



Lake Association News

A newsletter for the Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake

SUMMER 2008

CLEAR LAKE DREDGING BEGINS

The long awaited and eagerly anticipated Clear Lake dredging project began in late July. Heavy rains in the spring delayed the project start by a few weeks, but now the dredge barge is running full speed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The barge is removing between 10,000 and 15,000 cubic yards of sediment a day. The total amount of material to be removed is 2.3 million cubic yards. Workers first focused on deepening out the Lynn Lorenzen boat ramp area. Then they went to the west side of the little lake and worked on deepening the area south of the fishing jetty where the new marsh outlet will be. Parts of the west end have already been dredged to depths exceeding 10 feet. After completion, some areas will be greater than 20 feet deep. For safety reasons, please abide by the 10 mph speed limit and do not trespass at the containment site.

Pictures of Clear Lake dredging:



JEFF HEINZ/The Globe Gazette

Clear Lake's Annual Impact on Economy: \$43.36 Million

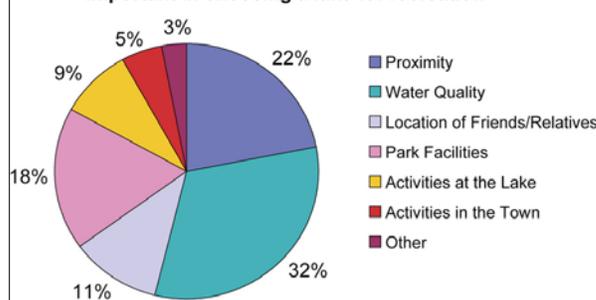
A recent study completed by ISU's Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) confirmed that Clear Lake truly is vital to the economy of north central Iowa. CARD was charged with the task of assessing the economic impact of all 132 publicly owned lakes in the state. They based their results on research conducted over the four year period of 2002 – 2005. The results showed that Clear Lake ranked very high in several of the valuation categories. Clear Lake was the state's 4th most visited lake during that timeframe, having over 430,000 household trips to the lake annually. The state average was about 80,000 household trips per year. The only lakes with more visitors were Saylorville Lake near Des Moines,

Coralville Reservoir near Iowa City, and West Okoboji in northwest Iowa. Visitors to Clear Lake spent an average of \$43.36 million annually, which in turn supported 529 jobs in the region during the study period.

Another interesting aspect of the study was evalu-

portant (see graph below). Among water quality attributes, households viewed safety from bacterial contamination and water clarity as the most important. The lack of odor and the presence of a hard, clean, sandy bottom in swimming areas are also important to some respondents.

Figure 2. Average allocation of importance points to factors important in choosing a lake for recreation



ating what qualities lake visitors look for in deciding which lake to recreate at. Respondents indicated that water quality was the single most important factor they consider when choosing a lake for recreation, with proximity of the lake and park facilities also being im-

portant (see graph below). The significance of this study goes beyond determining how much Iowans value their lakes. The information also helps validate the recent increase in funding that the State legislature has begun providing for lake restoration and

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Zero Swimming Advisories During 2008 Summer

For the first time since official beach monitoring began in 2000, there were not any swimming advisories posted at any of the 3 Clear Lake beaches that were sampled this summer. Beaches were sampled twice each week, typically on Tuesday and again on Thursday. There were a couple Tuesday readings during the summer that were elevated but had dropped to normal levels when the Thursday samples were conducted. The DNR only posts advisories if the Thursday tests are high since the weekends are when the most beach use takes place. Although the low bacteria readings is great news, there are still no "smoking guns" that have been identified as significant bacteria sources. DNR officials had planned to continue their investigation into potential sources, but flood sampling in the spring kept them from doing so. While we can celebrate the fact that there were no advisories, we still need further data on bacteria sources.



ZEBRA MUSSELS INCREASE

Each summer for the past three years the DNR has collected hard objects from ten sites on the bottom of Clear Lake to assess zebra mussel populations and expansion. The first year a handful of adults were found at about half the locations. Last year, hundreds of adults were found in most locations, and this year thousands were found at every location. This population explosion is very common for zebra mussels. They usually reach their peak three or four years after they have been discovered. The DNR is currently working with ISU to research the impacts the mussels and common carp have on water quality. For more information about aquatic invasive species and how you can help control their spread, please visit this site: <http://www.iowadnr.com/fish/news/exotics/exotics.html>



Toy boat encrusted with zebra mussels found in Clear Lake

Carp and Bullhead Populations on Decline

The populations of both black bullheads and common carp are among the lowest Clear Lake has seen in the past 10 years. That is good news for both fish enthusiasts and the water quality of the lake.

Much of the focus of lake restoration is placed on the external sources of nutrients to the lake, such as runoff from developed and agricultural areas. However, internal nutrient cycling can also play a significant role in water quality and clarity. Phosphorus, the nutrient most responsible for algae growth, is often stored in the bottom sediments of the lake. Benthic (bottom dwelling) fish like carp and bullheads dis-

turb the sediment, releasing the stored phosphorus and making it available for algae production.

The decline of bullheads is most likely just a natural shift in their population. The lifespan of a bullhead is in the 8-10 year range. Bullheads typically have one or two very successful spawns during their lifespan. The bullheads are now nearing the end of their lifespan, but they have not had very successful spawns in recent years, so their density has decreased.

The decrease in common carp is most likely due to lower reproduction, increased predation, and commercial fish removal. Commercial fishing of common

carp has been going on for several years, and it has not been uncommon for more than 100,000 lbs of carp to be removed from the lake annually. That continued fishing pressure appears to be having an impact on the carp population. The most recent estimate the DNR has is that the population is at about 80 lbs./acre. That is down significantly from an estimated 480 lbs./acre a few years ago. This spring another 87,000 lbs. were removed from the lake, and the commercial fishermen will be back in the fall for another catch.

This data is very encouraging as it indicates a shift in the fish community away from a rough fish dominated system.

This will not only allow for enhanced sport fish angling, but also clearer water.



Photo: Commercial fishing on Clear Lake using a seine net.

LAKE NEWS

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