



LAKE MINNIE BELLE MESSENGER

A Newsletter from the Lake Minnie Belle Improvement Association (LMBIA)

Winter 2026

The Chair's Corner

By Brian Kittelson, Chair – Lake Minnie Belle Improvement Association (LMBIA) Board

As we head into winter and the lake settles into a quieter rhythm, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a really meaningful and productive year on Lake Minnie Belle. Every time I'm out on the water or walking around the lake, I'm reminded how fortunate we are to call this place home — and how much of that is because of the people who care deeply about it.

2025 was a strong year for our lake community. We inspected more than **2,000 boats** at the DNR landing to help prevent invasive species from entering the lake. We also developed a state-recognized Starry Stonewort fast reaction plan — something we hope we never need but are prepared for. We raised over **\$12,000** through fundraising efforts (thank you to everyone who participated, donated, or spread the word). Our weed management team proactively mapped Eurasian watermilfoil and mapped and treated Curlyleaf pondweed, helping maintain lake health. Water clarity remained strong throughout the summer, averaging **16.5 feet**, and we completed three professional dive inspections specifically looking for early signs of Starry Stonewort.

And of course, we also *lived* the lake. The 4th of July festivities brought neighbors together on the water, and our Adopt-A-Highway cleanup helped keep the area around the lake just as cared for as the lake itself. None of this happens without a committed and thoughtful community — and I'm sincerely grateful to every board member, volunteer, and neighbor who played a role.

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we look forward, I'd like to first share the team who will help lead our efforts in the year ahead:

2026 Lake Minnie Belle Board of Directors

Brian Kittelson – Chair

Jeff Bullert – Vice Chair

Todd Kuechle – Treasurer

Karen Peterson – Secretary

Don Kotila, Kristin Jaquith, Rob Kruger, Charlie Schlauderaff, Bill Guptail, Cheryl

Kittelson, Richard Bautch

I'm grateful to work with such a dedicated group of neighbors.

And we also want to extend heartfelt thanks to Kristin Jaquith, whose steady leadership as Board Chair has helped guide and strengthen our efforts over many years. We are also grateful to Curt Wendland for his three years of service on the board. We're thankful for all they've given to the lake and our community.



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Our Focus for 2026

Going into 2026, we're concentrating our efforts on a few key areas that will have the greatest long-term impact on the lake:

Starry Stonewort Prevention and Awareness

This continues to be one of the most serious threats facing lakes in Minnesota, with 38 lakes now confirmed to be affected. Once established, it is incredibly difficult — and costly — to control. Our best defense is *prevention*. This means continuing strong access monitoring, clear education for residents and guests, and ongoing diver and shoreline inspections throughout the season. The goal is simple: keep it out.

Understanding and Managing Increased Weed Growth

We've all noticed that weeds have become more present in the lake in recent years and it affects recreation, habitat, and overall lake balance. In 2026, we'll be taking a more proactive approach to better understand *why* we're seeing these changes and to determine the most effective long-term management strategies.

Strengthening Water Quality Monitoring

Lake Minnie Belle has **19 inlets**, which means water — and everything carried in it — is constantly entering the lake from surrounding areas. We'll be monitoring key inflows to help ensure we're catching changes early, especially related to nutrients and clarity.

Fundraising to Support Long-Term Protection

Protecting a lake takes resources. From monitoring and treatment to prevention efforts and testing, these activities require ongoing funding. We'll continue to apply for grants and work with county and state partners, but we'll also be increasing our community fundraising efforts. Every contribution — whether time, talent, or financial — genuinely matters.

Amplifying Our Voice in Local and State Decisions

The more proactive we are in sharing the needs and priorities of Lake Minnie Belle with local and state agencies, the better positioned we are to secure support and influence policy that impacts us. We will continue to be an active voice in these conversations.

Thank you for your stewardship, your neighborliness, and your shared commitment to the lake. Protecting Lake Minnie Belle works best when we do it together — and I'm grateful to be part of this community with you.

Wishing you a peaceful and beautiful season ahead,

Brian Kittelson
LMBIA Chair



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The Power of Ice – Spring 2025 Shoreland Damage

(with thanks to Emily Wolf (Area Hydrologist – MnDNR) for providing information for this article)

As the ice melted and retreated last Spring, many of us found that our shorelines had suffered various forms of upheaval and damage. Shorelines had been moved back away from the lake resulting in ridges of varying heights composed of exposed soil, gravel, and rock. In some areas the shoreline buckled, retaining walls were broken, boulder landscapes were torn apart, and landslides occurred.

