

Geneva Lake Guardian



GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 412

Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Phone 262/275-9656 • www.genevalakeassoc.org

Summer 2009

The Association is dedicated to Conservation, Ecological Preservation and Education, and the General Welfare of the Geneva Lake Area.

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC. • PROTECTING GENEVA LAKE SINCE 1935

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ALPHABET SOUP AND OTHER CONFUSIONS OF GENEVA LAKE

One of the main confusions to both newcomers and old timers on Geneva Lake is that many of the community's organizations have over time come to be known by either their initials or by nicknames. Let's try to unravel a few for the benefit of our readers.

Begin with our organization, the Geneva Lake Association (GLA). Under the umbrella of GLA is the Geneva Lake Association Environmental Education Fund (GLAEEF). GLA provides general information to the public regarding local activities and issues, while the GLAEEF provides environmental college scholarships to students in the Geneva Lake area.

Several organization work together to ensure that the area's land and water is protected.

- The Geneva Lake Conservancy (GLC) is dedicated to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands, open space, and the unique character and quality of life of Walworth County.
- The organization responsible for making sure the waters of Geneva Lake remain clean and void of shoreland contamination and invasive species is the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency (GLEA).
- To assure these waters are safe and enjoyable for all there is the Water Safety Patrol (WSP). They provide the lifeguards for our municipal beaches and man the white boats with red lettering one sees cruising the lake on the ready to assist where needed.
- The State of Wisconsin has a presence in our area through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). They enforce state regulations for lakes and

rivers such as boat launching, shoreland vegetation, etc.

- Holiday Home Camp, founded in 1887, provides quality educational and recreational opportunities for at-risk children and families from economically stressed communities. Once again, however, there is some confusion—Holiday Home is owned and managed by the Lake Geneva Fresh Air Association, Inc., a name which bears no resemblance to the name of the camp—Holiday Home.
- Downtown Lake Geneva's Horticultural Hall, built in 1911 and on the national historical registry, is owned and operated by the Geneva Area Foundation, Inc. Once used as an assembly hall for the Lake Geneva Garden Club (GLCC), the Gardeners and Foremen's Association (no longer in existence), and Holiday Home Camp, the hall today is available to the community for weddings, meetings, theatrical performances, etc., and is locally lovingly referred to as Hort Hall.

This very briefly introduces you to some of the confusing acronyms you will hear around the lake. There are many other valuable local not-for-profit organizations in the Geneva Lake area. Good luck in sorting out the numerous organizations that the citizens of this actively engaged community enthusiastically support! Further information and a deeper explanation of these organizations, as well as other information about the area, can be found on the information tab on our website www.genevalakeassoc.org.

-Joy Rasin



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LAKESCAPING: INNOVATIONS IN SHORELINE RESTORATION

During one of the recent house and garden tours on Geneva Lake this summer, one of the homeowners who had graciously volunteered a tour of their property pointed out the shoreline “buffer zone” they created using vegetation to restore the shoreline to a more natural state. The shoreline had been mowed like the rest of the lawn area when they purchased the home in the 1970’s. Now, there is a thick stand of vegetation created to best resemble the natural state that existed before the area was settled. Not only do the flowers and natural grass plantings give a more pleasing look to the shoreline, but it affords an unexpected benefit—it keeps Canadian geese from the property!

The buffer zone has created an interesting contrast to most of the shoreland of Lake Geneva, and may hopefully be the harbinger of more such plantings on our lakeshore properties in the future. According to an article from the Langlade County Shoreland Restoration report on the State of Wisconsin Land Records and Regulations Department website, “(p)lants at the water’s edge provide beauty and color to the shoreland environment”. Vegetation at the shore also “...contributes to...good water quality.” Such plantings filter

rainwater and melting snow entering the lake and help to purify it.

Anyone owning property on or just walking along the shore of Geneva Lake over the years is familiar with bank erosion, shoreline heaving, and trees being undermined and leaning into the lake. The report points out that such problems may be mitigated or even improved by use of natural barriers as described above, improving the quality of life for the homeowner as well as the lake and adding beauty as a bonus.

