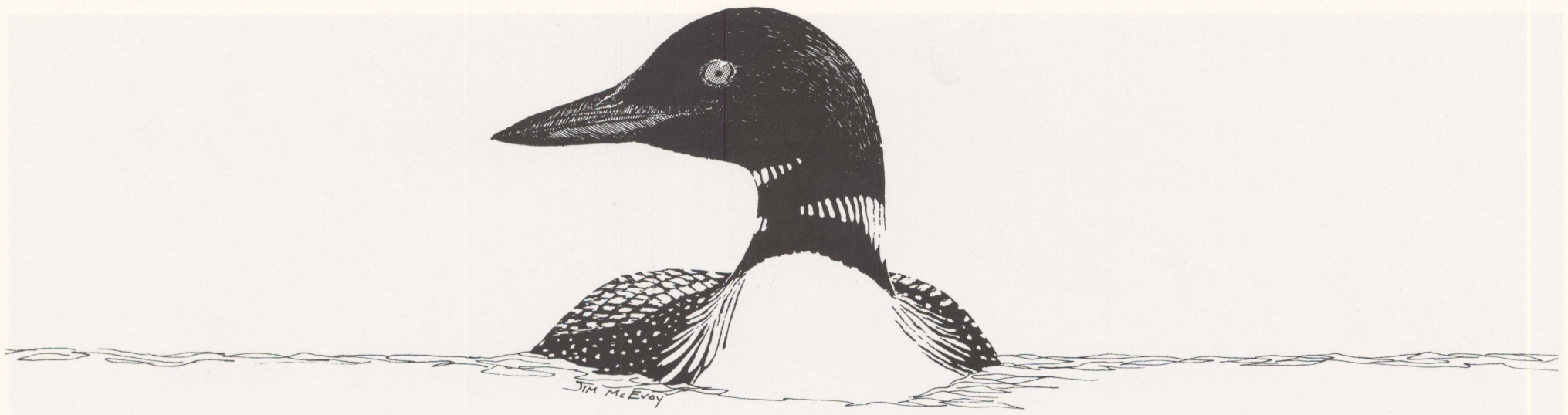


Get in tune to your lake



JIM McEvoy



Get In Tune . . . To Your Lake!

A lake is much more than an individual body of water—it's a reflection of how we use the surrounding land. What you do to the landscape directly affects the water quality of lakes and can heighten such problems as unsightly algae blooms, nuisance weeds, siltation, reduction of wildlife habitat, and loss of natural shoreline.

Here are some helpful tips on how to keep your lake clean and healthy. Whether you're a lake user or lake-front property owner, **be aware of your actions** and help keep Wisconsin's 15,000 blue jewels blue!

Please Don't Feed the Lake!

After a hard rain, check out what's washing into the nearest lake. Nearby farms, construction sites, houses, gardens and lawns add nutrients and sediments, contributing to excessive algae and plant growth. Simply put, what feeds your own crops, lawns and gardens **also** overfeeds the lake's greenery!

What you do to your land tends to show up in a lake. Follow these simple steps to slow water runoff and minimize nutrient overloading:

- Maintain vegetation on steep hills and banks, or terrace steep slopes
- Leave a natural vegetation buffer zone near your lakeshore
- Do you really need to fertilize your lawn? If so, apply only what is recommended through soil testing
- Remove cut aquatic plants and dead fish from lakeshore
- Use compost from lawn clippings or harvested aquatic plants to fertilize gardens and flowers
- Don't burn lawn wastes or sweep the leaves and lawn clippings into street gutters
- Direct runoff from rooftop downspouts to areas where it can soak into the soil
- Minimize paved and impermeable surfaces
- Minimize soil disturbance during construction and revegetate bare areas as soon as possible

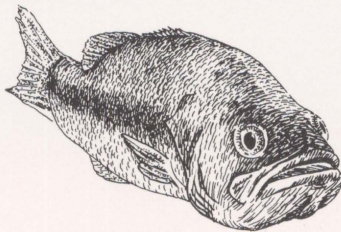
Flushing Your Lake's Future?

Every flush of a toilet or a rush down the gutter dumps something into our lakes. Storm sewers are **not** safe disposal sites—water running into the sewers flushes oil and grease, garbage, animal and yard waste, chemicals, pesticides, toxic metals, salts and sediments directly into the lake. Even overburdened septic systems leak nutrient-rich pollutants into lakes.

