

MLMF Conference Focuses on Local Initiatives

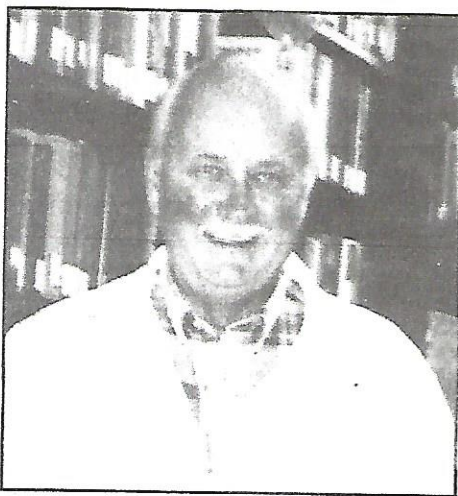
GINNY A. LEE

Four hundred participated in the Minnesota Annual Lake Conference at Arrowwood Resort near Alexandria on October 28-29. Minnesota lake leaders have gathered each fall for the last three years to share experiences and hear from experts.

To this conference attendee, the most exciting portion was the hour moderated by Carl Swanson. Swanson, president of the Greater Lake Sylvia Association and Minnesota Lake Management Federation and a member of WCFLA, handpicked six speakers that would bring water issues directly to the grassroots level—local initiatives.

Six highly regarded and successful men and women confined themselves to the ten minutes allotted to each of them—and left the audience wanting more.

WIL HANSON, spoke on the Big Stone Lake Restoration Project, proving that "citizens can spur government into action." During this project, local people



WIL HANSON

joined in partnership with agencies, state government, and local government.

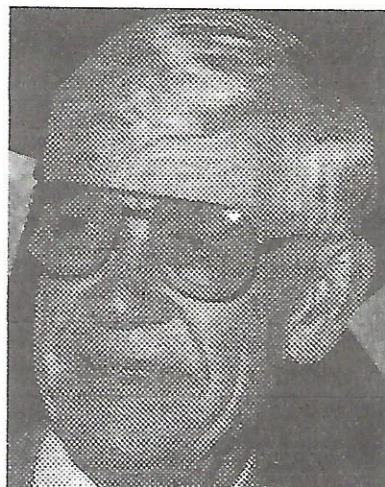
Provoked by excessive weed growth and blue-green algae, people began looking at past practices in regard to Big Stone Lake. In the 1930's, the Whetstone River was diverted into the lake because of dry conditions. In 1967, the Upper Minnesota Watershed District was formed and in 1977 Citizens For Big Stone Lake was formed.

"The lake was distasteful, both in smell, appearance and for recreational use," Hanson said.

An ensuing \$13 million project resulted in various river diversion efforts. Eighty percent of the river (and the accompanying silt, cattle remains and other debris) can now be kept out of the lake.

Citizens For Big Stone Lake continues to function today. It is made up of 500 members sporting "We Care" decals and boasting the Lawn Chair Drill Team which marched in the Twin Cities Aquatennial Parade and has reportedly been invited to perform at half-time during the Super Bowl!

JIM SCHWARTZ of Ten Mile Lake Association spoke on long range planning for lake associations. His talk was prefaced by the statement "Our



JIM SCHWARTZ

lakes are deteriorating... every lake in Minnesota is in peril."

Schwartz feels strongly that lake management and protection is a job too massive for the myriad agencies involved. Efforts to protect lakes are too fragmented and coherent management action will be too little, too late, if we wait for decisions from the top down. Action must be made on individual lakes by concerned citizens.

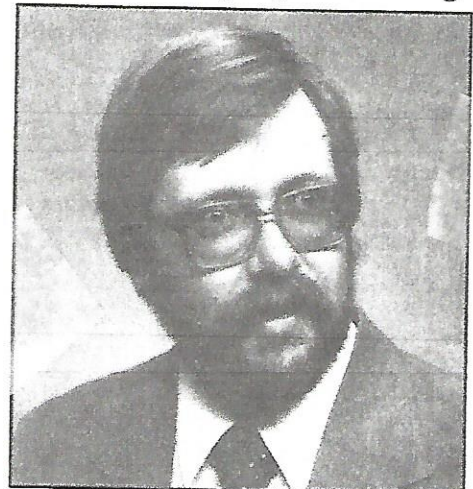
Schwartz exhorted the audience to amass information and data on their own lake, organize the facts, develop a strong, highly-functioning lake association and develop practical, long range plans.

In summary, Schwartz challenged the lakeshore owners present: "We need to seize the initiative. It's a tall order but it can be done—it must be done."

DAN HINRICHS, president of Wright County Federation of Lake Associations, described the CORE project his lake association, the Mink/Somers Lake Association has been involved with. (CORE stands for Cooperative Opportunities for Resource Enhancement.)

CORE projects can be undertaken by anyone, with preference being given to large groups and active involvement of group membership.

In 1988, Hinrichs' group took advantage



DAN HINRICHS

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of management funds available through the CORE program. These funds were deemed necessary to stem plummeting water clarity, massive winterkills of fish and migration of undesirable fish species, such as carp and black bullhead.

