SUMMER 2026 | FEATURING THE *STATE OF THE LAKES* REPORT

TEEJOP

REGIONAL GUIDE

Teejop is the Ho-Chunk word for "Four Lakes" — the Indigenous name for this region long before it became Madison and Dane County, Wisconsin.

FOREWORD BY JON GREENDEER, HO-CHUNK NATION PRESIDENT

MENDOTA | MONONA | WINGRA | WAUBESA | KEGONSA | YAHARA RIVER

CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE

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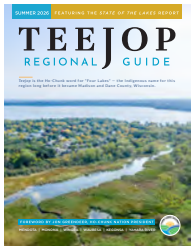
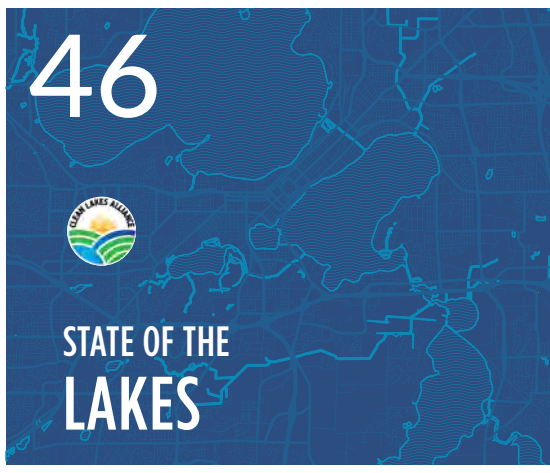


FEATURES

Cover: Pheasant Branch Creek flowing into the west side of Lake Mendota
Photo courtesy Robert Bertera
robertberteraphotography.smugmug.com



Clean Lakes Alliance
150 E Gilman St, Suite 2600
Madison, WI 53703
608.255.1000 | cleanlakesalliance.org

Thank you to Foley & Lardner LLP and the Gialamas Company for their past in-kind office space, and to Fiore Companies for their current support.

FOREWORD

BY JON GREENDEER, PRESIDENT, HO-CHUNK NATION

In our Ho-Chunk language, this place is called Teejop — a sacred homeland where water, land, and people have been connected since time immemorial. Today, many know this region as Madison or Dane County, but long before boundaries were drawn, this was — and remains — a place defined by water.

Water does not recognize municipal boundaries. It flows freely, connecting lakes, rivers, wetlands, and communities. It carries life, memory, and responsibility. That is why the transition from the Greater Madison Lake Guide to the Teejop Regional Guide is so meaningful. It reflects a deeper truth: stewardship must follow the natural systems that sustain us, not the lines we create.

For the Ho-Chunk people, water is not simply a resource. It is a relative. It is honored, protected, and given thanks. Our teachings remind us that what we do to the water, we do to ourselves and to future generations. This understanding is both cultural and practical — the health of our waters determines the health of our communities.

The lakes of this region — including Lake Mendota, Lake Monona, Lake Waubesa, and Lake Kegonsa — are connected, just as we are. What happens upstream affects what happens downstream. What happens on the land shapes what enters the water. This calls for shared responsibility and collective action.

The Teejop Regional Guide represents more than a name change. It is an invitation — to better understand this place, to acknowledge its history, and to act with intention. It asks us to recognize Indigenous presence, past and present, and to move forward with respect and reciprocity.

Organizations like Clean Lakes Alliance help bring people together around this shared responsibility. By connecting science, education, and community, they strengthen our collective ability to care for these waters.

As you read this guide, consider your relationship with water. Where does it come from? Where does it go? What role do you play in its journey?

We are all connected to these waters. Stewardship belongs to all of us.

In Ho-Chunk teachings, we consider the impact of our actions on the next seven generations. Let this guide serve as a reminder of that responsibility — and an invitation to protect what connects us all.

Teejop is not just a place. It is a living system that calls us to listen, learn, and care.

Jon Greendeer

Jon Greendeer
President, Ho-Chunk Nation

HEALTHY LANDS & STRONG PARTNERSHIPS SHAPE CLEANER LAKES

Welcome to the 2026 Teejop Regional Guide! Whether you're discovering a new favorite beach, exploring the area's many offerings, or learning about water quality conditions through this year's *State of the Lakes*, I invite you to dive into every page. Inside, you'll find the latest stories of stewardship, inspiration from lake lovers across Dane County, and the debut of a new land-health assessment to help track how conservation progress on the land is shaping the water we all cherish.

Healthy lakes depend on healthy lands. This year's expanded *State of the Lakes* introduces a more complete picture of watershed vitality, measuring progress not just in the water, but across our farmlands, neighborhoods, and shorelines. It's one more way Clean Lakes Alliance is helping our community stay accountable and focused on results.

I'm also excited to introduce the newly formed Renew the Blue Council, an extensive coalition of government and nonprofit partners uniting to put our shared lake-recovery plan into action. Building on more than a decade of collaboration, the Council represents a next-generation alliance for our watershed — where city, county, tribal, and community organizations align resources, share data, and help advance the 12 high-impact actions identified in *RENEW THE BLUE: A Community Guide to Cleaner Lakes & Beaches in the Yahara Watershed*.

The *Renew the Blue* Council promises to be a game-changer. By coordinating efforts, celebrating success, and accelerating on-the-ground projects, this partnership is designed to turn our shared vision of a community renowned for its healthy land, lakes, and waters into a sustained reality.

I hope you enjoy this year's Teejop Regional Guide as much as I do, and that it reminds you of the deep connection between our lives and the lands and waters that shape Greater Madison.

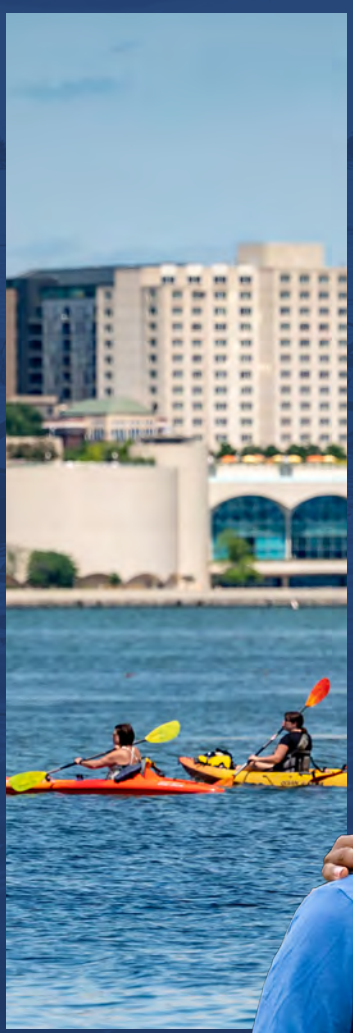
In partnership,

James Tye
Clean Lakes Alliance Founder & Executive Director

Lake Monona shown in the foreground and Lake Mendota in the background, photo courtesy Robert Bertera

2025

IMPACT REPORT



ABOUT US

VISION

We envision a community renowned for its healthy lakes, lands, and waters.

MISSION

Our mission is to champion the lakes and watershed stewardship for the benefit of all.

STRATEGIES

The strategies below are organized into four guiding pillars, each outlining a path to achieving our Vision and Mission.

People

Cultivate a love of the lakes

Offer fun, educational, and enriching experiences that connect people, businesses, and organizations to the lakes

Invite the community to celebrate, connect with, and care for our lakes, lands, and waters

Lands

Lead and inspire care of the land impacting our waters

Provide stakeholders with the motivation, guidance, and support to act

Champion recommendations in *RENEW THE BLUE: A Community Guide for Cleaner Lakes & Beaches in the Yahara Watershed*

Shorelines & Lake Parks

Support the creation of vibrant lakeshores

Celebrate, showcase, and nurture stewardship and legacy placemaking where land meets water

Focus public attention on reimagining and investing in our lakeshore spaces

Organization

Continue building an effective and enduring organization

Sustain a thriving workplace and high-impact organization by living our values as team members and partners

Continue to grow and diversify a sustained base of support while fostering a rewarding, values-based culture

From Strategy to Action

We advance each strategic pillar through three focused objectives.

ENGAGE

Events and multimedia outreach invite people into the Alliance, connect them to the watershed, and build a strong base of support. We spark community energy while keeping supporters informed and inspired to get involved.

EMPOWER

Unique programs and learning experiences expand volunteerism and cultivate watershed stewardship. We turn awareness into meaningful engagement, advocacy, and action.

ACTIVATE

A strong, informed Alliance advances accountability and progress toward shared goals. Through targeted grants, strategic partnerships, and selective lobbying, we keep critical initiatives moving forward.

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"Oak Park Dental is a proud supporter of Clean Lakes Alliance. We believe caring for our community is just as important as caring for our patients."

Dr. Jana Gyurina,
DDS, FAGD, FICOI, LVIF

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608-833-4466
MINERAL POINT ROAD, MADISON, WI

Clean Lakes Alliance Community Board and Renew the Blue Council Members at a February 2026 meeting.

CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS & STAFF

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Sopen Shah, Chair
Perkins Coie LLP

Jim St. Vincent, Vice Chair
Yahara Lakes Association

Scott Ducke, Treasurer
Lake Ridge Bank

Laura Skilton Verhoff, Secretary
Associated Bank

James Tye, Executive Director
Clean Lakes Alliance

Pam Christenson
Madison Gas and Electric

Zach Osman
Johnson Financial Group

Courtney Searles
U.S. Bank

Trey Sprinkman
Sprinkman Real Estate

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Steven Greb
Dane County Towns Association

Jeffrey Hanson
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Cody Jaworski
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Lake Waubesa Conservation Association

Dan Lee
First Weber Inc.

Aaracgeį Sarah Lemieux-White Eagle
Ho-Chunk Nation District 3 Legislator

Kyle Lyne
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Rod Martin
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Michael Moss
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Jessica Niekrasz
Niekrasz Consulting LLC

Darren Port
Tota Vita Financial Associates

Brian Potts
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Kimberly Shaul
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Jay Sodey
Associated Bank

Susan Thomson
ActionCOACH Business & Executive Coaching

Claire Varrelmann
The Edgewater

Brian Vigue
Audubon Great Lakes

Tom Wilson
Community Advocate

Dr. Jana Gyurina, Director Emerita
Oak Park Dental

Courtney Kruger, Director Emerita
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University of Wisconsin - Madison

Martin Griffin, Ex Officio
Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

Laura Hicklin, Ex Officio
Dane County Land & Water Resources Department

Patrick Miles, Ex Officio
Dane County Board of Supervisors

Mark Riedel, Ex Officio
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Senator Kelda Roys, Ex Officio
Wisconsin State Senator, 26th District & OpenHomes Realty

Jason Valerius, Ex Officio
Capital Area Regional Planning Commission (CARPC)

STAFF

James Tye
Founder & Executive Director

Michelle Boeder
Advancement Director

Paul Dearlove
Deputy Director & Chief Science Officer

Olivia Haseley
Donor Engagement & Events Specialist

Tiffany Hoffman
Administrative Specialist

Jason James
Associate Director of Membership

Caitlin McAleavey
Watershed Programs Associate Director

Brian Shorey
Finance & Business Senior Manager

Mike Smale
Watershed Programs Specialist

Karin Swanson
Marketing & Communications Manager

HISTORICAL MILESTONES


2025 boat tour and science day


2025 LakeForecast Training


2025 Volunteer Day with UW Credit Union and Urso Builders


2025 Loop the Lake


2025 tour of Kellercrest Holsteins conservation practices

BEFORE CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE

NO NONPROFT FOCUSED ON THE HEALTH OF THE YAHARA CHAIN OF LAKES

NO NEARSHORE WATER QUALITY MONITORING

NO COMMUNITY LAKE CLEANUP PLAN

NO LAKE HEALTH PROGRESS REPORTING

NO FARMER-LED CONSERVATION GROUP

BECAUSE OF CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE

A growing alliance of nearly 2,000 donating individuals and groups, guided by a 50-member Community Board, with lake-centered festivals and events drawing thousands of participants each year

Real-time water quality conditions are shared through LakeForecast.org and the free app, with close to 80 monitoring stations reporting across the five Yahara lakes

RENEW THE BLUE: A Community Guide for Cleaner Lakes & Beaches in the Yahara Watershed was formally adopted by the 19 cross-sector organizational members of the Yahara CLEAN Compact

Release of the annual *State of the Lakes* provides transparency around watershed health, lake conditions, and community progress toward water quality goals

Clean Lakes Alliance helped create and continues to financially support the farmer-led Yahara Pride Farms, a nonprofit facilitating the adoption of farmland conservation practices to protect water quality

BEFORE CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE

NO YAHARA LAKES-FOCUSED GRANT PROGRAM TO LEVERAGE PARTNER ACTION

NO ORGANIZED BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

NO CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE PROGRAM & EVENT IMPACTS

NO LAKE-SCIENCE PRESENTER SERIES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

NO ORGANIZED ADVOCACY SPECIFICALLY FOCUSED ON IMPROVING OUR LAKES

BECAUSE OF CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE

Since 2010, more than $1.5 million in Clean Lakes Grants have been awarded to help fund programs, buy equipment, perform land restorations, and move projects forward

Involved businesses and organizations include close to 250 donating members, with many employees regularly participating in Clean Lakes Alliance-hosted Volunteer Days, Lunch & Learns, and community events

In 2025 alone, Clean Lakes Alliance made 168,586 direct connections through our various programs, events, and communications

Clean Lakes 101s draw an average of 75 attendees each month

Lake protective policies and budgets are promoted through targeted advocacy campaigns, including those related to manure treatment, stormwater utilities, and beach testing


2025 Volunteer Day with Affiliated Engineers Inc and community members


Stand up paddleboarding at Marshall Park


2025 Volunteer Day with CG Schmidt & Sprinkman Real Estate

2025 LakeForecast Training


2025 Community Coffee

2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Loop the Lake 2025

CELEBRATING & GROWING THE ALLIANCE

Thanks in large part to our beautiful lakes, Greater Madison communities are routinely ranked among the most desirable places in the nation to live and visit. We also know how to have fun while connecting to these natural amenities. Popular events like the **Frozen Assets Festival and 5K**, the **State of the Lakes Community Coffee**, and **Loop the Lake** draw thousands of participants while helping to raise awareness and money for the lakes in every season.

Loop the Lake in 2025 saw 1,291 people biking, walking, or running around Lake Monona to support our lakes. We were especially grateful for the record level of annual **Friends of Clean Lakes** contributions, with 1,663 individuals generously donating to help us reach this high-water mark. Favorable numbers were also attained on the digital media front compared to recent years, with a record 16,229 social media followers and 7,962 unique users of LakeForecast.org.

15,535
Program/event participants & volunteers

1,663
Friends of Clean Lakes donors

ADVOCACY

Clean Lakes Alliance is advised by an Advocacy Committee of the Community Board on matters related to policy positions and selective lobbying. Whenever appropriate, we push for action on specific issues, policies, or budget items that could materially impact lake and watershed health.

In 2025, we continued to advocate for progress around ***Renew the Blue*** recommendations. This included recruiting government and nonprofit partners to join a **Renew the Blue Council** — a group of partners committed to advancing the 12 highest-impact action needs. It also included a new initiative to expand beach testing and *E. coli* source tracking in partnership with Public Health Madison & Dane County.

1,423
Community Talk attendees

40+
Renew the Blue Council partners


2025 Community Coffee

CLEAN LAKES GRANTS

More than $1.5 million in Clean Lakes Grants awarded since 2010 have helped catalyze partner action and moved important projects forward. In 2025, $13,598 in grants went toward:

- "**Conserve an Acre**" funding to increase the adoption of agricultural conservation practices
- Ongoing support for a Precision Agriculture Specialist to help farmers convert unproductive cropland into perennial cover, improving water quality and habitat
- Indigenous effigy mound awareness and education programming

73%
of Clean Lakes Grants since 2010 have supported agricultural best practices

$13,598
in grants distributed in 2025

Effigy Mound Guide tent at 2025 Loop the Lake

VOLUNTEERISM

Passionate volunteers drive many of our initiatives, magnifying our capacity to affect positive change. It is through their time, talent, and expertise that we can closely track water quality conditions, host large community events, and perform watershed-improvement work all year round.

Thanks to volunteerism, a six-year high of 439 individuals from 23 different businesses and organizations rolled up their sleeves as part of our weekly **Volunteer Days**. Volunteers also served on our boards and committees, powered our **LakeForecast** monitoring, and supported the **Frozen Assets Festival** and **Loop the Lake**.

758
Volunteers (6-year high)

2,081
Volunteer hours

23
Businesses and organizations joining Volunteer Days

2025 volunteer day with Perkins Coie, EcoWash, Park Hotel, and community members

MONITORING

In 2025, a record 117 trained **citizen scientists** were reporting real-time conditions across all five of the Yahara lakes. Through interactive maps on the LakeForecast app and website, the public had free access to the latest changes in water clarity, temperature, algal bloom presence, and beach closures from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Thanks to our network of LakeForecast monitors, lake users were able to quickly identify the best spots to enjoy the water on any given day. These efforts also served as an early warning system for when and where potentially toxic cyanobacteria blooms were forming. Data are used for research and help inform Clean Lakes Alliance's *State of the Lakes*.

1,755
Condition reports

79
Monitoring stations

7,962
LakeForecast.org Users (4-Year High)

2025 LakeForecast training with new monitors at B.B. Clarke Beach

EDUCATION

Raising awareness about our lakes, lands, and waters helps transform stakeholders into inspired watershed stewards. We host **Clean Lakes 101s**, **Lunch & Learns**, educational field trips, and other fun events to connect as many people to the lakes and our work as possible. We also engage our partners and supporters through **Lake-O-Gram** newsletters and the **Greater Madison Lake Guide**, featuring our annual *State of the Lakes*.

In addition to providing our own educational programming, Clean Lakes Alliance regularly partners with other groups to combine resources and maximize impacts. Our **Clean Boats, Clean Waters** partnership with Dane County and the Wisconsin DNR is one example, resulting in 3,861 one-on-one boater interactions during the 2025 season alone. Through boater education, an important line of defense is established to prevent new aquatic invasive species introductions.

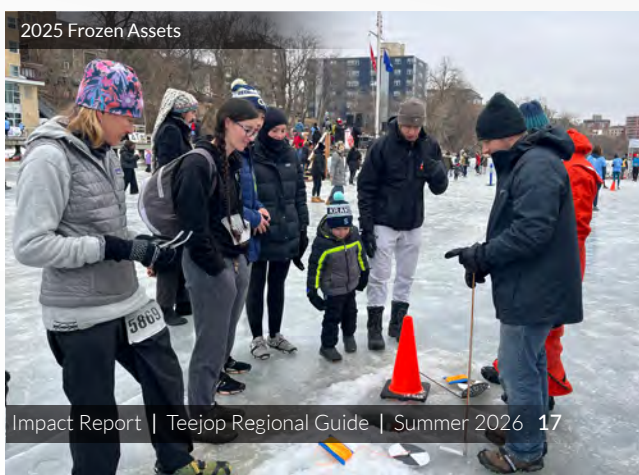
3,861
Boater interactions

3,990
Education hours delivered


Clean Boats Clean Waters educator talking with a boater

Clean Lakes 101: Deciphering the *State of the Lakes*


2025 Loop the Lake


2025 Frozen Assets

2025 volunteer day at Marsh Woods Conservancy

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

2025 successes also included:

- Publication of a first-of-its-kind valuation assessment, titled ***Economic Impact of the Yahara Chain of Lakes to Greater Madison***. Commissioned by Clean Lakes Alliance, the study quantified the added value our lakes bring to the surrounding region, amounting to over $220 million on an annual basis — a number shown to rise or fall depending on prevailing water quality conditions.
- An **Imagine a Day Without Water** media event and **Renew the Blue Council** delegate kickoff celebration. Hosted at the Lussier Center, the event featured keynote addresses from leaders such as Ho-Chunk Nation President Jon Greendeer and Dane County Executive Melissa Agard. We also thank the Madison Community Foundation for awarding a three-year, $75,000 Community Impact Grant in support of the Council. The grant recognizes Clean Lakes Alliance's backbone organizational role to convene, launch, and facilitate the coalition's ongoing work.
- Sponsorship of a national, PBS television release of **An Invitation to Wonder: Waubesa Wetlands**. The documentary by filmmaker Ben Albert explores the ecological significance, beauty, and hidden mysteries of this unique marsh. Guided by his grandfather, wetland scientist Calvin DeWitt, the film highlights the deep, intergenerational connection between humans and nature.
- For the second time, Executive Director James Tye was included as part of **In Business magazine's "Power 100"** for his outstanding dedication to nonprofit excellence and significant community contributions.

To learn more about these programs and the other good work of Clean Lakes Alliance, visit cleanlakesalliance.org.

Platinum Transparency 2025 Candid.

Charity Navigator FOUR-STAR

1% FOR THE PLANET

Members of the Renew the Blue Council

WORKING TOGETHER TO

Renew the *Blue*

In 2025, Clean Lakes Alliance launched a first-ever Renew the Blue Council — a cross-sector coalition of partners representing more than 40 governmental bodies and nonprofits. Each participating organization has signed onto a Letter of Intent, committed annual financial support, and appointed delegates to strive collaboratively toward achieving a shared vision: a community renowned for its healthy lakes, lands, and waters.

Guided by the belief that healthy waters create thriving communities, the Renew the Blue Council exists to turn vision into action. "Our lakes connect every community in this watershed," said Clean Lakes Alliance Founder and Executive Director James Tye. "The Council is about channeling shared values and interests into coordinated, measurable progress focused on Renew the Blue's highest-impact recommendations."

Released in 2022, *RENEW THE BLUE: A Community Guide for Cleaner Lakes & Beaches in the Yahara Watershed* outlines 12 high-impact action priorities to improve water quality and land health. Participating Council organizations are now coming together to collaborate through a Collective Impact approach to align efforts, share best practices, and pool resources to accelerate implementation.

Progress will be shared through Clean Lakes Alliance's *State of the Lakes*. This annual report card on water quality will soon be evolving to include a new land health assessment, ensuring transparency and progress accountability as lake-improvement efforts move forward.

RENEW THE BLUE COUNCIL

Letter of *Intent*

We, the undersigned, recognize that the lakes, lands, and waters of the Yahara Watershed define our sense of place and nourish our communities' economic vitality, recreational appeal, and local quality of life.

These include the interconnected system of waterways, wetlands, and lands of our watershed, including our five major lakes: Mendota, Monona, Wingra, Waubesa, and Kegonsa.

We believe we are stronger together and that everyone has a role to play in watershed stewardship.

We acknowledge and commit to learning more about the *"Rights of Nature"* policy adopted by the Ho-Chunk Nation, the ancestral stewards of this watershed. The core idea of this policy and movement is that natural ecosystems should be treated as living entities that are entitled to exist, thrive, and evolve.

We recognize the value of agriculture in our watershed and its important role in providing food, generating economic vitality, sustaining undeveloped land that absorbs water, and contributing to the scenic beauty of our region.

We celebrate the science, collaboration, and shared values represented in the Yahara CLEAN Compact's *Renew the Blue: A Community Guide to Cleaner Lakes & Beaches in the Yahara Watershed*, recognizing the 12 priority impact action recommendations as the most effective way to achieve water quality goals, and committing to implement those recommendations.

We commit to working together to renew and strengthen this Renew the Blue partnership alliance to accelerate progress around runoff, phosphorus, and E. coli reduction in order to protect the health and resilience of the waterways, wetlands, and lands of our watershed.

We believe we have greater impact working together across sectors, jurisdictions, and organizations to align implementation, coordinate outreach, and galvanize collective action.

We recognize Clean Lakes Alliance as the organizing body to convene and align our shared goals to support action and communicate progress.

We value the current collaboration among governments and nonprofit organizations that generates *State of the Lakes* – an annual water quality report shared with the public.

We commit to supporting *State of the Lakes* as it expands into measuring progress around priority urban and rural land-management practices. This includes tracking our large-acreage undeveloped urban and rural lands; conducting a shoreline survey; tracking acres permanently protected from development; and counting rain gardens.

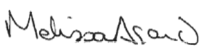
We commit to becoming a Clean Lakes Alliance Partner, providing data, resources and participation to support the work and goals of the Renew the Blue Council. As part of this commitment, we will designate two delegates to the Council — at least one of whom will be an elected official or serve in an official capacity on a common council, committee, or organization board. We will also make an annual financial contribution to Clean Lakes Alliance and actively participate in Council meetings, held approximately three to four times per year.

By signing this letter, we pledge to adhere to the values and fulfill the commitments listed above.

RENEW THE BLUE

Council *Signatories*

*As of March 31, 2026, **45 Founding Council signatories** — representing governments, universities, nonprofits, and community organizations across the Yahara Watershed — have committed to* Renew the Blue.



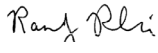
Melissa Agard
County Executive, Dane County

Satya Rhodes-Conway
Mayor, City of Madison

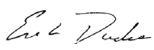
Jon Greendeer
President, Ho-Chunk Nation

James Tye
Executive Director, Clean Lakes Alliance

Karen Hyun
Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



Randy Romanski
Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection



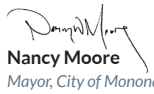
Eric Dundee
Executive Director, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

Emily Kuhn
Mayor, City of Middleton

David Pfeiffer
Chair, Capital Area Regional Planning Commission

Jeff Endres
President, Yahara Pride Farms

Jayme Powers
Chief Executive Officer, Madison LakeWay Partners



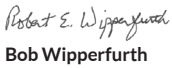
Nancy Moore
Mayor, City of Monona

Chad Lawler
Executive Director, Madison Area Builders Association

John Imes
Village President, Village of Shorewood Hills

Pam Shannon
Co-President, Friends of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy

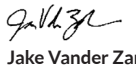
Lisa Marshall
Chief Executive Officer REALTORS® Association of South-Central Wisconsin



Bob Wipperfurth
Village President, Village of Windsor
President, Dane County Cities and Villages Association

Britton Reynolds
President, Yahara Lakes Association

Dean Grosskopf
Town Administrator, Town of Westport



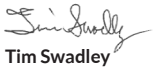
Jake Vander Zanden
Director, UW-Madison Center for Limnology

Tamara Knickmeier
President, Lake Waubesa Conservation Association

Heidi Habeger
Executive Director, Groundswell Conservancy

John Bottoroff
President, Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society

Martye Griffin
Director of Ecosystem, Yahara WINS



Tim Swadley
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Tayna Zastrow
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Justin Sargent
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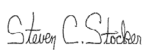

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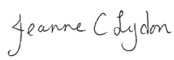
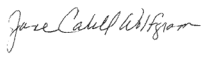
Stephanie Brassington
Village President, Village of McFarland

Patrick Bohlen
Director, UW-Madison Arboretum



Jeanne Lydon
President, Dane County Farmers Union



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The Science Beneath Us: Why Springs Thrive Around the Yahara Lakes

By Susan Swanson, Director, State Geologist
Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey
UW-Madison Division of Extension

Frederick's Spring at Pheasant Branch Conservancy

The Greater Madison Area is well known for its lakes, but the region is also rich with springs, where shallow groundwater naturally flows to the surface. The Yahara lakes and the broad wetlands that surround them, such as Cherokee Marsh or the Waubesa Wetlands, are also partly fed by groundwater. But in a spring, the groundwater emerges in a concentrated, visible form, often lifting and suspending sand from the bottom of a pool, flowing from a fracture in a rock outcrop, or even creating a stream depending on the volume of water.

Some of the largest springs in the Yahara Watershed roughly encircle the central portion of the Yahara chain of lakes, prompting the question of why this pattern and prevalence of springs exists (map, page 25). The geological setting and properties of the regional aquifers provide possible clues and explanations.

A spring emerging from a pool of water with a sandy bottom, known as a "seepage spring." Photo courtesy Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey.

