

Geneva Lake Guardian

Late Summer 2023



GENEVA LAKE ASSOCIATION
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Our mission is to enhance the conservation, preservation, environmental integrity and general welfare of Geneva Lake with timely and issue-centered communications and education through a wide membership base of area residents and local businesses.

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE GENEVA LAKE ASSOC., INC. • PROTECTING GENEVA LAKE SINCE 1935

New Geneva Lake Management Plan is well underway; completion expected in 2024

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by Tom Nickols, GLA Director

The work to update the Lake Management Plan for Geneva Lake is nearing completion and will likely be published in the spring of 2024.

The plan examines the watershed of the lake and looks at current conditions versus those that existed at the time of the last survey in 2008. At that time, the major issues affecting the lake were water quality, development/land use, boat traffic and invasive species. These trends persist today.

To understand the changes to the lake over the last fifteen years, SEWRPC (Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission) was retained to research and develop an updated Lake Management Plan. A DNR grant for partial funding was received in late 2022 with fundraising continuing. Water samples have been collected to understand seasonal pollutant levels as well as the overall health of the lake. Field collection of invasive plants and animals as well as native fish populations were important to gain an updated assessment on the health of the lake.

Three significant additions to the past survey were also made. To provide additional input on current issues, a survey was mailed to 2000 area residents. 1000 were sent to lakefront property owners and 1000 to owners in the watershed but not on the lakefront. Early results show that almost exactly 25% of the responses came from each of the four municipalities. Respondents tended to be long-time lake residents, who were both knowl-

edgeable and passionate about issues facing the lake. Based on the feedback, several focus groups are planned for this fall to collect additional information. The full survey will be published with the updated plan.

The banks of the lake contain a large number of tributaries that are normally dry, but carry a great deal of water and debris into the lake during storms. Stronger storms mean more phosphorous and other pollutants are going into the lake. For the first time, a major effort has been made to identify and label all of these tributaries so that management can begin. There are over 50 such tributaries that drain into Geneva Lake, so this assessment is not only important, but also very complicated.

Finally, the methodology to understand the impact and number of boats on the lake was updated. Previously, the number of boats in slips and on buoys were counted and then an estimate was made of the number of boaters on the lake at a particular time. For this survey, drones were deployed to capture the actual number of all boats on the lake, giving a more accurate picture of boat traffic.

The bulk of the data for the new Lake Management Plan has been collected. Data continues to be analyzed while the report is being written. The new Lake Management Plan is expected to be published Spring 2024. We thank the Geneva Lake Conservancy for significantly underwriting the cost and providing staff to work on the project, along with the subject matter experts at SEWRPC.



The President's Desk...



Welcome to the late-summer 2023 edition of the *Guardian*. With a mission to “educate and inform” our

members about issues of significance for Geneva Lake, here’s a look at what the GLA has been involved with lately:

Recap of the August 2023 Annual Meeting*

- The Environmental Education Foundation, our sister organization, recognized 14 local students with scholarship support to study environmental-related programs at the college level. We are inspired by their passion for Geneva Lake.
- The Water Safety Patrol reported on recent trends on the lake. See the related article from Brigid Cashman on page 3 about the Water Safety Patrol’s latest safety campaign.
- GLA Director and Secretary Bob Morava updated the group on the increasing use of boat cleaning machines available to local launches, to help prevent day-boaters from importing invasive species into or out of Geneva Lake.
- For the first time in many years, GLA was honored to have local elected leadership engage in a panel discussion about the most challenging issues facing their communities, e.g., managing storm water flow, pressures of increased development, concerns about the impacts of large agricultural operations, and man-power needs for first responders. A big thank you to Pat Kenny (President, Fontana); Charlene Klein (Mayor, Lake Geneva); Jim Weiss (Chairman, Linn) and GLA Director Bill Duncan (President, Williams Bay)!
- GLA Director Tom Nickols previewed the progress on the preparation of the next version of the Geneva Lake Management Plan, which has not been revised since 2008. With an expected

delivery in 2024, the GLMP will assess and prioritize a wide range of issues that affect the overall use, health and enjoyment of Geneva Lake.

