

BIG PINE LAKE

ASSOCIATION
CROSSLAKE, MINNESOTA

Big Pine Lake Association 2016 Annual Meeting

Minutes

Topic: Welcome and Introduction of Directors **Presenter:** Dennis Bengtson
Discussion: Meeting called to order by Dennis Bengtson, BPLA president at 10:10 am. Directors introduced: Steve Rozek, Vice President; Tom Veeninga, Treasurer; Terri Rammer, Secretary; Bill Korchik, Director of Social Events and Marketing; and Richard Rammer, Director of Property Management. Ken Ormsbee, Director of Communications and Finance, was unable to attend.
Action: Reminder to sign in and update contact information was made.

Topic: Review of Agenda **Presenter:** Dennis Bengtson
Discussion: Attendees were referred to the Agenda on the first page of their handout package.
Action: No additional items added

Topic: Dam Modification & Habitat Improvement Project Overview
Presenter: Dennis Bengtson for Ken Ormsbee
Discussion: Three charts were presented by Dennis. The BPLA began in 1970 around the same time as the approval of the original 160' long rock dam by the DNR. Because of our proximity downstream of the Pine River Dam in Crosslake, Big Pine Lake is unique. Our lake elevations vary frequently and widely, with 24 to over 30 inches of "bounce" every season. High water events are very hard on our rock dam. Over the years, there have been several failures of the dam requiring expensive repairs, including major failures in 1998, 2008 and 2013. The cost of repairs, including removal of floating bogs, has been as high as \$50,000 per incident. Since the original DNR permit stipulated that the Crow Wing County own the dam, the Board of County Commissioners asked for a plan to manage the costs. A Subordinate Services District (SSD) was established in 2010 to assess each lake property owner \$100 per year for dam maintenance. That original assessment proved inadequate to cover on-going repairs. In 2013, the assessment was increased to \$200/year which has allowed the SSD account to keep up with maintenances expenses, but the dam remains susceptible to damage and failure. Crow Wing County also commissioned an engineering study in 2013 to develop replacement options for the rock dam which were reported in our 2014 Annual Meeting. Last year, the BPLA Board focused on repairing extensive erosion to the top of the dam and spillway to address the low lake elevation concerns during periods of low outflow from the Pine River Dam in Crosslake. The county agreed to restore the dam and spillway to its originally permitted elevations, which was done in September using SSD

funds. Lake elevations this summer confirm that the restoration of the dam last fall was money well spent. DNR fisheries was involved in the dam restoration to see if any provision could be made for fish passage since the original tube intended for fish migration was no longer in place (fish cannot enter the lake unless the water is really, really high). Brainerd office DNR fishery specialist suggested that our rock dam be modified into a longer, riffle structure to aid fish migration. He mentioned the state's habitat friendly dam modification/ river connectivity initiative. This habitat modification would be eligible for grants if the focus was on river connectivity: the Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) grant program. Dennis and Ken are representing BPLA on a project team with Crow Wing County and DNR Fisheries, led by the Crow Wing Soil & Water Conservation District, to develop the CPL grant application that is due by September 9th. *See handout.* The DNR is the decision maker for the grant application selection. Our application will include a conceptual design of the project that will be presented by our guest speaker, Bill Westerberg, Conservation Engineer for SWCD. If selected for the grant, our project could begin as early as next fall. The 10% (minimum) non-state, matching funds requirement is expected to come from our BPLA (SSD fund) and/or other grants. No additional contribution from lake property owners is anticipated at this time.

Action: BPLA board to support the project team in completing and submitting the grant application by the September 9 deadline. Project cost estimates are being obtained by SWCD.

Topic: Dam Modification Project & Rock Riffle Design Benefits

Guest Presenter: Bill Westerberg, Conservation Engineer and technical support for North Central SWCD

Discussion: Bill presented the scope of his expertise and areas that he serves. He was asked by the DNR to survey our dam and present the best options. His charts showed the flow of water from the Pine River Dam at Crosslake to our rock dam, topography around our dam and the riffle structure he recommends. His objective is to complete at least the first 30% of the riffle design so qualified contractors can estimate approximate project costs for the grant application. Currently, we only have a wide range of estimates and time that would be needed to construct the new design. Our lake and river outflow is very small compared with the volume of water that flows through this section (3% of the Cross lake drainage area). The new design should be able to accommodate the highest outflows from the Pine River Dam. *Note: There are two different water elevation datums (NVDG29 and NAVD88) that can confound the understanding of our lake issues and project. Dennis has been reporting daily water elevations using the NVDG29 datum, consistent with MN DNR and USACE dam operations, to help standardize reporting.* The progressive, arch-shaped riffle design will include boulders that are 4-6 feet in diameter, positioned 50' apart in series so that each water level is 8-10 inches lower so that fish can migrate up the river, with 'resting' pools in between the boulders. This design needs to maintain our lake water level at an acceptable level during the minimum outflow rate of 33 CFS (cubic feet per second) and high outflows up to 2300 CFS. The design could include a walking path on the west end

