

SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

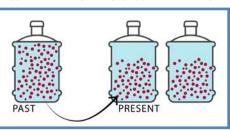
ADDRESSING THE HEADWINDS FACING OUR LAKES

For the last 11 years, Clean Lakes Alliance pushed for lake improvement projects, helped educate the community on how everyone can help the lakes in their everyday lives, and created a network of volunteer monitors who report conditions around all five Yahara lakes. It is the importance of work like this that leads to action on the landscape that makes a difference.

A recent analysis performed by Dane County Land and Water Resources Department using stream data collected by the United States Geological Survey (USGS) showed a 30-year decrease in the concentration of sediment and phosphorus flowing into our lakes. As you've probably heard us say, phosphorus is the fuel for toxic cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms that close our beaches and make our lakes unsafe to use.

New Challenges

Even though conservation practices are working, things are a little more different than they were 30 years ago. Our climate has changed, and so has the intensity of our rainstorms. The picture below shows that while conservation practices are



working to reduce p h o s p h o r u s concentrations, the increased volume of water is delivering more phosphorus to the lakes.

New Plan

For the past two years, we've been leading the Yahara CLEAN Compact (pg. 2) – a coalition of 19 organizations helping our community update the roadmap for cleaner lakes. Many of you participated in the Greater Madison Lakes Survey, which is helping the Compact Steering Team understand lake use, behaviors, and action priorities. As Clean Lakes Alliance moves forward with the Compact, we'll be focusing our own efforts around lands, lakes, and parks.

LANDS: Where the work starts – we will continue to support actions that reduce runoff and pollution from the land that reaches our lakes.

LAKES: We will support MORE research, education, and action around our lakes' ecosystem with invasive species, and other threats and solutions to water quality.

PARKS: We will advocate to revitalize our parks to achieve a higher standard of accessibility and sustainability.

Read more/ Inside this Lake-O-Gram you'll learn how you can help the lakes this fall by raking leaves out of the street gutter, and we have updates on watershed projects and plans. We're excited to keep working with you toward a future with clean and healthy lakes!



COMMUNITY INPUT HELPS SHAPE THE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR LAKES

A summer of gathering public input wrapped up in September with the closing of the Greater Madison Lakes Survey. Initiated by the Yahara CLEAN Compact's 19 member organizations, and with additional funding support provided by Clean Lakes Alliance, the survey was part of a multi-phased engagement process. Respondents shared their opinions on issues ranging from lake use and water quality to the types of actions believed to be most essential to furthering our progress toward cleaner lakes. It is part of the Compact coalition's commitment to foster a planning process guided not only by the latest scientific understandings about our lands and waters, but also by the varied perspectives and interests of a diverse watershed community.



Red indicates negative trends and green indicates positive trends

The survey, combined with feedback from stakeholder focus groups and random intercept interviews, is currently helping to inform the creation of an updated and more robust implementation plan to achieve a better future for our lakes. With its completion expected before the end of the year, this 'living plan' is being designed as a dynamic

user manual, defining the main challenges and assigning action recommendations to specific stakeholder groups. It will acknowledge what has changed over the past 10 years (see chart to the left), doubling down on what is working and identifying new opportunities to accelerate the pace of needed action.

A public rollout of the plan will occur during the first half of 2022. Depending on public-health considerations related to COVID-19, Clean Lakes Alliance hopes to host an in-person Community Breakfast in May. The event, typically attended by several hundred business, government, and nonprofit leaders, promises to be an exciting time for us to celebrate our shared successes and future commitments to cleaner lakes.



To learn more about the Yahara CLEAN Compact, visit cleanlakesalliance.org/yahara-clean.

DON'T LEAF ME HERE

By "Savannah Oak"

A FIRST-HAND NARRATIVE FROM AN OAK TREE LIVING IN OUR WATERSHED

I stand tall and proud against the stiff breezes and mighty gusts of summer storms. I commit myself to collecting the energy needed to fuel my fellow comrades in the journey to grow lustily toward the shining sun. With each passing day, I yearn for the nutrients that sustain us. Phosphorus most of all compels me.

However, days pass, and I begin to feel the warmth dissipating from the air, fleeting and wistful as mother nature beckons toward shorter days and brisk fall evenings. My mind now turns toward the end, the time that all leaves eventually discern.

The time when my strength finally waivers, and I fall slowly toward the ground, extricated from my home among the stars.

To any that hear this leafy manifesto, I urge you, don't leaf me where I land. The hard, hostile hardscape that lies beneath me is no resting place for me and my once diligent companions. The phosphorus that sustained us does not belong to the lake. It belongs to the land, to us, our future offspring that will emerge in the spring to welcome the warmth once again.

