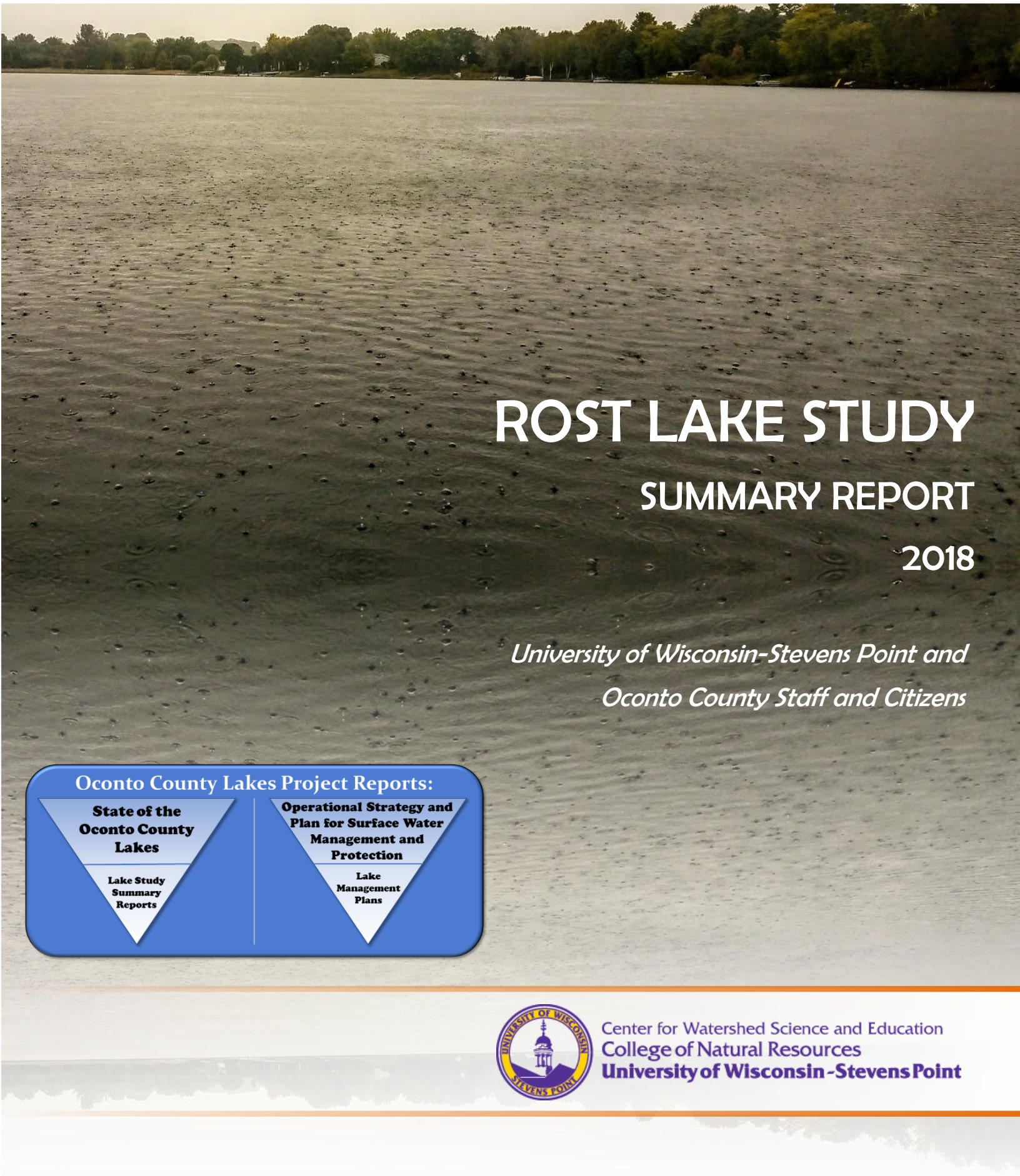
Oconto County Lakes Project



ROST LAKE STUDY

SUMMARY REPORT

2018

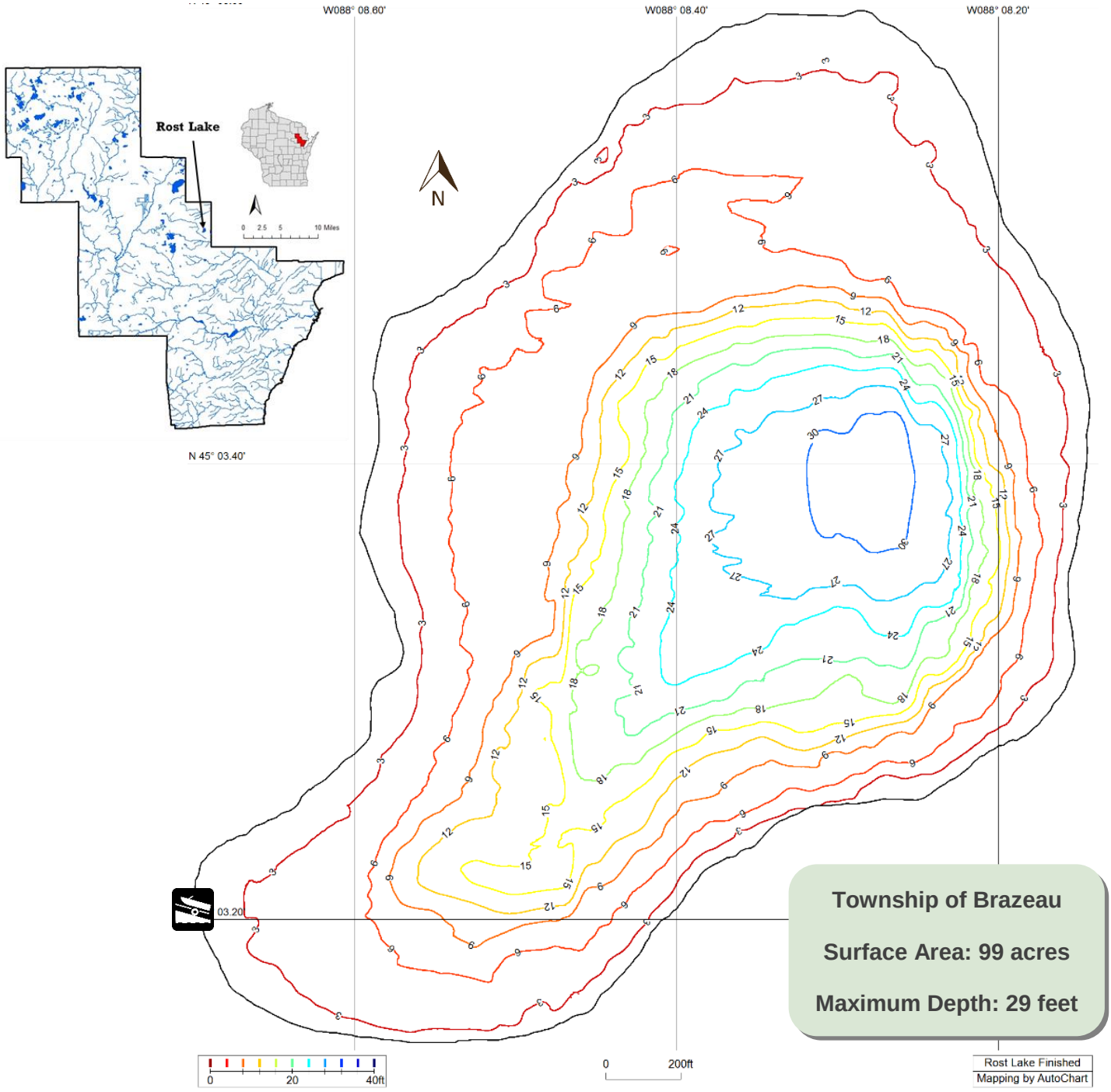
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and

