



Lake Association News

A newsletter for the Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake

SPRING 2009

LOCAL GRANT FUNDS RIPRAP PROJECT

A grant from Winnebago Industries assisted with funding a shoreline improvement project at Camp Tanglefoot on Clear Lake. The project consisted of reshaping about 120 feet of shoreline and then adding native field-stone to armor the bank. Shoreline erosion from an area even as small as this can add literally tons of sediment to Clear Lake each year. The placement of the riprap not only stops the erosion, but can provide aquatic habitat as well. Winnebago Industries has donated a total of \$50,000 for lake restoration improvements over the past 5 years. Most of those funds have been expended on shoreline improvement projects.



Large boulders ready to be placed on Tanglefoot shoreline



A portion of the completed Tanglefoot shoreline project

Wetlands Provide More Than Water Quality Benefits

Although wetlands are well known for their ability to trap nutrients and sediment from the runoff they receive, we are reminded nearly every spring of another important function they provide: flood control. The picture below was taken about two weeks after the large rain events the Clear Lake area received in June, 2008. The numerous wet areas seen are indicative of the landscape north central Iowa once had. These former wetlands acted as giant sponges for retaining rain water. However, for the past 150 years we have altered the landscape to focus on quickly moving rain-water off the land and into rivers and lakes rather than letting it absorb into the ground. While this has provided us with locations to build homes and some of the richest farmland in the world, it has also made us more susceptible to flooding.

To date, landowners in the Clear Lake watershed have

restored over 600 acres to the native ecosystem of prairie and wetland areas. This constitutes more than 10% of the original row cropped land when the CLEAR Project began. While landowners often point to wildlife habitat and water quality improvements as benefits of installing wetlands, they may not realize they have also helped to lessen the severity of flooding.

Prairie and wetland restoration continues today in the Clear Lake watershed. Two new restorations totaling about 130 acres are in the process of being completed this spring just west of Ventura. There are several different programs the USDA offers for prairie and wetland restoration. With grain prices declining and CRP payments on the rise, restoring

those wet areas may be the economical choice for the landowner. All programs utilize easements, which means the landowner retains possession and control over the property, but they agree to keep the property in a wetland/prairie land use for a period of time. The length of the easements can be from 10, 15, 30 years or permanent, depending on the program the property is eligible for. Please contact the CLEAR Project at 641-923-2837 Ext. 3 if you would like more information on these programs.



Rain Gardens - The Urban Wetland

Most people living in a residential area assume that the vast majority of rainwater that lands on their lots soaks into the ground. Unfortunately, in many cases, this is not true. Urban lots contain many impervious areas such as roofs, driveways, and sidewalks. Even lawns are often compacted, which severely limits their ability to infiltrate rainwater. The result is rainwater runs off the lot and enters the nearest storm drain leading to a river or lake. This runoff contains contaminants that degrades water quality. One solution to this problem is to install a rain garden. A rain garden is a planted depression that allows runoff from impervious areas to be absorbed. Rain gardens also add beauty and wildlife habitat to your landscape while helping manage storm water more sustainably. The popularity of rain gardens is growing rapidly as over 700 have been installed in Iowa over the past couple years. Native plants are recommended for rain gardens because they don't require fertilizer and are more tolerant to Iowa's climate. Homeowners can install a rain garden themselves, or many landscaping companies also have experience installing rain gardens. The Iowa Rain Garden Manual provides detailed information on how to install a rain garden, the manual can be downloaded from the CLEAR Project web site: www.clearproject.net



**APCL ANNUAL
PICNIC:
AUGUST 14TH**



Mark August 14th on your calendars for the 2009 Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake Annual Picnic.

The picnic will take place at the Clear Lake State Park Lodge. Officials from the DNR, Corps of Engineers, ISU and CLEAR Project will update the public on lake restoration accomplishments. Topics will include lake dredging, Ventura Marsh restoration, watershed improvements, and carp and zebra mussel research.

Please also remember to renew your membership to the lake association. Your membership dollars have been used in the past to fund projects such as lake dredging, storm water improvements, and information and education activities.

We hope you will join us on August 14th for the Annual Picnic.

LAKE NEWS

Gulf of Mexico Hypoxia Zone: How Does it Relate to Clear Lake?

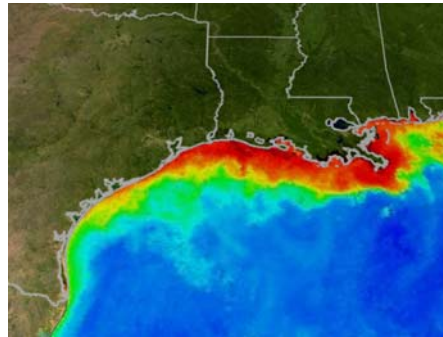
Most people who keep track of water quality related issues have probably heard the term “Dead Zone” or “Hypoxia Zone” before. The Gulf Hypoxia Zone is located in the northern Gulf of Mexico primarily along the shores of Louisiana and Texas. Hypoxia means “low oxygen,” and it is called the Dead Zone because oxygen levels are so low that aquatic life can not survive in the area.

So what causes the Hypoxia Zone and how does this relate to Clear Lake? Well, the same pollutants that create water quality issues at Clear Lake are causing the Dead Zone in the Gulf. When the nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, reach the Gulf, algae utilizes them and large blooms occur. The algae eventually die and begin decomposing. The decomposition process of the algae uses up oxygen. The amount of algae being produced and then decomposing is so great that nearly all the oxygen in the water is used up. Without oxygen, fish, shrimp, crabs, and other aquatic life can not survive and either die or move to other areas. This has a major impact on the commercial fishing

industry and many other businesses in the Gulf area. It also creates unsightly algae blooms which further degrades water quality.

Water monitoring data shows that Iowa is a leading contributor to the Hypoxia Zone because the same excessive nutrients and sediments that are in our water-

news regarding the Gulf Hypoxia issue. Some anthropogenic activities have actually helped reduce sediment loading to the Gulf. The series of locks and dams along the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers have acted like reservoirs and keep about 50% of the sediment in the river from reaching the Gulf.



Extent of Gulf Coast hypoxia zone in 2008

ways eventually leave the state and make their way to the Gulf via the Mississippi River. The Gulf Hypoxia Zone is the second largest human caused zone of hypoxia in the world. In 2008, the record flooding in the Midwest caused more nutrients to reach the Gulf and the Hypoxia Zone expanded to roughly 8,000 square miles. This was the second largest the zone has been since records began being kept in 1985.

There is some encouraging

The Gulf Hypoxia Zone is a good reminder that the actions we take on our own property do matter. Taking actions such as using a zero phosphorus fertilizer, not mowing grass clippings onto streets or sidewalks, and picking up after pets benefits not only Clear Lake, but also those downstream of us. The work being done at Clear Lake and other water quality improvement projects around the state can have a positive impact on not only our local water bodies, but also those thousands of miles away.



Mississippi River plume enters Gulf

The Association for the Preservation of Clear Lake
PO Box 54
Clear Lake, IA 50428

Name Surname
Add1
Add2
Add3
City, State Zip Code