

LAKE MINNIE BELLE MESSENGER

A Newsletter from the Lake Minnie Belle Improvement Association

Fall 2018

Letter from the Chairman

Cliff Whillhite, Director and Board Chairman

Another summer has come and gone. With that comes change and there have been many. We have two new board members and a change in the board officers. I have taken the chairman spot now that Tom Hess has retired from the board. He will be hard to replace and has given more to the lake than most will ever know. We will miss him but made him an advisor, so he is not completely off the hook!

We have several opportunities this coming year including the completion of the first phase of our outlet update, work on the Bees and Butterflies project and the possibility of working on MB9, the last remaining inlet to the lake that has plagued us for years. We are applying for grant money to help fund these projects and hope to initiate work later this year and into the next.

We will continue to work on the water quality issues along with your other concerns such as weed monitoring and control, AIS, fishing and working with the other governmental agencies (finally the DNR is planning to fix our fishing pier). Our lake is one of the prairie lakes in central Minnesota, more typical of lakes farther north, and our job is to protect and maintain it. Agriculture runoff and AIS are the two main threats but there are others also.

There is a lot of enthusiasm being generated around the lake and we have had 4 members requesting a spot on the board. We usually must beg! We will put them to work even without being on the board.

I have been on lake Minnie-Belle for 6 years and been on the board for 4 years. Your board does many things that may seem outside the scope of

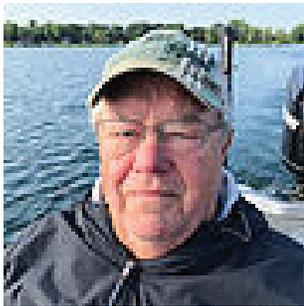
our responsibility, but we do have a pipeline to the state legislature by working with the DNR, MCAL, our County AIS, Soil and Water, MN COLA, MN Lakes and Rivers and the University of Minnesota. There are others but not enough letters in the alphabet left to list them.

If you want input on anything we do, just contact me or any of the board members. Hope you had a great summer.



Photo courtesy of Cindy Koenig (Cliff Whillhites daughter)

New Board Members



Hello from the waters of Lake Minnie-Belle. My name is Tom Rotz and I am a new board member. My wife Sharon and I moved to the lake in September of 2016 from Central Wisconsin, to be

closer to our children and grandchildren. We both enjoy fishing and boating and looked for a lake that would allow us and our grandchildren those opportunities. My main reason for joining the board is to keep the lake clean and safe for all of us to enjoy.

See you on the water, Tom



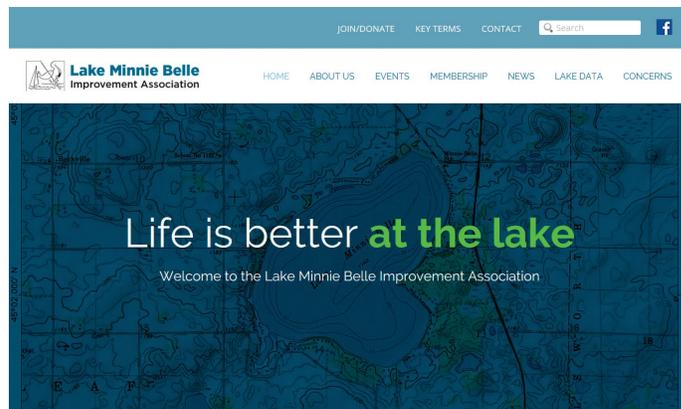
Hi, my name is Don Kotila. I want to introduce myself as a new member of the Lake Minnie Belle Lake Association Board of Directors. I was voted in at the September meeting to replace a board member who resigned in August.

This term will expire in 2020. My wife Colleen and I purchased our home on the southwest side of the lake in 1987. Colleen and I have 3 children, and 5 grandchildren. I am retired from 3M in Hutchinson after 34 years. However, I keep busy with Colleen's two Stay N Play Childcare Centers, fishing, and our 13 year old son Joseph's activities. Initially, I plan to help the lake association with the invasive species monitoring. Our family and friends have enjoyed fishing, skiing, tubing and boating on Lake Minnie Belle over the years, and my goal is to help keep our lake what the DNR says is "the jewel of Meeker County."

