

Lake Currents

Lake of the Woods Improvement Association

Weed Control Management Fee

By: Roy Pearson, President

All Lake of the Woods property owners are assessed an annual weed control fee of \$125. This fee appears on the winter property tax bill and can only be used for the purpose of treating the lake to control invasive weeds in lake waters. A Special Assessment District was created by a vote of lake property owners for a period of ten years in 2005. The treatment schedule is determined by a contracted firm: PLM Lake and Land Management. Annual treatment costs vary depending on weather conditions and the growth of treatable weeds. In recent years, the expenses

have been less than projected, thus creating a fund balance of approximately \$100,000. The annual assessment fee has been lowered twice since its inception by the LOW Board of Directors.

The assessment fee will expire in 2015 and the LOW Board of Directors will need to determine whether a request to the respective townships to continue the assessment shall be made. Another issue will be to discuss again lowering the annual weed control fee. Even though the fund balance is large enough to cover several years of treatment, there is concern that letting the fund expire will

create the possibility of running out of funds in future years. It is a consensus of the Board that treatment of the lake has greatly diminished the concentration of weeds and overall quality of the water in our lake. Stay tuned to future developments on this issue and please contact board members as to your opinion..

Membership Drive

The Lake of the Woods Association Board of Directors will start a membership drive during January and February of 2014. All property owners around the lake who are not current members will be contacted by letter and encouraged to join our association. Dues are just \$10 per year and it gives lake residents a chance to have a voice in management of the lake. Many lake property owners are not current members of our association. We encourage current members to contact neighbors to join the association so that we can have a greater representation of residents' opinions. A membership form will be available on our website: lakeofthewoodsmi.org.

a tradition - a time to get together and have some fishing fun. While some may find time to reflect while fishing, there are no limits to variations on a great theme! Experienced anglers who offer a child or young adult the chance to take their first fishing trip can provide a rewarding experience for all. People who fish tend to understand the natural aquatic network of plants and animals that help to sustain fish as well as the regulations that govern fishing in Michigan.

So grab a rod and your family and friends, and let's go fishing!

2014 Free Fishing Weekends

Two days twice a year, families and friends can enjoy one of Michigan's premiere outdoor activities, Michigan Fishing, for FREE!

The 2014 Free Fishing Weekends are scheduled for this winter: February 15 and 16 and this summer: June 7 and 8.

All fishing license fees will be waived for two days. Residents and out-of-state visitors may enjoy fishing on both inland and Great Lakes' waters for all species of fish. All fishing regulations will still apply.

For many, the annual Free Fishing Weekend has become

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Winter 2014

Did you know:

Michigan is the only place in the world with a floating post office.

The J.W. Westcott II is the only boat in the world that delivers mail to ships while they are still underway. They have been operating for over 125 years

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Aquatic Plant Management – Questions and Answers

Q. Will aquatic plant controls eliminate all aquatic vegetation?

A. NO! Nearly all currently available aquatic plants controls are **SELECTIVE** (i.e., they control some plants but not others). Intelligent aquatic plant management uses this selectivity to remove particularly problematic plants while leaving others unaffected. This approach minimizes interference with recreation while leaving desirable vegetation that provide **BENEFITS** to the lake (see below). Harvesting cuts all plants in the affected area, but plants are not killed and will regrow. Intelligent aquatic plant management removes the most problematic aquatic plants, which are typically exotic species, while preserving desirable native vegetation.

Q. Can't we get rid of ALL the weeds in our lake?

A. NO. And even if you could, you

shouldn't. Trying to keep a lake that has good growing conditions free of plant growth would be like trying to keep all plant life from growing in your front lawn— it just doesn't make sense! ... unless you pave it. (And if that's what you want, you can always build a swimming pool.) Aquatic plants are an important component of the lake ecosystem. They provide many benefits, including stabilizing sediments, oxygenating the water, providing habitat for fish and invertebrates.

Q. Are aquatic herbicides safe?

A. YES! Extensive testing has not identified significant human health risks associated with the proper use of these herbicides. And though no testing program can absolutely rule out unexpected effects, it is important to recognize that we daily use many materials that are known to be toxic, carcinogenic, or otherwise harmful materials that have been identified as

health risks by the same sort of testing to which aquatic herbicides are subjected. Gasoline, for example, contains a number of potent carcinogens, to which we are exposed every time we fill a gas tank..

