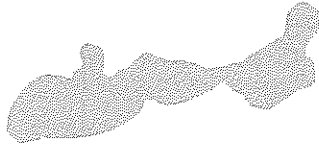


# Geneva Lake Guardian



GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION

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www.genevalakeassoc.org

Fall/Winter 2009

The Association is dedicated to Conservation, Ecological Preservation and Education, and the General Welfare of the Geneva Lake Area.

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC. • PROTECTING GENEVA LAKE SINCE 1935

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## KISHWAUKETOE NATURE CONSERVANCY CELEBRATES 20TH YEAR

In 1989, Williams Bay purchased the land that today constitutes the Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy. The property had been the subject of various development projects, including a water park, for some years, and all proposals were denied by the Village Board. Following yet another extensive project proposal, the Board decided to purchase the property to ensure its preservation and created the Conservancy. Kishwauketoe is a Potawatomi word meaning "clear water". The Kishwauketoe Nature Conservancy was established to ensure the preservation of the lakeshore, and was dedicated to The Children of Tomorrow.

During the past year, the Conservancy worked on the following projects:

- Finished clearing and planting around the new pond scrape was completed. This was accomplished due to a grant from US Fish and Wildlife.
- Clearing of box elder and buckthorn on both sides of Southwick Creek continued, and planted forty native trees and shrubs in this area as part of the Conservancy's annual Arbor Day Celebration. The Williams Bay Public Schools and Faith Christian School helped on this project. Over 8,000 plugs of native grasses, forbs, and sedges have been planted in this area in the past two years. This work will stabilize the soil along the stream banks and retard erosion. This stabilization benefits Geneva Lake.

- 800 feet of boardwalk were installed along the northern sedge meadow. This area had many ditches that were filled in to allow for the boardwalk, and it is now restored to its original natural wet condition.
- Red canary grass has invaded the prairie section and is threatening to overtake the restored prairie area, so eight acres at the south end of the 30 acre prairie were sprayed with herbicide. Once this vegetation is killed off, this area will be a quality wet meadow allowing for a different mix of sedges, forbs, and grasses than is present at this time.

All work at the Conservancy is performed by volunteers and supported by private donations by individuals and organizations such as the GLA. No tax dollars are used to support this property. There are four miles of trails open to the public. Anyone who has not toured the Conservancy should do so at their earliest opportunity to enjoy the ever changing vegetations in the prairie, woodlands, wet meadows and sedge meadows. Such a tour will make you realize what this area looked like when the Potawatomi Indians were the land owners around Geneva Lake. As a matter of fact, several members of the Conservancy's "Friends" board recently donated a golf cart, which is available to give tours to people unable to walk the trails.



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## NEW STANDARDS FOR THE GENEVA LAKE SHOREPATH

On October 13, 2009, the Walworth County Board of Supervisors approved amendments to the Walworth County Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to include standards for improvements to the Geneva Lake Public Pedestrian Path. The Shoreland Zoning Regulations prior to these amendments prohibited landowners from establishing an improved public shore path parallel to Geneva Lake. Since most people who have spent time at Geneva Lake are familiar with the existing public access path, this may come as a surprise that county regulations prohibited the existence of the path!

The Walworth County zoning and conservation staff have long felt the Geneva Lake Shore Path to be unique in that it was created by easement long before the zoning ordinances were established. The staff consulted the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to determine how regulations could be amended to permit the continuance of the shore path easement. After consulting with the DNR, the county staff proposed certain construction standards and provisions for pathway improvements, which have been incorporated in the amendments noted above.

“The new ordinance includes dimensional and construction standards to ensure compliance with the intent of the Shoreland Zoning Ordinances, specifically the preservation of natural scenic beauty”, confirmed Ms. Nancy Welch, Zoning Code Enforcement Officer for Walworth County. The new standard applies only to the Geneva Lake Public Pedestrian Path, since Geneva is the only lake in the county that has such a pedestrian easement around its shore. This easement is not a Wisconsin mandate; it was decided over 100 years ago by local agreements. It has been long thought by the writer and others that the state requires such an easement around its lakes—obviously not the fact.

The standards approved in October specify that any improvement to the public path must be located within the

pedestrian easement. In other words, the pathway cannot be rerouted. Also, the pathway must be no more than 36” wide, and must be constructed with pervious or porous materials, such as non-grouted pavers or grass pavers. Stairways are permitted where necessary to traverse steep slopes or to bridge streams. However, canopies, roofs, and closed railings or walls are prohibited. Ms. Welch said, “The purpose of this new provision is to provide a safe walkway for the public, while minimizing the potential for environmental harm.”

Landowners are reminded that a County-approved zoning permit and construction site erosion control permit must be obtained prior to any pathway construction or improvement. Ms. Welch is pleased to assist any landowner in complying with the new ordinance. Her office is located in the County Government Center in the City of Elkhorn and she can be contacted directly at 262.741.7916.