The project was designed to "save the lake, eradicate the bad fish, re-enter the good fish and install an aeration system so there would be no more winterkill," stated Hinrichs.

The aeration portion of the project has not yet been completed, but Hinrichs remains positive about the outcome, stating, "Even though several years have passed since the initiation of this project, our association continues to be optimistic, supportive, cooperative and patient. This is essential when participating in this type of program. We know that this project is the only way our lakes will ever be improved."

Mink and Somers lakes also participate in the Lake Watch program.



WALTER CHRISTENSEN

The next speaker, *WALLY CHRISTENSEN* of Woman, Girl and Child Lake Association and president of Cass County Coalition of Lakes, was not expected to show since he was recently out of eye surgery and it was his wife's 70th birthday. Attend he did, however, prompting Swanson to introduce him as "the unsinkable Wally Christensen."

Wally talked about access monitoring and its importance in containing the spread of Eurasian water milfoil. His group, comprised of 25 lake associations, conducted a survey over the Labor Day weekend. A crew of 12 volunteers logged 84 man hours over that weekend, inspecting all boats and trailers for the tenacious exotic weed. They handed out countless brochures on milfoil and showed samples of both Eurasian and northern water milfoil.

"Our people were courteous, polite and informative," Christensen said. "The people were interested and the response was fantastic." Of the 73 boats checked at one access, only one boater was "somewhat testy."

Christensen ended his remarks with some strong statements: "We do not believe that the spread of Eurasian water milfoil is inevitable. We were told we were fighting a lost cause against milfoil (during the Labor Day checks), but we do not believe so. We need education, communication and enforcement. People on the lower level are realizing the problem with Eurasian water milfoil and I think it's getting to the top. We must do something about this massive problem."

PAT WULFF, president of Lake Independence Lake Association and founder of the Metro Coalition of Lakes, has been battling Eurasian water milfoil for the past several years.

In 1988, Wulff started reading articles about Lake Minnetonka, five miles away from the 800 acres of Lake Independence. Wulff had lived on Lake Independence for the 12 years prior and knew very few of her neighbors and "no one across the lake." She proceeded to organize the Lake Independence Lake Association because of the imminent danger of milfoil invading her lake.

"We knew we were sitting ducks," Wulff said. "Over 100,000 people per year are allowed onto our little lake. I really got a quick education between then and now."

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During July of that year, the lake association membership was divided into 10 lake sections and completed their first lake survey.

They discovered Eurasian water milfoil.



PAT WULFF

Within three hours, the group had prepared a bulletin to pass around informing people of the milfoil presence and immediately worked on establishing a buoy system.

And, since "nurses aren't afraid of anything," Registered Nurse Wulff approached the Governor after a tax hearing, requesting immediate action. Wulff was deeply frustrated by the ensuing lack of same taken by the state.

"We went through the rest of the summer toting milfoil around the state," Wulff said. "A bill was passed and never enforced. Whatever the reasons, it's still adversely affecting our lakes."

Wulff is a strong advocate of a strong enforcement policy that supports Minnesota's lakes. "We need lake-friendly legislation passed," she said.

Lake Independence is currently working to gain DNR approval of a bottom barrier. "We try to be good citizens and follow the law," Wulff says. "It gets frustrating when it impacts your property values and way of life."

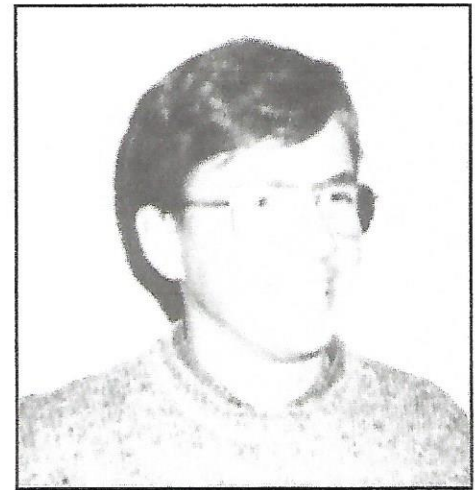
JOHN SUMPTION ended up the hour-long session. Sumption is the very outspoken director of the Cass County

Soil and Water District. He gave copious credit to Merten Jones and the Leech Lake Association for their efforts to impede the flow of milfoil to that heavy tourist area.

"All statistics heading our way are heading our way on boats," Sumption stated. "We believe milfoil must be contained at the source."

Prior to the conference, endorsement for a containment program was obtained from the Cass County Board of Commissioners, FOCUS 10,000 magazine, Lake Minnetonka Conservation District, lake associations representing over 2,500 members and nine regional Minnesota lake coalitions. A petition was circulated and broadly endorsed by individuals at the conference in support of containment of Eurasian water milfoil.

The MLMF membership passed a



JOHN SUMPTION

resolution requesting that the MLMF board organize and direct statewide efforts to implement confinement strategies for the prevention and spread of aquatic biological pollutants. As of press time, the steering committee had not yet met to begin reacting to that request. ■