

## Letter from the President

Greetings Fellow Shore Owners!

As I write this article, we are fast approaching the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. I can't help but think how grateful we are to have a wonderful lake and great people to call neighbors and friends. We are blessed to have them. This year, we faced our biggest challenge, the first experience of Eurasian Water Milfoil in Stone Lake. It was a shock to all of us. We have worked so hard over the years to be proactive in many ways to keep AIS out of our lake. Our diligence over these past years has brought much success. Stone Lake has been one of the cleanest and clearest lakes in the state. I'm not about to see that change now. I am certain we all want to do whatever it takes to maintain that same cleanness and clarity we've always seen and known.

Looking back, it's quite surprising how quickly we as a lakeshore community were able to act on such a serious issue. Thanks to Bill Hartz and Melissa Sunderland for initially spotting the invasive plant and notifying us. The Board responded immediately by forming an action plan to contain and minimize further spread. We've been very fortunate to have a committee that worked tirelessly into the late summer and early fall to research options and implement a plan to do all that was possible before time ran out with the cooler temperatures. Thankfully, because of their aggressive action, the areas of EWM that we were aware of have been removed. A big shout out goes to Cathie Erickson, Don Bushek, Allan Rosenwald, and Rolf Thompson for their collective efforts thus far and willingness to serve. Many other shore owners have assisted with these efforts, and we are thankful to them as well.

Our work is far from complete. Unfortunately, it is expected that we will always have EWM in our lake. Hopefully with the actions we have taken and will continue to take, it can be kept to a minimum. Moving forward, we will rely on all of your support to do this. We will each need to be on the lookout next spring/summer for EWM. There will be a need to ask you for further assistance in the future for various activities. We are also beginning a fundraising effort in order to cover future anticipated costs. I'm asking that you all participate and contribute. More details are in the process.

In closing, we do truly have much to be grateful for. We can all be thankful for each of you that stepped up to help. As a result of your work, the hope is our EWM issues will be minimized in the future.

*John Ryan* - President SOSLA  
(Shore Owners of Stone Lake Association)

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## SOSLA Upcoming 2024 Meetings, Events, and Important Dates!

- **June 15, 10:00 AM** Membership  
Meeting Location: Lion's Park
- **July 4, 11:00 AM**  
Boat Parade  
(Rain date July 5)
- **August 17, 10:00 AM**  
Membership Meeting Location: Lion's  
Park  
Annual Picnic & Golf Outing to follow.



### Stone Lake Events

- **2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of Month, 6:30-7:30 PM**  
Stone Lake Township meeting at Town  
Hall.
- **Monday & Thursday**  
**9:00 AM – 12 PM**  
Stone Lake Township office hours.



### Winter Dinner & Social

Planning for a winter SOSLA dinner / social is underway. All the specifics on date, time and place will be provided as soon as they are available. In the meantime, please reserve the dates of Saturday, January 13 and Saturday, January 20, 2024. One of those dates will be chosen depending on location availability



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## SOSLA - AIS Management Fund

Last summer, as Stone Lakers learned of the presence of Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) the reaction was swift and unanimous: WE MUST DO SOMETHING TO STOP IT NOW!

Thankfully, some years ago SOSLA had the foresight to develop an AIS Fund to be used in exactly this kind of situation. SOSLA was able to take immediate and aggressive action in August and September that helped to limit and assess the extent of the infestation.

But we also learned that this level of AIS management comes with real costs, and the fund was quickly depleted. We realized we needed to significantly “up our game” in fundraising in order to have the resources to combat EWM and keep our lake clean.

The SOSLA AIS Committee and Board has developed a comprehensive plan with cost estimates for 2024 - 2025. We are thankful that a grant from the Wisconsin DNR’s Early Detection and Response program has been approved. But this grant, which gets funneled through the Town of Stone Lake, will only fund a portion of our EWM response plan so we are turning to Stone Lake property owners and area businesses and residents to help.



In the next few days you should receive a letter with a lot more information including details about our plans to combat EWM for the next two years and asking you to make a donation to the SOSLA Stone Lake AIS Management Fund. It is critical that ALL of us do our part to protect our beautiful lake.

Thanks in advance for your thoughtful consideration.

