



December • 2009

## Dane County Clean Lakes and Safe Beaches Update

As you may know, the recent Madison and Dane County Public Health Environmental Scorecard shows a troubling trend—increases in phosphorus pollution levels in Lake Mendota and Monona after years of decline. It also shows increases in the numbers of beaches closed due in part to blue-green algae, which can produce toxins harmful to humans and pets.

The Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission and county staff have been addressing these problems on many fronts, including educating the public, prohibiting unnecessary phosphorus in lawn fertilizers, providing matching grants to upgrade urban storm sewer outfalls, and implementing strategies to reduce agricultural runoff, to name a few. Managing shoreland development impacts is another necessary way to address such problems. Staff recently completed the Shoreland and Riparian Management Final Report that suggests, among other strategies, ways in which we could update the county's shoreland 30-year-old shoreland rules.

Contrary to the claims of a recent postcard mailing to Yahara Lakes Association members and others, there is no new shoreland zoning rule proposed for County Board action. The truth is that Dane County staff must send the Shoreland and Riparian Management Final Report to the Department of Natural Resources by the end of December to fulfill a grant requirement.

This report completes Phase II of the Dane County Waterbody Classification Project. Phase I of the

project began in 2004 with sound science and research culminating in a report that classified all navigable waters in Dane County into Urban, Developing and Rural categories, based on their physical characteristics and planned level of development.

The goal of the Waterbody Classification Project Shoreland and Riparian Management Report is to suggest a flexible, yet effective set of strategies to better protect Dane County's lakes, beaches and streams from near shore pollution. Shorelands, or the areas closest to navigable lakes and rivers, are critical for cleaning up our lakes, making our beaches safe, providing habitat, and protecting the health of Dane County's residents. Properly managed shoreland buffers can provide significant pollution reduction, fish and wildlife habitat, erosion control and other benefits.

The Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission held listening sessions on the draft report on November 17 and 18. At its November meeting, the Commission voted to send the final report to the Department of Natural Resources as required, following the public meetings. The Commission also voted to take no action on implementing report initiatives until after final state shoreland zoning rules (NR 115) are approved by the Legislature. (For more information, go to DNR's website: [www.dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/news.htm](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/dsfm/shore/news.htm)) Most likely, we will have one year to comply with those changes in the unincorporated areas.

## Thanks to our corporate members for their support

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## Together, Into a New Year on Our Lakes

Looking to get involved in lake issues that concern you? Please see the YLA committees listed on the back of this newsletter, and consider getting involved. We welcome any help or input. Please contact [yla@mailbag.com](mailto:yla@mailbag.com) for additional information. As we approach a new year, the Board is looking to hear even more from our members and are looking to coordinate a few more social gatherings (in addition to the fabulous Annual Dinner) and are considering different options for reaching out to you in the form of discussions on current lake issues. Watch for additional information in the newsletter and at [www.yaharalakes.org](http://www.yaharalakes.org).

In this issue Dane County Lakes & Watershed provided us with an article on the importance of getting your lake address on your piers and a little history on the Waterbody Classification Project.

For additional information and specifics visit [www.danewaters.com](http://www.danewaters.com).

Also in this issue a Board Ballot, a reminder about what you can do to keep those aquatic exotic species out of our lakes and an article from Don Sanford on light trespassing..a little change from his history lesson but interesting.

Enjoy & always feel free to share comments and ideas for upcoming newsletters.

- Louisa Enz, Vice President, YLA Board

### **Steps to keep exotics out of our waterways**

Boaters using Wisconsin waterways can help prevent transporting exotic plants and animals from one lake or river to another by taking the following precautions with their boats and equipment:

- Remove plants and animals from your boat, trailer and accessory gear (anchors, centerboards, trailer hitch, wheels, cables and axles) before leaving the water access area.
- Drain your livewells, bilge water and transom wells before leaving the water access area.
- Empty your bait bucket on land, never into the water.
- Wash your boat, tackle, downriggers and trailer with hot water when you get home. Flush water through your motor's cooling system and other boat parts that normally get wet.
- Learn what exotic organisms look like.
- Look for the signs posted at boat landings.

## What's Your Light Trespass Score?

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Credit score, sports score and cholesterol level.

We're surrounded with numbers. But, what do you think your Light Trespass score is? On this rating low numbers are better than high. But first, just what is light trespass?

Light Trespass occurs when light travels from its intended purpose, i.e. your front steps and travels where it does not belong, in this case across the lake. One part of my job as lighting designer for Wisconsin Public Television was carefully putting light on people and things to reveal shape, texture and detail. The other, sometimes more challenging part, was keeping light where it didn't belong.