A LANDSCAPE SHAPED BY ROCK AND ICE

Much of south-central Wisconsin sits atop sedimentary rock layers, such as sandstone, limestone, and shale. But in some places, like beneath the Yahara lakes corridor, the surface of the bedrock is deeply carved by preglacial river valleys. After glaciers advanced over this landscape and later retreated, abundant meltwaters deposited sand and gravel in the valleys, hiding them from view beneath our modern land surface.

The deepest sedimentary rock layer in southern Wisconsin is a thick sandstone formation known as the Mount Simon aquifer. The highly productive aquifer supplies drinking water to residents of Madison and many surrounding communities. The amount of time it takes for precipitation to infiltrate and then circulate through the deep Mount Simon aquifer is very long, often measured in hundreds to thousands of years.

The springs in the Yahara lakes region, on the other hand, are fed by precipitation and groundwater that flow downward through the overlying sand and gravel aquifer and within shallower sandstone and limestone layers.

The springs at the site now known as Merrill Springs Park on Lake Mendota were once called *Makamai* by the Ho-Chunk. European settlers later renamed the area Merrill Springs after Alfred Merrill, a farmer who settled near Spring Harbor in the mid-1800s. Today, the historic lakefront park features a restored spring cistern and three stone benches constructed in 1934.

SACRED WATERS OF TEEJOP

For the Ho-Chunk people, the Yahara River Watershed, known as Teejop (translating to "Four Lakes"), has been an important cultural settlement hub continuously occupied by them for centuries. According to Ho-Chunk teachings, Mauna, the Creator, is responsible for creating the four deep lakes of the region.

Many of the ancient effigy mounds in the Yahara lakes region are located near springs, highlighting the spiritual significance of these water sources. Springs are sacred sites that serve as a spiritual link to the underworld. These natural groundwater outlets are traditionally revered as places of offerings, healing, connection, and ceremony.

The Ho-Chunk name for the springs is *Makamai*, meaning "medicine springs." Spring water is considered a "medicine," carrying special healing powers. The Ho-Chunk people have long offered tobacco and food where land meets these sacred waters as a way to offer prayer and receive blessings.

Today, the Yahara River Watershed and these springs remain sacred to Ho-Chunk residents, serving as a link between their ancestors and the land.

Written by Samantha Skenandore, Federal Indian and Tribal Law experienced attorney with Skenandore Wilson LLP, and an enrolled member of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

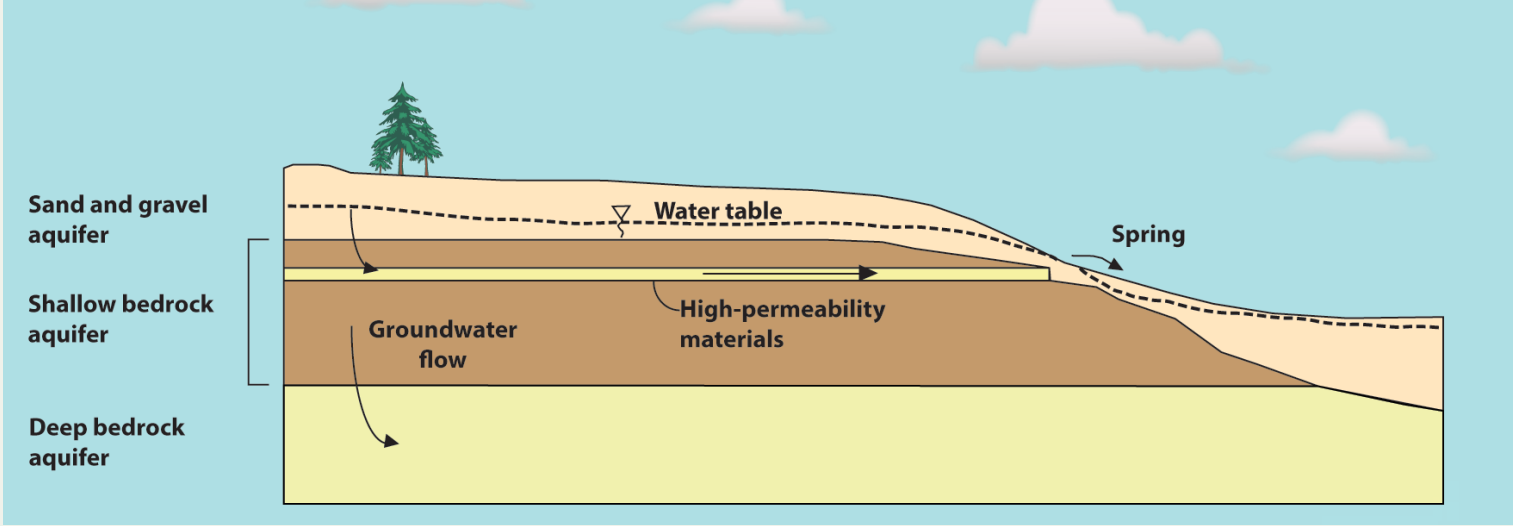
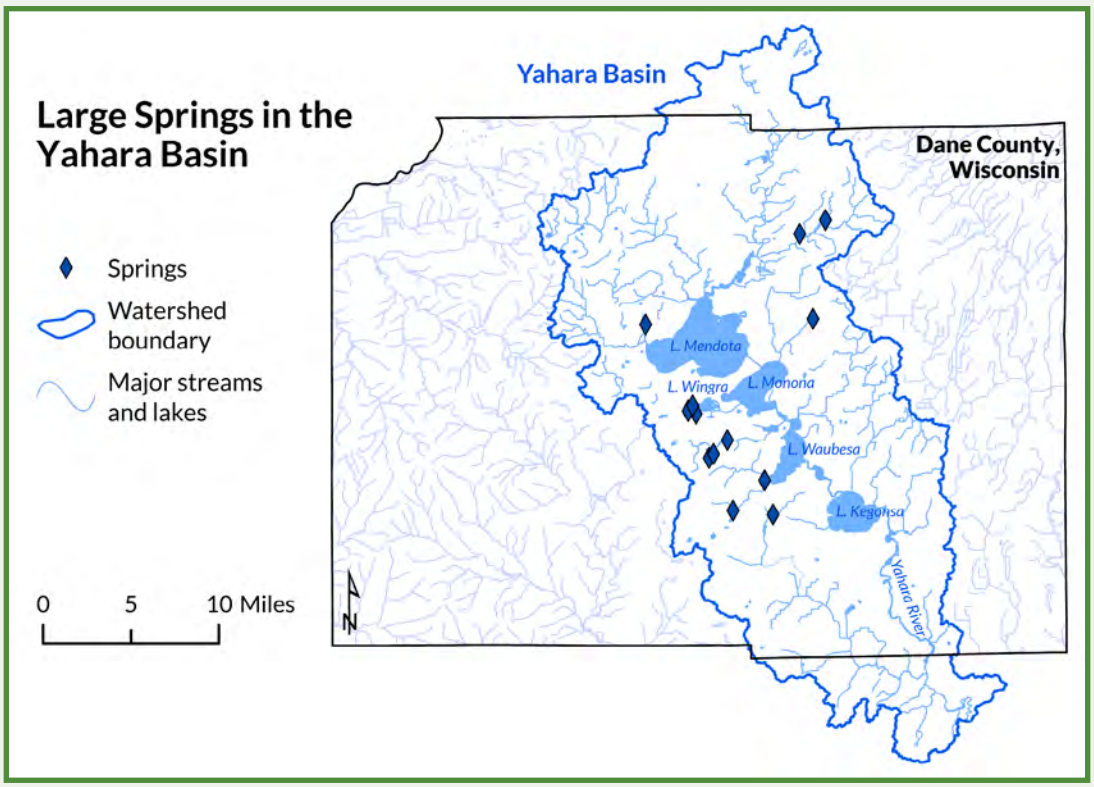


Figure showing a cross section of land and groundwater flow. Figure courtesy Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey.



Map of large springs in Wisconsin that flow at a rate of approximately 110 gallons per minute or more.

A spring emerges from a fracture in exposed rock, known as a “fracture spring.” Photo courtesy Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey.

Where groundwater encounters fractures and highly permeable zones in this shallower bedrock aquifer, it can discharge as a spring where the rock is exposed on the land surface or near a shallowly buried margin of a bedrock valley (figure, page 25). The time it takes for precipitation to infiltrate and then flow through the shallower bedrock aquifer to the springs is shorter, ranging from decades to centuries.

WHY SPRINGS MATTER

Beyond their natural beauty, springs play a critical role in our local ecosystems and offer a window into groundwater quality. Near the Madison area, springs provide a consistent source of water that sustains water levels for wildlife and sensitive wetland habitats during extended dry periods. Additionally, because the water temperature is nearly constant (around 50°F/10°C in southern Wisconsin), the area around a spring is often green and lush, even in winter.

Spring flow and water quality can also serve as indicators of the health of the near-surface aquifer, making springs critical environmental monitoring points. Even though spring water is naturally filtered through aquifers, it is not always pure or safe to drink. Because the water emerging from springs flows through the sand and gravel aquifer and the shallow bedrock aquifers most affected by human activity, spring water is vulnerable to surface contaminants like nitrates (from agricultural runoff and septic systems) and chlorides (from road salt use).

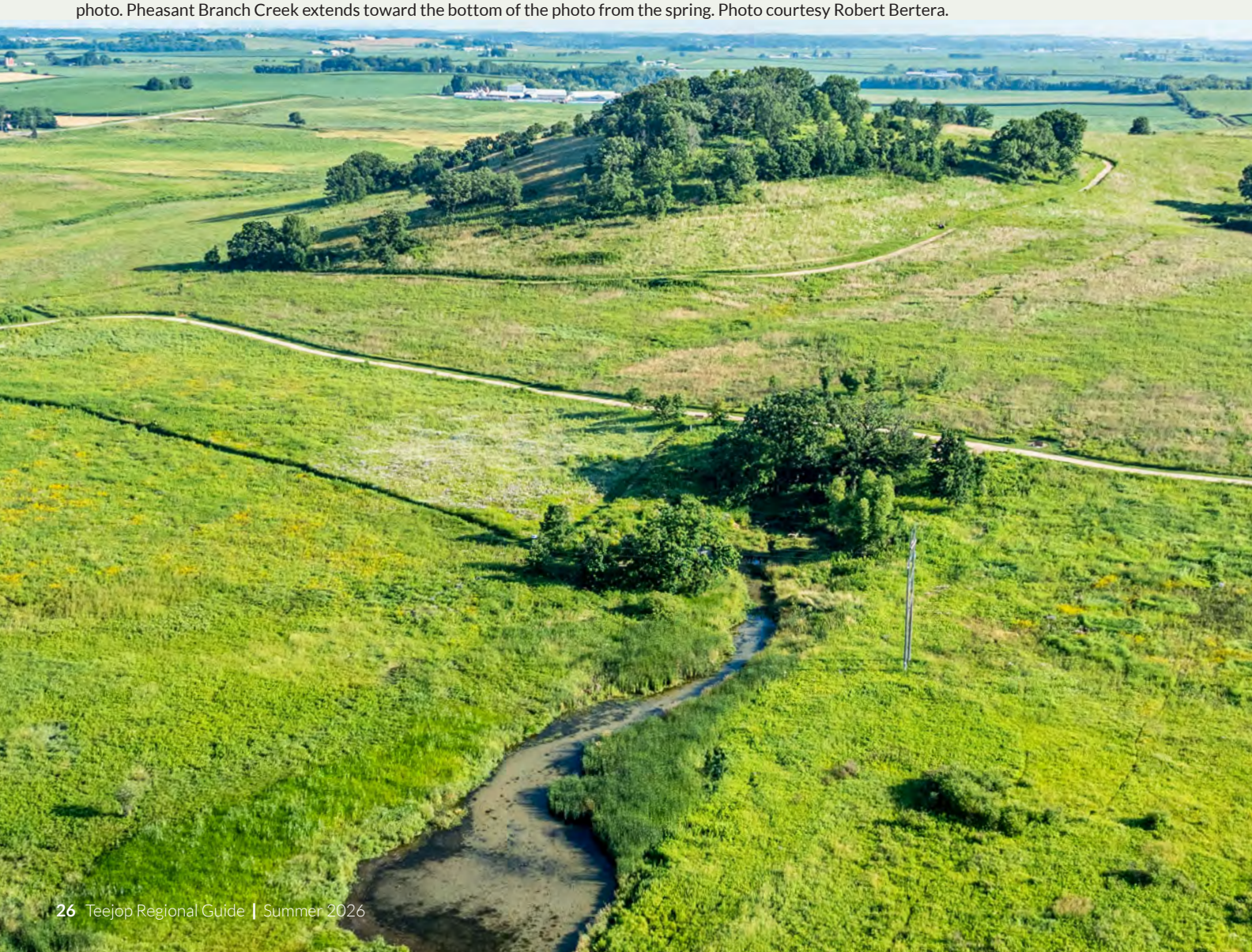
GEOLOGY AND LAND USE

The concentration of springs in the Yahara Watershed and the quality of the water that emerges ultimately depends on the region's unique geology and land use practices within the watershed. Springs exist across Wisconsin and in a variety of settings that reflect the state's diverse geology.

To learn more about the springs in the Yahara Watershed and across Wisconsin, visit the Wisconsin Geological and Natural History Survey's overview of springs in Wisconsin:

home.wgnhs.wisc.edu

View of Frederick's Hill in the background at Pheasant Branch Conservancy, with Frederick's Spring near the grouping of trees in the center of the photo. Pheasant Branch Creek extends toward the bottom of the photo from the spring. Photo courtesy Robert Bertera.



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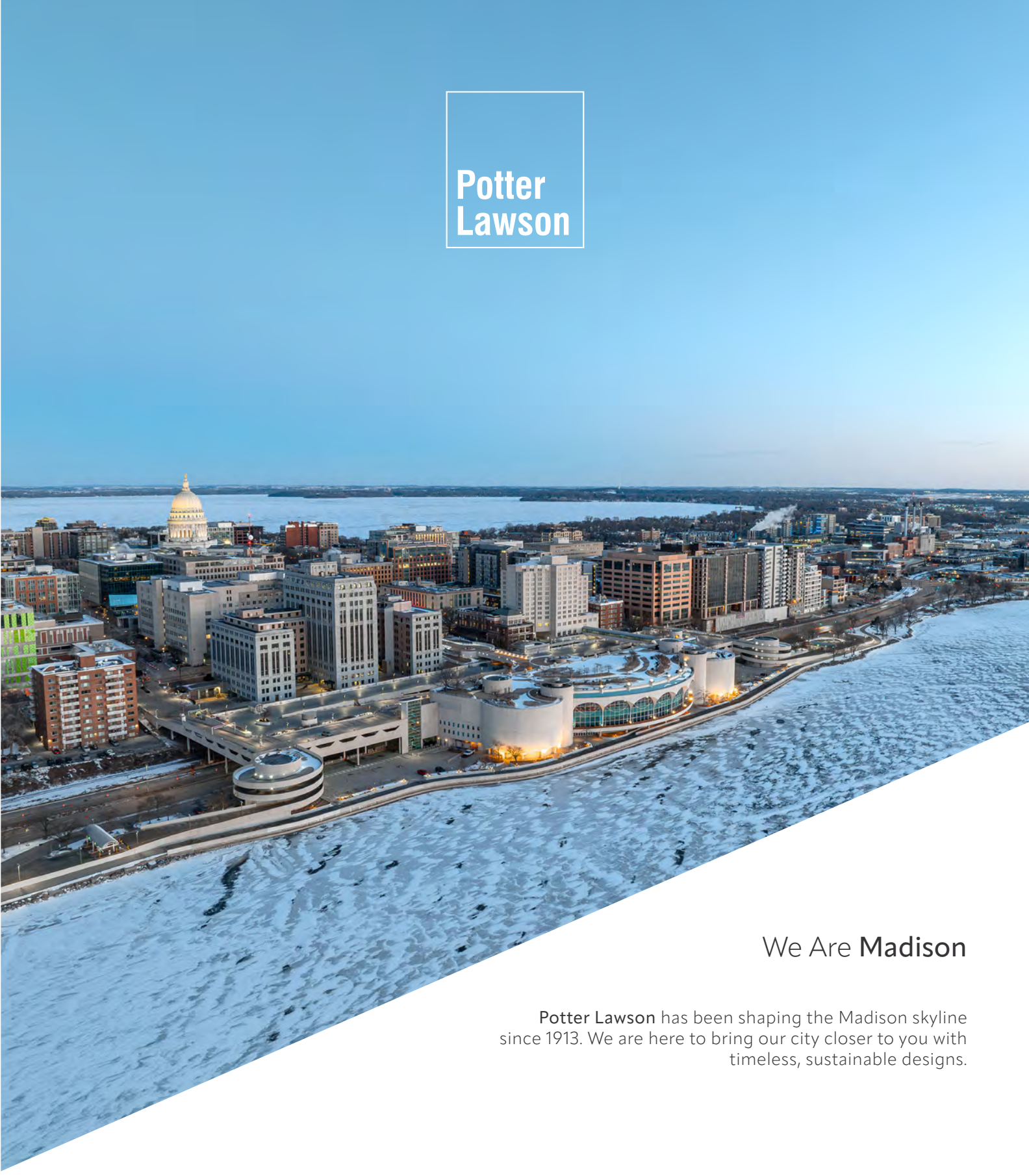

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GRACEFUL WAKES: MAKING WAVES FOR ALL ABILITIES

A SHARED LOVE FOR THE WATER

"IT'S AMAZING THAT THEY PUT ON THIS EVENT FOR THE ADULTS, FAMILIES, AND KIDS...YOU CAN'T ASK FOR MUCH MORE."

-RACHEL LEACH, MOTHER OF GRACEFUL WAKES PARTICIPANT

Waterskiing is a notoriously difficult activity, but the thrill of the water splashing and wind blowing past while skimming across the water surface are good reminders of why our local lakes are such an integral part of summer.

Grace Petzold and her mother, Wendy, have always loved waterskiing. During a trip to Florida more than a decade ago, they attended an all-ability ski program which allowed Wendy, who is paralyzed from the waist down, to ski alongside her daughter Grace. This bonding experience led Grace, with the help of her parents, to found Graceful Wakes, Inc. in 2015, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. "Our main mission is to provide accessibility to water sports," said Grace.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY ON THE LAKES

Since its founding, the nonprofit has partnered with ski clubs across Wisconsin and the country to provide adaptive water ski events. The events provide an opportunity for people with disabilities to engage with the lakes in a fun and active way. In 2023, Graceful Wakes began partnering with southern Wisconsin's Mad-City Ski Team to co-host these events on the Yahara lakes. The Mad-City Ski Team provides boats, volunteers, and food, while Graceful Wakes handles the outreach, communication, and adaptive skiing equipment. The specialized gear includes chairs that allow participants to ski while sitting, along with a mount to hold the tow rope for those unable to grip it themselves. As Grace explained, "The skier is able to sit while two trained side-skiers help them up."

A PERFECT DAY ON LAKE MONONA

Last summer, the organizations partnered for their 3rd annual event at Schluter Park in Monona, Wisconsin. "As an ADA-accessible park with an excellent beach, it's the ideal location for this event, and the Monona Parks Department allows us to utilize it for the day at no cost," said Cody Jaworski, president of the Mad-City Ski Team and Clean Lakes Alliance Community Board member. "Graceful Wakes is by far the most rewarding event that I get to be a part of with Mad-City Ski Team."

The result of this collaboration: a day full of smiles, splashes, and thrills. People from across the Midwest traveled to Lake Monona to experience the excitement of waterskiing. This included Carissa Leach who traveled

with her mother, Rachel, from Stevens Point, Wisconsin, to participate. “This is amazing that they put on this event for the adults, families, and kids because we don’t get a lot of opportunities like this. It’s nice to have recreation available to everyone right in the middle of the city. You can’t ask for much more,” said Rachel.

One by one, children and adults headed out for their waterskiing loop on Lake Monona as the event kicked off. Jim Reinwand, a former barefoot skier said, “The spray on your face is awesome. I appreciate all of the people who put on this event.”

TUBING, TEAMWORK, AND TOGETHERNESS

After the thrill of skiing, the Graceful Wakes event turned to another lake favorite: tubing. Makenzie Ramsey from Winnebago, Illinois, came to participate with her family. She was happy to finally spend time on the lakes that she otherwise drives past to get to other destinations, and was thrilled to go tubing later in the day. Her mother, Missy, elaborated, “We’re just thankful there’s an organization that provides [skiing and tubing]. It’s a great opportunity for kids who don’t get to do it every day, and to also have some fun.”

Wendy Petzold, who helped Grace with the founding of Graceful Wakes, loves to see the joy of people’s friends and families as they rise out of the water on the adaptive ski. “It’s not just the smiles on the skiers’ faces, but also their parents seeing them do things they thought they’d never be able to do.”

GET INVOLVED WITH GRACEFUL WAKES

Donate to support inclusive recreation or pre-register for the June 26, 2026, event at Schluter Park on Lake Monona (9 a.m. – 2 p.m.).
Visit: facebook.com/gracefulwakes

PHOTOS
Page 28: Mad-City Ski Team members Leigh and Marina ski alongside Maxx Heuser, photo courtesy Mad-City Ski Team
Page 29 Top Left: Wendy Petzold, mother of Grace Petzold, who founded Graceful Wakes
Page 29 Top Right: Jim Reinwand (center) with family
Page 29 Bottom Right: Rachel Leach (left) with daughter and participant, Carissa Leach
Page 30 Top: Mad-City Ski Team members Chez and Kaylie take a ride on a tube with Sophia Ciano Gwin, photo courtesy Mad-City Ski Team
Page 30 Bottom: Volunteers and participants at the 2025 Graceful Wakes event, photo courtesy Mad-City Ski Team

“GRACEFUL WAKES IS BY FAR THE MOST REWARDING EVENT THAT I GET TO BE A PART OF WITH MAD-CITY SKI TEAM.”

-CODY JAWORSKI, MAD-CITY SKI TEAM PRESIDENT & CLEAN LAKES ALLIANCE BOARD MEMBER

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FRIENDS AROUND THE WATERSHED

Messages from local Friends groups about their latest projects and initiatives

FRIENDS OF THE LAKESHORE NATURE PRESERVE

The Friends inspire people to connect with and care for the UW–Madison Lakeshore Nature Preserve, a gem of 300 acres and 4.3 miles of Lake Mendota's shoreline that includes Picnic Point and the Temin Lakeshore Path. The group hosts guided field trips in the Preserve's woods, prairies, and wetlands. The Friends also engage in community science projects such as Purple Martin and Eastern Bluebird nest monitoring. The Friends are proud to support the Preserve, including the new Frautschi Center (opening in late 2027). They invite anyone interested in preserving nature in Madison to become a Friend. LEARN MORE: friendslakeshorepreserve.com

New and experienced birders look for warblers on a Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve field trip in September 2025. Photo courtesy Scott Hershberger.

FRIENDS OF PHEASANT BRANCH CONSERVANCY

In 2025, the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy continued to grow the scope of its work, with management projects in and beyond the Conservancy's sensitive wetland areas. Thanks to growing support from the City of Middleton, Dane County Parks, hundreds of volunteer hours, as well as new land manager Tucker Sanborn, significant progress has occurred along corridor trails and in the 160-acre Conservancy expansion. Looking ahead to 2026, as new development pressure occurs to the west of the Conservancy, the Friends will continue to pursue grant funding to advise on and advocate for sustainable development planning to protect natural areas and the greater watershed. Support through a Friends membership and volunteering makes this work possible.

LEARN MORE: pheasantbranch.org

LAKE WAUBESA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

Founded in 1989, Lake Waubesa Conservation Association (LWCA) is a nonprofit, all-volunteer organization devoted to protecting and improving Lake Waubesa and its vital wetlands. Members are homeowners, lake users, and businesses located along the shoreline and surrounding areas of Lake Waubesa.

LWCA focuses on ways to manage Lake Waubesa and its watershed for the next generation. It uses a comprehensive lake management plan to identify projects aimed at improving water quality, including maintaining healthy shorelines and wetlands, reducing nutrients flowing into the lake, and managing aquatic plants and invasive species.

LEARN MORE: waubesa.org

PHOTOS

Top Left: Looking out from Pheasant Branch Hill with a view of some recent projects, photo courtesy Chris Kubiak
Bottom Left: LWCA volunteers remove debris from the Waubesa Wetlands located along the southwest shore of Lake Waubesa, photo courtesy Debbie Klein
Top Right: River clean-up volunteers returning with a canoe full of trash removed from the Yahara River, photo courtesy Justin Sargent
Bottom Right: Mitch Trow, DNR fish biologist, shows a small mouth bass to a youngster at the fish survey presentation

FRIENDS OF THE YAHARA RIVER HEADWATERS

Protecting the water quality of the Yahara River headwaters is essential to safeguarding the entire chain of shared lakes. With increasing development pressure in the region, the Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters are seeking support to secure and preserve critical headwaters lands.

Building on the success of bank stabilization and native trout population recovery, the Friends also look forward to promoting the installation of new, ecologically sensitive paddler launches along the river. This combined effort to safeguard watershed lands and improve access ensures both sustainable recreation and the permanent preservation of sensitive riparian areas. The Friends will continue to host their popular spring and fall river cleanups to maintain the health and safety of the Yahara River.

LEARN MORE: yaharariver.org

FRIENDS OF LAKE KEGONSA SOCIETY

Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society (FOLKS) works to improve the ecology, water quality, fishing, and recreational use of Lake Kegonsa. In 2025, FOLKS focused on phosphorus-reduction projects, environmental education, and wildlife habitat. Volunteers monitored water quality at piers, lake inlets and the outlet, and at the lake's deepest point. The program "Native Shoreline Gardens: Protecting our Lake" promoted shoreline protection and preservation of natural habitats through native plant gardens and rain barrels to reduce phosphorus runoff. A Wisconsin DNR fisheries presentation featured an electrofishing demonstration showing how fish surveys are performed. FOLKS also supported the wood duck population by installing and repairing nesting houses around Lake Kegonsa and the new Lower Yahara River Trail.

LEARN MORE: yaharalakes.org

FRIENDS OF LAKE WINGRA

Friends of Lake Wingra (FOLW) is a small nonprofit with a big mission: promoting a healthy Lake Wingra through an active watershed community. The group focuses on education, community action, and clean water initiatives. FOLW connects neighbors with simple, impactful practices — from keeping leaves out of streets to reducing road salt and planting rain gardens. Each year, FOLW brings people together through its spring Lake Clean-Up with Wingra Boats and its fall Community Bike Ride, creating opportunities to celebrate, learn about, and care for the lake.

LEARN MORE: lakewingra.org

CAPITOL WATER TRAILS

Capitol Water Trails (CWT) is an all-volunteer nonprofit dedicated to improving the flowing waters of Dane County and beyond. In 2026, the group aims to expand its reach by raising funds for a new enclosed trailer and 18 canoes, along with paddles and safety equipment.

CWT will launch a new website in the spring of 2026 outlining goals to engage civic and corporate partners and strengthen support to make local waters flow cleanly through the area. Through hands-on experiences, CWT teaches the skills and knowledge needed to understand why healthy waterways matter to everyone.

LEARN MORE: capitolwatertrails.org

FRIENDS OF THE TOKEN CREEK WATERSHED

Friends of the Token Creek Watershed, a citizen-based nonprofit, is dedicated to preserving the natural beauty and environmental health of Token Creek. The creek is a key water source for Lake Mendota and is sustained by one of southern Wisconsin's largest natural spring complexes. In 2025, the Friends organized several workdays to remove invasive species, clean trails and roadsides, and improve accessibility infrastructure within the Token Creek Conservancy. Additionally, the World's Biggest Little Parade is a wonderful fundraiser and a chance to connect with the community. The Friends look forward to hosting the parade again on July 4, 2026.

