Des Moines Lake Board – Meeting Minutes
Date: November 12, 2025
Format: Virtual meeting

---

1. Call to Order & Attendance

Chair: Amy Juers

Present:

- Amy Juers
- Ryan Knox
- Tom Rooney
- Mike Schafhauser
- Mike Keller

Absent (with notice):

- Holly Huso (travel/flight delays)
- Michelle Schoeder (illness)

---

2. Decontamination Station & Burnett County Ordinance Update

Lead: Ryan

- Ryan has been heavily involved with Burnett County's Natural Resources Committee regarding proposed updates to the decontamination ordinance.
- Current ordinance does **not** explicitly allow use of:
  - Motor muffs / "fake-a-lake" for engine coolant pathways
  - Use of hot water via these methods for ballast tanks
- This issue surfaced after Steve Johnson (Fish Lake) lodged a complaint about non-decontamination and the sheriff could not find language in the ordinance allowing the equipment Des Moines Lake uses.
- Steve's position to the County:
  - Every boat should receive motor-muff decontamination.

    - Every ballast tank should be **completely filled** with hot water.
    - His system operates at ~2.5 gallons per minute; some ballast tanks are 200–250 gallons, with multiple tanks per boat → up to **5–6 hours** per vessel at Fish Lake.
    - Board consensus: this is *unreasonable* and unlikely to be adopted by Burnett County.
- Des Moines Lake's system:
    - ~2.5x higher water volume output than Steve's system.
    - Supported by multiple research documents and empirical studies Ryan has compiled.
- Amy and Ryan had a call with Emily (Burnett County); Amy recommended postponing ordinance changes until more complete, reliable information (including manufacturer input on seals/heat tolerance) is reviewed.
- Ryan has generated 4–5 detailed documents summarizing research, existing practices, and Des Moines Lake's protocols.
- Ryan has been asked to attend the **December 11** Burnett County Natural Resource Committee meeting in person to present.

---

3. Decontamination Documentation & Website

- Ryan will share his latest memo and related documentation with the Board.
- Plan to post these materials on the **decontamination station webpage** so members and other stakeholders can review.

---

4. Signage Task Force for Decontamination Station

Lead: Ryan

- Current sign is considered **temporary**; many observations on how people read it and how it might be improved.
- Board will form a joint **sign strategy task force** including:
    - Des Moines Lake board members

    - Long Lake representatives
    - Volunteers from both associations
- Goal: redesign the sign, including wording and layout, and finalize with a printer by **March** so it's ready for the **April** opening.
- Ryan noted sign development is complex and needs time.

---

5. Land Use Agreement & Long Lake Partnership Meeting

- Ryan referenced prior **Long Lake partnership meeting** discussions.
- Amy will revisit the **land use agreement** work and circulate the Long Lake partnership meeting notes to the Board.

---

6. Fundraising – Apparel Store Results

Lead: Mike K

- Recent apparel store run generated **$445** in revenue, comparable to the first sale.
- One missing shipment issue appears to have been resolved (no further complaints received).
- General satisfaction with merchandise quality and ease of store operations.

Logo / Color Visibility Issue:

- Some dark garments (e.g., dark green/navy coolers, shirts) make the loon logo hard to see.
- Plan for next sale:
    - Work directly with vendor to **block or adjust** low-contrast logo/garment color combinations.
    - Possibly review SKUs and preview selections via screenshare before opening the store.

---

7. Golf Tournament Fundraiser Concept

- Amy has not yet heard back from Adam Burnett regarding a **golf tournament** at Voyager.
- She will:
    - Informally connect with Mark Sisson and his wife (active with Voyager events) to identify the correct contacts and gauge interest.
- Survey responses indicated interest in:
    - Golf events
    - Picnics and social gatherings
    - Other community activities
- No additional fundraising is planned for this winter; future efforts will tie into 2026 activities.

---

8. Financial Update & Insurance / Entity Discussion

Treasurer: Mike S.

Balances:

- Savings: **$16,739.49**
- Checking: **$6,936.06**
- Joint account (shared with Long Lake; DML “owns” roughly half): **$2,354.12**

Current Financial Position:

- Adequate cash on hand with **no major bills** anticipated over the winter.
- Anticipating further input from attorney regarding:
    - New entity structure
    - Insurance implications and potential cost savings
- Insurance has increased ~35–40%, which was higher than expected.

DNR Grant Requirements:

- Wisconsin DNR grant requires **$1M liability coverage** until grant term ends (estimated end of **2027**).

- Separate DNR grant for the camera system; no funds received for cameras yet.
- DML is still owed a 10% final WDS reimbursement (eligible after 2027).

Dues / Credit Card Fees:

- Credit card processing and bank service charges are currently the **largest ongoing expense** (about $5/month plus transaction costs) — roughly equal to the electric bill.
- Members who pay dues by card pay ~$41+ vs. $40 by check; this covers transaction cost, but monthly flat fees still exist.
- Tom raised the idea of dues adjustments/cash discounts; currently, card vs. check structure already partially addresses this.

