

LHIA Project Updates October 2009

WOW! What a summer it has been. On June 27th 2009 the Lake Hendricks Improvement Association (LHIA) held their annual meeting. Around 100 people (up from 6 in 2008) watched as experts from throughout the area gave presentations on how to best tackle the problems that have plagued Lake Hendricks for years.

They are; poor water quality that results in algae blooms that get worse every year. It has become a real problem to maintain good numbers of catchable sport fish with water conditions being what they are. Recreational use on the lake has suffered as well as water quality has declined.

This year has been particularly bad with large quantities of algae being washed into the lake outlet along with several thousand carp.

This threatened to disrupt the July 4th celebration and called for some quick action by the LHIA to remove and bury the dead carp.

The problems with the lake have prompted the LHIA to hire a full time project manager to over see four major water projects that have been identified to improve the water quality in the lake in the upcoming years.

These projects are in both Minnesota and South Dakota. In South Dakota Deer Creek is the major inlet for water coming into Lake Hendricks. Deer Creek is also responsible for the lion's share of animal waste that enters the lake.

The solution for this is to slow the flow of water and allow the nutrients being carried by the water to either settle out or used up by plant life before the water enters the lake.

I am happy to report that 225 acres have been located and purchased by the department of Game Fish and Parks in SD. This will result in a large wetland being created to slow the water coming in on Deer Creek and be filtered through a cattail marsh.

This will assure that the unwanted nutrients will not enter the lake. Almost 400 head of cattle will be removed from this section of Deer Creek. Removing this large number of live stock will make a huge difference in animal pollution entering the lake.

Along Deer Creek is a flood retention dam that directs water into Lake Hendricks. This dam was built in 1966 to protect from and supply water to Lake Hendricks. Over the years silt has rendered several functions of the dam useless.

With help from the Deer Creek watershed board repairs are being made to assure that water flow into the lake will become cleaner and more predictable. Repairs are important to protect the newly created wetland from flooding.

In Minnesota there is a large dredge ditch that drains 9000 acres. This water enters the lake on the south side of the lake just inside the SD boarder.

According to lake studies that have been completed over the last 25 years most of the Phosphate carrying silt that pollutes Lake Hendricks enters the lake via this ditch. Phosphates are the food that algae need to grow.

As silt accumulates in the lake wind action and rough fish cause the phosphates to suspend in the water column allowing the ever present algae to utilize it for food.

Phosphates enter the lake via soaps that are used for washing cloths and fertilizers that are used in agriculture, on private lawns and golf courses.

The solution for this is to add grass filter strips along the edges of the ditch that will trap the silt being carried by the water.

Statistics show that 80% of the silt carried by water will be removed by the grass strips. Paying close attention to your own lawn it will go along way to helping to solve the algae problem.

I am happy to report that through the efforts of the project coordinator along with the NRCS and the Soil Conservation offices in Ivanhoe 100% of county ditch 11 will have grass filter strips planted in May of 2010. This will dramatically reduce the chemical laden silt from entering the lake. These grass strips will be between 50' and 120'. This was made possible because of the new sales tax money that was voted on and passed in Minnesota in November of 2008. The money is being used to compensate the farmers who farm along ditch 11 and provide the seed and planting as well. When you see one of your government officials thank them for making dollars available for these types of projects.

Money from the same fund has been made available through the Clean Water Act for cities and towns to deal with sewer and surface water issues. Hendricks has allowed storm surface water to enter the lake for many years. This is being dealt with as well. Through the efforts of David Bleez working with the lake project coordinator grant money has been located to help pay to redirect the surface water away from the lake depositing it directly into the lake outlet bypassing the lake completely. This water is laded with all kinds of pollution from trash, winter salt, fertilizer and oils. Reducing this will greatly enhance the water quality in around the city area. Lincoln county has been instrumental in working with the city of Hendricks on this project, be sure to thank them when you see your officials for their help.

As you can see these four projects are large and will make a huge difference in the water coming into the lake. It will take a few years to enjoy the full benefits of these projects. I do believe a year from now we will be able to notice a marked difference in the quality of water in the lake. Our vision for Lake Hendricks is this instead of the lake being unusable 3 months out of the year it may only be green for a month. It will get better as time goes by and the pollution load is reduced.

This will not happen without your support. If you aren't a member of the lake association and live in this area reconsider your decision and join up. It cost only \$25 to become a member, I am asking you to join up or at least make a donation to the LHIA we are a non profit tax deductible organization that expects your help. Everyone that lives in this area or uses Lake Hendricks for recreation will appreciate it more if you support the projects that are being implemented.

We are experiencing a very unique window of opportunity to fix a big mess that is many years in the making. To be able to address four major areas of need in two states at the same time and be able to move them all forward in such a short period of time is unheard of. Lets not blow this opportunity get involved if not with your time do it with your dollars. Here is an address where to send checks and donations. As the lake improves your opportunities to enjoy the lake and property values will increase s well.

Make Checks payable to:
Lake Hendricks Improvement Association
Po Box 161, Hendricks, MN 56136