



On The Lake

NEWSLETTER

The LAKE MINNETONKA ASSOCIATION
is the **VOICE** for Lake Minnetonka Lakeshore Owners and Businesses

Lake Minnetonka Water Levels – How low will they go?

Our Mission

The Lake Minnetonka Association, a nonprofit organization, works to promote the preservation, protection, and the reasonable use of Lake Minnetonka through volunteers, lakeshore owners, and businesses. The Lake Minnetonka Association serves as an information resource and advocate for the Lake Minnetonka community.



BECOME A MEMBER
and help protect
the lake we love.

(See page 7)

Water levels have dropped continuously on Lake Minnetonka since June 1st, putting the lake about **20 inches below the normal high water level**. As of November 7th, the lake elevation was at 927.38 feet above sea level. Even though the dam has been closed since July 21st, lake levels will continue to drop about ½ inch per week if it does not rain. The lowest recorded lake elevation was 921.78 feet above sea level recorded on December 13, 1937. The highest recorded lake elevation was 931.11, recorded on June 23, 2014.

While lake levels were uncommonly low this past boating season, it certainly is not the first time this has happened, nor will it be the last. From 1987 through 1989 Lake Minnetonka experienced similar levels as it did in 2020 through 2022.

According to the National Weather Service, the Lake Minnetonka area will be in a severe drought throughout the fall, and drought conditions are expected to continue or worsen through most of the winter. While long-range weather predictions indicate a 50/50 chance of normal precipitation levels in 2023, 2022 is shaping up to be one of the driest years on record. About 8½ inches of precipitation is needed over the next 90 days to remove the drought classification.

“Precipitation deficits in fall and leading through the winter can often dictate drought

conditions leading into the spring,” according to Dan Hawblitzel, meteorologist-in-charge with NOAA/National Weather Service in Chanhassen. “That was the case for the 2021 drought and it is possible these deficits in late 2022 will persist into 2023.”

If lake levels remain below an elevation of 928 feet into next spring, the LMCD can declare a **“low water emergency.”** This will allow homeowners to extend their docks without a permit if:

- The dock is a seasonal and temporary type.
- The length of the dock is 30 feet beyond the dock use area when the lake elevation is at or below 928 feet, and 60 feet if the lake elevation is at or below 927 feet.
- The water depth may not be greater than 5 feet deep at a lake elevation of 928 feet.
- The dock must not impair navigation or create a hazard.
- The property has no past variances.
- The dock must be designed, constructed, elevated, lighted and/or reflectorized to be readily visible.
- The dock must be secured and constructed so dock sections do not float away during higher water or wave conditions.

(continued on page 2)



From The Helm

By Tom Frahm, LMA Board President



50 YEARS ON THE LAKE

This year marks my wife's and my 50th year of living on Lake Minnetonka. In that time many things have changed, both good and bad. When we moved here 50 years ago, the lake was pristine. A person could swim or boat anywhere on the lake without battling weeds or turbulent waters. But, unfortunately, some things have changed the lake in a negative way and are harmful to the health and enjoyment of this amazing lake.

First, boat traffic has increased substantially and today's boats are bigger and more powerful. The wakes they produce have a negative effect on the lake bottom and are causing shoreline erosion. **Second**, development along the shoreline and surrounding areas has increased substantially. This has increased hard cover, causing more run-off and pollution to enter the lake; negatively effecting water quality and increasing weed growth. **Third**, the introduction of aquatic invasive species (AIS) into this lake. Since the late 1980's, numerous invasive plants and animals have been found in Lake Minnetonka. All have been very harmful to the lake's health and its recreational use. In addition, managing these invasive species over the years has cost the state and lakeshore owners millions of dollars.

I believe if the people using and enjoying this beautiful lake (both lakeshore owners and transient lake users) do not start changing their attitudes and usage of the lake to help preserve it, 50 years from now the lake will be irreversibly damaged and unrecognizable. There are numerous AIS pollutants just waiting to be introduced into the lake. So it is paramount we prevent any additional AIS pollutants from entering Lake Minnetonka.

The Lake Minnetonka Association will continue to be active in preserving this lake, but we need your help and support. **It is up to you.** All of us must take positive corrective steps to stop additional destruction of this wonderful lake.

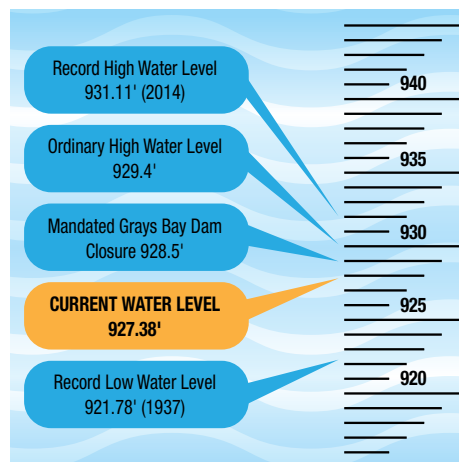
Water Levels

(continued from page 1)

- The docks are subject to inspection at reasonable times and the property owner must register the dock extension request with the LMCD.