LEARN MORE: tokencreek.org

FRIENDS OF THE ARBORETUM

Friends of the Arboretum (FOA) builds positive relationships between people and the land through support of the UW-Madison Arboretum. Community members are invited to enjoy these opportunities to engage with and preserve the natural environment:

Native Plant Sale: Every May, FOA hosts a native plant sale. Online orders can be made in early spring, or shop at the tent sale in May. Proceeds support the Arboretum.

Grass to Gardens: Each spring, selected applicants are awarded native plant kits to convert lawn to native ecosystem.

Luncheon Lectures Series: A monthly luncheon lecture series offered fall through spring. Enjoy a great meal while learning about environmental topics.

Trips: Fun, informative, guided nature adventures offered throughout the year.

LEARN MORE: foamadison.org

PHOTOS

Top Left: Annual Lake Wingra Clean-up hosted by Friends of Lake Wingra and Wingra Boats in April 2025, photo courtesy Friends of Lake Wingra
Bottom Left: Working in a Dane County river, photo courtesy Capitol Water Trails
Top Right: Volunteers from Friends of the Token Creek Watershed were joined by students to remove invasive plants, photo courtesy Holly Anderson
Bottom Right: FOA 2025 Native Plant Sale in the tent, photo courtesy Lily Butler

YAHARA LAKES ASSOCIATION

Since 1970, the Yahara Lakes Association (YLA) has been a volunteer organization that advocates for the lakes; educates members on pertinent lake-related regulations and stewardship opportunities; and fosters community among those who live along the shores. YLA works to improve and protect the lakes so that everyone may enjoy them. Lakeside learning events, shoreline socials, website, monthly newsletters, and YLA alert emails provide members with pertinent information that make them better stewards of the local lakes. YLA partners with Dane County, the University of Wisconsin Center for Limnology, and lake organizations to preserve these precious resources.
LEARN MORE: yaharalakes.org

FRIENDS OF OLIN TURVILLE

Since 2010, the Friends of Olin Turville (FOOT) have sought to enhance the landscape and enjoyment of these two historic parks so that our community might discover their beauty and enjoy their unique offerings. To meet that goal, FOOT's efforts have taken two directions: 1) Improving the parks' natural assets through volunteer work to reduce invasive species, prepare for controlled burns, clean shorelines, and spread native plant seeds; and 2) Expanding the parks' visitor appeal through guided nature walks, concerts, dances, yoga sessions, and the occasional winter ski night and spring fling. In 2025, FOOT hosted four spring dances, a summer Gratitude in Nature event with outdoor yoga and goat encounter, four fall concerts, and monthly Bird & Nature walks.
LEARN MORE: olin-turville.org

PHOTOS
Page 36 Top left: YLA members listen to an update from Dane County Land & Water Resources Department staff on lake levels and water quality
Page 36 Bottom Left: Dance in the Olin Pavilion
Page 36 Top Right: FOMB volunteers in April 2025, photo courtesy Nina Emerson
Page 36 Bottom Right: Madison FUN - connecting communities and kids with nearby nature, photo courtesy Paul Noeldner
Page 37 Top: Volunteers remove invasives and plant native plants along Starkweather Creek
Page 37 Bottom: Monthly Bird & Nature Adventure guided walks, photo courtesy Clare Leary

FRIENDS OF MONONA BAY

Friends of Monona Bay (FOMB) is a watershed group that works to promote the health and enjoyment of Monona Bay through water monitoring, education, stewardship, and advocacy. Monona Bay's central location makes it ideal for year-round recreation. The Friends monitor water quality, promote lake-friendly practices, and partner with a monthly shoreline cleanup.

FOMB coordinates monthly shoreline cleanups year-round on the second Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to noon. Volunteers for the cleanup meet at the Brittingham Beach House, also home to Brittingham Boats. From January 2006 through December 2025, FOMB had 3,728 volunteers at monthly cleanups who collected 3,116 bags of trash. In addition, volunteers have retrieved bicycles, grills, chairs, hubcaps, and other miscellaneous trash items from Monona Bay.
LEARN MORE: FOMB Monthly Shoreline Cleanup (On Facebook)

MADISON FUN

Madison FUN (Friends of Urban Nature) is a nonprofit, 13-year partnership of public, private, and volunteer groups with a shared mission to help connect Madison communities and youth with nearby nature year-round. Together with community partners, Madison FUN co-sponsors free, naturalist-led Bird and Nature Adventures for all ages every weekend in local parks. The group also hosts the Madison Parks FUN Master Naturalist Class, the annual Madison Bird and Nature Festival, and a variety of other nature education and outreach events and activities.
LEARN MORE: facebook.com/groups/MadisonFUN

FRIENDS OF STARKWEATHER CREEK

Friends of Starkweather Creek is a nonprofit group dedicated to improving the watershed's environmental quality and enhancing public appreciation and enjoyment of the Creek. The group works with government and community partners to restore native habitats and advocate for sound watershed planning and management practices. Many paddling, cleanup, and nature events offer creek experience and appreciation to folks of all ages. For 20 years, the Friends have co-sponsored the Summer and Winter Solstice Bonfire celebrations at Olbrich Park.

LEARN MORE: starkweatherfriends.org

FRIENDS OF CHEROKEE MARSH

Cherokee Marsh is Dane County's largest wetland, located along the upper Yahara River and Token Creek, upstream from Lake Mendota. The Friends of Cherokee Marsh are volunteers who work to protect, restore, and foster appreciation and enjoyment of Cherokee Marsh's lands, waters, and living beauty. In cooperation with Madison Parks, Dane County Parks, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Friends host restoration work parties and raise funds to augment land management. The Friends sponsor family-friendly walks the first Sunday of each month, seasonal nature and outreach events, and community science for all ages.

LEARN MORE: cherokeemarsh.org

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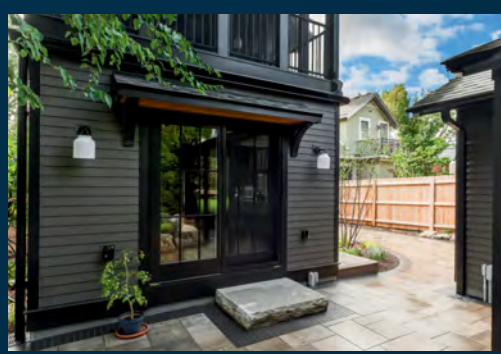

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Harvesting ice at the Conklin Ice House on Lake Mendota. The men are using pike poles to slide the blocks to the conveyor and U-shaped tools to split partially sawed blocks from ice. The steel frame of the new Wisconsin State Capitol is visible to the right of the icehouse. Photo circa 1912. Photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI 11341.

THE LEGACY OF ICE HARVESTING ON OUR LAKES

Did you know our lakes supplied a much-sought-after product representing one of the area's top exports? Greater Madison's lakes once played a crucial role in the ice harvesting and refrigeration industry, a significant part of the local economy in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Ice harvesting began locally in the 1850s and quickly expanded alongside the region's growing brewing and meat-packing industries. The arrival of the Illinois Central Railroad in 1887 further expanded new markets for this budding industry with Lakes Wingra, Monona, and Mendota becoming prominent suppliers. According to Wisconsin Magazine of History, the ice was nearly always at least 12-14 inches thick.

Ice harvesting typically took place in January, although in colder years it continued into March, when ice could still reach 18 inches thick. The ice was mostly harvested through a combination of manual labor and horse power. Snow was cleared by horse-drawn plows, and workers scored grooves into the ice by hand to map out 22-inch squares for cutting. These grooves were then deepened by horse-drawn ice cutters which sliced the ice approximately two-thirds of the way through. The blocks were then removed by hand and floated to an elevator that lifted the ice into a storage building.

Many of Madison's parks served as hubs for this booming industry. The ten-acre lot that is now the site of Wingra Park and Wingra Boats was originally occupied by

Conklin Ice House on Lake Mendota. A man is standing in the snow-covered yard in the foreground near a sleigh, and a carriage with a sign painted on the side reading: "Conklin & Sons Mendota Lake Ice." Behind the carriage is a large pile of ice and snow. Men are working on the second floor gallery near wooden ladders and pulleys. On the far left is a box with painted with the words "Howe U.S. Standard," probably a scale. Photo date unknown. Photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI 117662.

the Knickerbocker Ice Company. Later, the area's ice harvesting business was dominated by the Conklin & Sons Ice Company. On the property of what is now James Madison Park stood the Conklin & Sons Mendota Icehouse. The facility could store up to 15,000 tons of ice harvested from Lake Mendota. The company operated six smaller icehouses that collectively stored up to 7,000 tons of ice.

Most of the harvested ice was used locally with Chicago becoming an important market after the introduction of the Illinois Central Railroad. The Kurt & Huegle Ice Company, located in Maple Bluff on Lakewood Boulevard, benefited from its proximity to the railroad and a nearby slaughterhouse, making it easier to transport ice and meat.

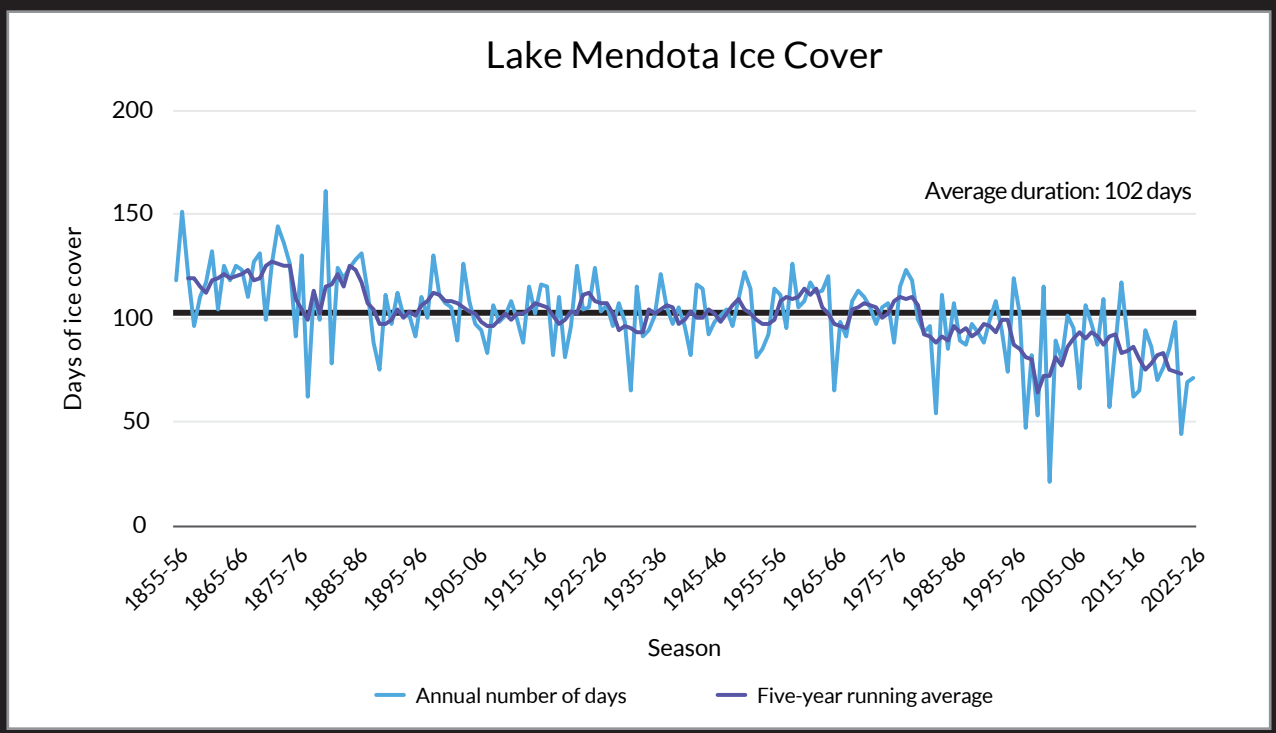
Ice harvesting's gradual demise came in multiple forms, including a decline in lake water quality due to poor wastewater management. The U.S. Sugar Company, headquartered where the Garver Feed Mill currently sits, operated on Lake Monona from 1905 to 1924. It discharged factory waste into the lake via Starkweather Creek. The pollution eventually prompted the Chicago Board of Health to exclude most of our area lakes from the Chicago ice market in 1908, except for Lake Wingra. In 1911, a law further prohibited the use of ice from Lake Monona because of the well-documented sewage and factory waste it received. The industry's decline further accelerated in the 1910s with the invention of artificial refrigeration. After World War I, large ice-harvesting companies had largely gone out of business.

Even if ice harvesting was still an active industry today, its feasibility would be questionable due to the impacts of climate change and warming winters. The average duration of ice cover has been decreasing across the Yahara chain of lakes since the time of the Industrial Revolution.

Historically, the longest ice-cover season on Lake Mendota lasted 161 days (1880-81), while the shortest duration was just 21 days (2001-02).

While the historical significance of ice harvesting remains, the impacts of warming winters and pollution serve as ongoing reminders of how environmental change can affect entire industries and how we relate to our local waters.

Knickerkbocker Ice Company truck. Photo circa 1927.
Photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI 130411.



Above: Annual duration of ice cover on Lake Mendota. Chart and data courtesy Wisconsin State Climatology Office.

Below: Dudgeon neighborhood looking across Monroe Street to Lake Wingra with Knickerbocker Ice House (1895-1937) in background. Photo circa 1913. Photo courtesy Wisconsin Historical Society, WHI 46059.

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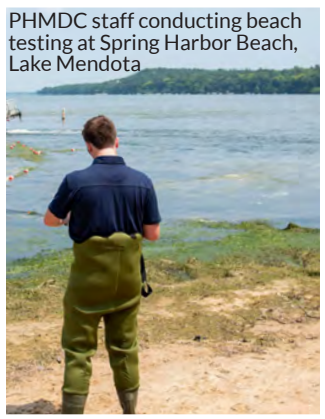
Marshall Park Beach, Lake Mendota



PHMDC staff conducting beach testing at Spring Harbor Beach, Lake Mendota

Tenney Park, photo courtesy Luna Collins

Connecting to Our Lakes

BY SATYA RHODES-CONWAY, CITY OF MADISON MAYOR

Satya Rhodes-Conway

Madison's lakes have been integral to our culture, character, and survival throughout human history. It is critical that we continue to create opportunities for everybody to connect with and care for these incredible resources. Madison has 56 individual waterfront parks with more than 17.5 miles of shoreline. Year-round recreational activities involving the lakes consistently rank in the top five park uses. As such, Madison Parks works to improve public access to lakes through various strategies.

Looking for a day at the beach? Madison Parks offers 12 free public beaches that are open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The beaches are cleaned regularly throughout the season by staff, as well as volunteers, often affiliated with Clean Lakes Alliance. Public Health Madison & Dane County monitors and tests the water for harmful contaminants. With the support of the Madison Parks Foundation, we have beach mats at Vilas Beach and Bernie's Beach, allowing people with limited mobility or in wheelchairs to access the beach. We are working to install beach mats at Warner Park Beach, Esther Beach Park, and Tenney Park Beach this year.

Boating — motorized or not — is an excellent way to get out on the lakes. Madison Parks manages 10 public boat launches and numerous seasonal public piers. Our community partners create more opportunities through watercraft rentals, camps, and events.

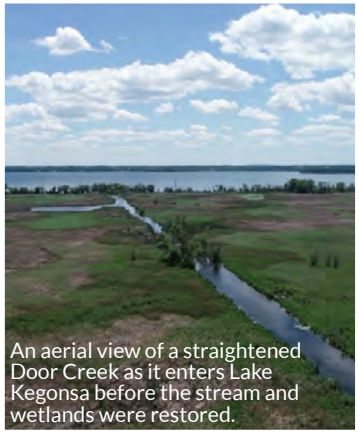
Our lakes are important assets year-round. In the winter, our lakefronts offer ice skating, with skate rentals at Tenney and Vilas Lagoons. These are beautiful places to enjoy the beauty of winter on the water.

Whether you are seeking a peaceful space with amazing views, or enjoying a community festival, Madison Parks is committed to connecting our community to our lakes.

We hope to see you on and around the lakes in 2026!

View of one of Madison Parks' beach mats, which connects people with limited mobility to the water. Shown at Bernie's Beach on Monona Bay.

Measuring the impact of prairie restoration on improving soil carbon & infiltration while reducing nurient runoff, such as phosphorus.



An aerial view of a straightened Door Creek as it enters Lake Kegonsa before the stream and wetlands were restored.

An aerial view of the newly restored Door Creek as it enters Lake Kegonsa. The stream was remeandered to replicate its historic channel as part of the legacy sediment removal initiative.

Melissa Agard

A Message from Dane County

BY MELISSA AGARD, DANE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Dane County's lakes are more than scenic waters — they are the lifeblood of our community, shaping our economy, way of life, and connection to the natural world. Protecting and restoring these waters remain one of our highest priorities, and we continue to build on a strong foundation of science-driven action, collaboration, and innovation.

Across the county, our conservation and restoration projects are delivering real benefits for water quality and community resilience. Through initiatives like "Suck the Muck," we are removing phosphorus-laden legacy sediment from key tributaries before it reaches our lakes. By targeting this long-standing source of nutrient pollution, we reduce the fuel that drives harmful algae blooms while also improving the stream habitat.

Just as important, county staff closely track the progress of our work. Using water sampling, soil monitoring, and watershed modeling, our team measures how conservation practices — from restored wetlands to expanded cover crop — reduce phosphorus runoff, prevent erosion, and improve water clarity. This data allows us to evaluate what works well, refine our strategies, and ensure that public investments deliver lasting environmental benefits.

Wetland, prairie, and shoreline restoration efforts on both public and private lands are strengthening the natural systems that filter water and absorb stormwater during heavy rain events. These efforts not only protect our lakes but also enhance wildlife habitat and build resilience in the face of a changing climate.

We know that challenges remain, particularly as more intense rainstorms increase runoff risks. But we also know that progress is possible when we combine innovation, accountability, and partnership. I am proud of Dane County's continued investment in proven conservation practices and careful impact measurement to create cleaner, healthier, and more vibrant lakes for generations to come.

Soil conservation research project installed on working farmland

Powering beyond for stronger communities

The energy industry may be evolving but our support for organizations that protect the environment hasn't changed. **We're proud to support the Clean Lakes Alliance.**

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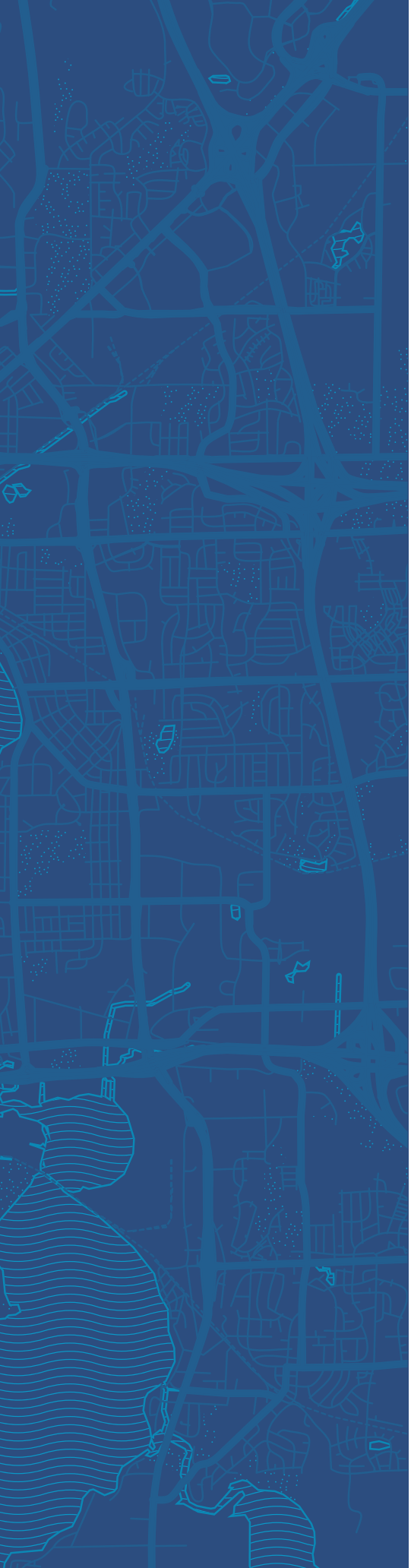
2025

STATE OF THE LAKES



2025
STATE OF THE LAKES

WRITTEN BY **PAUL DEARLOVE**
Clean Lakes Alliance Deputy Director and Chief Science Officer

The *State of the Lakes* is an annual health checkup of Dane County's five Yahara lakes — Mendota, Monona, Wingra, Waubesa, and Kegonsa. The chain of lakes and the land areas that drain to them are shown in Figure 1.

Focusing on major drivers and indicators of water quality, the report summarizes various lake and watershed health metrics, trends, and the likely causes of observed conditions. This report begins by presenting a water quality health dashboard for each lake before reviewing five broader categories of watershed impact and lake response. It then concludes with on-land improvement actions and progress measures, recognizing that downstream water quality is largely determined by activities and actions on upstream lands.

This report is a product of collaboration involving multiple government and scientific contributors. Special thanks to the U.S. Geological Survey; University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Limnology, including Honorary Fellow Richard ("Dick") Lathrop; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; Public Health Madison & Dane County; Dane County Land & Water Resources Department; and the volunteer monitoring network participating in Clean Lakes Alliance's LakeForecast program.

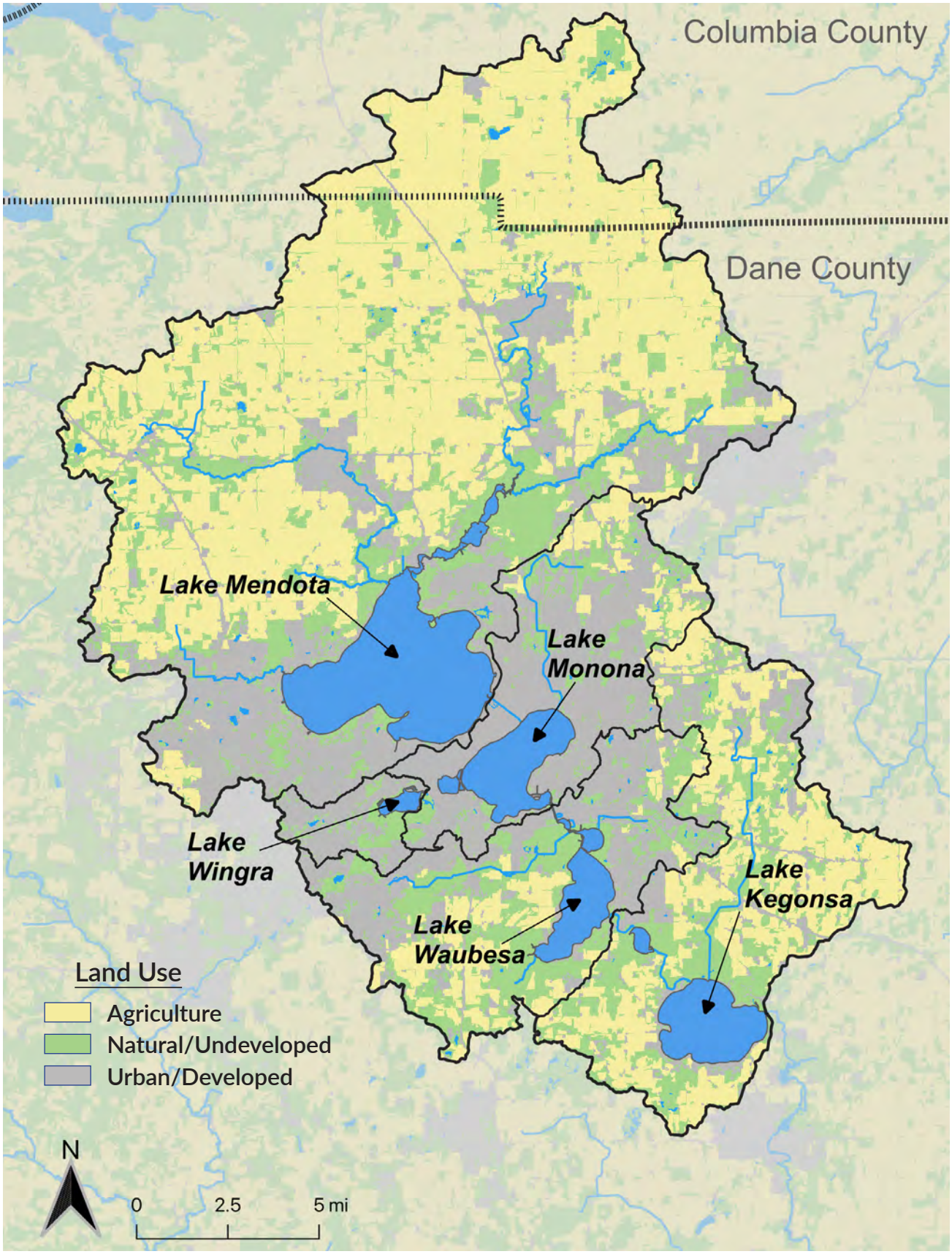


Figure 1: Yahara Lakes Watershed showing land areas that drain directly to each lake.
Yellow denotes agricultural areas that comprise most of the 385-square-mile watershed.

2025 KEY TAKEAWAYS

The Yahara Watershed continues to face persistent water quality challenges, even as some indicators show stability or modest improvement. This year's monitoring data reveals a mixed picture — with most lakes holding steady on key measures but notable declines in a few, alongside ongoing concerns about contaminants and the urgent need for expanded conservation efforts across the watershed. All five Yahara lakes are listed as impaired for failing to meet water quality standards. This is also true for nearly a dozen tributary streams and a similar number of beaches.

OFFSHORE WATER QUALITY

Most lakes received fair or good water quality rankings for offshore clarity and phosphorus levels. Lake Kegonsa was the exception as it fell from a good ranking in 2024 to a poor ranking in 2025. After many years of good clarity and phosphorus concentrations, Lake Wingra fell to a fair ranking in both categories, experiencing a one-foot loss of median clarity compared to the prior year.

NEARSHORE WATER QUALITY

Nearshore clarity and reported cyanobacteria blooms were close to the 2013-2025 average. Lake Monona had the highest nearshore clarity, and fewer cyanobacteria blooms were reported across the Yahara lakes compared to the prior year, with Lake Kegonsa having the highest number of bloom sightings.

BEACH CLOSURES

Public Health closures of Clean Lakes Alliance-tracked beaches surpassed the 2013-2025 median. Causes were the result of high *E. coli* (75%), cyanobacteria (19%), or both (6%).

CHLORIDE & PFAS CONTAMINATION

Other contaminants of concern include chlorides and PFAS. Rising chloride concentrations remain an ongoing water quality threat, with the highest levels consistently measured in Lake Wingra. Lakes Monona, Waubesa, and Kegonsa remain under fish-consumption advisories for PFOS, which is part of the PFAS family of "forever chemicals." On a positive note, voluntary monitoring by Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District revealed PFAS levels below the regulatory threshold in treated wastewater and biosolids.

LAND HEALTH PROGRESS

Continued progress is needed to reach the goal of 100% of farmland acres covered by nutrient management plans. Achieving more acreage under various conservation practices, increasing manure treatment and phosphorus exports, and removing fall leaves from city streets are among identified, *Renew the Blue* action priorities.

LAKE MENDOTA

Lake Mendota is the largest of the five Yahara lakes by surface area, depth, and volume, sitting at the headwaters of the Yahara River chain. Its drainage area is predominantly agricultural. Inlet tributaries include Pheasant Branch Creek (west shore) and Sixmile, Dorn, and Token Creeks, plus the Yahara River (north shore). Water exits the southeast shore through the Yahara River to Lake Monona. The lake has been listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act for PCBs (since 1998) and for total phosphorus (since 2011).

