

March 12th 2021

The Muskrat Minute

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance

LET'S GET AN UPDATE!

Welcome to the Winter/Spring 2021 edition of the Muskrat Minute, the sporadic newsletter of McCarrons Lakefront Alliance! We are glad to say hello to a new year and new projects ahead. We have a lot of information to share – so let's get to it!

OUR FIRST YEAR

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance has just wrapped up its first full year as a formal lake association – and although the pandemic kept us from hosting the social events we would have liked, we got a lot accomplished thanks to the support from our members and volunteers! For those of you who are curious about what we have been up to, here are just a few highlights from our inaugural year:

Getting Started

We got up and running as a 501(c)(3) -- taking care of all of the legal and administrative requirements, writing bylaws and creating a solid foundation that we hope will carry McCarrons Lakefront Alliance into the future.

Building relationships

We opened up lines of communication with Ramsey County officials, the Capitol Region Watershed District and others who make decisions about the lake to ensure we have a voice when decisions are being made. On a variety of issues ranging from invasive species to E. coli, or from outlet management to fish surveys – we have been working hard to gather information, contribute our own ideas and keep everyone informed.

ICE IN/ICE OUT

It's been great to see so many people out enjoying this winter season on the lake!

We calculated that Lake McCarrons didn't see Ice-In until Dec. 25, due to a lingering area of open water on the northwest side that resisted freezing. That's not the latest Ice-In date we've had, but it is later than our average of Dec. 4. If you are curious to know how this year measured up historically, check out the Ice-In/Ice-Out data on our website: ([link](#))

Thanks again to Gordon Pierpont for providing most of data and to Ashley Sluis for creating the beautiful graphs. It really is cool to see how the different years compare. Now we wait for Ice-Out!

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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ICE CLEANUP

We would like to extend a huge thank you to our neighbors who cleaned up the trash and debris left behind by ice fishermen this year. We believe the owner of one ice house that was out on the lake most of the season is responsible for leaving behind two chairs, a jack, fishing bait, logs and garbage at multiple sites where he camped out. This is unfortunate and we will report this behavior in the future. But for now, thank you to our neighbors who took the time to be good stewards of Lake McCarrons! We appreciate you!

WINTER SOCIAL

Due to the pandemic we didn't feel it was appropriate to host a winter gathering this year. We are bummed we missed it, but we plan to bring it back in 2022.

Invasive species

We started our own zebra mussel monitoring program and in just one season, our samplers collected a lot of mussels! Each year the samplers will be removed for counting and placed back in the water for year-round monitoring. The data will be shared with Ramsey County as part of a coordinated effort to monitor zebra mussels in Lake McCarrons from year to year. Right now there is no permanent treatment for zebra mussels, but if one becomes available in the future, this data could definitely help.

E. coli

We advocated for expanded E. coli monitoring on Lake McCarrons after the prolonged beach closures of 2019. The county's attempt to use dogs to manage the goose population on the beach didn't work in 2020, but we are talking with them about better options going forward. There might be an opportunity for volunteers to get involved, so stay tuned!

Outlet Cleanup

Volunteers worked hard this year to keep the outlet near the fishing pier clear of debris. The work is important because a clean outlet keeps lake levels low. A special thanks to Chris Sluis and Andrew Montain, who cleared the outlet multiple times a week this fall to ensure the lake froze at low levels.

Outlet Redesign

We have started talking with the Capitol Region Watershed District and Ramsey County about possibilities for an outlet redesign, to avoid future clogs.

Community Outreach

We have reached out the Rice/Larpenteur Alliance about ways we can partner with them on lake issues going forward.

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DOCK FOR THE ENCLAVE

We have been talking with the developer for the new 20-house project at 210 and 196 S. McCarrons, to see if we can learn more about his proposed structure for a dock, which would be near the public fishing pier.

We are also talking with the DNR, which would have jurisdiction over any necessary permits for a dock, and we have shared our concerns with the city. We have been advocating for a dock that will be in keeping with the current character of Lake McCarrons and so far, the developer has been receptive.

