

WINTER 2024

LAKE-GRAM



WISCONSIN'S FROZEN PARKS

ENJOYING AND PROTECTING OUR LAKES YEAR-ROUND

Don't get me wrong, I love spending time in our lakes or at a lakeside restaurant throughout the summer. But winter lake season may actually be my favorite. It's a less obvious time to enjoy our lakes and lakeside parks, but it isn't any less fun.

We're less than a month away from Frozen Assets, a 10-day event, presented by Associated Bank and The Edgewater, that celebrates everything our lakes have to offer in the winter. We've said many times that when the lakes freeze, they become our largest parks, and Frozen Assets takes full advantage of that gained "land" in the winter. Whether it's playing in or watching our first-ever pond hockey tournament, running or walking in the only 5K in North America held entirely on a frozen lake, watching sky divers and large show kites in the sky, learning about winter lake science, or just walking out on the ice, this community-wide event has something to connect everyone with our frozen lakes.

However, using the lakes in the winter is only half the story. We also need to protect the lakes by changing our winter

habits due to a changing winter climate. With our recent string of mild winters, we're experiencing more winter rainstorms than in the past causing runoff to find its way to our lakes even when they're frozen. Reducing salt use, which is toxic to aquatic life, is one important action. But thinking about runoff from your property the same way you do in the summer is the best way help the lakes in the winter. The more runoff that gathers phosphorus from bare soil, the greater chance we have of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms in the summer.

I hope you'll join me at Frozen Assets and join me in protecting our waters year-round. As a community, we are moving the needle. The lakes are becoming more top-of-mind for everyone, which means their health is becoming a top priority. Stay warm and enjoy our beautiful lakes throughout the year!



James Tye
Clean Lakes Alliance
Founder & Executive Director



Volunteers collect native seeds during a Clean Lakes Alliance Volunteer Day at Holy Wisdom Monastery, September 2023

SEED COLLECTION FOR HEALTHY LAKES

Native seed collection is a strong focus of Clean Lakes Alliance's Volunteer Day program every fall. What does this volunteer-favorite activity have to do with helping our lakes?

Native plants are incredibly well adapted to protect our shorelines and watershed soils from erosion, filter harmful runoff, and slowly infiltrate water back into the ground to recharge local aquifers. These plants help prevent flooding in our neighborhoods, beautify our communities, and are a vital food source for our pollinators. The more prairies and native plants we can have throughout our watershed, the healthier our lakes and waterways will be year-round.

Water that washes over the landscape eventually makes its way to our lakes, carrying everything with it: fertilizers, manure, salt, pet waste, litter, and more. Native plants act as deep-rooted living sponges, helping to intercept and treat contaminated runoff before it ends up in our lakes.

Since 2014, Clean Lakes Alliance has partnered with Dane County Parks to assist in collecting native seeds used to restore or create new native plantings and prairie spaces throughout Dane County, including along the shores of our lakes. In 2022, with the help of volunteers from Clean Lakes Alliance and beyond, Dane County Parks collected approximately 3,700 pounds of native seed valued at

an estimated 1.2 million dollars! Over 230 species were collected in total, many of which are being used to establish a 160-acre platinum prairie at the north end of Pheasant Branch Conservancy. The prairie replaces a former dairy farm on land acquired by Dane County in 2019. See page 3 to learn how Clean Lakes Alliance has supported this initiative with our Seed the Need campaign!

Volunteer from Hovde Properties collects native seeds at a Clean Lakes Alliance Volunteer Day at Holy Wisdom Monastery, 2022



GROWING YOUR DONATIONS

Clean Lakes Alliance starts each year by reaching out to past supporters, while also trying to grow the number of people in our community who put the lakes at the top of their agenda. Donors make a difference, and their dollars stay local to support projects, practices, and advocacy. Like most nonprofits, the more money we raise, the more we can commit toward improving water quality and growing stewardship.

PLANTING THE SEED

Four years ago, Dane County purchased a 160-acre farm adjacent to the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. Immediately, Clean Lakes Alliance received a \$100,000 grant from the Alliant Energy Foundation to help restore the land to prairie and wetland. Clean Lakes Alliance then committed an additional \$100,000 over four years to turn the land into a “Platinum Prairie” – which will include more than 200 types of plants.

