list, please reach out to info@mccarronslakefront.org and we will be happy to add you! Updates to the website are coming soon!

GET INVOLVED

There are several opportunities for members to get involved in McCarrons Lakefront Alliance activities (while social distancing!). If you would like to participate in one or more of these committees, please reach out to us at info@mccarronslakefront.org to learn more.

- Zebra Mussel Trackers: We are setting up a tracking program with Ramsey County in an effort to help collect data for possible future treatments, etc.
- Outlet Brigade: We are seeking volunteers to help clear the lake's outlet of debris.
- Welcoming Committee: We will be putting together a welcome packet for new lakefront owners, to say hello and educate them on invasive species. The materials would eventually also be distributed to local businesses and others to improve education efforts.
- Fundraising Committee: We are not actively fundraising right now, but if you have fundraising skills and would like to help implement a plan for the future, we'd love to hear from you!

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