

The State of the Lake Report for 2023

The seasonal changes on the lake can be noted as follows. As winter was slow in arriving January started with open water for three weeks and then the temperatures brought the ice that allowed 5-6 days of ice fishing before it broke up with the big lake storm action heaving and fracturing the ice cover to make it remain unstable for the next two months. Steelhead started to become more prevalent as spring river spawning became evident. Following fish started to show up in the warmer waters to spawn as well. They were the panfish, crappie, walleye, pike, and rock bass. Anglers were showing up first on the channel, then the bridge or marsh, and finally the docks as the waters warmed. A new look to the shoreline developed as filamentous algae became dominant on some shorelines and limited the starry stonewort as the summer progressed. The algae developed as a result of high water over the past three years flushing the marsh up river and moving algae into the lake shoreline. Less rain and snow caused the lake level to drop 6 inches in the spring and again in the fall. Next year docks may have to be extended to have the same depth of water needed for boating.

With no big alewife run in the channel and lake this summer, there were fewer predators caught by youth in the summer fishing contest. The species included pike, walleye, sheepshead, and dogfish or bowfin. The best results in the summer two months tourney were a 32 inch pike and 3 master angler bowfin (dogfish) over 27 inches. The nicest catch of perch 9 - 12 inches were recorded this summer compared to the last 6 years. This was probably due to less ice fishing pressure this past winter due to the lack of good ice.

The lake vegetation harvest was done the last week of July and the first few days of August. Only one 4 day harvest was done with the same amount of starry stonewort removed. This is the target species the permit allows to be harvested. Two harvesters were used to get the roughly 100 wet tons of vegetation out of the lake and then dumped on an upland field. Native vegetation has a hard time competing with starry stonewort and usually is eliminated where starry stonewort has gotten a foot hold. Riparians can sign out two weed cutters and two weed rakes for personal use to manage your recreational water front this summer. This can be used on native vegetation as well as invasive. Remember to lift and dry your cut vegetation.

Monthly water testing on the lake showed no results to be alarmed about. Our E. Coli bacteria testing on the village creek and the north and south branch of the Pentwater river still showed high counts that we hope to address with the help of GVSU Annis Research Center next month. This year the oxygen readings were brought back by Pat Hooyman who oversaw them. Late summer stratification of our lake showed up and is typical of Michigan drowned river mouth lakes. This should help us understand when lake turnover occurs on our lake and water mixing happens. Even though the water temperature of the lake approached 80, our cooler lake waters seem to hold back vegetation growth so no second harvest of starry stonewort was needed this summer.

The salmon runs were lighter and the kings showed up in two different schools and moved up river for spawning by October. The few coho that came in at the start of November were quick to spawn and was the lightest run of the last 5 years. Steelhead fishing was improved trolling on the lake and better than the spring run. Two master angler steelhead were recorded along with a few browns. With a rain in December the pike fishing picked up and limits were caught trolling.