Anyone who has traversed any significant portion of the Geneva Lake shore path is aware that the path reflects a wide variety of surfaces, from trodden grass to wooden walkways, gravel walkways, even paved walkways. How specifications in this new ordinance will affect pathway “improvements” currently in use is a question only time will tell. As is evident by this action and by other regulatory actions by Wisconsin and Walworth environmental agencies, the overriding emphasis going forward for Geneva Lake will be maintaining its viability for future generations. This may result in some inconvenience for individual landowners, but the lake is the most precious resource we have, and governmental agencies appear ready to safeguard its future. Please see accompanying article on the related topic, “SHORELAND VEGETATION REGULATIONS”. Also on the horizon are new shoreline development rules recently approved by the Natural Resources Board that will be presented to the Wisconsin legislature. See The Beacon, November 20, 2009 issue.

## WALWORTH COUNTY ORDINANCES ON VEGETATION REMOVAL

Walworth County has adopted conservation standards that will make it more difficult to remove vegetation from the shoreland zone of Geneva Lake as well as all other lakes in the county. These standards are in accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter NR 115. NR115 covers such provisions as setbacks for structures from waterways and property lines, wetland protection, lot sizes, and other items pertinent to the shoreland area of Wisconsin’s lakes. What is the “shoreland zone?” The shoreland zone is defined in Wisconsin regulations as the area within 1,000 feet of the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of a navigable lake, pond, or flowage or within 300 feet of

the OHWM of a navigable stream or river. In the case of Geneva Lake, 1,000 feet from the OHWM, or shore line, covers much if not all improved property around the lake. Walworth County has developed their own regulations for lakes in the county. There is a “no-touch” zone within 35 feet of the OHWM where removal is prohibited (with certain exceptions), and permit regulations apply to land beyond this 35 foot strip up to 300 feet from the OHWM.

There has been growing emphasis in recent years on the part of the state of Wisconsin, as well as Walworth County, toward protection of our waterways in the light

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

All persons interested in the conservation, preservation, environmental education and general welfare in the Geneva Lake Region are invited to become members. The contributions requested from members are as follows:

Regular Membership - Annual Contribution \$30.00

Sustaining Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$50.00

Contributing Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$100.00

Donor Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$150.00

Benefactor Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$250.00 or more

Commercial Membership - Annual Contribution \$60.00

Send Membership form to: GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC. P.O. Box 412, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP  OR RENEWAL

(Please Print)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Summer Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Pier # \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Business or Profession \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Send Mail to: \_\_\_\_\_

Regular  Sustaining  Contributing  
 Donor  Benefactor  Commercial

All Contributions Are Tax Deductible

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## NEW MEMBERS

Since our last newsletter, we have the following new members of the Association

Stuart Bagni	Fontana Muni	Joseph McHugh
Sharon McCaffrey Clevenger		Carolyn & Mike Moran
Drs. Robert & Cynthia Conlon	Linwood	Karen K Morros
Stuart & Callie Erickson		Joan & Colin Munro
John Erikson	Williams Bay Muni	Gary Neilson
Mandan Farahati		David & Georgia Nelson
Ray Fitzgerald	Fontana Muni	Robert & Rita O'Brien
Bob Funderburg		Arthur Pancoe
Keith Gibson		Jack & Dolly Schneidwind
Bonnie & Ken Heim		Robert & Becky Schutz
John & Julie Johnson		Mark & Judy Thorne
Michael & Mary Keeling	Buena Vista	David & Sonette Tippen

### COMMERCIAL

Harpoon Willie's/Calamari Restaurants

Recreational Upholstery

Scott Byron & Co.

Sheldon Landscape

Ship Shape Marine

*Welcome!*

We intend to list all new members of the GLA in the newsletter. Of course, membership automatically includes listing in the annual Directory.

# *Peace On Earth*

## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2 WALWORTH COUNTY ORDINANCES

of increased development of waterfront property. Geneva Lake is by far the most popular body of water in southeast Wisconsin, and there are few spots on its more than 20 miles of shoreline that have not been developed for summer as well as year-round residences. Many of our beautiful homes around the lake have manicured lawns and lush gardens that reflect the pride of ownership of the residents. As beautiful as these lawns are, they may not be considered adequate protection of the lake. Heavy rains can carry nutrients from fertilized lawns directly into the lake, and they provide no protection from erosion and sedimentation that occurs during heavy rains. Trees, shrubs, native flowers and grasses and even rocks or boulders can help retard erosion, as well as affording wildlife habitat and shade for fish. Another advantage, as noted in the GLA article, "LAKESCAPING: INNOVATION IN SHORELAND RESTORATION" in our Summer 2009 newsletter, shoreland restoration that include flowers and natural grass plantings keep the Canadian geese from the property.

Should a property owner desire to remove vegetation

from the shoreland zone of his/her property, the county zoning division must be involved. As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, a permit may be required, and depending upon the size and complexity of the undertaking, a conservation plan may be required before removal is allowed. It is obvious that governmental agencies prefer a vegetation buffer along the shore. Such a buffer protects the lake and, in many people's eyes, enhances the natural look of the lakefront.

For more information about the Wisconsin DNR regulations, call 262-574-2136 or see their website at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us>. If you are ever in Elkhorn during the week, a wealth of information can be obtained in the form of brochures available free of charge in the lobby and in the Zoning and Conservation office in the County Government Center.

For information about Walworth County Shoreland Zoning Regulations, Land Disturbance and Erosion Control, contact the Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management Department at 262-741-4972 or see their website at <http://www.co.walworth.wi.us>.

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