



Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 173

Stoughton, WI 53589-0173

July 2024

President's Message ~ George Corrigan

What a difference a year makes! Last year very little rain resulted in water that was so low it was difficult for many to get their boat off the lift, and the lack of runoff meant blue-green algae blooms were relatively uncommon. This year we have had rain to the point we are very close to slow-no-wake, and the excess runoff has led to frequent blue-green algae blooms.

Our annual meeting was held in June. Our speaker, Alex DeSmidt, Senior Landscape Architect for Dane County LWRD, discussed the then soon-to-open (and now just-opened) trail between Fish Camp County Park and Kegonsa State Park. If you haven't had a chance to walk, run or bike it, I suggest you find the time do so. It is impressive and beautiful.

FOLKS Members asked questions and made suggestions at the end of the meeting, and we asked people to fill out comment cards. We received a number of thoughtful suggestions and comments. I will respond to a few of those here.

One of the questions dealt with itching after swimming ("swimmer's itch"). In general, it helps to wear waterproof sunscreen or oils and to rinse/shower off and dry thoroughly after being in the lake. Refer to the **FOLKS** article in the July 2023 newsletter (you can find it on our website Kegonsa.org).

One suggestion was to explain how Board members are nominated and have greater transparency in the nomination process. We often learn of impending vacancies shortly before the annual meeting. This year we learned in May we would have two vacancies in

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President's Message (Continued)

June. The Board turned to **FOLKS** members who had expressed interest in prior years, or spent considerable time on volunteering for ongoing projects.

If you are interested in joining the Board, let us know at any time and we will keep you in mind for the next vacancy. Better yet, spend time volunteering for **FOLKS**. Spending time on projects insures we know you will be an active, engaged Board member. You can serve on a **FOLKS** Committee without being a Board Member (see kegonsa.org for a list of our committees). We are starting our second year without a Board Secretary if you want to volunteer immediately. We will remind people to volunteer for the Board next spring. Alternatively, any member can nominate a member for the Board during the annual meeting.

Another suggestion was to accept electronic payments. The Board has been working on that for months, and testing has begun. We will definitely accept electronic payments for our next event, and most likely will accept electronic payments for dues next year. (We are working on collecting the member info at the time payment is made).

We hope to use some of the other suggestions, and always feel free to share your comments and suggestions (email kegonsafolks@gmail.com).

-George Corrigan, FOLKS President

Volunteers Needed

Water monitoring: Clean Lakes Alliance is looking for someone to **sample at the Kegonsa State Park Beach** and join the LakeForecast data collection program. The beach at the state park is an important sampling site for our lake and a volunteer is needed immediately. Volunteers collect general conditions data, identify algae blooms, and take temperature and clarity readings. The equipment is provided. **FOLKS** currently has 15 volunteers sampling at the end of piers for this program and one volunteer collects data at the "deep hole" in Lake Kegonsa. If you're interested in joining this team, please contact Kim Walz (kwalz99@gmail.com).

Native Plants: Dane County is **planting plants in the new rain gardens** at Fish Camp County Park the first week of September (day not yet determined). A number of **FOLKS** members will be helping with this planting but more volunteers are needed. If you're interested contact Janice Kellogg (kelloggja7@gmail.com) or Connie Hagen (chagen001@gmail.com).

If you'd like to work with any of the project committees, contact the chairperson listed on the website.

Lake Kegonsa Water Levels

As of July 17, 2024 the Lake Kegonsa level is **844.47'** (ft above sea level). A number of large storms with heavy rain have hit our watershed this spring/summer. We've had **20.85 inches of rain in the last two months** (since May 20th, National Weather Service, Dane County Regional Airport). Normal rainfall during this period is about 8.60 inches. With these large rain events, it's very difficult for Dane County to keep the range between summer minimum and summer maximum.

Lake	7/17/2024 Lake Level (ft)	Summer Maximum (ft)	Inches Above Summer Max	1% Flood Level	Inches Below 1% Flood	2018 High
Mendota	851.80	850.1	20.4	852.8	12.0	852.3
Monona	847.18	845.2	23.8	847.7	6.2	848.5
Waubesa	846.66	845.0	19.9	847.0	4.1	847.9
Kegonsa	844.47	843.5	11.6	845.8	16.0	845.8

Although Dane County was building capacity in the spring, all lakes are currently still very high - some lakes are almost two feet above summer maximum. The dams are currently set to maintain or decrease lake levels. The Tenney Dam (Mendota) is 64% open, Babcock Dam (Waubesa) is 100% open and LaFollette Dam (Kegonsa) is 100% open.

