



# Van Etten Lake Association

## Spring Newsletter 2016

*Keeping Members Informed and Involved*



### New Special Assessment District for Weed Management

The process of creating a new five year special assessment district (SAD) to collect funds to control weed growth on the lake is in motion, with two scheduled public hearings already completed in February and March of this year. VELA and specifically, the VELA Weed Committee, have been a part of the decision making process involved in this new SAD and have given their recommendations on how to best manage the weeds, taking a proactive position rather than reactive, after a problem surfaces. The committee works with the Oscoda Township board and the Office of Community Development which oversees the funds, but the township itself determines who will be selected as the lake management firm (based on bidding).

The Van Etten Lake SAD was established in 2005, renewed in 2010, and then held up for one year due to a legality, with the result that the new program will start this year and run through 2020. Before that time period, weevils were being utilized to see if they could control the growth of unwanted Eurasian Milfoil (EM), but it was determined that they were only partially effective, had difficulty wintering on the lake, and ultimately, were very costly for the amount of control they produced. Doing nothing to control weeds was not an option, as left unchecked; the EM would eventually choke the entire lake.

The new SAD will operate a little differently than in the past, with Oscoda Township fronting the entire cost at the time of implementation. After the treatment program finishes for the year, the property owners will then be assessed their share on the winter property tax bills.

Costs for treatment of unwanted invasive species like Eurasian Milfoil as well as nuisance weeds may vary, dependent on a variety of factors; but the resolution lists a “not-to-exceed” amount of \$70,000.

Based on past records, there are 722 property owners included in the SAD with the following break-down of approximate costs per year: 173 deeded access (\$19), 52 back lots ((\$38), 345 less than 80 ft. of frontage (\$76), 125 with 80-159 ft. frontage (\$115), and 27 properties with greater than 160 ft. of frontage (\$153). Questions regarding the actual amounts may be directed to the assessor's office.

All properties listed in the SAD were sent a letter regarding the required hearings and there were a few people who were in opposition to the SAD, either because they did not want ANY additional taxes levied for any reason, or they did not feel they received benefit from the weed control measures.

#### **Board Members – 2015 - 2016**

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#### **Event Calendar**

June 4	VELA Spring Meeting *
July 9	VELA Annual Mtg. * – Elections
July 28	PRVEL Mtg. ^
Aug 6	VELA Annual Picnic
Sept 10	VELA Fall Mtg. *
Oct 27	PRVEL Mtg. ^

\* held at Oscoda Twp. meeting room – 10 AM

^ held at Greenbush Twp. Hall – 10 AM



**Annual Picnic: Saturday, August 6, 2016 Ken Ratliff Park – 5 PM**



Boat Launch Fees

In an effort to address the issue of unpopular boat launch fees for property owners around the lake, VELA board members have requested a meeting with township superintendent, Robert Stalker, to discuss possible changes. Details will need to be worked out, but essentially, the \$20 yearly membership dues for VELA would include payment of an annual fee to launch your boat in the Spring and take it out in the Fall. At this point, it is unclear whether this action could be put into place this season or will have to wait until 2017. Watch our website for updates – [www.vanettenlake.org](http://www.vanettenlake.org).



Well Water Contamination Issue

Much publicity has been given to the issue of certain chemical compounds (PFCs) found in residential wells bordering the former Air Force Base across from Van Etten Lake. These compounds are found in a variety of commercial products, including the fire-fighting foam which was used at the base.

It was noted in the March 30 edition of the Oscoda Press (covering the March meeting of all parties involved – Michigan Dept. Health/Human Services (MDHHS), District Health Dept. #2, Michigan DEQ, and US Air Force ) that of the wells tested, the range of PFCs ranged from 6 ppt (parts per trillion) to 51 ppt. The Environmental Health Agency (EPA) advisory levels are set at 200 – 400 ppt, dependent on the particular compound, which means that the levels measured were far below the level of being harmful to humans.

However, much is unknown about long term effects of these compounds, so both the MDHHS and the Health Dept. issued precautionary health advisories to the 24 owners of those wells which tested positive and plan on doing more monitoring of wells on properties located on the west shore of Van Etten Lake, south of the Dry Creek and west of Van Etten Creek (by the dam). It was stated that ground water tends to travel in currents, so any contaminated parts would be absorbed into the flow of the current but would not travel across the lake. Trace amounts of PFC's are in ALL bodies of water throughout the world, but have not been found to cause harm to humans or fish at these minimal amounts.

All persons affected by this contamination are able to receive free bottled water at the Oscoda Community Center and suggestions were made for a long term solution by perhaps hooking up to the municipal water system. State and local officials were in attendance and dialogue led to a possible move to enact laws related to safe drinking water standards which could bring about funding for such issues in the future.