Q. We don't want to use CHEMICALS in our lake... isn't harvesting a more environmentally responsible aquatic plant control technique?

A. Not necessarily. The most environmentally responsible control technique depends on the goals of the management program and the type(s) of plants to be controlled. In some cases, harvesting is the best choice. In other cases, harvesting can exacerbate aquatic plant problems. For example, we would not recommend harvesting a lake with an uncontrolled Eurasian water milfoil population because harvesting will speed the spread of this aggressive exotic plant and hasten the replacement of native plants.

Ice Safety

When is ice safe?

There really is no sure answer, and no such thing as 100 percent safe ice. You cannot judge the strength of ice by one factor such as its appearance, age, thickness, temperature or whether the ice is covered with snow. Ice strength is based on a combination of several factors, and they can vary from body to body of water. Ice can also vary in different areas of the same body of water.

Safety tips:

- Dress warmly in layers.
- Don't go alone. Head out with friends or family. Take a cell phone if available, and make sure someone knows where you are and when you are expected to return.
- Know before you go. Don't travel in areas you are not familiar and don't travel at night or during reduced visibility.
- Avoid inlets or outlets that may have current that can thin the ice.
- Look for clear ice, which is generally stronger than ice with snow on it or

bubbles in it.

- Carry some basic safety gear: ice claws or picks, a cell phone in a waterproof bag or case, a life jacket and length of rope.

What to do if you fall through ice

If you fall through the ice, remain calm and act quickly.

- Do not remove your winter clothing. Heavy clothes can trap air, which can help provide warmth and flotation. This is especially true in a snowmobile suit.
- Go back toward the direction you came. That is probably where you will find the strongest ice – and what lies ahead is unknown.
- Place your hands and arms on the unbroken surface. This is where a pair of ice picks are handy in providing the extra traction you need to pull yourself up onto the ice.
- Kick your feet and dig in your ice picks to work your way back onto the solid ice. If your clothes have trapped a lot of water, you may have to lift yourself partially out of the water on

your elbows to let the water drain before starting forward.

- Once back on the ice, don't try to stand up. Lie flat until you are completely out of the water, then roll away from the hole to keep your weight spread out. This may help prevent you from breaking through again.
- Get to a warm, dry, sheltered area and warm yourself up immediately. In moderate to severe cases of cold-water hypothermia, you must seek medical attention. Cold blood trapped in your extremities can come rushing back to your heart after you begin to warm up. The shock of the chilled blood may cause ventricular fibrillation leading to a heart attack and death!

General ice thickness guidelines

For new, clear ice only
2" or less - STAY OFF

4" - Ice fishing or other activities on foot

5" - Snowmobile or ATV

8" - 12" - Car or small pickup

12" - 15" - Medium truck





WARNING! Invasive crayfish should not be used as bait

Crayfish sold alive in pet shops, grocery stores, and live food markets are not intended for use as bait or release into lakes and rivers. Many are red swamp crayfish – an aggressive invasive species that is nearly impossible to eradicate.

Posted on **August 19, 2013** by **Dan O'Keefe**, Michigan State University Extension

In the Deep South, crawfish boils have long been popular at social gatherings. The crawfish, or crayfish as we tend to call them in the upper Midwest, are cooked alive in much the same way lobsters are with one exception—the crawfish are cooked with cayenne pepper, other spices, corn, and potatoes to provide a spicy one-pot feast.

Crawfish boils, and to a lesser extent other Cajun dishes like crawfish etouffee, have become so popular that an aquaculture industry has grown to meet the demand. The species of choice is the red swamp crayfish, which is native to Gulf Coast states and the lower Mississippi River north to the southern tip of Illinois.

Live crayfish can be found at grocery stores and gas stations in most any small southern town, and they are also becoming more available in northern states. This might be encouraging for those of us who love spicy seafood, but there is one downside—red swamp crayfish is not native to the Great Lakes basin.

