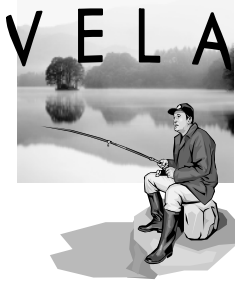


February 2013



# Van Etten Lake Association

## Winter 2013 Newsletter

Keeping Members Informed and Involved

### For Your Consideration:

Living on a lake has its challenges, but the pros far exceed the cons to those of us who love to be able to see the sunsets, fish the waters, swim in the hot sun, catch sight of an eagle, or just go for a boat ride.

Being a riparian (living next to a body of water) might simply mean that you are the owner of a lake home that was left to you by a relative. Or it might mean that you got a deal on a small cottage several years ago and have been working to improve on it since then. Or it might mean that you saved most of your work life to finally get the home of your dreams on a lake.

Whatever the case, I hope it also means that you recognize the responsibility you have to do all you can to take care of the lake so that you and your family can enjoy it for years to come. If you're not sure exactly what that means, please consider the following:

- ⊗ educate yourself regarding what makes a lake healthy, esp relative to septic system usage and shoreline practices – you can use on-line resources, handouts from the lake association, and/or VELA newsletter articles related to this topic
- ⊗ make a commitment to attend both VELA meetings and PRVEL meetings to be better informed on lake and watershed issues and volunteer your time to help out where needed
- ⊗ contribute to the VELA Endowment Fund yearly, where your money will directly benefit water quality as well as fish and wildlife – no amount is too small
- ⊗ become a VELA member (only \$20 annually) and join your neighbors in support of all the board is trying to do to manage and protect our recreational lake for everyone to enjoy.

The board recognizes that we can't do our jobs alone – we need your help. Please be willing to help us improve and protect VanEtten Lake.

Carole Plunkey, VP

**Did you know???** The Pine River, with all its branches, winds through the watershed for a total of 372 miles – have you been to the Pine River Campground located off F-30, about 8 miles west of Mikado? It's a beautiful site to see what the watershed holds within its boundaries for all to enjoy and support.



### Board Members:

Pres: Ron Mathison [ronaldamathison@gmail.com](mailto:ronaldamathison@gmail.com)  
Vice Pres: Carole Plunkey [caroleplunkey@charter.net](mailto:caroleplunkey@charter.net)  
Sec: Joe Plunkey [joemplunkey@hotmail.com](mailto:joemplunkey@hotmail.com)  
Treas: Leonard Brockhahn [sbrock50@gmail.com](mailto:sbrock50@gmail.com)  
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Tom James [peabody56@comcast.net](mailto:peabody56@comcast.net)  
Larry Evans [larryann44@yahoo.com](mailto:larryann44@yahoo.com)

### EVENT CALENDAR

Wed - March 20 – First day of Spring  
Thurs - April 25 – PRVEL Mtg  
Sat - June 1 – Spring VELA Mtg

## February 2013

### Winter Ice Precautions

We are again printing out the following guidelines for your information and safety:

- \* under 4 inches – stay OFF the ice
- \* 4-6 inches – ice fishing allowed
- \* 6-10 inches – snowmobile & ATV riding
- \* 10-16 inches – small cars & pick-ups allowed

**CATCHING ANY FISH?** Please send pictures and info to [caroleplunkey@charter.net](mailto:caroleplunkey@charter.net)

### Website

Have you checked out our [vanettenlake.org](http://vanettenlake.org) website for up to date “hot news”, or to see copies of meeting minutes or news- letters. Or perhaps you want to check out the photo gallery or submit a question.

Please take advantage of this special tool to stay informed and/or communicate with your VELA board.



### Zoning Ordinance: Shared Waterfront Access Lots

If you spend the winters in Oscoda, you will have already read about the proposed zoning ordinance which would amend the current one to allow and regulate the use of waterfront lots or parcels which provide access to a water body for dwellings not located on the water, and which the planning commission says it has put forth in order to better “preserve the quality or recreational use of all waters within the Township”. Many people turned out for the hearing regarding this issue, as it has implications for all riparians, including the folks who live along the AuSable and who were the main attendees at the meeting.

The commission stated that they had pursued this course of action in response to a state-wide trend for developers or groups of individual property owners to buy small waterfront parcels for the purpose of providing water access to any number of off-water dwellings. The point out that such practices cause concerns with the over-use and/or congestion of the water body and a variety of nuisance impacts on waterfront properties near the access lot. They want to be able to regulate this type of development and the current zoning ordinance does not now address this issue.

As the VELA board is always interested in any issue which impacts the lake, representatives were present at the meeting to clarify the ordinance’s intent and ask any questions they might have. It was explained that these proposed changes will not affect any existing properties owned by a group of individuals (e.g. Brewster Park development with lake access properties) and will need to be voted on first by the commission, then sent to the county for review and a vote, and then sent to the township for their consideration and vote. So there will be plenty of opportunity for anyone interested to keep abreast of this issue.

As always, the VELA board supports any action that promotes the health of the lake and/or the interests of it’s property owners.

A copy of the actual ordinance is available at the township hall, zoning office.

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Contact Carole Plunkey (739-8717) if you wish to place an ad in the newsletter.

## February 2013

### PRVEL Watershed News

STILL waiting on a response from the IRS to approve our application for "official" non-profit status for the water shed group, referred to as a 501 (c)(3). However, the newly established board of directors has been meeting to discuss priorities and projects for 2013.

