

Lake Redstone

Protection Connection

LAKE REDSTONE PROTECTION DISTRICT • SPRING 2010

Emergency Slow-No Wake Policy Updated

Aiming to improve boater safety, protect the shoreline, and maintain water quality, changes to Lake Redstone's emergency Slow-No Wake policy were adopted by the Town of La Valle in June.

The modifications, endorsed by the LRPD Board in March, provide more local control during periods of high water by shifting the authority for declaring Slow-No Wake conditions from the Sauk County Sheriff to the Town of La Valle. They also set a clear and consistent threshold for triggering emergency SNW restrictions.

Since 1993, boats have been required to observe Slow-No Wake limits (the minimum speed at which a motorized watercraft is able to move and maintain adequate steering control) whenever the level of Lake Redstone rose more than 18 inches above its normal design elevation of 916 feet above sea level. Not only was this standard not always easy to assess, it has also proven to be too liberal.

"At that level, many wooden dock sections would float off of their metal frames out into the lake," the LRPD's proposal explained. "Also, the level of the water would be above the top level of most of the rip rapping, causing shoreline erosion."

Instead, the Town established a new threshold of 16 inches above the height of the spillway where County Road F crosses the west branch of Big Creek. Also, to prevent an instance where SNW conditions were removed and then reinstated several times during a single rain event, the new policy does not lift the SNW period until the lake level falls to 12 inches above the spillway. Both the 16-inch

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Finishing a dam mess

Improvements to the Lake Redstone dam were completed in early May following the Sauk County Board's approval of just under \$53,000 for the project. A routine DNR inspection in 2008 revealed minor weaknesses in the dam.

Loganville's Holtz Lime, Gravel, & Excavating reshaped the lake side of the dam, armored an additional 12 feet of shoreline, stabilized the slope with a heavy-duty turf reinforcement mat, and made several additional minor modifications.

Borings taken during the inspection showed the densely-packed clay at the dam's core to be very solid, and the structure is expected to be in good shape for "years and years to come," said Sauk County Parks Director Steve Koenig.



MATT STEVE, SAUK COUNTY PARKS

Volunteers 'Dig' Keeping Tabs on Lake Redstone

by Geeg Drum, LRPD Commissioner

DID YOU REALIZE THAT Lake Redstone water testing goes on year-round? Thanks to our valuable and dedicated volunteers, Bob Roloff and Gary Botsford, we are accumulating information from the lake on a monthly basis, with the exception of dangerous freeze/thaw access months.

In winter months, measurements for water temperature and dissolved oxygen are taken at two-foot intervals from the lake bed to the bottom of the ice (which was 30 inches thick on February, 8!). This is repeated at three designated measurement sites on the lake. It is not an easy or quick data collection expedition in winter and we applaud Bob & Gary's efforts.



Gary Botsford and Bob Roloff (in cap) collect data during their February foray onto Lake Redstone.

During the summer months, you might think data collection would be easier, but it is often complicated by winds, rain, and wave action from boat traffic on the lake. Summer measurements are done at the same three sites on the lake, and additional testing is added: dissolved oxygen and temperature profiles, total phosphorus, chlorophyll-a, and water clarity information is gathered. Additionally, our third volunteer, Nick Ladas, obtains grab samples for phosphorous testing in the streams that feed into Lake Redstone from the northern watersheds.

Laboratory analysis is performed at the Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene. Information collected is supplied to the DNR where it is added to the state database of information on Wisconsin lakes. ♦

Annual Meeting, Board Election set for Aug. 2

The Lake Redstone Protection District will conduct its 2010 Annual Meeting on Saturday, August 2 at the La Valle Town Hall (314 Highway 33/58) from 8:30 a.m. to 11:25 a.m.

Among other business, those in attendance will elect a new member to the LRPD Board of Directors. We invite any of our constituents who have a genuine interest in helping to maintain and improve the quality of the Lake Redstone watershed to please consider joining our team for the upcoming 3-year term. If you would find this service appealing, please contact any current board members. We welcome your input and involvement!

Thanks!

In our last newsletter, we asked if anyone had land that they would like to donate to help the District in our pursuit to protect the resources of Lake Redstone. We are happy to announce that Donald and Esther Sturm of Wonder Lake, Illinois, have graciously donated property they have owned on Lake Redstone since 1988 to the LRPD.