The State of our Lake – Phosphorus and Algae

Algae occurs naturally in all water bodies in Wisconsin. However, high levels of algae growth called algae blooms are a significant problem for lake users. The water quality in Lake Kegonsa has been quite discouraging this summer. Algae blooms are dependent on water temperature, sunlight, turbidity of the water and available nutrients (i.e. phosphorus, nitrogen). In our case the abundance of phosphorus in our water poses the largest problem.

Phosphorus enters our waterway mostly through run-off from shorelines into the streams and lakes, but also through the turbulence and resuspension of historical phosphorus sediments in the waterbodies. Lake Kegonsa receives most of its continuous phosphorus load from

- The Yahara River
- Door Creek
- Shoreline run-off
- Historical sediment

The amount of phosphorous entering the lake depends on the concentration of phosphorous and the volume of water from each source.

Types of Algae:

Two main types of algae blooms occur in Lake Kegonsa

1) True green algae

Green algae are often referred to as filamentous algae and are **not toxic**. Green algae start to grow in the spring at the bottom of the lake and produce long hair-like filaments which form into dense mats. During the process of photosynthesis oxygen is produced which gets trapped within the filaments and causes the algae mats to rise to the top of the lake. Green algae mats will turn brown and eventually sink to the bottom. Green algae blooms are unsightly, smell bad, clog motors and prevent enjoyment of the water but are not harmful to humans or animals.

Filamentous green algae mats accumulate along the shorelines depending on which way the wind is blowing. Many lake property owners rake the filamentous mats onto their piers for pick up or move them out into deeper water away from shore where they sink.



Filamentous Green Algae

2) Blue-green algae (Cyanobacteria).

Blue-green algae is actually a bacteria called cyanobacteria and **can release toxins** that may be harmful to children and pets, and in some cases can be harmful to persons with immune system deficiencies and adults. Exposure can occur by swallowing lake water, skin exposure (swimming), inhalation (water skiing or tubing). Rashes, respiratory problems, nausea and other symptoms may occur. Not all blue-green algae produce toxins but if a blue-green algae bloom is present, you and your pets should **avoid contact with the water**.

Blue-green algae float on the surface of the water. The rapid growth of these bacteria into significant blooms usually occurs when the water temperature is higher, sunlight is plentiful and there is not much wind. The excess phosphorus in our lake system allows these blooms to occur and be prolonged. We're pretty sure every lake user has pictures like these from this summer.



Blue-green algae blooms: at Muto's, Barber Dr (June) and at Diel's, CO Hwy AB, (July)



Blue-green algae on the rocks near shore, Walz's, Sunnyside St. (July)

A third type of algae has been proliferating in Lake Kegonsa the past couple of weeks. It looks like short grass clippings, then clumps into balls and then forms mats that look like pea soup. This is also a form of **blue-green algae** called *Aphanizomenon* which may also produce toxins.



How to tell the difference:

Both green and blue-green algae may be bright green, turquoise or brown but blue-green algae are many more colors and are more often light turquoise, blue or white and may be purplish/red. Blue-green algae often has a sheen like paint.

The pdf attached to this email ***Staying Safe and Healthy in Wisconsin Lakes*** (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01888.pdf>) is from the Wisconsin Dept of Health Services and details two tests to differentiate between green and blue-green algae:

1. The jar test – green algae settles and blue-green algae floats and
2. The stick test – green algae has long strands or threads hanging from the stick and blue-green looks like the stick is coated with paint but does not hang off the stick.

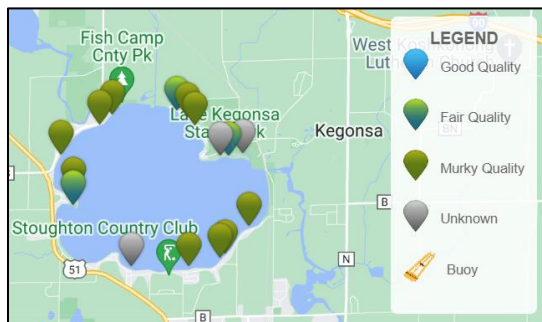
How to report a blue-green algae bloom:

From ***Staying Safe and Healthy in Wisconsin Lakes***, "Email the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources at DNRHABS@wisconsin.gov to report a bloom and ask questions about blooms and bloom mitigation strategies. Be sure to include descriptions of bloom size, duration, and location with lake name, town name, and county name. Include photos taken both close up and farther away."