GROWING SUCCESS

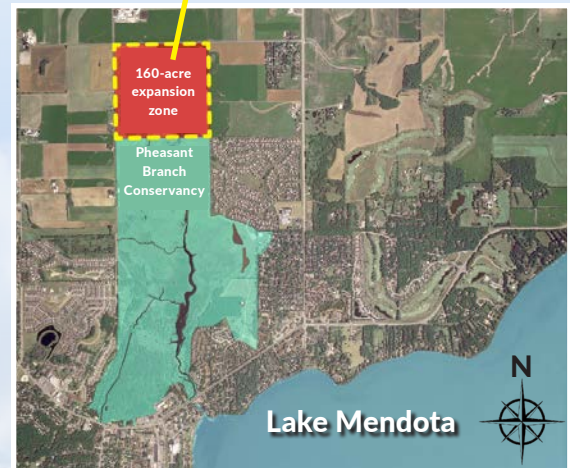
In its fourth and final year, the Seed the Need campaign will plant the final 40-acre quadrant this spring. Projects like this would not be possible without donor support from people like you! But we’re not stopping with this one success. We’re hoping you will renew your donation or join us with a new donation so we can commit to more projects like this, or new programs and practices that will continue to make lakes healthy.

FUTURE FOCUS

Clean Lakes Alliance envisions a community renowned for its healthy lakes, lands, and waters. We will achieve this vision when we can say yes to more projects, while also funding programs that change the way we think about our relationship with the lakes. The needle is moving in the right direction. The lakes are improving. With your help and support, we will achieve healthy waters and a thriving community.



Map of Pheasant Branch Conservancy expansion zone showing seed planting years for each 40-acre quadrant



Map of Pheasant Branch Conservancy showing the 160-acre expansion zone on the north end of the land

**DONATE TO
SEED THE NEED:**
cleanlakesalliance.org/seed-the-need

Platinum
Transparency
2023

Candid.

Volunteers from Lands' End collect native seeds during a Clean Lakes Alliance Volunteer Day at Pheasant Branch Conservancy in 2023

JOIN US FOR 10 DAYS

Frozen Assets is a FUNraiser, FRIENDraiser, and FUNdraiser which highlights the year-round value of our lakes, while raising money to protect our waters through lake improvement projects, educational programming, and our volunteer water quality monitoring program.

FROZEN ASSETS PRESENTED BY:  **Associated Bank** THE **EDGEWATER**



FROZEN ASSETS FUNDRAISER

Saturday, January 27th, 8 p.m. - Midnight
The Edgewater

Frozen Assets - Madison's most fashionable fundraiser, is back at The Edgewater for the first time in four years! Step on the gondola at The Edgewater and transform yourself to a Madison you've never seen. You're high in the mountains at the exclusive Mendota Moonlight Club with breathtaking views of the most studied lake in the world below. Get ready for an unforgettable night of music, drinks, dancing, and vibrant décor while raising important funds for our local lakes. Tickets: cleanlakesalliance.org/frozen-assets-tickets

KITES ON MENDOTA

Friday, February 2nd at dusk (Night Fly)
Saturday, February 3rd, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Sunday, February 4th, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
On frozen Lake Mendota at The Edgewater

Join Clean Lakes Alliance for Kites on Mendota with the Wisconsin Kiter's Club! Experience walking out on a frozen lake and enjoy the views of large show kites flying above the ice! Back due to popular demand, watch the 2nd annual night fly as large show kites will dot the sky over Lake Mendota at night! These LED-lit kites will fly high in the air for a unique nighttime display.

More: cleanlakesalliance.org/frozen-assets



FROZEN EDGES CHALLENGE

Saturday, January 27th -
Sunday, January 28th
On frozen Lake Mendota
at The Edgewater

Join The Edgewater as they present the Frozen Edges Challenge, part of Frozen Assets. This regional pond hockey tournament includes rinks built right on frozen Lake Mendota! Each team of 4-8 players will play at least 3 games. Spectators can watch, play, eat, and drink at The Boathouse at The Edgewater and the Labatt beer garden. Sign up to play: runsignup.com/frozenedgeschallenge

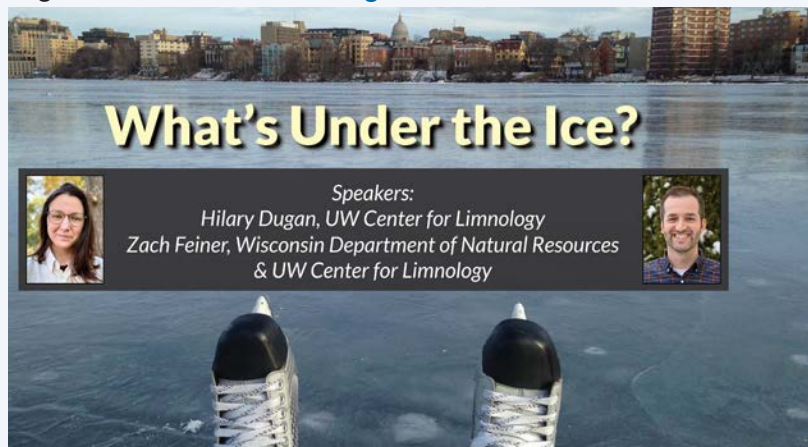


CLEAN LAKES 101 - WHAT'S UNDER THE ICE?

