

DOCK SIDE

Volume XXX • Issue #2

Newsletter of the Balsam Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District

Fall 2024

Entrusted to Preserve, Protect, and Manage Balsam Lake through Environmental and Conservation Stewardship for Sustainability

What We Do On Our Land Ends Up in Our Waters

How can each shoreline owner promote a healthy Balsam Lake?

Preserve a Shoreline Buffer.

Plant a natural buffer of deep-rooted plants along the shoreline to help control runoff and prevent erosion. Alternatively, simply create a “no-touch, no-mow” area at the shoreline. Do not maintain and mow lawn (turf grass) to the shoreline edge, or leave bare soil that can wash into the lake.

Natural plantings or plants with deep roots help absorb and filter runoff during rain events and provide erosion control by holding soils together, and reduce nutrients entering the lake. Native grasses along the shore help deter geese and provide habitat for wildlife. There are many low growing plant options available too, so that a view to the lake is not obstructed.

Rain gardens and infiltration basins are also excellent practices for buffering the shoreline and protecting Balsam Lake from runoff contamination.

Use No Phosphorus (P) fertilizers.

Wisconsin law limits the use, retail display, and sale of turf fertilizers that contain phosphorus. Also important is the use of a “slow-release” fertilizer that provides a slower release of nutrients so that the plants and ground have time to absorb the nutrients.

Keep waste out of the water, especially fall leaves.

Keep leaves, grass clippings, yard waste and all other organic matter out of the lake, and keep all pet waste out of the lake by quickly cleaning it up.

Minimize impervious surfaces through planning.

When landscaping, consider porous surfaces instead of impervious ones, like concrete and blacktop. A half-acre lot with 20 percent impervious surface contributes five times more overall runoff, six times more phosphorus, and 18 times more sediment to the lake than an undeveloped natural half-acre lot.

Remember, new construction, additions, new impervious surfaces, landscaping, filling/grading, and remodeling activities which involve structural changes within the shoreland area require a Land Use Permit from Polk County. To protect the lake, establish a shoreline construction and restoration plan before construction begins, and include and maintain silt fences and other erosion control measures as a part of those plans.

For full details on these and additional shoreline best practices, scan this QR Code and reference pages 6-8.



PRAIRIE NURSERY

Little bluestem, Schizachyrium scoparium, an attractive native grass with bluish-green leaves that change to a copper hue in fall. Grows from one to four feet high with fluffy seed heads in August-October.



PAUL SKAWINSKI

A rain garden will capture runoff from your roof so it can soak into the ground.

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Fall 2024

Hope all enjoyed the summer season. Comments on BLPRD activities follow.

East Balsam Water Quality / Alum – 2024 treatment continues to exceed water quality expected results. More to follow in this publication

Nanobubbler – The District took delivery of the nanobubbler in late October. It is operating in Pine Island Park Bay until ice comes in. Look forward to keeping members apprised of its progress.

Harvesting / Herbicide – Weeds-weeds-weeds! We had a bumper season of native and invasive aquatic plants. We treated the invasives in East Balsam with herbicides this spring and results were favorable. The main basin had significant native weed growth and accumulation on shorelines. The lack of snow cover in the winter of 23-24 stimulated weed growth for the summer season.

Water Safety Patrol – Relative to 2024 we were short staffed as our deputy from 2023 resigned. Chief Thompson brought back in-person boater safety which was well attended by our beginning boaters on the lake. More information to follow in this publication.

Large Wave Boats – The 2024 season showed continuing improvement in reported large wave boat incidents. Shout out to the Balsam Lake Surf Club and to Chief Thompson for their participation in boating safety classes and continued monitoring of wake surfing activities.

Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) – Our CBCW team inspected approximately 3,500 boats entering the lake during the 2024 boating season. Cleaning stations continue to be in place at seven landings on our lake with estimated usage of 70+ percent.

Finance – The 2025 budget was approved at our annual meeting. YTD through September 2024 the district has a surplus from operations of \$78,000. Closing out end of season expenses will diminish that surplus.

Zebra Mussels – The invasive mussels continue to propagate in our lake given observations throughout. Monitoring continues via the District, Polk County Land and Water Resources Dept. and Wisconsin DNR. No short-term solutions are apparent thus far. Mussels generally run their course and hopefully diminish in numbers at some point in time.