for kayakers/canoers to portage around the dam. Additionally, steps from the parking area down to the water may be included in the plan. This might also restrict trucks from getting too close to the dam. The construction will further damage the currently poor access road, which will be replaced with a 12' wide road with ditches on both sides. Question: Explain the dam design. The large boulders and 'quarter' boulders will allow water to flow over or around the dam based upon water level. The spaces between the boulders will be partially filled with clay and fines since there is very little sediment in the water coming from the Cross Lake Dam. When/if floating bogs reach the dam, they will be caught by the first set of boulders. A slightly submerged path all along the front edge of the riffle will allow access for maintenance vehicles to remove captured bogs. Bill showed examples of the different dam designs in Minnesota and shared the pros/cons for each design. We are looking at the rock riffle design to improve our fish population while managing the widely varying water flows. With the rock riffle design, we do not need a fish bypass structure that would be more costly. This design features much larger, embedded rocks that cannot be removed by hand. Four-wheelers can be an issue if they try to drive across the dam, but the boulders size may limit their access. One significant cost of new rock riffle is the location and transportation of the large boulders required. There may be a wetland created with the design of the dam. Grant money from the Clean Water Legacy may offset the cost of the wetland plantings. Grass and plants will prevent or limit erosion during high water events. Bill showed an example of a poorly designed dike/berm/snowmobile trail which can erode and direct water around the dam. Our current dam was built with a compacted earth base. The dam modification project will include rebuilding and hardening the fragile and porous east end of the current dam that is a high failure risk during high water flows. Next steps – meet with contractors to obtain cost estimates to accomplish the build.

Member questions:

Cost? Estimated costs are not firm yet. The SEH study estimated \$232K - \$387K for the Rock Riffle Option so an approximate cost of \$350,000 is currently being assumed. The contractor estimates will be used for the grant application and may be higher depending on the cost to rebuild the east side of the current dam.

Will this plan avoid the flooding seen this summer? Yes. The water level will be controlled by the rocks. (NOTE: We do not believe Bill fully understood this question as no structure of any design can prevent flooding if the Pine River Dam in Crosslake discharges abnormally high flow rates – see next question).

Our lake levels have been an issue when the Cross Lake Dam is opened. Will this design stop this? No. The dam will not prevent this from happening, but will add fish habitat and maintain usable BPL water levels during normal conditions. The Army Corps of Engineers should modify their discharge rates from their Pine River Dam when managing to their specified pool elevation range. Dennis will speak to this issue in detail later in the meeting. Mike requested that we establish a high water mark for BPL and that the Army Corps of Engineers adhere to that level, that they draw down the Whitefish Chain pool elevation over a longer period (i.e. 15 days vs. 10) and that we continue to have conversations with them. Dennis has been visiting with them and providing additional recent data to show the effect of various outflow levels from their

dam on our lake elevations. The USACE dam operations staff have welcomed our data sharing and are already showing some consideration of our situation in extending and limiting their peak outflows following high water incidents. Their highest priority is to preserve the Pine River Dam structure when a very large rainfall occurs (and we certainly agree) so there are very practical limits as to how much they can manage their operations in consideration of downstream impacts like our lake elevations. What is the proposed length of the new dam/structure? The rock riffle section is expected to be 100-120 feet wide and at least 200 feet long with a 2.4% drop from top of dam to bottom.

Action: Bill was thanked for his work and a coffee break was begun before the business portion of the meeting.

Business Meeting Called to Order by Dennis Bengtson

As specified in the BPLA By Laws, Robert's Rule of Order will be followed for this formal portion of the meeting.

Topic: Review of 2015 Minutes for Approval **Presenter:** Terri Rammer

Discussion: No discussion on content available on the website. Please contact Terri if you need information on using the BPLA website (www.bigpinelake-crosslake.com). If you do not have an e-mail address, please contact Terri for a copy. Motion to approve by Carol Veeninga and Bill O'Brien.

Action: Minutes unanimously approved.

Topic: Annual Treasurer's Report **Presenter:** Tom Veeninga

Discussion: Account balances, \$13,327.95 in checking and \$35,930.96 in the SSD fund as of 8/11/16 and 7/5/16 respectively, were presented with details included in handout to members. Approximately \$500 was spent on the fishing tournament. \$15,780 for contractor work on the rock dam restoration was spent from the SSD fund. The SSD fund grows about \$20,000 per year. A co-pay for the new design work will be taken from this fund, and it is not currently anticipated to cost additional funds to members.