And fear not, for I have the answers you seek. Listen closely, for when the day finally comes, you will know what to do with knowledge and determination to guide you. Gather me from the streets. Hoist me from that underserving concrete grave and lay me to rest on the comforting soil so that I may bestow my nutrients to other aspiring greenery. And for those with loftier intentions, I may be mulched and composted, employing the elemental process of decomposition to transform me to a bountiful loam.

So, when you step into the crisp fall air, remember my words...don't leaf me here.

Home leaf tips

Leaves release phosphorus when they break down. When left in the street, leaves make a phosphorus-rich tea that washes down storm drains and directly into our lakes. Help reduce this problem by:

- Raking the street/curb in front of your house to get leaves out of the street
- Keep leaf piles on the terrace and out of the street ahead of city pick-up
- If you live in an apartment, ask the building manager about their leaf strategy to help our lakes





MONITORING COMMUNITY BEACHES

Safe beaches are a Clean Lakes Alliance priority. Lakeside parks and beaches are the public entry points to our lakes, and they are how most of us access the water. Among the 66 miles of total shoreline encircling our chain of five lakes, almost half of those miles are in public ownership. However, a small fraction of the shoreline is set aside for public recreational access. Once all the non-designated swimming areas are removed, the fraction of shoreline that allows for easy, publicly accessible entry into the water shrinks even further.

Twenty-two beaches may sound like a lot, but they represent tiny, narrow and scattered points of opportunity spread across 29 square miles of surface water. They are finite resources belonging to a community owing its existence and much of its identity to the lakes. They are also threatened resources, with many beaches routinely closed to swimmers throughout the summer due to *E. coli* and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) that can endanger public health. While our public beaches are more often considered safe and swimmable for most of the summer season, closures can be common at some of our most troubled access points. When beaches close, it limits our access to the lakes.

Clean Lakes Alliance believes that regular monitoring and effective information sharing are two tools we can use to keep lake users safe. Fortunately, most designated swim areas are tested at least once per week thanks to the work of Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC) and others.

Recognizing the value of our beaches in connecting people to the water and the fact that water quality can change daily, we continue to advocate for investments in expanding our government monitoring programs. We will also continue to report trends in beach closures through our annual *State of the Lakes Report*. And finally, through a network of more than 100 trained volunteer monitors and the one-of-akind LakeForecast app, we are encouraged by a growing level of awareness when it comes to our ever-changing lake conditions.





WATER QUALITY IN OUR WATERSHED

A GLOBAL COLLABORATION FOR WATER QUALITY MONITORING

LakeForecast water quality monitors were back at it again this summer collecting water clarity measurements, temperature, and important visual observations like the presence of potentially harmful cyanobacteria blooms. With the help of 37 newly trained recruits, a record 102 volunteers took to the lakes for the 9th season of LakeForecast reporting.

Despite the official end of the "beach season" on Labor Day, many enthusiastic volunteers will continue through September reporting conditions which can be viewed in real time on the LakeForecast app. This winter, Clean Lakes Alliance staff will summarize thousands of data points and see what can be gleaned from the hard work of our dedicated volunteers. To see past water quality summaries, visit cleanlakesalliance.org/monitoring.

Volunteers also supported the following two projects to better understand the preeminent challenges of harmful algal blooms.

Microcystin Testing

In partnership with the UW-Madison Water Systems & Society Research Group, seven volunteers measured microcystin concentrations throughout the summer using provided test kits. Microcystins are a class of toxins that are produced by some of the more common cyanobacteria species seen in the Yahara lakes. Graduate student researchers are exploring methods to better predict cyanobacteria abundance before the algal season. Thank you to graduate student Max Beal for his support in training our volunteers!

BloomOptix Pilot Project

Clean Lakes Alliance volunteers participated in a global collaboration this summer by supporting innovative research from New York-based BloomOptix. Equipped with portable digital microscopes generously shipped all the way from London company ioLight, volunteers collected microscopic images of algae and cyanobacteria cells. These images are being used to train an artificial intelligence mobile app to quickly differentiate between harmless green algae and toxin producing cyanobacteria. While still in early phases, BloomOptix scientists hope to eventually provide lake managers a rapid identification tool to evaluate the potential health risks of harmful algal blooms.



THANKS TO OUR LAKE PARTNERS

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The Lake Partner program recognizes businesses and organizations that support Clean Lakes Alliance through an annual donation made independent of events,

MANY PEOPLE, ONE GOAL

A LETTER FROM CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JAMES TYE



The key to any successful organization is participation. At Clean Lakes Alliance, I'm proud to say community members, businesses, and organizations like you are participating each year with a Friend (individual) or Lake Partner (business/organization) donation.