- GLA Vice President Lynn Grayson provided keen insights into the concept of a Lake District, as a possible vehicle for improved coordination and management of the watershed. Authorized by state statute, Lake Districts are a common technique employed throughout Wisconsin when approved by local property owners. Is it time for Geneva Lake to consider a Lake District?

See the articles in this issue for more details on some of these topics. And thank you to all who attended the meeting; we were gratified to see such large attendance.

A Tribute to Retiring GLA Director Dianna Colman; A Welcome to George Atkinson

Jim Gee, former President of GLA and former Executive Director of Yerkes Observatory, provided a well-deserved tribute to Dianna Colman, who is retiring from the GLA Board after many years of selfless service and sharp

insight. Dianna’s contributions to the lake community cannot be overstated, especially her ongoing work to preserve Yerkes for generations to come. Thank you, Dianna!

GLA is also proud to add George Atkinson as a new Director to the Board. George is a long-time member of the Lake Geneva community and is eager to advance the GLA’s mission over the years to come. Welcome, George!

Thank You to Our Generous and Interested Membership

We recognize that there are many worthy local organizations, all trying to improve and preserve Geneva Lake and the community that surrounds it. Thank you for your steadfast and generous support of GLA’s efforts to contribute to that effort. And we are most grateful for your continued interest in our work. For more information, please visit our website at www.genevalakeassoc.org.

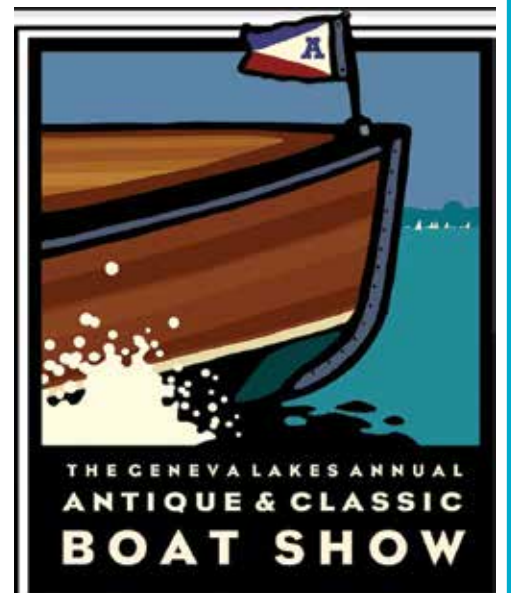
Mark Lillie
President, Geneva Lake Association

* *Complete Minutes of this and previous GLA annual meetings can be found at www.genevalakeassoc.org/annual-meeting-minutes.*

Geneva Lake Antique and Classic Boat Show Returns

The Geneva Lakes Antique and Classic Boat Show returns Saturday, September 23rd, and Sunday, September 24th at the Abbey Harbor in Fontana. The show runs from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Sunday.

Admission is free and there will be a wide variety of boats in the water and on land.



Water Safety Patrol's safety campaign "Clip Before You Dip!"

by Brigid Cashman
Water Safety Patrol and GLA Director

Geneva Lake is considered the busiest lake in Wisconsin. Thanks to the efforts of the Water Safety Patrol, however, the Lake's record of accidents and fatalities is relatively low compared to other inland lakes. Each member of the 90-person WSP Staff is certified in CPR, First Aid, and Lifeguard Training (and several have even higher credentials).

Unfortunately, there has been a slight increase in drownings both on Geneva Lake and in the state of Wisconsin over the past few years. To improve the safety of everyone using the Lake, WSP has a few important tips and reminders:

1. The boat chop and depth of Geneva Lake contribute to high and unexpected swells of waves, and these can take many seasoned swimmers by surprise. The WSP urges everyone using Geneva Lake to **"Clip Before You Dip"** and put on a USCG approved wearable PFD before getting into the Lake. Even the WSP's highly trained crews wear them when entering the water from a WSP boat. See WSP Safety Tips: <https://watersafetypatrol.org/safety-tips>.
2. Did you know that the state of Wisconsin recently passed a new law allowing boats to pull a skier/wakesurfer/tuber without an observer/spotter? Not so on Geneva Lake - **it IS a local ordinance to have an observer (of reasonable capacity) on board on Geneva Lake.** The observer keeps an alert eye and thus prevents a possible drowning on a busy lake like Geneva.
3. Did you know that Personal Flotation Devices (PFD, or

lifejacket) are not mandated for skiers/tubers/wakesurfers in the state of Wisconsin? Again, not so on Geneva Lake - **it IS a local ordinance: all those engaging in water sports who are towed by a boat MUST wear a United States Coast Guard wearable PFD on Geneva Lake.**

Remember: to ensure the safety of all the boat's passengers, everyone should "Clip Before You Dip." If you are interested in further information about *Clip Before You Dip*, please contact the Water Safety Patrol at 262-245-6577.

