

The Muskrat Minute

By McCarrons Lakefront Alliance

SUMMER IS HERE!

Welcome to the 2022 Summer Kickoff edition of the Muskrat Minute, the sporadic newsletter of McCarrons Lakefront Alliance! We are so ready for summer - and we hope you are too! We have a lot of information to share, so here we go!

MCCARRONS FUN

We had such a great time seeing our friends and neighbors at our winter social! Thanks to all who came out to try to get that ice carousel spinning! And a special thanks to Chris Kalla for all of the planning, engineering and chainsawing!



We are already looking forward to getting the carousel going next year – but we don't want to wait to see all of you until then! We are planning another event for the late summer/early fall. Watch your emails and our Facebook page for more details as we get closer to the event. Hope to see you soon!

SHORELINE SURVEY

The Capitol Region Watershed District and Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division conducted a shoreline survey last summer, and shared the results in May. The study surveyed each lot on the lake for signs of erosion, existing shoreline conditions and vegetation buffer widths.

The CRWD says shoreline conditions have changed since the previous assessment was done in 2007, but erosion on McCarrons is still considered minor. At the meeting, we were told that 91% of parcels showed little to no signs of erosion.

That said, each shoreline is very different, and each has its own issues. There is not one uniform recommendation for the entire lake. CRWD has grants available for those who want to do shoreline restoration work, and if you have questions about your shoreline or are interested in learning more, please reach out to Rachel Funke, rfunke@capitolregionwd.org, 651-644-8888 ext. 110. Or, you may go to this [LINK](#) to request a site consultation

A link to the CRWD report – with details on individual properties -- is available here: [LINK](#)

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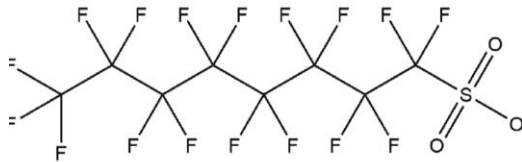
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PFOS

McCarrons Lakefront Alliance held a special meeting in May to get more information about the high levels of PFOS found in the lake's fish last fall. Catherine Neuschler with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency came to talk to us about PFOS and address some concerns.

The MPCA has added McCarrons to its list of impaired waters for PFOS, after elevated levels of the chemical were found in the lake's fish.



Perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS)

PFOS, also known as perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, is a member of the family of manmade chemicals known as PFAS. These chemicals don't break down in the environment and can cause health issues. PFAS are found in nonstick cookware, stain-resistant carpets and fabric, microwave popcorn bags and other products.

Neuschler's powerpoint presentation can be found here and will be posted to our website. ([LINK](#))

Here are some quick high points from her presentation and from other information we've received:

_ Foam is something to watch out for on the lake and should be avoided. If you see foam, take a picture and let us know! We'll collect data and contact the MPCA.

_ PFAS and PFOS is ingested through drinking water or eating fish, not generally absorbed through the skin.

_ This may have been the first time the fish were tested for PFOS (tests were done in 2018 or 2019 and made public last fall), so it's not known if the level of PFOS is new or if it has always been there and was just discovered. It's also not known where the chemicals are coming from.

_ Testing done on the water in Lake McCarrons in 2018 shows the level of PFOS and other chemicals known as PFOAs and PFBA are well below what would be considered safe for drinking water. While we don't recommend drinking the water, the MPCA says the water is considered safe for recreation. Here are the numbers for safe drinking water levels compared with levels in Lake McCarrons, for some perspective.

Pollutant	Safe Level (ng/L)	McCarrons (ng/L)
PFOS	15	2.5
PFOA	35	3.5
PFBA	7000	90

FISH CONSUMPTION

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has a handy Lakefinder tool that pulls together Department of Health fish consumption guidelines for specific lakes.

The Lakefinder says that for McCarrons, consumption of largemouth bass should be limited to one meal per month, due to PFOS and mercury contamination.

Consumption of sunfish should be limited to one meal a week. See the Lakefinder for McCarrons, click here: ([LINK](#))

That webpage also has links that will take you to information about general fish consumption guidelines, the size of a serving of fish and other data. Feel free to explore to learn more!

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E. COLI

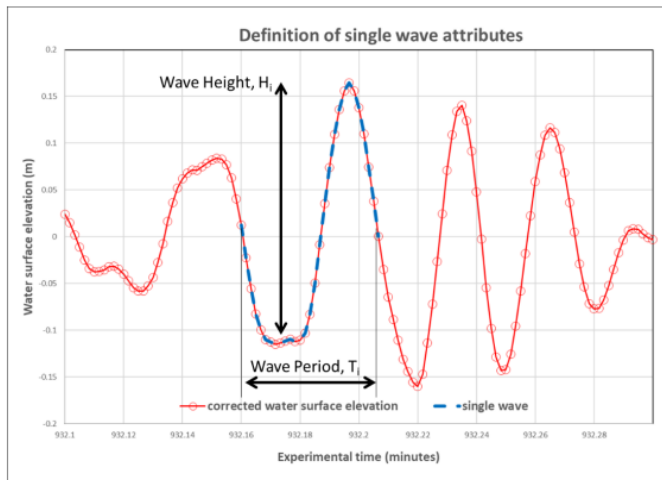
We counted about 40-50 geese at the beach this spring and feces was everywhere. But in recent weeks, we haven't seen geese at the beach in large numbers, and there has been little waste left behind. We also haven't seen any goslings. Ramsey County said it has not removed any geese this year, so it's possible they nested somewhere else this season. So far, E. coli levels have been low and within safe levels for swimming.