Conservancies – The Rice Creek and Stumps Bay conservancies are posted with updated signs. Our objective is to preserve the land in its natural state as best we can to positively influence water runoff. Public use is allowed however firearms, camping, fires, and motorized vehicles are restricted. More information can be found on our website, www.BLPRD.com.

Lake Manager – Marisa Weider has made significant contributions to the District in her first year. Her knowledge, experience and energy has been welcomed by the commissioners as they execute on the programs they lead. We are well on our way to broadening, sharing and documenting the knowledge of the District's operations.

Thank you for your continued participation and support.
— Tom Kelly



**Balsam Lake Protection & Rehabilitation
District Commissioners**

Tom Kelly, Chairman 1849 Orchard Hill Mendota Heights MN 55118 612-508-0879 Email: tkelly56@comcast.net Term Expires 2025	Dale Ulbrich 1342 185th Avenue Balsam Lake, WI 612-819-8361 Email: dalerulbrich@yahoo.com Term Expires 2024
Bill Mork, Vice Chairman 680 Alvarado Plymouth, MN 55447 612-599-8678 Email: bmork1@aol.com Term Expires 2026	Terry Palmberg PO Box 428 Balsam Lake WI 54810 612-839-5284 terry.g.palmberg@gmail.com (Appointed by Town of Milltown)
Dave Mariani, Secretary 1875 Pine Island Park Street Balsam Lake, WI 54810 Home: 651-492-3313 Email: dmmaria@msn.com (Appointed by Polk County)	Jack Weix 1838 Wellesley Avenue St. Paul, MN 55105 weixjack@gmail.com 612-325-8530 Term Expires 2026
Dave Wagner, Treasurer 1889 138th St Balsam Lake WI 54810 651-354-6897 Email: dave.wagner.962@gmail.com	www.blprd.com

Contact us

Please contact the commissioners with any questions, comments or concerns you have. Commissioners meet on the third Saturday of the month, starting at 8:30 a.m. at Polk County Business Center, lower level conference room. Many meetings are held by Zoom. You are welcome to attend any of the meetings.

2025 Meeting Dates	
February 15	June 21
March 15	Annual Meeting: July 19
April 19	September 20
May 17	October 18

2024 Summer CLP Harvest on Balsam Lake: A Season of Challenges and Successes

As anticipated, the 2024 summer season at Balsam Lake brought a significant rise in both Curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) and native aquatic plants. This growth surge, particularly in CLP, led to the decision to implement targeted chemical treatments on designated CLP beds in East Balsam. These early spring treatments proved highly effective, freeing up valuable time for our mechanical harvester to cover the rest of Balsam Lake more thoroughly.

Under the leadership of Don Coddington, our harvester team logged a record-breaking number of hours on the water this year. Fortunately, the harvester performed without any major mechanical issues, though weather posed occasional challenges. One unique difficulty this season was the unusual amount of “floating grass” that appeared as summer progressed. Since our equipment isn’t designed to capture these large floating masses, they occasionally became a nuisance for homeowners, depending on wind conditions. We are grateful to all those who helped by removing these weeds from their shorelines as they washed ashore.

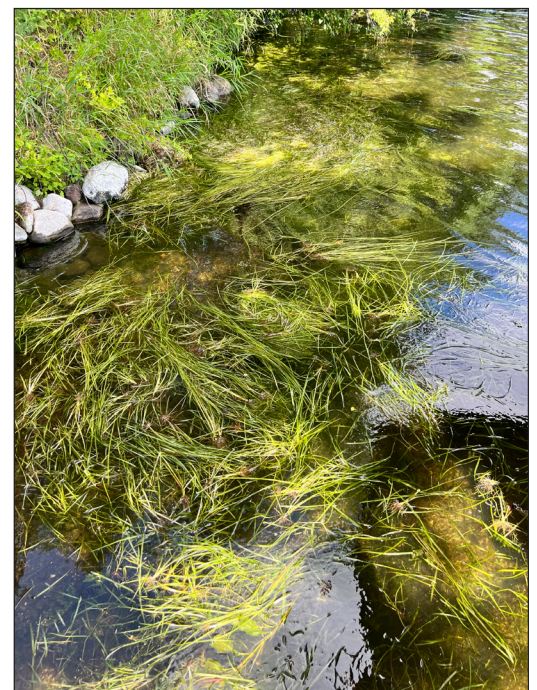
While the harvester team works diligently to reach every corner of the lake, we appreciate your patience as it takes time to complete the full rotation.