[The WSP has been serving Geneva Lake for 103 years!]



Lake Management Plan Survey identifies boat waves and boating behavior as growing concern

by Janet Happ
Assistant Executive Director
and
Savannah Thomas
Water Protection Specialist
Geneva Lake Conservancy

As part of the Geneva Lake Management Plan Update 2024, the Geneva Lake Conservancy worked with the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), the Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency to send a broad-ranging survey to 2,000 households in the lake's watershed.

Of the 280 respondents, enjoying the view was the favored activity associated with the lake, while 92 percent said that they walked the shore path. Swimming, pleasure cruising, and paddling were the most favored lake activities.

Seventy percent, however, said that they were concerned about excessive boat waves and other boaters not following ordinances or laws, while 67 percent said that they were worried about poor boating etiquette or behavior. Sixty-five percent said that they were concerned about noise from boaters.

Respondents also expressed growing concern about the impacts of greater property development, as well as the need to guard against pollutants running into the lake, algae blooms, and invasive species.

The next step in the process is to schedule focus group meetings with Geneva Lake stakeholders to obtain their input on solutions to the issues documented by the survey. If you are interested in being part of a focus group, please contact Savannah Thomas at wps@genevalakeconservancy.org.

More details about survey results will be incorporated into the Lake Management Plan when it is finalized in 2024.

Should Geneva Lake consider one?

FAQ'S about a "Lake District"

At the August 2023 Annual Meeting, GLA Director and Vice President Lynn Grayson led a very informative discussion on a topic that has become a bit more prevalent around Geneva Lake: there are literally hundreds of Lake Districts around the state, which are designed to coordinate lake management issues and address local concerns (e.g., water quality, erosion, boating practices, etc.). There are even several Lake Districts just in Walworth County, however, Geneva Lake is not one of them.

In order to help inform GLA members about the Lake District concept, Lynn responded to some "frequently asked questions" that help frame the issue:

What is a Lake District?

- A Lake District is a special purpose unit of government. The first Lake Districts in Wisconsin were established in 1974 with the passage of a state law providing legal authority for their creation. See Public Inland Waters, Ch. 33 of the WI Statutes, Sections 33.001-33.60.
- A Lake District's powers and authorities are set forth in state law, including the ability to tax property within the district to fund Lake District work to maintain, protect and improve the quality of the lake and its watershed.
- There are over 250 Lake Districts in Wisconsin today. (Lake Districts in Walworth County include Powers Lake, Lauderdale Lakes and Whitewater/Rice Lake areas, among others).

What is the purpose of a Lake District?

- The purpose of a Lake District is to maintain, protect and improve the quality of a lake and its watershed for the mutual good of the members and the lake environment.

How is a Lake District formed?

A Lake District may be established in Wisconsin as follows:

- By **51%** of the **landowners** in the proposed district petitioning the county or town board; ("landowners" may include people who are residents of another state or area, but own property in the proposed district)
- By owners of **51%** of the **land** in the proposed district petitioning the

- county or town board;
- Resolution of a village board, city council or municipal governing body; or
- Conversion of a town sanitary district.

see *Lake District*, page 6

Fourteen people who are key to the future of Geneva Lake

Keeping our lake, and the environment around that lake, healthy for the next generation is a complex problem. But the solution may be as simple as four words... committed, educated, engaged people.

At the Environmental Education Foundation (EEF) our hope is to be part of that solution by offering grants and scholarships to educate and inspire children from elementary school through doctoral studies. Fourteen people who are part of the solution to the current and future problems of the lake are the recent scholars supported by the foundation. They are studying components of the problem from agricultural runoff to environmental restoration.