So it is with outdoor lighting. Take a look at the outside of your house after dark. The best vantage point is from your neighbor's yard or better yet, out on the lake. Then look back. What do you see? Maybe your garage light casts a constant beam into your neighbor's living room window. Are those spotlights at the corner of your house lighting up not only your driveway but shining like a beacon across the lake? An offending light doesn't have to be big either. If you can answer yes to any of these situations, you're guilty of creating light trespass.

Unfortunately, you've got plenty of company. Dozens of well-meaning though misguided property owners try to turn night into day. Whether it's in the interest of better security, aesthetics, or trying to save a couple of dollars we've been duped into installing poorly-designed, light-wasting fixtures that do more damage to the nighttime environment than good.

Inside your house, you wouldn't take the shade off of that light next to the couch. So why do it outside? Outdoor lighting should enhance the beauty and security of our homes and neighborhoods. While I'm

not encouraging you to turn off your front porch or backyard lights, I am suggesting that you look around your home and think about what you can do to keep light under control.

There are plenty of options available to improve your outdoor lighting that will economically enhance the safety and beauty of your home. The solutions are really pretty simple once you see the problem. Shields can be easily made for some High Pressure Sodium or Mercury Vapor yard lights from aluminum baking pans or aluminum flashing. (Turn off the power first.)

You'll find more information at the International Dark Sky Association website: [www.darksky.org](http://www.darksky.org)

The first step is yours. Take a walk or a boat ride soon. Then, think about how you could "light surfaces rather than spaces" and you'll be on the way towards lowering your Light Trespass score.

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*Don Sanford is the President of Midwest Outdoor Lighting Solutions (MOLS). He has 25 years experience as a lighting designer for television, film and theatre. He has been an outdoor lighting consultant to UW-Extension and UW-Madison. MOLS offers individuals and small businesses help with solutions to light trespass problems.*

*For more information or to arrange a presentation to your organization, contact Don at Midwest Outdoor Lighting Solutions. He can be reached at [dpsanford@charter.net](mailto:dpsanford@charter.net) or (608) 225-7520.*

*Don is also a Captain on the Betty Lou Cruise Line. He is currently researching "On Fourth Lake, A Social History Tour of Lake Mendota." He welcomes your comments, recollections and anecdotes.*

# County Officials Stress Importance of Numbering Plan

The Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission and the Dane County Sheriff's Department, working with the Dane County Land Information Office and Dane County Public Safety Communications, have created a lake property numbering system to provide a more rapid response to emergencies and enhance the personal safety of everyone who uses the lakes.

Each lakeshore property on Lakes Mendota, Monona, Waubesa and Kegonsa has been assigned a unique "lake address." The Mendota addresses begin with the letter "A"; Monona with "B"; Waubesa "C"; and Kegonsa "D". These numbers have been cross-referenced in the 911-computer system with the property street address.

The program began in the spring of 2003, when the Lakes and Watershed Commission began sending periodic letters to lake property owners providing them with their "lake address" and requesting that they voluntarily post this address on a sign at the end of their piers where it will be visible from the water.

In 2008, properties on Lake Mendota within the Village of Maple Bluff were added to this program upon completion of the village's Geographic Information System (GIS) parcel mapping. The metal signs are similar to those used in the Dane County rural numbering system; however, the lake signs are blue in color. The cost of these signs and letters/numbers is \$10.

This is an entirely voluntary program. As of fall 2009, just over 30% of the properties in the Yahara River chain of lakes have posted lake property numbering signs. The highest rate of participation is on Lake Kegonsa, where almost 40% of the properties have been posted.

With this system in place, a boater in distress can report his or her location by cell phone using the nearest lake property "address" as a reference point.

Similarly, a landowner who observes an emergency on the water can dial 911 and the dispatcher will be able to translate the street address to a water location. For an emergency in a lakefront home, the nearest response may be the Sheriff's recreation patrol.

An added benefit to lakeshore residents is that the lake address can assist in locating by water the home of friends. Instead of providing directions such as "the large white house located between the big willow tree and the brown boat house," lakeshore residents are able to give friends their pier address. With that number, friends are immediately able to navigate to the correct area of the lake and find the exact pier.

Any questions about this program should be directed to Sue Jones, Lakes and Watershed Commission staff at 224-3764.



**Have You Visited Our Web Site?**

**[www.yaharalakes.org](http://www.yaharalakes.org)**





## NEWSLETTER

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**Yahara Lakes Association, Ltd. is a non-profit organization of over 700 members dedicated to representing Lake property owners and advocating for the vitality of the Yahara chain of lakes so that all citizens may enjoy them.**

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### **COMMITTEES**

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*Call 848-9008 if you would like to become involved in any of the above-listed committees, or if you have concerns you would like a committee to address.*