The District would again like to thank Dr. and Mrs. Sturm for their donation. If anyone else is interested in donating property to the District, please contact any one of our board members.



GEEG DRUM

Lake Redstone Protection District

Protecting and rehabilitating the water quality of Lake Redstone for its residents and the public.

www.lakeredstonepd.org

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Over 90% Failing at Lake Redstone

Steel Septic Tanks Posing Safety Threat

Nearly all of the steel septic tanks surrounding Lake Redstone are failing, threatening residents with severe injury and compromised water supplies, according to recent work by the Sauk County Planning and Zoning Department.

Of the 131 steel septic tanks known at Lake Redstone, 122—or 93 percent—were found to be full of holes during inspections conducted over the last 18 months. In addition, nearly half of the steel holding tanks and 74% of the 144 drain fields examined also failed.

“It’s definitely a safety concern,” warned Brian Cunningham, zoning and environmental specialist with the department. He attributed the county’s recent emphasis on inspections to three separate incidents where steel tanks suddenly collapsed and individuals fell through gaping holes in the sod.

In addition to the risk of sudden injury, failing tanks can discharge untreated waste directly into the groundwater, contaminating both drinking supplies and surface waters such as Lake Redstone.

Septic tanks are most commonly made of steel, concrete, or plastic, and each material has its advantages and disadvantages, Cunningham noted. Most of the steel tanks at Lake Redstone were installed prior to 1980, and the vast majority have reached the end of their useful life.

“Basically, their time is up. Just like the shingles on your house, they’re only good for so long,” he said. “As we’ve replaced these county-wide, every one of the steel tanks has been full of holes.”

Inspection of the tanks at Lake Redstone also revealed that many of the area’s drain fields are also inadequately installed—potentially a much larger problem than the failing tanks, according to Cunningham. Drain fields constructed

either below the level of the groundwater or directly on top of bedrock allow untreated waste to infiltrate water supplies before being neutralized by beneficial bacteria in the soil.

“The plumbing code has just changed so much since these systems were installed,” he explained. “We know so much more now than we did then.”

Residents with inadequate systems were notified last fall, and all but a handful have taken steps to start addressing the problem, Cunningham noted. Replacing a tank or drain field can cost several thousand dollars, though assistance is available through the Department of Commerce’s “Wisconsin Fund.”

“We know it’s an expensive issue, so we give people time,” he said.

Residents with concerns about the placement of their drain fields should consult with a Certified Soil Tester, often listed in the telephone directory under “Septic Tanks.” For additional information, contact Cunningham or other members of the Planning and Zoning Department at 355-3285 or bcunningham@co.sauk.wi.us. ♦



BRIAN CUNNINGHAM, SAUK CO. PLANNING & ZONING

The sudden collapse of failing steel septic tanks can create holes like this one in a matter of moments, in addition to threatening the integrity of water supplies.

Sauk County has teamed up with area municipalities, towns, schools, and the Ho-Chunk nation to offer a free way for residents to receive timely, trusted alerts and advisories.

Through the NIXLE public emergency notification system, important, geography-specific public safety information is sent to directly to subscribers via the web, email, or cell phone text message (text message rates may apply).

Users select what level of alerts to receive, from urgent, to advisories, to general notices. You can also opt-in to get announcements from community groups in the area.

The free service pledges no advertising or spam and not to share your information with third parties. To register, visit www.co.sauk.wi.us and scroll down to “Sauk County Nixle Emergency Information System.”

PIER

PRESSURE?

New DNR rules offer options for lakefront owners

PIERS ARE A POPULAR FOCUS for boating and waterfront recreation. It seems like a simple topic, but if you have been involved in a dispute over “pier rights” with your neighbor or have seen shorelines filled with piers and boat lifts, you understand why regulations are important to treat everyone fairly and to protect Wisconsin’s lakes, rivers and streams.