*Rolf Thompson*  
SOSLA AIS Fundraising Committee Chair

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## A Swift Response to EWM – Two Days of Harvesting In 2023

All around Stone Lake, the Aug. 13 discovery of a patch of the highly invasive Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) near the railroad beach sparked the same response. WE MUST DO SOMETHING TO STOP IT NOW! Of the four treatment options (hand pulling, Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH), herbicide treatment, and mechanical cutting) the only one that doesn’t require a permit is hand pulling. And time was short because by mid-September or sooner the EWM would be too brittle to harvest.

SOSLA’s EWM Committee contacted county and DNR staff and talked with people on other lakes to learn about the control methods they use and the contractors they work with. We reached out to a company in Minocqua, WI called Aquatic Plant Management (APM) and they agreed to work with us.



We weighed the options of scheduling two days of hand-harvesting right away or applying for a permit to do two days of DASH. Because of the uncertainty of getting a permit to use DASH before the EWM became too brittle, especially without a professional survey (map) of the EWM and without an aquatic plant management plan, we decided to bring in a hand-pulling team from APM as soon as possible. At least we’d get more information about our infestation by having professionals take a look at it.

Bed of EWM in Stone Lake near railroad beach. Photo Matt Berg.

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## A Swift Response to EWM – Two Days of Harvesting In 2023

*Continued*

At the same time, other SOSLA volunteers tackled the problem of how to mark off the EWM area so that boaters wouldn't inadvertently spread it and to mark the area for treatment. They quickly obtained a permit for the buoys and placed large informational buoys around the EWM area.

APM's hand harvesting dive team came to Stone Lake on Aug. 28. They loved working in our clear water but found that our above-average water clarity allowed the sun to infiltrate deeper so we had EWM



growing in water up to 15 feet deep. They successfully pulled about 600 lbs. of EWM from shallower areas that day but recommended that instead of another day of hand-pulling we should immediately apply for a DASH permit. The next day, a permit application was submitted based on their findings. And then we all waited anxiously.

On Sept. 13 we received the permit and APM mobilized a DASH team for us. With the DASH process, a diver uses a large suction hose to pull the milfoil, which is sucked into a funnel-shaped sieve on their pontoon boat. The lake water goes back into the lake while the milfoil is separated and bagged.

APM's DASH team came to Stone Lake on Sept. 14, one day before the deadline to stop for the year. They spent eight hours harvesting EWM from the largest patch that had been marked by buoys. They also inspected nearby areas and removed sporadic plants they found to the northwest of the large patch and back to the boat launch.



Volunteers played an important support role in gathering EWM fragments that broke loose during both types of harvesting. In kayaks and canoes and wading in the shallow water, they used nets to pick up loose floating fragments which could otherwise grow roots and start new plants.



None of this would have been possible without the AIS Contingency Fund that SOSLA has wisely built up over the years. We were able to focus on getting things done as fast as possible without being slowed down by concerns about how we'd pay for the harvesting services.

*The AIS Committee*





Wisconsin DNR has been very active surveying Stone Lake this season. In the spring 2023, after ice out, we surveyed for northern pike and walleye. Later in the spring, Stone Lake was surveyed for bass and panfish. Lastly, this fall the lake was surveyed for juvenile walleye. In addition, there is an ongoing creel survey that should run through March of 2024. At this point in the year, we have only analyzed the walleye population estimate from last spring. The walleye population was estimated at 1.5 fish/acre (an increase from 2010) and we sampled over 500 adult walleye that averaged 15.9 inches. For the future, we are tentatively planning to stock walleye again next fall 2024 and do another fall survey to look for young walleye. After completion of this year's creel survey, there will be a comprehensive survey report written to summarize data on all species and make any new management recommendations.

*Craig M. Roberts*

Fisheries Biologist – Washburn and Burnett Co./Bureau of Fisheries Management, WI-DNR

### Lake Levels

Where are we compared to historic water levels? On October 1<sup>st</sup>, Stone Lake was approximately 2.8 feet below the high-water mark reached in late July of 2020, but still about two feet above the low levels of the summers of 2012-13. This year has been somewhat of a rollercoaster, with a rise from last fall by over one foot due to the heavy snows and spring rain, followed by a summer drought that brought levels back down to 2022 lows, and then late September downpours that raised levels again by almost five inches. The October 1, 2023 level was only three inches below the October 2022 level.