Lake Type: Drainage
Direct Drainage Area: 217 sq. miles
Total Drainage Area: 232.4 sq. miles

Surface Area: 9,847 acres
Shoreline Length: 22 miles
Mean Depth: 42 feet

Maximum Depth: 83 feet
Volume: 133,407 million gallons
Flushing Rate: 22% of volume/year

2025 Health Metrics

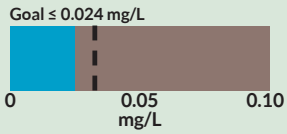
Status vs. Goal

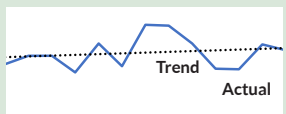
Trend (2013-2025)

PHOSPHORUS

July–August median surface phosphorus concentration measured at the deepest point was **0.033 mg/L**, compared to the **0.024 mg/L or lower goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate nutrients) and eutrophic (excess nutrients) conditions for deep lakes. *Wisconsin DNR ranking scale. Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
>0.059	0.055 – 0.034	0.032 – 0.020	<0.020

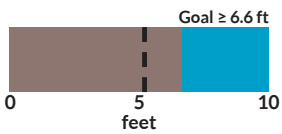


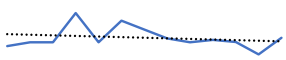


OFFSHORE CLARITY

July–August median clarity measured with a Secchi disk over the deepest point was **5.2 ft**, compared to the **6.6 ft or greater goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate clarity) and eutrophic (poor clarity) conditions. *Wisconsin DNR ranking scale. Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

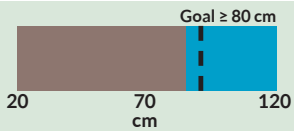
Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
0 – 2.7	2.9 – 4.6	5.0 – 8.1	>8.1

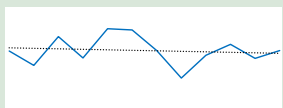




NEARSHORE CLARITY

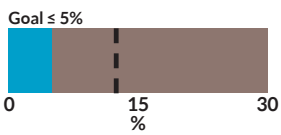
June–August median nearshore clarity measurements taken with a 120-cm turbidity tube was **91.0 cm**, compared to the **80 cm or greater goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*





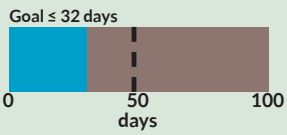
CYANOBACTERIA

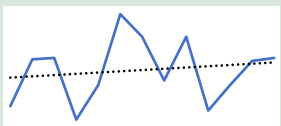
June–August sampling days when strong evidence of a potentially toxin-producing cyanobacteria bloom was observed at one or more nearshore sites was **12.4%**, compared to the **5% or less goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*



BEACH CLOSURES

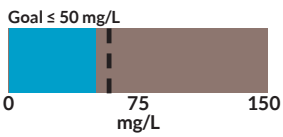
Annual total beach closure days across eight monitored Lake Mendota beaches (Governor Nelson, Warner, Mendota, James Madison, Memorial Union Pier, Marshall, Tenney, Spring Harbor) was **49 days**, compared to the **goal of 32 days or less** (four per beach); **65%** were due to high *E. coli* levels and **35%** to cyanobacteria. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*





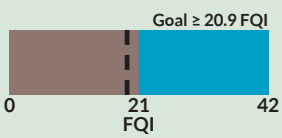
CHLORIDES

Average chloride concentration was **58.1 mg/L**, compared to the **50 mg/L or lower goal**, the level above which sensitive aquatic life, including zooplankton, may be negatively impacted. Levels have increased since monitoring began in the early 1970s. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*



PLANT COMMUNITY

Floristic Quality Index (FQI), measuring how closely the aquatic plant community resembles an undisturbed ecosystem, was **19.1** (2023 inventory), compared to the **20.9 or higher goal** (ecoregion median). *Data: Dane County Land & Water Resources.*



[Improving conditions when compared to first surveys in early 1990s, but lower than ecoregion average]

PFAS

Lake Mendota is not listed as impaired for PFAS. *Source: Wisconsin DNR.*

LAKE MONONA

Lake Monona is the second largest of the five Yahara lakes and sits immediately downstream of Lake Mendota, receiving most of its water and nutrients via the Yahara River. Its drainage area is predominantly urban, with storm sewer inputs and tributaries that include Murphy's (Wingra) Creek (west shore), the Yahara River (north shore), and Starkweather Creek (northeast shore). Water exits the south shore through the Yahara River to Upper Mud Lake and Lake Waubesa. The lake is listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act for PCBs (since 1998), total phosphorus (since 2011), and PFAS (since 2022).

Lake Type: Drainage
Direct Drainage Area: 40.5 sq. miles
Total Drainage Area: 278 sq. miles

Surface Area: 3,277 acres
Shoreline Length: 13 miles
Mean Depth: 27 feet

Maximum Depth: 74 feet
Volume: 29,059 million gallons
Flushing Rate: 91% of volume/year

2025 Health Metrics

Status vs. Goal

Trend (2013-2025)

PHOSPHORUS

July–August median surface phosphorus concentration measured at the deepest point was **0.031 mg/L**, compared to the **0.024 mg/L or lower goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate nutrients) and eutrophic (excess nutrients) conditions for deep lakes. *Wisconsin DNR ranking scale. Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

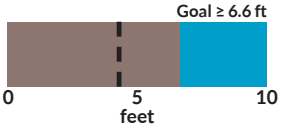
Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
>0.059	0.055 – 0.034	0.032 – 0.020	<0.020

*Gap on some graphs due to data not collected during pandemic

OFFSHORE CLARITY

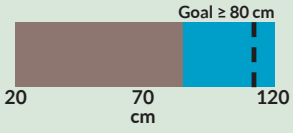
July–August median clarity measured with a Secchi disk over the deepest point was **4.3 ft**, compared to the **6.6 ft or greater goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate clarity) and eutrophic (poor clarity) conditions. *Wisconsin DNR ranking scale. Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
0 – 2.7	2.9 – 4.6	5.0 – 8.1	>8.1



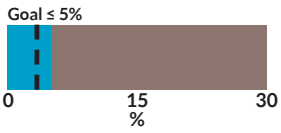
NEARSHORE CLARITY

June–August median nearshore clarity measurements taken with a 120-cm turbidity tube was **112.5 cm**, compared to the **80 cm or greater goal**. Lake Monona had the highest nearshore median clarity compared to the other lakes. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*



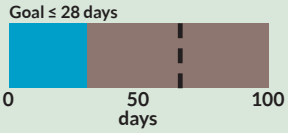
CYANOBACTERIA

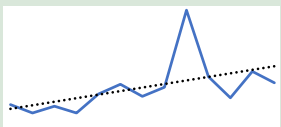
June–August sampling days when strong evidence of a potentially toxin-producing cyanobacteria bloom was observed at one or more nearshore sites was **3.4%**, compared to the **5% or less goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*



BEACH CLOSURES

Annual total beach closure days across seven monitored Lake Monona beaches (B.B. Clarke, Bernie's, Brittingham, Esther, Hudson, Olbrich, Olin) was **66 days**, compared to the **goal of 28 days or less**; **88%** were due to cyanobacteria and **12%** to *E. coli*. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*



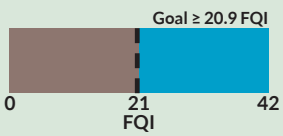


CHLORIDES

Average chloride concentration was **71.8 mg/L**, compared to the **50 mg/L or lower goal**, the level above which sensitive aquatic life, including zooplankton, may be negatively impacted. Levels have increased since the early 1970s. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*

PLANT COMMUNITY

Floristic Quality Index (FQI), measuring how closely the aquatic plant community resembles an undisturbed ecosystem, was **20.7** (2023 inventory), compared to the **20.9 or higher goal**. *Data: Dane County Land & Water Resources.*



[Improving conditions when compared to first survey in 2008]

PFAS

Lake Monona is **listed as impaired for PFAS (since 2022)** and is under a fish-consumption advisory. *Source: Wisconsin DNR.*

LAKE WINGRA

Lake Wingra is the smallest of the five major Yahara lakes by surface area, depth, and volume. Originally a deep-water marsh, this dredged lake now flows into Lake Monona via Murphy's (Wingra) Creek. Its drainage area lies entirely within the city of Madison and is predominantly urban. Three minor, unnamed tributaries enter along the west and southwest shores. The lake is listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act for total phosphorus (since 2011) and PCBs (since 2012).

Lake Type: Drainage
Direct Drainage Area: 5.4 sq. miles
Total Drainage Area: 5.4 sq. miles

Surface Area: 321 acres
Shoreline Length: 3.7 miles
Mean Depth: 9 feet

Maximum Depth: 14 feet
Volume: 1,585 million gallons
Flushing Rate: 77% of volume/year

2025 Health Metrics

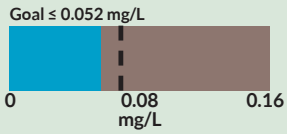
Status vs. Goal

Trend (2013-2025)

PHOSPHORUS

July–August median surface phosphorus concentration measured at the deepest point was **0.069 mg/L**, compared to the **0.052 mg/L or lower goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate nutrients) and eutrophic (excess nutrients) conditions for deep lakes. *Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
>0.103	0.096 – 0.055	0.052 – 0.030	<0.030

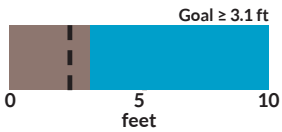


**Gap on some graphs due to data not collected during pandemic*

OFFSHORE CLARITY

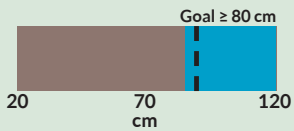
July–August median clarity measured with a Secchi disk over the deepest point was **2.3 ft**, compared to the **3.1 ft or greater goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate clarity) and eutrophic (poor clarity) conditions. *Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

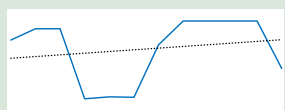
Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
0 – 1.5	1.6 – 2.9	3.1 – 5.3	>5.3



NEARSHORE CLARITY

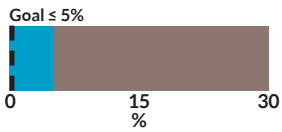
June–August median nearshore clarity measurements taken with a 120-cm turbidity tube was **89.5 cm**, compared to the **80 cm or greater goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*





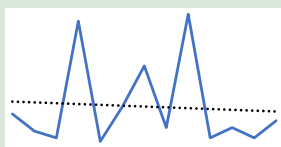
CYANOBACTERIA

June–August sampling days when strong evidence of a potentially toxin-producing cyanobacteria bloom was observed at one or more nearshore sites was **0%**, compared to the **5% or less goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*



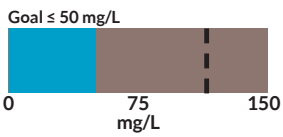
BEACH CLOSURES

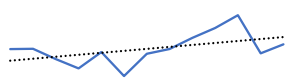
Annual total beach closure days at Vilas Beach was **7 days**, compared to the **goal of 4 days or less**; **100%** were due to high *E. coli* levels. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*



CHLORIDES

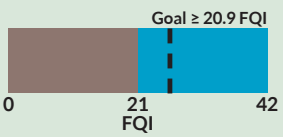
Average chloride concentration was **114.5 mg/L**, compared to the **50 mg/L or lower goal**, the level above which sensitive aquatic life, including zooplankton, may be negatively impacted. Levels have increased since the early 1970s. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*





PLANT COMMUNITY

Floristic Quality Index (FQI), measuring how closely the aquatic plant community resembles an undisturbed ecosystem, was **26.2** (2023 inventory), compared to the **20.9 or higher goal** (ecoregion median). *Data: Dane County Land & Water Resources.*



[Improving conditions when compared to first FQI assessment in 2011]

PFAS

Lake Wingra is not listed as impaired for PFAS. *Source: Wisconsin DNR.*

LAKE WAUBESA

Lake Waubesa is the fourth largest of the Yahara lakes by surface area and volume. It sits downstream of Upper Mud Lake and Lake Monona. Its drainage area includes a mix of urban and rural/agricultural land uses. Inlet tributaries include Nine Springs Creek and Penitto Creek (north), the Yahara River (north shore), and Swan Creek and Murphy's Creek (southwest shore). Most water and nutrients come from the upper lakes through the Yahara River. Water exits the east shore through the Yahara River to Lake Kegonsa. Waubesa is listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act for phosphorus (since 2011) and PFAS (since 2022).

Lake Type: Drainage
Direct Drainage Area: 43.6 sq. miles
Total Drainage Area: 325 sq. miles

Surface Area: 2,083 acres
Shoreline Length: 9.4 miles
Mean Depth: 15 feet

Maximum Depth: 38 feet
Volume: 10,567 million gallons
Flushing Rate: 320% of volume/year

2025 Health Metrics

Status vs. Goal

Trend (2013-2025)

PHOSPHORUS

July–August median surface phosphorus concentration measured at the deepest point was **0.046 mg/L**, compared to the **0.052 mg/L or lower goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate nutrient) and eutrophic (excess nutrient) conditions for deep lakes. *Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

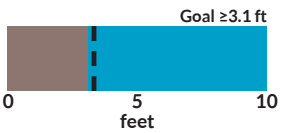
Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
>0.103	0.096 – 0.055	0.052 – 0.030	<0.030

**Gap on some graphs due to data not collected during pandemic*

OFFSHORE CLARITY

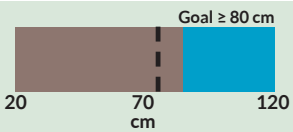
July–August median clarity measured with a Secchi disk over the deepest point was **3.3 ft**, compared to the **3.1 ft or greater goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate clarity) and eutrophic (poor clarity) conditions. *Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

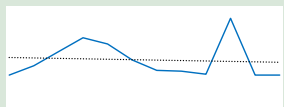
Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
0 – 1.5	1.6 – 2.9	3.1 – 5.3	>5.3



NEARSHORE CLARITY

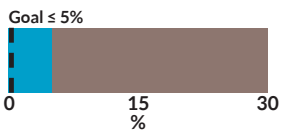
June–August median nearshore clarity measurements taken with a 120-cm turbidity tube was **75.0 cm**, compared to the **80 cm or greater goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*





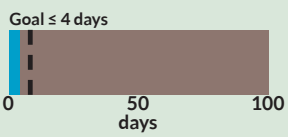
CYANOBACTERIA

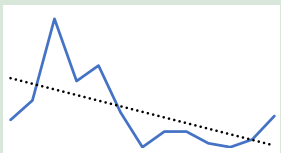
June–August percent unique sampling days when strong evidence of a potentially toxin-producing cyanobacteria bloom was observed at one or more nearshore sites was **0%**, compared to the **5% or less goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*



BEACH CLOSURES

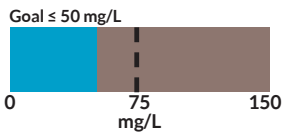
Annual total beach closure days at Goodland Beach was **8 days**, compared to the **goal of 4 days or less**; 100% were due to high *E. coli* levels. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*





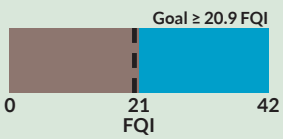
CHLORIDES

Average chloride concentration was **73.7 mg/L**, compared to the **50 mg/L or lower goal**, the level above which sensitive aquatic life, including zooplankton, may be negatively impacted. Levels have increased since the early 1970s. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*



PLANT COMMUNITY

Floristic Quality Index (FQI), measuring how closely the aquatic plant community resembles an undisturbed ecosystem, was **20.4** (2024 inventory), compared to the **20.9 or higher goal**. *Data: Dane County Land & Water Resources.*



[Improving conditions when compared to first survey in 2006]

PFAS

Lake Waubesa is **listed as impaired for PFAS (since 2022)** and is under a fish-consumption advisory. *Source: Wisconsin DNR*

LAKE KEGONSA

Lake Kegonsa is the third largest of the Yahara lakes by surface area and volume. It sits downstream of Lake Waubesa and Lower Mud Lake. Its drainage area is predominantly rural/agricultural. Inlet tributaries include the Yahara River and Door Creek (north shore), and two unnamed creeks (southwest and northeast shore). Most water and nutrients come from the upstream lakes through the Yahara River. Water exits the east shore through the Yahara River toward the Rock and Mississippi Rivers. Kegonsa is listed as impaired under the Clean Water Act for total phosphorus (since 2011) and PFAS (since 2022).

Lake Type: Drainage
Direct Drainage Area: 54.4 sq. miles
Total Drainage Area: 384.6 sq. miles

Surface Area: 3,210 acres
Shoreline Length: 9.6 miles
Mean Depth: 17 feet

Maximum Depth: 32 feet
Volume: 17,700 million gallons
Flushing Rate: 220% of volume/year

2025 Health Metrics

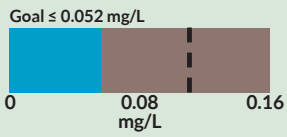
Status vs. Goal

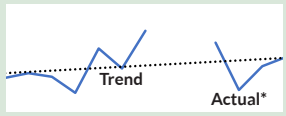
Trend (2013-2025)

PHOSPHORUS

July–August median surface phosphorus concentration measured at the deepest point was **0.111 mg/L**, compared to the **0.052 mg/L or lower goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate nutrients) and eutrophic (excess nutrients) conditions for deep lakes. *Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
>0.103	0.096 – 0.055	0.052 – 0.030	<0.030



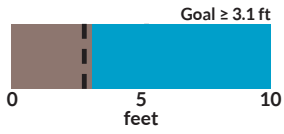


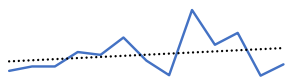
**Gap on some graphs due to data not collected during pandemic*

OFFSHORE CLARITY

July–August median clarity measured with a Secchi disk over the deepest point was **2.8 ft**, compared to the **3.1 ft or greater goal**, the threshold between mesotrophic (moderate clarity) and eutrophic (poor clarity) conditions. *Data: UW Center for Limnology.*

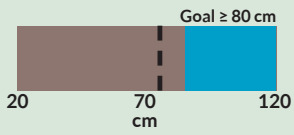
Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
0 – 1.5	1.6 – 2.9	3.1 – 5.3	>5.3

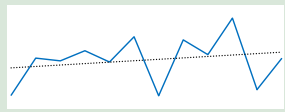




NEARSHORE CLARITY

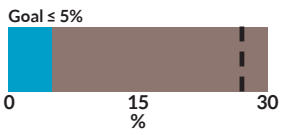
June–August median nearshore clarity measurements taken with a 120-cm turbidity tube was **75.0 cm**, compared to the **80 cm or greater goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*

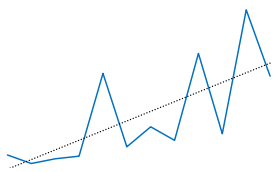




CYANOBACTERIA

June–August sampling days when strong evidence of a potentially toxin-producing cyanobacteria bloom was observed at one or more nearshore sites was **27.0%**, compared to the **5% or less goal**. *Data: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast monitoring network.*



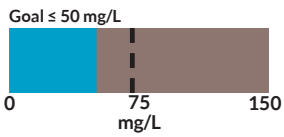


BEACH CLOSURES

Lake Kegonsa has no beaches monitored by Public Health Madison & Dane County; *closure data is not available.*

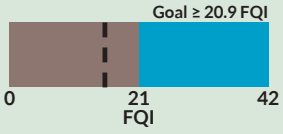
CHLORIDES

Average chloride concentration was **70.9 mg/L**, compared to the **50 mg/L or lower goal**, the level above which sensitive aquatic life, including zooplankton, may be negatively impacted. Levels have increased since the early 1970s. *Data: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*



PLANT COMMUNITY

Floristic Quality Index (FQI), measuring how closely the aquatic plant community resembles an undisturbed ecosystem, was **15.5** (2024 inventory), compared to the **20.9 or higher goal**. *Data: Dane County Land & Water Resources.*



[Stable conditions since the first FQI assessment in 2006]

PFAS

Lake Kegonsa is **listed as impaired for PFAS (since 2022)** and is under a fish-consumption advisory. *Source: Wisconsin DNR.*

WATER QUALITY INDICATORS

The *State of the Lakes* assesses five areas of interest that represent vital, interconnected pieces of the larger water quality puzzle. Illustrated in Figure 2, they include both outputs (i.e., land-use actions taken) and outcomes (i.e., measured water quality responses). Each was chosen to illustrate critical cause-and-effect principles that play out as water interacts with and gets funneled through the watershed.

The availability and movement of phosphorus are central themes given its dominant role in affecting overall lake conditions. Although a natural element essential for plant and animal growth, it can easily harm water quality due to excess supply and poor management. Sources of phosphorus can include eroded soil particles, fertilizer runoff, leaf debris in city streets, livestock manure, sewage releases, and uncollected pet waste. A common rule of thumb is that it takes only one pound of phosphorus to generate up to 500 pounds of wet algae growth.

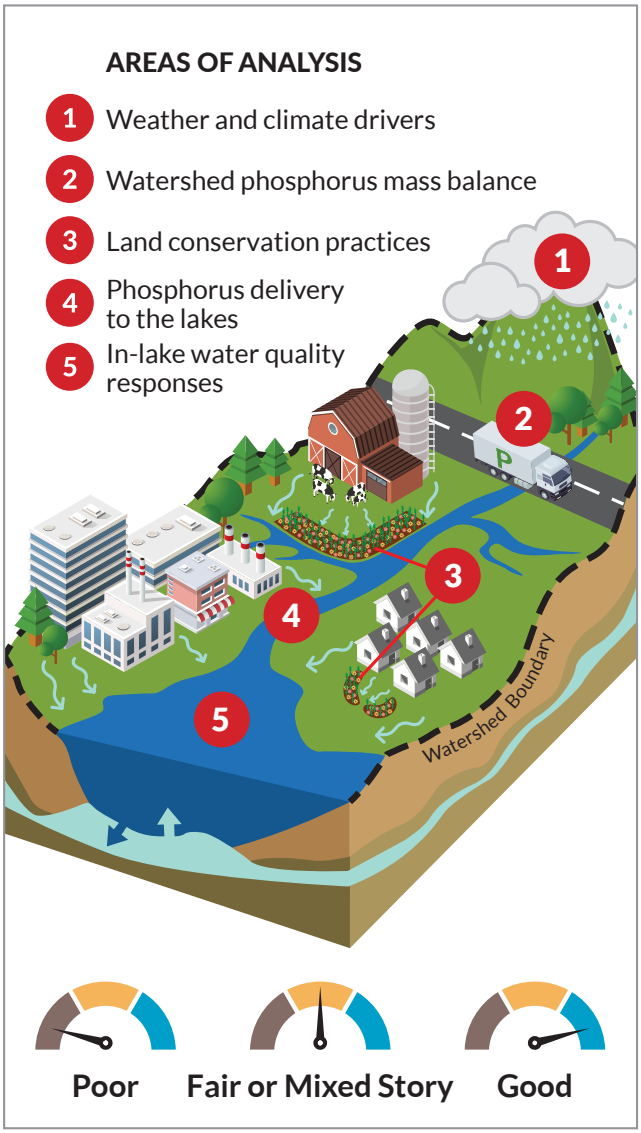
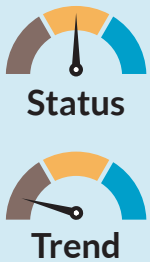


Figure 2: Cross-section illustration of an example watershed showing five areas of analysis. Example scoring dials are used throughout this report to represent the status and long-term trend for each area of analysis.

1 WEATHER & CLIMATE DRIVERS



After a wetter-than-normal 2024, total precipitation mirrored the historical average in 2025. Longer-term trends toward milder winters and increased rainfall intensities will make managing runoff more difficult.

The Wisconsin State Climatology Office confirms that the past two decades have been the state's warmest on record, and the 2010s was Wisconsin's wettest decade. Regardless of whether it is a change in average temperature, precipitation, ice cover, or some other factor, lakes dynamically respond to their environment. Regional heating and cooling patterns influence what types of aquatic organisms can thrive, how and when the water column mixes, and the timing and magnitude of annual freeze cycles. Meanwhile, the timing, intensity, and amount of rainfall over the watershed determine what can get moved from the land surface into downstream receiving waters, including phosphorus-containing materials that fuel algal growth and turn the lakes green.

Ice Cover

Winter ice conditions and the timing of ice-off influence everything from a lake's thermal properties to the reproductive success of its aquatic life. Ice quality and overlying snow depth affect how much sunlight can penetrate to warm the water column and facilitate dissolved oxygen production through photosynthesis. As ice-off dates move earlier due to climate change, resulting impacts can range from poorer walleye reproduction to more intense algal blooms.

Winter temperatures heading into 2025 were warmer compared to the long-term average, contributing to a relatively short ice season. During the 2024–2025 winter, lakes Mendota and Monona had 69 and 79 days of ice cover, respectively — both well below their 102-day historical averages. This continues a trend toward shorter ice seasons in recent decades. Earlier ice-out dates and below-average ice cover durations align with broader

patterns of increasing winter temperatures in our region. Shorter and warmer winters lead to warmer lake temperatures earlier in the year, effectively creating a longer growing season for algae and aquatic plants. Warmer winters can also contribute to greater runoff and phosphorus delivery when wet precipitation falls on frozen soils. Rather than soak into the ground, rainfall more easily turns into runoff that can carry land-spread manure and other contaminants into the ditches and streams that drain to the lakes. It is estimated that, on average, nearly half of the total phosphorus loading through Lake Mendota's monitored stream tributaries occurs from January to March, making late winter and early spring a vulnerable time for our lakes.

Precipitation

A total of 36.41 inches of precipitation fell across the watershed during the 2025 "water year" (Oct. 1 – Sep. 30). This is a 22% decrease over the prior year's wetter-than-normal 46.45 inches and less than an inch shy of the historic normal. Water years are used to align data collection with the natural cycle of water accumulation and runoff. This 12-month period ensures that winter snow cover is counted alongside the rain that fed it, providing accurate, consistent annual data for managing water resources.

The winter season, particularly January – March, brings the highest levels of phosphorus loading to our lakes, often resulting in increased blooms and aquatic plant growth during the summer season. As much as 37-48% of phosphorus loading occurs during this three-month period based on long-term stream gaging data collected by the U.S. Geological Survey.

While spring and summer rainfall totals were close to historical averages, it's worth noting that May, June, July, and August each recorded at least one day with rainfall exceeding one inch, and some over two inches within a 24-hour period. These large events contribute to increased soil erosion and stormwater runoff throughout the watershed, impacting water clarity and algal bloom frequency.

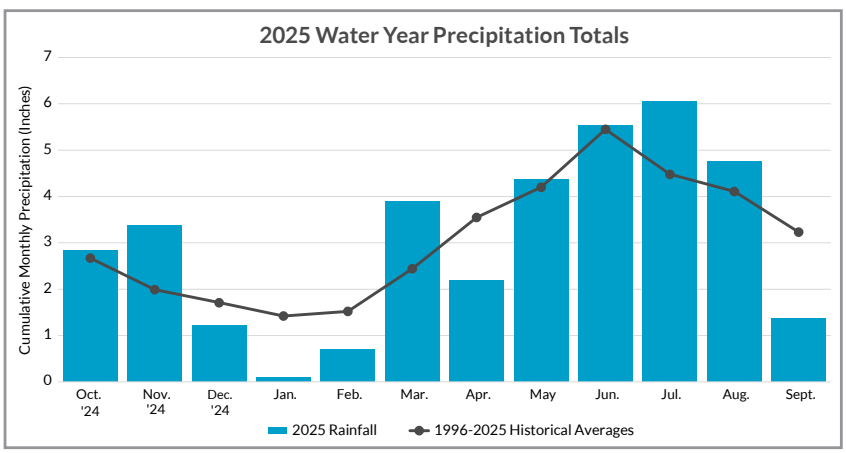
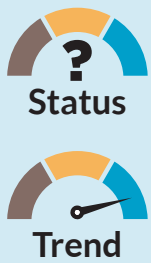


Figure 3: Cumulative precipitation measured at the Dane County Regional Airport. Total precipitation collected in inches during the 2025 water year (Oct. 1 - Sep. 30) compared to historic normals. *Precipitation data credit: NOAA Regional Climate Center, Dane County Regional Airport.*

2 WATERSHED PHOSPHORUS MASS BALANCE



A mass-balance analysis was last performed using data from 1992-2017 and showed a slowing rate of net phosphorus accumulation in the watershed. This analysis should be repeated to evaluate any recent changes to these overall trends.

