

Nov. 8th 2021

The Muskrat Minute

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance

www.mccarronslakefront.org

TIME FOR AN UPDATE!

Welcome to the Fall 2021 edition of the Muskrat Minute, the sporadic newsletter of McCarrons Lakefront Alliance! We held our annual meeting last month and our guest speakers had some good information to share. We are also planning a winter event this year. Here's the latest!

ANNUAL MEETING

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance hosted our annual meeting on Oct. 6 at Villa Park – it was outside to stay safe as the COVID-19 pandemic persists. It was our first in-person event since January 2020! And it was great to see those who attended.

We had two guest speakers. Bob Fossum, Monitoring, Research, & Maintenance Division Manager at Capitol Region Watershed District, shared information about the shoreline survey and plans for the outlet; Kristopher Lencowski, Director of Park Operations for Ramsey County, spoke about E. coli at the beach. Here's what they had to say:

Shoreline Survey:

The Capitol Region Watershed District conducted a lakewide shoreline survey this summer. The survey was done by boat, in cooperation with Ramsey County Soil and Water. Site visits were also done at properties that had previous shoreline restoration projects.

Bob Fossum said the data is collected and when the report is done, CRWD will work with McCarrons Lakefront Alliance to schedule a meeting so they can share updates and offer recommendations. We will keep you posted! This could happen over the winter. CRWD also plans to reach out directly to property owners who could benefit from restoration.

Outlet:

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance board member Chris Sluis has been focused on keeping the lake's outlet clear of debris so lake levels stay low, and he's been working to find long-term solutions. This summer, Chris convened a meeting with CRWD, Ramsey County Parks and Public Works – getting all interested parties together to solve the problem.

As a result, Bob said the CRWD and Ramsey County are working together to make some immediate adjustments to the grate to prevent clogs from leaves and other seasonal debris. When it comes to a long-term solution, Bob said a detailed evaluation of the outlet is in the Lake McCarrons Management Plan.

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CRWD is building and calibrating a computer model this fall, winter and spring that will look at all the flows to McCarrons, and will model what the lake does during various rainfall events.

Meanwhile, Chris has recruited some volunteers to help keep the outlet clear of debris. One volunteer, Andrew Montain, has gone above and beyond to keep the outlet clean. Thank you Andrew for all your work! If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Chris Sluis at info@mccarronslakefront.org.

E. coli and the geese

The beach closures we've seen in the last few summers have been disheartening and have created a public health issue. Kris Lenkowski said Ramsey County officials have narrowed down the large number of geese at the beach as the cause of the dangerous bacteria levels.

The county is trying to figure out what to do. In recent years, they had to remove the geese, which no one likes to see. Like many of you, we love the geese and all lake wildlife but we understand that this is a public health issue and the county has to keep people safe. Kris said removing geese is always a last resort – and we are advocating for other approaches.

Over the past two summers, the county has used a company called Driven Wild to try to scare geese from the beach. That hasn't worked. Looking ahead, Kris said the county is considering egg addling, also known as egg oiling, which would prevent the eggs from hatching. Shoreline vegetation or other changes to the landscape to make the area less attractive to geese are also being discussed as future possibilities. As with everything, budgets are an issue.

It's not entirely clear why the E. coli levels have been so bad in recent years. But Kris guessed warmer climates are to blame. As you know, McCarrons Lakefront Alliance worked to get extra testing done on other areas of the lake over the last two summers, and the folks who do this work believe the rest of the lake has been safe when there have been spikes at the beach.

IMPAIRED WATERS LIST

In some really sad news that just came out Monday, Nov. 9, the [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#) will be adding Lake McCarrons to another category on its list of impaired waters for 2022, due to high PFOS chemicals found in the fish taken from the lake. Monday's list is a draft report, and must be approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. PFOS, also known as perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, is a member of the family of chemicals known as PFAS. These chemicals don't break down in the environment and can cause some health issues. McCarrons had already been on the list since 2010 due to levels of mercury found in the fish. According to [Minnesota Public Radio News](#), the state is required to develop plans to clean up the bodies of water that on the impaired waters list. This is another issue McCarrons Lakefront Alliance will be working on and we will keep you informed.

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FALL REMINDER: DON'T BLOW OR RAKE LEAVES INTO THE LAKE

As we are all cleaning up our yards this fall, please do not blow or rake leaves into the lake. Excess leaves in the lake produce higher levels of phosphorus, which can lead to algae blooms. This also goes for the sewer drains near your homes as well. It's best to keep those clear of leaves and other debris so they don't wash into the watershed when it rains. If you'd like to do more to reduce pollution in the watershed, check out the Adopt a Drain program.

<https://adopt-a-drain.org/>

QUICK HITS

Villas at Lake McCarrons: We were happy to have some good conversations with the developer early in the process and, in our view, it looks like the dock installed for the development is tasteful and fits in with the lake. We know many people feared the new development would mean 20 new boats on the lake. (We love boats! But that would have drastically changed this small lake's character.) At our request, the homeowner's association placed limits on docking boats overnight, which eases fears that the lake would be overwhelmed. It also stays in line with the developer's statements that the dock would not turn into a "marina."



Networking and communications: One of our main missions is to act as a connector between residents who have a vested interest in the lake and all of the various agencies that have jurisdiction over one area of the lake or another. With so many agencies involved in Lake McCarrons, it's easy for them to pass the buck and leave residents uninformed. We had a huge success this summer when Chris Sluis got CRWD, Ramsey County Parks and Public Work together to talk about the outlet and advocate for solutions.

Outlet clearing: Chris Sluis has created a schedule for volunteers who are interested in cleaning out the outlet as more leaves drop this fall. Contact Chris if you'd like to help!

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ZEBRA MUSSEL UPDATE

Last year we were surprised by how many zebra mussels were on the bottom of our sampler plates. The initial takeaway was that there are A LOT of zebra mussels in the lake, but they are attaching to hiding spots and weren't out in the open. We checked the plates again this fall and unfortunately observed a significant increase in the density of zebra mussels. The goal of this project is to do some self-monitoring and provide data to the county to better track how zebra mussels are behaving in the lake and whether any mitigation efforts might be options in the future.

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.

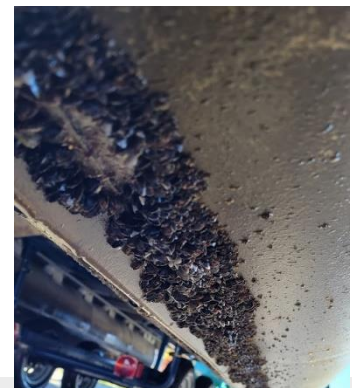
2020



2021



Are you seeing zebra mussels? As you take out your boat lifts and docks this fall, we'd be interested to hear what you are seeing. Free to drop us a note at info@mccarronslakefront.org to let us know what you are observing. Send pictures if you have them!



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WINTER SOCIAL

We are keeping our fingers crossed that we can have a winter social this year! Our first one in January 2020 was a blast. And this time, we hope to have an ice carousel! Keep an eye on your inboxes for details after the holidays. We are aiming to do this in January, and all are welcome!

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/>

GET INVOLVED

There are several opportunities for members to get involved in McCarrons Lakefront Alliance activities. 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 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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