

BLCA Vision

Desired State: [Current state follows each item in italics]

Water Quality

1. We have an on-going, up-to-date lake management plan that is acted on, reviewed and improved annually. The lake management plan is an integral part of the BLCA vision.

The lake management plan is in place and being implemented [land use/zoning and lakeshore restoration efforts]. The BLCA is the driving force of the Healthy Lakes Partnership, and the lake management plan is part of the BLCA vision and goals.

The lake management plan was revised in 2007. In addition, the BLCA created a lake vegetation management plan which allows us to continue our efforts to control curly leaf pondweed.

2. BLCA members and non members are satisfied with the water quality on all four lakes. Water quality trends show continuous improvement.

Members of the BLCA are not satisfied with water quality on the four lakes. The Healthy Lakes committee is continuing its systematic approach to monitoring so we can determine trends and make decisions based on reliable data. Water quality monitoring includes both lake water monitoring and river/stream monitoring. Funding is being sought to continue monitoring through 2008.

The MPCA in mid-2007 placed the Elk River and the 4 lakes of the Briggs Lake Chain on their draft impaired waters list. This action by the MPCA confirms what BLCA members have suspected re water quality. Being on the impaired waters list may also lead to more funding for water quality improvement.

The Water Quality Committee of The Palmer Long-term Advisory Team, which includes BLCA board members, will be conducting a data summit early in 2008 to summarize current lake/stream data, identify gaps, and serves as a basis for future action to improve water quality.

3. Water levels on all four lakes have been stabilized.

Lake water levels have not been stabilized. There were two high water occasions in 2005 which prompted the Palmer and Clear Lake Townships to trigger the high water ordinance, but none in 2006 or 2007.

4. 100% of lake residents understand cause and affect [how their behaviors effect the lakes], and have adopted "best practices" as part of their lake experience. All members believe they can positively impact the future of our lakes.

We have a long way to go, but have begun educational efforts through speakers at general meetings and newsletters. The Lake Report included BMP articles in 2007. Although the term "best practices" is not commonly known or used, BLCA members are slowly beginning to understand the concept.

5. Lake and lakeshore vegetation is controlled and is beneficial to water quality, utilizing the lake vegetation management plan.

Progress is being made. The BLCA sprayed for curly leaf pondweed in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007. Although it is difficult to measure exactly the impact of spraying, it appears to be effective in decreasing the

incidence of curly leaf pondweed. With the help of a DNR grant allowing us to spray 100% of the affected areas on Julia, Rush and Briggs, the BLCA was able to control curly leaf pondweed in 2006 and 2007. On lake Julia there was an abundance of native weeds [Canadian water weed and coon tail] that grew vigorously after the curly leaf pondweed died back, clogging the south end of the lake.

6. BLCA members and non members are actively engaged in healthy shoreline and property maintenance. At a minimum shoreline and property maintenance have shown no increase in destructive practices.

We still have lake residents using destructive practices. Approximately 20 residences are actively restoring shorelines. Criteria are being established to determine what constitutes restoration. The BLCA project [RREAP: Raingarden and Restoration Education Action Project] funded in part by MN Waters provided funding for 8 new conservation projects in 2007. The BLCA has submitted a grant proposal to the MN DNR for a 2 year lakeshore restoration program, that should it be granted would provide funding for an addition 15 shoreland projects.

7. All waste treatment facilities are in compliance with best practices.

Not all waste treatment facilities are in compliance with best practices. Currently we don't have accurate data regarding how many are not in compliance, or who they are.

8. The BLCA and the Healthy Lakes Partnership have effectively engaged all watershed residents in the purpose of saving our waters for the future..

Some watershed residents have taken action [such as field run-off berms], but we have a great deal of work to do. The Healthy Lakes Partnership put out one newsletter in 2004, and 2 in 2005..

Development/Zoning/Gov cooperation

9. All lakeshore owners have an adequate level of knowledge of their responsibilities as lakeshore owners.

Knowledge of lakeshore responsibilities of prospective lakeshore owners is very inconsistent. County zoning doesn't have its act together in terms of giving consistent information, and the Board of Adjustment [appointed by the County Commissioners] is often inconsistent in granting variances. Some people follow the rules/laws, some don't have a clue, while others work the system to get what they want. Some lakeshore owners listen to their contractors as the experts on responsibilities, but some contractors don't know themselves what lakeshore owners are responsible for. [See reference to RREAP in #6]

10. Development around the lakes is in accordance with current zoning laws and regulations. Development does not have a negative impact on the lakes or surrounding area.

There are many known violations around the lakes. There is no consistency in getting building permits. The land use and zoning committee monitored various sites re: variances and violations, and worked closely with the township and county zoning office to attain consistency in the county's application and enforcement of zoning ordinances and other regulations. The county is not consistent in its enforcement of laws and regulations, nor is it effective in follow up of violations.

Many property owners, and the contractors they hire for excavating, building, landscaping etc, share a philosophy about property ownership that gives them the right to do whatever they like to their property. Consequently many pay little or no heed to county and DNR shore land regulations and are willing to pay "after the fact" for permits and fines. BLCA members attend township meetings, plus meeting of the Board of Adjustment, and help keep the county zoning staff focused on lake related violations.

