

*June 29, 2016*

Dear Leech Lake Property Owner:

It is time once again to invite you to join your friends and neighbors in protecting our beautiful lake from the many threats it faces now and in the years to come. People who own homes, businesses or recreate on the lake can be members of the Leech Lake Association and participate in our common cause of protecting and enhancing the lake. There is power in numbers as we work towards the health of the lake, and we need your help. Now is also the ideal time to join as your annual membership would begin on August 1 and run through July 31, 2017.

Leech Lake has faced a number of threats in the past decade and there are more looming in the future. Unusually high angler harvest concurrent with an expanding cormorant population placed noticeable pressure on the walleye population during the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. The imminent threat of Zebra Mussels, Quagga Mussels, and Spiny Water Fleas are the most recent issues of concern because they have strong impacts on algae and zooplankton production, both of which are necessary for supporting healthy fish populations. Some or all of these are probably contributing to the present dire problems on Mille Lacs and other Minnesota lakes. As the economy improves, there will also be increasing developmental pressures which require the vigilance of all of us who live on or near the lake.

.

The Leech Lake Association has long been on the front lines for all of these issues, supported entirely by volunteers and Association dues and contributions.

* Leech Lake Fishing Advisory Committee: Our Board members assisted the DNR in developing its five-year Leech Lake Fisheries Management Plan -- which through a slot and reduced bag limit as well as some limited stocking to speed the recovery of small walleyes has brought walleye fishing back to some of the highest levels ever recorded. The Committee also supported the Leech Lake Bands Division of Resources Management efforts to reduce cormorant numbers to sustainable levels on the lake. The Advisory Committee just completed the approved 2016-2020 DNR Management Plan which is designed to maintain good fishing of all species, as well as protect Lake Habitat. Periodic updates on the Leech Lake Fishery Plan are shared with our members at our annual meeting, on our website and in our newsletters.
* Shoreline and Spawning Bed Protections: Our Association has provided volunteers and financial support to the DNR, Association of Cass County Lakes (ACCL) and Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) to protect area lakes, shorelines and watersheds. These include acquisitions on Millers Bay and Five Mile Point to acquire sensitive shoreline habitat to protect spawning beds for which we received the Governors Habitat Conservation Award. Other potential acquisitions to protect sensitive shoreline are underway.
* Lake Safety and Navigation: Association dues help pay for dredging of the Roosevelt Canal to allow boat traffic between Agency Bay and the main lake. This canal, dug back in WPA days is a critical waterway for many and was dredged twice during the low waters of early 2015. We also purchase lighted buoys and replacement channel markers, and assist the Sheriff's office and the Corps of Engineers with placement.
* AIS Prevention: We represent Leech Lake through various AIS Committees which determine how state and county monies will be spent. Our Association has obtained matching grants in 2015 and again in 2016 to pay for boat inspectors and inspections at Leech Lake public boat launching areas (over and above that which will be provided by DNR). Each year our volunteers assist with AIS inspection and boat certification for Leech Lake Fishing Tournaments.
* Legislative/Rulemaking: Our Board participates in zoning inspections of lakeshore developments, variance requests and conditional use permit applications looking for potential negative impact on the lake, watershed or neighborhood.
* Youth fishing events -- like the Corps of Engineers Fishing Derby at Federal Dam. We provide volunteers and financial support to equip and instill in young people a love of fishing, plus provide water safety training and life jackets.
* Shingobee Island Fishing Pier: The Association and its members played a key role in the restoral of this valuable landmark. The new pier has been designed and built to accommodate all fishing enthusiasts especially those with disabilities.
* Website Development: The Association now has an official website which allows you to access Association news online. We are maintaining the website but are open to any changes our members would like to see.

We sincerely hope at this time that you will consider joining the Leech Lake Association. Preserving the relatively pristine nature of Leech Lake for future generations will require our constant vigilance. Your membership will ensure good two-way communication between you and us regarding issues or threats around the lake. The annual dues are inexpensive -- only $30 for a family and $50 for a business.

To register your membership, please fill out the enclosed Membership Form and return it in the self-addressed envelope. We need your help -- now more than ever. We also invite you to attend any of our monthly meetings which are held the 3rd Monday of each month at 9:30 a.m. at the Cass County Courthouse in downtown Walker.

Sincerely,

Robert Gisvold, President

Dave Laursen, Secretary

Leech Lake Association