**Leech Lake Association Meeting Minutes – May 15, 2023**

--Submitted by Dave Laursen, Secretary

Meeting called to order at 9:30 AM by Vice President Tom McGovern. Board Members present: Tom McGovern, Dave Laursen, Jennifer O’Neill, Jeff Brockberg, John Eaton, Mark Bovee, Sharyn Nepsha. Board Members absent: Bob Gisvold, Bill Schultz. Guests: Carl Pederson & Donna Perleberg, DNR; Raining White, DRM; Shawn Weissenfluh & Sam Anderson, COE; Dawn Freese, Mark Freese, Dana Gutzmann, SWCD.

SECRETARY’S REPORT: Jennifer O’Neill moved to approve the October 22, 2022 Meeting Minutes as written. John Eaton seconded. Motion carried.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Dave Laursen reported that the Leech Lake Association bank balance at the end of October 2022 was $65,839.71. Income from October 2022 through March 2023 was $4,530, through membership renewals and $1,850 through a cost-sharing agreement with SWCD. Expenses were $2,740, mainly for water and algae testing by RMB Laboratories and Phytotechnology.

NEW AIS HIRE: Dana Gutzmann reported that her replacement as the Cass AIS Technician would not be starting until later in the month, and that she would introduce the person to the board at our June meeting. Dana is now the Cass SWCD Manager.

STONEWORT PRESENTATION: Donna Perleberg and Raining White briefed the Board on a grant the DNR has received to study stoneworts in Cass County lakes, including Leech Lake. The studies are needed because stoneworts make up 25% of underwater plant diversity and keep lakes healthy. (The exception, of course, is invasive Stony Stonewort.) Because native stoneworts have not been studied extensively, technical expertise in identifying stonewort species is lacking. The goal of the new study is to change this by gathering baseline data on 500 lakes, and partnering with groups like the Leech Lake Tribal College, the New York Botanical Gardens where ~~some~~ technical expertise exists, and the U of M Bell Museum. Invasive Starry Stonewort will be looked for on all target lakes. One of the goals will be to gather new data on Leech Lake muskie habitat.

WATER LEVELS: Shawn Weissenfluh reported that Leech Lake water level is at 1295.1, four inches above the summer band (1294.8), The Leech Lake River below the dam is low, at 1285. Discharge from the dam is 2100 cps.

WATER TESTING: Tom McGovern reported that water quality samples were collected the day before (Sunday). Overall water clarity is good (possibly affected by late ice out) however it’s less clear in Kabekona Bay, which has more phosphorous and rivers flowing through it.

DNR FISHERIES: Carl Pederson reported that summer sampling for year-over-year walleye is about to begin (seining, trawling, electro-shocking). Trawling will be used again this year on Leech Lake though it has been discontinued on Lake Mille Lacs, due to zebra mussels filling up the trawls.

Carl stated that if trawling eventually can’t be employed on Leech Lake, electro-shocking provides comparable data. Gill net sampling data from the fall of 2022 indicates that there are walleyes of all sizes in the lake available for catching. Walleye numbers meet management objectives, though perch numbers remain low. There will be a creel census on Leech Lake this coming winter.

ANDERSON’S COVE STONEWORT REMOVAL: John Eaton reported on the hiring of Aquatic Plant Management LLC with special suction equipment to remove starry stonewort within the harbor at Anderson’s Cove. Cost for hiring this group is $13,522. The wintertime efforts of John, Dana, and Jennifer to apply for grants and solicit funds for this project have been successful. LLA has secured $3,850 in cost-share funds from Cass SWCD and $3,000 from a MN DNR AIS control grant. John and team then contacted three lake associations within the harbor who have their own separate boat launches and received funding commitments from them, and/or from individual members. With our own commitment of $2,000, we have come within $82 dollars of reaching the $13,522 goal. Thank you to John, Dana, and Jennifer for this successful effort. The DASH (diver-assisted suction harvesting) work will begin this summer. Jennifer will place an article in the Walker Independent-Pilot to inform the public before work begins, as boaters will need to watch out for equipment and divers in the harbor.

ROOSEVELT CANAL: Jeff Brockberg reported that the Roosevelt canal is in good shape, especially with the lake 4 inches higher than the normal summer band. He and Ryan Bruns, who does the excavating there will continue to monitor the situation. Jeff has also been in contact with the Sheriff’s Department in regard to the new buoys they received through grants, though they apparently did not have time or the manpower to put them out, possibly because of the late ice out. Jeff will follow up.

ANNUAL MEETING: Sharyn Nepsha sought input on when and where to hold the Annual Meeting, usually scheduled for the first Friday in August (August 4). The Board discussed holding the meeting in mid-week, when it might be easier to secure reservations, and also less expensive. Potential sites for the meeting, now that The Chase is being sold, include Trappers Landing, the Walker Community Center, and the Green Scene. Sharyn to contact those organizations and report back.

MEMBERSHIP & SPRING NEWSLETTER: Jennifer O’Neill reported that the Spring Newsletter is presently at the printer. LLA paid-up membership presently stands at 265, with a few still to be added.

NEW ARRIVAL MAILING LIST: Mark Bovee reported that his project to identify recent arrivals to the Leech Lake area is proceeding with the assistance of Jeff Woodford. This list will be an opportunity for us to introduce ourselves to recent arrivals and potentially expand membership.

ACCL MEETING: Jennifer O’Neill is now representing the LLA at ACCL Meetings. She reported on a program that ACCL is introducing to provide lake associations with signs and cleaning supplies to place at boat landings. The Board agreed to wait on participating in this program until we see how it goes elsewhere.

BOARD MEMBER CANDIDATES: Mark and Dawn Freese, who live in Worthington and have a home on Shingobee Bay, introduced themselves to the Board and shared their interest in the Leech Lake Association, and potentially being considered for board membership. They are extremely well qualified from a technical, scientific and experience standpoint, and we would be fortunate to get one or both on our Board. Laursen explained that the usual procedure for joining the Board is to be interviewed by our President or other Officer and then be voted in at a subsequent Board Meeting.

John Eaton moved to close the meeting at 11:40 AM. Mark Bovee seconded,

Minutes submitted by Dave Laursen, Secretary