Monday, January 29th
Presentation 4 - 5 p.m. in The Edgewater's Grand Ballroom
Happy hour & networking 5 - 6 p.m. at The Boathouse

Most lakes in Wisconsin are frozen for 3-5 months per year. Have you ever wondered what happens in lakes in the winter? Scientists from UW-Madison's Center for Limnology will discuss how lakes function after they freeze over. Learn about the unique physics, chemistry, and biology of our lakes during this fascinating time of the year, and what a warming climate means for the future of Wisconsin's lakes.

Register: cleanlakesalliance.org/clean-lakes-101



OF FROZEN ASSETS!

FROZEN ASSETS FESTIVAL

Saturday, February 3rd, 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
The Edgewater and Lake Mendota

Join Clean Lakes Alliance for the Frozen Assets Festival, presented by Associated Bank and The Edgewater! The family-friendly festival on frozen Lake Mendota and The Edgewater helps connect the community with the lake through free winter activities.

Festival attendees can see skydiving, figure skating, dance, science demonstrations, and large show kites. Festival goers can also try pond hockey, snowshoeing, curling, and speed skating. Meet Bucky Badger, enjoy free hot chocolate, and more!

More: cleanlakesalliance.org/frozen-assets



FROZEN ASSETS 5K RUN/WALK

Saturday, February 3rd at 10 a.m.
On frozen Lake Mendota, starting off The Edgewater Pier

Register today for the Frozen Assets 5K and run or walk ENTIRELY on frozen Lake Mendota! Enjoy beautiful views of downtown Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Campus along the route. The course will start and end at The Edgewater, right in the heart of the Frozen Assets Festival. This event is one of the only races worldwide to be held entirely on a frozen lake - it truly is a bucket-list experience!

Register: runsignup.com/2024frozen5k



Frozen Assets runs from Friday, January 26th - Sunday, February 4th. Learn how to rent a rink for skating, bowling, or curling on Lake Mendota, and see information about additional activities: cleanlakesalliance.org/frozen-assets

REDUCING SALT USE TO HELP OUR LAKES

Across Wisconsin and much of the United States, waterways are becoming increasingly salty due to road salt, water softeners, dust suppressants, and fertilizers. Salting our freshwater threatens our fisheries, tourism, economy, quality of life, drinking water, and the health of our aquatic ecosystems.

Once salt is in the environment it doesn't go away. It ends up in our lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands. Chloride from salt degrades freshwater ecosystems. It only takes one teaspoon of salt to pollute five gallons of water to a level that is toxic to native aquatic organisms. Naturally occurring concentrations of chloride are less than 1 mg/L throughout most of Wisconsin, but our surface water, groundwater, and soil have been absorbing virtually all the salt spread in the state for more than six decades.

Once salt gets into water it is very difficult to remove. Treatment, like reverse osmosis or ion exchange, is costly to install and even more expensive to operate. It could cost

millions or even billions of dollars, so preventing salt from entering our water resources in the first place is the most cost-effective solution.

Pictured is an example of salt overuse



DID YOU KNOW?

One coffee cup filled with salt is enough to treat one suburban driveway in the winter.

To learn more, visit Wisconsin Salt Wise:
wisaltwise.com

\$1.4 MILLION IN CLEAN LAKES GRANTS

Clean Lakes Alliance is proud to have awarded more than \$1.4 million in Clean Lakes Grants, building partner capacity and kickstarting promising new initiatives. This milestone equates to roughly \$108,000 in annual investments (on average), sparking on-the-ground project action to benefit our local lakes.

Representing most of the land base draining to our local lakes, agriculture has received the highest percentage of overall grant support, helping producers adopt best practices that provide water quality protection and other benefits.

There is little that can't be accomplished when working together toward common goals. We thank our many urban and rural partners who are making a positive difference in the watershed, including our

2023 CLEAN LAKES GRANT AWARDEES:

Organized by Clean Lakes Alliance, volunteers collect seeds from one of Pheasant Branch Conservancy's established prairies



DANE COUNTY LAND & WATER RESOURCES (\$25,000)

A phased, multi-year planting of a "platinum" prairie on 160 acres of Pheasant Branch Conservancy

The restoration of this former dairy operation—a recent addition to the Conservancy—aims to absorb and filter farm runoff before it enters Pheasant Branch Creek on the west side of Lake Mendota. Through the propagation of well over 100 different native plant species per acre, the restored tall-grass prairie will also provide abundant wildlife habitat and serve as a seed nursery for other Dane County projects. Over the last three years, \$75,000 in Clean Lakes Grants has been provided to fund this important work.