It’s important to remember that not all aquatic plants are “bad weeds.” These plants play a critical role in maintaining the overall health of Balsam Lake. They provide shelter and food for fish, amphibians, and waterfowl, stabilize sediments to keep our water clear, and help reduce shoreline erosion. They also absorb phosphorus, a nutrient that could otherwise fuel algal blooms.

Mechanical harvesting by the Balsam Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District (BLPRD) is carefully regulated by the Wisconsin DNR through a permit process and adheres to the guidelines of our Aquatic Plant Management Plan.

For more information about the BLPRD’s Aquatic Plant Management Plan, chemical treatments, or mechanical harvesting efforts, please visit our website at www.BLPRD.com. ●

*A bumper crop of Horned Pondweed, *Zannichellia palustris*, a native aquatic plant, was seen around the lake this summer. Its fruit and foliage are grazed by waterfowl.*



Boat Launch Cleaning Stations Usage

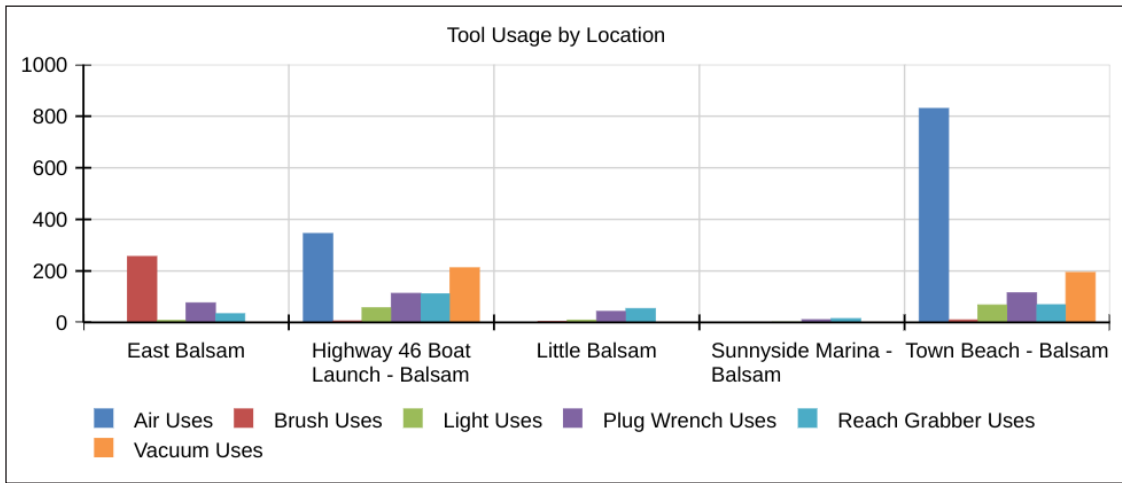
We had a successful year with the CD3 cleaning stations!

Cleaning stations continue to be in place at seven landings on our lake with estimated usage of 70+ percent. Statistics for five of the stations are shown here.

Thank you to the CBCW Monitors for their efforts instructing users about use of the cleaning stations.

The team inspected approximately 3,500 boats entering the lake during the 2024 boating season.

A bi-county ordinance adopted by Polk and Burnett Counties makes it mandatory to clean your boat before launching and before leaving a lake landing when a cleaning station is provided. ●



The new ordinance signs were placed at landings with cleaning stations by the county this summer.

Location	Year	Month	Air	Brush	Light	Plug Wrench	Reach Grabber	Vacuum	Total	Percentage
Town Beach - Balsam	2024	Apr	14	0	2	3	3	8	30	2 %
		May	135	2	14	14	8	33	206	16 %
		Jun	269	3	19	23	19	54	387	30 %
		Jul	219	2	19	28	19	38	325	25 %
		Aug	129	0	6	26	9	32	202	16 %
		Sep	49	3	6	15	11	25	109	8 %
		Oct	15	0	2	6	0	4	27	2 %
		Total	830	10	68	115	69	194	1286	
		Percentage	65 %	1 %	5 %	9 %	5 %	15 %		



The CD3 Boat Cleaning Station at Town Beach Launch.