Since the lake is shallow in that area, there are concerns about dock length, as well as concerns that this dock could turn into a marina-type structure, which would add an exponential number of boats to the lake. There are also concerns that it would impede activity on the public fishing pier. And, we want to ensure that construction of the dock does not negatively impact fish habitat or water quality.

So far, developer Roger Anderson has said he does not intend to build a “marina” and he will not do any dredging. Anderson said he envisions the dock will be used for kayaks, paddle boards and for residents to swim and fish. We don’t have clarity yet on what a final design will look like but it will at least reach deep enough waters to dock a motorized boat.

We have been curious about whether The Enclave’s homeowners’ association will have rules or restrictions on dock use, and we have offered a few suggestions. We were told that one of the homeowners’ association rules will be that people will not be allowed to store items (like boat trailers) outside.

Our goal is not to create more restrictions for lakefront owners, restrict boating or tell property owners what they can or can't do. But a development like this is something new for Lake McCarrons and the fear of the unknown has raised some concerns. We are hopeful that with some open discussions, McCarrons Lakefront Alliance can have some positive input and we can all work together as neighbors.

We would like to welcome our new neighbors once they arrive and we plan to do outreach with the homeowners’ association to help the new residents become good stewards of Lake McCarrons.

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A LITTLE LAKE MCCARRONS HISTORY

Ever wonder how Lake McCarrons got its name? According to a history of the area written by John McCarron, the McCarron family emigrated to the U.S. from Ireland, and John's great-grandfather, Charles McCarron, moved from Ohio to what was then Minnesota Territory in 1850. Charles McCarron became the first homesteader around the lake -- which was named after him!

John McCarron wrote that his great-grandfather homesteaded 160 acres of land between what is now Roselawn and County Road B, and Dale and Western. Part of the homestead included Villa Park, and the southern boundary of the land was the lake -- where Charles built his log cabin. He also started a dairy, which became the family business. As recently as John's childhood, the area that is now Villa Park was all cow pasture.

The McCarron family lived in the area for generations. John McCarron wrote that the family delivered milk to others by wagon, and that cutting and hauling ice from the lake was a "grueling" job. John also remembered hearing a story about a team of horses that had broken through the ice on the lake and had to be rescued!

John went into the Navy during World War II, then returned to settle on the lake and start his own family. He wrote that his three sons spent the summers swimming, fishing, boating and water skiing, and the winters skating and playing hockey.

John McCarron died in 2008. His daughter-in-law, Margie, still lives on the lake. We thank her for sharing a bit of her family history with us!

FUN FACTS

Do you have any fun facts about the history of Lake McCarrons or longtime residents? If so, feel free to submit them to info@mccarronslakefront.org so we can consider them for future newsletters. We love to learn about our lake and neighbors!

SEEKING WILDLIFE PHOTOS

One of our website updates will include a page dedicated to our wildlife friends on Lake McCarrons. Send us your best unique McCarrons wildlife photos so we can all see who visits our backyard! Photos may be sent to info@mccarronslakefront.org.

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E. COLI AND INVASIVE SPECIES

Ramsey County is working on its plans for invasive species inspections and monitoring for 2021, as well as its plans to try to keep the geese population at the beach under control. On the invasive species front, the county is planning to keep the rate of inspections similar to last year -- McCarrons had 108 hours of inspections in 2020. Discussions on keeping E. coli levels in check are currently under way and we are glad to see the county is exploring several different ideas.

The county asked if McCarrons Lakefront Alliance would like to contribute funding to these efforts. We decided to hold off on contributing any of our limited funds at this time because we want to learn more about how the money would be used. We will keep you posted as there are updates!

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.

- Outlet Brigade: We are seeking more volunteers to help clear the lake's outlet of debris.
- Welcoming Committee: We are 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!

BECOME A MEMBER

If you are interested in becoming an official member of McCarrons Lakefront Alliance, visit our website and fill out a registration form ([link](#)). Donations are welcome, but not required.

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