If long term trends continue, however, we are still in for some additional lowering of the lake. The good news this year was that most shore owners put their docks in expecting some additional drop and didn't have the problems encountered last year with getting their boats off the lift at season's end. Don't get too comfortable yet on the levels stabilizing – plan for a little more drop in the future.

*Gary Erickson*

### Adopt-A-Highway 2023



Eleven SOSLA Highway Heroes contributed to this summer's Highway70 cleanup. They were John and Rita Ryan, Steve Erickson, Melissa Sunderland, David Turnham, Rolf Thompson, Steve and Deb Kolb and their granddaughter, Kiara Staley. Susan Turnham and Gail Emerson drove trucks behind those walking with traffic to help keep them safe and provide a place for full bags of trash. Because we had enough walkers for groups to start at each end of our designated mile,

the project took half as long as last year. Although there was far less trash than last year, it was still necessary to do the cleanup. And a bit of good news – the county has put up the signs identifying SOSLA as the group responsible for our mile of Highway 70. You can see them near Sloan and about a mile west near Strabel Rd. Many thanks to everyone who participated.

*Gail Emerson*

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## Purple Loosestrife Update

While the number of purple loose strife plants was about the same this year as last year, the distribution seems to have changed. Although the major concentration remains in the northwest corner of Big Stone, there were more plants in the south west corner and fewer along the north shore. Historically the east and south shores have had few, if any, plants. This year, there were multiple plants in the back waters of Lake Avery, the first in about five years. All known plants were eradicated. My thanks to those of you who removed your own purple loose strife.

An encouraging finding was many shiny black beetles on the loose strife plants in the northwest corner. The leaves on these plants looked partially eaten. I assume these are purple strife beetles that have adapted to Stone Lake winters and will help us control purple loose strife in the future, if their numbers continue to increase.



*Stephen B. Erickson*

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## Secchi/Chemical Testing Summary-Fall 2023

We concluded another year of water clarity and chemical monitoring in September. The good news is that our test findings during 2023 were not significantly different from past years.

Our water clarity measured by our secchi readings continues to be excellent. Our maximum depth recording was 27 feet and our minimum recording was 17 feet in late September.

Phosphorus and chlorophyll readings registered very low amounts consistent with past years and reflective of the minimal plant growth in Stone Lake. Unfortunately enough though to allow Eurasian Water Milfoil to invade!!

Secchi and chemical testing on our lake has been conducted every year beginning in 1987. We suspect that there are not many other lakes which have regularly monitored for 36 consecutive years. Since 1987, 207 secchi readings have been conducted and 66 samples testing for both phosphorus and chlorophyll have been submitted to Madison for analysis.



*Mary Grau, Allan Rosenwald*

## 25 Year Service Award



Allan Rosenwald received an award early this summer from the Wisconsin Citizen Lake Monitoring Network (CLMN) for his 25 years of service as Stone Lake's Citizen Lake Monitor. Several times a year, Allan and CLMN volunteers around the state measure lake clarity (secchi disk reading), water temperature, and water chemistry. The citizen data is reported to the DNR and is an important part of their information about our lakes. Prior to his passing, Paul Callaghan and his family frequently assisted Allan with this work.

Congratulations, Allan, and thank you!

*The SOSLA Board*

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## 2023 Boat Launch Wrap-Up

Launch monitoring is done for the season. Andy had a busy summer, intercepting **230 boats and contacting over 450 people**. This is the first year that I've looked at these numbers and, frankly, I'm amazed! They ought to impress upon us the importance of monitoring activity at the launch, especially since a surprising share of the boaters that Andy talked to claimed not to know about decontamination requirements.



We owe a thank you to a bunch of people this year. Thank you to Andy for his diligence. Thanks to Susan and David Turnham for tending to the spray equipment and for donating the cost of bleach. Thank you to Michelle Drabek (Stone Lake's Town secretary) for taking care of the business side of the DNR Clean Boats Clean Waters grant. Thanks to Allan and Mary for their on-going water quality monitoring.

And big thanks to the members who volunteered at the ramp this year: Sue, Dallas, Dale, Connie, John, and the Bills. If I missed anyone, I apologize. And please let me know so that I can count your hours against the grant requirements.