Oconto County Staff and Citizens

Center for Watershed Science and Education
College of Natural Resources
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Background

- Rost Lake is a 99-acre seepage lake in central Oconto County with a maximum depth of 29 feet.
- Most water enters Rost Lake via groundwater. Surface water runoff, direct precipitation and groundwater also contribute water to lesser extents.
- Visitors have access to the lake from one public boat landing on the south side.
- This report summarizes data collected during the 2016-2017 lake study.



Township of Brazeau

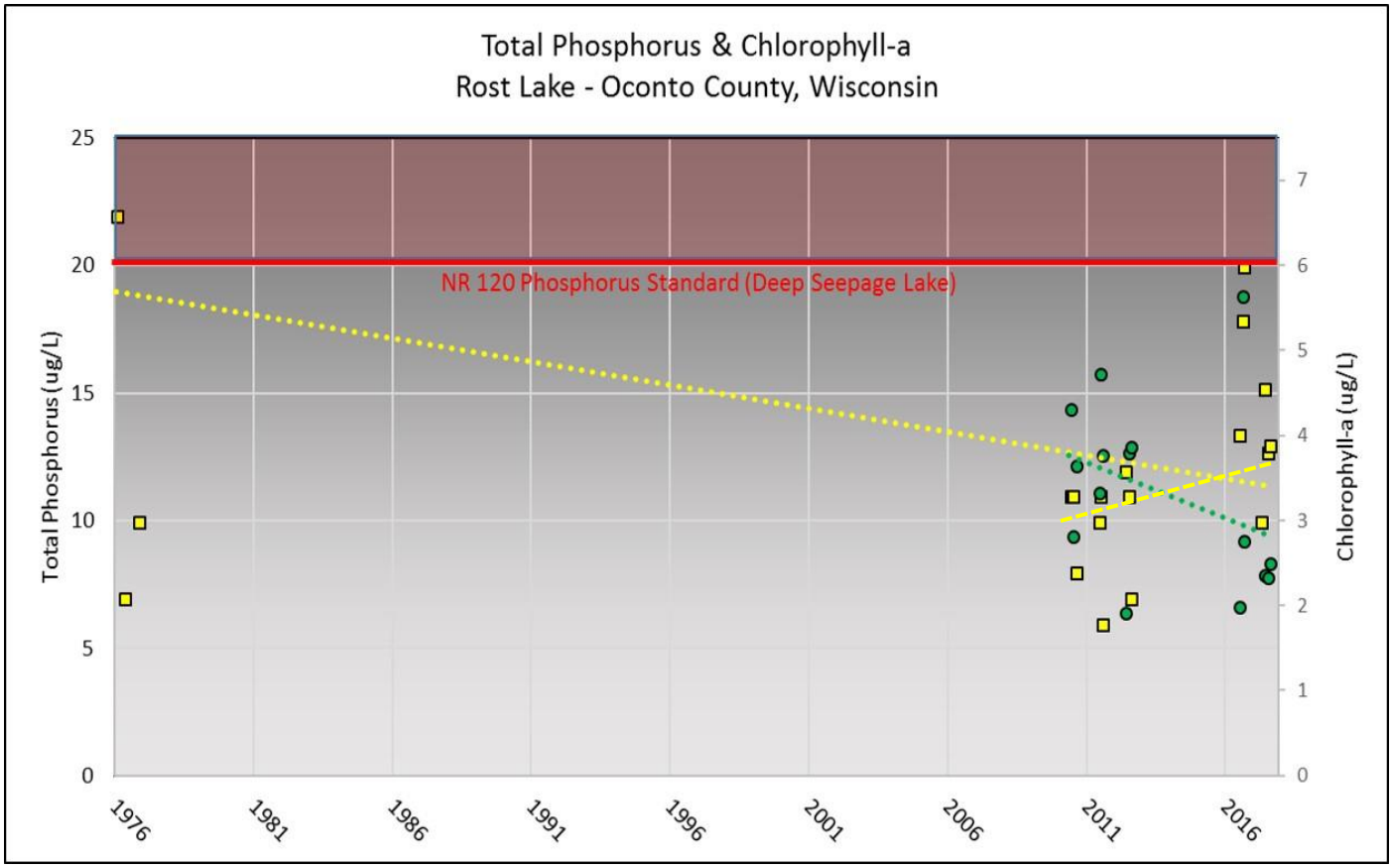
Surface Area: 99 acres

Maximum Depth: 29 feet

Water Quality

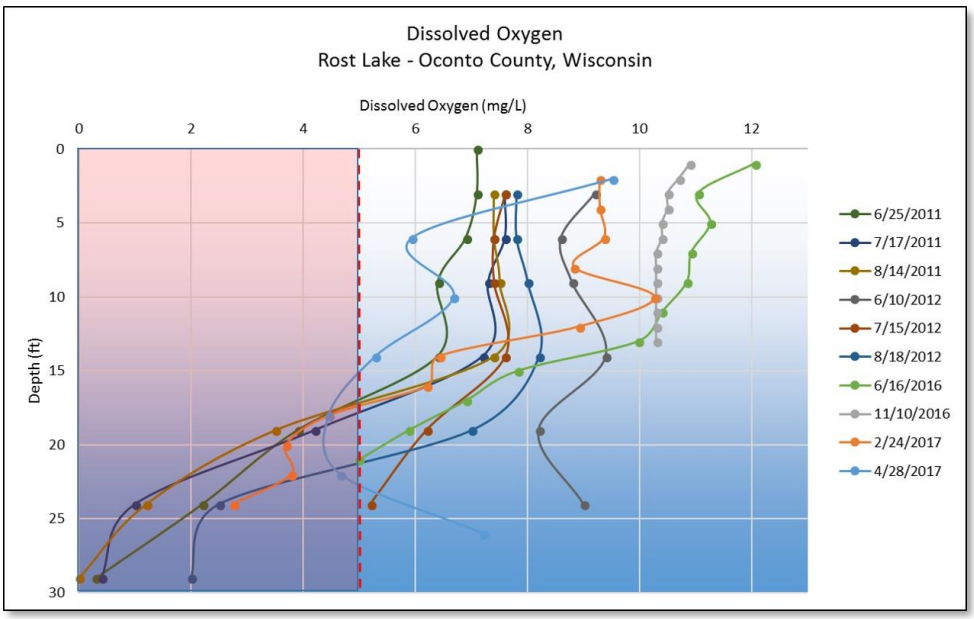
Nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen are what feed aquatic plants and algae in a lake. Excessive amounts of nutrients delivered to a lake will result in abundant plant and algae growth. Disturbance within a watershed combined with the landscape's inability to infiltrate and filter runoff is what primarily delivers nutrients to a lake.