The article goes on to mention another benefit...“Wildlife depends on both live and dead plants for habitat.” Thus, “lakescaping” as it is called...“ holds the key to restoring Wisconsin’s shorelands to a natural state.”

One can hire an expert to implement a shoreline restoration plan or seek expert advice and begin a personal adventure. A combination of these methods can lead to a cooperative and rewarding learning experience for the homeowner. For complete information, go to <http://lrrd.co.langlade.wi.us/shoreland/index/asp>, or visit the DNR website at dnr.state.wi.us.

WISCONSIN NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD UPDATES SHORELINE RULES

At their June, 2009, meeting, the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board approved the first changes to the state’s minimum shoreland zoning standards (NR115) in more than 40 years. According to the summary statement from the meeting, “Development patterns (of land use) have changed significantly from a small family cottage to year-round homes and multi-use complexes with sizes proportionate to the high value of the shoreland property.” In the interim, most counties in the state created their own ordinances regarding shorelands. The state now recognizes the need for cohesive, simplified and effective statewide standards that can be enforced at the county level. These proposed standards are limited in scope to unincorporated areas annexed after 1982 and those areas incorporated after 1994. How these standards will be applied to the Geneva Lake properties will be of interest to everyone in the area.

In a background memo to the Board, Secretary **Matthew Frank** noted research results that precipitated the need for the proposed revisions to shoreland zoning standards:

- Traditionally developed shorelines-e.g., less vegetation, more impervious surface support 83-92% fewer aquatic species than those with intact and absorptive surfaces.
- Shoreline property continues to develop at an increasing rate.

Mr. Frank also outlined some key principles in the proposed standards the Board has now recommended to the Wisconsin legislature, including:

- Property owners may maintain existing buildings and lawns.

- Current standards of the 75-foot setback and the 10,000 and 20,000 square foot lot sizes remain intact.

Under the changes, new building or remodeling will require property owners to follow stricter standards and to address environmental concerns in their areas. As reported in the June 28, 2009 issue of the Walworth County Sunday Newspaper, “New regulations include limits on waterproof surfaces such as roofs and driveways.” These new standards will likely decrease the number of variance applications counties currently receive so that homeowners can simply apply for permits from the county. Details of the proposed new regulations can be found on the Natural Resources Board website. As stated there, “Benefits to the environment include reduced storm water runoff and related pollutants, and conservation of fish and wild life habitat. The revision is also expected to address administrative problems with the current rules identified by county zoning staff and property owners.”

It is difficult to speculate on what effects this legislation will have on the Geneva Lakes area in years to come if and when it is enacted into law. One can be certain the State will take a more active role in zoning enforcement on lakeshore and lake-adjacent properties. In the interim, one can merely scan the PUBLIC NOTICES published in The Lake Geneva Regional News—for example, the August 13, 2009 issue reflects a Proposed Ordinance Amendment on Shoreland Zoning, Section 74-167, that addresses Geneva Lake directly.

For further information, visit: dnr.wi.gov/org/nrboard/agenda.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

All persons interested in the conservation, preservation, environmental education and general welfare in the Geneva Lake Region are invited to become members. The contributions requested from members are as follows:

Regular Membership - Annual Contribution \$30.00

Sustaining Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$50.00

Contributing Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$100.00

Donor Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$150.00

Benefactor Membership - All Members who so elect, Annual Contribution \$250.00 or more

Commercial Membership - Annual Contribution \$60.00

Send Membership form to: GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION, INC. P.O. Box 412, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OR RENEWAL
(Please Print)

Name _____

Home Address _____

_____ Phone _____

Summer Address _____

Pier # _____ Phone _____

Business or Profession _____

Business Address _____

_____ Phone _____

Send Mail to: _____

- Regular Sustaining Contributing
 Donor Benefactor Commercial

All Contributions Are Tax Deductible

NEW MEMBERS

Since our last newsletter, we have the following new members of the Association

Louise & Clint Kuzmich Elgin Club **Larry & Phyllis Pierce** Belvidere Park Assn.

