



Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 173
Stoughton, WI 53589-0173
January 2020

President’s Message ~ Peter Foy

Successful 2019

At our last Board meeting of 2019 we reviewed the many projects that **FOLKS** is involved in. It was nice to conclude that our goals for both prior projects and the first year barge pickup project were all met. This could only be accomplished by our active Board members managing each of the projects as well as the financial support of our members and major sponsors, like the Stoughton Conservation Club, Clean Lake Alliance and the Bryant Foundation. You will read a little recap of the projects in the newsletter articles.

Newsletter

We receive a lot of positive feedback about our newsletter. Each quarter various Board members write the articles and submit them to Connie Hagen, who then lays out the newsletters. Most of the time she also adds pictures that everyone enjoys. So, we have a lot of people to thank for getting this done.

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President's Message, continued

Award Nomination

I am proud to announce that **FOLKS** has been nominated for a **2020 Wisconsin Lakes Stewardship Award**. "The awards go to groups who exemplify the extraordinary volunteer and professional effort made to protect and improve lakes in Wisconsin." We won't know for a while if we win the award, but we are proud to be nominated. If we win I am hoping that Connie Hagen can accept the award on our behalf. She is one of the major reasons that we are so organized.

Carp Removal

Board members Pat Guiney, Tom McGinnis and I met with David Rowe and Dan Oele from the DNR on January 3, 2020 to discuss plans for carp removal in 2020. David and Dan have been a major help to us with this project over the years.

In 2019 we had our largest removal in the four years that **FOLKS** has been sponsoring this important project. This spring 162,135 pounds of carp were removed and they were all shipped live to the Brooklyn, New York area for consumption. In addition to the fishermen getting paid for selling the carp at market, **FOLKS** paid the fishermen an incentive of \$12,427 to stay and remove as many carp as possible.

We found out at the meeting that the fishermen will renew their contract with the DNR to fish in Lake Kegonsa again in 2020. We are discussing the makeup of our incentive to make sure it is structured to provide the best motivation for removing as many carp as possible. We will see them back fishing in the spring, as soon as the ice is off the lake. We'll keep you updated via email.

2020

We have some exciting plans to both continue current projects and add some new events in 2020. Thank you for your ongoing support. We look forward to a fun and productive New Year.

– Peter Foy

FOLKS Annual Membership Drive 2020

You'll receive your annual dues statement in the mail next week. Please check all the information carefully so that we have your most current names/addresses/emails. Privacy – Just so you know...We don't give your address or email to anyone without your permission, ever.

About 76% of the residents on Lake Kegonsa and 18 households along the Yahara River are currently members of **FOLKS**. As well as many interested people from Stoughton, McFarland, Madison and the surrounding area.

To help us make **FOLKS** a stronger organization, we'd like you to talk to your friends and neighbors and make sure they're aware of what **FOLKS** does to help our lake stay clean and safe. Membership forms are available on our website at www.kegonsa.org. All of the past **FOLKS** newsletters can be found on the website too!

Notice of Important Park Meetings (January 15th and 29th)

Public meetings are scheduled in January for two large projects near Lake Kegonsa. Many of your board members will be at these meetings but we encourage you to attend.

1. Dane County Lower Yahara River Trail – Phase 2 **Dane County Parks Division** **Wednesday, January 15, 2019, 7pm** **Pleasant Springs Town Hall**

www.danecountyparks.com/LYRT

Information from the Dane County website about the meeting: “Dane County Parks retained the Madison based consulting firm KL Engineering Inc. in March of 2019 to conduct environmental review, topographic survey, design and engineering for a proposed segment of multi-use trail extending between Fish Camp County Park and Lake Kegonsa State Park. Dane County Parks is also coordinating with the Wisconsin DNR on planning for additional trail through Lake Kegonsa State Park to Williams Drive in the Town of Pleasant Springs.

This public information meeting will review the planning effort underway and gather input.”

