

# VanEtten Lake Association Spring Newsletter 2017

*Keeping Members Informed and Involved*



## PFC Update

An open house and community meeting was held in Oscoda on April 25<sup>th</sup>, to bring people up to date on actions being taken to address the issue of PFC (perfluorinated chemicals) contamination in ground water (entering water wells) on and around the former Wurtsmith AFB property. Several governmental agencies have been involved in assessing exactly where the contaminant has traveled and have offered home owners who's wells have tested positive for the chemicals other alternatives for safe drinking water. Almost every well tested has been well below the federal standard set by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

It was originally thought that the ground water containing these chemicals did not move under VanEtten Lake, but flowed south and east toward Lake Huron. But evidence of trace chemicals was found on the east side of the lake as wells there were tested, so now the DEQ will continue to test wells along Loud Drive as well as others between the lake and Lake Huron to determine if/where the flow may have impacted the wells. So far, no wells north of Phelan Creek have tested positive. Those testing positive for trace amounts (below the EPA standard) have been informed and offered either water filter systems or bottled water.

According to the Dept of Health and Human Services (MDHHS): “PFCs are **not** a health concern on or in Van Etten Lake. It’s true that PFCs have been found in the environment on and near the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base, but PFCs **do not** absorb through skin and incidental swallowing of water through regular water activities like swimming or boating is not harmful to health. Fishing is okay too, as MDHHS has **not** found higher levels of PFCs in Van Etten Lake fish.” For questions for MDHHS, call Christina Bush at 800-648-6942. To find the Eat Safe Safe guidelines, visit [www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish](http://www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish).

A new Restoraton Advisory Board is in the process of being set up by the Dept of Defense to provide community involvement during the restoration process and VELA will be represented on this board by the VELA president.

Stay informed by watching for upcoming community meetings and/or visit the Public Health Dept website at [www.dhd2.org](http://www.dhd2.org) - click on Wurtsmith Activities. It is extremely important that we all share information about this issue based on facts and not personal bias or conjecture.

### **Board Members – 2016 - 2017**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Pres Joe Plunkey        | <a href="mailto:joeplunkey@charter.net">joeplunkey@charter.net</a>       |
| VP Devon Tasiar         | <a href="mailto:devontasior@gmail.com">devontasior@gmail.com</a>         |
| Sec Carole Plunkey      | <a href="mailto:caroleplunkey@charter.net">caroleplunkey@charter.net</a> |
| Treas Leonard Brockhahn | <a href="mailto:sbrock50@gmail.com">sbrock50@gmail.com</a>               |
| Dave Swenson            | <a href="mailto:dks110250@gmail.com">dks110250@gmail.com</a>             |
| Shirley Brockhahn *     | <a href="mailto:sbrock50@gmail.com">sbrock50@gmail.com</a>               |
| Janice Wilber           | <a href="mailto:gjwilber55@yahoo.com">gjwilber55@yahoo.com</a>           |
| Doug Jager              | <a href="mailto:dj62852@charter.net">dj62852@charter.net</a>             |
| Celeste Creger          | <a href="mailto:cacreger@ameritech.net">cacreger@ameritech.net</a>       |

\* appointed 2017

### **Event Calendar \***

|                   |                             |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sat/June 3 _____  | VELA Spring Mtg.            |
| Sat/July 8 _____  | VELA Annual Mtg – Elections |
| Thurs/July 13 ___ | PRVEL Mtg                   |
| Sat/August 5 ____ | ANNUAL PICNIC               |
| Sat/Sept 9 _____  | VELA Fall Mtg               |
| Thurs/Oct 12 ___  | PRVEL Mtg                   |

\* VELA meetings at Parks Library/Skeel Ave  
PRVEL meetings at Harrisville Library  
(Both at 10 AM)

**2017 Action Plan for Weed Control**  
**Doug Jager**

As we look forward to another year on our lake, the Weed Committee has been busy during the winter months getting ready for the upcoming season. The new Special Assessment District (SAD) was approved last year and will have a duration of five years. During the months of November and December we reviewed bids for a lake management company. Lake Pro, who has been our lake manager for the last six years, was the lowest bidder and the committee recommended they be contracted to continue in that capacity.