As a reminder, if there is a beach closure this year, neither Ramsey County nor CRWD are planning to do the lakewide testing that we had advocated for in the past. After two years of doing this type of testing, the data shows that when E. coli levels are elevated at the beach, they seem to be concentrated there. The elevated bacteria does not seem to be a lakewide issue.



Unfortunately, it is looking like the county will not be able to hire lifeguards to work at the beach this year. The county is working on a plan to have others do some of the tasks that lifeguards did, such as cleaning bathrooms and picking up geese feces, should they become a problem. Ramsey County also has opted not to do use the dogs to try to keep geese from the beach this year, because that program hasn't worked.

WAVE STUDY



The University of Minnesota St. Anthony Falls Laboratory conducted a study on wave energy produced by recreational wake surf boats. The results of their study were published in February. ([LINK](#)).

The report focused on comparing waves from wake surf and non-wakesurf boats at different distances. The scope of this study is pretty narrow but the science is great, and the report acknowledges that more research needs to be done, including researching other types of watercraft and comparison to wind generated waves.

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ODDS AND ENDS ON INVASIVE SPECIES

_ Zebra mussels: Our monitoring plates are in the water. We saw a big increase in zebra mussels last year, and we'll be monitoring again and submitting information to the county. We welcome your pictures and information about what you are seeing on your shorelines/equipment as well!



_ Boat Inspections: Ramsey County contracts with WaterGuards to check boats going in and out of Lake McCarrons. This year, WaterGuards will be at the boat launch for a total of 102 hours of inspections. The inspectors are trained by the DNR and are at the boat launch at random times. 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>.

_ Boat Inspection App: Ramsey County has developed a new app to help boaters remember what to do when checking in and checking out of a lake. The app can be found at: ramseycounty.us/ais. Feel free to check it out, use it, and spread the word so visitors use it as well.

_ Cleaning Tools: The tools at the boat launch to help boaters clean invasive species and other debris from their equipment are in need of repair and at the time of this writing, Ramsey County is in the process of getting them fixed.



_ Spiny Water Flea: The Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center is conducting a pilot project to see if a citizen science approach will be a good way to monitor for spiny water fleas in the state's lakes. The goal is to try to get a more complete picture of how prevalent the issue is and work on slowing the spread. So far, the spiny water flea has not been found in McCarrons. To stop the spread of spiny water flea, anglers are urged to drain all water from boats and gear, wipe fishing lines and reels, wipe livewells and drain bait buckets. For more information, visit this website: <https://maisrc.umn.edu/stopspiny>

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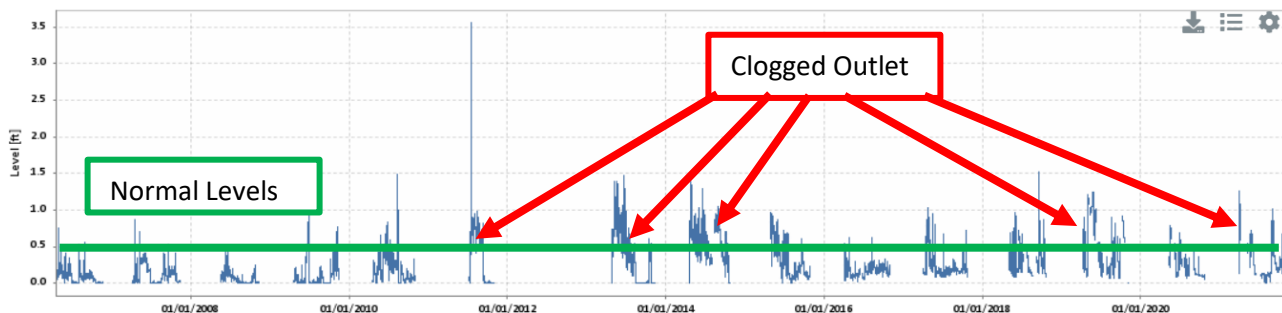
LAKE LEVELS AND THE OUTLET

For about two years, McCarrons Lakefront Alliance has been connecting with CRWD and Ramsey County Parks to discuss the lake outlet and how it regularly gets clogged by leaves and lake weeds. At times, the grate at the outlet would quickly clog and raise lake level by 6-12 inches, essentially overriding the weir that's designed to hold the proper lake level. Board member Chris Sluis coordinated volunteers to help clean the outlet, especially in the fall to prevent the lake from freezing at a high level and creating ice damage on shorelines. Higher water levels also increase erosion on shorelines and may have contributed to the undercutting found during the CRWD shoreline assessment.

CRWD and Ramsey County Parks agreed the vegetation

that was getting stuck in the outlet was an issue, and the outlet grate was modified to reduce clogging, keep lake levels more consistent, and prevent shoreline erosion.

The CRWD has a monitoring station on the lake and posts data online so you can see historical lake levels. The data shows that lake levels spiked and remained higher in the last 10 years as the outlet became overgrown and clogged -- when compared with levels from the early 2000s, after the grate was installed. It will be interesting to see what happens to lake levels this year after the improvement to the outlet. Below is a graphic from the CRWD's website, but you can see all the data here: ([LINK](#))



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.

_ 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 brainstorming ideas for future fundraising events and ways we can do more outreach. If you have fundraising skills and would like to help implement a plan or share ideas, we'd love to hear from you!

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