NEWSLETTER

Issue 5 March 29, 2021

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Friends of the 14 Mile Creek Watershed,

Ice is off the lakes, we've gotten a little rain, and early shoots are appearing. Interesting that after 4 years of way above average precipitation in 2016, 2017, 2018 & 2019, last year recorded less than average precip at the Hancock weather station. Relief for recent high groundwater issues, but perhaps less flushing action in our lakes. It bears watching this summer.

Some of you know we've expanded the 14 Mile Watershed committee to try to bring in all stakeholders in the 30+ miles of our watershed that begins in Plainfield and ends at Petenwell. The 10-year, $8 million EPA backed watershed restoration plan (9 Key Element Plan) identifies at least 50 stakeholder groups with a role in reducing the high nutrient load and improving our watershed. We in the Rome lakes area are among them, but our actions alone won't solve the problems. As much as 23,400,000 gallons flow through our watershed on average every day, so we understand that we need to reduce nutrients all along the way to have a lasting solution to the blue-green algae issue that first forced us to take action in 2016.

The current 14 Mile Watershed Joint Committee has incorporated as the 14 Mile Watershed Alliance and has applied for non-profit status. The reorganization makes us more open to all stakeholder groups throughout the watershed – we're not just a lakes group anymore, and the non-profit status provides access to donations and funding not available to municipalities like Rome and taxing authorities like TriLakes. So, that eases the financial burden on all of us. We'll continue our link with TriLakes and Rome by providing a seat for them on the board of directors

of the new alliance, and we hope to add directors from key stakeholders upstream as well.

Ten years is a long time. There is a lot to do and the plan breaks it out into 3-year milestone activities for education, municipalities, agriculture, and lakeshore owners, to make it more manageable. It's like eating the proverbial elephant, one bite at a time. There are also short-term solutions that can temporarily ease the issues some of you have with algae accumulation in calm bays (much like our aerator program), or with weeds and debris accumulation along some shorelines. They may not be part of the formal 10-year plan, but we understand these things are important to our enjoyment of the lakes and we plan to partner with TriLakes on many of these efforts. As an example, we are investigating processes (slag and denitrification) that will filter some of the nutrients before they reach our lakes. Watch for a project beginning in April along Hwy D and W intended to test the denitrification theory. More about that another time.

Our 14 Mile committee was successful in obtaining approximately $250,000 in grant funding to cover water testing in the watershed over the next three years, healthy lakes projects to provide fish habitat and protect our shorelines from runoff and erosion, and assisting Kason Morley to fund hiring of a seasoned Adams County employee to oversee the next three years of the 9 Key Element Plan. We feel that success will help us launch the focused restoration of our watershed and improve our lake water quality. Stop and see us the next time you're at the farmers market or other area event. We're happy to share what we know. Who knows? Maybe you'll want to join us in our effort to improve and protect our lakes and the watershed that feeds them.

Thanks,
Your 14 Mile Watershed Committee
Don Ystad - Chair

Water Testing in the 14-Mile Creek

Join the 14 Mile Committee Meeting Monday, April 12th at 2:00 p.m.

Our next 14-mile committee meeting is Monday, April 12th at 2:00 p.m. The DNR's Scott Provost is guest speaker. Scott will discuss "neonicotinoids" which are a class of neuro-active insecticides chemically similar to nicotine. Neonicotinoid use has been linked in a range of studies to adverse ecological effects, including honey-bee colony collapse disorder (CCD) and loss of birds due to a reduction in insect populations. Neonicotinoids have been found in our upstream ditch network in a recent UW study. Here's the link to agenda and meeting Zoom information.

The 14 Mile Watershed Alliance is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the improvement of surface and groundwater in the 14 Mile Creek Watershed in central Wisconsin. See us at 14milewatershed.org or https://www.facebook.com/14MileWatershed

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