Donald & Joyce Huml Stonebeigh **Allison Alexander** Cedar Point Park

Michalene Melges **Mary McCafferty** **Kent W. Shodeen** **David & Andrea Rapaport** **Jerry & Judy Sommers**

Welcome!

We intend to list all new members of the GLA in the newsletter. Of course, membership automatically includes listing in the annual Directory.

RUSSELL HOVDE RETIRES

Russell J. (Russ) Hovde, longtime Director of Field Operations for the GLA, retired in July, 2009. Russ was a director and officer of the GLA when **John Palmer** suddenly announced his retirement as Director of Field Operations at a GLA meeting in 1997. Russ had become familiar with the behind-the-scenes operations of the GLA and felt confident he could step in to fill the void, so he volunteered to take over the position on the spot, an offer gratefully accepted by the organization. Russ was a retired Vice President of the Continental Illinois National Bank and Trust Company of Chicago, where he had had much experience in writing, so he was confident he could fill the position adequately.

The GLA had always had a good mailing list of people living around the lake, but when Russ assumed the Director of Field Operations position, not enough people were contributing to the organization. Russ set his mind to increasing membership contributions to ensure the continued health of the GLA, and during his tenure contributions increased significantly. This enabled the GLA to make

donations to deserving organizations such as the Water Safety Patrol as well as to fund annual college scholarships through the Geneva Lake Association Environmental Education Fund to college students concentrating in environmental studies. The largest single donation during Russ' tenure was a \$20,000 grant to Kishwaukee in Williams Bay to fund the wooden walkway in use today.

Russ and his wife **Betty** have been solely responsible for the publication of the annual directory and quarterly newsletter. Some of the earlier cover photos for the directory were taken by Russ, while more recent photos have been donated by **Bruce Thompson**, a professional photographer in Walworth.

Russ and Betty have moved to Madison, Wisconsin, the town they both grew up in and where they met at the University. They both will be sorely missed, not merely for their efforts for the GLA, but for their deep interest in the civic and cultural affairs of the Geneva Lake area. Russ has been appointed an Honorary Director of the Geneva Lake Association in recognition of his service to the organization.

IN MEMORIAM - BRUCE MACLEOD ARMSTRONG

Bruce M. Armstrong, 71, former Lake Geneva resident, passed away March 19, 2009, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Mr. Armstrong, a staunch environmentalist, served as a Village Trustee in Williams Bay in the early 1970's. He successfully led a citizens' group that opposed the Brandel development that was to be located on property that is now

Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy.

Bruce was also the driving force in establishing the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency. He is survived by his wife **Joan**, one daughter, three sons, and seven grandchildren.

FIRE & STORM SAFETY

At the GLA annual meeting in July, several officers from the Town of Linn Fire/EMS attended and fielded questions relative to improving protection of Geneva Lake area property. With Summer waning, it is appropriate that we point out several key points raised by the officers that all homeowners should consider, whether year-round residents or seasonal.

- NOAA Weather Radio – While there are storm sirens strategically placed at numerous locations throughout the lake area, they are primarily designed to be heard outdoors. NOAA radios are recommended for homeowners as a supplement to the storm sirens. These radios are available from reputable dealers and information is readily available on the internet.
- Knox Box- A Knox box is a secure device designed to hold access keys, contact phone numbers, etc. at your property to aid firefighters in the event they are called to respond to a alarm activation or similar event.

The box provides access to the property in the event the homeowner is not present/available. With such a box placed in a mutually agreed location, damage-free access can be gained to the property. Several types of Knox boxes are available for purchase. Go to www.knoxbox.com for information. The department is ready to help homeowners with any questions.

- Driveway Access- All homeowners should maintain their driveways in all seasons to allow quick and easy access for emergency vehicles. This is often overlooked during the winter, especially where homeowners are not regularly in residence.

The Linn officers thanked the GLA for the publication and distribution of the pier number/road address list last year. The list has been a real benefit to local fire/EMS departments as well as to law enforcement and the Water Safety Patrol.

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