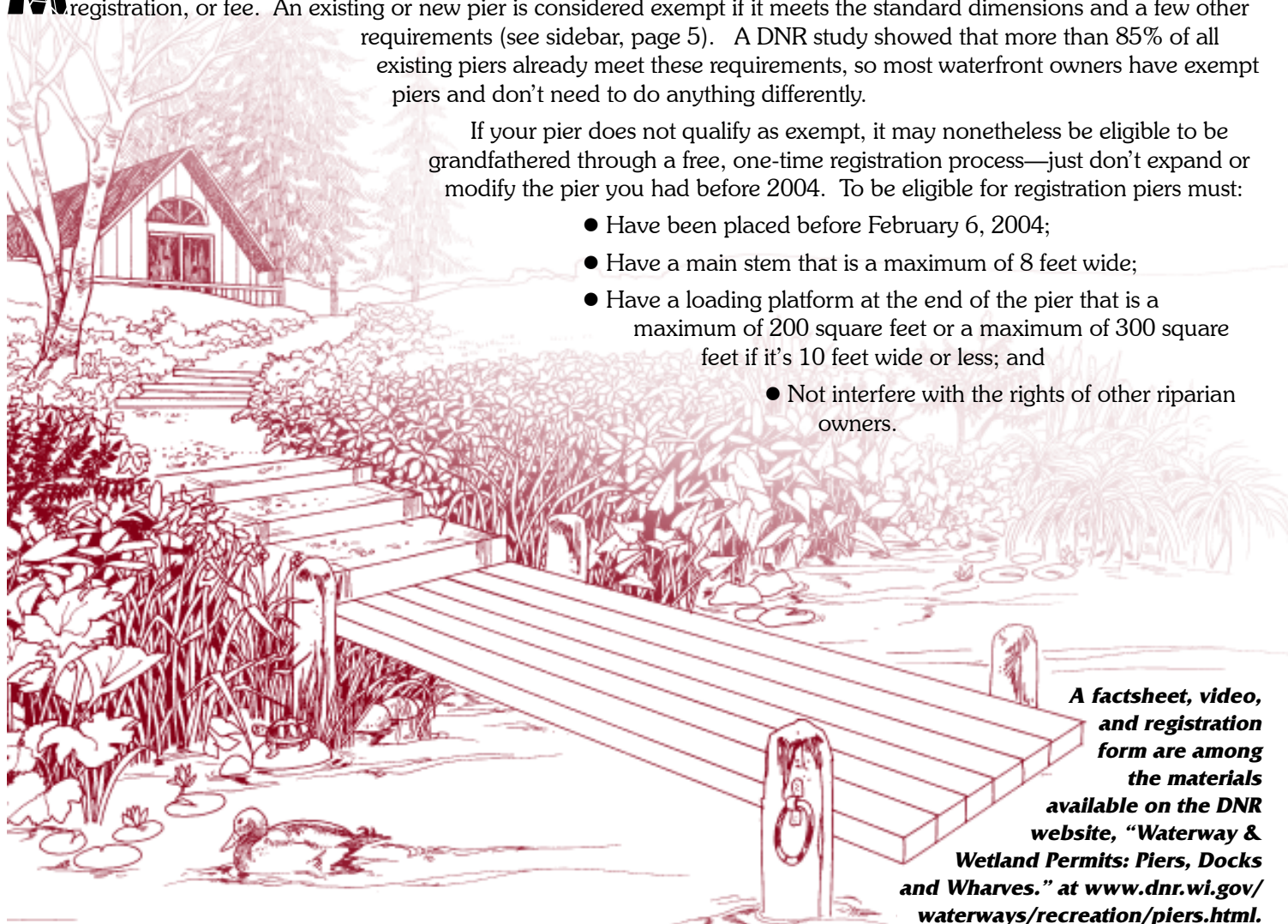
In the summer of 2008, new legislation concerning the placement of piers on Wisconsin waterways went into effect, expanding pier configuration options, providing greater flexibility in the number of boat slips allowed for commercial and multi-family lots, and creating a registration system to grandfather piers placed before 2004 that no longer meet today’s standards.

Under the law, most existing piers meet the size standards and their owners won’t have to do anything. Owners of piers that are larger than the standards have until April 1, 2011, to determine if they qualify to be grandfathered in, and to complete the registration process. A very small number of owners of extremely large existing piers will need to go through the individual permit and review process, but the normal fee permit will be waived.

MOST PIERS ARE CONSIDERED “EXEMPT” by the Department of Natural Resources, and do not require a permit, registration, or fee. An existing or new pier is considered exempt if it meets the standard dimensions and a few other requirements (see sidebar, page 5). A DNR study showed that more than 85% of all existing piers already meet these requirements, so most waterfront owners have exempt piers and don’t need to do anything differently.