These fourteen actually represent the scores of EEF scholars who have received support from the foundation for more than 40 years. This year our scholars range from a doctoral student, Sam Ahler, who is already contributing to research on native plants, to a new Gateway Technical College student, Paige Foley, who will be learning greenhouse operations. Hundreds of elementary students get their first experience with outdoor education through programs supported by EEF.

And how does this happen? The foundation is supported by our founding family, the Reynolds, and also by individuals and area businesses that recognize the benefit of investing in the children and young adults who are key to protecting our lake in the future. GLA is a proud, long-time supporter of EEF scholars.

While protecting our lake can seem

overwhelming, if you want to be someone who is key to solving the problem, here are four simple things you can do.

1. Tell a student about EEF Scholarships and send them to the website (eefscholars.org) to apply. The deadline is annually on March 1.
2. Tell a teacher (or local researcher who engages students) about the grants applications on the EEF website to fund projects to inspire students to pursue environmentally focused careers.
3. Be an advocate for outdoor education programs at your elementary school. Volunteer or just make sure that the teachers and administrators know how much you value this experiential learning. (And make sure they apply for EEF funding.)
4. Donate to EEF and join our lo-



Ten of the fourteen 2023 EEF scholars who were recognized at the GLA Annual Meeting.

cal businesses, individuals, and our founding family, who invest in outdoor education programs, scholarships, and grants.

Want to learn more? Go to our website at www.eefscholars.org and join us in our quest to ensure the future of our lake through the education of tomorrow's scientists and leaders.

GLEA addresses recent fish kill, updates on deployment of boat cleaning machines

by Jake Schmidt

Executive Director, GLEA

Fish Kill

Earlier this summer, the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency (GLEA) and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) noticed an increase in dead fish around Geneva Lake. Targeting no specific species or area of water, this phenomenon is referred to as a fish kill.

Fish kills are a naturally occurring cycle, especially common during the late spring and early summer months. Multiple factors can be attributed to these cycles, including spawning stress, recreational impacts due to boating and fishing, and environmental factors such as shorter ice coverage. When the water warms up too quickly, these rapid seasonal changes can cause aquatic life to go into shock. Unfortunately, some fish cannot adapt quick enough to rapid habitat changes, and a fish kill may occur.

The GLEA was receiving reports and seeing dead fish accumulate around the lake. Wind direction plays a significant factor, as it will push the dead fish in a specific direction, or they may collect in bays and protected inlets. GLEA has a contract with the US Geological Survey for water quality testing in addition to doing our own, which gave results well within the normal range for that time of year. There was no evidence supporting anything other than the fish die off being a natural cycle. While it is unfortunate and sad, sometimes the best thing to do is let the ecosystem stabilize on its own! As we progress into the later summer months, the fish kill has slowed down and made less of an impact on Geneva Lake.

GLA Waves

When you entrusted us with your email address we promised not to stuff your inbox with unnecessary messages. *GLA Waves* is the email medium for the Geneva Lake Association. We use it to inform you of important community issues or meetings, including our own annual meeting. We might also remind you when your membership comes due. If you haven't seen an issue of *GLA Waves* during the past year, we might not have your current email address. Next time you renew your membership, be sure to include your preferred email address.



CD3 Roadside Unit Ribbon Cutting Ceremony

From left to right: Mary Jo Fesenmaier, City of Lake Geneva Alderperson and former Geneva Lake Environmental Agency (GLEA) Vice Chairperson; Patrick Kenny, Village of Fontana President and GLEA Board Chairman; Bob Morava, Geneva Lake Association Secretary; Rob Umans, Village of Williams Bay Trustee and GLEA Board Member; Jake Schmidt, GLEA Executive Director; Carol McAdam, GLEA Board Member Town of Linn Citizen Representative; Steve Russell, City of Lake Geneva Harbormaster and Village of Williams Bay Trustee. Not pictured: Alyson Wisnionski; GLEA Lake Manager Intern.

GLA Grant Helps Assess Starry Stonewort - Thank You!

