



Lake Association News

A newsletter for the Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake

Summer 2016



New CLEAR Project Coordinator Hired

Jim Sholly joined
the CLEAR

Project at the end of April. He has been working in conservation for over a decade and spent the last two years leading the watershed project surrounding the Iowa Great Lakes. Jim is familiar with the work that has been completed already on Clear Lake having worked with Iowa DNR's Lakes Restoration program during the dredging project on the "Little Lake". In his short time here he has lined up several shoreline stabilization projects for this fall and is starting development on a lake-friendly lawn care workshop series. To find out what you can do to help protect our lake, contact Jim by visiting www.ClearProject.net.

APCL Annual Picnic 2016

The annual picnic will be held on Sunday August 14th at PM Park in Clear Lake starting at 4:30 p.m. Guests can expect to hear updates from Iowa DNR Fisheries biologist Scott Grummer, APCL President Deb Tesar, and CLEAR Project Coordinator Jim Sholly. A pulled pork meal will be provided during discussions about watershed improvements, water quality monitoring, and the Clear Project.

Native Landscaping on our Urban Lands

Prior to European settlement of Iowa, our landscape was dominated by tall grass prairie and interspersed oak trees that stretched across the state. The native vegetation was maintained by regular fires that would sweep across the land. While this fire would remove most unwanted vegetation, the native prairie and oak trees would thrive off the fire. The deep root system of the prairie plants along with the thick layer of bark around the oak trees protects the plants during the fires. These root systems also aided in absorbing the majority of the rainfall events.

Fast forwarding to today's conditions after years of fire suppressant, urban development, and agriculture production the native vegetation of Iowa has been significantly altered. Turf grass in urban lands, row crop production on agriculture lands, and impervious surfaces like roads and rooftops now thrive where prairie and oak savanna once stood. Along with changing the dynamics of vegetation growth, we have altered the hydrology of the land by absorbing less rainfall and shedding more runoff, much to the detriment of our waterways.

While we will never completely restore the native vegetation of Iowa, there is something we can do on our own properties to mimic the landscapes of old by planting native prairie vegetation. Currently our urban lands are covered with turf grass that possess shallow root systems resulting in little water absorption capabilities and no benefit to our pollinator species. Planting natives in locations like our lawns provide numerous benefits to mitigate the effects of development. Deep root systems boost organic matter and break up the soils, allowing for more rainwater to be absorbed. The flowering native species provide a pollen source for pollinators like butterflies and bees, which are vital components of our food sources. The deep root systems also anchor soil in place better than shallow-rooted turf grass.

Selecting the right native species for your property is vital towards a successful project. Numerous resources exist to research which plants work the best for you. Simply typing "Iowa native prairie plants" into your favorite search engine will pull up numerous websites with photos and descriptions of native prairie plants. Areas like the edges of yards, areas that are difficult to mow, and shoreline areas provide ideal growing conditions. Since our landscape didn't have a lot of trees prior to settlement, the majority of native plants enjoy full sun conditions, so consider shade cover of the area before you plant.



Summer Yellow Bass Fishing

By: Vaughn Wassink—Iowa DNR Fisheries

Late July into mid October is a great time to fish for yellow bass on Clear Lake, especially from a boat. Total yellow bass harvest in 2015 from July through October was estimated at 53,000. Yellows really start to group up in schools by mid to late July and once located can produce some catch rates that rival the spawning period. The average size is usually better as well. Two main strategies are used. 1) Drifting the main basin flats in search of fish likely feeding on bloodworms on the bottom or 2) staying on top of structure rock reefs with an anchor or trolling motor. Fish on the bottom with a 1/32 to 1/16 ounce leadhead jig or a tungsten drop jig tipped with a small piece of crawler or cutbait.

Clear Lake Commercial Fish Harvest

By: Scott Grummer Iowa DNR Fisheries

Common carp and bigmouth buffalo are annually removed from Clear Lake by a commercial fisherman. Common carp are undesirable due to their foraging behavior that stirs bottom sediments and uproots aquatic plants. Bigmouth buffalo are an underutilized fish seldom caught by anglers. The buffalo feed on plankton in the water column and rarely are harvested by a recreational angler.

Removal of carp will help improve water quality and make room for more popular gamefish species like yellow bass, crappie, channel catfish and walleye. This practice is another piece of a larger puzzle to improve water quality on Clear Lake.

How many of these fish are removed from Clear Lake each year? In 2015 the commercial angler removed 111,000 lbs. of carp and 2,300 lbs. of

buffalo. In 2016 the commercial angler recently finished his harvest prior to Memorial Weekend. Final reports for 2016 are not yet in, but the results will be similar to the 2015 catch.

The question often asked is, "what happens to these fish after they are caught?" The commercial angler markets these fish to buyers mainly for human consumption. One buyer is an Iowa company based out of Spirit Lake. Stoller's Fisheries (www.stollerfisheries.com) makes several products from caviar/roe to specialty Kosher items. They are able to market almost all portions of these fish with very little waste. Falt Fisheries (www.faltfisheries.com) from Bellevue, Nebraska is another company purchasing the carp. They have a fresh fish market and a restaurant in south Omaha called Joe Tess Place.

From a fisheries management perspective, a goal would be to maintain a carp population below 100 lbs. / surface acre. The last carp estimate for Clear Lake was in 2009 which showed a density of 114 lbs. / acre..

Managing carp to desired levels can be achieved with removal by the commercial angler and limiting spawning that creates new fish in the lake. Ventura Marsh restoration work and water level management with the pump will help reduce carp spawns historically occurring in the marsh. Healthy predator fish populations in Clear Lake will help control young carp that do hatch out in the lake.

Fish management along with all the other lake, marsh, and watershed work help the long term goal of maintaining and protecting Clear Lake's water quality.

Clean—Drain—Dry

Make sure to know all the new invasive species laws in Iowa. Check to make sure your boat's drain plugs are



removed and all loose vegetation is cleaned from your trailer before leaving the boat ramp. The spread of invasive species hurts everyone and once they are established cannot be undone.



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