The January general meeting was productive and plans are underway for spring and summer projects, contingent on funding, as always. The board was pleased to see 2 more VanEtten Lake residents in attendance (yeah!). Even if you find it hard to make every quarterly meeting, please try to attend at least one a year to find out how you might be able to help with all our efforts to monitor and manage the unique problems that this huge area of land and water presents to us.

brought together reps from the US Forest Service, Huron Pines RC&D, Conservation Dept, USDA,

Even if you find it hard to make every quarterly meeting, please try to attend at least one a year to find out how you might be able to help out with all our efforts to monitor and manage the unique problems that this huge area of land and water presents to us.

Remember, what happens up in the watershed, directly affects the conditions within VanEtten Lake, including the issues of sediment loading, unwanted nutrients, invasive species, fishing, and much more.

Please join us to volunteer your time and/or talents and consider making a donation to support the organization (checks may be made out to PRVEL and sent to PO Box 680, Oscoda, MI 48750).



### 2012 VAN ETTEN LAKE WATER QUALITY RESULTS

#### SECCHI DISK CLARITY

The average clarity for 2012 was **6.2 feet**. The average for the summer of 2011 was **7.0 feet**. The reduction is due to the heavy algae bloom experienced over much of the later part of the summer. The 10 year average is **6.6 feet**.

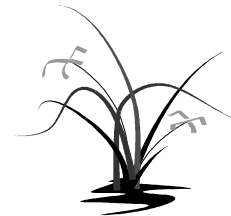
#### PHOSPOROUS TESTING

The 2012 spring overturn phosphorous concentration was **15 parts per billion [ppb]**. The comparable concentration in 2011 was **31 ppb**. The spring result is thought to be a good estimate of the average phosphorous concentration in the lake. The lower value compared to 2011 was due to the much lower amount of spring runoff received from the Pine River this year. The 10 year average spring concentration is **24.5 ppb**.

The 2012 fall phosphorous concentration was **68 ppb** with a 10 year average of **33.4 ppb**. The fall reading is an indication of the amount of phosphorus available at the surface available to support aquatic growth. The result this year was the extended algae bloom. It is possible that the hot dry conditions over the summer contributed to a release of phosphorous from the sediments that came into the lake during the spring of 2011. A comparable sample taken from Van Etten River below the dam in September had a total phosphorus concentration of **161 ppb**. Hopefully some of the phosphorus has been flushed from the system.

#### CHLOROPHYLL A TESTING

This test is intended to help to determine the relative amount of algae in the lake by measuring chlorophyll concentrations. While the median for 2012 was **6.4 ppb**, relatively low spring values mask the high values recorded in late summer. The concentration in August was **14.0 ppb** and in September it was **22.0 ppb**. A higher concentration of chlorophyll-A indicates that more algae are present at the time of sampling. The median for the summer of 2011 was **6.6 ppb**. The median Chlorophyll A concentration over the past 10 years is **5.6 ppb** with a 10 year average for August of **11.7 ppb** and for September of **9.3 ppb**.



Dan Stock, CLMP Lead Lake Monitor



Questions? If they haven't been answered by this newsletter, contact Ron Mathison at [ronaldamathison@gmail.com](mailto:ronaldamathison@gmail.com)

## February 2013

### How old is your septic system?

The first septic system was installed in 1874. The idea was, liquids would be adsorbed by the soil and evaporate. Dissolved solids would stay in the soil. The solution was believed to be better than putting human waste directly on or into the ground.

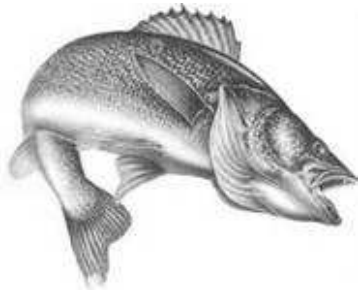
Back then, many people only bathed once a week, unlike the usual daily schedule most of us have now, multiplied by however many guests there may be in your home at any given time. There were no automatic washers, dishwashers, water softeners, or garbage disposals to add unwanted pollutants to the discharge. Also, early households used approximately 50 gal. of water per day per family. Today's automatic washer can use 50 gal. per load!

According to MSU Extension Service, "a septic system will never work better than the day it is installed. It's performance will only deteriorate. Typical life of a septic system under ideal conditions is approximately 20 years".

Do you know how old your septic is? Do you know where it is located? Do you know what condition it is in? Most septic pumping companies can give you this information if you don't already know. Pumping is recommended every 3-5 years, depending on the usage and number of people in the residence.

Being a responsible home owner requires ongoing attention to things of this nature, especially when living next to a body of water. Please do some checking now to avoid problems later./

**YEAH!!** ... VELA membership rose to **310** at the end of 2012 – thanks to all our supporters!



**Contaminated Fish:** The public meeting regarding the effects of per-flourinated compounds (PFC) on fish and surface waters in the vicinity of the former Wurtsmith AFB was held on Jan 24<sup>th</sup>. The Michigan Dept of Community Health has determined that the levels of PFC's were sufficient enough to declare a ban on eating any fish from Clark's Marsh or the lower AuSable River, from Foote Dam to the mouth.

Migratory fish that enter the river from Lake Huron (walleye, salmon, trout) are not expected to have high levels of PFC's, and regular guidelines for consuming these varieties should be followed - these can be found at the website: [www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish](http://www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish).

**Fish sampled from VanEtten Lake last Fall had very low levels—way below the standard to be concerned, so no ban for resident fish in VanEtten** (perch, bluegill, bass and other panfish). For further information or questions, please contact Paul Rekowski.

**Did you know???** VanEtten Lake is considered a warm water fishery because of its slow flow rate allowing for water to stand and be heated by the sun.



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