Thank you to the Geneva Lake Association for supporting the GLEA's efforts to monitor Starry Stonewort (SSW) populations by supporting our grant application to help fund an Aquatic Plant Point Intercept Survey of public access sites, as well as a Sub Point Intercept Survey of previously identified sites with SSW (conducted by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission). The GLEA will continue to monitor and assess SSW populations, as it now appears that SSW is continuing to spread eastward into deeper water and was found at new sites identified this year. GLEA intends to prepare an updated report on the SSW issue later this year.

CD3 Status and Local Chapter 30 Ordinance

GLEA is thrilled to announce that the Village of Fontana and City of Lake Geneva have passed and adopted a local ordinance to enforce the regulation of aquatic plants on watercraft and trailers, and the Village of Williams Bay currently is in the process of adopting the ordinance. These municipalities have also installed stationary CD3 Roadside Waterless Boat Cleaning Stations and participated in the Clean Boats Clean Waters Program, funded by the agency, DNR grants, and mentioned municipalities. Thank you to these municipalities for supporting and contributing to the further protection of Geneva Lake.

Am I a current member?

GLA members are encouraged to renew their memberships on an annual basis to receive the *Directory* and to be listed in the *Directory* as members. See the information on your mailing label to determine if your membership is current.

Record amounts awarded

GLA provides grants to local organizations for water quality

The mission of the Geneva Lake Association is “to enhance the conservation, preservation, environmental integrity and general welfare of Geneva Lake with timely and issue-centered communications and education through a wide membership base of area residents and local businesses.”

The GLA is fortunate that, through the support of its membership, it can lend financial support to local not-for-profit organizations whose projects further the goals of GLA’s mission.

This year the GLA is especially proud to have been able to provide grants to the following eight organizations for projects and activities that have a direct, positive impact on the water quality of Geneva Lake or environmental education:

- **The Environmental Education Foundation** – environmental scholarships.
- **Geneva Lake Water Safety Patrol** – environmental education as part of boating classes and an annual boat count.

- **Geneva Lake Environmental Agency** – continuing Aquatic Plant Point Intercept surveys for Geneva Lake, assessing the presence of invasive species.
- **Geneva Lake Level Corporation** – maintenance costs for the dam and spillway controlling the level of Geneva Lake.
- **Lake Geneva Ministries** – shore path reconstruction and erosion control.
- **Lake Geneva Fresh Air Association (Holiday Home)** – water reclamation projects and lake path improvements
- **Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy** – continuing restoration of the Harris Creek watershed.
- **Yerkes Future Foundation** – further development and delivery of public environmental education tours on the property and ongoing watershed protection projects.

Thank you to GLA Director Frank Voris for leading GLA’s grant award process.



GLA supports projects such as this at Conference Point, halting the erosion of the shoreline in addition to the process of removing invasive species and replacing them with indigenous plants to improve Geneva Lake’s ecology for the enjoyment of residents and guests.

Lake District...(Continued from page 4)

How do you identify the boundaries for a Lake District?

The parties seeking to form a Lake District must agree upon the geographical boundaries of the district. Lake Districts typically include consideration of the following:

- The total watershed and drainage basin areas
- Riparian parcels—all property touching the water
- Parcels that benefit from proximity to the lake
- Property with deeded lake access or shared access lots

How do lake districts operate and conduct day-to-day business?

- Under state law, Lake Districts have a blend of powers and governance provisions that are specific to a local community
- Lake District objectives and directives are guided by those that live in and own property in the district

- Day-to-day operations are carried out by a board of commissioners composed of elected volunteers and local officials
- Financial direction is determined by district residents and property owners, typically at an annual meeting

What else should we know about Lake Districts?

- A city, village or municipality must give its approval to be included in a district
- Lake Districts’ annual budgets are funded by tax levies or special assessments so all property owners share in the cost of management activities undertaken by the district
- Lake Districts may have the capability to regulate lake use, such as local boating ordinances
- Residents who live in the district and are eligible voters and property owners have a vote in the affairs of

the Lake District

- An annual meeting of a Lake District must be held each year between May 22 and September 8

There are certainly various pros and cons to creating a new unit of government that has the authority to coordinate lake management issues. To learn more about Lake Districts in Wisconsin, visit GLA’s website or the following resources:

Lake Districts - Extension Lakes | UWSP

(www3.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/UWEXLakes/Pages/organizations/districts)

Lauderdale Lakes Lake Management District

(www.lauderdalelakedistrict.com/)

If you would like to share your opinion about whether Geneva Lake should consider a Lake District, feel free to drop us an email at: GLAoffice@aol.com.