The shoreline upheaval and damage was not confined to just one area of the lake but occurred intermittently around Lake Minnie Belle.

Ice jacking is the culprit that caused the damage to our lakeshore.



Buckled Shoreline and Ice Ridge at Lake Minnie Belle, 2025

What is ice jacking?



courtesy: Michelle Hines

Ice jacking is a natural phenomenon that can cause extensive damage along the shoreline of a lake or waterbody. The photo (*1) to the left shows an **ice ridge** that formed in 2012 along the shoreline of Lake Miliona near Alexandria, MN.

Simply put, ice jacking is the result of changes in the temperature of the ice. The ice sheet on the lake expands as its temperature rises. When its temperature lowers, the ice sheet breaks into shrinkage cracks. These cracks then fill with water that freezes into new ice resulting in a larger ice sheet! With each significant rise and fall in



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temperature, the ice sheet gets bigger and bigger – “scraping,

gouging, and pushing as it goes. Some people call this process “ice jacking” because of the ratcheting effect that each subsequent and cumulative push exerts upon the shore.” (*3) As the ice continues to expand against the shore, it pushes soil and rock into mounds (ice ridges) and can also cause the shoreline and any structures to buckle.

Why was the ice jacking so severe on Minnie Belle last year?

Ice jacking occurs to various extents depending on weather conditions and it does not really occur until the ice is at least five inches thick (*4)

A dry freeze-up – when fall precipitation is below normal and there is no snow on the ground – exacerbates ice jacking and its resultant damage. Wide variations in temperature, including significant daily temperature (high to low) variations increase the amount of ice jacking that occurs (*4). These conditions all occurred in our area last year:

- the Fall of 2024 was very dry,
- there was little or no snow on the ground
- wide variations in temperature occurred throughout the Winter of 2025

Ice jacking impacts are the worst when there is little snow covering the ice and the temperature fluctuates a lot!

In his article titled “Ice Power!”, Gerald L. Paul says,

“During years of early snow falls and deep snow cover, the snow helps insulate the lake ice. This keeps its temperature more constant and thus minimizes “ratcheting.” But in other years, when snow cover is light or absent... and temperature extremes are great, look out!” (*3)

Can anything be done to prevent shoreline damage from ice jacking?

MnDNR recommendations for avoiding ice-related damage to your shoreline follow:

“The simplest means of avoiding ice-related damage to shore line property is to ensure that personal property is out of wrath’s path. State and local shoreland regulations requiring setback limits not only lead to improved aesthetics but also help to minimize personal property damage from ice action and wave-induced erosion. Engineering solutions are sometimes pursued to remedy ice ridge problems, but they can be expensive and ineffective. If an engineering solution is pursued, property owners should seek the advice of a professional.” (*2)



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Other recommendations include:

“...**do nothing, then restore the damage**”...may be the most reasonable approach along existing developed shorelines. This method basically says: stay out of wrath's path and clean up afterwards. It's a form of planned, acceptable damage. It naturally would require that all structures, landscaping, etc., be placed beyond anticipated damage limits. The allowable damage then would be to let the ice do its “push thing,” shoving the earth upon the shore. Then, when spring thaw is over man does his “push thing” and shoves the earth back again.” (*3)

Note that work to restore a shoreline following ice jacking damage may require an Individual Public Waters Work Permit from the MN DNR. To determine whether or not a permit is required, see Reference Item #2 - [Shoreline Alterations: Ice Ridges](#) or contact our local DNR Area Hydrologist at the MN DNR office in Spicer, MN. (320-409-2042).

Do you want to know more about ice jacking?

For “all you ever wanted to know about ice jacking,” check out the MN DNR webpage information at:

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/pwpermits/ice_ridges.html

References

- (*1) [Ice Damage to Shoreline Property - Photo Gallery | Minnesota DNR](#)
- (*2) [Shoreline Alterations: Ice Ridges](#)
- (*3) [Microsoft Word - ICE POWER with banner.doc](#)
- (*4) [ICE! ... Blockbuster by Boreas! | Minnesota DNR](#)

LMBIA Meat Raffle

The **LMBIA Meat Raffle** held at Shaggy's Bonfire Bar & Grill will continue through the winter! Bring your families, friends and neighbors and join us at Shaggy's at 6:00 pm each Monday night. You can have a delicious dinner, fill your freezer, and have a great time - all while helping LMBIA manage aquatic invasives!