Board Meetings

With only a room divider to separate us from another group, the monthly board meetings have been competing for air space while meeting concurrently. The monthly board meetings are going to move to the 4th week of every month. They still start at 7 pm at Bonfire Bar & Grill. Please join us!

New Website Launched Kristi Ties



The new LMBIA website was released in August. It has limited content with more to be released in stages. The first stage is to provide events, meeting minutes, and board contact details. The second effort will be to have the functionality to pay memberships and donations online. The final stage is to include any other content that may be of value to the lake residents. The goal is to have all stages completed by the end of the year. Please excuse any incomplete tabs/links for the next few months.

Check it out!

<https://www.lakeminniebelle.org/>

We would love to hear from you! What would you like to see in the newsletter and/or website? Do you want to participate in any LMBIA activities? Use the new Contact Us to share your ideas. It is the easiest way to send emails to board members as they are directed appropriately from the website.

2019 Membership Steve Hatlestad

Please watch for a separate mailing in late November regarding Membership Dues. You may recall the \$50 of your dues are set aside to deal with AIS issues, if/when they arise. The balances of the dues are allocated for lake improvement projects. And please remember, any additional funds are greatly appreciated and will go a long way to keep Lake Minnie Belle one of the cleanest, most desired lakes to enjoy in Minnesota. And, your dues and AIS contributions are all tax deductible!!

Northern Pike Slot Limit – special regulation

Steve Stepien & Don Kotila

An open house to collect public comment on the northern pike special regulation in effect since 2003 on Lake Minnie-Belle was held on September 18th. Scott Mackenthun (Area Supervisor, DNR Fisheries) hosted the meeting and there were about 12-15 people who showed up and asked questions and/or gave comments. Overall there was good support for continuing the special regulation. The DNR response to changing the slot size while keeping the special regulation, such as 26"-36", was that they need consistency between the 43 lakes that are in the on-going part of the study and didn't want to make any change to the 24"- 36" slot and lose that ability to make comparisons.

2018 brought new northern pike regulations to Minnesota. Minnie-Belle is now within the north central zone, where pike between 22-26" must be immediately released and a ten fish bag limit is in place, with no more than two fish over 26 inches. If the special regulation were dropped, the default regulation would be the zone regulation. The biggest concern raised during the meeting came from the winter spear fishing group. How do they know the fish size before spearing? The DNR suggested suspending a 24" PVC pipe on a string or temporarily placing said pipe on the bottom to help estimate fish length.

There were comments about the observed over harvesting of crappies in the lagoon in the early spring and the perceived decrease in crappies around the lake. The crappies don't spawn in the lagoon they just congregate in the warmer water and feed until

the lake ice goes out before spawning. A suggestion was made to close the lagoon to fishing until the bass opener which is 2 weeks later than the regular fishing opener. Mackenthun acknowledged he has heard these complaints before but stated that DNR doesn't have any clear evidence that protecting spawning areas improves spawning success of crappies. Crappies aren't well sampled on Minnie-Belle and have been sampled at low levels since the DNR has used standardized sampling on the lake. Because large individual crappies are still caught, the DNR felt that over harvest was unlikely. The DNR would like to try some spring-time sampling to see if that might better sample fish that may be missed in the June standard assessments. Since there is adequate spawning habitat around much of the lake and crappies can spawn when they reach around 6 inches in length, crappies have found ways to offset harvest that occurs during spring fishing. Because of the ineffectiveness of the practice and spring workloads, closing the lagoons in the spring is not being considered by DNR.

A final decision on the northern pike special regulation for our lake will be made later this year, in time for next year's fishing opener. Comments will be accepted by DNR until close of business on Monday, October 8. A special regulation can be kept indefinitely and wouldn't need further review but can be revisited by DNR. Should the regulation be kept and, in the future, lose its effectiveness or become unpopular, a DNR review can be brought forward to discontinue the regulation.

Lake Water Levels

You may have noticed that the lake was a little higher again this year. Our rainfall amounts were back to normal and the lakes natural springs were very active last fall and again early this spring. Looks like we are getting closer to our normal water levels. We do track the lake levels and thanks to Rick and Camilla Devries, who report the lake level to the MPCA, we have current and historical data to share.