During the months of January and February, Lake Pro requested bids from several companies who apply herbicides and receive permits from the DEQ. The committee reviewed the bids received and recommended hiring PLM, who also was the lowest bidder. All these issues required the approval of the Oscoda Township Board of Trustees and with the Weed Committee recommendations, all were approved.

The Weed Committee met with Pete Filpansick from Lake Pro on March 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss issues and concerns that we would like addressed for this year. Our first concern was to have Lake Pro out to survey in early June and deal with serious weed issues in the NW cove. Pete agreed to schedule a survey for the first week, weather permitting.

The second area of concern was not scheduling any herbicide applications around our two busiest vacation weeks. The weeks before and after the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Labor Day. He agreed to keep away from those weeks.

The Weed Committee would like to have feedback from our VELA members. We are asking anyone to please give us feedback on how we are doing. Positive or negative, we would like to know if there is more that we can do to improve our lake. Please feel free to email me at [dj62852@charter.net](mailto:dj62852@charter.net) with your opinions. As always, if there is something that you have seen on the lake regarding weed growth that needs immediate attention, you can call my cell (586) 216-9899.



**DAM DIARY:** In an effort to help property owners understand the workings of the dam and how lake levels are affected, periodic reportings will be made available on issues like dam repair, new equipment, safety issues, environment around dam, change in procedures, etc. Some months will not have significant news to report, while others may be interesting and even essential to our understanding of the impoundment we call

VanEtten Lake. For example, in Feb/2017, a damaged water level gauge was removed and a new gauge was installed.

- Future plans:
- 1) Installation of protective cable float to deter watercraft from tying off on dam gates
  - 2) Installation of fencing and stairway within county property for safety
  - 3) Placement of container station for fish line/hooks so not creating a safety hazard for people or animals

***Cole's Lakefront Cottages***  
Van Etten Lake  
4507 Van Etten Dam Rd., Oscoda, MI 48750  
*All Sports Lake - Boat Rentals*

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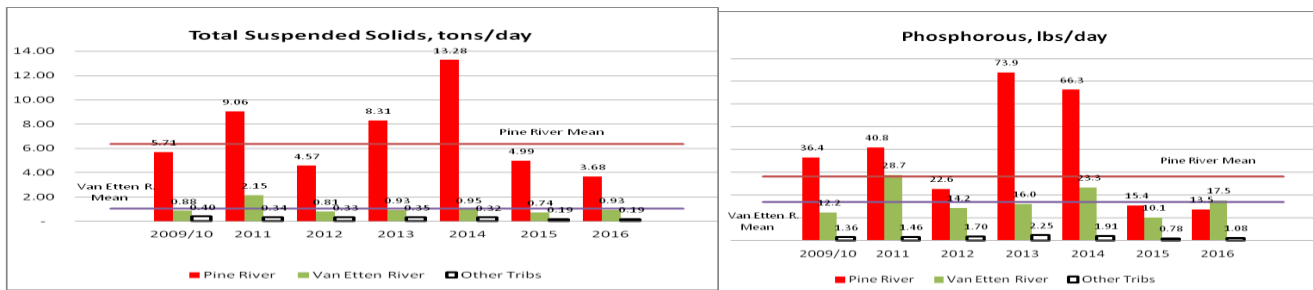
5400 N.US23    Oscoda, Mi 48750  
989-820-7266  
contact@sunnybunns.com  
sunnybunns.com

To place a business ad in the newsletter, please contact Carole at 739-8717

## Water Quality Report

### NUTRIENT AND SEDIMENT LOADINGS TO VAN ETTEN LAKE

Nutrients and sediments can enter Van Etten Lake through stream input, overland flow, ground water seepage and within lake processes. The total contribution from each stream depends on the concentration of nutrient or sediment in the stream and the rate of stream flow (discharge). The contribution from each stream, called "load", is calculated as pounds or kilograms per day. Streams with high concentrations and high discharge will contribute the most nutrients and sediments to the lake. The Pine River is the primary source of nutrients and sediments. By also measuring the water that flows out of the lake for nutrients and sediments, the total contribution (or deduction) from non-stream related sources (runoff, seepage and within-lake processes) can be estimated. Most of the sediments entering the lake are carried by the inlet streams following storm events. After stream water enters the lake, sediment quickly settles to the bottom as the velocity decreases. Many of the settling particles have phosphorous molecules bound to their surface. These attached nutrients become part of the stored nutrient pool at the bottom of the lake.