The difference between the mass of phosphorus entering (imported into) and leaving (exported from) the watershed tells us whether the net balance is trending in the right direction. The movement and fate of livestock, feed, fertilizer, harvested crops, animal waste, and other phosphorus sources are factored into the analysis. The goal is to attain a negative balance, indicating more phosphorus is being exported than imported on an annual basis. This situation reduces the overall availability of phosphorus from being able to reach area waterways.

Conversely, a positive balance signals an annual net accumulation of phosphorus in the watershed, usually leading to its gradual buildup in area soils. Phosphorus-saturated soils subject to erosion from disturbance or a lack of year-round plant cover can eventually end up at the bottom of nearby lakes and streams. Phosphorus is also more easily "leached" (or released in dissolved form) from these soils when they encounter rainwater and snowmelt.

Past improvements to the overall mass balance are attributed to multiple factors. They include decreases in imported commercial fertilizer, less phosphorus-containing feed supplements consumed by livestock, exported byproducts of manure digestion, and advanced phosphorus-management strategies implemented by Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (among others). Examples of mass balance detractors include increases in livestock numbers and milk production that result in more manure being generated.


Token Creek

3 LAND CONSERVATION PRACTICES


Status


Trend

The adoption of agricultural and urban best practices, such as farmland nutrient management plans, planting of cover crops, reduced tillage, construction site erosion controls, and removing fall leaf debris from streets, helps keep phosphorus out of our lakes and streams. More of these practices are needed to overcome increasing rainfall and runoff.

The implementation of conservation practices is critical in our efforts to improve water quality. Perennial grasslands, vegetative buffers, cover crops, and rotational grazing are examples of land-stewardship practices that protect soils and reduce the amount of soil and nutrient runoff reaching nearby surface waters.

Another recommended practice is the implementation of nutrient management plans. Nutrient management plans are a tool that allows farmers to evaluate different cropping, tillage, and nutrient applications (i.e., fertilizer and manure spreading) to support strong yields while reducing runoff risk. They also help inform nutrient-application decisions, reducing the potential for nitrates to contaminate drinking water aquifers. In the Yahara Lakes Watershed, UW-Madison Extension reporting shows that between 16-29% of private wells are currently exceeding the 10-mg/L health standard.

Records filed with Dane County Land & Water Resources in 2025 indicate that 46,039 out of 81,253 total agricultural acres within the Yahara Lakes Watershed (56%) were mapped as having a nutrient management plan. This represents a 3% increase over what was reported in 2024. Since Dane County does not receive plans from every farm on an annual basis, the reported percentage of agricultural land having a nutrient management plan is likely to be considerably higher but still short of the goal of having all acres covered.

A key environmental metric within nutrient management plans is the Rotational Average Phosphorus Index (PI), representing estimated pounds of phosphorus loss per acre per year. The higher the PI value the greater the risk for phosphorus to reach surface waters. State standards require all agricultural fields to have a PI of 6 or less. However, based on modeling summarized in *RENEW THE BLUE: A Community Guide for Cleaner Lakes & Beaches in the Yahara Watershed* (2022), a Rotational Average PI of 2.1 or less is needed to reach phosphorus loading targets and water quality goals. Based on information from nutrient management plans submitted in 2025, the average PI for fields within the Yahara Lakes Watershed was 2.3, or a one-tenth reduction compared to the prior year.

4 PHOSPHORUS DELIVERY TO THE LAKES


Status


Trend

Phosphorus loading into Lake Mendota was similar to the 2021–2023 drought years, hitting water quality targets. In both 2024 and 2025, the January–March period had a smaller impact on total phosphorus loading than is typical.

Most phosphorus is delivered to the Yahara lakes through tributary streams that collect and funnel upland-generated runoff as it moves downhill. How much is transported depends on the seasonal timing and intensity of runoff events, the location and availability of major phosphorus sources, and measures taken to contain those sources and manage runoff.

Stream monitoring helps assess how conservation practices, land-use changes, and shifts in weather or climate influence phosphorus loading. Loading describes

the total mass of phosphorus entering a water body over a specific period. In our case, we characterize loading in pounds of phosphorus (calculated by multiplying in-stream concentrations by streamflow) delivered to Lake Mendota through its monitored stream tributaries in a given water year.

Perched at the top of the chain and receiving most of the drainage from the Yahara Lakes Watershed, the condition of Lake Mendota offers a good indicator for how the downstream lakes will be impacted. Lake Mendota is also the largest lake with the greatest number of monitored streams and the most complete long-term dataset. Most of the phosphorus received by the lower lakes in the chain is through the outlets of the upper lakes as it cascades through the system.

Figure 4 shows stream-monitored phosphorus loading since 2013. Total precipitation is also plotted to distinguish between wet and dry years. From 2021-2023, average annual phosphorus loading to Lake Mendota was comparatively lower, dipping slightly below the water quality target level (approximately 32,600 lbs.). This was largely due to the three-year period of drier weather that followed years of above-average precipitation, reducing the amount of runoff able to transport phosphorus to the lakes. Favorable phosphorus-loading conditions were repeated in 2025. Scientists estimate that, on average, the number of summer algal-bloom days can be cut in half if these lower levels can be maintained.

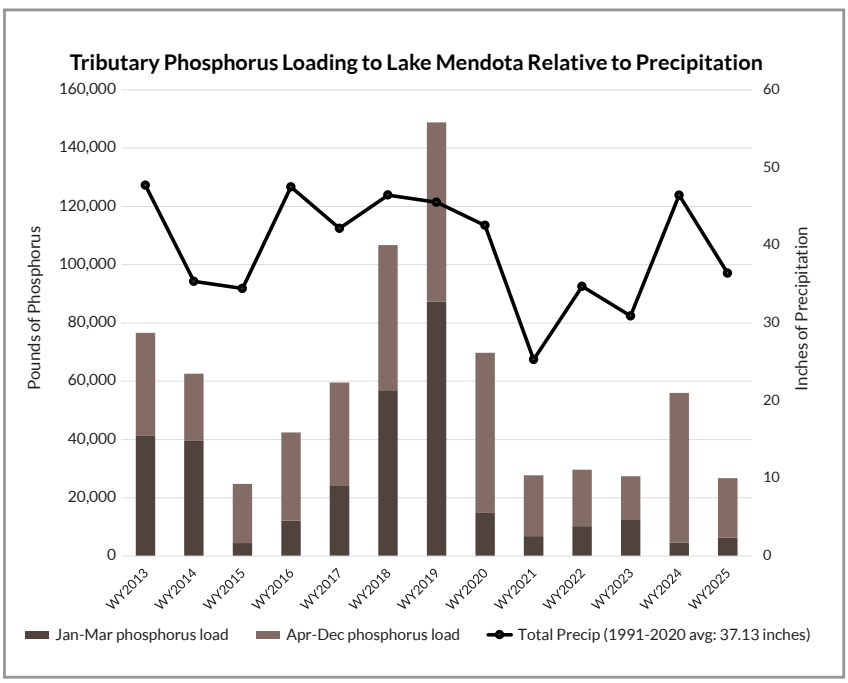
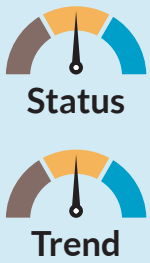


Figure 4: Phosphorus loading through Lake Mendota's monitored stream tributaries in relation to total precipitation by water year (Oct. 1 - Sep. 30). *Phosphorus loading data credit: U.S. Geological Survey. Precipitation data credit: NOAA Regional Climate Center, Dane County Regional Airport.*

5 IN-LAKE WATER QUALITY RESPONSES



Offshore water clarity and phosphorus levels were in the fair to good range for most of the Yahara lakes. Lake Kegonsa was the exception as it moved from a good to poor phosphorus ranking. After a multi-year stretch of consistently favorable clarity and phosphorus values for Lake Wingra, it moved from good to fair rankings in both categories. Compared to 2024, fewer cyanobacteria blooms were reported across the chain.

Several in-lake metrics are used to assess overall lake health and track changes over time. Those metrics include water clarity, phosphorus concentration, presence of cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) blooms, and beach closures. Each is summarized in the following sections. Apart from Lake Wingra and Lake Kegonsa, the other Yahara lakes improved slightly in phosphorus and offshore clarity compared to 2024.

Phosphorus

In-lake phosphorus concentrations fell or remained relatively unchanged in all the lakes except for Lake Wingra and Lake Kegonsa (Figure 5). No obvious trends are evident in any of the lakes when looking at longer time horizons.

After Lake Mendota's post-turnover phosphorus concentrations hit record lows in 2022 and 2023, a much wetter 2024 saw these positive effects start to disappear before improving again in 2025. Turnover occurs when deeper lakes cool to the point where the water column can completely mix. Higher phosphorus concentrations that have built up throughout the summer in the lake's bottom waters are then mixed throughout the lake. When less phosphorus enters the lake from the watershed, the bottom-water buildup of phosphorus is reduced, thereby reducing internal (in-lake) sources that can fuel algal growth the following year.

According to UW Center for Limnology Honorary Fellow Richard Lathrop, "Fall-turnover phosphorus

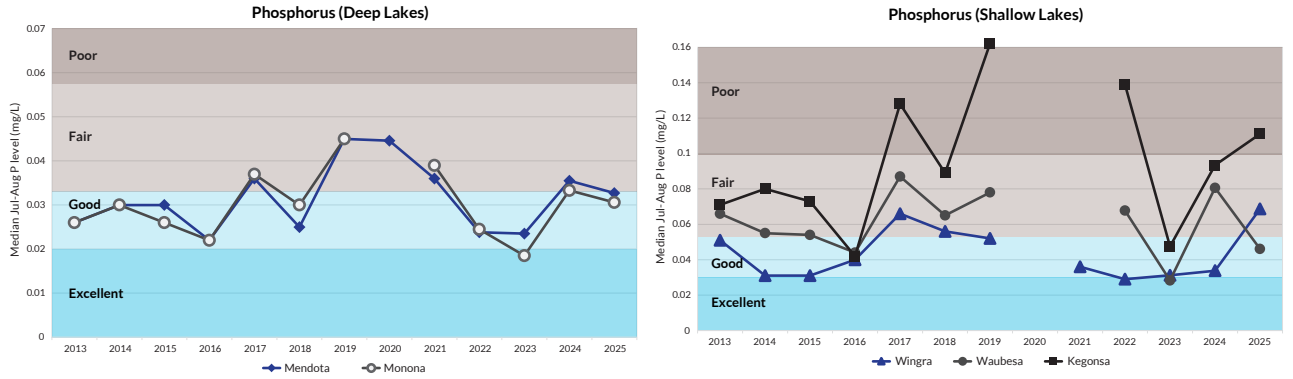


Figure 5: Median summer (July-August) phosphorus concentrations and corresponding water quality classifications by lake type. Phosphorus sampling was not performed in lakes Kegonsa, Waubesa, and Wingra in 2020, and in lakes Kegonsa and Waubesa in 2021. Water quality classifications based on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' criteria. *Data credit: Richard Lathrop, UW-Madison Center for Limnology.*

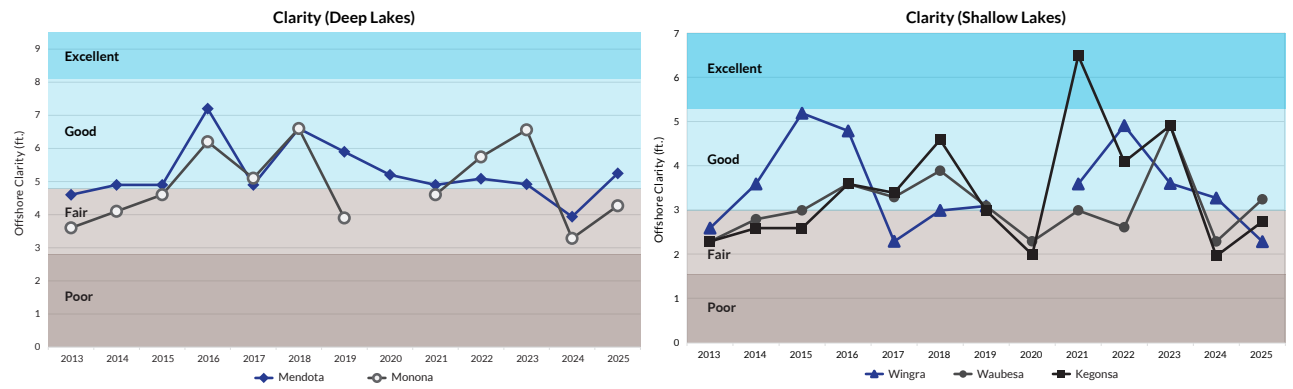


Figure 6: Median summer (July-August) offshore water clarity readings and corresponding water quality classifications by lake type. Water clarity information was not available for lakes Monona and Wingra in 2020. Water quality classifications based on Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' criteria. *Data credit: Richard Lathrop, UW-Madison Center for Limnology.*

concentrations were especially low in 1988, 2012, and 2023 following those extended drought periods. Fifty years of post-turnover monitoring data confirm that Lake Mendota's phosphorus levels decline when watershed sources are reduced, resulting in significant and relatively quick water quality improvements."

Water Clarity

Offshore water clarity improved by roughly a foot over the prior year for all of the Yahara lakes except for Lake Wingra (Figure 6). In fact, Lake Mendota experienced a prolonged, spring clear-water phase with record-setting clarity readings. Lake Wingra, on the other hand, had a year defined by extremes, starting with high clarity early in the season before dropping to less than two-foot clarity readings in August. A short clear-water phase in the spring was followed by low clarity readings not seen since before a successful carp-removal project in 2008. Because Lake Wingra fish sampling by UW Center for Limnology did not show new carp recruitment, the loss of clarity was likely due to a surge of nutrients entering through storm sewers following one or more summer runoff events.

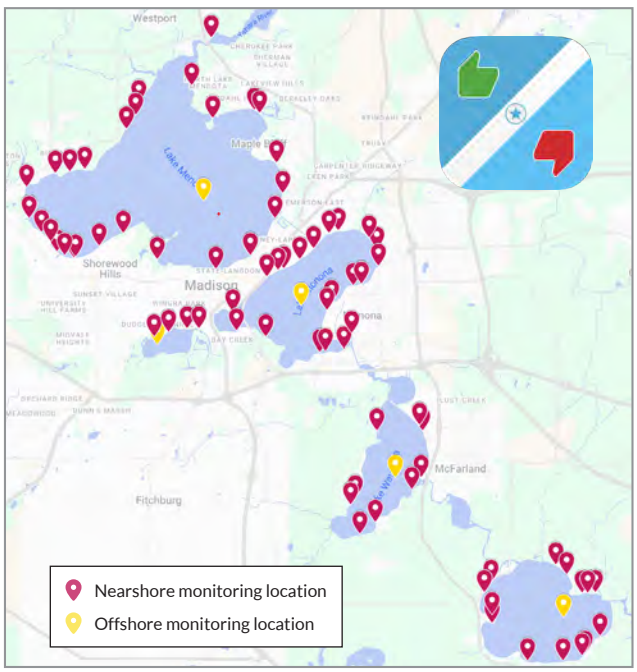


Figure 7: 2025 LakeForecast monitoring locations.

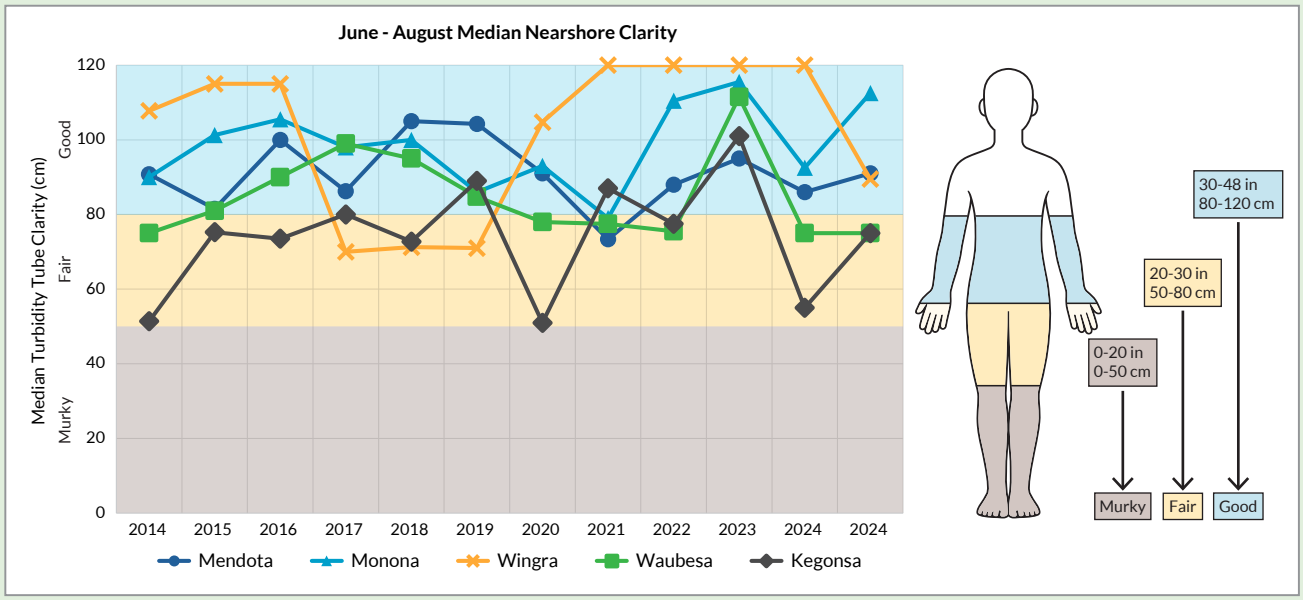


Figure 8: Median summer (June-August) nearshore clarity readings for each lake (2014-2025). *Data credit: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast Program.*

Because water clarity often varies across a given lake, Clean Lakes Alliance uses a network of trained monitors to collect additional data through its LakeForecast program. From Memorial Day through Labor Day, monitors submit at least twice-weekly reports on water clarity, water temperature, and the severity of observed green algae and cyanobacteria blooms (among other variables). A total of 1,755 condition reports were submitted in 2025. These reports allow lake users to stay aware of ever-changing nearshore conditions. They also help scientists better understand how water quality responds to environmental change occurring both in the outlying watershed and within each lake itself.

Nearshore clarity is measured by LakeForecast monitors using a turbidity tube to report conditions at 79 sites spanning all five lakes (Figure 7). Figure 8 shows the median summer (Jun-Aug) clarity readings for each lake from 2014-2025. Values under 50 centimeters are considered "murky," between 50-80 "fair," and between 80-120 "good." Figure 9 shows how nearshore clarity by lake changed as the 2025 sampling season progressed.

Values for 2025 remained within the fair to good range. Lake Monona had the highest median nearshore clarity while Lake Waubesa and Lake Kegonsa had the lowest. Comparing nearshore to offshore findings highlights how clarity can vary over both time and space within individual lakes, and why both assessments are provided in this report.

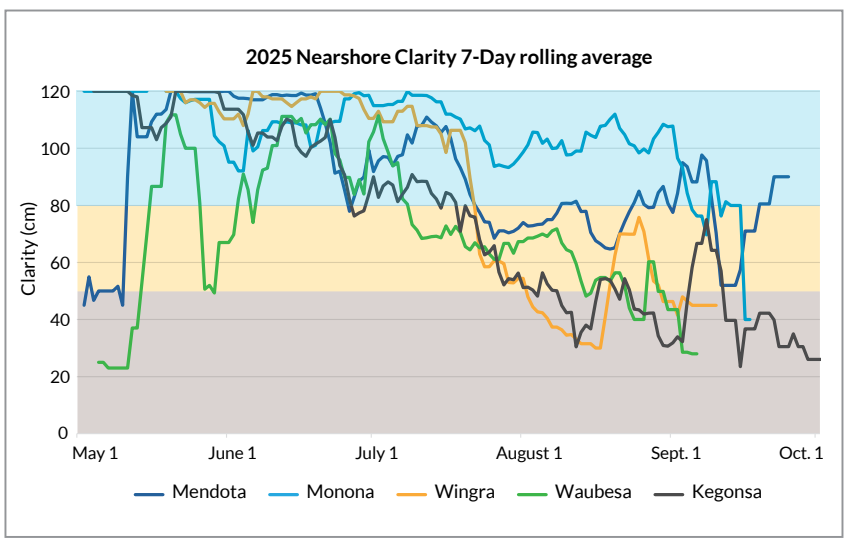


Figure 9: Nearshore clarity (7-day rolling average) recorded from June 1 - August 31, 2025. Measured in centimeters using a 120-cm turbidity tube and displayed relative to Clean Lakes Alliance's good (80-120 cm), fair (50-80 cm), and murky (0-50 cm) clarity classifications. *Data credit: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast Program.*

Water clarity usually diminishes as the season unfolds. In spring, cooler water and an abundance of native zooplankton suppress algae growth, favoring clearer water. Zooplankton numbers decline as the summer progresses due to increased water temperature and predation by young fish, reducing this natural grazing pressure on algae. At the same time, sunlight and heat stimulate algae growth, especially when nutrients like phosphorus are plentiful. Increased boating activity can also stir up bottom sediments in shallow areas, further decreasing clarity. By mid- to late summer, the combined effects of reduced zooplankton grazing,

higher algae growth, and sediment-resuspending recreational activities often turn lakes murkier compared to earlier in the season.

Cyanobacteria Blooms

To determine cyanobacteria bloom frequency, the number of days on each lake with at least one report of a strong cyanobacteria bloom observed within the monitoring sites was counted. By dividing the number of "cyanobacteria bloom days" by the total number of sampling days for each lake, a percentage is generated representing how often the monitors observed at least one major bloom within their nearshore sampling area. This method lessens overreporting in situations when different monitors report the same cyanobacteria bloom.

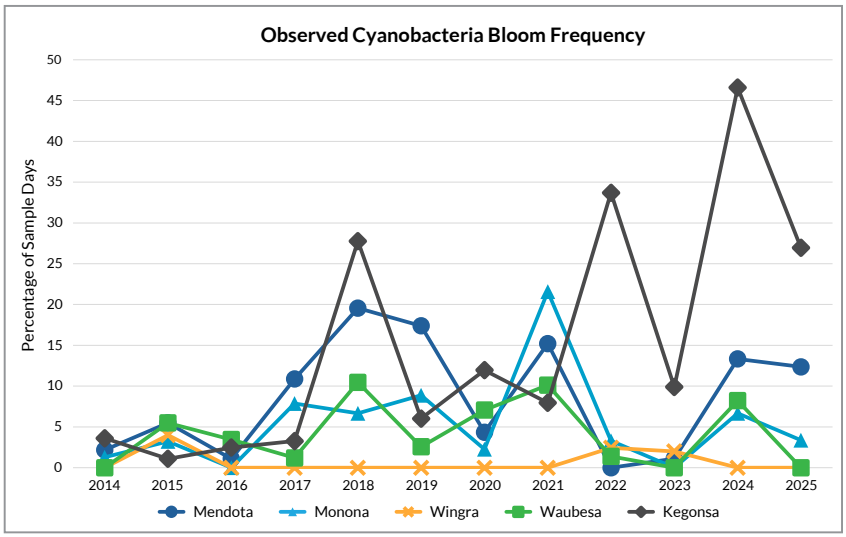


Figure 10: Percent of sampling days (June-August) when strong evidence of a cyanobacteria bloom was observed at one or more sites on each lake. *Data credit: Clean Lakes Alliance LakeForecast Program.*

Figure 10 shows the percentage of sampling days when strong evidence of a cyanobacteria bloom was observed on each lake (2014-2025). Overall, monitors reported fewer cyanobacteria blooms, with every lake experiencing a reduction in reported cyanobacteria blooms compared to 2024.

Lake Kegonsa continued to report the highest frequency of blooms, with over 40% of sampling days having significant evidence of a surface bloom reported during the month of August. Lake Mendota saw the second-highest numbers, with August being the worst month for surface blooms. Both lakes Mendota and Kegonsa saw bloom frequencies increase as the sampling season progressed, while Lake Monona experienced the opposite trend. Monitors on Lake Wingra and Lake Waubesa did not report a single, significant bloom from June 1st to August 31st.

Beach Closures

Beach closures are another useful indicator of general lake health. Clean Lakes Alliance looks at closure data provided by Public Health Madison & Dane County for 17 beaches (Figure 11). Covering four of the five Yahara lakes, these tested public beaches were selected for analysis due to the consistency of tracking data over the reporting period. Results are reported as total closure days recorded for each season, roughly running from Memorial Day to Labor Day. For example, if two beaches on a given lake are closed for a total of five days each, 10 closure days would be reported for that lake.

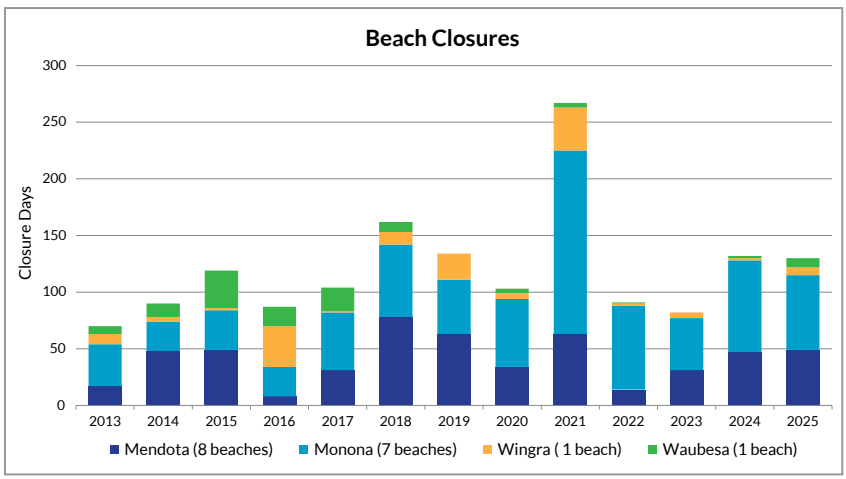


Figure 11: Beach closure days by lake. Includes beaches consistently monitored since 2013. Lake Mendota: Governor Nelson, Warner, Mendota County (not monitored due to being closed for renovation), James Madison, Memorial Union Pier, Marshall, Tenney, and Spring Harbor; Lake Monona: B.B. Clarke, Bernie's, Brittingham, Esther, Hudson, Olbrich, Olin; Lake Wingra: Vilas; Lake Waubesa: Goodland County; Lake Kegonsa: None. *Data credit: Public Health Madison & Dane County.*

Closures are most often the result of high cyanobacteria and/or *E. coli* bacteria levels, with closure rates strongly influenced by timing and frequency of testing. Beaches are generally tested once per week and then daily for those with a closure in effect. Cyanobacteria blooms, which are often a product of high lake fertility (caused by an oversupply of nutrients like phosphorus), can be dangerous due to the bloom's potential to release toxins that can harm people, pets, and wildlife. High *E. coli* concentrations can also be harmful as they are an indicator of human or animal fecal matter in the water that may contain

dangerous pathogens. *E. coli* often enters beach areas via nearby storm sewer outfalls and waterfowl feces.