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LAKE MINNIE BELLE HISTORY

Prepared by the Lake Minnie Belle Improvement
Association in 1987

- 1903:** This was the last time Lake Minnie Belle overflowed to Sucker Creek prior to the time the present outlet was established. It flowed generally in the same place that the present drain follows. The lake had to be several feet above the present established level to flow into Sucker Creek.
- 1914:** The 4EEEE's Resort was started on the NE side of the lake. Outhouses were used.
- 1925 - 1945:** There was a boat rental on the west side of the lake that had 8 boats.
- 1929:** Nelson's Resort just west of the DNR public access and 4EEEE's were both in operation.
- 1930 - 1950's:** The lake levels fluctuated but were generally 3 to 5 feet below the present established level. During this time, the lagoon on the NW side of the lake was generally dry. Rushes and water lilies were growing in the lake. Trees up to 6 inches in diameter were growing in the lake bed. The 4EEEE's Resort parked 30 to 40 cars in front of the resort on the dry part of the lake bed.
- 1940:** Larson's Resort (Nelson's) just west of the DNR access closed.
- 1940's:** A sand bar just west of the DNR access formed a lagoon. In spring, northerns spawned here.
- 1950:** Higher water washed out this sand bar.
- 1950:** 4EEEE's Resort and 4 other cabins were the only development on the lake. 4EEEE's had 7 cabins and 22 rental boats as well as a camp ground.
- 1950:** Lake water was used for drinking prior to the early 50's.
- 1952:** Minnie Belle Shores subdivision on the SW side of the lake was platted. Several other subdivisions followed in the next few years.
- 1953:** The first running water and flush toilets were installed at the 4EEEE's.
- 1960:** Most of the major subdivisions around the lake were established.
- 1965:** The lagoons on the S and SW side of the lake were dredged.
- 1967:** The first house was built on the SW lagoon.
- 1971:** The present outlet was put in so the lake could drain to Sucker Creek and the lake level was established at 1141.3 feet above sea level.
- 1960 - 1980's:** There were many cabins built in subdivisions around the lake.
- 1975:** Many cabins are being remodeled for use as year round homes.
- 1988:** There are very few vacant lots left around the lake.



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Summary of RESULTS – 2025 Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention and Management Activities

AIS Prevention – “Stopping Starry Stonewort”

In 2025, LMBIA continued its focus on “Stopping Starry Stonewort” from invading Lake Minnie Belle. Inspecting boats and watercraft for Starry stonewort before they enter the lake is the best way to stop it from entering the lake. In 2025, over 2,000 boats and watercraft were inspected at the DNR Access before they entered Minnie Belle! Inspections were conducted from May 10th through the end of September with most days covered from 6 am to 8 pm.

Over 2000 Boats & Watercraft Inspected

The result:

✓ No Starry Stonewort has been found in Lake Minnie Belle (as of the final 2025 survey conducted on September 17, 2025)

AIS Management – Surveys, Treatment, and Fast Reaction Plan for Starry Stonewort

Surveys

Throughout the past spring and summer, surveys were conducted for Curlyleaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, and Starry Stonewort. The Table below shows the surveys that were conducted and which plants were looked for in that survey.

2025 Aquatic Plant Surveys						
Type of Survey	Survey conducted to locate these aquatic plants				Location	Date
	Curlyleaf pondweed	Eurasian watermilfoil	Starry stonewort	Other aquatic plants/algae		
Boat Survey	✓		✓		Lake-wide	04/29/25
Scuba Dive Survey			✓		DNR Access	07/01/25
Scuba Dive Survey			✓		DNR Access	08/01/25
Boat Survey		✓	✓		Lake-wide	08/27/25
Scuba Dive Survey	✓	✓	✓	✓	DNR Access, East Access, West Access	09/10/25
Point Intercept Survey (Boat)	✓	✓	✓	✓	DNR Access (7 Acres)	09/17/25
Meandering Survey (Boat)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Entire lakeshore to depth of 15 ft	09/17/25