*A guide for local property owners for enhancing environmental stewardship**

Lakeshore Properties Resource Guide for Walworth County

The Lakeshore Properties Resource Guide is designed to provide lakeshore property owners, managers, residents, (and those that work on those properties) the resources they need to know about living on, managing, and working on these properties for the benefit of the lakeshore environment. Construction, landscaping, yard maintenance, lawn care and other practices are different for lakeshore properties. Practices that you might have done on a suburban or urban property can be detrimental to the lake environment, so lakeshore properties need to be managed and maintained to preserve the shoreline, water quality, and overall lake environment.

Website

This guide available on the Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management website:

<https://www.co.walworth.wi.us/365/Land-Use-Resource-Management>

For questions about this guide, please contact Julie Hill at julie.hill@wisc.edu

Contributors

- Rich Charts, Walworth County Lakes Association and Whitewater-Rice Lakes Management District;
- Josie Hanrahan, formerly Walworth County Land Use;
- Jill Hapner, Southeastern Wisconsin Invasive Species Consortium (SEWISC),
- Julie Hill, UW-Madison - Division of Extension;
- Rory Klick, Kettle Moraine Land Trust;
- Suzanne Markus, Lauderdale Lake Improvement Association,
- Heather Marquardt, Senior Urban Conservation Technician, Walworth County Land Use;
- Maddie Olivieri, Geneva Lakes Conservancy;
- Elisabeth Partyka, Lauderdale Lake Improvement Association;
- Patrick Siwula, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR);
- Theresa Stegemann, Whitewater-Rice Lakes Management District;
- Bill Thummel, Delavan Lake Improvement Association;
- Kiera Theys, Geneva Lakes Conservancy

How to Use this Guide:

This guide is a collection of links to credible and trustworthy resources, that are free from bias and backed by research and evidence. They are organized by the categories listed in the Table of Contents. You will find additional useful information on the websites linked in this guide.

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- General Information
- Landscaping Practices Lawn Care
 - Shoreline Gardens
 - Healthy Lakes and Rivers - <https://healthylakeswi.com>
 - Healthy Lakes and Rivers Fact Sheets
- Invasive species (both aquatic and terrestrial)
- Property Development
 - Permitting
 - Construction Erosion Control Guides
 - Piers, docks, boathouses and buoys
- Questions to Ask When Hiring a Professional
- Educational Resources
- Grants and Funding Opportunities

** Reprinted in entirety from the Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management Department website*

Geneva Lake Guardian



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GLA Membership Application/Renewal Form

All persons interested in enhancing the conservation, preservation, environmental integrity and general welfare of Geneva Lake and its surrounding area are welcome as members. The tax deductible contribution levels are as follows:

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY:

- \$ _____ **Regular Membership**
Annual Contribution \$50
- \$ _____ **Sustaining Membership**
Annual Contribution \$75
- \$ _____ **Contributing Membership**
Annual Contribution \$100
- \$ _____ **Donor Membership**
Annual Contribution \$150
- \$ _____ **Benefactor Membership Options**
 - \$ _____ Annual Contribution \$250 or more
 - \$ _____ Annual Contribution \$1,000 or more
 - \$ _____ Annual Contribution \$2,500 or more
- \$ _____ **Commercial Membership**
Annual Contribution \$100 or more

All Contributions are Tax Deductible

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(as you want to be listed in the Directory)

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Geneva Area Address _____

(if not the same) _____

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Pier Number _____ (if none, use LG, F, WB, WAL, etc.)

Subdivision or Association (If any) _____

Estate Name (ex. "Heavenly Acres") _____

Send Membership Form and check to:

Geneva Lake Association, Inc. (GLA)

PO Box 412

Lake Geneva, WI 53147

**Online membership application/payment is also
found on the GLA website: www.genevalakeassoc.org**

How do I know if my membership is current?

Just check your mailing address on this publication. The status of your membership in the GLA is noted in the line above your name.