Annual LMBIA Meeting

Our annual LMBIA meeting was held on Saturday, July 21st at the Beckville Church picnic grounds. Attendance was 81 which is a little less than last year's meeting. A great pork chop dinner was served. Thanks to B & B Sports for donating the chops and Bruce Hamm for doing all the grilling.

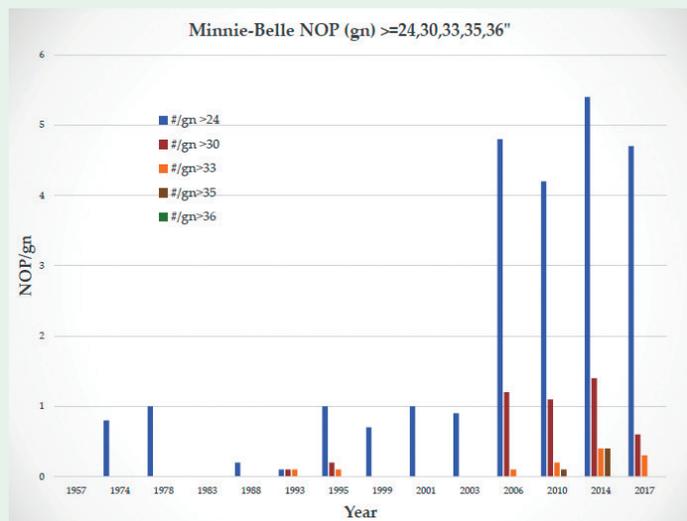
Tom Hess has retired from the board after 15 years of service, 11 of those years serving as chairman. His knowledge and leadership will be missed. Tom Rotz was elected to fill his spot. Julene Schatz, Stan Kittelson and Laurie Boll were also re-elected to the board. The election of officers for the board will be conducted at the August 21st meeting.

Guest Speaker:

Our guest speaker was Jim Lilienthal who was instrumental in getting our lake designated as a special regulation lake. There are only 100 lakes in Minnesota with that designation and there is pressure to reduce the number to 60. That designation makes us a "research" lake and allows the DNR to implement unique requirements such as our Northern Pike slot limit of 24" to 36". The question is what good did it do? The slot limit was put in place 15 years ago and we now have all the data.

In the 1960's and 70's our lake was producing an abundance of northern pike in the 24 to 40-inch range. That changed in the 1980's and the typical size was 18 to 22 inches. What happened to all our large northern? They were over harvested, and it takes 10 years for a pike to grow to over 24 inches. The research showed that with the reduction of larger pike they started breeding at a younger age (1-year-old vs 3 years old). Large pike also claim a much larger area of spawning ground than the smaller ones and we had an explosion of small pike. The smaller pike consumed all the preferred food (yellow perch and bullhead) then turned on the smaller walleye. We had a lake full of small northern with a serious reduction in available food for them.

The slot limit was intended to protect the larger northern, which also cannibalize the smaller pike, and rebuild the food chain. It has taken 15 years, but our lake fish population is now back in balance. The data has convinced both the DNR and the state law makers to implement a state wide (Northern Central) slot limit on northern pike! The DNR wanted the 24 to 36" slot but politics negotiated a 22 to 26" with a limit of 10 under the slot and 2 over.



The data before 1993 was collected by a different method and doesn't correlate with the data collected after that time.

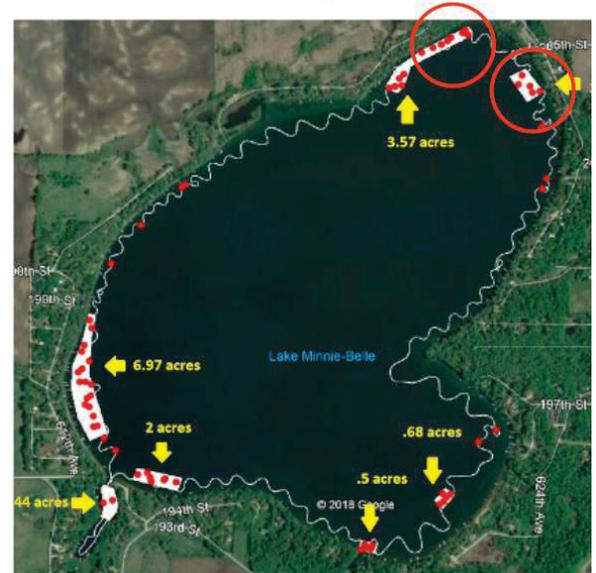
U of M Research Project on Hybrid Milfoil Steve Stepien