- Total Phosphorus was consistently **below** the Wisconsin state phosphorus standard of 20 ug/L for deep seepage lakes during the two-year study. The long-term trend is decreasing (based on July data), but the 6-year trend suggests increasing concentrations.
- Inorganic nitrogen (0.22 mg/L) remained below the threshold of 0.3 mg/L when algal blooms increase.
- Chlorophyll-a, an indirect measure of algae, remained below 6 ug/L and limited data suggests a decreasing trend.



Water Quality

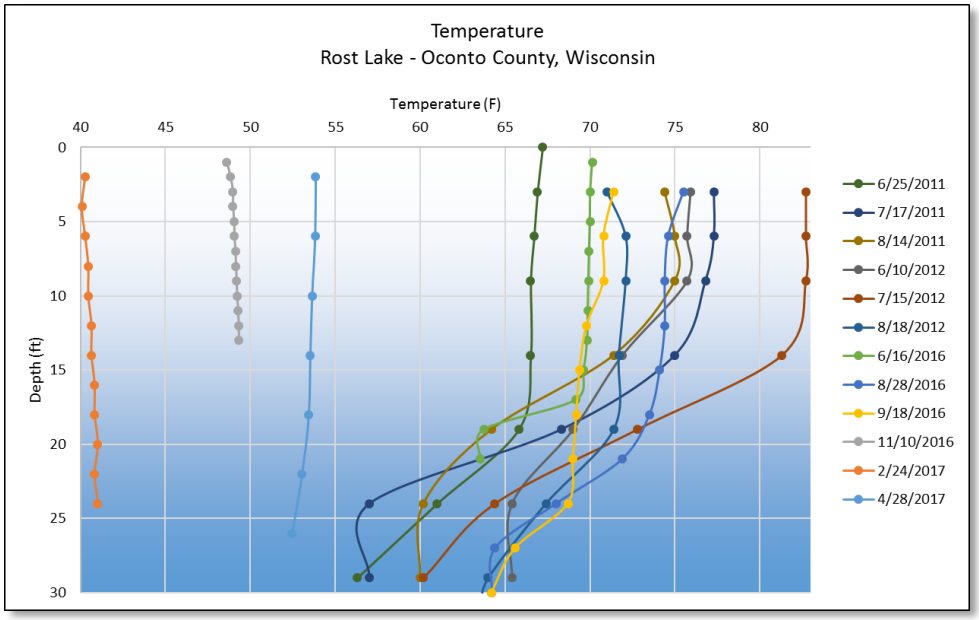
Sufficient **dissolved oxygen** in lake water is essential to the survival of aquatic organisms. The amount of dissolved oxygen present within a lake varies by season and depth. It is determined by the biological activity that consumes or produces oxygen, by water mixing through wind, changes in temperature, and inputs of surface and groundwater. Generally, at least 5 mg/L oxygen is required for fish.



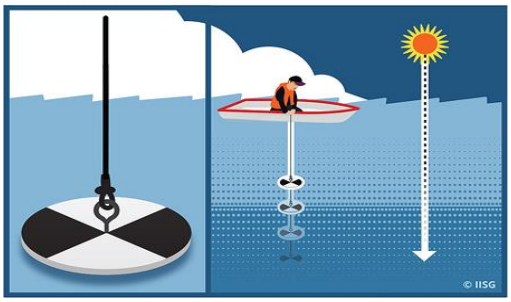
- Sufficient oxygen is available in Rost Lake in the top 15 feet of the water column.
- Bumps in dissolved oxygen concentrations at 10 feet suggest mild algal activity.

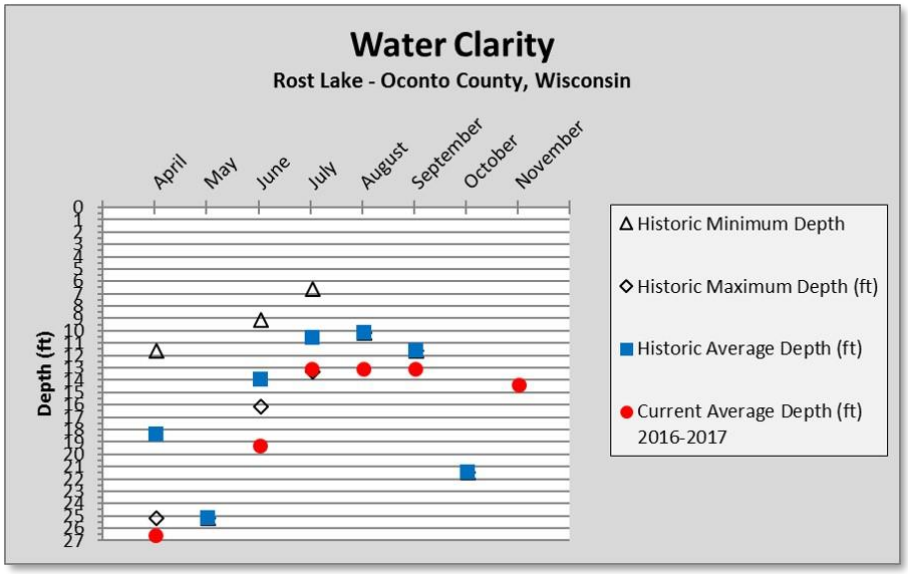
Lake water **temperature** has a significant impact on water chemistry, spatial distribution of fish, microbial growth and oxygen content.