Boater Safety Class

The BLPRD Water Patrol conducted a Boater Safety Class over Memorial Day weekend. Eight students, along with several parents attended the class. Subjects covered included DNR boating safety rules and regulations, as well as subjects unique to Balsam Lake — slow no wake zones, boat cleaning guidelines, courteous boating, and more. Grady Levine and Mark White from the Balsam Lake Surf Club covered courteous boating.

The students all passed the class and are now certified to operate watercraft in Wisconsin, once they meet age requirements. Boaters born on or after January 1, 1989, are required to pass a Boater Safety Class to legally boat on Wisconsin lakes.

The DNR course is offered online, but there is valuable information to be gained by attending an in-person class.

We plan to make this an annual event, offered over the Memorial Day Weekend, so mark your calendars, and look for future notices for next year's class.

Thank you to the students and parents who took the time to attend, to the Balsam Lake Surf Club for their presentation, and to our Water Patrol Chief, Tommy Thompson for conducting the course. ●



*Water Patrol Chief
Tommy Thompson
conducting Water Safety
Training on May 24,
2024*



Clean Boats Clean Waters

The Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) program finished up another successful year under the direction of Terry Morton. Here are the statistics for the year for the various public landings.

Landing	Boats Entering	Boats Leaving	People Contacted
Town Beach	1,531	1,010	5,725
The 46 Store	1,533	1,084	4,910
East Balsam	297	182	942
Little Balsam	102	29	265
TOTAL	3,463	2,305	11,842

Who Can Legally Drive A Motorboat...

Operators 12-15 years of age must either have a WDNR safety certificate or an adult on board while operating a motorboat.

A person 10 or 11 years old may operate a motorboat only if accompanied by a parent, a guardian, or a person at least 18 years old designated by the parent or guardian.

A person younger than 10 years old may not operate a motorboat.

Who Can Legally Drive A PWC...

A person younger than 12 years old may not operate a PWC.

A person 12-15 years of age may operate a PWC only if he or she holds a valid boating safety certificate issued by WDNR. Parental supervision is not a substitute for a boating safety course certificate as with other motorboats.

A person at least 16 years old may operate a PWC only if he or she holds a valid boating safety certificate issued by WDNR.

Source: dnr.wi.gov/topic/boat

Nanobubbler Update

The District took delivery of the nanobubbler in late October. Pine Island Park Bay is currently being treated. It is anticipated it will take 6-8 months for the bay to be completely treated. Operating can continue until the water temperature reaches 35 degrees. This process uses hyper oxygen treatment to stimulate biomass digestion by the bacteria already in the lake.

The objectives are to improve water quality while reducing muck levels and phosphorus. Wildlife habitat should also be positively influenced. Baseline data has been developed and outcomes will be measured accordingly. ●

The Nanobubbler in place at Pine Island Park Bay. Opposite, a look at the technology inside the unit.



Water Clarity Update

Water quality is looking great going into September. Secchi disc reading was 11.2 ft, chlorophyll = 7.5 ug/L, and surface and bottom total Phosphorus were 0.014 mg/L and 0.012 mg/L, respectively. — William F. James

Date	Secchi Disc Reading		Bottom DO	Surface TP	Bottom TP	Bottom SRP	Chlorophyll
	Impaired Waters objectives			(< 0.04 mg/L)			(< 27 ug/L)
	East Balsam Lake objectives			(< 0.03 mg/L)			(< 20 ug/L)
	(m)	(ft)	(mg/L)	(mg/L)	(mg/L)	(mg/L)	(ug/L)
5/13/2024	3.4	11.15	11.23	0.020	0.020	0.008	3.48
5/29/2024	3.4	11.15	6.23	0.020	0.016	0.007	6.83
6/12/2024	2.3	7.55	1.31	0.016	0.014	0.000	18.56
6/25/2024	2.4	7.87	3.8	0.011	0.028	0.000	9.14
7/10/2024	3.4	11.15	0.81	0.014	0.026	0.000	3.25
7/25/2024	2.7	8.86	5.23	0.018	0.024	0.000	4.94
8/8/2024	2.3	7.55	3.29	0.020	0.021	0.000	8.54
8/19/2024	2.7	8.86	0.29	0.015	0.012	0.000	2.50
9/4/2024	3.4	11.15	0.21	0.014	0.012	0.000	7.47

Polk County Tree Sale

Add Trees, Shrubs, and Native Seed to Your Lakeshore Landscape

Each year, the Polk County Land & Water Resources Department (LWRD) offers a variety of pines, hardwoods, shrubs, fruit trees, and native seed packets for landowners to purchase and plant – it is a program that has been going on for 36 years! In the spring of 2024, 17,000 trees and shrubs and over nine pounds of native seed were purchased!