Three more people joined the association and there are currently 53 members.

The Mosquito Management Program was a success again this year, with one last recent application and 31 people using the program. The goal of the association is to add value to members. There was a question of mosquito treatment effectiveness. The program was endorsed by a number of members as being effective and allowing families to use their yards. The application is marginal for ticks and flies but exceptionally effective for mosquitoes. It works better with an area that has a vegetation barrier, or foliage, for the spray to adhere.

Are we paying Bill Westerberg for his work on our dam design? Yes, to increase our chances of winning the grant competition this year, we believe it is imperative to include a conceptual design and better cost estimates. We are also reimbursing some administrative expenses to have CW SWCD lead the writing of the grant application because of their prior experience and success. Total payment to CW SWCD is capped at

\$4,000 to be paid by BPLA and ultimately reimbursed from SSD fund.
Motion to approve treasurer report by Wanda Rozek and Ron Schapp.
Action: Treasurer's report unanimously approved.

Topic: Social Activities and Plans

Presenter: Bill Korchik

Discussion:

The social activity group is informal but organizes events, adds fun and cohesiveness of the lake association. You should look out for your neighbors just as you would like them to help you, such as when your dock is floating away in high water or a tree falls on your house. The association is made up of all volunteers. If anyone is interested in volunteering this next year, for a fishing tournament, coffee & conversation, or walk around to distribute flyers for event, please sign up.

There were three planned events this year. In May, we did a trash pick up with 40 people and 5 large bags of trash. The successful event ended at the rock dam with Steve Rozek grilling brats and dogs. The volunteers could decide when to do this again. Dennis and Jane Bengtson hosted a Coffee & Conversation for a few hours. People who are willing to host an event do not need to give a house/cabin tour but sharing coffee is a great way to meet neighbors and build a community. The 2nd Annual Fishing Tournament was held. An immense effort is needed to host this tournament – the Walksons, Heurungs and the O'Briens donated their beachfront for the event; a dozen volunteers; members who donated prizes, including toys for kids. 140 people attended with 111 registered to fish/win door prizes. 13 businesses donated prizes! **Eric Grimes** was responsible for the business donations and he was acknowledged with an Exemplary Service plaque. Thank you Eric.

Action: Members were encouraged volunteer to continue to produce these events. If you are willing, donate kids (9 and under, or 10-17 year olds) related 'prizes' for next years tournament. If you are willing to host a drink and bean bag event, please sign up.

Topic: Fish Stocking Initiative

Presenter: Steve Rozek

Discussion: Steve is passionate about fish in our lake. DNR net samplings show that our sunfish abound, northern are up and walleye are up. Crappies are the only fish that have shown a decline over time – a significant decrease. Our lake has the perfect environment for black crappies – warm calm water with plenty of weeds. Young crappies are 4 times more effective at eating nuisance bugs (insect control) than sunfish. Older crappies eat sunfish, which is good in our lake as it adds fish diversity. They cannot lay eggs until May-June when they are three. The small 5-6" females will have small spawning. The 10-14" females can lay 60,000 eggs (record 188,000 in MN). Half are eaten in their first year. Our lake is healthy and the crappies thrive on the insects. We lost a lot of our crappy population to a number of reasons including winterkill, rock dam failure, & over fishing. Re-stocking fish to jump-start a lake that had a great population was the reason we received approval back in 2007. We couldn't afford a full restocking within one year but have a plan to continue to populate our lake. Walleye love our lake with the rocky 'river bed' and love the water of our dam. Last year, we added 5,000 fish with the help of donors. Our next stock will be in 2017. The goal is to have a healthy lake

(plenty of fish of various ages). Our next test netting will be in 2018 when the DNR will age the fish. The crappies feed at dusk and dawn while sunfish eat by sight, during the day. Large crappies are fantastic eating. Note: we shouldn't share the increasing fish population information to other fishermen, as it will take three years for the crappies to mature and maintain the population of our lake. Once the fish population has recovered, we don't need to re-stock. Question: When to stock? Stocking happens in October due to mortality.

Action: Donations for fish re-population is appreciated.

Topic: Big Pine Trail Resident's Sign Board **Presenter:** Richard Rammer

Discussion: Richard showed an example of his name signage that is available for south side lake residents. Richard was thanked for the great improvement in appearance of the sign with restored wood and the newer polyurethane finish that should last longer.

Action: Contact Richard if you are interested in a sign on the south side for \$15 per sign – labor is included.

Topic: BPLA Communications **Presenter:** Dennis Bengtson for Ken Ormsbee

Discussion: Communication to and from members is very important. Please let us know if you have questions or suggestions. **We will primarily communicate via e-mail and our website at <http://www.bigpinelake-crosslake.com/>**. Terri & Richard's daughter, Christina, has been graciously supporting the website and updated it over the winter. We try to keep the website up-to-date within a week of meetings. Please submit lake-related photos for our gallery. Please let Ken know if you aren't receiving information or if your address needs to be updated. Signage is also placed in advance of social events and important meetings, such as this annual meeting.