- The temperature gradient in Rost Lake illustrates thorough mixing fall through spring with a thermocline developing at 15-25 feet during the growing season.



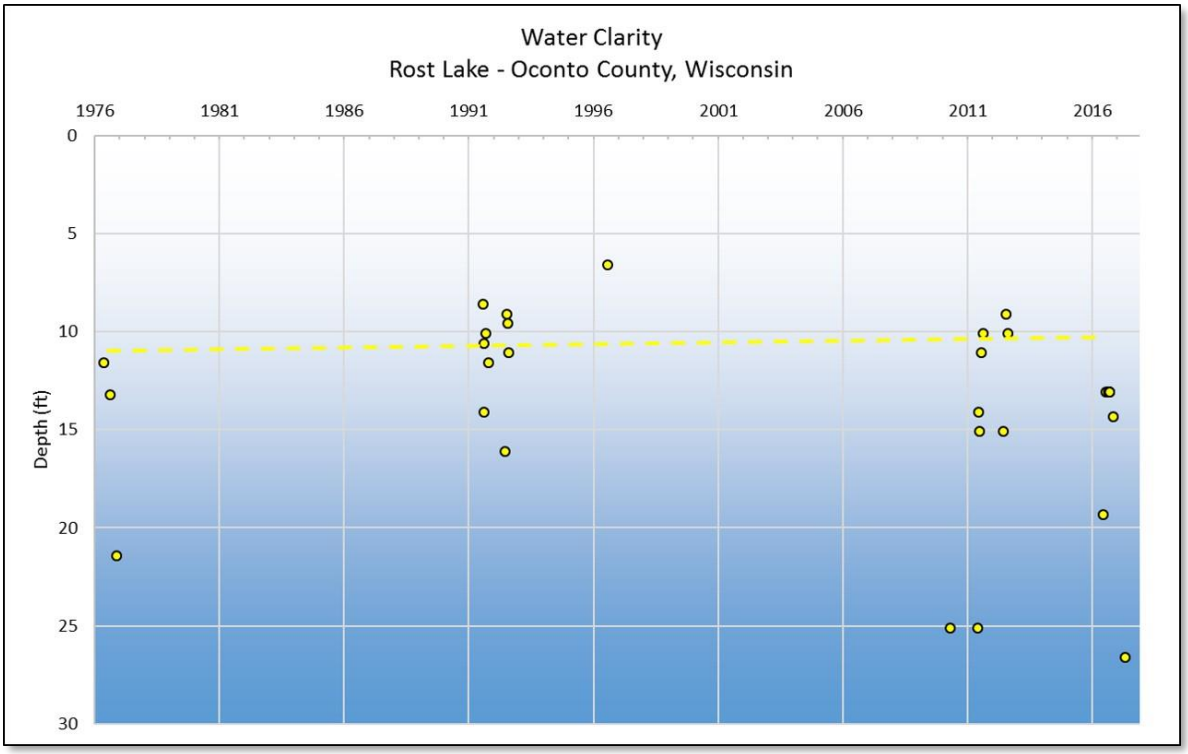
Water Quality





Water clarity is a measure of how deep light can penetrate (Secchi depth). Clarity is affected by water color, turbidity (suspended sediment), and algae. Water clarity helps determine where rooted aquatic plants can grow. It is typical for water clarity to vary throughout the year.

- The graph at the left shows water clarity measurements taken between April and November.
- During 2016-17, on average, the poorest water clarity in Rost Lake was July-September and the best was in April. These depths are generally better than previous observations and demonstrates a stable trend (based on July data).



Water Quality

Other chemistry data was collected from lake water samples, such as basic cations, pollutants and acid rain input, and physical parameters. Results of such analyses can provide insights into a variety of other potential impacts to the lake. While concentrations of these compounds in lake water is usually low, higher concentrations can be indicators of other potential issues.