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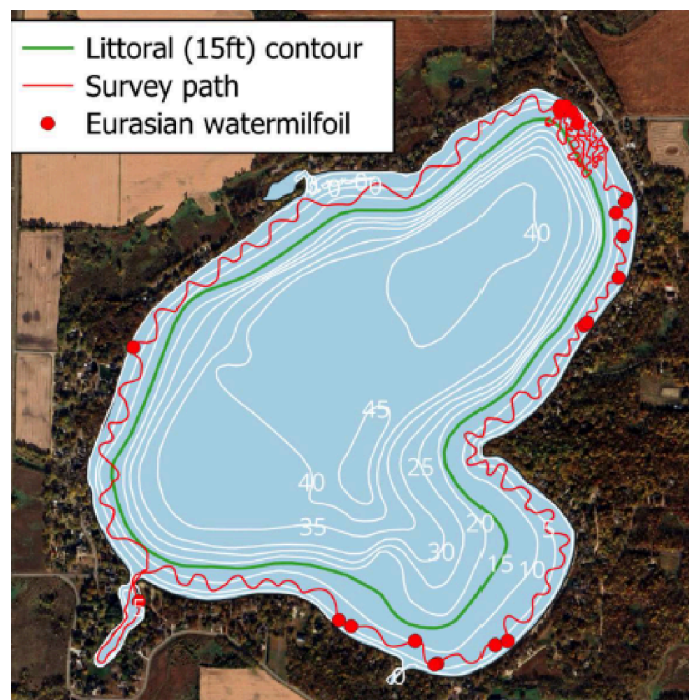
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The results:

✓ The April 29th survey identified multiple sites with Curlyleaf pondweed and resulted in an approved treatment plan (see subsequent section on “Treatment”).

✓ The surveys for Eurasian watermilfoil found Eurasian watermilfoil at the DNR Access and the West Access, but it was not dense at either site. Eurasian watermilfoil was also found scattered around the lake at 16 other locations. The density and quantity of the Eurasian watermilfoil that was found did not warrant treatment in 2025. The graphic below shows the locations of Eurasian watermilfoil found on September 17, 2025. These locations will be re-checked in 2026.



✓ No Starry Stonewort was found in any of the surveys conducted in 2025.

✓ 17 non-invasive aquatic plants were identified, as well as filamentous algae.



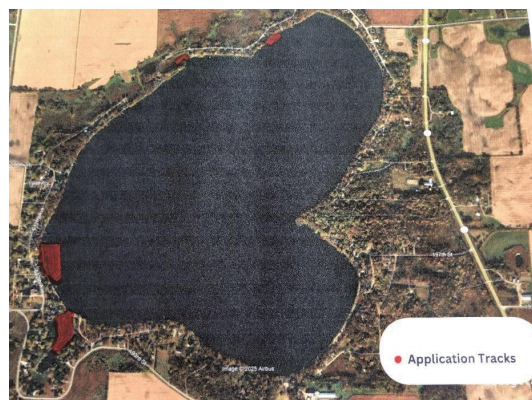
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Treatment

The April 29th survey for Curlyleaf pondweed delineated several locations of Curlyleaf on Minnie Belle. Four of the locations were approved for treatment by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR). These four locations and the size of each of the areas are shown in the following graphic and table. LMBIA engaged Tigris, a national aquatic management company, to treat the Curlyleaf pondweed in these areas. Tigris treated the areas on May 8, 2025.



The result:

✓ 7.4 acres of Curlyleaf pondweed were treated on May 8, 2025.

LOCATION on Minnie Belle	ACRES TREATED
Near outlet on north side of lake	0.8
Small lagoon on northwest side	0.4
West side	3.5
Southwest lagoon	2.7
Total Acres	7.4

Fast Reaction Plan for Starry Stonewort

If the worst-case situation should occur and Starry Stonewort is found in Lake Minnie Belle, LMBIA is prepared to act immediately to keep the invasion in check. Early in 2025, Brian Kittleson led LMBIA's effort to develop a Fast Reaction Plan for Starry Stonewort. The plan was developed based on input and discussions with the MN DNR, Meeker County, Lake Sylvia AIS representatives, Lake Koronis AIS representatives, and several contractors that have extensive experience identifying and managing Starry Stonewort.

The Lake Minnie Belle Fast Reaction Plan provides a step-by-step process for effective and efficient management of a Starry Stonewort invasion should one occur. It also includes supporting mechanisms that are available upon request should the need develop. Response to a Starry Stonewort invasion will be costly. LMBIA is working to fill a War Chest with \$100,000 that can be accessed to allow immediate response to any invasion.