Lower Yahara River Trail: Fish Camp County Park to Lake Kegonsa State Park

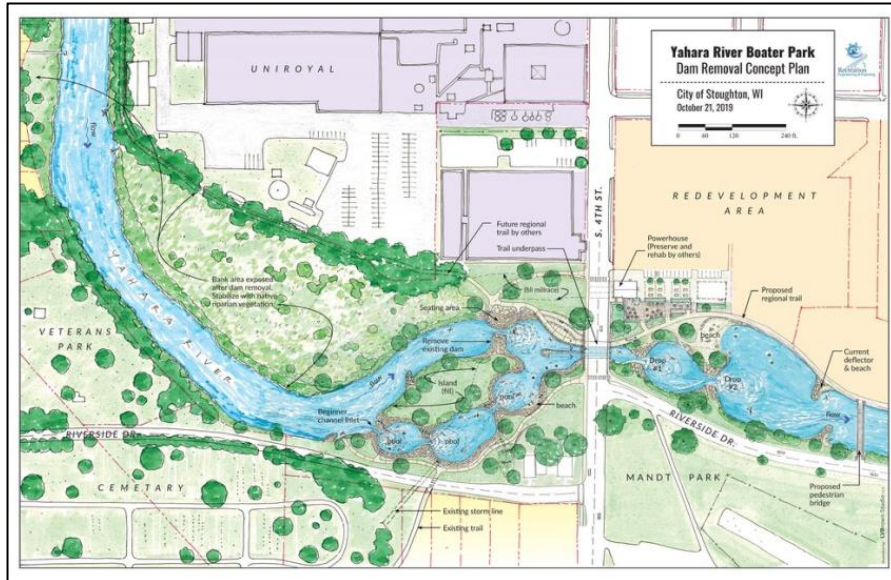


2. Stoughton Yahara River Park Project **Stoughton Parks & Recreation Department** **Wednesday, January 29, 2019, 7pm** **Stoughton High School Auditorium**

<http://stoughtonrec.com/riverpark>

Important Park Meetings, continued

The Stoughton Parks meeting is to describe the status of the redevelopment plan for the river area in Stoughton including removal of the Stoughton Dam. According to the website "The project includes a riverwalk, pedestrian bridge connecting Mandt Park to the redevelopment area, trail connection from Mandt Park to downtown, a whitewater park, and a rental facility."



Ice On Contest

We should have known when we had the snowiest October in history (that melted quickly, thank goodness) that we would have one of our earliest freezes for the lake which would last less than a week! Yes, the lake froze November 16th. Just ask Eric Veith in the picture below, who returned from vacation and found his pier frozen in!



Ice On Contest, Continued

We didn't have anyone guess November 16th but Mark Femal's guess was the closest and the lake stayed frozen for over 5 days so we decided that he should win a \$25 gift certificate to Springers for taking a chance on guessing such an early date!

The lake officially froze December 15th. There were a number of open spots off Shadyside that didn't freeze over until then. The winners are Sue and Bill Schmitz and they will win a \$50 gift certificate to Springers. Our thanks to Springers for their continued support for this contest!

The guesses for the date the lake would freeze were much earlier this year. December 7th had the most votes with 9 people guessing that day. Thanks to all who participated. It is always fun to see how quickly the guesses come in as well as your comments on when and why the lake should freeze on your date.