There were 130 closure days among the beaches tracked for this analysis. This was comparable to 2024 and surpasses the median of 104 closure days since 2013. Closures were caused by *E. coli* (81%) and cyanobacteria (19%). Beaches closed exclusively due to *E. coli* were James Madison, Marshall, and Spring Harbor on Lake Mendota, Esther and Olin on Lake Monona, Vilas on Lake Wingra, and Goodland County on Lake Waubesa. Beaches closed exclusively due to cyanobacteria were Warner and Tenney on Lake Mendota, and B.B. Clarke on Lake Monona. The remaining tracked beaches — Bernies, Brittingham, Hudson, and Olbrich on Lake Monona — were closed due to both *E. coli* and cyanobacteria.

THE STORY OF 2025

The 2025 *State of the Lakes* tells a story that is both encouraging and cautionary. Favorable runoff conditions and below-average winter precipitation helped reduce phosphorus delivery during the critical January–March period, contributing to fair to good offshore clarity and phosphorus levels in most of the lakes. Compared to 2024, fewer cyanobacteria blooms were reported across the chain, and most lakes saw modest improvements in summer clarity. These results reinforce what decades of data continue to demonstrate: when phosphorus loading declines, the lakes can respond favorably, quickly, and measurably.

At the same time, significant challenges persist. All five Yahara lakes remain listed as impaired for phosphorus, with additional impairments for PFAS (commonly referred to as forever chemicals) and other contaminants impacting their health and usability. Rising chloride concentrations linked to winter deicing practices continue to trend upward. Beach closures remain elevated compared to long-term medians, driven primarily by elevated levels of *E. coli* and cyanobacteria. Lake Kegonsa's increase in phosphorus and bloom frequency underscores how fragile gains can be when watershed conditions shift.

The watershed indicators provide important context. Nutrient management plans cover just over half of agricultural acres in the watershed, and the average Phosphorus Index value remains above what modeling suggests is needed to consistently meet water quality goals. Climate trends toward warmer winters, shorter ice seasons, and more intense rainfall events further complicate progress. Even in a year of near-average precipitation, high-intensity storms can still deliver large pulses of runoff and phosphorus into the lakes. ■

Aerial view of Lake Monona in the fall of 2025, photo courtesy Robert Bertera

Building additional manure-processing capacity is a top recommended action to achieve cleaner lakes

CLEANER LAKES BEGIN UPHILL

The story of water quality change is why the action framework outlined in *RENEW THE BLUE: A Community Guide for Cleaner Lakes & Beaches in the Yahara Watershed* remains so essential. Priority recommendations include **direct-impact actions** that measurably reduce phosphorus loading at its source:

1. **Build additional manure-processing capacity.**
   Support farmers in using existing manure-processing facilities or to build their own on-farm systems. Pilot a manure-collection and processing program targeting the critical January-March period with the highest overall phosphorus loading.
2. **Increase the ability to handle and transport manure.**
   Use composting and other processing techniques to allow for improved timing and targeting of applications. Minimize chemical fertilizer use by substituting with composted manure or other sources of crop nutrients generated within the watershed.
3. **Increase farmland acres guided by a nutrient management plan.**
   Use plans to improve operational decision-making, ensure the most efficient use of costly nutrient inputs, and reduce the risk of phosphorus loss.
4. **Increase farmland acres under no-till (or reduced tillage) and continuous living cover.**
   Limit soil disturbance and maintain a living root in the soil with cover/forage crops, harvestable buffer strips, overwintering hay, etc. to build better soil health and reduce erosion.
5. **Increase municipal street-cleaning miles and frequency during fall.**
   Regularly remove leaf litter from streets to prevent rainwater-leached phosphorus from entering storm sewer systems.
6. **Protect internally drained lands and wetlands.**
   Use closed depressions (accounting for an estimated 41% of the watershed) to naturally retain and absorb runoff. Maintain and restore wetland function to achieve similar benefits.
7. **Increase green-infrastructure installations in parks, new developments, and on existing residential and commercial properties.**
   Incorporate nature-based solutions such as rain gardens, bioswales, infiltration trenches, and permeable pavement to capture, absorb, and filter runoff. Use tools such as stormwater utility credits, rate adjustments, and recognitions to reward action.

The actions described above directly capture or reduce phosphorus before it reaches streams and lakes. Equally important are the priority **indirect-impact actions** that enable and accelerate implementation at scale:

1. **Continue to work together as Yahara CLEAN Compact members.**
   Maintain ongoing member meetings to collaborate on recommended actions, report progress, and coordinate around new initiatives. Ongoing collaboration should consider how actions might affect the watershed phosphorus mass balance, among other factors.
2. **Increase participation in producer-led watershed groups.**
   Expand farmer involvement in conservation planning and practice adoption through continued learning, information sharing, and distribution of cost-share incentives.
3. **Complete an inventory of shoreline and beach conditions.**
   Establish guidelines and criteria for the sustainable design, development, management, and restoration of shorelines and public beaches.
4. **Increase *E. coli* testing at public beaches.**
   Focus efforts on beaches shown to be most susceptible to problems. Assess *E. coli* bacteria sources at beaches with high closure rates so corrective measures can be taken.
5. **Continue to track and report progress.**
   Use and support the annual *State of the Lakes* report as a means of outreaching to the community. Support continued maintenance and operation of stream-gaging stations that track changes in phosphorus loading.

Together, these recommendations reinforce three essential truths. First, phosphorus management remains the most powerful lever for improving lake health. Second, weather variability can either accelerate or undermine progress, making runoff-reducing strategies increasingly vital. Third, sustained improvement requires both on-the-ground implementation and support systems that make those efforts scalable and permanent.

The path forward is clear but requires sustained commitment. Expanding nutrient management plan coverage to all agricultural acres, accelerating adoption of conservation practices, reducing winter salt spreading, enhancing manure treatment capacity, and strengthening urban stormwater controls are among the actions that will move us in the right direction. And by repeating the watershed phosphorus mass balance analysis and investing in continued stream-gage monitoring, it will be possible to evaluate how well collective actions are translating into long-term, measurable results.

The Yahara lakes are dynamic systems that display an ability to recover under favorable conditions. Periods of lower phosphorus loading in recent years have demonstrated that clearer water, fewer cyanobacteria blooms, and measurable ecological improvement are possible. With science-guided action, community engagement, and informed policy decisions, these improvements can become the rule rather than the exception.

PUTTING STEWARDSHIP VALUES TO WORK

Ultimately, lakes mirror their watersheds, reflecting the condition of the lands that drain to them. When soils are protected and biologically thriving, water infiltrates and is filtered. When landscapes are hardened by pavement and rooftops, rainfall turns to runoff, collecting contaminants and delivering them downstream.

Roads, parking lots, and compacted soils increase stormwater volume and velocity, intensifying erosion and nutrient transport. To offset these impacts, expanding green infrastructure in cities and neighborhoods is essential. Rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavements, restored wetlands, and urban tree canopies help absorb rainfall where it lands. At the same time, building dense, efficient land use conserves more land for parks and conservation areas to help protect infiltration capacity and minimize runoff.

In rural areas, one of the most pressing watershed challenges is the excess manure produced in livestock-dominated regions. Increasing manure treatment capacity, reducing commercial fertilizer imports, and improving application timing and methods are critical strategies for reducing surplus phosphorus. Where soils are already enriched, careful management is necessary to prevent dissolved phosphorus from leaching or being washed into streams during snowmelt and heavy rain.

In urban settings, fall leaf debris represents one of the largest seasonal sources of phosphorus entering local storm drains. Street gutters filled with decomposing leaves can release significant nutrient loads during each rain event. Effective leaf-removal programs combined with public education campaigns offer high-impact opportunities to address the sources and pathways of phosphorus that threaten our lakes.

The Beltline over the Yahara River near Capital Springs State Recreation Area, photo courtesy Robert Bertera

WATERSHED UNDER PRESSURE

The 385-square-mile Yahara Lakes Watershed is home to a mix of urban, suburban, and agricultural landscapes. Estimates have placed its population at more than 370,000 people, including the cities of Madison, Sun Prairie, Middleton, Monona, and neighboring towns and villages that lie fully or partially within the watershed boundary.

This population is the result of substantial growth over recent decades, mirroring trends in Dane County as a whole, which has seen above-average increases since the 1970s. The county's total population rose from about 488,000 to more than 560,000 from 2010-2020, and local planning projections estimate it could reach nearly 887,000 by 2050 (a 58% increase). Communities within the watershed are among the County's fastest growing, meaning a large share of future population growth will continue to occur in areas that are most directly connected to the lakes.

Population growth matters because it influences land use patterns, development intensity, and infrastructure needs. In the absence of thoughtful planning, such growth can lead to the unnecessary hardening of the landscape (more pavement, roofs, and compacted soils), which accelerates stormwater runoff, reduces infiltration, and increases the transport of nutrients and sediments to lakes and streams.

Urban expansion has nearly doubled developed land area in the watershed since the 1970s. Dane County analyses show that the total urbanized acreage in the watershed grew from roughly 41,000 acres to about 71,000 acres over the last 50 years, a more than 70% increase, and the County's population is projected to grow substantially through 2050. To accommodate this growth, efficient and compact development coupled with enhanced green infrastructure will be necessary to minimize runoff volumes.

Because the watershed includes both dense urban areas and productive agricultural land, population and development pressures are impacting the lakes in complex ways. Urbanization typically increases impervious surfaces and stormwater volume, while agricultural growth can influence nutrient balances through manure production and the use of imported commercial fertilizers. Growth trends highlight the need for planning and practices that protect soils and absorb runoff before it reaches surface waters.

A monarch butterfly visiting native flowers at Holy Wisdom Monastery

A YEAR OF LAND HEALTH PROGRESS

New Plan Guides Native Plant Restoration Across Madison's Stormwater System

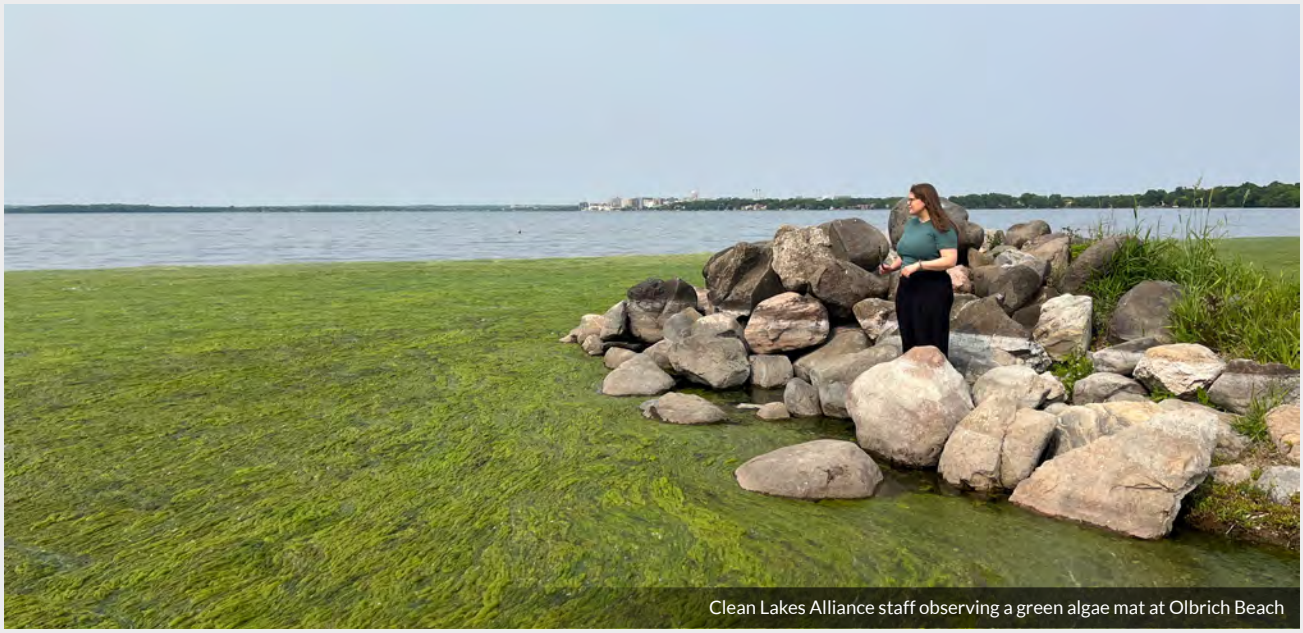
Madison's Stormwater Utility Section adopted a citywide Vegetative Management Plan to guide how vegetation is managed across more than 1,500 acres of stormwater ponds, greenways, and wetlands. The plan emphasizes restoring native plant communities, strengthening biodiversity, and improving climate resilience while maintaining the essential stormwater functions these areas provide.

Native vegetation plays an important role in reducing flood risk, improving water quality, and allowing more water to soak into the ground. One strategy already in motion requires stronger native planting standards in developer agreements for private projects that include ponds and greenways. Over time, the plan is expected to expand habitat for pollinators and help the city better respond to heavier rainfall and other extreme weather conditions.

Continued Watershed-Scale Adaptive Management

Yahara WINS again served as an influential driver for phosphorus reduction and collaborative watershed action in 2025. This long-term adaptive management initiative brings together utilities, farmers, municipalities, and conservation partners to implement practices that reduce phosphorus going into area lakes and streams. In 2024 alone, partner efforts under Yahara WINS prevented more than 59,000 pounds of phosphorus from reaching waterbodies. That legacy of practice implementation carried forward into 2025 with continued collaboration, cost-share support, and treatment practice deployment.

Yahara WINS also approved funding to conduct a multi-year prioritization study. The study will use geospatial analysis to identify where phosphorus-reducing practices are most needed and likely to be effective across stream reaches. This effort supports targeted implementation and maximizes the impact of limited resources.



Clean Lakes Alliance staff observing a green algae mat at Olbrich Beach

Stream Restoration

Dane County's Land & Water Resources Department is helping to improve water quality in the watershed through long-term, targeted land conservation. A major milestone is the completed restoration of roughly three miles of Door Creek, including re-meandering the stream and reconnecting it to adjacent wetlands. This project reflects more than 30 years of work in the Door Creek sub-watershed.

Earlier studies identified Door Creek and nearby wetlands as critical natural resources worth protecting. The County has since worked with local landowners and partners to address areas prone to soil and nutrient loss. This focus is especially important because Door Creek was identified as the second-largest nonpoint-source phosphorus contributor in the watershed. Conservation practices implemented over time include 9.5 miles of stream buffers along Little Door and Door Creeks, restoration of 180 acres of prairie, and more than 50 additional projects aimed at reducing phosphorus runoff.

Monitoring and Reporting

Clean Lakes Alliance continued coordinating water quality monitoring across the Yahara lakes, reporting on cyanobacteria blooms, beach status, and water clarity through LakeForecast.org. This information, produced by citizen scientists, improves community awareness and helps direct attention and resources toward areas of concern. Other volunteer-run efforts include Rock River Coalition's stream monitoring and those of various Friends groups and watershed associations.

Stream gages operated by the U.S. Geological Survey remain instrumental to assessing the impacts of watershed change over time, including resulting phosphorus loads to downstream waterways. Many of these gages have been collecting discharge and water quality information for decades. Unfortunately, the long-term funding situation for these gages is in question, jeopardizing critical datasets that lead to informed management decisions. Strong advocacy supporting continued, local government funding is needed to ensure that these monitoring investments continue.

Touring the farm shop at the 2025 Yahara Pride Farms Twilight Meeting

Producer-led watershed groups

Increasing participation in farmer-led initiatives, such as Yahara Pride Farms and newer groups like Biological Farmer Friends, helps ensure that land managers are directly involved in shaping and applying nutrient-management and soil-health improvements — a key indirect-impact action in *Renew the Blue*.

Technical assistance and outreach

The Dane County Land & Water Resource Department and Yahara WINS partners continued to provide planning, technical, and cost-share support to landowners for practice adoption, representing the critical work that underpins on-the-ground gains.

Broader Integration of Sustainable Land Practices

Programs that integrate water quality with land health, like regenerative agriculture practices, continued to expand in 2025. These include cost-share supported cover cropping, reduced tillage, and vegetative buffer installation, helping to reduce phosphorus runoff while improving soil organic matter, infiltration, and carbon sequestration.

Demonstration of the effects of agricultural practices on runoff

A newly planted rain garden

City of Madison Rain Gardens

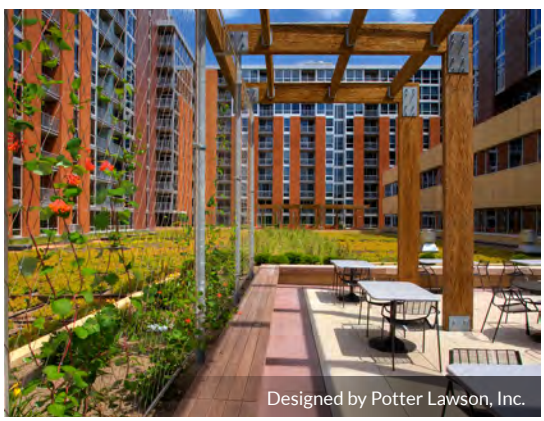
Since the early 2000s, and at last count, approximately 773 rain gardens have been installed through cost-share programs and community partnerships. A typical residential rain garden can infiltrate thousands of gallons annually. Collectively, these installations are estimated to infiltrate millions of gallons of stormwater per year.

Dane County Stormwater Retrofits

Dozens of regional stormwater ponds and bioretention basins have been installed or upgraded across urbanizing sub-watersheds. Urban stormwater retrofits can remove 40–80% of total phosphorus from treated runoff, depending on design.

Green Roofs

Madison alone now has more than 20 green roofs, including as part of municipal, university, and private developments. Green roofs can reduce annual runoff volume by 50–60% and significantly reduce peak flow during intense rainfall events. They provide important infiltration in dense urban areas where ground space is limited.



Designed by Potter Lawson, Inc.

Regional manure digester in Middleton

Conservation Lands

Dane County Parks manages more than 12,000 acres of parkland and natural resource areas. The watershed includes thousands of acres of protected wetlands, prairies, and woodlands that function as natural infiltration zones. Land conservation programs have permanently protected tens of thousands of acres countywide, reducing development pressure in sensitive recharge areas.

Agricultural Manure Management

The Yahara watershed produces more phosphorus in manure than crops remove annually, creating a structural surplus. Advanced manure treatment (e.g., digesters and nutrient separation systems) can be used to help export phosphorus out of saturated regions. Dane County has completed an initial feasibility study and is reviewing the possibility of eventually adding a third treatment facility to the northern part of the watershed.

Urban Leaf Management

Fall leaf debris is one of the largest seasonal urban phosphorus sources. Studies show that timely leaf collection can reduce phosphorus in urban runoff by 50% or more during autumn storm events. Consequently, most communities are either maintaining or expanding their leaf-collection and street-sweeping programs. ■

City of Madison leaf collection truck

To learn more about watershed-friendly actions, visit **cleanlakesalliance.org** or follow Clean Lakes Alliance on social media.

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AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES FOR IMPROVED WATER QUALITY

Healthy lakes start with healthy land. Much of the Yahara Watershed is agricultural, and the way soil and nutrients are managed on agricultural lands plays a critical role in protecting water quality. Rain and snowmelt can carry soil, manure, phosphorus, and other nutrients from fields into nearby streams and lakes. This can contribute to algae blooms and degraded water conditions in local lakes and waterways.

The good news? Farmers across our region are leading the way with proven conservation practices that keep soil in place, reduce runoff, and improve long-term farm resilience. From cover crops to nutrient management planning, these best management practices help protect both working lands and the waters we all depend on.

The following pages show several key agricultural practices that support cleaner, healthier lakes.

Low-disturbance manure injection
Photo courtesy Dane County Land & Water Resources

COVER CROPS

Cover crops are planted between regular crop growing seasons to maintain a living root in the ground, protecting and improving soil conditions. The root system of the living plant anchors soil in place, preventing soil from washing away during rain events or snowmelt. Over time, cover crops enhance soil health by increasing organic matter and supporting beneficial soil organisms.

Cover crops sign on a local field. Photo courtesy Dane County Land & Water Resources.

Contour planting shown at Kellercrest Registered Holsteins in Mt. Horeb, Wisconsin.

CONTOUR PLANTING

Contour planting involves planting crops along the natural contours of the landscape, rather than up and down slopes. This practice reduces the speed of water flowing across fields, keeping soil and nutrients in place during rainfall events.

Rotational grazing shown on a local farm. Photo courtesy Dane County Land & Water Resources.

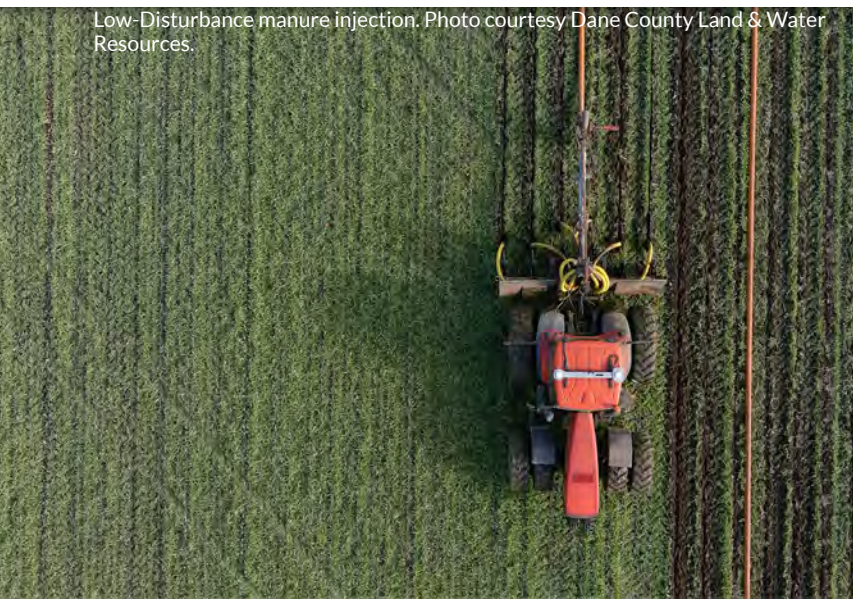
ROTATIONAL GRAZING

Rotational grazing is a sustainable livestock management practice where foraging animals are moved frequently between pasture sections to allow previously grazed areas adequate time to regrow. This approach maintains robust plant roots, reduces soil compaction, and limits erosion caused by overgrazing. Rotational grazing reduces the need for additional manure spreading or commercial fertilizers because the animals' natural distribution of manure provides sufficient nutrients.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLANS

Nutrient management plans are written strategies that guide how and when nutrients, like phosphorus and nitrogen found in fertilizer and manure, are applied to farm fields. These plans are based on soil testing and crop nutrient requirements to ensure nutrients are used efficiently and at appropriate rates. Proper nutrient management reduces the rist of phosphorus runoff while supporting healthy crop growth and farm productivity.

Soil samples are taken at multiple depths for nitrogen analysis. Photo courtesy Dane County Land & Water Resources.



Low-Disturbance manure injection. Photo courtesy Dane County Land & Water Resources.

LOW-DISTURBANCE MANURE INJECTION

Low-disturbance manure injection (LDMI) uses specialized equipment to apply manure beneath the soil surface rather than on top. Injecting manure reduces soil disturbance and odors and prevents nutrients from being easily carried away by runoff. By placing nutrients closer to plant roots, LDMI improves nutrient uptake from plants, reducing the need for additional commercial fertilizers.

NO-TILL FARMING

No-till is a method of growing crops without disturbing the soil, instead using specialized equipment to plant seeds directly into the residue of the previous crop. Leaving this organic matter in the fields provides a buffer for the soil, limiting erosion, improving soil structure, and increasing water infiltration through root channels and voids created by the plant residue left behind. This practice also reduces fuel and labor costs and soil compaction by eliminating multiple passes over the field.

No-till farming. Photo courtesy Dane County Land & Water Resources.

BUFFER STRIPS

Buffer strips are vegetated areas established along field edges, streams, and drainageways, usually extending at least 30-35 feet in width.. These dense plantings slow runoff and capture sediment, nutrients, and pollutants before they reach surface waters. Buffer strips also help stabilize soil and provide beneficial habitat for pollinators and wildlife.

Buffer strip in Dane County. Photo courtesy Dane County Land & Water Resources.

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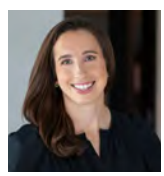
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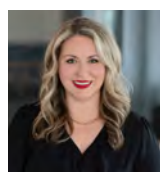
Juliana Van Eck
608.628.6465

Aquatic plant growth shown through clear water in Lake Wingra

TENDING OUR UNDERWATER LAKE GARDENS

Submerged aquatic plants, often dismissed as "weeds," are essential to the freshwater ecosystems of lakes and rivers. Known scientifically as macrophytes, aquatic plants absorb nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen which otherwise can fuel algal blooms. They also stabilize lake-bottom sediments, help protect shorelines from wave erosion, and provide critical habitat and food for fish and other wildlife. Because aquatic plants play such a vital role, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulates and limits their removal to preserve the numerous benefits they bring to our waterways.

A SHIFTING UNDERWATER LANDSCAPE

The Yahara lakes historically had a greater expanse, abundance, and diversity of aquatic plants compared to today. Unfortunately, the cumulative impacts of pollution, lake-bed disturbances, and misguided weed-control strategies have led to a decline in the health of local aquatic plant communities over the past century.

Invasive aquatic plant species have likely contributed to this trend as well. Boats and trailers can unintentionally spread non-native plants as they travel from lake to lake. Some

Eurasian watermilfoil and a zebra mussel found near Marshall Park on Lake Mendota

non-native plants are invasive and can outcompete, crowd out, and displace other species, effectively reducing the natural biodiversity of a healthy aquatic plant community.

The Yahara lakes are no stranger to invasive aquatic plants and historically have been an epicenter of invasive species discovery due to their popularity with recreational boaters. Curly-leaf pondweed, a common non-native species found in our local lakes, was first discovered in Wisconsin in Lake Wingra in 1906. Eurasian watermilfoil, another invasive species, was first discovered in Lake Mendota in 1962.

LIVING WITH THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY

Invasive aquatic plants like curly-leaf pondweed or Eurasian watermilfoil can create dense monocultures (dominated by a single species) when they are newly introduced to a lake or located in areas of frequent lake-bed disturbance. These dense, single-species thickets can lead to diminished structural diversity and habitat value, and can make swimming, fishing, and boating difficult due to their prolific growth characteristics. The increased stagnation of water can also promote the growth of insects like mosquitos or the parasites that cause swimmer's itch.

Our current reality is to try to manage and live with the invasive plants that have already established themselves in the Yahara lakes. Large-scale eradication efforts, particularly through the use of chemical herbicides, can cause oxygen depletion from mass die-offs and negatively effect beneficial, non-target species.

The presence of non-native aquatic plants is not always as harmful to lake ecology as might be predicted. After an initial period of ecological disruption, non-native species can often settle into a narrow ecological niche, allowing overall aquatic diversity to rebound to near pre-invasion levels. For example, Eurasian watermilfoil initially began to dominate Lake Wingra's aquatic plant community shortly after its introduction in the 1960s and 1970s. But over time,

Curly-leaf pondweed found in Lake Wingra

Watermeal, a non-invasive aquatic plant, found in Warner Park Lagoon

as the lakebed remained relatively undisturbed, Eurasian watermilfoil declined in abundance and native plants began to thrive again. Today, Lake Wingra supports a more balanced and diverse mix of native and non-native plants, particularly in its littoral (nearshore) zone. This is a sign of a lake ecosystem returning to health and equilibrium.

