

Annual Picnic Review

The Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake thanks everyone who attended our Annual Picnic on August 13th. A total of 88 people joined us for good food and to hear presentations by DNR officials and Corps of Engineers staff. Many of you also made generous donations to the Association which totaled over \$1,500. We will utilize these funds to continue the important work of improving the water quality of Clear Lake. Thanks for making the 2004 picnic a success!

Investigating High Bacteria Levels At Clear Lake State Park Beach

The summer of 2004 has left some unanswered questions about bacteria levels at Clear Lake State Park beaches. There are two State Park beaches at Clear Lake which are monitored weekly: Clear Lake and McIntosh Woods. The McIntosh Woods Beach has not exceeded the EPA criteria of 235 cfu/100ml of E.coli at any time in the past three years. However, Clear Lake State Park Beach exceeded EPA limits 6 times in 2002, 3 times in 2003, and 9 times in 2004. Although high bacteria readings are typically tied to rain events, there have been occasions during 2004 when levels were high even when precipitation was not a factor. While there are still many questions we can not yet answer, there are a few things we can conclude as a result of investigating the drainage area of the Clear Lake State Park beach more closely:

1. The only surface water outflow near State Park Swim Beach is a small stream running through the State Park. E.coli levels exceeded the EPA criteria four out of five times the stream outlet was tested.
2. The high bacteria readings are a very localized issue. This is evidenced by low E.coli levels at McIntosh Woods beach and no detectable levels in open water portions of the lake.
3. An abnormally wet spring and early summer raised bacteria levels throughout the state, indicating high levels are typically tied to rain events.
4. Geese pollution on the swim beach was not responsible due to very low geese use of the

beach in 2004.

The evidence listed above has led us to believe that the stream running through State Park which outlets near the swim beach is one likely source of bacterial contamination. Other potential sources include pet and wildlife waste from residential areas. All sewer lines in the area have been inspected and the City will be conducting some maintenance on the lines this fall to correct any potential bacteria sources. All septic systems in the area have been abandoned and so likely are not contributing bacteria. The Iowa DNR Environmental Protection Division does not feel livestock in a pasture near State Park is significantly contributing bacteria.

Technology has not yet advanced enough to easily pinpoint which species the bacteria contamination is originating from. Therefore it is not possible to speculate the exact source. A caffeine analysis will be done this fall which may help determine if the bacteria is human or animal derived. What we do know is that something needs to be done to control bacteria levels at the storm water outlet near the swim beach. This outlet will be looked at more closely by the City of Clear Lake and engineers to determine possible solutions. Controlling bacteria levels at this point will not ensure bacteria levels will never be high at the beach again, but it likely will reduce the number of times high readings occur.



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Help Make Water Quality A Legislative Priority in 2005

Many lake area residents and visitors have developed a growing concern about water quality and water safety. The Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake wants to take a proactive position in improving Iowa's water quality and safety. It is time to invite the Iowa Legislature to also become proactive in protecting our interest, safety, and investment in Iowa lakes. We need your support to make Clear Lake and other Iowa lakes a place we, our children, and our grandchildren, can enjoy. The following are issues that likely will be brought before our legislators in 2005.

Lake Restoration Funding: Water quality is one of the lowest funded programs in the state of Iowa but it is one of the top environmental concern for Iowans. Environmental programs are usually the first to be cut when the legislature has a hard budgeting year. It is up to us to protect the water quality of Iowa lakes. During the past two years the Iowa Legislature has held the Lake Restoration Fund static at \$1 million annually. With a number of lakes in Iowa needing multi-million dollar restoration projects, this fund must be increased for our state to see improved water quality. Improved water quality would attract more visitors to our state lakes and entice businesses and families to take up residence in Iowa, resulting in an improved economy.

Boat Registration Fees: A modest increase in boat registration fees was proposed in the 2004 legislative session, but it did not pass. However, we expect the legislation will be reintroduced in the 2005 session. Under the proposed legislation the annual boat registration fee for an 18 to 25-foot boat would have gone from \$9 to \$12.50. The proposed legislation would require that the fee increases be spent on increased water quality and safety along with fighting invasive species. With your support of the boat registration fee increase, we will gain a valuable funding source for water safety and water quality improvements.

Invasive Species: All lake users should be concerned about the rapid spread of invasive species such as Eurasian Water Milfoil and Zebra Mussels. These species have already been found in the waters of states bordering Iowa and even in a few of our own lakes. Once a lake is infested with these fast spreading plants and animals, it is almost impossible to eradicate them. Increased funding for public education and regulation of these species is needed.

Water Safety: The IDNR Lake Patrol officers can only enforce the existing boating laws. There are several changes needed to Iowa's boating regulations. Examples would be tighter regulations on boat speed and the need for boat safety training courses for boat operators under 17 years of age.

Your Stake: The chances are good that if you are reading this letter you benefit from an Iowa lake. Whether you are a visitor to an Iowa lake, an employee or business owner in a lake community, or fortunate enough to be a lakeshore property owner, everyone has a vested interest in improving our lakes. By being proactive with water quality and water safety we can have a positive impact on improving Iowa's lakes and economy.

I-Call To Action:

I-CALL is a communications tool for volunteers concerned about Iowa's environment. The goal of I-CALL is to inform Iowa's conservation advocates of important issues and facilitate timely communications with elected officials. It is operated by the Iowa Environmental Council and automatically distributes customized, issue specific, information to volunteers via emails, phone calls, or faxes. But more importantly, volunteers commit to taking action on it. You can sign up for I-CALL at: <http://www.iowacall.org>. Additionally, we encourage you to send your email address to the CLEAR Project (david.knoll@nacdn.net) for updates on pending legislation during the 2005 session.

LAKE RESTORATION ACTIVITIES OF NOTE:

INHF Purchases PappaJohn Property:

INHF and local residents partnered to purchase the 22 acres of land consisting of over 600 feet of shoreline in the Ventura Heights area. The purchase ensures the property will be maintained in a conservation friendly manner.

Hanson Foundation Pledges and Additional \$100,000:

The Hanson Foundation has generously pledged an additional \$100,000 for storm water filtration installation in 2005. The Hanson Foundation has donated a total of \$223,000 over the past two years for lake restoration efforts.

Storm Water Filtration System Installation to Begin:

The City of Clear Lake will be installing two storm water filtration systems this fall at City Beach. Cerro Gordo County will also be installing two systems at locations not yet determined. The Hanson Foundation previously donated funds to assist with the cost.

Vandalism in Ventura Heights:

Four mature trees each about 40 feet tall were killed by an unknown vandal in the state owned park land at Ventura Heights. There is a \$500 reward for information leading to the arrest of the vandal. Contamination of soil and groundwater may also have occurred from the chemical applied to kill the trees. Please contact the Cerro Gordo County Sheriff if you have any information regarding this crime.