The BLCA project [RREAP: Raingarden and Restoration Education Action Project] funded in part by MN Waters, provided information and referral sources to contractors, etc to improve landowner understanding and acceptance of zoning laws and regulations. The BLCA provided 8 small restoration grants to contractor, etc customers, in 2007 summer months..

11. There is a high level of cooperation and coordination among state and local government units and area residents regarding water quality issues. Elected officials understand the impact of undesirable development and other activities on lake quality matters, and make decisions supportive of the BLCA mission and vision. The DNR and other regulators are coordinated, provide consistent information and advice across governmental units, and are responsive in a timely manner.

The BLCA has a good working relationship with Sherburne County and other regulators, but the coordination and cooperation among the regulators needs attention. Our relationship with Benton County is limited. Knowledge is usually not the issue: regulators are not consistent in the application of their knowledge or the enforcement of their rules and regulations.

12. The BLCA and its members take an active role in helping to plan for the futures of Palmer and Clear Lake Townships.

In 2005 and 2006 individual BLCA members participated in PLAT [Palmer Long Term Advisory Team], and the Minnesota Design Team experience in September 2006. BLCA members and partners have been instrumental in forming the Water Quality Committee, and planning the 2008 Data Summit. There has been no planning activity in Clear Lake Township.

Safety/Security

13. We have safe lake neighborhoods with members actively taking responsibility for things such as Neighborhood Watch, traffic control, etc.

Members are gradually beginning to take responsibility for safe neighborhoods. Of 12 possible designated neighborhood areas, 6 initiated Safe Neighborhood efforts in 2005, 6 hosted Neighborhood Watch events in 2006, but only 3 were held in 2007..

14. We have attained a high level of safety regarding boating, personal watercraft, ATVs, snowmobiles, recreational vehicles and airplanes. There is consistent enforcement of laws pertaining to activities on and around the lakes. Speed is controlled both on the lakes and on lake roads. Personal watercraft laws [and other laws regulating recreational behavior] are followed and enforced.

There is a potential for accidents, but there are few known or reported incidents. There is a low level of enforcement of safety The new regulations, and it is inconsistent on all four lakes. Palmer fire station has a sheriff's satellite office with water safety boat.

15. All public access areas are user-friendly, with garbage facilities and toilets, and the lakes, public access areas, ditches and roads in the lakes area are litter-free year around.

We have year around garbage facilities on all four lakes, and bathroom facilities on two lakes [Rush and Briggs]. Public access areas are cleaner than before having garbage facilities. Ditches and roads in the lakes area not litter free; a 2 mile stretch of MN Highway 25 is cleaned twice each year by a small number of BLCA volunteers. Highway 25 was only cleaned once in 2006 because of major construction. The board approved a draft plan for clean-up activities for road, ditch, access and ice which was implemented in 2007.

16. There are safe places to walk and bike throughout the area.

Currently there is one short bike path by Palmer Park and County 6.

17. Neighbors and lake users are respectful of their neighbors, other lake residents, and all waterways .

It is a mixed bag about neighbors being respectful.

BLCA Organization/Structure

18. We have attained 100% membership [lakeshore owners on all 4 lakes and those who have access to the lakes], and the level of participation is very high among members. Meetings are well attended and members are eager to volunteer for BLCA activities.

Membership in 2004 was approx 50%, down from 60% in 2003. Membership was 309 in 2005, and 346 in 2006. Although 2006 membership was up from 2005, we did not attain our goal of 380 members. Our 2007 goal was 75%, but we only attained 55% membership. Our membership goal was not attained due to a variety of factors. Only about 10% of members volunteer for BLCA activities, but willingness to volunteer, if asked, seems to be improving. Meetings are not well attended, with approx 50 members per meeting.

19. 100% of BLCA board members are actively involved in BLCA business and activities beyond attending board meetings.

Approximately 90% of board members are actively involved in activities beyond attending meetings. Meetings are well attended throughout the year. [BLCA started having board meetings throughout the year in fall of 2003] Active and willing board participation is improving with clearer expectations and more thorough board selection. A formal orientation was started in October 2005, and continued in 2006 and 2007, for new board members discussing board member participation.

20. The BLCA has an effective budget process, and has maintained a balanced budget plus 15% for 5 years.

The BLCA has a uniform budget process. We had balanced budgets in 2005, 2006 and 2007, but did not have a 15% surplus. Although the BLCA had a balanced budget in 2007, we did not meet our budget goals.

21. The BLCA supports social and community activities, including co-sponsorship with organizations such as the DNR, county and townships.

We have a BLCA picnic and band concert and participate in Palmer Day..

22. The BLCA website is an up-to-date and useful resource for members, non member property owners, and prospective lake property owners

The BLCA website is up and running, and has been edited and updated. We do not have data regarding its usefulness to members, nonmembers, and prospective lake property owners. The website is getting better and is occasionally updated with current information. It is better each year, but we have a way to go to meet the desired state.

23. The BLCA has helped create an effective water management organization.

The BLCA is a non-profit association with no powers for assessments. The current water management organization is the Elk River Watershed Association, created through a joint powers agreement between Sherburne and Benton counties. The ERWA has limited ability to raise funds for water quality improvement projects, and the participation on the part of watershed residents is voluntary. There is little interest in exploring a watershed district, although the two counties have hosted an information session for their commissioners. A committee was formed to explore, with the ERWA, what it would mean to form a watershed district, but no action was taken in 2007. The BLCA will continue to exist regardless of what form the water management organization takes.