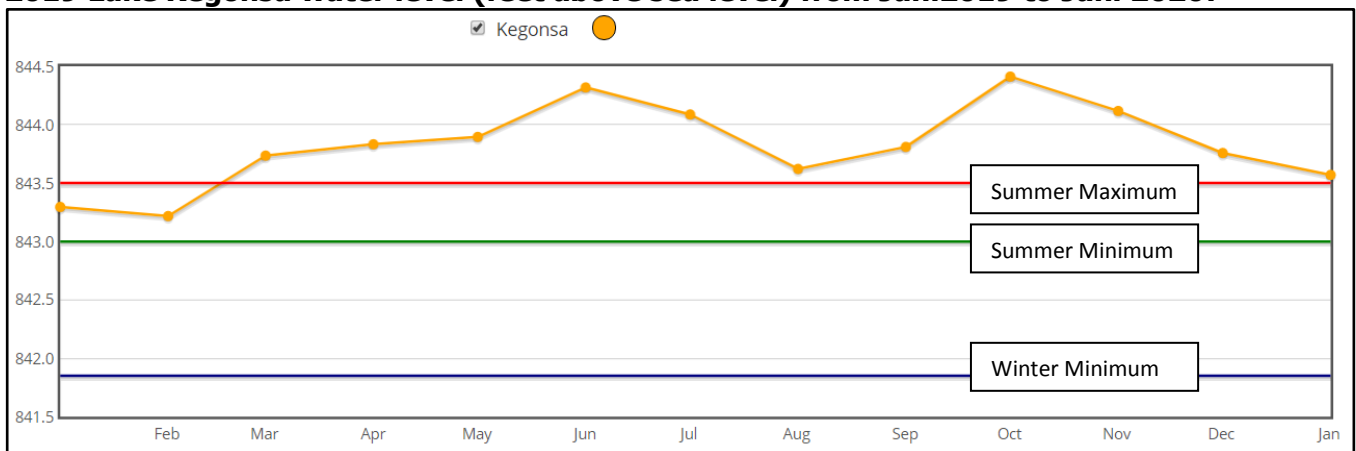
2019 Lake Kegonsa Levels

As of January 6, 2020 the Lake Kegonsa level is 843.49' (ft above sea level) which is still near the summer maximum level of 843.5'.

Lake levels are expected to continue to lower during winter (ice) conditions. All lakes are currently receding to winter water ranges. Per the Dane County website "Winter goals (starting November 1st) are to maintain water levels between the winter minimum and summer minimum target levels." For Lake Kegonsa this range is between 843.0' (summer minimum) and 841.85' (winter minimum). This target level was not reached in early 2019 but the county is trying very hard to build capacity to accommodate the spring rains.

The graph below shows the 2019 Lake Kegonsa levels per the Dane County Land & Water Resources Department website at (<https://lwr.dane.gov/chartlakelevels>).

2019 Lake Kegonsa water level (feet above sea level) from Jan.2019 to Jan. 2020:



Lake Kegonsa Educational Program Nov. 20th

FOLKS sponsored another educational presentation and discussion on Lake Kegonsa in November. We had a great turnout - over 130 people attended the November 20th special presentation. Our speakers were Assistant Director of the Dane County Land & Water Resources Department, **John Reimer** and Dane County Water Resources Planner, **Pete Jopke**. **Darren Marsh**, Director of Dane County Parks was also present to support the discussion.



John Reimer discussed lake level management including aquatic plant harvesting and operation of the three dams in the Yahara Chain of Lakes. He talked about the 2019 water levels and actions taken by the county to manage lake levels. He reviewed the county's future dredging plans to increase the flow of water through the Yahara Lakes system. The county's plan includes their proposal to purchase dredging equipment and complete dredging operations with county employees due to difficulties bidding out the dredging jobs. (**FOLKS** included an article by John Reimer on the dredging plan and sediment removal in the September 2019 newsletter). John also presented the plant harvesting totals from the river and the lake and reviewed the results of the **FOLKS** 2019 pier pick up program. You'll see a summary of the pier pick up program later in this newsletter on page 6.

Pete Jopke, a Water Resource Planner with Dane County Land & Water Resources Department gave a very informative presentation on the current conditions in Lake Kegonsa. Pete has 30 years' experience working in lake and stream ecology and has spent many years working for the Wisconsin DNR in their aquatic invasive species programs and fisheries biology. He presented results of the 2019 plant sonar survey and the nearshore fish survey on Lake Kegonsa.

Pete was very optimistic when he spoke about the ecological "State of Lake Kegonsa". He reported that indigenous (natural) plant species like *Vallisneria* (water celery) and coontail were flourishing in Lake Kegonsa and that this was in part likely due to the removal of carp from the lake that **FOLKS** has been supporting the past three years. These natural plant species not only protect water quality, but importantly, they also generate critical oxygen for the lake. The natural aquatic plants create a filtering system, helping to clarify the water by absorbing nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen that often stimulate algal blooms.

These natural plants also help to stabilize areas of soft lake bottoms and reduce shoreline erosion by reducing the effect of waves and current. Native aquatic plant communities like those growing in Lake Kegonsa help prevent the establishment of invasive non-native plants like Eurasian water-milfoil. In addition, many waterfowl species eat the shoots of these plants and, they provide important cover for young bluegills, perch, largemouth bass, and northern pike while supporting insects that fish and ducklings eat.

Educational Program, continued

Regarding the fish populations living in Lake Kegonsa, Pete was also very positive. He mentioned that recent fish surveys conducted by the DNR indicate that natural reproduction of several important game fish including walleyes and northern pike were successfully thriving in Lake Kegonsa. He also reported that we should be proud to know that several species of sensitive minnows such as the Iowa Darter and Logperch were present only in Lake Kegonsa and not in Lakes Mendota, Monona, and Waubesa. The presence of these sensitive fish minnows is often an indication of a high-quality resource because they do not tolerate most forms of water pollution or habitat alteration. Their presence in Lake Kegonsa is therefore a function of the quality of the habitat present in our lake, especially the rocky shoals that are critical for these unique species.