The result:

✓ LMBIA is well-prepared to respond quickly and effectively should Starry Stonewort be found in Lake Minnie Belle.



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Did you know that...








- *there are fish consumption guidelines for eating bullheads from Minnie Belle?*
- *Minnie Belle has better average water clarity than 90% of all the lakes in Minnesota?*
- *the average water clarity depth for Minnie Belle from May through October 2025 was 16.5 feet?*
- *the maximum depth of Minnie Belle is 49 feet?*
- *if you were to walk around the shoreline of Lake Minnie Belle, you would walk 4.86 miles?*

You can find all of this information and much, much more on the LakeFinder page of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR) website. The link to this site follows:

[LakeFinder | Minnesota DNR](#)

What information is available on LakeFinder?

“LakeFinder is an online tool that finds and displays detailed information about most lakes in Minnesota. Information available includes fishing regulations; location; water access sites; lake maps; reports on stocking, ice in/out and water quality; fish consumption; and aquatic plant surveys.” shows the “top level” information available on LakeFinder that is specific to Lake Minnie-Belle. Note that many of these reports and maps provide links to additional information.

 Lake reports	 Lake maps	 Invasive species
Fisheries Lake Survey Water Access Sites Fish Stocking Ice In/Out Fish Consumption Water Levels Water Quality  Lake Health  Aquatic Plant Survey (PDF)	Water Clarity  Lake Depth Recreation Compass » Google Earth/KML 	Eurasian watermilfoil, zebra mussel Stop aquatic hitchhikers »



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For example, if you are interested in fishing, the “Fisheries Lake Survey” page provides information about recent fish sampling (both quantity and size) for various types of fish. It also has a section, “**Status of the Fishery**” which provides lots of information that may be of interest. For example, if you are interested in Walleye and Northern fishing on Lake Minnie Belle, the **Status of the Fishery** section says:

“Minnie-Belle Lake has some of the clearest water in Meeker County and this can lead to challenging daytime fishing for walleye. Fishing during low-light periods or even after dark tends to be most productive. Anglers typically find Walleye, Largemouth Bass, sunfish and Northern Pike biting at Minnie-Belle Lake. A Walleye jaw tagging exploitation study was completed at Minnie-Belle in 2024. Anglers who catch a Walleye with a jaw tag are encouraged to call the Hutchinson Area Fisheries office (320-753-0339) and report their catch.”

“Moderate numbers of Walleye were gill netted in 2024, and average size was ideal (17.2 inches in length) for anglers looking for a meal. The longest Walleye captured was 26.7 inches. Walleye were age-2 to age-17. Low numbers of Northern Pike were sampled, but average length was large (25.5 inches), especially when compared to other area waters. The longest pike sampled in this summer's gill netting was 36.5 inches. Anglers can keep three pike at Minnie-Belle Lake, but only one can be over 36 inches in length and none can be below 24 inches; all pike between 24 and 36 inches must be immediately released.”

The “**Lake Health**” page provides great information for understanding the “overall health” of Lake Minnie Belle. This information may be of interest to LMBIA members but is also of significant interest to the LMBIA Board. The **Lake Health** page for Lake Minnie Belle provides the following Lake Health Summary for Minnie Belle:

Lake Health

A healthy lake is one that is near its natural state. Water entering the lake has low levels of pollution. A healthy lake is protected by a natural shoreline and by investments in careful stewardship of the lake and its watershed (lakeshed).

About the Score

[Learn More](#)

The Lake Health Score is an average of the Water Quality, Biology, and Hydrology Lake Health Component Scores and is on a 0 to 100 scale.

Lake Health Score (▲): 75

Lake Health Grade: B+

Lake Health Score Major Watershed Mean (●): 48

Lake Health Score Major Watershed Min/Max: 25/75





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A deeper dive into the **Lake Health** page provides valuable information for LMBIA's quest to continuously improve the health of Lake Minnie Belle by minimizing nutrient loading to the lake (see the Stewardship Tab). Here we find that ***"Minimizing nutrient pollution is an important tool in protecting and improving lake health. Reducing phosphorus inputs into lakes may have many benefits, including improved water quality and reduced algal growth."***

The tab also provides a ***Phosphorus Load Reduction Goal of 9 pounds per year***. Reducing the 170 pounds of phosphorus that enters Lake Minnie Belle each year by 9 pounds is equivalent to reducing the annual load by 5%. This information can be used by LMBIA as they work on the following efforts planned for 2026:

- ***Strengthening Water Quality Monitoring Understanding***
- ***Managing Increased Weed Growth***

Where does the information on LakeFinder come from?