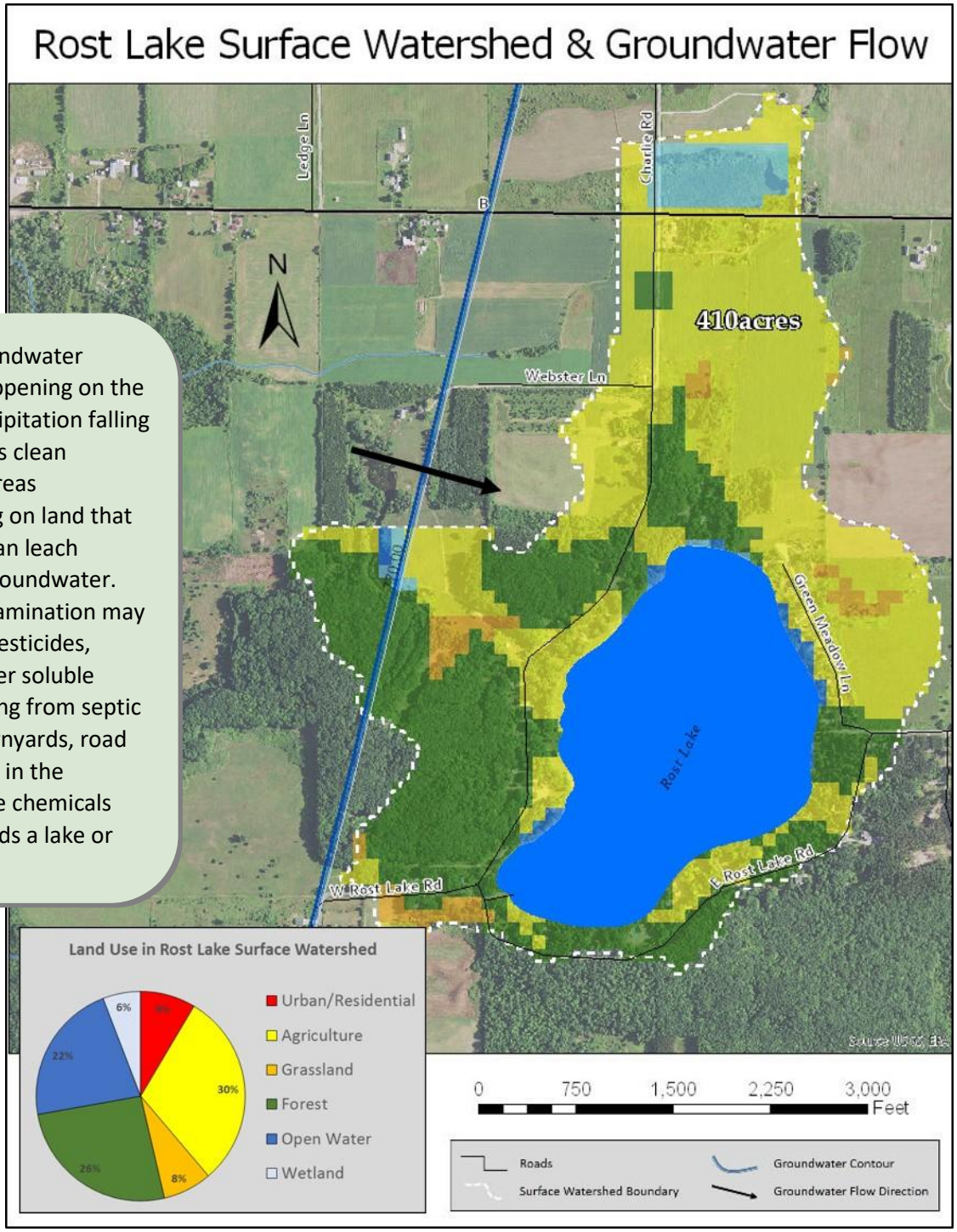
- Concentrations of potassium (1.2 mg/L), chloride (11.2 mg/L) and sodium (7.5 mg/L) were slightly elevated. This can suggest impacts from septic systems, road salt, animal waste and fertilizers.
- DACT, a screening tool to determine if your lake is being impacted by pesticides, was not detected.
- Water in Rost Lake is hard (132 mg/L CaCO3), having a high level of dissolved minerals. Hard water lakes tend to produce more fish and aquatic plants than soft water lakes and have clearer water as the minerals can bind with phosphorus making it unavailable to algae blooms.

For more information on how to interpret your lake's water quality data, please refer to the "State of the Oconto County Lakes Report" that is on file with Oconto County.

Watershed

Groundwater provides water to lakes in Oconto County throughout the entire year. Hard surfaces on the landscape prevent water from soaking into the ground and becoming groundwater. This results in less water flowing to the lake during snowmelt and rain events. Water that does not infiltrate to groundwater becomes **surface runoff** flowing across the surface of the landscape where it can move sediment and contaminants to the lake from within its watershed.

The quality of groundwater reflects what is happening on the land surface. Precipitation falling on forests produces clean groundwater, whereas precipitation falling on land that has chemical use can leach contaminants to groundwater. Groundwater contamination may include nitrogen, pesticides, herbicides and other soluble chemicals originating from septic systems, crops, barnyards, road de-icing, etc. Once in the groundwater, these chemicals move slowly towards a lake or river.

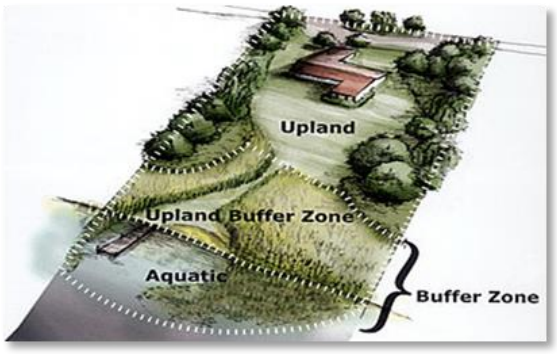


Shorelands

Shoreland vegetation is critical to a healthy lake's ecosystem. It provides habitat for many aquatic and terrestrial animals including birds, frogs, turtles, and many small and large mammals. It also helps to improve the quality and quantity of the runoff that flows across the landscape towards the lake. Healthy shoreland vegetation includes a mix of tall, native grasses/flowers, shrubs and trees.

- Shorelands around Rost Lake were surveyed in September 2017. Some of Rost Lake's shoreland is healthy, but many stretches are in need of restoration.

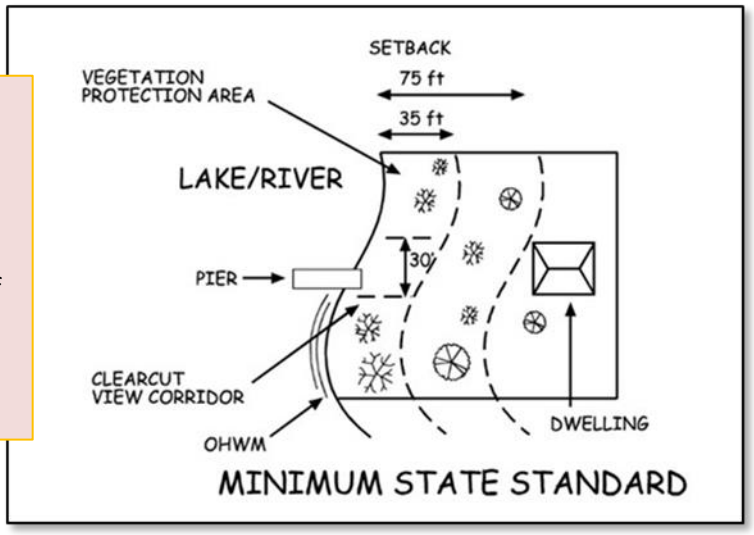
Total lakefront footage	No. Riparian lots	Measured shoreland disturbance (feet)	Measured shoreland disturbance (%)
7,723	94	4,993	65



State Shoreland Zoning Ordinance
NR 115 Wisc. Adm. Code for Unincorporated Municipalities

No vegetation within 35 feet of the lake's edge shall be removed except for:

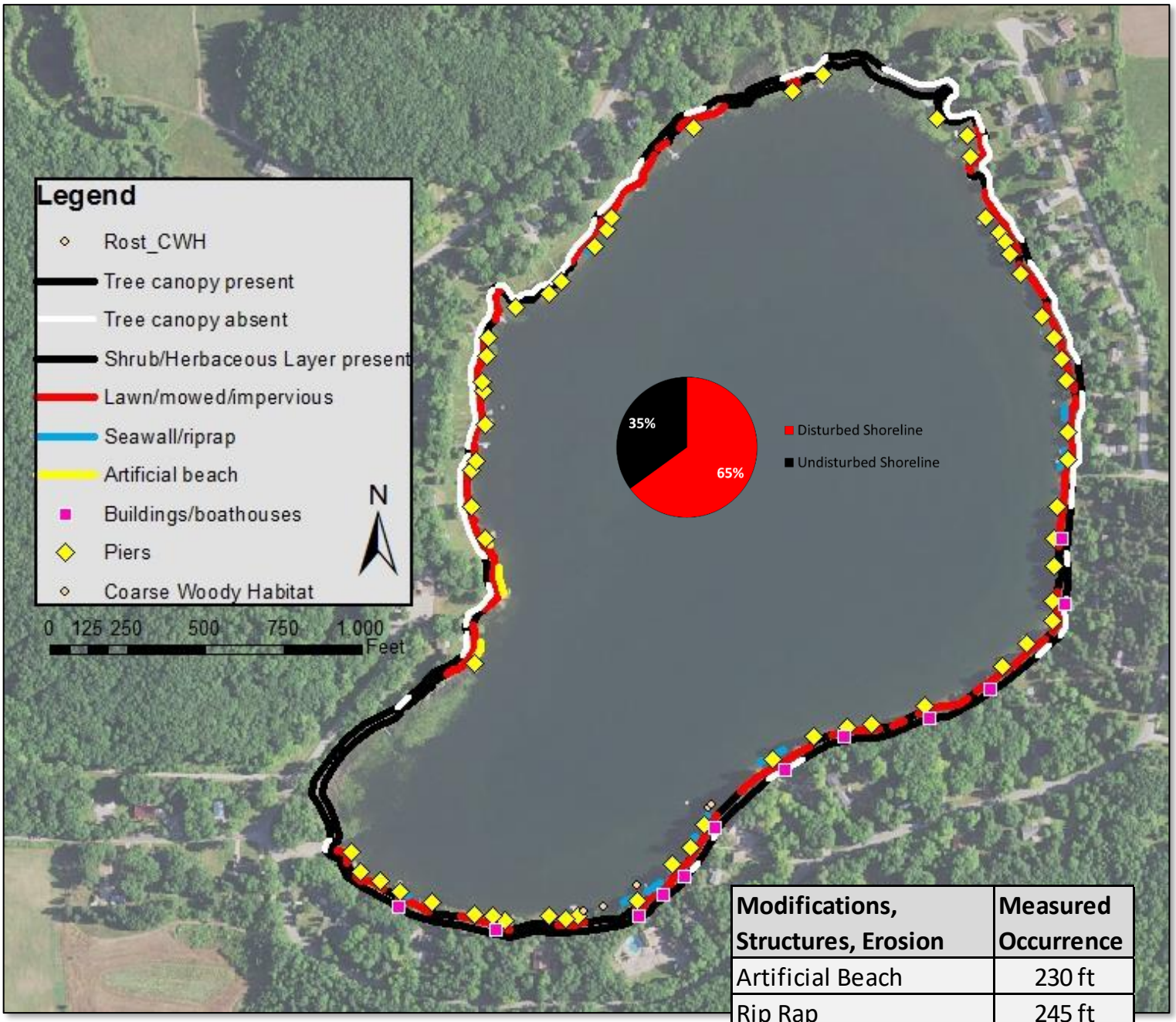
- Up to 30% of shoreline may be removed of shrubs and trees for a view corridor
- A mowed or constructed pedestrian path up to 5 feet wide to access lake



What Can You Do To Help Rost Lake?

- ✓ Leave natural shoreland vegetation in place or restore if it has been removed.
- ✓ Learn to identify and look for invasive plants and animals and know who to contact if found.
- ✓ Do not purchase prohibited and restricted species. Purchase native plants when possible.
- ✓ Never transplant water garden or aquarium plants into lakes, streams or wetlands. Properly dispose of them.
- ✓ Remove invasive exotic plants from your landscape and replace them with native plants or non-invasive exotics. Scout regularly for new invasive plants.
- ✓ Avoid using garden plants from other regions whose invasive potential is poorly understood.