If your pier does not qualify as exempt, it may nonetheless be eligible to be grandfathered through a free, one-time registration process—just don’t expand or modify the pier you had before 2004. To be eligible for registration piers must:

- Have been placed before February 6, 2004;
- Have a main stem that is a maximum of 8 feet wide;
- Have a loading platform at the end of the pier that is a maximum of 200 square feet or a maximum of 300 square feet if it’s 10 feet wide or less; and
- Not interfere with the rights of other riparian owners.



A factsheet, video, and registration form are among the materials available on the DNR website, “Waterway & Wetland Permits: Piers, Docks and Wharves.” at www.dnr.wi.gov/waterways/recreation/piers.html.

All existing piers that meet these criteria must be registered with the DNR by April 1, 2011. Of course, if you want to be sure you don't need to register your pier, you can also choose to modify your pier so that it meets the "exempt" standards.

IF YOU HAVE AN EXISTING PIER with a large deck on it . . . your deck is likely causing harm to habitat, navigation, or your neighbor. None of the recent law changes allow piers that are over 8 feet wide or piers with loading platforms or decks that are over 300 square feet. If your pier falls into one or both of those categories you should downsize your pier to meet the new basic

exemption standards (which would require you to do nothing with the DNR) or downsize your pier to meet the grandfather standards and register. You may also apply for an individual permit to keep your pier, but be aware that applying for a permit is not a guarantee that you will be able to keep your pier in its current configuration. Some of the very large "party platforms" will need to be downsized to reduce their harmful impacts.

Piers that are too big can shade out aquatic plants that are important to fish and can interfere with boaters, swimmers, and others enjoying Wisconsin lakes and rivers.

NEW PIERS CAN BE INSTALLED without a permit if they meet the exemption standards outlined to the

right and detailed in the DNR's "Pier Planner" guide. Grandfathering will not apply to piers first installed after February 6, 2004, so these new piers should not have large decks or extra boats. Permits are required for piers that are larger than the dimensional standards or have more boats.

If you are thinking about replacing your pier and you're going to follow the new basic exemption requirements, go ahead. If your existing pier doesn't meet these requirements, it's a good time to consider a different pier design that meets the dimensions to be exempt and minimizes impacts on the lake or river.

IF YOU ALREADY HAVE A DNR PERMIT for your pier . . . it's still good. Just continue to follow the terms and conditions of that original permit.

If you are selling your waterfront property and your pier is exempt, the new owner can place the same pier and they won't need a permit either. If you received a permit or registered your pier, the permit and registration automatically transfers with the property, so the new owner can simply follow the conditions of the original permit or registration. If the new owner wants to install a different pier, they can design it to be exempt, or apply for a permit if they need something different.

Flags, flowerpots and benches are all fine to have on a pier.

Note that the information presented here reflects the slightly more stringent standards that Lake Redstone is subject to as an Area of Special Natural Resource Interest (ASNRI).

To learn more about piers and other issues important to waterfront owners, and to find brochures and application forms, visit www.dnr.wi.gov/waterways/ or contact DNR Water Regulations and Zoning Specialist Jeff Schure at jeff.schure@wisconsin.gov or 608-275-3228. ♦

What qualifies as an 'exempt' pier?

A proposed pier, dock, or wharf is eligible for an exemption from DNR permitting requirements if it meets all of the following conditions:

- ✓ The pier may not exceed 6 feet in width. An "L" or "T" is allowed as part of the pier, provided no parts of the pier exceed 6 feet in width.
- ✓ The pier may extend out from the shoreline a distance sufficient to moor your boat, use a boat lift, or to reach a 3-foot water depth, whichever is greater.
- ✓ The pier may not interfere with the rights of other riparian owners.
- ✓ The pier may not be a solid structure, or constructed on rock-filled cribs or similar size and type devices serving as a foundation.
- ✓ The pier may not totally enclose any portion of a navigable waterway.
- ✓ The pier may not interrupt the free movement of water nor cause the formation of land by deposition of littoral drift upon the bed of the waterway.
- ✓ The pier may not be constructed or maintained with a screen or similar structure underneath or in any other manner which would trap or accumulate aquatic plants or other debris.
- ✓ The pier may not have more than two boat slips for the first 50 feet of riparian owner's shoreline footage and no more than one additional boat slip for each additional full 50 feet of shoreline footage.
- ✓ The pier, dock, or wharf and any boats, boat shelters, hoists, or lifts associated with it shall be located entirely within the riparian owner's zone of interest.
- ✓ The pier, dock, or wharf may be placed and maintained only by a riparian owner or their agent.