Iowa Darter



Logperch

Thank you to all our **FOLKS** members who took time out to come to the meeting. The significant number of members attending the educational meetings shows the county staff how interested and involved we are in the welfare of Lake Kegonsa.

Curbside Leaf Pick Up – **FOLKS** Leaf Management Project

The **FOLKS** Leaf Management Program had another successful season this fall. The **Towns of Dunn and Pleasant Springs** both utilized leaf vacuums to help keep our streets, lawns and lakes clean and healthy. **FOLKS** partnered directly with both towns and the **City of Stoughton** once again to run this project with the goal of reducing the amount of phosphorus entering our waterways from storm water flowing over uncollected leaves.

As a follow-up, we encourage you next year to continue participation in this program by removing the leaves from the street near your house and include them with your other leaves. As water flows over leaves, phosphorus is leached out of the leaves and into the storm water. Storm drains and runoff through leaves from steep yards flow directly into the lake.

Town of Dunn

The Town of Dunn has a program to alert residents about their leaf collection program (www.town.dunn.wi.us, search 'Leaf Management'). The Town of Dunn had two leaf collections. Signs were posted throughout the route to notify residents a collection would take place. The Town of Dunn collected 30.5 loads of leaves from the Lake Kegonsa area this year for a total of 3,660 cubic yards of leaves. An additional 2,340 cubic yards was collected in the Lake Waubesa area of the Town.

Leaf Management Project, continued

The Town of Dunn leaf vacuum is more labor intensive than anticipated and physically dangerous in icy weather. The ice and snow makes operation of the vacuum hose unsafe for the operator. The truck and trailer has to be constantly backed up to get all the leaves. Dunn is discussing purchasing a vacuum similar to Stoughton's. There is an issue of financing – a new machine is approximately \$205,000. They think they can get about \$30,000 for their current machine. **FOLKS** has offered to help the Town apply for a grant to assist in this purchase.

The public requires more education about where to place the leaves. The township wants them closer to the road. **FOLKS** signage emphasizes keeping leaves out of the street.

Town of Pleasant Springs

The Town of Pleasant Springs continues to share the City of Stoughton's equipment on weekends with collecting days of Friday afternoon and Saturday mornings. **FOLKS** placed announcement signs for the Town every few blocks around the lake with the dates of the next collection clearly marked. Pick up dates this year were November 8, 9, 15, 16 and 23.

It was a difficult year for collecting due to weather conditions. We experienced increased rain and snowfall amounts and freezing temperatures that make vacuuming difficult and hazardous. Due to early heavy snowfall, Stoughton's leaf vacuum was in use through Friday and was not always available until Saturday. The Town reported that several of the leaf piles were mixed with garden waste, twigs, as well as snow and ice which clog the machines.

Pleasant Springs collected 14 loads of leaves this year over two weekends. This compares with 22 loads last year over 3 weekends. Most of the leaves were delivered to **Blue Moon Community Farm** in Stoughton, who has expressed an interest in taking more leaves next year. A few were delivered to the Town of Dunn transfer site and 4 loads were delivered to the City of Stoughton transfer site.

The owner of Blue Moon Community Farm believes they can take most, if not all, of next year's leaves, while the Town of Pleasant Springs will no longer accept vacuum truckloads of leaves at their transfer site. The Town of Pleasant Springs will open their transfer site on an as needed basis for individual drop offs next year.

The Pleasant Springs Director of Public Works says that they really need to figure out the best way to get information to their public. This is needed not only for the leaf pickup program, but also to notify their citizens of road closings, road and ditch work that closes off driveways, etc.

FOLKS Involvement

FOLKS has helped the Towns and the City of Stoughton with coordinating this project. **FOLKS** is continuing to assist both Towns with mailing and educational materials. In this 3rd pilot project year, the Town of Dunn has taken the lead in funding and running their leaf pick up. In the Town of Pleasant Springs, **FOLKS** continues to assist with funding for leasing equipment from the City of Stoughton and covering some employee costs for the leaf pick up around Lake Kegonsa.

FOLKS support for the annual fall leaf collection program continues to be one of our most admired and appreciated effort. We certainly appreciate **your** efforts to help Lake Kegonsa!!