Dredging is typically not allowed to accommodate dock access.

Lake Minnetonka is large enough to absorb the environmental impact caused by most droughts, even a severe drought. The exception to this is in the backwaters or shallower areas of the lake. Here, reduced water levels can increase the concentration of pollutants and cause stagnation and increased algae blooms. Low water levels and higher water temperatures can also lead to reduced oxygen levels which can harm fish and other aquatic life. Excessive aquatic weed growth and matting are likely to occur during extended periods of low



water. Drought and low water levels can destabilize shorelines and cause the loss of shoreline vegetation; increasing the potential for shoreland erosion. Therefore, during times of low water, it is especially important for wake surfers and other boaters to be mindful of their wake and avoid shallow bays and areas where their wakes can damage lake bottoms and fragile shorelands.



Pumpkinseed Fish

This seasonally appropriate named fish is a member of the Sunfish family and is commonly found in Lake Minnetonka.

Sources disagree on the origin of the name; some say its named because its shape resembles

In Europe, the pumpkinseed fish is considered an invasive species.

a pumpkin seed, others claim its name comes from a pumpkin seed-shaped orange spot on its gill cover.

Regardless, it is a popular pan fish about the size of a bluegill. The pumpkinseed can be distinguished from the bluegill by the bright orange spot at the tip of the ear flap and the lack of a dark blotch on the soft portion of the dorsal. Breeding males are particularly colorful; their cheeks and gill covers are marked by wavy bright blue bars. Identifying and distinguishing sunfish is complicated by frequent hybridization.

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Lake Minnetonka Shipwrecks

There are 83 known wrecks, including a nearly 1000-year-old Dugout Canoe removed from the lake in 1934 (shown), 38 maritime sites/cultural resources, a few sunken cars, snowmobiles, a lifeguard tower, and other items on the bottom of Lake Minnetonka.



Courtesy, West Hennepin History Center and Museum

These wrecks and other artifacts tell an important story about the history of Lake Minnetonka. It is illegal to remove or disturb shipwrecks or other submerged cultural resources in Minnesota lakes and rivers (Minnesota Statutes § 138.31 and Minnesota Statutes § 16B.25). Under these laws, the Minnesota Historical Society and the State Archaeologist protect and manage shipwrecks and other submerged cultural resources in state waters as unique and finite physical aspects of the state's cultural heritage that belong to the people of Minnesota.

The state reserves the title to all objects found in the lake. "Treasure hunting," the removal of items, or disturbing shipwrecks and other culturally important sites without a license from the state is illegal, and disrespectful to the many stewards of Lake Minnetonka and those who are working to protect the integrity of the lake's cultural and historical resources.

Remember to always Respect the Lake!

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Bay Treatment Program Update

PREPARING FOR NEXT YEAR

This year we welcomed three new bays to our Bay Treatment Program: Browns Bay, Smithtown Bay, and Black Lake. Treatments on Crystal Bay were expanded to include most of the west and north sides of the bay. Due to the hard work of our bay captains, invasive Eurasian watermilfoil and curlyleaf pondweed are under control in several of the bays on Lake Minnetonka.

Unlike the summer of 2021, the weeds were not nearly as bad this year in most of the lake. While the late spring played an important role in slowing the growth of many weeds, it is clear our lake treatments are working. The early spring treatment for curlyleaf pondweed may have also knocked back the Eurasian watermilfoil.

In 2022, the Lake Minnetonka Association applied for and received **\$54,700 in grants** from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) to control aquatic invasive species in several bays in the lake and a commitment of \$39,000 from the LMCD to help offset treatment costs for bays that had not previously been treated.

Post-treatment vegetation surveys were done this fall on a number of the bays that were treated this spring and summer. All of the reports received so far show a decrease in the percentage of invasive plants, and an increase in native plant diversity.

It is difficult to predict what next year will bring, but it is anticipated that invasive weeds in the bays treated in the past will only need spot treatments or have small areas treated. In contrast, some native weeds, such as water celery and water star grass will continue to be a problem. The MnDNR prohibits lakewide herbicide treatments to control these and other native plants. The aggressive growth of some native plants in Lake Minnetonka and elsewhere in the state may be the result of changes in weather patterns and water clarity caused by zebra mussels.

Invasive flowering rush did not require treatment in 2022. It is too soon yet to determine if it is fully under control but it is clear our treatments have had a significant impact on the spread of this invasive plant.