And finally, thank you to everyone who helped during the milfoil harvesting. I don't personally have all of your names, but you know who you are!

That's it for now. See you all next spring.

*Don Bushek*

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## Oak Wilt

We have another nemesis in the neighborhood. Oak wilt was found at a few locations on the west side of the lake as recently as mid-September. The locations of the known infestations are adjacent to public roadways. Bryan Walter, Town of Stone Lake maintenance worker, was concerned about several dead oaks he observed and reported them to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR investigated and confirmed they were the victims of oak wilt.

A DNR funded treatment program exists for private properties, but the funding does not cover public properties. The site on private property has already been treated through the DNR program to arrest the spread at that

location and the Town is evaluating their options for action on sites in the public right-of-way.

The question now is how extensive the infestation may be and how sites out of the view of those who can identify it can be found. All property owners are encouraged to view the following link to understand what oak wilt is and how to identify it, how it spreads, and what steps are necessary to stop, or minimize, its damage.

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/foresthealth/oakwilt>



*Gary Erickson*

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## Calendar Committee Updates

Calendar specifications remain the same as in the past, except that the Calendar Committee has decided to expand the area of nature and wildlife to the “general area” of Stone Lake – meaning a reasonable distance into Washburn or Sawyer Counties. Water related pictures should still only be of Stone Lake proper. If you take a unique picture of one of the neighboring festivals, such as the LCO Pow Wow, or the Spooner Rodeo, we will let the members decide during voting if is appropriate for the calendar. One last comment: orientation of pictures must be horizontal (camera or phone sideways, not vertical with the camera or phone on end).



*The Calendar Committee*

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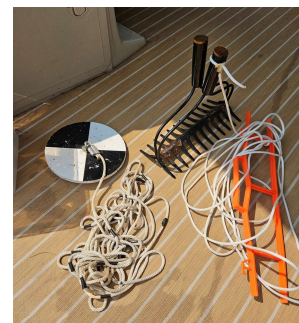
## Testing For Zebra Mussels



On July 31, Lisa Burns from the Washburn County Land and Water Conservation Department conducted zebra mussel veliger testing on Stone Lake. To date, Big and Middle McKenzie are the only lakes in Washburn County with zebra mussels. Samples were taken in three locations on the lake. A fine-meshed net was lowered down 10 feet into the water column, which collected water into a sampling cup. Ethyl alcohol was used to rinse the cup and empty all of the sample into a plastic bottle. A lab will analyze the sample for microscopic zebra mussels, called veligers. This work is done annually on about six lakes per year. Results of the test will likely be known in October. Additional lakes that were tested included: Slim, Nancy, Gilmore and the Minong Flowage. The McKenzie chain of lakes is also sampled, to gather density information.

With the zebra mussel veligers being microscopic, they are easily carried to other waterbodies by currents or by residual water left in boating and fishing equipment (e.g., live wells, bilge pumps, engine cooling systems, bait buckets). Besides being a county ordinance, it is important to spray your boat and equipment down before launching and leaving a boat landing.

*Lisa Burns*





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## 2023 Stone Lake Boat Parade

The Stone Lake 4th of July Boat Parade was great fun! It was a beautiful day with participating boats ranging from heavily loaded and carefully decorated pontoons to solo boats including a kayak and a GW Invader (a small one-person racing speedboat).

Boat decorators continue to show delightful creativity with themes this year that included The Little Mermaid, a train engine, a school bus, and a fishing boat. Others focused on patriotic displays, while some showed up armed with just their enthusiasm.

We welcome everyone to participate regardless of decoration; after all, the main goal is to join in the fun! Still, the theme boats are a huge hit all around the lake. A parade is nothing without spectators, so shoreline fans also contribute to this annual lake-wide celebration!

This year each boat that completed the parade received a participant reward with treats donated by individuals and local businesses. A big shout out and thank you for 2023 Stone Lake Boat Parade donations go to shore owner Joe Kapoun along with Red Schoolhouse Wines, Last Frontier, The Whistlepunk, and Farm Boyz. Next time you're in town, let these local businesses know we all appreciate their support!

*The SOSLA Boat Parade Committee*



## SHOREOWNERS OF STONE LAKE ASSOCIATION (SOSLA)