The above checklist is condensed from DNR publications. For complete rules, visit www.dnr.wi.gov/waterways/recreation/piers.html.



Last fall, volunteers resumed the active management of Meronek Meadows at the intersection of Pierce Road and West Redstone Drive. After its successful establishment in the mid-1990s, the prairie had fallen into neglect, and many of the native flowers and grasses had been overshadowed by invading woody vegetation.

Restoration began in the fall as students from Reedsburg Area High School (above, left) helped cut trees, hauled away much of the wood, and treated the stumps to prevent re-sprouting. Then, this past March, the area was burned in order to rejuvenate the old prairie plants and provide a fertile medium for a second round of seeding. At left, Jean Judd was among the April volunteers spreading a mix of native prairie seed, produced locally by Bluestem Farm and purchased by the Sauk County Natural Beauty Council and LRPD.

Though it takes several seasons for a newly-planted native prairie to flourish, with a bit of help from Mother Nature, big bluestem, purple coneflower, and other tall prairie grasses and colorful prairie flowers will once again dance in the wind at Meronek Meadows. Stop by and take a look!

PHOTOS BY BEV VAILLANCOURT

MN Program Offers Planting Tips

by Geeg Drum, LRPD Commissioner

This year the focus of Wisconsin Area Lakes Convention was on the “fringe benefits” of lake living, specifically where the shoreline meets the water. It promoted a better understanding that the lake ecosystem health is a reflection of its shoreline and shallows.

The Blue Thumb program improves water quality by encouraging homeowners to use native plants in gardens, rain gardens, and to stabilize shoreline property. Though developed by the Rice Creek Watershed District in Minnesota, this educational program is intended for use throughout the Midwest. Consider the benefits of native plantings:

Control shoreline erosion—Native plants help maintain shorelines and decrease erosion by slowing down incoming waves and anchoring soil on shore;

Eco-friendly—Native aquatic plants produce oxygen for fish and absorb phosphorous, reducing mid-summer algae blooms and murky, green lake water;

Kind to critters—Native gardens provide natural habitat as well as nectar, pollen, and seeds for bees, butterflies, birds, and other wildlife, while discouraging Canada geese and the mess they leave behind;

Cleaner water—Native plants and rain gardens help clean water naturally since they generally have deep root systems that anchor soil and act as filters, separating out pollutants while absorbing water and decreasing flooding.

For more information go to www.bluethumb.org. Check out their native plant selector tool—it’s awesome!💧



Transport Law Latest Tool in Invasives Fight

Memorial Day weekend arrived with Wisconsin lakes and rivers better protected against aquatic invasive species, officials say. But the confirmation of zebra mussels and Eurasian water milfoil in new waters in 2009 underscores the need for boaters, anglers, and others to continue taking steps to prevent the invaders from spreading.

'Slow the Spread by Sole and Tread!'

To help raise awareness of the impacts invasive species are having on Wisconsin ecosystems, June has been designated as the state's fifth annual **Invasive Species Awareness Month**.

Steps you can take to reduce the impact of invasive species include:

- Learn to recognize invasive species;
- Stay on designated trails, roads, and other developed areas;
- Clean off shoes, tires, clothes, pets, and gear;
- Don't move firewood;
- Don't dump bait worms in water or near forests;
- Volunteer to help control invasives;
- Spread the word and educate others.

For more information about workshops, field trips, and activities across the state, visit www.invasivespecies.wi.gov.

"New laws, more local partners, and good awareness of the prevention steps give us a stronger foundation to keep new invaders out and control the spread of the invaders that are already here," says Jeff Bode, longtime leader of DNR's lake protection and aquatic invasive species control programs.

"But the key is for boaters and anglers to be vigilant about taking the required prevention steps," he says. "There are more waters with invasive species this year, and that means more opportunities for people to accidentally spread the invaders if they are not careful."

Those steps generally require boaters and anglers to avoid moving water, plants, fish, and other organisms from one water body to another.

New law requires clean boats before leaving launch

While boaters and anglers have long been advised to clean off their boats before leaving the landing, a new law prohibits boats from leaving the launch "dirty."