MANAGING FOR BALANCE

Aquatic plant management is a difficult balance between maintaining a healthy aquatic plant community and supporting various forms of recreation. In areas where non-native species have formed dense monocultures that hinder accessibility and navigation, Dane County operates a fleet of mechanical harvesters guided by DNR-approved management plans.

The most effective strategy is to avoid the introduction of invasive plants altogether. Educational programs, such as Clean Boats, Clean Waters, educates boaters on best practices to avoid introducing non-native plants and organisms to new waterbodies. They include:

- **Remove and properly dispose of any attached plants and debris**
- **Drain water from live wells and equipment**
- **Dry boats and gear for several days before visiting another waterbody**

Responsible boating practices also help protect native aquatic plants. For example, the aggressive operation of motor boats through shallow waters disrupts the lakebed, cutting and uprooting native plants while enabling invasive species like Eurasian watermilfoil to colonize the freshly disturbed sediment. Boating slowly through shallow areas with the motor trim raised, and restricting wake boating to deep waters (greater than 20-foot depths, according to the latest research) are key to being a responsible boater.

PROTECTING THE UNDERWATER FOREST

Just like on land, the natural world of plants below the water's surface is essential to a healthy and thriving ecosystem and provides numerous ecological benefits worth protecting. Reducing unnecessary lake-bed disturbances and cleaning your boating equipment of potentially harmful hitchhikers are among the best ways to protect ecosystem health while enjoying time on the water.

DID YOU KNOW?

The DNR allows for manual removal of non-native aquatic plant species. Learn how to identify and manage aquatic plants on the DNR's webpage:

dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/lakes/plants

Aquatic plant harvester on Lake Monona


Paddling through dense aquatic plants on Lake Wingra

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13 Marshall Park
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15 McKenna Park (Shorewood Hills Boathouse)
16 Frautschi Point
17 Picnic Point
18 University Bay Boat Launch
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7 The Mariner's Inn - *Permanently Closed*
19 Memorial Union
20 The Boathouse
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LAKES MONONA & WINGRA

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10 Hudson Park
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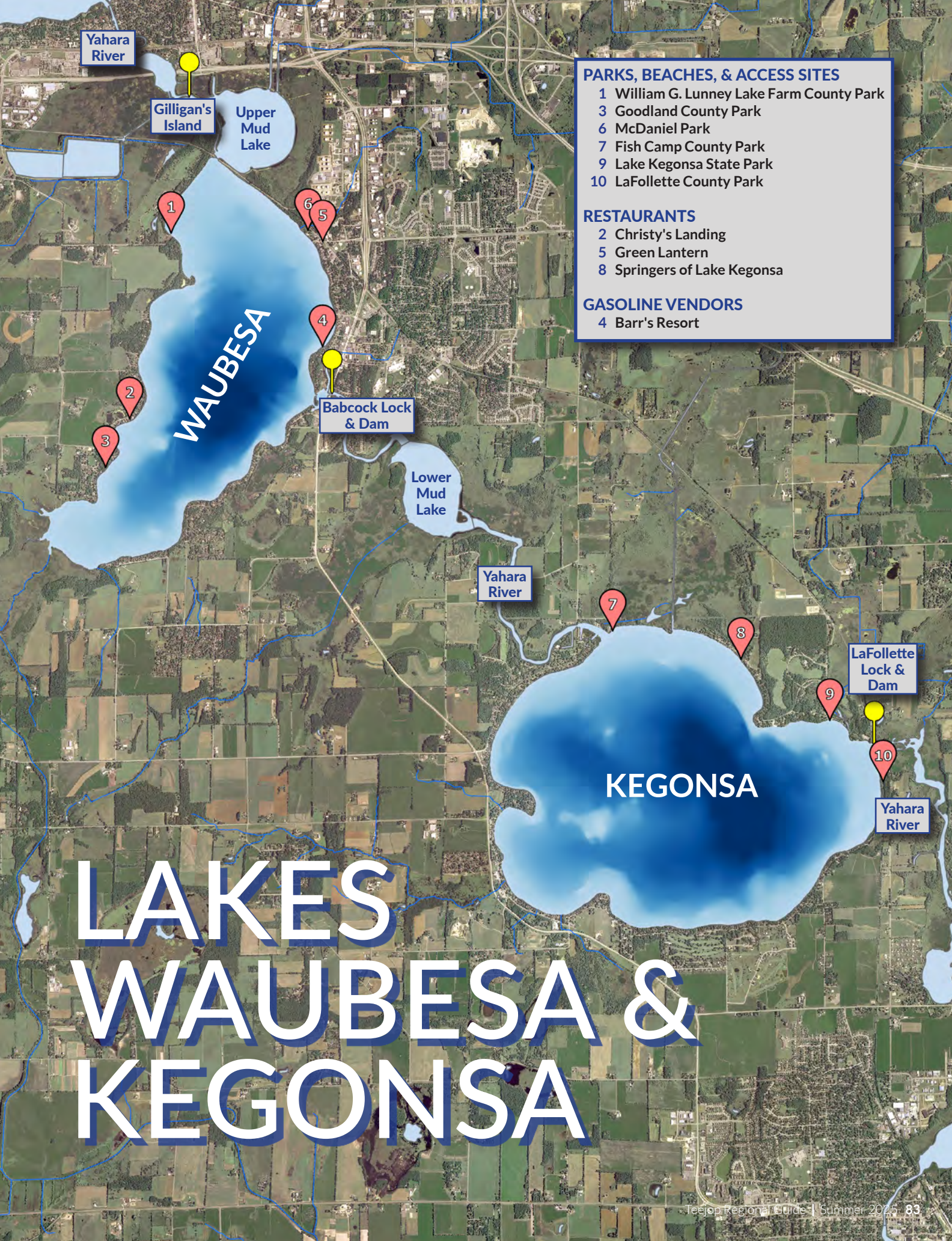
14 Law Park
16 Brittingham Park
17 Vilas (Henry) Park
18 Wingra Boat Launch & Livery
19 Bernie's Beach Park
20 Olin Park

RESTAURANTS

2 Breakwater
2 Buck & Honey's
3 Waypoint Public House
7 The East Side Club - Tiki Bar & Grill
8 The Biergarten at Olbrich Park
12 Madison Elks Lodge
13 Sardine
15 Lake Vista Café
19 Lakeside St. Coffee House

GASOLINE VENDORS

2 Four Lakes Yacht Club



LAKES WAUBESA & KEGONSA

Volunteers from Lake Ridge Bank cut invasive buckthorn at UW Lakeshore Nature Preserve in September 2025

The Impact of *Our Members*

A MESSAGE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

The health of Greater Madison's lakes relies on dedicated community support. As Membership Committee Co-Chairs, we want to thank the individuals, businesses, and organizations driving our efforts to champion the lakes and watershed stewardship for the benefit of all.

We are deeply grateful for our 2026 Members. Your annual campaign support provides flexible funding needed to champion water quality year-round, train volunteer monitors, produce educational program like our Clean Lakes 101 Series at The East Side Club, advocate for lake policies, and implement phosphorus-reducing projects.

Building on this foundation, our new **Partner & Funder Program** now recognizes the full scope of an organization's annual impact. By combining event sponsorships, grants, and memberships into a single tier of cumulative giving, we can properly acknowledge their comprehensive investment in Clean Lakes Alliance.

In the following pages, alongside our **Partner & Funder Program** and **Business Member** listings, you will find the **Lake Guide Directory**. Whether you are seeking recreation, dining, or shoreline services, this resource connects you with lake-related businesses that make our watershed a great place to live, work, and play.

With gratitude,

Co-Chairs, Membership Committee

Kyle George
Vice President & Relationship Manager
Lake Ridge Bank

Zach Osman
VP Private Banking
Johnson Financial Group

Partner & Funder *Program*

The Partner & Funder Program recognizes a business or organization's total annual impact by combining all their financial support into a single cumulative giving tier. Whether they contribute through event sponsorships, memberships, or grants, this structure allows us to celebrate their comprehensive investment in Clean Lakes Alliance.

FOUNDATIONAL ($30,000+)

CG Schmidt
Madison Community Foundation*
Madison Gas and Electric
The Edgewater

SUSTAINING ($20,000+)

Alliant Energy Corporation
Hovde Foundation/Properties
Lake Ridge Bank
National Guardian Life Insurance Company

COMMUNITY ($10,000+)

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Associated Bank
Cresa Madison
Dream House Dream Kitchens
Exact Sciences is now Abbott
Fields Auto Group – Madison
Illumina
JD McCormick Family Foundation
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Sprinkman Real Estate
Weed Man Lawn Care
Wisconsin DNR
Wisconsin Distributors
Wisconsin Union
WKOW-TV 27
Yahara WINS*

WATERSHED ($5,000+)

Clasen Quality Chocolate
Evjue Foundation*
High West Distillery
Open Water
UW Health
UW Madison – Department of Radiology

STEWARDSHIP ($3,500+)

AprilAire
Destination Madison
Green Bay Packers Foundation*

** Reflects grant funding or financial support received in 2025. Partners & Funders as of March 31, 2026.*

Volunteers from CG Schmidt collect native seeds at Holy Wisdom Monastery in September 2025


Volunteer from Johnson Financial Group plants native plants in the Native Play Area on the west end of Olbrich Park in September 2025

Volunteers from Associated Bank collect native seeds at Graber Pond Conservancy in October 2025

2026 MEMBER LIST

Volunteers from United Way and the community collect native seeds Lake Farm County Park in October 2025

Members as of March 31, 2026

A+ Heler's Dry Ice & C02
Accord Realty of Madison
ActionCOACH Business & Executive Coaching of Madison
Alison Lebwohl Consulting
Alliant Energy *
AprilAire *
Architectural Building Arts *
Argent Capital
Associated Housewrights
Atlas Counseling
barre3 Madison
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Big Grove Brewery
Bishops Bay Country Club
Buck & Honey's - Monona
Burnard Pressure Washing
Buye Law Office *
Capital Area Regional Planning Commission
Capitol Water Trails
Carrington Lawn & Landscape
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CG Schmidt *
Christ Presbyterian Church
Christy's Landing
City of Fitchburg
City of Madison
City of Middleton
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City of Stoughton
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Clasen Quality Chocolate
Cresa Madison
Crown Point Resort
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D&S Bait Tackle & Fly Shop
Dane Buy Local
Dane County
Dane County Cities & Villages Association
Dane County Farmers Union
Deconstruction Inc.
Delta Beer Lab
designCraft Advertising
Destination Madison *
Dirigible Studio
Dixon Shoreline/Landscaping
Downtown Madison Inc.
Dream House Dream Kitchens *
EcoWash Pressure Washing
Edgeless Beauty Group
Edgewater Resources
Envirolok
Eppstein Uhen Architects
Exact Sciences is now Abbott *
EZ Office Products
Faherty Brand
FCS Partners
Fields Auto Group Madison *
Fiore Companies *
Fontana Sports
Forward Madison FC
Foundation for Dane County Parks
Four Lakes Traditional Music Collective
Friends of Cherokee Marsh
Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society
Friends of Lake Wingra
Friends of Olin Turville
Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy
Friends of San Damiano
Friends of Starkweather Creek
Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters
Goodman's Jewelers
Goodwin Recruiting
GRAEF
Great Lakes Ecological Monitoring
Groundswell Conservancy
Heartland Credit Union
Henry Farms
High West Distillery *
Highway 51 Liquor and Bait
Ho-Chunk Nation *
Honeybee Cannabis Company *
Hovde Properties *
HR4D Consulting
Hydrate IV Bar
Illumina *
In Business Magazine
Isthmus Partners
J Henry & Sons
JD Hellenbrand Piers and Lifts
JD McCormick Properties *
JMJ Dynamic Solutions
Johnson Financial Group *
Katz Properties
Keller Real Estate
KEVA Sports Center

Volunteers from Heartland Credit Union collect native seeds at Cherokee Marsh Conservation Park in August 2025

Kim Straka & Krista Potter Realty Team - First Weber
Klaas Financial Asset Advisors
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Lake Effect HR & Law *
Lake Ridge Bank *
Lake Waubesa Conservation Association
Lakeshore Apartments
Lauer Realty Group
Little Luxuries
Mad-City Ski Team
Mader Designs
Madison Area Builders Association
Madison Boats *
Madison Community Foundation
Madison Development Corporation
Madison Gas and Electric *
Madison LakeWay Partners
Madison Magnet
Madison Metropolitan School District Planetarium
Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District
Madison No Fear Dentistry
Madison School and Community Recreation
Madison Veterinary Specialists *
Manke Enterprises
MaraLee Olson Design Studio
MCV Salon
Meister's K&M Tree and Landscaping
Mendota Yacht Club
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Midnight Splash - Houseboat Charter
Midwest Solar Power
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Monona Motors
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Murphy Desmond
Nattspil
Nature's Retreat
NGL Insurance Company *
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Olbrich Botanical Gardens
OpenHomes Realty
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PinSocial
Potter Lawson *
Premier Retirement Partners
PRL Keystone Foundation *
Quam's Marine & Motor Sports
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ResTech Services
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Springers of Lake Kegonsa
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The Biergarten at Olbrich Park
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The Creative Company
The East Side Club
The Edgewater *
The Storage Guy *
Timpano Group
Toot & Kate's Winebar
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Town of Dunn
Town of Westport
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Trei-Four Aces
Tulric Condo Association
Urso Builders
UW Health
UW-Madison Arboretum
UW-Madison Center for Limnology
UW-Madison Extension Natural Resources Institute
UW-Madison Nelson Institute
Village of DeForest
Village of Maple Bluff
Village of McFarland
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Yahara WINS Watershed Improvement Network
ZEBRADOG
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MEMBER

The Clean Lakes Alliance membership program recognizes businesses and organizations that support Clean Lakes Alliance through annual donations (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) made independent of events, sponsorships, or programs, **directly benefiting our efforts to improve the lakes**. Additionally, members demonstrate their organizational commitment to clean lakes through one or all of the following avenues: making improvements on their properties, educating staff on watershed sustainability, and participating in volunteer opportunities. Members who donate at the $1,234.50 level or more are also recognized as part of the Yahara Society (denoted with an asterisk).

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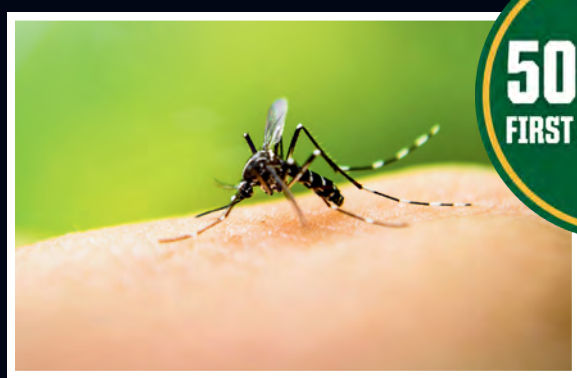

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mendotalakeshore.com

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Monona, WI 53714

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Riverwood Apartments
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accentapts.com/riverwood-apartments

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thesurfapartments.com

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Madison, WI 53703
waterfrontmadison.com

Watermark Lofts
(608)575-1018
960 John Nolen Dr
Madison, WI 53713
twallenterprises.com

Yahara Terrace
(608) 949-3399
320 W Broadway
Monona, WI 53716
yaharaterrace.com

ASSOCIATIONS

Association of State Floodplain Managers
(608) 828-3000
8301 Excelsior Dr
Madison, WI 53717
floods.org

Invasive Plants Association of Wisconsin
PO Box 5274
Madison, WI 53705
ipawi.org

Lake Waubesa Conservation Association (LWCA)
MEMBER
PO Box 6521
Monona, WI 53716
waubesa.org
LWCA is a volunteer group that values Lake Waubesa and its ecosystem. We strive to keep members and the community informed and involved in current issues, activities, and events affecting Lake Waubesa.

North American Stormwater & Erosion Control Association of WI
PO Box 70714
Madison, WI 53707
nasecawi.org

Realtors Association of South Central Wisconsin
MEMBER
4801 Forest Run Rd #101
Madison, WI 53704
(608) 240-2800
www.rascw.org

Token Creek Watershed Association
PO Box 366
Windsor, WI 53598
tokencreek.org

Upper Sugar River Watershed Association
(608) 437-7707
PO Box 314
Mount Horeb, WI 53572
uppersugar.org

Wisconsin Alumni Association (WAA)
MEMBER
608-262-2551
650 N Lake St
Madison, WI 53706
uwalumni.com
The WAA is your connection to UW-Madison and we work to advance the University's mission. WAA's Alumni Park is a place where alumni stories are shared and celebrated.

Wisconsin Wetlands Association
(608) 250-9971
214 N Hamilton St, Suite 201
Madison, WI 53703
wisconsinwetlands.org

MEMBER

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LAKE DIRECTORY

View of Lake Mendota from Holy Wisdom Monastery with lupine blooming in the foreground

Yahara Lakes Association (YLA) MEMBER
(856) 298-0703
PO Box 6412
Monona, WI 53716
yaharalakes.org
The YLA represents the interests of waterfront property residents and advocates for the vitality of the Yahara chain of lakes for all to enjoy.

BAIT & TACKLE

Dorn Outdoor Pro Shop
(608) 274-2511
1348 S Midvale Blvd
Madison, WI 53711
facebook.com/DornOutdoorProShop

Harley's Liquor & Bait
(608) 222-7941
3838 Atwood Ave
Madison, WI 53714
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mononabaiticecream.yolasite.com

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(608) 399-2809
105 E Main St
Waunakee, WI 53597
muskyfool.com

BOAT LAUNCH SITES - KEGONSA

Amundson Landing & Park
Quam Dr
Stoughton, WI 53589

Fish Camp Boat Launch
3383 County Rd
McFarland, WI 53558

Lake Kegonsa State Park Boat Ramp
2405 Door Creek Rd
Stoughton, WI 53589

Town of Pleasant Springs Boat Launch
2267 Williams Point Dr
Stoughton, WI 53589

BOAT LAUNCH SITES - MENDOTA

Governor Nelson State Park Boat Launch
5140 County Hwy M
Waunakee, WI 53597

Governors Island Boat Launch
Governors Island Pkwy
Madison, WI 53704

MEMBER

Clean Lakes Alliance's membership program recognizes businesses and organizations that support Clean Lakes Alliance through annual donations (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) made independent of events, sponsorships, or programs, **directly benefiting our efforts to improve the lakes**. Additionally, Members demonstrate their organizational commitment to clean lakes through one or all of the following avenues: making improvements on their properties, educating staff on watershed sustainability, and participating in volunteer opportunities.

Lake Street Boat Launch
6000 Lake St
Middleton, WI 53562

Marshall Park Boat Launch
2101 Allen Blvd
Middleton, WI 53562

Mendota County Park Boat Launch
5133 County Hwy M
Middleton, WI 53562

Spring Harbor Boat Launch
5218 Lake Mendota Dr
Madison, WI 53705

Tenney Park Boat Launch
1610 Sherman Ave
Madison, WI 53704

Warner Park Boat Launch
1201 Woodward Dr
Madison, WI 53704

Willow Drive Boat Launch
Willow Dr (Howard Temin Lakeshore Path)
Madison, WI 53705

BOAT LAUNCH SITES – MONONA

Law Park
410 S Blair St
Madison, WI 53703

Olbrich Park Boat Launch
3401 Atwood Ave
Madison, WI 53704

Olin Park Boat Ramp
302 E Lakeside St
Madison, WI 53715

Tonyawatha Park and Boat Launch
4609 Tonyawatha Tr
Monona, WI 53716

Winnequah Trail Boat Launch
5898 Winnequah Tr
Monona, WI 53716

BOAT LAUNCH SITES – WAUBESA

Babcock County Park Boat Launch
2909 US-51
McFarland, WI 53558

Goodland Park Boat Launch
2862 Waubesa Ave
Madison, WI 53711

Lake Farm Park Boat Launch
4286 Libby Rd
Madison, WI 53711

McConnell Street Boat Launch
McConnell St
Madison, WI 53711

BOAT LAUNCH SITES – WINGRA

Henry Vilas Park Boat Launch
1602 Vilas Park Dr
Madison, WI 53715

Wingra Park & Boat Livery
824 Knickerbocker St
Madison, WI 53711

BOAT LAUNCH SITES – YAHARA RIVER

Cherokee Marsh - South Boat Launch
5002 School Rd
Madison, WI 53704

Lottes Park Boat Launch
400 W Broadway
Monona, WI 53716

BOAT SALES, RENTAL, REPAIR, & STORAGE

Barr's Resort
(608) 838-9917
6002 Lake Edge Rd
McFarland, WI 53558
facebook.com/BarrsResort

Brightwork Boats
(608) 849-9200
5864 Easy St
Waunakee, WI 53597
madisonboathouse.com/brightwork-boats

Brittingham Boats
MEMBER
(608) 250-2555
701 W Brittingham Pl
Madison, WI 53715
Madisonboats.com
Downtown's premier paddle destination. Rentals of stand-up paddleboards, kayaks, canoes, paddle boats, and fishing boats. Special events, including excursions and Burgers on the Bay every Friday, make it a Madison must.

Capitol Boat Club
(608) 423-5202
5339 Lighthouse Bay Dr, Pier 5
Madison, WI 53704
capitolboatclub.com

Deano Dock & Lift, LLC
(608) 850-4424
N3427 Co Rd J
Poynette, WI 53955
deanodock.com

Decks Docks & More
(262) 593-2216
W1204 Concord Center Dr
Sullivan, WI 53178
facebook.com/decksdocks

Don's Marine, LLC
(608) 592-4705
N1401 WI-113
Lodi, WI 53555
donsmarine.com

Endres Manufacturing Company
(608) 849-4143
802 S Century Ave
Waunakee, WI 53597
endresmfg.com

Gervasi Trailer
(608) 271-4239
2295 S Syene Rd
Madison, WI 53711
trailerrepairandpartsmadison.com

JD Hellenbrand Piers and Lifts
MEMBER
(608) 513-0690
N1792 Ryan Rd
Lodi, WI 53555
jdhellenbrand.com
Work with JD Hellenbrand for all your pier, lift, and rail system needs. From purchasing to installation, removal, and storage, we're with you all the way.

Mad City Marine/RV Sales
(608) 846-9329
N827 US-51
Arlington, WI 53911
madcitymarinervsales.com

Manke Enterprises
MEMBER
(608) 592-4022
N1558 Sunset Dr
Lodi, WI 53555
manke.com

Marine Tops Unlimited
(608) 246-3979
4121 Terminal Dr
McFarland, WI 53558
marinetops.com

LAKE DIRECTORY

Marshall Boats
(608) 228-8333
2101 Allen Blvd
Madison, WI 53562
madisonboats.com
Paddle or pontoon? Enjoy a quiet paddle into Pheasant Branch Conservancy or bring everyone for a pontoon boat ride — this is your destination for summer memories. Located on Madison's west side, this is the perfect place for your next party!

Mazanet Marina
(608) 249-9316
5320 Blue Bill Park Dr S
Madison, WI 53704

Outdoor UW at Memorial Union
MEMBER
(608) 262-1630
800 Langdon St
Madison, WI 53706
union.wisc.edu/outdoor-uw
Outdoor UW is your outlet to the outdoors with equipment rentals, such as kayaks, stand-up paddleboards, canoes, snowshoes, and ice skates, as well as events and activities.

Pharo Marine
MEMBER
(608) 849-5950
5341 W River Rd
Waunakee, WI 53597
pharomarine.com
Platinum sales and service center carrying brands of Lund, Godfrey, and Mercury. Sales, service, storage, and accessories.

Quam's Marine & Motor Sports
(608) 873-3366
1896 Barber Dr
Stoughton, WI 53589
quamsmotorsports.com
Full-service dealership on Lake Kegonsa for more than 50 years. Services include wet slips, winter storage, service, sales, parts, and accessories.

Redline Watersports
(608) 838-0838
4805 Voges Rd
Madison, WI 53718
redlinewatersports.com

Rock River Marina
(608) 884-9415
520 E Richardson Springs Rd
Edgerton, WI 53534
rockrivermarina.com

Rutabaga Rentals - Olbrich Park
(608) 513-1308
3527 Atwood Ave
Madison, WI 53714
rutabagashop.com

SkipperBud's
(608) 246-2628
5381 Westport Rd
Madison, WI 53704
SkipperBud's Boating Super Center offers boaters many options to fit any budget or lifestyle. New or Used boats, service, fiberglass repair, & storage. Visit our showroom - or online at skipperbuds.com

Summerset Marine
(608) 249-3100
5371 Farmco Dr
Madison, WI 53704
piers-lifts.com

TAC's ALEment
(608) 512-9442
2466 County Hwy AB
McFarland, WI 53558
tacsalement.com

The Harbor at Newville
(608) 884-6007
807 Harbor Rd
Milton, WI 53563
theharboratnewville.com

Wickcraft Boardwalks
(608) 244-9177
2317 Daniels St
Madison, WI 53718
wickcraftboardwalks.com

Wingra Boats
MEMBER
(608) 233-5332
824 Knickerbocker St
Madison, WI 53711
madisonboats.com
Up-north beauty in downtown Madison. Surrounded by nature, this quiet lake is a mecca for paddling and the perfect place for the whole family to SUP, kayak, canoe, row, or paddle boat. Fish, paddle, and play.

BOAT TOURS, GROUP RENTAL

Badger Pontoon Rentals
(608) 421-2355
badgerpontoon.com

Capital Lake Pontoons
(608) 571-4889
capitallakepontoons.com

LAKE DIRECTORY


Pride Paddle on Lake Monona, August 2025

Madison School & Community Recreation (MSCR)
(608) 204-3000
328 E Lakeside St
Madison, WI 53715
mscr.org
Celebrating 100 years of fun! MSCR is Madison's public recreation department offering arts, camps, fitness, sports, paddling, boating, outdoors and afterschool activities for all ages.

Midnight Splash - Houseboat Charter
(608) 628-0730
midnightsplashmadison.com
Houseboat charter and tours on Lake Mendota with a capacity of over 40 people. Multilevel boat with slide, full kitchen, two bathrooms, & grill. Instagram & Facebook @midnightsplashmadison. Call today to book!

Pontoon Porch
(608) 284-8727
pontoonporch.com

Sunburst Sailing of Madison
(608) 628-9020
SunburstSailingOfMadison@gmail.com

COMMUNITY & CONVENTION CENTERS

Monona Terrace Community & Convention Center
(608) 261-4000
1 John Nolen Dr
Madison, WI 53703
mononaterrace.com

Pyle Center
(608) 262-0881
702 Langdon St
Madison, WI 53706
pyle.wisc.edu
Overlooking the shores of Lake Mendota, Pyle Center offers visitors 135,000 square feet of comfortable meeting spaces, 8-hour chairs, rooftop terraces, and more.

The East Side Club - Tiki Bar & Grill
(608) 222-9131
3735 Monona Dr
Madison, WI 53714
escmadison.com

Wisconsin Memorial Union
(608) 265-3000
800 Langdon St
Madison, WI 53703
union.wisc.edu/visit/memorial-union
Memorial Union offers versatile event spaces, on-site dining, experienced planners, and a beautiful lakefront view. It's an ideal setting for meetings, conferences, and gatherings.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION / ADVOCACY

Clean Lakes Alliance
(608) 255-1000
150 E Gilman St, Suite 2600
Madison, WI 53703
cleanlakesalliance.org
We are a unique partnership of diverse stakeholders who raise community awareness of the issues facing the watershed. We advocate for the welfare of our lakes and help procure the necessary funding to clean and protect these waterways.

