NEWSLETTER

Issue 14 January 10, 2022

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Our piece of the water quality puzzle

As responsible lake property owners, we have to ask ourselves, “what is our own contribution to declining lake water quality”? While it’s been said that 70 to 80% of excess nutrient loading is attributable to agriculture across the state, that is not applicable for populated lake systems surrounded by septic systems and lawns, and especially man-made lakes such as ours.

Remember that Wisconsin has 15,000 lakes, many much less populated than ours, so the average land-use nutrient contribution may be very different for us. The EPA approved Nine Key Element Plan for restoration of our lakes and 14 Mile watershed tells us that.

Let’s talk facts. There are about 1500 properties surrounding our Rome area lakes. While many are seasonal or part-time, studies show that septic systems and lawns are key contributors to declining water quality. We added Nitrate testing to our in-lake sampling program 2 years ago. Results show that Nitrates, a key component of Blue Green Algae, are 10 times higher in our lakes than the minimum at which algae grows. That’s alarming!

While our septic systems will be with us for a while, we can reduce our use of lawn fertilizer, especially within that 35-foot buffer from the water line. If you and your family are concerned about lake water quality, a simple thing you can do is stop fertilizing your lawn down to the lake. Maintain at least a 35 foot buffer and consider native plantings in the buffer to minimize runoff and erosion. Suburban style lawns up to the shoreline and clean lakes don’t mix.

Welcome Kyle Kettner, 9 Key Element Plan Coordinator

We are very pleased to announce that Kyle Kettner has been hired by Adams County to oversee the implementation of the Nine Key Element Plan in our 4-county watershed. His role is funded by the DNR/Tri-Lakes grant which covers the majority of his salary for the next three years. Kyle is a masters-level UW water science and soil science grad who previously worked with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We've begun work with Kyle to confirm our own ongoing work on plan milestones and to share our contacts in the watershed so that he can begin expanding those critical relationships with our upstream neighbors. This is a major step in the cleanup of our watershed.

Thank you to some special upstream watershed neighbors

Heartland Farms – Jeremie and Alicia Pavelski help run one of the largest crop farms in Wisconsin. You've seen the signs all over our area. Jeremie and Alicia hosted us for a tour of their farm and operations facility this summer. They are the new generation, utilizing technology to farm more efficiently, economically, and eco-friendly. They employ 4 technology professionals developing software that utilizes satellites and sensor equipment to adjust fertilizer and irrigation use based on scientifically measured plant needs. They use cover crops and no-till wherever possible. They are active participants in Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association's water task force and members of the newly created Big Roche-A-Cri producer-led watershed council. Friends of the 14 Mile Watershed!

Joan Kramer – Joan is a sweet lady who lives on the 14 Mile in an area that is very difficult for us to access for testing. She believes in our work protecting the watershed and has given us access through her property so we can safely and effectively perform our monthly sampling. We are among the few with permission to get beyond the no trespassing signs. While we appreciate having access, we've also come to appreciate Joan and her love of the environment; a true friend of the 14 Mile!

Owen Rock Cranberries – Mark Mahoney, owner, and Jim Bielmeier, marsh manager, hosted a tour of their marsh this fall. They have the same concerns with over-abundance of Nitrates in the water as we have. Excess Nitrates in the water makes for leggy cranberry plants resulting in less growth of berries. For us, it's Blue-Green Algae. So, they take steps to "settle out" the excess nutrients in their marsh ponds. Nitrates in the marsh ponds will convert to harmless Nitrogen in the air, much as we are attempting to do in our experimental denitrification project in the Leola ditch on nearby DNR land. While their marsh and beds are a "closed system", we know that surface water and groundwater are connected, so what growers like Owen Rock do to filter out excess nutrients benefits us as well. Friends of the 14 Mile watershed!

Please join us for the 14 Mile Watershed Alliance meeting Monday, January 10th at 2:00 p.m. at the Rome Town Hal or via Zoom. Here is the link to the agenda and Zoom instructions.

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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