The sale opens in January and products are sold on a first-come, first-serve basis until stock is sold out. A January mailing with program information is sent to landowners who have purchased trees in the past or request to receive information about the program. The items offered change each year based on availability, past demand, and customer feedback.

Ordering opens in January 2025 and tree pick up is the final Friday in April at the Government Center in Balsam Lake.

If you are interested in participating in the 2025 tree sale, would like to have your name included on the LWRD mailing list, or if you have any questions, please contact the Land & Water Resources Department at 715-485-8699 or email nicole.schmid@polkcountywi.gov.

Find the link to “Tree Sale” on this LWRD page: <https://www.polkcountywi.gov/landwater>.

Important Tree Program Information

- Tree size and availability are subject to change.
- Payment is due at time of order.
- Tree order information will be available at the end of December, with the sale opening in January.
- The sale is conducted online. As always, our friendly staff will be available to assist with questions regarding placing your order.
- All people ordering trees will receive a notice via mail or email that will provide exact pick-up details for your order.
- Items not picked up on designated date/time will not be available for pickup or refund unless previous arrangements have been made with the LWRD office. ●

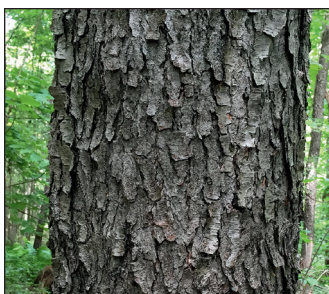


WILL STUART

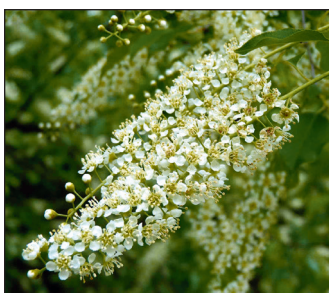
Planting for wildlife and water quality

Include native grasses, wildflowers, shrubs, and trees where land meets the water and provide numerous benefits for water quality and restore valuable habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Native plant lists organized by soil and sunlight are available at the Polk County website www.polkcountywi.gov.



Black cherry
Prunus serotina
has distinctive bark, spring flowers and summer fruit. Grows to 80 ft in some locations, and can also be shaped as an ornamental.



Plant native flowering trees and shrubs to support birds and other wildlife.



White spruce *Picea glauca*, also known as Canadian spruce, grows to 100 ft. in a pyramidal shape.



Balsam fir *Abies balsamea* grows to 60 ft. Soft branches—not prickly like spruce.

Choose native evergreens and avoid tree diseases.

Dock Side

Balsam Lake Protection & Rehabilitation District
 P.O. Box 202
 Balsam Lake, WI 54810

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Water Patrol Initiative

The 2024 water patrol season relative to the 2023 season saw fewer hours on the water patrolling and slightly fewer total citations and warnings as the District was challenged by staffing with one less part-time deputy.

The addition of an in-person Boater Safety Class was well received. Staffing continues to be a challenge as there is shortage of certified officers. We continue to search for additional certified staff. Please contact Tom Kelly or Chief Thompson at thomas.thompson@balsamlakepolice.org or (715) 554-7848 with recommendations ●



Balsam Lake Water Safety Patrol			
Tom Thompson, Chief			
	2023	2024	Notes
Patrol Hours	274	169.5	2023 had two officers
Administrative Hours	57	36	
Exempt Hours	0	8	Exempt hours are for boating safety class
Citations Issued	11	10	
Warnings Issued	28	13	
Citations per hour	12.5	10	
Admin Hour Percent	21%	21%	Needs to be under 30%



Balsam Lake Water Patrol boat