But your participation goes beyond donations. You are volunteering, attending our programs, and spreading important lake information. You are our voice in the community, leading to a movement in which the lakes are the center of the community.

If you haven't made a donation to join our movement, or maybe you haven't renewed your 2021 donation yet, I'm hoping I can convince you that your investment in our lakes is an investment in our community's future.

Over the past 11 years, we've not only awarded more than \$1.2 million in grants to fund projects that improve our lakes, but we've also purchased 3.4 miles of vegetated stream buffers to filter stormwater before it reaches our lakes, and nearly 2,400 acres of cover crops to prevent winter soil erosion. While these purchases may not be as flashy as a new car, they're actually an important vehicle that will take us to clean water.

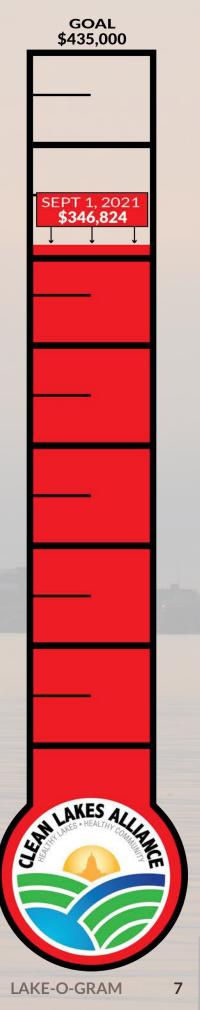
The thermometer at the right shows you how close we are to our 2021 Lake Partner and Friend of Clean Lakes campaign. If you want to help us reach our goal and continue funding important lake projects, educational programs like Clean Lakes 101 Science Café, or volunteer monitoring, you can use the envelope in this Lake-O-Gram, or visit us online at cleanlakesalliance.org/donate.

If you want to learn more about where your money goes, or what we have planned for the future, feel free to email me at james@cleanlakesalliance.org. I'm always happy to chat with anyone who is excited about the health of our lakes.

Thanks for all you do to support our community's most precious resource. Whether you make a \$35 or a \$3,500 donation, it all adds up to make a big impact that continues to improve our lakes.

In partnership,

James Tve



A CELEBRATION
OF PLATINUM
PRAIRIE SEEDS

IMPROVING WATER QUALITY
THROUGH LAND IMPROVEMENTS

By Hans Herbert,

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy

Great prairies grow from great seed stock. That is why the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy are helping create a "Platinum Prairie" in the new 160-acre addition to the Pheasant Branch Conservancy with our partners, Clean Lakes Alliance and Dane County Parks.

In 2019, Dane County acquired 160 acres of farmland to be restored to prairie and wetlands that will significantly reduce stormwater volume due to increased water infiltration into the ground, and improve water quality by reducing sediment and phosphorus runoff within the Pheasant Branch Watershed, positively impacting Lake Mendota. This former dairy farm immediately adjacent to the northern border of Pheasant Branch Conservancy contains the headwaters for an intermittent stream into Pheasant Branch Creek and is a recharge area of Frederick Spring, presenting a tremendous opportunity for crucial stormwater management and water quality improvements.



Ceremonial seeding at Pheasant Branch Conservancy (2020)

Dane County has removed the structures on the property and completed the construction of sediment basins for stormwater management, in conjunction with wetland restoration. Thanks to very generous donors, the first quadrant has been seeded with an initial seed mix containing more than 175 species of seeds. Lars Higdon and Shane Otto of Dane County Parks reported being very pleased with the first-year growth of the seeds in the initial 40-acre quadrant, given the very dry conditions this past summer.

TIMELINE OF PROGRESS IN PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY

Since its acquisition of the new 160 acres of farmland, Dane County has been busy with projects on this land.



2019

• Committed \$14 million to purchase the land immediately to the north of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy

2020

- Demolished all structures on the property and recycled concrete for a new crushed gravel trail
- Built a sediment basin and an upper and lower berm with water control structures to slow and filter stormwater runoff

2021

- Divided the former agriculture field into four quadrants, of approximately 40 acres each with one quadrant being converted to native prairie each year over four years
- Planted seed in the first quadrant in March funded through donations, including generous gifts from Alliant Energy and Hy Cite Enterprises

End Goal

Restoration of this property to a high-quality "platinum prairie" will eliminate about 550 pounds of phosphorus and other nutrients, and 2.6 million gallons of water annually from entering Pheasant Branch Creek, which drains directly into Lake Mendota.

There are several projects in the Lake Mendota Watershed helping to improve water quality in Lake Mendota and downstream. One project many have heard of is "Suck the Muck," which has removed legacy sediment from Dorn and Token Creeks. Another lesser-known project involves Six Mile Creek and its Friends group. The Friends of Six Mile Creek are working to clean up the creek which will positively affect the water quality of Lake Mendota and locations farther south through the Yahara Watershed.