A bird's-eye view of the San Damiano property on Lake Monona's east shore, courtesy Robert Bertera



LAKE WAUBESA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION (\$5,000)

Development of Lake Waubesa's first-ever, comprehensive lake management plan

The project involves evaluating ecological conditions and threats, establishing management goals, and identifying needed actions for the lake's overall improvement. Clean Lakes Alliance is participating on the advisory committee and continues to raise funds with the goal of providing a second \$5,000 grant in 2024.



Shoreline monitoring on Lake Waubesa in July 2023, courtesy Carolyn Betz

FRIENDS OF SAN DAMIANO (\$5,000)

Facilitation of a community-engagement and master-planning process to chart the future of Lake Monona's newest public lakefront park

Project work included the development and public vetting of multiple design concepts. Now owned by the City of Monona, this nearly 10-acre former friary includes roughly 1,500 feet of minimally developed lake frontage. Future design features will benefit water quality, habitat, and sustainable public use and enjoyment of the property. The Friends were also awarded a \$5,000 Clean Lakes Grant in 2022 to advance this effort.

Low-disturbance manure injector demonstration at a Yahara Pride Farms event



YAHARA PRIDE FARMS (\$4,575)

"Conserve-an-Acre" capacity building to promote the adoption of conservation farming practices within the watershed

Clean Lakes Alliance co-founded and annually fundraises to support this farmer-led nonprofit organization. Grant funds are used to help promote and cost share a variety of agricultural practices that benefit water quality, including cover crops, reduced tillage, and manure composting. To date, Clean Lakes Alliance has raised \$476,000 in supporting grants to Yahara Pride Farms.

UW-MADISON STUDENT DOCENTS (\$675)

Native American effigy mound education at Hudson Park

As part of Clean Lakes Alliance's Loop the Lake Bike Ride around Lake Monona, Indigenous students knowledgeable in local history were recruited to educate participants on these cultural marvels.



Student docent educates Loop the Lake participants about Native American effigy mounds

PHEASANTS FOREVER (\$1,000)

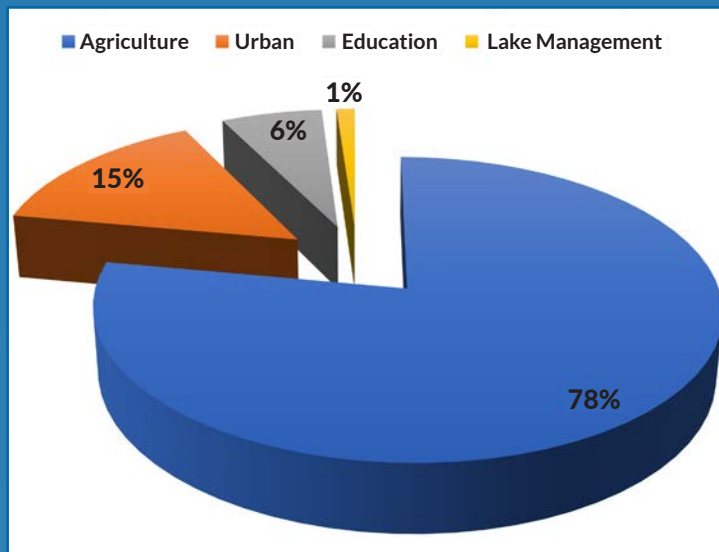
Promotion of precision-agriculture techniques in the Yahara Watershed

A Precision Ag Conservation Specialist employed by Pheasants Forever works with watershed farmers to convert unprofitable cropland acres into conservation lands. Over the last few years, a total of \$5,000 in Clean Lakes Grants has helped support the work of this position.

Photo courtesy Pheasants Forever



OVER \$1.4 MILLION IN CLEAN LAKES GRANTS (2011-2023)



UW-MADISON ENGINEERING CAPSTONE (\$2,000)

A student project investigating the feasibility of increasing manure-treatment capacity in the watershed

Engineering capstone students were sponsored to assess the feasibility of developing more commercial-scale digesters in the watershed. Work included identifying an optimal site location, as well as design, construction, and manure-handling considerations to achieve desired capacity goals. It is hoped that project outcomes can be used by Dane County as it explores the development of a third treatment facility.

UW-Madison Engineering Capstone students join Clean Lakes Alliance's Watershed Engagement Manager, Caitlin McAleavey (far right), for a tour of the Waunakee-area digester



STORMWATER WEEK CONTEST WINNERS (\$604)

Prizes awarded to the winners of a city-wide, storm drain mural selfie contest to raise awareness about urban stormwater.



Clean Lakes Alliance
150 E. Gilman St, Suite 2600
Madison, WI 53703
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CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE LAKE-O-GRAM

FROZEN ASSETS PRESENTING SPONSORS



FROZEN ASSETS MAJOR SPONSORS



Photo: Ice skating on The Edgewater's Grand Plaza at Frozen Assets, 2023