Lake Minnie-Belle appears to have an area that contains deep water hybrid milfoil. This area along the northeast side of the lake has now been listed as a research area. This macrophite is a cross breeding of Eurasian Water Milfoil and the native Northern Water Milfoil. We are working with the University of Minnesota on this project. Dr. Newman and volunteers took a hundred samples from around the lake last year and took more samples from two specific locations earlier this year. We are still waiting for the DNA test results, and will provide more information as it becomes available. The DNR has also declared another area in front the AMA property as a research location and will be monitored by the DNR AIS specialist.



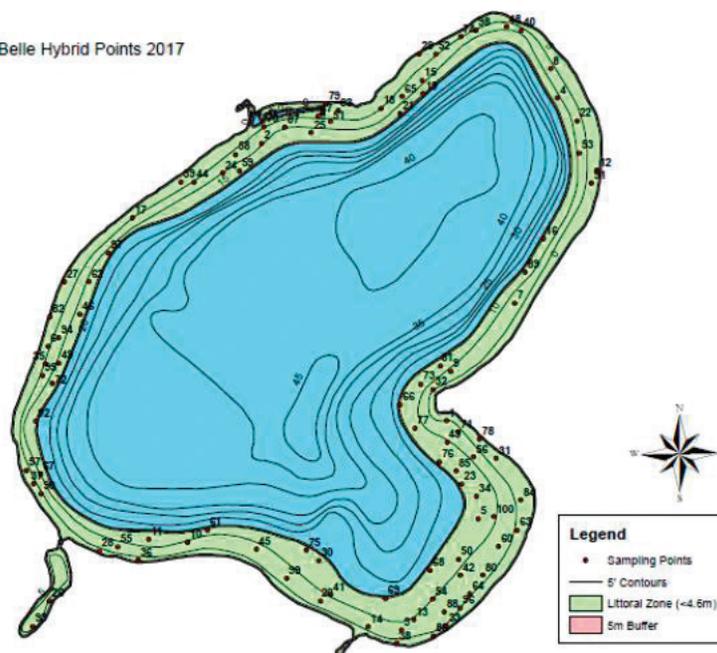
Abby Dahlquist, Steve Stepien and Dr. Ray Newman at the 2018 DNR & U of M Partnership conference.

Hybrid Eurasian Water Milfoil research areas



Locations of Research Areas

Minnie-Belle Hybrid Points 2017



Sampling loctions for Hybrid EWM on Minnie-Belle

Starry Trek 2018 Steve Stepien

We participated in the 2018 Starry Trek sponsored by the MN AIS Research Center and the DNR on August 18th. Volunteers got a hands on exposure to Starry Stone Wart (SSW). We met with experts from around the United States to observe and get to know the new scourge to our lakes.

We came back to Minnie Belle and took samples from the lake, identify suspects, bag, tag, and submitted samples for identification at the U of M. No SSW was detected in our lake. This was a state wide effort and did find another lake in Wright county with SSW.



A Message from Jeff Bullert

I am a 3rd generation cabin owner on Lake Minnie-Belle and I love this lake. I wanted to show off my love for lake minnie-belle to others so I designed a t-shirt. The shirts became popular among other Lake Minnie-Belle-ies so I printed more and more to meet demand. I have also created a social media group on Facebook for people to get to know other who enjoy the lake as much as I do. People share their photos, ask questions and offer items for sale.



