



## SAWM 2022 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

As waterfront property owners, all of us have an obvious interest in what is happening to our waters, and we appreciate this opportunity to update you. For those of you unfamiliar with Shawano Area Waterways Management (SAWM), it is a volunteer, non-profit organization that exists for the benefit of the residents on Shawano Lake, the channel, and the Wolf River. Included with this mailing is a two-page summary of what we do on your behalf. We also have a website at [www.sawm.org](http://www.sawm.org) and a Facebook page that is accessible to members and non-members. We recommend you check out the website and Facebook page for information on SAWM projects, updates, answers to frequently asked questions and more. We can also be reached by email at [shawanolakewi@gmail.com](mailto:shawanolakewi@gmail.com) or by phone at 715-304-9130. We welcome your feedback.

While these are indeed strange times, the efforts of SAWM to preserve and protect the Shawano Waterways continue without interruption. We would like to take this opportunity to update you on those efforts and ask for your support to ensure their continued success.

### **What has SAWM done for the Shawano Waterways over the last year?**

Three major initiatives were the focus of our activities in 2021 and early 2022:

- 1. Continued efforts to address Shawano Lake water level issues.**
- 2. Completed work on an updated 5-year Lake Management Plan to develop long-term strategies and guide the activities of SAWM and stakeholders.**
- 3. Continued buoy maintenance and repair.**

Following is a summary of each.

### **Water Level Issues**

Much activity continues to take place around our efforts to bring final resolution to the water level challenges that we have faced since a complaint was filed in 2015. Through November 15, 2023 the Shawano Paper Mills dam is operating under a temporary amendment of exemption that allows them to maintain the pool elevation of the Wolf River pond at a level of 802.9 feet msl year round. Recall, this is our historic target elevation which we deem appropriate to ensure safe navigation on the river, channel and lake. This order was granted in late July 2021. Since that time SAWM, North Eastern Wisconsin Hydro (dam operators) and our project consultant, Gomez and Sullivan, have been working to finalize a filing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to secure a permanent amendment to the operating exemption allowing the dam to operate at this higher level in perpetuity. For those that have monitored this effort, you'll recall two earlier filings were attempted without success.

Recently, a very key hurdle was crossed as our consultant and NEW Hydro completed a desktop hydrologic study which was provided to the WI DNR for review and comment. The WI DNR indicated they had no concerns with the study or operation at the proposed target level of 802.9 ft vs the current "normal" pool height of 802.5. The hydrologic study compared the flooding potential if a 1% Annual Exceedance Probability event occurred at the

normal pool height of 802.5 vs the proposed value of 802.9. The results displayed no meaningful difference in results.

During this time, SAWM attended board meetings with the surrounding city, county and villages and towns to educate elected officials on the status of this project. Further consultation with these elected officials will occur in the coming months as we share with them the details of the final draft filing. The draft amendment application is scheduled to be provided to the WI DNR for review in mid August with the final amendment application filed with FERC by year end.

We remain optimistic and hopeful that these actions will be the final steps in resolving this very costly and time consuming issue. Unfortunately, instead of directing revenue toward other important topics effecting our waterways, we will have spent near \$100k working to return the water level to its historic value. We can't provide enough thanks to our partners at NEW Hydro and Gomez and Sullivan for helping us navigate this final effort.

### **Lake Management Plan**

A Lake Management Plan is a comprehensive document that includes water quality sampling and evaluation, shoreline condition assessments, an update to the watershed assessment, fishery and fishery habitat assessment, analysis of the lake bottom core sediment, and aquatic plant surveys. To be eligible for DNR grants, SAWM is required to update its Lake Management Plan every five years. We began the process of developing a new Lake Management Plan in 2019 and have contracted with Onterra, our environmental consultant, to assist with its completion. The total cost of the project was almost \$53,000; however, we were awarded a DNR grant of almost \$40,000 to cover most of the cost. The Lake Management Plan was completed this year. It was approved by the SAWM board of directors, and a copy is posted on the SAWM website to be available to our members and non-members.

The document has a multitude of suggestive action items and initiatives. One of action items is to create standing committees. The standing committees will organize and delegate all the initiatives within the Shawano Lake Comprehensive Management Plan. SAWM has created the following committees:

#### **1. Lake Quality Committee**

Objective: The objective of the Lake Quality Committee is to sustain healthy and safe Shawano Area Waterways through efforts to enhance, maintain and improve shoreland and aquatic habitat, water quality, safety and navigability. Additional efforts are focused on project and equipment funding, cost analysis, risk assessment, lake treatment strategies and data analysis. Members of the committee include SAWM board members and other volunteers from within the SAWM organization.

#### **2. Fisheries and Wildlife Committee**

Objective: The objective of the Fisheries and Wildlife Committee is to sustain healthy fish and wildlife populations that depend on Shawano Lake and its associated waters through projects that enhance and maintain shoreland and aquatic habitat and water quality. Members of the committee include SAWM members as well as representatives from relevant conservation and citizen organizations.