Take notice of your wastes—what they are, where they're going, and how to safely dispose of them:

- Treat household cleaners, solvents and pesticides as hazardous waste. **Don't** dump these toxins into the storm sewer—keep abreast of changing disposal practices and learn to discard contaminants properly!
- Recycle motor oil and other acceptable automotive wastes
- Encourage local street sweeping
- Reduce or eliminate pesticide use on your lawn and garden
- Pick up animal waste and bag for pick-up and proper disposal

- Compost yard waste for your garden
- Maintain septic systems (pump regularly); make sure all gray water drains to your septic system, and never dump wastewater directly into the lake
- **Be Water Wise:** conserve water and less wastewater will reach the lakes



Where Have All the Wetlands Gone?

Since most prime lakeshore property is already developed, pressure mounts to develop "marginal shorelands" or wetlands. Wetlands play a crucial role in the overall health of a lake, filtering out pollutants and sediments, acting as natural barriers against shore erosion, and providing food, cover and nursery areas for a variety of fish and wildlife.

To function effectively, a wetland needs an undisturbed, stable environment. Here's what you can do to help:

- Eliminate filling, dredging, draining or altering wetlands and weedbeds
- Protect beneficial or unique fish and wildlife habitats
- Control erosion into wetland areas—sediments not only reduce the life expectancy of wetlands, but often contain toxins or can cover and suffocate plants and fish eggs
- Avoid using motorboats and jet skis in shallow areas to prevent stirring sediments. Check into local boating control ordinances to further prevent overcrowding and sediment problems
- A lake is not a swimming pool! Some aquatic plants and algae are crucial to the health of the lake. Learn which lake plants are most beneficial to fish and wildlife
- Work toward the control of non-native nuisance plants such as purple loosestrife, curlyleaf pondweed and Eurasian milfoil
- Consider alternatives to chemical spraying of excessive lake plants (hand harvesting, raking, cutting, aquatic plant screens, and mechanical harvesting)
- To chemically treat lake plants, remember—you **do** need a DNR permit. Contact your local DNR lake biologist for the best plant control method to suit your lake
- Fight zoning changes that would promote development of wetland areas; attend zoning hearings, contact your Board of Adjustment
- Become a shoreland/wetland steward; make sure any development on or near wetlands is properly permitted

How's Your Lakeshore Looking?

Thoreau called a lake "the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature." While piers, decks and cabins may help you enjoy your lake, shoreline development can obscure its natural beauty, masking the landscape's expression. Be aware of state and local shoreland zoning regulations designed to help keep the landscape

in harmony with the natural lakeshore, and keep Wisconsin's most expressive feature beautiful:

- Maintain and restore natural vegetation strips along the shoreline, not only to enhance the lake's beauty, but to provide cover and shade for fish, wildlife and people—also increasing privacy, reducing runoff and noise
- Contact your zoning office before you begin any construction activity on or near your shoreline
- All structures, including decks, must be set back 75 feet from the shoreline
- Follow standards for shoreline cutting, lot size, sanitation, and construction
- Design structures to complement the landscape. Use natural colors and build only what you need
- Try natural-looking rock or boulder rip-rap, instead of sea walls and sheet piles, to prevent shoreline erosion
- Learn who your local zoning officials are and participate in Board of Adjustment hearings: **You can make a difference!**

Is Your Lake an Orphan?

Take an interest in your lake and get involved! Never assume that lake problems will simply disappear or not ever happen. It takes a lot of organization and planning to ensure your lake's future health against destructive development or declining water quality. Consider the many ways to become involved with your lake.

- Show you care; adopt a lake today!
- **ORGANIZE** shore clean-ups, picnics, festivals, and other activities to get lake-property owners and lake users involved and interested in their lake
- Initiate or become an active member in your own lake district or association
- Help design a long-term plan for your lake to balance the needs of the lake environment with those of people. Accommodate recreational, residential, wetland and wildlife areas in the lake and its watershed
- Recognize areas of excessive aquatic plants and develop a whole-lake solution to the problem (don't forget alternatives to chemical treatment)
- **Look ahead!** Plan and manage your lake's development
- Find out more about the state's lake planning grant program

Got the Blues 'Cause Your Lake is Green?

There are no simple solutions to complex lake problems, but you **can** help. Your daily use of the lake and its surrounding landscape contributes greatly to lake water quality. Any action you take to improve the lake will likely trigger others to join in the effort.

We must learn to live in tune to our lakes. Take a stake in your lake—and help keep Wisconsin's 15,000 most expressive features looking healthy, beautiful. . . and blue.

For more information, contact:

Lake Management Program
Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources
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