The red swamp crayfish is also highly aggressive and large relative to many native crayfish, which explains why this species quickly became more abundant than native crayfish in places like [Pine Lake](#) in Washington. It can also carry crayfish fungus plague and burrow into river banks, de-stabilizing shorelines and smothering in-stream habitat with sediment.

This is why the Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials were concerned when anglers were found [using red swamp crayfish as bait](#) off a west Michigan pier this summer. It is illegal to import any crayfish into Michigan for use as bait; however, red swamp crayfish remain available for sale. While it remains legal to buy live red swamp crayfish to eat, to study, or to display in an aquarium, this species could be a real threat to the environment if released into the wild. It could also cost taxpayers a small fortune to control.

Red Swamp Crayfish

Prevent the Spread!

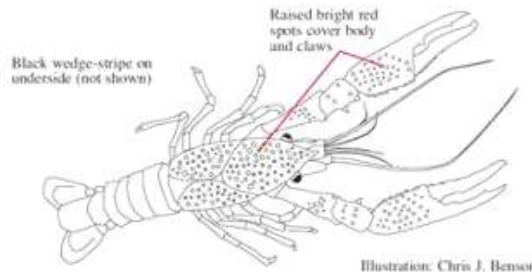


Illustration: Chris J. Benson

- If you buy live crayfish for the aquarium, food, or use in the classroom DO NOT release them into local waters

- If you see red swamp crayfish being sold as bait contact Michigan DNR's Report All Poaching hotline at 1-800-292-7800.

- Learn to identify red swamp crayfish and contact Michigan State University Extension or Michigan DNR if you find the species in Michigan waters.

In [Wisconsin](#), red swamp crayfish were found in two ponds in residential neighborhoods a matter of miles from Lake Michigan. It seemed like a best-case scenario in terms of potential to eradicate the pests before they spread. The ponds were small and the crayfish apparently had not spread, so eradication was, at least theoretically, possible.

Unfortunately, the red swamp crayfish proved exceedingly difficult to combat. Over the course of two years, managers spent \$250,000 in attempts to eliminate the crayfish from two ponds. Bleach was used in one pond to kill all aquatic life, but some red swamp crayfish were able to ride out the treatment in burrows. Another pond was drained and treated with an insecticide, and when that failed to eliminate crayfish, the pond was filled in.

Michigan anglers, and others, need to do their part to prevent red swamp crayfish from ever becoming established in Michigan waters. Red swamp crayfish may taste great, but they could be the next addition to the long list of destructive Great Lakes invaders if prevention efforts fail.

Aquatic Invasive Species

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](#). For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>.

To contact an expert in your area, visit <http://expert.msue.msu.edu>, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

"We all have a role in preventing the introduction of harmful plants and animals to our waters," said Sarah LeSage, Michigan's Aquatic Invasive Species Program coordinator. "This prevention is critical, since management of invasive species after they've become established may not be feasible or is often very costly." View Michigan's Aquatic Invasive Species State Management Plan at www.michigan.gov/aquaticinvasives.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dnr.





It's time to renew your membership

It is time to renew your membership for 2014. The Lake of the Woods Association Board of Directors has announced that annual dues will remain at \$10.00 for the 2014 membership year.

Your \$10 for dues helps to promote the boater safety class, sponsor lake and community activities, such as the annual picnic, the 4th of July boat parade and the local fireworks display.

Additional benefits include the Lake of

the Woods website that includes news, photos, calendar of events and lots of great information.

Please take a few minutes to review your renewal form and return it with any changes and your check or money order for \$10.00 in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

To those of you who have been faithful members we thank you for your continued support, and we ask that you please

encourage your neighbors to join the association.

As you can see, the Lake of the Woods Improvement Association is involved in many activities to help maintain the quality of the lake now and for future generations.

Please do your part by joining us with your membership.

(Tear Here)

2014 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Lake of the Woods Improvement Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 188 Decatur, MI 49045-0188

Please return this entire form with your membership renewal.

Below is the information we currently have on file for you. If it is incorrect, please note any changes.

Thank you for your continued support of YOUR lake association!