Report algae-related illness to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Division of Public Health (608-266-1120) or you can use the reporting form found on their website "Harmful Algal Bloom Illness or Sighting Survey".

Where to find reports of blue-green algae and beach closings:

Beach closings are determined by the Public Health Madison and Dane County. Lake Forecast (<https://lakeforecast.org/map/site>) is sponsored by Clean Lakes Alliance and shows water quality information such as clarity for end of pier locations around the lake and openings/closings at Lake Kegonsa State Park Beach. For more information click on the balloon at each location on the website.



The WI DNR reports beach closings for algae or E. coli at dnr.wi.gov/beachhelath and it shows advisory reports for Kegonsa State Park Beach.

Monitoring Data on Kegonsa:

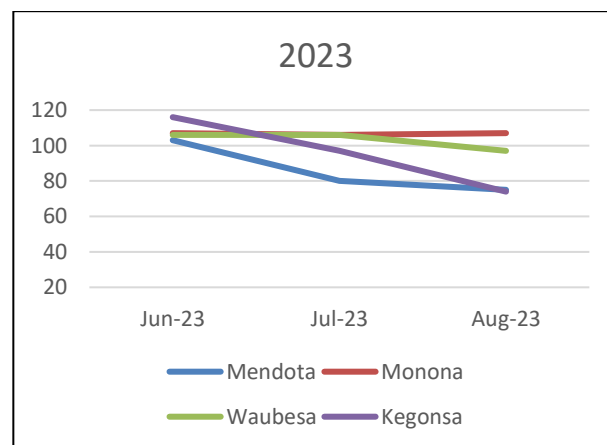
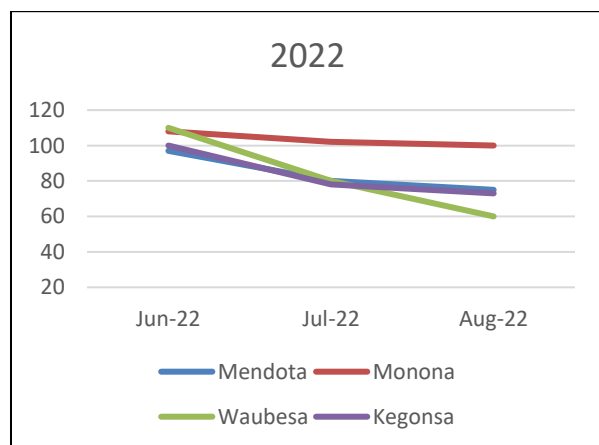
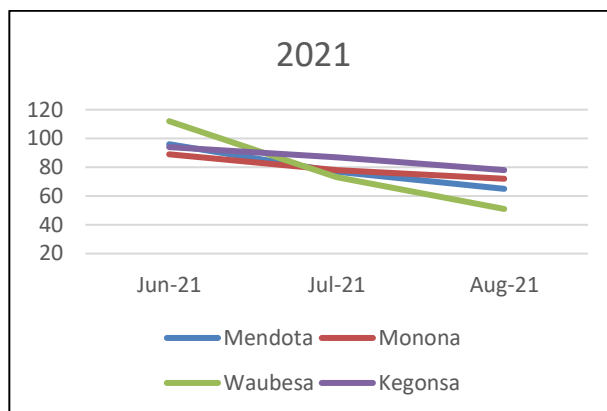
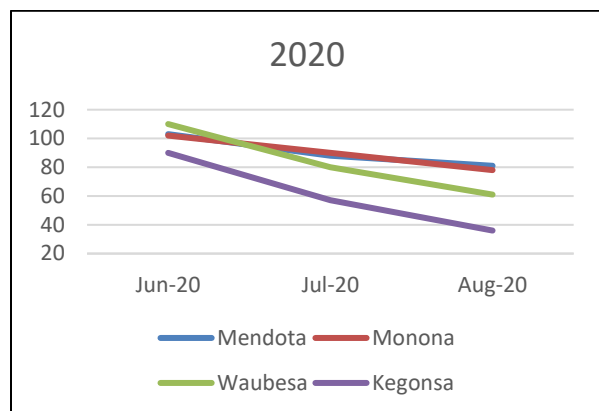
FOLKS volunteers monitor water quality at the end of piers, at the deep hole, on the Yahara River at Fish Camp, on Door Creek at Hwy MN and at the entrance to Kegonsa, and at LaFollette Dam. We are increasing our data collection each year to assist in building a database of scientific information for Lake Kegonsa.