Shirt Site: <https://lakeminnie-belle.com/>

Facebook Group: What's Happening on Lake Minnie-Belle



Photo courtesy of Cindy Koenig (Cliff Willhites daughter)

Lake Monitoring Stan Kittelson

Summer is over, and so is the 2018 Lake Monitoring season. So how did our lake water quality do this year? The RMB Laboratory's report is not yet complete, but we have enough information to show that there is no significant trend in Lake Minnie Belle water quality. We sampled water five times this year (May-Sept.) The Secchi disk readings that measure water clarity (clearness) were as follows: May-29ft., June-17ft., July-17.5ft., Aug-11ft., Sept-12ft. These readings were taken from the same point near the center of the lake. We also sampled the top six feet of water for chlorophylla and phosphorus, because that is where the highest fertility/productivity level of the lake resides. These samples were also taken at the same point near the center of the lake.

The collection of water quality data is one way to quantify the physical, biological and chemical composition of our lake.

Our goal is to educate lake property owners about the fertility and productivity levels on our lake, and to use this information to promote stewardship on shoreline properties.

No water sampling is done during the winter months. The lake takes a winter break, and so do we. Have a good winter, and we will report to you again in the Spring.

A special thank you to
**Mark & Ann Schmidtbauer's
Creative Graphics**
for publishing the LMBIA Messenger.
This service is done at no cost
to our organization.
We greatly appreciate
your generosity!

Spotlight Robert Hantge



Olivia Rock, age 8, from West Linn, Oregon skiing for the first time Lake Minnie Belle.

Making Memories

We are so blessed to have a beautiful lake to enjoy and share with others and there's no better way to share it, than teaching the next generation to ski. This is one of my greatest joys is teaching kids to ski. I will stand in the water all day long and put on skies, untangle ropes and fit lifejackets. Seeing the joy and pride gleaming from their face as they make their first lap around the lake with wobbly legs and arms, is all worth it. Our family has enjoyed this Minnesota pass-time our entire lives. My mother grew up on Lake Minnetonka, which meant my brother and I were skiing as young kids around Harrison Bay – we would beg for one more lap. It's an old family tradition and the memories will last a lifetime.



4 - 10yr olds, Jack Hantge, Grady Campbell, Ethan Block and Logan Hagstrom enjoying a group-ski on Minnie Belle.

Update from our AIS Team

Weed Control:

We have completed the lake surveys and chemical treatments for Curly Leaf Pondweed (CLP) and Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM). We located two large areas with CLP. Most was along the west side of the lake and in the lagoon. The DNR approved both of the locations and we treated a total of 5 acres. We wanted to use a different and more effective chemical but they wouldn't let us use it because they are still stocking the lake with walleye fingerlings. The follow up survey found we had a good kill but there were still areas that didn't take.

We found 8 – 10 locations that had EWM but most were just small clumps and we can't treat anything less than a few acres. The chemical disperses and affects the natural weeds growing in the area unless we treat about 3 acres or more. We did treat 3 locations on the lake that were large enough to be effective. (see the maps) Most was along the west side of the lake on both sides of the lagoon and another area from the outlet east to the middle of the AMA property. There were two areas that we were not able to treat because they have been classified as research protected areas.

Chemical treatment of EWM puts pressure on them and they begin to propagate sexually rather than by fragmentation. This is the cause of the Hybrid EWM, they cross breed with the native Northern Water Milfoil (NWF). The hybrid can be more resistant to chemical treatment and can become "hardened". (see the article of our work with the U of M to study the Hybrid)

The DNR recommendations are to treat in areas that become a problem to recreation or local property owners. Just because it has been located doesn't mean it needs to be controlled. This is particularly true in clear water lakes. The plant gets enough light and doesn't need to reach the surface. Many areas in our lake have EWM but they don't cause a problem. Given time (2 – 5 years) the natural plants respond in a positive fashion because they have been put under pressure by the invasive plants and adapt by increasing growth rate and reproduction thus keeping the EWM in check. One exception to this is in areas with heavy bottom silt. Excess runoff from the lake inlets have created a few areas with silt and high levels of fertilizer. These are the areas that have been treated. Sandy bottom areas of the lake are "off limits" to chemical control.

There are about a dozen property owners on the lake that treat the weeds in front of their property on their own dime. They have been utilizing Clarke Corp, our contract company, and they do the treatments at the same time they do it for the association. Costs run about \$250. The permits are easier to obtain because they go through a different DNR division, Aquatic Plant Management out of New Ulm. If you are interested in treating the weeds in front of your property just let us know and we will help in getting the process going for you.