Operating vs. Project Costs & Reconciliation:

- Ryan and Mike previously reconciled DNR deposits, association contributions, and expenditures (around May).
- An "Expense Master – Operating Costs and Project Balance" spreadsheet is maintained, with:
  - Operating costs
  - Project build-out costs
  - Linked receipts on a second tab
- Current status:
  - Approx. **$800 under budget** on the project today.
  - Total funds are **~$600 above** forecasted project needs, giving **~$1,400** cushion before exceeding original estimate.
- Des Moines Lake has periodically **floated expenses** during the build to keep the project on track; goal is to minimize future fronting of funds.

Insurance / Entity:

- Attorney is preparing recommendations for a **new entity structure** (e.g., for better alignment with operations and insurance) over the winter.
- Board wants clarity on how a new structure could:
  - Reduce insurance costs

    - Clarify liabilities for the insurer and the associations

---

9. Operating Cost Summary for WDS

Ryan:

- **2025 WDS operating cost: $2,059.19** so far.
- Expect **~$60** additional electrical cost → estimate **$2,100**, vs. original forecast of **$2,000**.
- Unexpected items:
    - ~$200 electrician visit to troubleshoot a GFI circuit.
- Even with the insurance increase and the electrician visit, costs are roughly on target.
- Long-term:
    - Funding in place for **~10 years** of operations plus **~$5,000** maintenance/repair fund.

---

10. Financial Transparency & Member Communications

- Annual meeting feedback: members want **more transparency** about finances.
- Plan:
    - Tom will review the budget spreadsheet and bank/operating records.
    - Tom will help prepare a **member-friendly financial summary** for distribution.
- Board also discussed an **informal audit**:
    - Two neutral volunteers (one from each association), **not** board members and not involved in WDS projects, would review the financials to confirm everything is above board.
- Goal is to meet member expectations and ensure no questions arise regarding Board stewardship.

---

11. 2025 Member Survey Results

Presenter: Tom

- Tom cleaned up survey data and used ChatGPT to help summarize.
- ~47 responses total.

Highlights:

- **Participation & Awareness**
  - Most respondents know about the association's activities and communications.
  - Main barriers to participation: **too busy**, **having company**, and general scheduling conflicts.
  - Lack of awareness was mentioned only minimally.
  - Members generally aware DML is a **501(c)(3)**.
  - Strong perception that the **$40 annual fee is a good value**; Tom believes a modest dues adjustment would not significantly impact membership, if ever needed.
- **Lake Concerns (Top Themes)**
  - **Wake boats**: the single biggest concern; frequently mentioned in "what would you change" and open comments.
  - **Power loading** at the landing: concerns about erosion and ramp damage.
  - **Balance between recreation and preservation**: respondents want both enjoyment and protection of the lake.
  - Some respondents noted they appreciate that access is somewhat limited and that most users are lake residents.
  - **ATVs, overdevelopment, real estate pressure** also mentioned, though largely outside board control.
  - **Septic systems**: a few respondents raised concerns about leakage; however, current water chemistry data does not indicate a widespread problem.
- **Likes & Community**

    - Strong sense of **community**, cleanliness, and natural character.
    - Members like that most boaters are residents and that traffic is limited.
- **Invasive Species & Education**
    - Respondents care about invasive species prevention, but many feel the Board is already doing a lot (annual meeting content, website, videos, “Live from the Lake” updates).
    - Ongoing education still important, but not seen as a major board shortcoming.
- **Events & Social Activities**
    - Interest in more community events:
        - Golf tournament
        - Picnics and gatherings
        - Ice cream socials
        - “Taco Boat” idea (mentioned repeatedly and humorously)
        - Flotilla-style mid-lake social
    - Desire for more structured opportunities to meet neighbors.
- **Volunteer Sign-Up**
    - Comment in summary about “simplifying sign-up”; unclear if this referred to:
        - Clean Boats, Clean Waters / decontamination shifts
        - General volunteer opportunities
    - Ryan confirmed there is a **volunteer page** on the website.
    - Amy noted past suggestion to use SignUpGenius for clean-boat shifts; adoption has been slow.
    - Plan to highlight the volunteer page more clearly and possibly tie it to future door-hanger communications.

---

12. Boat Landing – Condition, Member Sentiment & Next Steps

- New survey question this year focused on **boat landing improvements**.
- Key stats (multiple choice / check-all-that-apply):
  - **61%** want the Board to **advocate with the town** for landing repairs/improvements.
  - **44%** have concerns that an improved landing would increase non-resident boat traffic.
- Interpretation:
  - Members support advocating for improvements but are wary of making access **too easy** and increasing traffic, decontamination workload, and exposure risk.
- Observations:
  - Cement side performed better this year; all boats used the cement side and launch was easier than previous years.
  - Sand side developed a shallow "divot," partly due to power loading.
  - Idea floated: more rock at the launch could discourage power loading by increasing prop damage risk (not a formal proposal yet).
- Amy has a **Devils Lake** email thread with examples and preliminary cost/concept numbers for a ramp project (though that project included a retaining wall we likely don't need).
- General consensus:
  - Move **slowly** on major landing projects.
  - Education is needed to help members understand trade-offs between better access and increased non-resident use, decontamination volume, costs, and liability.
  - Topic should be presented clearly at the **annual meeting** with survey data.