You can find monitoring data on our website at [Kegonsa.org](https://www.cleanlakesalliance.org/monitoring/). The tables below are from the Clean Lakes Alliance "2023 Water Quality Monitoring Results" which includes the monitoring done by volunteers on **Lake Kegonsa** to show the difference in years on Kegonsa. You can find the full yearly reports at <https://www.cleanlakesalliance.org/monitoring/>.

Clarity of the Water:

The more algae in the water, the lower the clarity. With the algae blooms this summer, the clarity has been very low. Algae is covering all of Lake Kegonsa even at the Deep Hole.

The following graphs show the average nearshore water clarity measured in centimeters at the end of piers from June through August 2020 – 2023. You can see that water clarity decreases from June through August on all Yahara lakes.



So far this summer, the average clarity for Kegonsa is 82 cm for June and 64 cm for the first half of July which is lower than previous years.

Days of Blue-Green Algae (Cyanobacteria):

As you can see from the historical graph below, Lake Kegonsa had the highest number of days with blue-green algae blooms in 2018, 2020 and 2022. In 2023, very little rain resulted in fewer algae blooms on any of the Yahara Lakes.

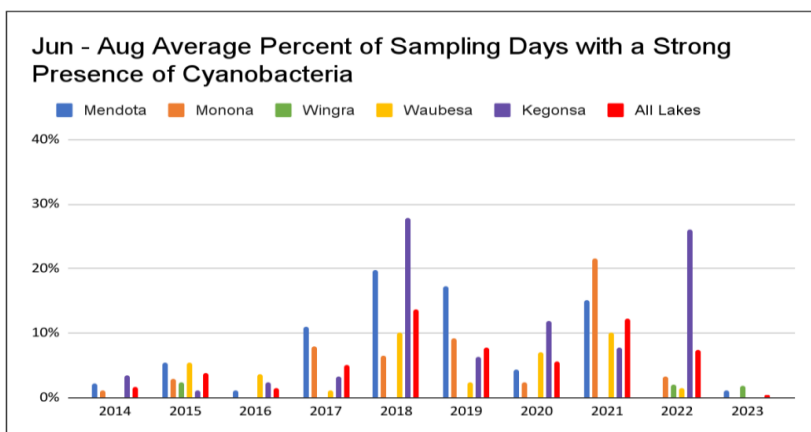


Figure 5: Percent of sampling days with a strong presence of cyanobacteria for each lake from 2014 to 2023.

So, What Do We Do?

If **FOLKS** had a magic button to get rid of the algae blooms in Lake Kegonsa we would certainly push it. Unfortunately, we don't. It's difficult to reduce the overall phosphorus levels while we're experiencing more frequent and more severe major rain events. This year with a number of large rains the amount of phosphorus coming into our waterways is higher than ever. Phosphorus reduction projects will show results with long term sustained efforts.

FOLKS projects are designed to reduce the phosphorus load in our lake over time - many small steps can make a difference. To reduce the phosphorus in run-off we do projects such as leaf removal, shoreline buffers, prairie plantings and rain gardens with long rooted native plants. Phosphorus is also removed through the aquatic plant pick up program and we removed carp from the lake to reduce the resuspension of phosphorus from the lake bottom.

You as an individual homeowner can reduce phosphorus in run-off going into the lake by participating in many of these programs. You can:

- Plant long-rooted native plants along shorelines to help filter run-off
- Install a rain garden or redirect downspouts to slow run-off
- Use rain barrels
- Use only phosphorus free fertilizer on lawns and gardens
- Pick up all pet waste
- Remove cut aquatic plants from around piers and shorelines
- Rake phosphorus laden leaves away from the shoreline and the storm sewer system
- Reduce wakes from boats. Strong boat wakes can damage aquatic habitat along the shoreline, and may resuspend phosphorus from the lake bottom.
- Consider reducing impervious areas near your property.
- Conservation practices to control erosion.
- Contact your local, county and state officials to discuss your concerns about phosphorus reduction and funding projects to benefit the lakes.