Clean Wisconsin
(608) 251-7020
634 W Main St, Suite 300
Madison, WI 53703
cleanwisconsin.org

Ripple-Effects Wisconsin
ripple-effects.com

River Alliance of Wisconsin
(608) 257-2424
612 W Main St, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703
wisconsinrivers.org

Wisconsin Citizen-based Monitoring Network
(608) 576-2446
PO Box 7921 - NH/6
Madison, WI 53707
wiatri.net/cbm/

FISHING GUIDES

A Big Fish Guide Service
(414) 779-0479
wibigfish.com

Big B's Guide Service
bigbguideservice.com

Blue Ribbon Outdoors
(608) 698-3332
blueribbonoutdoors.com

Finseekers Guide Service
(847) 707-1827
finseekers.com

LAKE DIRECTORY

Fishing Guide Service with Lee Tauchen
(608) 444-2180
leetauchen.com

Fishing Thrills Guide Service
(608) 921-8980
fishingthrills.com

Klus Fishing & Hunting Guide Service
(608) 469-1867
klusfishandhunt.com

Madison Angling Guide Service
(608) 210-9350
madisonangling.com

Madison Fly Fishing Co.
(608) 347-0444
madisonflyfishing.com

Madison Musky Guide Service
(608) 848-3906
madisonmuskyguide.com

Millenium Guide Service
(608) 695-9703

Okada Outdoors
(608) 575-8597

Pike Pole Fishing Guide Service
(608) 290-3929
pikepolefishing.com

Spring Creek Specialties
(608) 206-5951

Wisco Outfitters
(608) 206-7938
wiscooutfitters.com

FRIENDS GROUPS

Capitol Water Trails
MEMBER
capitolwatertrails.org
WI nonprofit organization focused on clearing river blockages and improving natural habitat.

Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed
rockrivercoalition.org/chapters/badfish

Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area
3101 Lake Farm Road
Madison, WI 53711
friendsofcapitalsprings.org

Friends of Cherokee Marsh
MEMBER
PO Box 14536
Madison, WI 53708
cherokeemarsh.org
We work to protect, preserve, and restore the beauty, value, and health of Cherokee Marsh, Dane County's largest wetland located at the head of the Yahara chain of lakes.

Friends of Edna Taylor Conservation Park
facebook.com/friendsofetcp

Friends of Hoyt Park
PO Box 5542
Madison, WI 53705
hoytpark.org

Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society (FOLKS)
MEMBER
PO Box 173
Stoughton, WI 53589
kegonsa.org
FOLKS is a nonprofit providing volunteers and financial resources to help improve the ecology, water quality, fishing, and recreational use of Lake Kegonsa. Our 450+ members proudly partner with Clean Lakes Alliance.

Friends of Lake View Hill Park
PO Box 8813
Madison, WI 53708
lakeviewhill.org

Friends of Lake Wingra
MEMBER
PO Box 45071
Madison, WI 53744
lakewingra.org
We are a nonprofit dedicated to promoting a healthy lake through an active watershed community. We collaborate with partners to promote stewardship, conservation, education, and sustainable practices.

Friends of Monona Bay
friendsofmononabay.blogspot.com

Friends of Olin Turville (FOOT)
MEMBER
olin-turville.org
FOOT was established in 2010 with the intent to preserve and improve the parks' facilities and landscapes and encourage the community to rediscover the beauty and unique offerings of the two parks.

Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy
MEMBER
PO Box 628242
Middleton, WI 53562
pheasantbranch.org
A nonprofit whose mission is to restore, preserve, and promote the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and Watershed through education and collaborative restoration and management with the City of Middleton and Dane County.

Friends of Starkweather Creek
MEMBER
PO Box 8442
Madison, WI 53708
starkweatherfriends.org
Friends of Starkweather Creek (est. 2002). Nonprofit group dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of our creek and watershed through stewardship, education, advocacy, and fun!

Friends of the Kettle Ponds
kettleponds.org

Friends of the Lakeshore Nature Preserve
PO Box 5534
Madison, WI 53705
friendslakeshorepreserve.org

Friends of the Lower Wisconsin Riverway
(608) 471-7955
PO Box 614
Spring Green, WI 53588
wisconsinriverfriends.org

Friends of the UW Arboretum
(608) 890-2555
1207 Seminole Hwy
Madison, WI 53711
arboretum.wisc.edu/get-involved/friends

Friends of the Yahara River Headwaters
MEMBER
PO Box 139
DeForest, WI 53532
yahahariver.org

Friends of Wisconsin State Parks
(608) 294-0810
S2815 Briar Bluff Rd
Reedsburg, WI 53959
fwsp.org

MEMBER

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Madison LakeWay Partners MEMBER
(608) 261-4282
330 E Lakeside St
Madison, WI 53715
madisonlakeway.org
MLP is a 501(c)(3) organization partnering with the City of Madison to redevelop 1.7 miles of Lake Monona waterfront from Olin Park to Machinery Row connecting downtown to the water.

GASOLINE

Barr's Resort
(608) 838-9917
6002 Lake Edge Rd
McFarland, WI 53558
facebook.com/BarrsResort

Four Lakes Yacht Club
(608) 222-1401
6312 Inland Way
Monona, WI 53713
madison4lyc.com

Mazanet Marina
(608) 249-9316
5320 Blue Bill Park Dr S
Madison, WI 53704

SkipperBud's MEMBER
(608) 246-2628
5381 Westport Rd
Madison, WI 53704
skipperbuds.com
SkipperBud's Boating Super Center offers boaters many options to fit any budget or lifestyle. New or Used boats, service, fiberglass repair, & storage. Visit our showroom - or online at skipperbuds.com

LAKE SPORTS & RECREATION RETAIL

Bass Pro Shops
(608) 478-4100
1350 Cabela Dr
Sun Prairie, WI 53590
cabelas.com

BumperMate USA
(608) 212-4609
129 E North Street
DeForest, WI 53532
bumpermateusa.com

Dick's Sporting Goods - East
(608) 241-2764
350 E Towne Way
Madison, WI 53704
dickssportinggoods.com

Dick's Sporting Goods - West
(608) 829-1313
237 W Towne Mall
Madison, WI 53719
dickssportinggoods.com

Fontana Sports MEMBER
(608) 257-5043
216 N Henry St
Madison, WI 53703
fontanasports.com
Established on family values, a deep respect for nature and a passion for outdoor pursuits, Fontana Sports has been providing Wisconsin with the best in outdoor apparel, footwear, & equipment since 1949.

Isthmus Sailboards
(800) 473-1153
5495 Catfish Ct
Waunakee, WI 53597
isthmussailboards.com

Machinery Row Bicycles
(608) 442-5974
601 Williamson St
Madison, WI 53703
machineryrowbicycles.com

Madison Log Rolling
(608) 698-8171
madisonlogrolling.com

REI
(608) 833-6680
7483 W Towne Way
Madison, WI 53719
rei.com

Kids fishing at Olin Park Boat Launch on Lake Monona, May 2025

LAKE DIRECTORY

Rich's Boardsports
(608) 244-6838
411 N Fair Oaks Ave
Madison, WI 53714

Rutabaga Paddlesports
(608) 223-9300
2620 Rimrock Rd
Madison, WI 53713
rutabagashop.com

West Marine
(608) 221-8708
2455 W Broadway
Madison, WI 53713
westmarine.com

LODGING

Crown Point Resort
MEMBER
(608) 873-7833
2030 Barber Dr
Stoughton, WI 53589
crownpointresort.com
Modern 1-3 BR Cedar Cottages on Lake Kegonsa, 15 minutes from Madison. Kitchens, decks, grills, wifi, cable, AC. Paddleboard, kayak, and pontoon rentals. 5-star rated on VRBO and Tripadvisor.

Governor's Mansion Inn & Café
(608) 390-6463
130 E Gilman St
Madison, WI 53703
governorsmansioninn.com

Hilton Madison Monona Terrace
(608) 255-5100
9 E Wilson St
Madison, WI 53703
hilton.com/en/hotels/msnmhhf-hilton-madison-monona-terrace

Mendota Lake House Inn
(608) 390-6463
704 E Gorham St
Madison, WI 53703
mendotalakehouse.com

The Edgewater
MEMBER
(608) 535-8200
1001 Wisconsin Pl
Madison, WI 53703
theedgewater.com
Located in the heart of downtown on beautiful Lake Mendota! Award-winning historic resort with 202 guest rooms, public pier, 40 boat slips, Grand Plaza with free community programming, dining, full-service spa, and winter ice skating.

The Livingston Inn
(608) 238-6317
752 E Gorham St
Madison, WI 53703
livingstoninnmadison.com

Wisconsin Union Club Suites
MEMBER
(608) 263-2600
800 Langdon St
Madison, WI 53706
union.wisc.edu/hotel
Sleep just steps from Lake Mendota and above the beloved Memorial Union Terrace, in one of six charming, renovated Club Suites. Entertainment and dining facilities are on site.

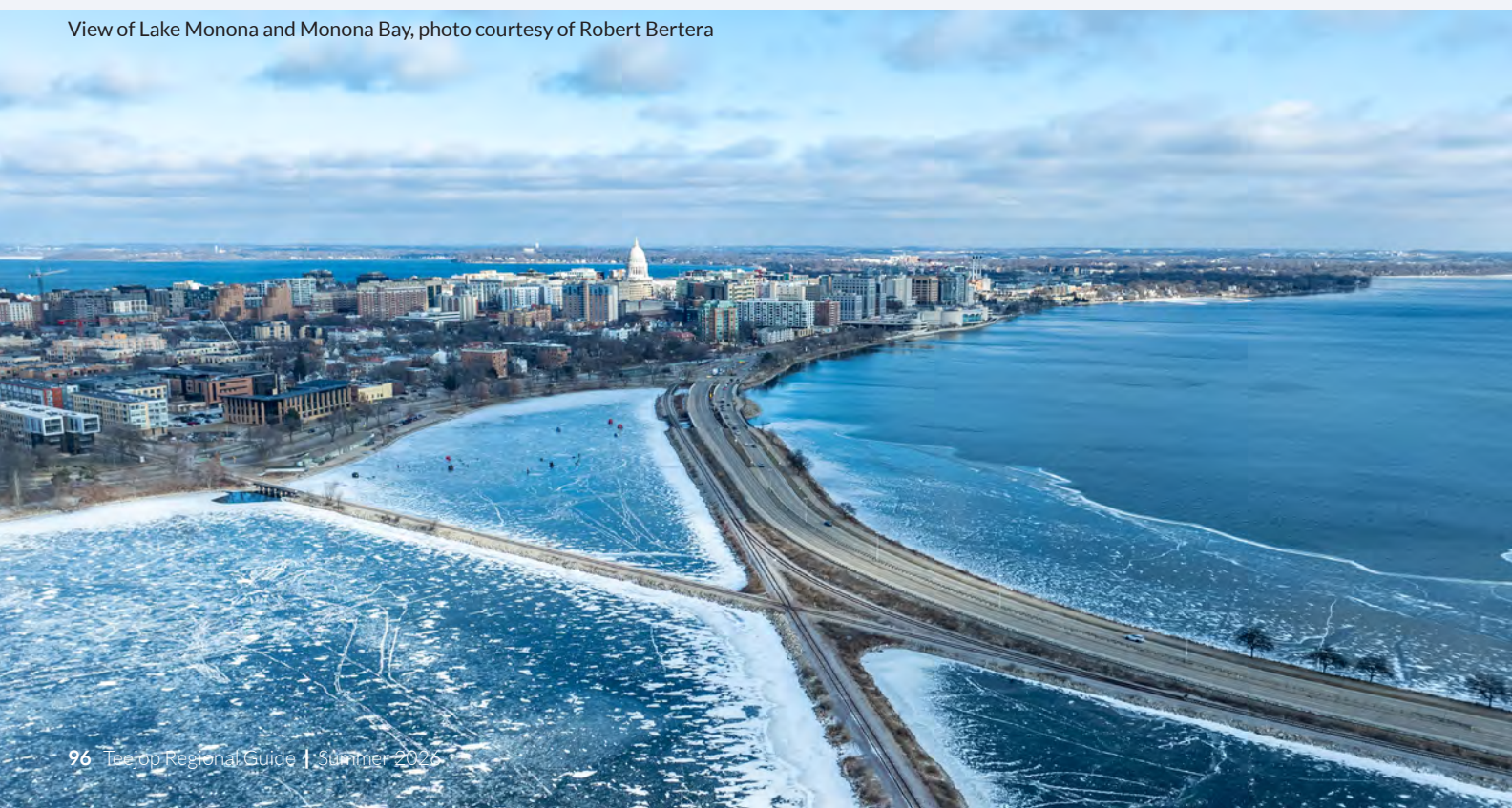
MOORING/SLIPS

Brittingham Boats
MEMBER
(608) 250-2555
701 W Brittingham Pl
Madison, WI 53715
madisonboats.com
Downtown's premier paddle destination. Rentals of stand-up paddleboards, kayaks, canoes, paddle boats, and fishing boats. Special events including excursions and Burgers on the Bay every Friday make it a Madison must.

MEMBER

Clean Lakes Alliance's membership program recognizes businesses and organizations that support Clean Lakes Alliance through annual donations (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) made independent of events, sponsorships, or programs, **directly benefiting our efforts to improve the lakes**. Additionally, Members demonstrate their organizational commitment to clean lakes through one or all of the following avenues: making improvements on their properties, educating staff on watershed sustainability, and participating in volunteer opportunities.

View of Lake Monona and Monona Bay, photo courtesy of Robert Bertera



LAKE DIRECTORY


Dog park at Yahara Heights County Park on the Yahara River, August 2025

Goodspeed Family Pier
888-947-2586
650 N Lake St
Madison, WI 53706

Lake Monona Sailing Club
lakemononasailing.com

Maple Bluff Marina
(608) 244-3048
1321 Farwell Dr
Madison, WI 53704
villageofmaplebluff.com

Marshall Park
2101 Allen Blvd
Middleton, WI 53562

Mazanet Marina
(608) 249-9316
5320 Blue Bill Park Dr S
Madison, WI 53704

McKenna Park Boathouse
(608) 267-2680
3400 Lake Mendota Dr
Madison, WI 53705
shorewood-hills.org/marina

Monona Docks
400 Interlake Dr
Monona, WI 53716
madisonproperty.com/boatslips

Quam's Marine
& Motor Sports
MEMBER
(608) 873-3366
1896 Barber Dr
Stoughton, WI 53589
quamsmotorsports.com
Full-service dealership on Lake Kegonsa for more than 50 years. Services include wet slips, winter storage, service, sales, parts, and accessories.

Shorewood Hills Marina
(608) 267-2680
3700 Lake Mendota Dr
Madison, WI 53705
shorewood-hills.org/marina

SkipperBud's
MEMBER
(608) 246-2628
5381 Westport Rd
Madison, WI 53704
skipperbuds.com
SkipperBud's Boating Super Center offers boaters many options to fit any budget or lifestyle. New or Used boats, service, fiberglass repair, & storage. Visit our showroom - or online at skipperbuds.com

TAC's ALEment
(608) 512-9442
2466 County Hwy AB
McFarland, WI 53558
tacsalement.com

Westport Marine
(608) 850-4774
5339 Lighthouse Bay Dr
Madison, WI 53704

Wingra Boats
MEMBER
(608) 233-5332
824 Knickerbocker St
Madison, WI 53711
madisonboats.com
Up-north beauty in downtown Madison. Surrounded by nature, this quiet lake is a mecca for paddling and the perfect place for the whole family to SUP, kayak, canoe, row, or paddle boat. Fish, paddle, and play.

RESTAURANTS & BARS

Breakwater
(608) 416-5388
6308 Inland Way
Monona, WI 53713
breakwatermonona.com

Buck & Honey's
MEMBER
(608) 478-2618
800 W Broadway, Suite 300
Monona, WI 53713
monona.buckandhoneys.com
Our mission at Buck & Honey's is to consistently deliver creative, yet familiar food in a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere. We facilitate the fun to ensure each guest has a memorable experience at a great value.

Christy's Landing
MEMBER
(608) 222-5391
2952 Waubesa Ave
Madison, WI 53711
christyslanding.com
Located on beautiful Lake Waubesa, featuring lakeside dining, tiki bar, live music, banquet facilities, and volleyball.

Green Lantern
(608) 838-4730
4412 Siggelkow Rd
McFarland, WI 53558
thegreenlanternrestaurant.com

Lakeside St. Coffee House
(608) 441-7599
402 W Lakeside St
Madison, WI 53715
lakesidestcoffeehouse.com

LAKE DIRECTORY

Lake Vista Café
(608) 261-4000
1 John Nolen Dr
Madison, WI 53703
mononaterrace.com/experience-monona-terrace/lake-vista-cafe

Madison Elks Lodge
(608) 255-1644
711 Jenifer St
Madison, WI 53703
madisonelkslodge.org

Monona Bait & Ice Cream Shop
(608) 222-1944
4516 Winnequah Rd
Monona, WI 53716
mononabaiticecream.yolasite.com

Sardine
(608) 441-1600
617 Williamson St
Madison, WI 53703
sardinemadison.com

Springers of Lake Kegonsa
MEMBER
(608) 205-9300
3097 Sunnyside St
Stoughton, WI 53589
springersonthelake.com
A full-service bar and restaurant with outdoor lakeside seating and spectacular sunset views. Live entertainment on Friday evenings (weather permitting) from Memorial Day to Labor Day weekend.

The Biergarten at Olbrich Park
MEMBER
(608) 237-3548
3527 Atwood Ave
Madison, WI 53714
olbrichbiergarten.com
View the downtown skyline over Lake Monona with friends and family all around and a cold drink in your hand. Bring your own picnic or enjoy our local soft pretzels, sausages, and more.

The Boathouse - The Edgewater
MEMBER
(608) 535-8232
1001 Wisconsin Pl
Madison, WI 53703
boathousemadison.com
A Madison favorite offering casual lakeside dining like burgers, sandwiches, the best cheese curds in town, craft beer, and ice-cold margaritas. Accessible by land or by water. Visit BoathouseMadison.com for hours and menus.

The East Side Club - Tiki Bar & Grill
(608) 222-9131
3735 Monona Dr
Madison, WI 53714
escmadison.com

The Statehouse - The Edgewater
MEMBER
(608) 535-8232
1001 Wisconsin Pl
Madison, WI 53703
statehousemadison.com
Madison's signature restaurant on Lake Mendota featuring Modern-American fare with thoughtfully sourced ingredients, sunset seating, and a casual atmosphere. Visit StatehouseMadison.com for hours and menus.

The Tasting Room
(608) 223-1641
800 W Broadway, Suite 100
Monona, WI 53713
tastingroomofmonona.com

Wisconsin Memorial Union
MEMBER
(608) 265-3000
800 Langdon St
Madison, WI 53703
union.wisc.edu
Enjoy made-to-order pub food, locally made ice cream, pizza, Friday fish fries, and so much more. Memorial Union's lakefront dining is a year-round destination with first-come, first-served seating.

SHORELINE LANDSCAPING & ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION

Adaptive Restoration LLC
(608) 554-0411
8864 Offerdahl Rd
Mount Horeb, WI 53572
adaptiverestoration.com

Dixon Shoreline & Landscaping
MEMBER
(608) 432-0078
N6780 County Hwy U
Portage, WI 53901
dixonshoreline.com
thelakesaver.com
Professionally certified in rainwater harvesting, rain exchange, pondless waterfalls, and fountain scapes. We specialize in stormwater runoff issues with the revolutionary, easy to install Lake Saver Bag.

EC3 Environmental Consulting Group Inc.
(608) 497-0955
PO Box 44281
Madison, WI 53744
ec3grp.com

Envirolok LLC
(608) 226-2565
10101 N Casey Rd
Evansville, WI 53536
envirolok.com

EOR
(608) 839-4422
1334 Dewey Ct
Madison, WI 53703
eorinc.com

Good Oak LLC
(608) 209-0607
4606 Pflaum Rd, Suite A
Madison, WI 53718
goodoak.com

Meister's K&M Tree and Landscaping Inc.
MEMBER
(608) 592-5244
W 11924 County Rd V
Lodi, WI 53555
meisterskandm.com
Meisters K & M Tree and Landscaping specializes in shoreline restoration, landscaping, retaining walls, and tree services. We offer free estimates and are fully insured.
Email: info@meisterskandm.com

MEMBER

Clean Lakes Alliance's membership program recognizes businesses and organizations that support Clean Lakes Alliance through annual donations (Jan. 1 - Dec. 31) made independent of events, sponsorships, or programs, **directly benefiting our efforts to improve the lakes**. Additionally, Members demonstrate their organizational commitment to clean lakes through one or all of the following avenues: making improvements on their properties, educating staff on watershed sustainability, and participating in volunteer opportunities.

LAKE DIRECTORY

Lake Monona, photo courtesy Robert Bertera

Olson Toon Landscaping Inc.
(608) 827-9401
3570 Pioneer Rd
Verona, WI 53593
olsontoon.com

SCS Engineers
(608) 224-2830
2830 Dairy Dr
Madison, WI 53718
scsengineers.com

Silt Sock Inc.
(608) 438-7625
N6100 Johnson Rd
Portage, WI 53901
siltsock.net

Strand Associates Inc.
(608) 251-4843
910 W Wingra Dr
Madison, WI 53715
strand.com

Sweeney's Aquatic Weed Removal
MEMBER
aquaticweedremovers.com
Sweeney's Aquatic Weed Removal is your full-service lakefront care company. We specialize in lakeweed removal, shoreline restoration, leaf & debris removal, and algae & muck control. Contact us today!

Weed Man Lawn Care - E3 Group
MEMBER
(608) 268-2022
2211 Eagle Dr
Middleton, WI 53562
madison.weedman.com
Weed Man Lawn Care has been a strong advocate of clean water and reducing sediment runoff since the company's inception. In creating high-quality turf, we are reducing urban sediment runoff while creating beneficial filtering to our lakes and the Yahara River Watershed.

SPORTING OUTLETS & CLUBS

Badger Flyfishers
badgerflyfishers.org

Camp Randall Rowing Club
617 N Shore Dr
Madison, WI 53703
camprandallrc.org

Capital City Muskies Inc.
PO Box 8862
Madison, WI 53708
capitalcitymuskiesinc.org

Fishing Has No Boundaries - Madison Chapter
(608) 417-3474
1618 Mayfield Ln
Madison, WI 53716
fhnbmadison.com

Four Lakes Ice Yacht Club
(608) 347-3513
runsignup.com/2026-loop-the-lake

Four Lakes Yacht Club
(608) 222-1401
6312 Inland Way
Madison, WI 53713
madison4lyc.com

Lake Kegonsa Sailing Club
lksc.org

Lake Monona Sailing Club
lakemononasailing.com

Mad City Paddlers
madcitypaddlers.org

Mad-City Ski Team
MEMBER
6516 Monona Dr,
Suite 193
Madison, WI 53716
madcityskiteam.com
Come visit us Sunday evenings at 6 p.m. from Memorial Day through Labor Day at Law Park for FREE, on-water entertainment.

LAKE DIRECTORY

Madison Area Antique & Classic Boat Society - Glacier Lakes Chapter
glacbs.org

Madison Bass Club
madisonbassclub.org

Madison Fishing Expo
(262) 644-7940
wifishingexpo.com

Madison Sailing Center
madisonsailingcenter.com

Madison Youth Sailing Foundation
madisonyouthsailing.com

Mendota Rowing Club
622 E Gorham St
Madison, WI 53703
mendotarowingclub.com

Mendota Yacht Club MEMBER
PO Box 2062
Madison, WI 53701
mendotayc.org
Founded in 1903, our mission is to encourage the sport of sailing among young and old.

Stoughton Country Club
(608) 873-7861
3165 Shadyside Dr
Stoughton, WI 53589
stoughtoncountryclub.com

Trout Unlimited - Southern Wisconsin Chapter
PO Box 45555
Madison, WI 53744
swtu.org

Waubesa Sailing Club
waubesasailingclub.org

Wisconsin Bass Federation
wisconsinbass.com

Wisconsin Bowfishing Association
wibfa.com

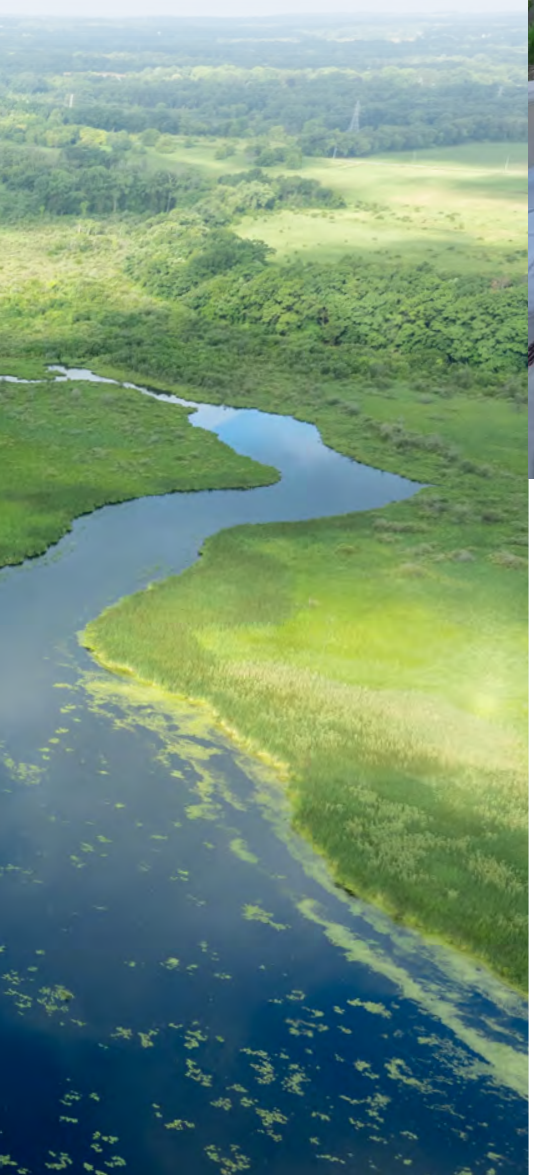
Wisconsin Fishing Team
wisconsin-fishing-team.web.app

Wisconsin Hoofers: Sailing, Outing, and Scuba Clubs MEMBER
(608) 262-1630
800 Langdon St
Madison, WI 53703
hoofers.org
The Hoofer Sailing, Outing, and Scuba Clubs are three of the six outdoors clubs based at Memorial Union. Open to those 18 and older, Hoofers clubs make it easy to make friends and enjoy the lakes.

Southern end of Lake Waubesa, photo courtesy of Robert Bertera

Wisconsin Smallmouth Alliance
wisconsinsmallmouth.com

Yahara Fishing Club
PO Box 259803
Madison, WI 53725
yaharafishingclub.org



ALUMNI PARK

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Photo: Joe Leute

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724 Langdon Street, Madison

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ALUMNIPARK.COM
TO LEARN MORE.

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View of Loop the Lake, photo courtesy Robert Bertera

LOOP THE LAKE

"A bike ride to benefit our lakes"

Presented by Lake Ridge Bank™

Saturday, June 20, 2026
Starts & ends at The East Side Club
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Cyclists of all ages and abilities navigate the scenic 13-mile loop around Lake Monona. Registration includes:

- Fun and educational stops
- Food item
- Free Michelob Ultra, Ultra Zero, or Ultra Seltzer (21+)
- Kids 10 and under ride FREE with a paid adult!

Learn more: cleanlakesalliance.org/loop-the-lake

A Clean Lakes Alliance event, in partnership with City of Monona Parks & Recreation, Discover Monona, the East Side Club, Madison LakeWay, Madison Parks, and Monona East Side Business Alliance

Use code **LAKEGUIDE10** to receive 10% off your registration - scan the QR code to register

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150 E Gilman St, Suite 2600
Madison, WI 53703-1441

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