Shorelands

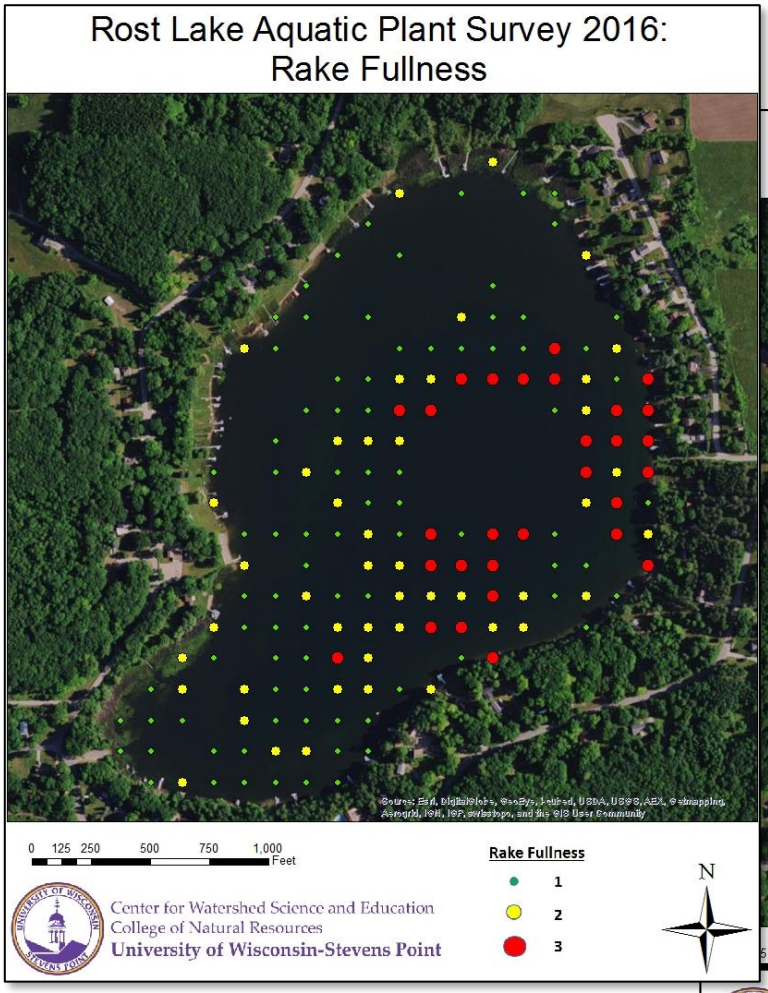


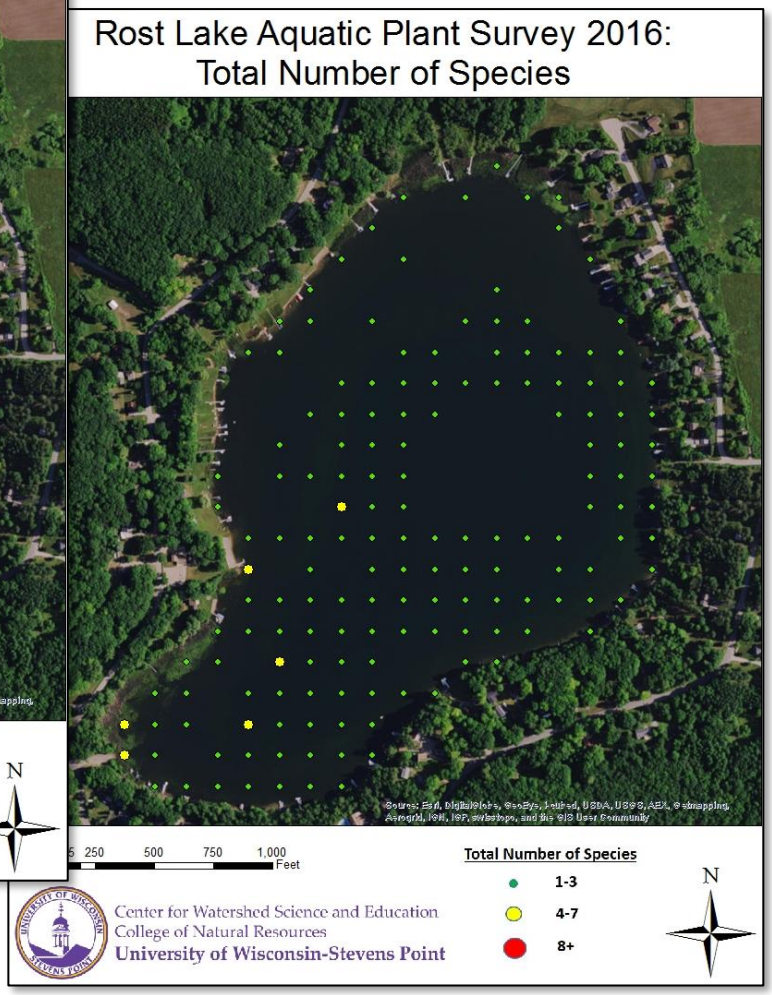
Modifications, Structures, Erosion	Measured Occurrence
Artificial Beach	230 ft
Rip Rap	245 ft
Sea Wall	145 ft
Impervious Surface	43 ft
Mowed Lawn	4,011 ft
Erosion	35 ft
Nonconforming Buildings	13
Piers	62
Coarse Woody Habitat	4 logs/mile

Aquatic Plants

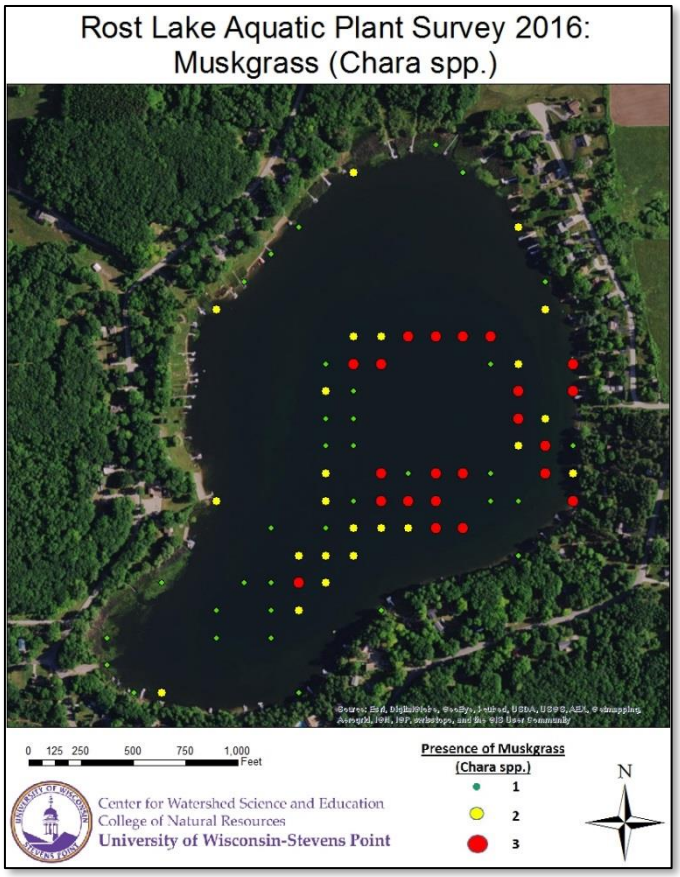
Aquatic plants are the forest landscape within a lake. They provide food and habitat for terrestrial and aquatic creatures such as fish, ducks, turtles, invertebrates and other animals. They increase oxygen levels in the water and utilize nutrients that would otherwise be used by algae. A healthy lake typically has a variety of aquatic plant species creating diversity that can help to prevent the establishment of aquatic invasive species.

- The aquatic plant community in Rost Lake is characterized by quality vegetation with a floristic quality index (25) slightly above the regional average. A total of 25 species were observed in the 2016 survey.
- During the 2016 aquatic plant survey of Rost Lake, 65% of the sites had vegetative growth. The maximum depth of vegetation was 28 feet.
- The most frequently encountered plant species were chara (49%), slender naiad (36%), and wild celery (18%). All three species are native to Wisconsin.