The suggested dues amount is again \$10.00 for this year



Keeping the Family Cottage: New Tax Benefit for Transfers Between Parents and Children

Reprinted from The Michigan Riparian Spring 2013 Issue

By: Crystal Morgan, Shareholder

Bloom Sluggett Morgan, PC

Grand Rapids, Michigan

As a result of Proposal A, which was adopted by Michigan voters in 1994, the taxable value of a property (the amount on which a property owner pays property taxes) cannot increase from one year to the next by more than the rate of inflation or five percent—whichever is less—until there is a transfer of ownership. When there is a “transfer of ownership” to a new owner (including a family member), the taxable value of the property generally “pops up” or is “uncapped” to the state equalized value, which is supposed to represent 50 percent of the property’s fair market value. Thus, uncapping the taxable value after a sale or transfer can result in the new owners paying significantly more in property taxes than long-time previous owners of the same property.

Under Michigan’s General Property Tax Act, a transfer of property from one spouse to another, or from a decedent to a surviving spouse, is exempted from the definition of a transfer of ownership. Therefore, such conveyances do not constitute a transfer of ownership for purposes of uncapping the taxable value of the property.

A new law now extends this same protection to transfers between close relatives. Under Public Act 497 of 2012, signed

into law in December 2012, the exemption will also apply (beginning December 31, 2013) to a transfer of real property to a person related by blood or affinity to the first degree. Persons related by blood to the first degree include a person’s parents and children (including legally adopted children). Persons related to the first degree by affinity include a person’s spouse, mother-in-law, father-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, stepson, stepdaughter, stepmother or stepfather. The exemption applies only to property that is classified as residential real property, and only as long as the use of the property does not change following the transfer. MCL 211.27a(7)(s).

This new exception to uncapping in the case of transfers between parents and children is especially important in the case of elderly parents who have owned their home for many years, and whose taxable value has not been uncapped since the cap was first enacted under Proposal A in 1994.

Overall, Proposal A has been beneficial to riparian property owners throughout Michigan who have held onto their land for long periods of time, as waterfront properties have tended to increase in value over the last decade and a half much more rapidly than non-waterfront properties. Waterfront property owners who have owned their riparian property for long periods of time have seen their taxable values (and, hence, their property taxes) grow much more slowly over time than the owners of riparian properties that change ownership frequently. The down-

side, however, is that senior generation owners may wish to transfer waterfront property to their children, but the uncapping of the taxable value would result in an increased tax bill that the children cannot afford. Unfortunately, this can lead to forced sales of properties that have been in the same family for generations.

While the scope of the new law is narrow, the new law is not limited to homesteads. Thus, it allows parents to transfer cottages and vacation homes that have been under the same ownership for a number of years or decades to close relatives, allowing the property to remain in the family without the fear of an insurmountable tax burden.

It is not yet clear how the Michigan State Tax Commission or local taxing authorities will interpret or apply the new law in certain situations, such as where the property is owned by the parents’ trust, a living trust or by a limited liability company owned by the parents. Further, it is important to remember that this new law does not become effective until December 31, 2013. Thus, it does not have any effect on a property’s 2013 taxes.

However, once in effect, this new law will allow parents for the first time to transfer (i.e., by deed or will) residential real property to their children and stepchildren without “uncapping” the taxable value. This will result in helping to keep cottage and waterfront home ownership affordable, and allowing Michigan families to retain and enjoy property that has been part of their family’s history for generations.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia can be fatal if not detected promptly and treated properly. It occurs when the body temperature drops to 95 degrees or below. A 3.6 degree drop from a normal body temperature of 98.6 degrees may seem trivial, but it's drastic for vital organs. The most common victims are older persons who have diffi-

culty keeping themselves or their homes warm in cold weather and infants less than 1 year of age because they lose body heat more easily than adults, and cannot make enough body heat by shivering. The condition can develop over a period of time. Even cool indoor temperatures of 60 degrees can eventually

trigger hypothermia. Symptoms include shivering, drowsiness, slurred speech, hallucinations and slow and shallow breathing. If you notice these symptoms in a person, take his or her temperature. If it is 95 degrees or below, call a doctor or ambulance, or take the victim directly to the hospital.



*Lake of the Woods
Improvement Association*

www.lakeofthewoodsmi.org

Facebook: LakeoftheWoods, Michigan

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Servicing Lake of the Woods residents

since 1980!



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