CLEAR THE CREEK

By David Broadfoot, Friends of Six Mile Creek

Our group cares for Six Mile Creek, a tributary of Lake Mendota. At the direction of recent Waunakee High School graduate and local resident Sam Kaufmann, we have been working diligently to improve the quality of the watershed.

Six Mile Creek is a tributary of Lake Mendota that runs from just west of Waunakee to the north side of Lake Mendota. The creek is categorized by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as an "Exceptional Resource Water."

Last summer, we began working to clear large logjams that prevented navigation of the creek. Capitol Water Trails has been a great partner for us providing much needed expertise and labor. Sam has also been collaborating with the Village of Waunakee Public Works Department. The department has been helpful in disposing of the logs we remove and repurposing them as mulch. Our group clears what is needed for navigation and streamflow, while preserving the habitat areas log falls can create for fish and other small animals.

The Friends of Six Mile Creek also remove trash from the creek as we encounter it. The goal is to make the creek more

navigable, allow for easier flow in times of high water to reduce any flood risks, and increase community awareness and involvement in our watershed. Our hope is that the removal of the impediments in the creek will allow fish to migrate upriver. The Dane County "Suck the Muck" project plans to target the lower portion of Six Mile Creek near Woodland Drive in coming years. We are looking forward to improvements in water quality and streamflow once the sediment is removed.

Volunteer opportunities!

Friends of Six Mile Creek: facebook.com/groups/friendsofsixmilecreek

Capitol Water Trails: capitolwatertrails.org/volunteer.html



2021 EVENT RECAP &

ENGAGING SUPPORTERS AND RAISING IMPORTANT FUNDS FOR OUR LAKES

We are grateful to have had so many of you join us this past spring and summer at our events – both in person and virtually. Together, we are raising important funds for lake improvement projects, educational programming, and water quality monitoring.

LOOP THE LAKE

In June, 1,200 people joined us to Loop the Lake - an increase of 33% over last year! Participants in Greater Madison and across the country biked, ran, walked, paddled, and even rode horses to support the Yahara lakes. The event raised a collective \$67,102 for clean lakes. Save the date for next year's Loop the Lake - Saturday, June 18th, 2022 starting and ending at Olbrich Park or virtually from anywhere. cleanlakesalliance.org/loop-the-lake



BIG SWELL SWIM

Also in June, swimmers jumped into Lake Monona for the Big Swell Swim Madison race, benefitting Clean Lakes Alliance. Swimmers participated in a 1.2 or 2.4-mile race and were able to contribute \$3,825 in support of Greater Madison's lakes.

Learn more: cleanlakesalliance.org/big-swell-swim

WAUBESA SURF 'N TURF

In July, golfers and anglers came together at the Waubesa Surf 'n Turf Challenge to golf 918 collective holes and catch 573.5 total inches of legal-size gamefish. The day-long tournament raised funds for clean lakes. Save the date for next year's Waubesa Surf 'n Turf Challenge - Thursday, July 7th, 2022. cleanlakesalliance.org/surf-n-turf





FORE! LAKES

We had so much fun at our ninth annual Fore! Lakes Golf Outing in September. The event was held at Nakoma Golf Club, which recently renovated its course to mitigate runoff to the UW Arboretum. Together, we raised more than \$45,000 (net) to support our lakes. We hope you'll join us for next year's Fore! Lakes Golf Outing at Bishops Bay Country Club in September 2022. Learn more: cleanlakesalliance.org/fore-lakes-golf-outing

A LOOK AHEAD TO 2022

MENDOTA FREEZE & FROZEN ASSETS 5K

The 10th Annual Mendota Freeze Contest begins on Wednesday, December 1st, and brings attention to the year-round importance of our lakes. The contest asks people to guess the official ice-on date for Lake Mendota. All entries to correctly guess the date will be entered to win a prize.

To enter a guess and view the contest rules, visit mendotafreeze.org

Join us on Saturday, February 5th, 2022 for the 3rd annual Frozen Assets 5K Run/Walk. Shake up your fitness routine and see Madison from a whole new perspective – from frozen Lake Mendota! The Frozen Assets 5K Run/Walk truly is a bucket list experience – this event is one of the only races worldwide to be held ENTIRELY on a frozen lake. Learn more: cleanlakesalliance.org/5K



COMMUNITY BREAKFAST

Save the date for next year's Community Breakfast on Wednesday, May 18th, 2022 to hear the results of the Yahara CLEAN Compact. The Clean Lakes Alliance Community Breakfast brings lake enthusiasts together to review our collective progress toward cleaner, healthier lakes. Learn more: cleanlakesalliance.org/community-breakfast





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