It is illegal for people to drive away from a boat landing with aquatic plants or animals attached to their boat, trailer, or vehicle. A first citation of this so-called "transporting" law carries a penalty ranging from \$232 to \$767.50 and a second offense within three years carries a penalty that ranges up to \$2,657.

In the Lake Redstone area, DNR Warden Dave Horzewski and Joe Prantner of the La Valle police will work with the local Boat Team to educate boaters and motorists and enforce the new rules. While much of their attention will focus on area boat landings, the law also gives them authority to make traffic stops of vehicles travelling on public highways and observed to have aquatic plants or zebra mussels attached to the vehicle, boat, trailer, or other equipment.

"First and foremost, we'll be stressing education over enforcement," emphasized Prantner. "While citations may be issued in some cases, our goal is to get all boaters to voluntarily follow this law in order to protect Wisconsin lakes, rivers, and wildlife."

Rapid response to new invaders working

Wisconsin's new invasive species rule, which took effect in September, classifies invasive plants and animals as "prohibited" or "restricted" and sets regulations for each category. After the destructive red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) and the invasive plant yellow floating heart (*Nymphoides peltata*) were found in Wisconsin for the first time last fall, the new rule enabled DNR staff to work with local officials and rapidly develop and implement control plans.

More than 30 county and regional partners now have staff coordinating their efforts to prevent and contain the spread of invasive species. In addition, the corps of dedicated volunteers continued to play a vital role in education, boat inspection, and monitoring waters for new invaders. Volunteers accounted for 70 percent of the hours spent on boat inspections statewide in 2009.

Despite these efforts, 22 new waters were found to have Eurasian water milfoil and 10 were confirmed as having zebra mussels. Spiny water fleas were found in the Madison chain of lakes, representing the third inland occurrence in Wisconsin.

On the positive side, quagga mussels did not spread inland from Lake Michigan, nor did round gobies. Testing also did not find any inland sites where fish had viral hemorrhagic septicemia (VHS), although the virus was confirmed in fish from Lake Superior. ♦



Take a Stake in Your Lake!

Here are a few simple ways you can help enhance Lake Redstone and protect your property investment:

- **Establish a rain garden;**
- **Use low- or no-phosphate detergents;**
- **Ensure proper maintenance of your septic system;**
- **Keep hard surface on your property to a minimum;**
- **Choose zero phosphorus fertilizer or use no fertilizer at all;**
- **Properly dispose of household hazardous wastes and medicines;**
- **Protect your property from soil erosion by maintaining shoreline buffers;**
- **Keep garden refuse, grass clippings, leaves, pet waste, and campfire ashes out of the water; and**
- **Don't feed the geese.**

You can learn more at:

- www.dnr.wi.gov/lakes
- www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexplakes/
- www.wisconsinlakes.org/

Lake Redstone PROTECTION DISTRICT

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and 12-inch levels will be indicated by a visible marker on the bridge abutment.

The Town and the District are also exploring additional ways to alert boaters to a SNW declaration. Currently, fold-down road signs are located at all three boat landings and at 12 locations on the roads surrounding the lake. Announcements on Reedsburg radio stations WRDB (1400 AM) and WNFM (104.9 FM), the LRPD web site, the Town of La Valle website (www.townoflavalles.us), and at all Town official meeting notice sites would supplement notification efforts.

The Town of La Valle board unanimously approved the initial draft of the new rules at its April meeting, and following a review by the DNR, gave the proposal final approval at its June 14 meeting.

With a watershed covering nearly 30 square miles, Lake Redstone since 1992 has risen above 917.5 feet on six occasions: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, and 2008.

Also in April, the Town established several permanent Slow-No Wake zones in three narrows where curves might prompt boaters to think that the channel is about to open up, according to Town Supervisor and Lakes Committee Chair Bev Vaillancourt. The zones, which are now marked with buoys, are in addition to a new state law which mandates that motor boats observe SNW conditions within 100 feet of any shoreline, dock, or raft. The Wisconsin statute also limits personal watercraft to no wake speeds within 200 feet of shore.

The locations of the slow no-wake buoys were based on recommendations from Town law officers and approved after extensive study by the Town Board and the DNR. Complete copies of all adopted and draft Town ordinances may be found at <http://townoflavalles.us/home/ordinances.html>. ♦

Colored dots on the map at right show the approximate location of buoys marking permanent Slow-No Wake zones on Lake Redstone.