Action: Review the website as needed. Give the Board suggestions for communication improvements.

Topic: 2015 Rock Dam Restoration & Performance Analysis

Presenter: Dennis Bengtson

Discussion: Graphical charts of our lake elevations are created and reported monthly and yearly. We remain members of the Lake Level Minnesota program. Dennis measures the lake level daily using the official DNR gauge which they install and calibrate in late April each year. We can make decisions based upon actual elevation and outflow data and not just opinions or emotions. We know the direct effect that both low and high Pine River Dam outflows have on our lake's elevations based upon these measurements. Due to the rock dam restoration last September, our lowest water level is now 8 inches higher than last year at minimum outflow. The highest water levels this summer were due to heavy rains on July 11 & 12. This event was very similar to the one in June of 2012 when the water was much higher and resulted in many floating bogs and expensive damage to the rock dam. Dennis met with the Pine River Dam operations staff just as they were increasing their outflow following the recent large rainfall. Their goal was to cap their outflow around 1400 CFS (cubic feet per second) to avoid the large spike of 2323 CFS that caused flooding and damage in 2012. Our elevation did go up,

and too high for some on the south side, but not as high as previously experienced in 2012. The goal of the Pine River Dam operations team is to keep the pool elevation (water level) on the Whitefish Chain within the “Summer Band”, a 6” elevation difference. This year, in consideration of negative effects of peak outflows on our lake and dam, they let the pool elevation go to 5” above the Summer Band (8” above their normal mid-band level) for about ten days. This thoughtful action, for which we have thanked them, kept our peak elevation lower and minimized floating bogs and damage to our fragile rock dam. Dennis shared more data on the handouts comparing elevations this year, after the rock dam restoration, to last year. To date, we have had only 14 days where the elevation was below our desired minimum (and the lowest was 8” higher than last years low) versus 68 days below desired minimum last year. At high outflows, we are ten inches higher than last year at the same outflows. Our priority was to avoid the very historically low lake levels that strand boats on lifts and make fishing and navigation difficult. We also focus on high water levels, but we cannot control the weather or the high outflows from the Pine Rive Dam that result from big rains. While we cannot afford a dam with variable flow controls, we still need a water control structure that can maintain a minimum usable lake level, withstand very high outflows from the Pine River Dam without failing and allow anytime fish passage. That is what we are currently working on with the CPL grant project team.

Action: Dennis will continue to share our data and communicate with the Pine River Dam operations staff about the effects of high outflows from their dam on our lake elevations.

Topic: Election of Directors

Presenter: Dennis Bengtson

Discussion: The biographical highlights of four nominees for three Director positions were shared in a handout. The nominees were: Richard Beck, Pam Graves, Ann Korchik and Bill Korchik (for re-election). Terri Rammer, Board Secretary, has informed the Board that she needs to step down mid-term due to other commitments. The second year of her term is available for an appointee by the Board. Richard Rammer’s term expired this year and he did not wish to run for re-election. Steve Rosek was appointed to serve the second year of Pat Zulkosky’s term when he had to step down, however, Steve is unable to run for re-election at this time. Each current BPLA membership was allowed one ballot to vote for three of the four candidates. Ballots were counted and the top three vote recipients were elected to the Board for two-year terms: Bill Korchik, Ann Korchik and Pam Graves. Richard Beck, the fourth highest vote recipient, will be appointed by the Board to complete the second year of Terri Rammer’s term. During the ballot collection, Dennis recognized both Terri and Richard Rammer for their service on the Board. They graciously received Certificate of Appreciation engraved plaques for their personal commitment and years of service.

New Business (covered during ballot counting): There has been repeated Illegal use of fireworks on our lake again this summer. Prior to the meeting, the Board President had received comments from residents and BPLA members about illegal fireworks on the Fourth of July weekend and at numerous other times. Arial and explosive fireworks,

which are still illegal in Minnesota, can also be an annoyance late at night, as well as, a fire hazard during dry conditions. One member expressed her family's lengthy tradition of shooting fireworks while at their cabin throughout the summer and requested that complaining neighbors contact the offenders directly before involving law enforcement. As stated on our website, BPLA encourages their members to be good neighbors and keep an eye out for things that don't look right. If you see something illegal, suspicious or dangerous, you can call the county dispatcher at 218-692-2222 to investigate. If it is illegal use of fireworks, they will confiscate the fireworks. A second instance will also result in a fine.

The 2016 Annual Meeting adjourned at 12:10 pm.