Relatively dry conditions prevailed over the summer of 2016 for a second year. The estimated amount of phosphorus - P (13.5 lbs/day or 2.47 tons/year) entering the lake from the Pine River was about 48 percent of the estimated seven year mean amount. This reduction in the P load was not unexpected because of the dry conditions. For the first time in several years, the estimated amount of P leaving the lake exceeded that entering from the Pine River. The estimated amount of total suspended solids - TSS (3.68 tons/day or 1343 tons/year) entering the lake is based on a regression method used to develop the estimate was about 57 percent of the seven year mean. This also reflects the relatively dry conditions over the summer.

The data suggests the following:

1. The Pine River is by far the major contributor of P and TSS to the lake. Preliminary indications are that the bulk of P and TSS are carried to the lake during spring melt runoff and early spring rains.
2. There are no indications that either Phalen Creek or Huron (Sims) Creek contribute high amounts of P from golf course runoff.
3. Over the long term, the amounts of P and TSS leaving via the Van Etten River are significantly less than the amounts entering from all sources. The difference is due to a combination of settlement of solids after they enter the lake and uptake of P by aquatic growth which becomes a part of an internal recycle.



**PICNIC REMINDER:** Plan for a family outing with all your lake friends at the annual VELA picnic on Sat, August 5 at Warrior Pavilion/Ken Ratliff Park. Main meat dish and drinks provided – bring a dish to pass. Entertainment/prizes/raffle. Fun day!

## **Pine River Watershed (PRVEL) Update:**



Focus for this season will be on the Buhl Dam removal project under the direction of Huron Pines Conservation group and in cooperation with US Forest Service, DNR, DEQ, and PRVEL. Removal will reconnect 10 miles of upstream habitat on the south branch of the Pine River and its tributaries. Reestablishing natural stream function will enhance the capacity of the river to host strong and healthy fish populations and this area (just west of Mikado) will remain a primary area for recreational activities. A new footbridge structure will be installed to allow passage to the existing trail system as well.

Possible work on bank stabilization will be evaluated after dam removal to assess the impact on the river flow. Macroinvertebrate sampling has been completed pre-removal by PRVEL volunteers and will be done as follow-up upon completion, time and weather permitting.

The program to monitor and eradicate invasive species continues each year and benefits from many eyes watching for these unwanted plants. The River Keepers program can always use new members to help in this project as well as report back any other problematic issues that might show up within the watershed. Please contact Carole Plunkey to sign on.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:** Please consider signing on to help other PRVEL volunteers sample the Pine River for aquatic “bugs”. Sampling dates will be Wed, May 10 and Sat, May 13 with backup dates if weather is prohibitive. Contact Arnie Leriche at [aleriche526@gmail.com](mailto:aleriche526@gmail.com).

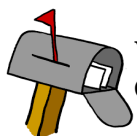
## **Talks with the Township**

In March, VELA board members met with township representatives and staff from both Alcona and Iosco public health departments to follow up on the proposal to institute a point-of-sale septic system ordinance. VELA has been a strong advocate for such a policy for several years, recognizing that improper or poorly functioning septic systems can impact water quality when unwanted discharge remains in the soil and ultimately, the ground water, and that often, property owners are either unaware there is a problem, or they have not taken action to remedy a poorly functioning system. These concerns are of special significance when the systems are on a lake, but need to be for the whole community as they affect sanitation and public health concerns.



After productive discussion, the township will be discussing its options with their lawyer and report back findings for final action.

Regarding the issue of boat launch fees being waived for lake property owners, the township would like a better sense of the support behind any change in current boat launch practices. This would require a survey of all lake residents. The VELA board voted to postpone this action until the January invoice mailing to include a survey, since this mailing goes out to all lake residents, not just members. Any action taken on this issue would not happen this season anyway, due to the task of conducting the survey and compiling the results.



**VELA INBOX**

Got Questions? Email [joeplunkey@charter.net](mailto:joeplunkey@charter.net)