FOLKS Aquatic Debris Collection Program

The first year of the aquatic plant collection program was a big success. This program was started by the **FOLKS** Board in June 2019 with the cooperation of Dane County. The cost of the program was funded by **FOLKS** from membership dues and contributions.

Thanks to all of the lake residents who participated in the program by placing lake debris at the end of their docks for pick-up by the barge crew each month. We had very positive feedback from lake residents who appreciated the program. We also had excellent support from John Reimer of the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department and his crews. This program provided residents with a way to keep their shoreline and the lake clean. The types of debris removed included cut aquatic plants, algae, floating sticks and logs, dead fish, and other items that needed removal from the lake. It was a great way to contribute to keeping Lake Kegonsa clean and beautiful.



Following are a few facts and figures about the program for 2019:

- Total of 6 weeks when the barge picked-up on Lake Kegonsa and the Yahara River ranging from June through September
- Total of 17 days when the barge was on the lake during those weeks comprised of 136 hours worked by the barge crew
- Total of 84 barge loads were picked-up and removed from the lake. The highest activity was during the following weeks:
 - June 23 – 21 loads
 - July 14 – 20 loads
 - July 28 – 17 loads
 - August 25 – 17 loads
- Based on an estimated weight of 1,000 pounds for each barge load, that is approximately **84,000 pounds** of debris removed from the lake. What a great job by everyone who participated!!!

The **FOLKS** Board plans to continue the program in the upcoming year. We will plan for six pick-up weeks during the season similar to 2019. **FOLKS** will be working out the schedule with Dane County and will announce the specific weeks and other details in the spring.

Scar-face Capone on Kegonsa?

Kim VanBrocklin



Wisconsin has long-been a haven for gangsters of yesteryear. Its' wooded, winding, rural terrain provided an unspoken camouflage for brothers Ralph and Alphonse Capone in Northern Wisconsin.

But did Lake Kegonsa ever house the infamous gangster, Al Capone?

According to an excerpt in her self-published book, "I Will Build, Not Cry" (1985) the late Idabelle Barber (of Stoughton, WI) paraphrases her first-person sightings of Capone at her parents' Barber's Bay grocery store on Lake Kegonsa.

"One day, a fancy car pulled up outside. The windows were very thick but I could see several women with fur coats inside. Papa took Paul and me in the back and told us to stay there and be quiet. Paul was frightened and started to cry. To keep him quiet, I handed him a basket. Inside were mama's dentures. This new toy kept him busy for a while, but when he tried to cram them into his mouth, they broke!" Idabelle was worried that her father would be angry, but he just laughed. He told her "The man who came in for gas was the gangster, Al Capone," and that "at one time, he had rented a cottage from the people next door."

She reminisced that "Mama never liked to talk about the time Al Capone and his friends were living next door. She never wanted to have anything to do with those people. When any of them, even Capone, came into the store, she would walk out and leave Papa to wait on them."

A final account involving Capone at this location, entailed that the Barber's Bay store (which was across from the old Club Barber/Barber's Bay restaurant), had slot machines inside, and that Idabelle's father was tipped off by the outlaw that the store was on the verge of getting searched by the authorities.

"One day Capone came in and told Papa that the cops were going to check his store. He and Papa loaded all the machines on a truck and covered them. Then they moved the truck to the house next door. When the police came to the store, they didn't find any machines. They noticed marks on the floor made by the legs of the machines. They asked Papa what the marks were from and he said 'I don't know.' Two days after the inspection, Papa put the machines back in the store. The man next door helped him."

Chicago-based gangsters such as: Capone, Baby Face Nelson, Bugs Moran, and John Dillinger all had notable ties to Wisconsin. Al Capone's brother Ralph was so drawn to the beauty of 'up north' that he eventually settled in Mercer, WI and ran the Rex Bar until the time of his passing.

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For More About **FOLKS**,
Visit our website at www.Kegonsa.org and

on Facebook  at facebook.com/kegonsa/

or on Twitter  @LakeKegonsa

Please Support Your Lake Association -
Renew Your **FOLKS** Membership.

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

If you have any questions regarding
membership, please contact:
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FOLKS Lost and Found

List lost and found items on the **FOLKS**
Facebook page or contact Eric Olson at
eolson@bunburyrealtors.com

FOLKS board meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month and the public are welcome.
Next Meeting is January 14, 2020, 5:30 - 7:00 PM.
Stoughton Country Club, 3165 Shadyside Dr., Stoughton, WI 53589

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