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



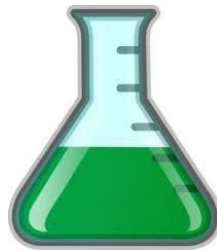
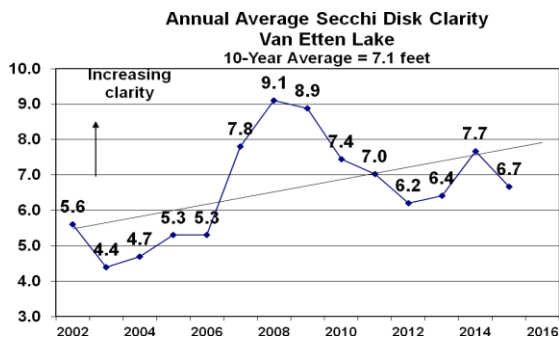
**VELA INBOX** Got questions?  
Email [joeplunkey@hotmail.com](mailto:joeplunkey@hotmail.com)

**Did You Know...?** A DEQ permit is not required for hand pulling lake weeds in front of your property - plant fragments should be removed from the water and properly disposed of (see [michigan.gov/deq](http://michigan.gov/deq) for more info)

## 2015 Water Quality Summary

### SECCHI DISK CLARITY

The average of the weekly clarity measurements taken for 2015 was **6.7 feet**. The average for the summer of 2014 was **7.7 feet**. The 10 year average is **7.3 feet**. The average water temperature mid-lake over the summer was 67.8 deg. F. This compares to a 10 year average of 68.4 deg. F. The clarity and temperature measurements are taken weekly from mid-May to mid-September. As indicated by the trend line on the graph, there has been a trend to greater annual average clarity in the lake over the past 13 years.



### PHOSPHOROUS TESTING

The 2015 spring overturn phosphorus concentration was **23 parts per billion [ppb]**. The comparable concentration in 2014 was **26 ppb**. The spring result is thought to be a good estimate of the average phosphorus concentration in the lake. The 10 year average spring concentration is **24 ppb**.

The fall phosphorus concentration was **39 ppb**. This compares to the concentration for 2014 of **40 ppb**. The 10 year average concentration is **33.9 ppb**.

### CHLOROPHYLL A TESTING

This test is intended to help to determine the relative amount of algae in the lake by measuring chlorophyll concentrations. The median for 2015 was **7.4 ppb** compared to a median of **2.0 ppb** for 2014. The average of the median values for Chlorophyll A concentration over the past 10 years is **5.4 ppb**.

Even the reported chlorophyll concentrations were higher throughout the summer than those of 2014, the bloom that occurred did not fully develop until after Labor Day and did not reach the highest levels until after our clarity testing for the year was completed. Samples for toxins from the blue green component of the algae bloom were not taken.

## February Fishing Tournament

Ratliff Park was once again the site for the annual Iosco County Conservation District (CD) Fishing for the Future Tournament. Eighty-seven holes were purchased and great prizes were given to adults and children who were the top 10 anglers. Perch was the catch of the day, with the winner weighing in at ½



pound. The day was once again, extremely cold, but a warming tent and lunch were provided. The event raises funds for the CD and is sponsored by local organizations and businesses, including VELA and PRVEL. If you stick around during the winter months, please consider supporting this fun event by signing up next year. Details will be available online at the CD website [www.ioscoconservation.org](http://www.ioscoconservation.org)



## Pine River Watershed News

The focus of the prioritized projects for the watershed continues to be on improving water quality, protecting and preserving wildlife and plant habitats, and sustaining the fishery. Following a detailed Management Plan, volunteers work with local, state, and federal agencies to plan, fund, and implement these projects and design programs aimed at assisting with the goals.




The 2016 season was ushered in this Spring with (1) placement of new temperature loggers at various sites within the Pine River system to assist the MDNR in collecting data designed to effectively sustain the fishing populations (mainly brown trout) and (2) the Macroinvertebrate Sampling program, which uses volunteers to collect aquatic specimens in the streams and evaluate water quality based on their species and numbers. Contact person for this program is [Arnie Leriche \(aleriche526@gmail.com\)](mailto:aleriche526@gmail.com)

Additional projects aimed at reducing streambank soil erosion and restoration of at least one priority road stream crossing are also in the works, with the assistance of the Alcona Road Commission, US Forest Service, and Huron Pines Conservation Council.

Planning for the possible removal of Buhl Dam in Mikado Township also continues, with several agencies involved in the decision making. If approved, the project would most likely be implemented this year, with the goal of improving fish passage and fish habitat, reducing shoreline erosion, and allowing the stream to achieve its natural flow.

The state land, just north of the entrance of the river into Van Etten Lake that has been designated as an ecological reference area by the MDNR, will again receive our attention through monitoring and removal of unwanted invasive plant species. Volunteers are needed to help with this program – contact person is [Doug Jager](#), who also is on the VELA board.

**Please come to our next meeting Thurs, July 28, and learn more about how you can be a part of the team to keep our watershed – and ultimately, our lake – healthy.**



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