Chemical treatments are not practical on Lake Kegonsa because the Yahara River runs through the lake. Dane County and CLA have a number of projects that support phosphorus reduction such as re-meandering and removing phosphorus laden sediment from Door Creek and other tributaries (above), working with farmers to reduce phosphorus on fields available for run-off (manure injection, cover crops, buffer strips, etc.) and installing manure digesters in Dane County.

For more information you can also visit:

- cleanlakesalliance.org/cyanobacteria/ and CLA's State of the Lakes
- dhs.wisconsin.gov/water/bg-algae/defined.htm
- dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/lakes/bluegreenalgae
- Publication on algae: dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p0/p00853.pdf
- DNRBeachHealth@Wisconsin.gov
- Algal Blooms in WI: <https://www.wisconsinacademy.org/magazine/algal-blooms-wisconsin>

FOLKS is dedicated to monitoring the conditions in our lake and trying to identify solutions to improve the water quality. We won't see improvements in the near term but we can build a legacy of clean water for future generations by making this a priority.

Save the Dates for Upcoming **FOLKS** Events

We have some events scheduled that you might want to put on your calendar. Details will come as the event gets closer.

- **Fall Update and Social:** September 19, 2024
 - **Leaf Pick Up**
 - **Pleasant Springs:** Nov 2 & 3, Nov 16 & 17, 2024
 - **Dunn:** Nov 9 & 10, Nov 30 & Dec 1, 2024
 - **Spring Educational Program:** April 26, 2025
 - **2025 Annual Meeting:** June 7, 2025
-

FOLKS 2024 Annual Meeting

FOLKS Annual Meeting and dinner was held on Saturday, June 8 at the Stoughton Country Club. More than 80 people attended. Project updates were portrayed on posters for members to review. The annual financial reports and membership data were presented and a new Board of Directors was elected.

The meeting featured our guest speaker **Alex DeSmidt , Dane County Senior Landscape Architect**. Alex led us through the construction of the Lower Yahara River Trail Phase II and updated us on the many improvements at Fish Camp County Park. The article below is about these county projects.

Two retirements from the board were recognized:

- **Pat Guiney**, Joined the Board in 2016, led our fish projects and coordinated with Dane Co and the DNR.
- **Kim Van Brocklin**, Joined the Board in 2019, led the wildlife group and helped with social events.

These board members put in a lot of effort to make **FOLKS** a success so please thank them when you see them.

And two new members were welcomed to the board:

- **Melissa Whittinghill**, lives on Sunnyside St and moved to lake Kegonsa in 2022.
- **Mike Krueger**, lives on Co Hwy AB and has been a lake resident since 2019.

The **FOLKS** board elects the officers from among its members at the first meeting after the annual meeting. Your officers for this year are the same as 2023:

George Corrigan, President

Janice Kellogg, Vice President

Connie Hagen, Treasurer

Current open position, Secretary

The website (www.kegonsa.org) has additional bio and contact information for each of the board members.

We appreciate all the comments and suggestions from our members and will be working on them at our board meetings.

Lower Yahara River Trail and Improvements at Fish Camp County Park

The Lower Yahara River Trail Phase II and Fish Camp County Park opened the day before the 4th of July! What good timing! Per Dane County, the "Phase II of the Lower Yahara River Trail between Fish Camp County Park and Lake Kegonsa State Park is now complete and open to the public".

We appreciate Dane County and the Parks Department for identifying projects that increase the assets on the shores of Lake Kegonsa and provide access to all of us. And thanks again to **Alex DeSmidt , Dane County Senior Landscape Architect** for providing a great presentation on the projects at our annual meeting.

The Trail:

The new section of the Lower Yahara Trail is a 1.6-mile trail which is a mix of boardwalk, a 90 foot bridge over Door Creek and paved trail along the northern shore of Lake Kegonsa. There are trail heads at Fish Camp County Park and on Fairview (near Springers) with a few parking places. The trail continues into Kegonsa State Park and on to Williams Drive. The trail connects to the Village of McFarland via a 2-mile on-road route along CTH AB. Future phases will connect to Stoughton.

More info, maps, project plans and fun videos of the trail construction of the trail are at <https://lwr.danecounty.gov/CompletedProjects/Detail/Lower-Yahara-River-Trail-Project>.