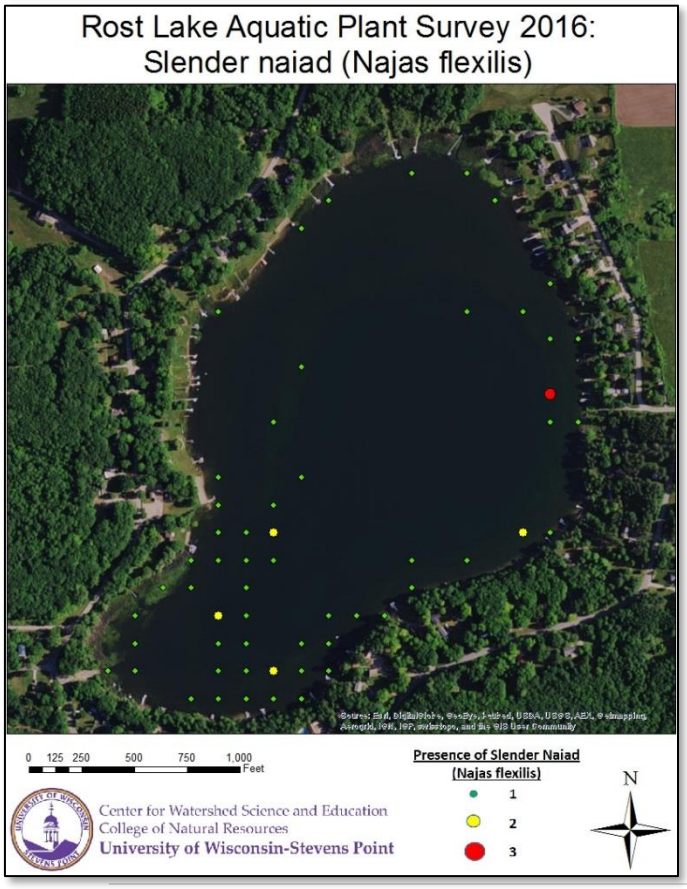




Aquatic Plants

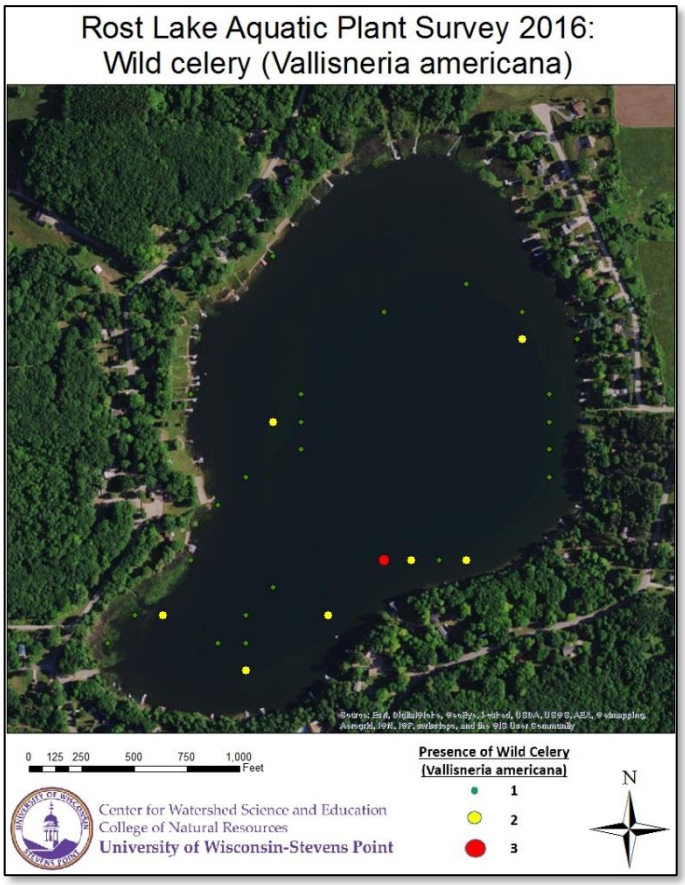


Chara is a type of macro algae that grows attached to muddy lake bottoms and has a musky odor. Muskgrass, as it is known, filters the lake water and is helpful in preventing the establishment of invasive species.

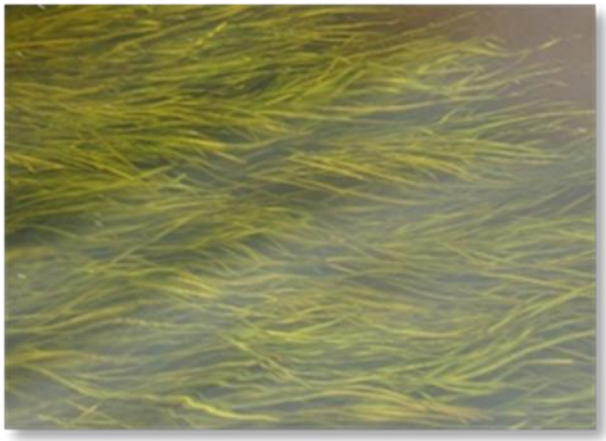


Slender naiad has glossy, finely toothed leaves appearing as whorls near the end of stems. Also known as the water-nymph, the whole plant is eaten by waterfowl and provides shelter for small fish and insects.

Aquatic Plants



Wild celery has long, thin, ribbon-like leaves that are commonly up to four feet long. The seeds, roots and leaves are consumed by ducks and other waterfowl. Water celery provides excellent habitat for fish.



Aquatic **invasive species** are non-native aquatic plants and animals that are most often unintentionally introduced into lakes by lake users. In some lakes, aquatic invasive plant species can exist as a part of the plant community, while in other lakes populations explode, creating dense beds that can damage boat motors, make areas non-navigable, inhibit activities like swimming and fishing, and disrupt the lakes' ecosystems.

- ✓ Though not observed during this survey, Chinese mystery snail (2013), phragmites (2016) and purple loosestrife (2016) have been documented in Rost Lake by the Department of Natural Resources.

Chinese mystery snails compete with native snails for food and habitat and can clog water intake pipes.

Chinese mystery snail, *WDNR*

Purple loosestrife prefers moist areas where it crowds out native species and habitat.

Purple loosestrife, WDNR

Acknowledgments

This report was prepared as an appendix to the **Oconto County State of the Lakes Report**, which is on file with the Oconto County Land Conservation Department.
Written and prepared by the Center for Watershed Science and Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

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