SURVIVING IN COLD WATER

A fall boat ride can be an enjoyable experience, but failing to take the proper precautions can lead to deadly results. Water temperatures in Lake Minnetonka drop rapidly after September and by October the average water temperature is below 50 degrees. According to the National Center for Cold Water Safety, **water temperatures below 60 degrees are very dangerous.** However, understanding how your body reacts to cold water and knowing the following safety tips can save your life.

- 1. Wear a life jacket.** According to the MnDNR, over 30 percent of boating fatalities in Minnesota happen in cold water with a victim not wearing a life jacket. Without a life jacket, most cold water victims die long before they become hypothermic.
- 2. Fight for survival.** If you are wearing a life jacket, the 1-10-1 principle may save your life:
 - 1 MINUTE**— Get breathing under control. Gasping, hyperventilation and panic are normal reactions to falling into cold water – this is called the “cold shock response.” By focusing on breathing and calming yourself, your chances of survival will increase.
 - 10 MINUTES OF MEANINGFUL MOVEMENT**— this is approximately the time you have to get out of the water on your own power.
 - Assess the situation and make a plan.
 - Perform most important functions first, such as locating other party members.
 - Self-rescue if possible.
 - Use emergency communications and signaling. Regardless of how good of a swimmer you may be, after about 10 minutes you will lose the ability to swim and will drown if you are not wearing a life jacket.
 - 1 HOUR (OR MORE) OF USEFUL CONSCIOUSNESS**
 - It takes about 30 minutes for hypothermia to set in and about one hour before you lose consciousness.
 - During this time keep calling for help and focus on slowing heat loss by floating on your back and:
 - Cross ankles.
 - Cross arms over chest.
 - Hands should be kept high on the shoulders or neck.
 - Draw knees to chest.
 - Lean back and try to calm yourself.
- 3. Stay with the boat. If the boat capsizes or the victim falls overboard, stay with the boat and try to reboard.**
 - Most capsized watercraft will still float.
 - A craft in the water is easier for rescuers to locate.
 - If you have to remain in the water, do not attempt to swim unless it is to a nearby boat or floating object.
 - Keep boots and clothes on. Almost all clothing will float for an extended period of time.

Planning “Winter Gardens” that provide winter interest, food, and habitat

With another Minnesota winter on our doorstep, here is a reminder that gardens can have beauty and function year round. After your garden is cleaned-up and “put to bed” for the winter, take a step back and visualize what to plant next year to give your garden winter interest in the future. Consider adding plants to your garden that have interesting colors, shapes and textures and which can provide food and habitat for wildlife. Here are just a few ideas that work well in winter gardens:

- Plant forbs and grasses for garden interest or food: blanket flower (rudbeckia), black-eyed Susan, ornamental grasses, sunflower, Joe-pye weed, sedums, and pincushion flower.
- Add shrubs and small trees for color, bark texture, foliage, or food: red twigged dogwood, corkscrew willow, hydrangeas, sumac, amur chokecherry, winterberry, yews, spruces, arborvitae, crabapples, and rhododendrons.
- Use trees for bark texture, foliage, and interesting seed pods – spruces (avoid non-native varieties), pines, Kentucky coffee tree, catalpa, pin oak, river birch, and popular (aspens).



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We thank our Business Members for their many contributions to our organization and to our Lake Minnetonka community. They make the lake a better place to live, work and play!

No Starry Stonewort found in Lake Minnetonka

Early this fall, the Lake Minnetonka Association completed its fourth year of monitoring for invasive starry stonewort, and we are happy to report that once again, no starry stonewort was found.

Starry stonewort is a large celled algae similar to seaweed and is extremely difficult to control once it becomes established. If not found early enough, it can cost millions of dollars to control, so money spent on detection and early removal of this invasive species is money well spent.

This year the Lake Minnetonka Association expanded its monitoring efforts to include diver inspections in the areas at most risk of infestation. Sixteen of the busiest private and public access sites were checked along with over 1,700 private sites.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources reminds boaters and anglers to follow Minnesota laws to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species:

- Clean aquatic plants and animals from watercraft, trailers, and water-related equipment.
- Drain all water by removing drain plugs and keep drain plugs out while transporting watercraft.
- Dispose of unwanted bait in the trash.

Some invasive species are small and difficult to see on your boat or equipment. To remove or kill them, take one or more of the following precautions before moving to another waterbody, especially after leaving infested waters:

- Spray with high-pressure water.
- Rinse with very hot water (120 degrees for at least two minutes or 140 degrees for at least 10 seconds).
- Dry for at least five days.

Lake Minnetonka Association's Starry Stonewort Survey was funded through a grant from the Hennepin County AIS Prevention Program. Grants are available to help local units of government and organizations implement projects that prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Thank you to members who have joined or renewed in the past year. Your support makes it possible for us to protect the lake we love!

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