Boat Inspections:

At the time of this writing we have one week to go with boat inspections and there have been almost 3000 boats inspected at our lake. We had Kirk Hatlested doing most of the boat inspections at the landing this year. The poor guy did more inspections than any other two inspectors in the county combined. Our lake is by far the most popular lake for both fishing and recreation. Of course that increases the chances of AIS being introduced into our lake. Our plan of attack has been to contain zebra mussels at the landings on Stella and Washington, we keep a decontamination unit stationed there, and prevent introduction at the other landings. If you are exiting Minnie-Belle you might not get as thorough an inspection as entering. We also ask boaters what lake they were last on and if it was not an infected lake we only required the "Clean, Drain, Dry and Dispose" criteria. We were successful again this year – see the Zebra Mussel Trap results.

We also had Kurt Dahlquist inspecting boats on the west side landing for 6 weekend to get a better understanding of the risk from that landing. The data collected showed that 36 of the 38 boats entering on that landing were local members that live on the lake. Most utilize Minnie-Belle only - “one boat, one lake, one season”. We determined the risk from that landing was minimal and did not close and redirect boats from that landing on weekends.

Zebra Mussel Traps:

We have zebra mussel settling traps around the lake and check them at least every other week. The ones surrounding the DNR landing get checked more often. I almost had a heart problem earlier this year when the one on the landing dock came up positive in a preliminary check. After further examination we found it had been set too deep in the water and had fine sand embedded in the organic growth taking hold on the surface. Boaters kicked up the sand and created the false positive. All of the 15 detection traps came up negative this year.

We have submitted snail samples to the U of M and DNR. It appears we may have Chinese Mystery Snails in our lake. The final results aren't back yet but we have been finding them in many of the surrounding lakes also. These are rather large snails about one inch in size with a left handed swirl. They lose their operculum (bottom sealing flap) when they die and range in color from black to almost white. These are an invasive species but don't get the notoriety. Because of their size they crowd out the native snails. If you look, you will spot them on your dock and lift.

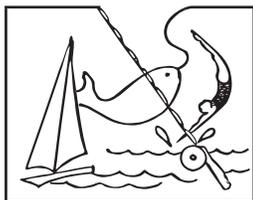
Nuisance Critters:

Chigger itch – our lake did not have much for chiggers this year and they were almost absent last year. The life cycle goes from fish, to birds that eat the fish, then to snails that eat the bird droppings in the lake. The snails are the intermediate host and when the chiggers mature they kill and exit the snails. A lack of dead snails on the beach is a good sign. We haven't had large flocks of birds on our lake and that seems to have broken the cycle. As a reminder to the boaters that keep the birds away, it is unlawful to harass them and chase them away. So far nobody has complained. (Lake Ripley had chiggers for over three weeks this year and the kids were crying and screaming)

Your AIS dollars:

The U of M and the DNR have approved an experimental zebra mussel treatment. It is a type of algae that is already native to MN lakes but when in high concentrations kills zebra mussels by destroying their red blood cells. Even better, it works even after killing the algae. The process of growing and cultivating the algae needs to be ramp-ed up in order to bring the costs down but

that should only be a few years away. So far the DNR will only allow up to 30 acres for treatment. If we can detect an infestation early we have plans to cordon off the area, close the landing, and begin treatment within 10 days. The cost of implementing the plan in a timely fashion is our responsibility, at least for the first year, but it is still feasible. We can also utilize some of the counties AIS emergency fund. After the first year there is grant money available from the DNR for control. There are other lakes around that have over \$120k in their account to deal with it in the same way. Thanks to all the membership for your AIS \$ contributions.



LAKE MINNIE BELLE
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Check Us Out!

LMBIA website:
www.lakeminniebelle.org (under construction)

LMBIA on facebook:
www.facebook.com/lmbia

LMBIA Email:
info@lakeminniebelle.org

DNR website:
www.dnr.state.mn.us

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LAKE MINNIE BELLE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board meetings are held the 4th Tuesday of each month (except December), at the Bonfire Bar & Grill at 7:00 PM.

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