Information and data included on LakeFinder is developed by the MN Department of Natural Resources, the MN Pollution Control Agency, the MN Department of Health, and the University of Minnesota.

References

- (*1) Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. LakeFinder.
<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefinder/index.html>

THANK YOU!

The LMBIA Board thanks ALL members for supporting the Association. We are able to continue our quest to preserve and protect Lake Minnie Belle only because of your support, both in time and donations!

We also encourage you to support the businesses of our GOLD LEVEL Business Members. Many thanks to these valuable contributors! Our GOLD LEVEL Business Members are:

- **Litchfield Building Center • B&B Sports & RV • BROADBAND Corp • EZ Dock & Lift**
- **Hicks Bus Line • Jason Tibbits, StateFarm • Litchfield Building Center • Nagal Landscaping • Rod Burriss, CROSSCOUNTRY MORTGAGE • TheHomeSource Store**
- **Yamaha Motorsports & Marine**

We also want to offer our thanks to:

Shaggy's Bonfire Bar & Grill for hosting the weekly LMBIA Meat Raffle and LMBIA Board Meetings



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35 Years! LMBIA's Commitment to the Adopt a Highway Program

LMBIA has participated in the ***Adopt a Highway Program*** for 35 years - since 1990! Twice a year, spring and fall, LMBIA has recruited volunteers to remove trash and debris from two miles of shoulder and ditch along Highway 22. LMBIA cares for the section of Highway 22 between 190th Street and County Road 28.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) sponsors the program which they bill as "A program that turns community involvement into cleaner roadsides." The program offers public service opportunities to groups and families while keeping roadsides beautiful and free of litter and saving taxpayers money.

On October 7th, thirteen volunteers spent about an hour conducting this year's Fall Cleanup and removed 12 large garbage bags of debris from the shoulder and ditch along LMBIA's section of Highway 22. LMBIA

thanks the following folks for helping with this event: Richard Bautch, Susan Bubany, Jim Bullert, Bill Hard, Brian Kittelson, Cheryl Kittelson, Rob Kruger, Carol Nissen, Dean Nissen, Larry Rewerts, Mary Rewerts, Charlie Schlauderaff, and Curt Wendland.



For the past few years, Curt Wendland has been the Board member responsible for LMBIA's participation in the Adopt a Highway program. Curt stepped down from the Board this past summer but subsequently worked to successfully transition leadership of the Program to Richard Bautch. Many thanks go to Curt for shepherding this program so successfully!

Curt Wendland, Carol Nissen, and Dean Nissen participate in the Fall 2025 Adopt a Highway Program

The Spring 2026 Cleanup will be scheduled to occur after the snow has melted. Watch for emails in the Spring that announce the date and please consider volunteering to help with the event!



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Board Meetings

Board meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7pm.
Location to be posted via Facebook Page.

How much are LMBIA membership dues for 2026?

LMBIA's work to preserve and protect Lake Minnie Belle continues to grow more difficult because of the current population of invasive species and the impending threat of Starry Stonewort. The LMBIA Board works diligently to obtain funding from grants, government entities, and other fundraising activities and will continue to do so. However, the availability of these funds and the ability of the Board to fundraise is subject to change from year to year. Annual membership dues cost \$175.

Are LMBIA membership dues tax deductible?

Yes. LMBIA membership dues and any additional donations are tax deductible.

How do I pay LMBIA membership dues in 2026?

Please complete your 2026 membership form using one of the two following options:

1. Use the online membership form on our website
www.lakeminniebelle.org/membershipform or QR code →
2. Wait until you get a membership form mailed to you in February.



membership form

Ownership Changes/Contact info Changes

If ownership of property or contact information has changed please let us know so we can update the directory.

Emails us at info@lakeminniebelle.org



Check Us Out!
LMBIA website:
www.lakeminniebelle.org

LMBIA on Facebook
www.facebook.com/LMBIA

LMBIA Email
info@lakeminniebelle.org

Lake Minnie Belle Board of Directors

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