Sections of the new portion of the Lower Yahara River Trail.

The Park:

Improvements at Fish Camp County Park are also complete and the park has reopened. You can find more info at <https://www.danecountyparks.com/parksproject/detail/Fish-Camp-Launch>

New parking lots, accessible fishing piers and an accessible kayak launch are part of the improvements at Fish Camp County Park. The native plant gardens are in full bloom so stop over to Fish Camp if you have a chance. As we noted above the new rain gardens will be planted the first week of September.



Improvements at Fish Camp County Park

Ribbon Cutting:

The Dane County ribbon cutting on these projects is scheduled for September 24th at the trail head at Fish Camp. Please join in to celebrate if you can.

Dane County Begins Work on Door Creek

The Yahara River and Door Creek are the two major inputs to Lake Kegonsa and are very important to the health of our lake.

The Dane County Project known as "Suck the Muck" is expected to begin next week in Door Creek. It is designed to decrease high concentrations of legacy phosphorus flowing into Lake Kegonsa from the creek by removing portions of the creek bottom laden with phosphorus and pump it to a dewatering site away from the water flow into the lake.

Another part of the plan is to re-meander 2.5 miles of Door Creek which will enhance the wetland and increase flood abatement capacity. It is also expected to improve fishery, particularly northern pike. **FOLKS** will continue to update you on the Door Creek project as we learn more.

The most current information on the plan for the Door Creek Restoration project can be found at: <https://lwr.danecounty.gov/CurrentProjects/Detail/Door-Creek-Watershed>.

Aquatic Debris Pick Up

Four weeks of the Barge Pick-up program for 2024 have been completed. **FOLKS** sponsors this program in cooperation with the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department. Many lake residents are participating by placing aquatic debris on the end of their piers during the pick-up weeks.

The remaining weeks this year are as follows:

- July 29 through August 2
- August 12 through August 16
- September 9 through September 13

As you know the barge crew is only obligated to make one complete trip around the lake. Many weeks they make more than one trip but that is not guaranteed. If your debris is not picked-up by mid-week (the end of Wednesday), please e-mail John Bottorff, project Chairperson, at jbott53511@att.net. Include your name and address in the message. John can then contact Dane County to have the barge crew pick-up at your location. Please make sure to place debris at the end of the pier in a visible spot. **FOLKS** and Dane County want to avoid misses and provide excellent service through this program.

We know gathering the debris can be a big job and we thank lake residents for continuing to support this program!

Water Information and Safety – BG Algae and Wakes in the Lake



Blue green algae (cyanobacteria) is discussed in the article above. Our first safety tip repeats the advice above – **DO NOT SWIM** in water with a blue green algae bloom. If it looks like paint, stay out of it.

Our second tip is unrelated, and is about respecting others. When you are within 200 feet of shore you must operate at a slow-no-wake speed – it's the law. Also, we hope that boaters on Lake Kegonsa will be cognizant of the amount of wake you're generating and respecting both shorelines and small craft (kayaks, canoes, paddleboards). If you have a large wake please try to stay nearer the center of the lake.

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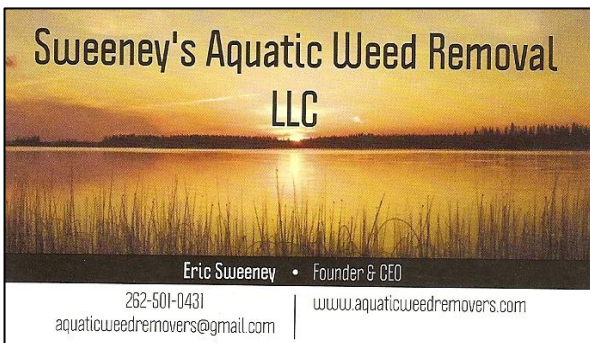
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This year's dues remain \$20.00 for households and \$30.00 for businesses.

If you have any questions regarding membership, please contact:

Connie Hagen at chagen001@gmail.com
or George Corrigan at corrigan@corrigan.pro

Send news of interest to **FOLKS**:

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FOLKS Lost and Found

List lost and found items on the Website (www.kegonsa.org), Facebook page or contact Eric Olson at eolson.folks@gmail.com

FOLKS board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month except for a couple of months in the winter. The public are always welcome.
Next Meeting is August 13, 2024, 6:00 PM, Stoughton Country Club

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