#### **3. Education and Communication Committee**

Objective: This committee is the outreach arm of the SAWM organization. Its focus is to inform all stakeholders that use, share, or benefit from the greater Shawano Lake resource the importance of

maintaining it for future generations. This committee is also responsible for recruiting new members and raising operational funding for the organization. The effectiveness will be measured by tracking the annual number of members and fundraising dollars collected.

### **Buoy Maintenance and Repair**

For your safety, SAWM places and maintains the buoys on the lake, channel, and river. The cost of maintaining the buoys and lights is a significant expense that is covered by SAWM. Every fall, the buoys are pulled for the season and the lights are removed from the buoys and bridges. The cost of a buoy is \$146. The cost of a single light for a buoy or bridge is \$277. While we expect that a few lights will fail every year due to age, last year there were many more buoys that were damaged from being hit with the tops ripped off or worse. SAWM will spend more than \$14,000 this year just to replace damaged buoys and lights. Please use caution when navigating near the buoys!

### **How can you help?**

We need your support. ***Please encourage your neighbors to join SAWM!*** There are about 1,370 property owners on Shawano Lake, the channel, and the river. ***Last year we had about 700 members, about half of the total property owners. 100% of the property owners benefitted from the efforts of SAWM but only half of the property owners supported these efforts!!*** As a lake association, we can't force anyone to be a member, but hopefully from this letter you will recognize the benefit SAWM provides. Our efforts help maintain a healthy lake environment, which improves the recreational use of the lake for you and improves the value of your property. Our efforts to maintain higher water levels alone have already cost us about \$50,000, while recent harvesting equipment maintenance and upgrades cost over \$135,000. We anticipate the need to purchase new equipment in the range of \$250,000 in the next year or two as our equipment is truly on its last leg. In addition to project-based expenses, our recurring costs include chemically treating seven buoy lanes, maintaining and placing buoys and navigational lights, and collecting floating weed beds, as well as participating in the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program. We apply for grants where possible and fortunately, we receive generous support from the local municipalities of Wescott, Washington, City of Shawano, Richmond, Cecil, and Shawano County, ***but your \$50 annual membership dues make up the single largest revenue source for SAWM. We need everyone to step up to help maintain the quality of our waterways. Everyone benefits, and we're only asking you to pay \$50 per year to help out. Please consider doing your part.***

### **Donations**

By law, a lake association cannot charge more than \$50 annually for membership. In addition to the annual dues, many of you choose to make an additional contribution to SAWM. These donations are always appreciated and last year almost one half of our members made additional donations totaling just over **\$30,000!!** This was an increase of \$10,000 over the previous year! Let us see if we can beat this total this year!! Our generous donors are now too numerous to list but each one is greatly appreciated – ***thanks to all of you!***

### **What else do I need to know?**

Communicating with all property owners is critical if we are going to be successful in meeting the challenges facing our Shawano waterways. We need you to be informed. This year the **SAWM Annual Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, June 4 at 9:00am at the SHAWANO SKI SHARKS SHOW SITE at 211 Riverside Dr. in Shawano. Rain date: June 11.** We would appreciate your attendance whether you are a member or not. It provides a great opportunity to get an update on the association and lake related topics and to hear from local DNR and Law Enforcement officials. We will also have our annual election of officers and directors and vote on an update to our Bylaws. A redline of the Bylaw changes is posted on the SAWM website for review.

**We need to keep you informed throughout the year.**

Current SAWM members receive an email newsletter. This is a cost-effective way for us to communicate with property owners on the various issues we are dealing with every year. Members also receive weekly/bi-weekly emails that list the activities taking place in the Shawano area.

**Other important information:**

**Chemical Treatment of Weeds – Navigation Channels.** We will use chemical treatment to control weed growth within designated areas of the lake mainly along seven buoy lanes. Thanks to SAWM member Bart DeFere for the time and money he has invested in gaining and maintaining the certifications necessary to handle this spraying on behalf of SAWM. Our spraying costs would be substantially higher if we had to hire an outside contractor to provide this service.

**Weed Harvesting** - The harvesting of weeds in public areas will continue this year along with the ability to pre-pay for private cutting around your dock on the lake and channel. Private cutting is a service provided only to SAWM members. The cost for private cuttings this year is \$200 per cutting if requested and paid for by June 1. After June 1 the cost increases to \$300 per cutting.

**Airport Road Bridge Replacement Update** - The CTH HHH bridge replacement project has been awarded to contract. The project has been awarded to Pfeifer Brothers Construction and construction is anticipated to take place between July 11th – October 31st, 2022. During this time the Channel shall be open to boat traffic on weekends from 1:00pm on Friday through 6:00am Monday. There will be intermittent closure of the waterway at other times determined by the contractor to perform the demolition of the existing bridge, driving pier piles, setting forms for the concrete deck, placing the concrete deck, and removing forms from the concrete deck.

The Contractor is to place buoys and signs as needed to accommodate boat traffic along the channel and to place creek closed signs upstream and downstream of the bridge during times of waterway closure.

**Local Business Support**

We would also like to send a special thanks to our 2021 business members that paid to advertise in our email newsletter. Please thank them with your patronage and support their business.

**SAWM Board of Directors**

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