---

13. Communications – Door Hangers & "Paperless" Push

- Amy suggested one final **door hanger** campaign in spring:
    - Include QR codes for:
        - Website
        - Newsletter signup
        - Facebook & Instagram pages
        - Volunteer page
    - Message: transitioning to **paperless** communication going forward.
- After that, members should not expect regular physical mail or door materials.

---

14. Lake Health Data & Wake Boat Impacts (Drone Footage)

Wake Boat Impacts:

- Amy shared drone videos/photos (from Michelle's husband and Amy's son) showing:
    - Distinct bottom "trails" and trenches in front of the Milbert/Lawyer property, consistent with wakeboat operation too close to shore.
    - Power loading scouring at the **boat landing**: clear depression in sand next to cement slab.
    - A few other sand-point trails near Ross's point.
- This was the **only area** (apart from the landing) showing visible bottom disturbance of this magnitude.
- Amy observed cloudy water in that area during a pontoon ride, not seen elsewhere on the lake.

Secchi & Phosphorus Results:

- Secchi disk readings and phosphorus levels came back **very positive**:
    - No evidence of water quality decline.
    - Phosphorus levels are within healthy ranges, suggesting no current septic-driven nutrient issues.

- Caveats:
    - Weather and other variables also influence readings.
    - There is only one wake boat on the lake now; more boats or larger boats could change conditions.

Wake Boat Coordination Idea:

- Tom's concern: larger and larger boats (including non-wake boats) may be used to "fight" the wake, creating overall bigger waves and fewer safe windows for water skiing and tubing.
- Suggestion:
    - If feasible, Amy could discuss with Melissa (wake boat owner) a **voluntary time window** (e.g., **11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.**) during which the wake boat primarily runs.
    - Not a formal policy, but a cooperative solution to allow other families (especially with kids) to water ski at other times.

Wake Boat Litigation Status:

- Question raised regarding status of broader wake boat litigation or policy proposals in Wisconsin.
- No current updates known; Holly had previously tried to monitor this.
- Emily Moore or county contacts may have more current info.

---

15. Membership & Donations

- Amy sent emails earlier in fall to a non-member list from Ryan; resulted in **one new member**.
- Handwritten notes appear to be more effective; may use more of them next year.
- Plan: consider a **final year-end email** reminder for:
    - Nonprofit donations
    - 2025 dues

---

16. Recognition – LaRock's

- Holly ordered appreciation gifts (cooler and hats) for the **LaRock's** family in recognition of their long-term contributions.
- Total cost ~**$200**.
- Plan:
  - Reimburse Holly via Mike.
  - Present gifts at the **annual meeting** if LaRock's can attend; otherwise, deliver personally in May.

---

17. Key Action Items

1. **Burnett County Ordinance & Documentation**
   - Ryan to share latest memo and supporting documents with Board.
   - Ryan to attend **Dec 11** Burnett County Natural Resource Committee meeting.
   - Once posted, Amy/Ryan to notify Board that ordinance documentation is available on the **decontamination page**.
2. **Decontamination Sign Task Force**
   - Form a joint task force (DML Board, Long Lake reps, volunteers from each association).
   - Develop new sign design and content.
   - Target: finalized and to printer by **March**.
3. **Long Lake Partnership / Land Use Agreement**
   - Amy to circulate Long Lake partnership meeting notes to the Board.
   - Amy to restart work on the **land use agreement**.
4. **Apparel Store Vendor & Logo Colors**
   - Amy/Mike to contact the apparel vendor to:
     - Review logo/garment color combinations.

        - Remove low-contrast SKUs (e.g., dark logo on dark garments) from future stores.

5. **Attorney / Entity & Insurance**
    - Amy to reconnect with attorney to:
        - Obtain draft of recommended entity structure.
        - Clarify insurance implications, required coverage, and potential cost savings.
    - Resume parallel work on land use agreement.
6. **Financial Transparency & Member Summary**
    - Mike to provide Tom with bank/operating records as needed.
    - Tom to draft an easy-to-understand **financial summary** for members based on:
        - The master operating/project spreadsheet
        - Bank/account data
7. **Informal Audit Volunteers**
    - Recruit **one non-board volunteer** from each association (DML & Long) to review project financials and confirm everything is above board.
8. **Boat Landing Research & Communication**
    - Amy to send the **Devils Lake landing** cost/concept email chain to the Board (if not already shared).
    - Tom to discuss with Keller to understand budget ranges and potential town involvement for any landing improvements.
    - Prepare to present survey data and landing scenarios at the **annual meeting**.
9. **Survey Export & Distribution**
    - Tom/Amy/Ryan to coordinate:
        - Sharing online survey access with Ryan.

- Troubleshooting clean **PDF export** with charts.
- Sending survey summary and/or full charts to membership.

10. **Water Quality Communication**
    - Post recent **Secchi and phosphorus** results on Facebook and/or website to inform members of current positive water quality status.
11. **Wake Boat Outreach & Litigation Check**
    - Amy to:
        - Check with Emily Moore about current status of any wake boat-related litigation or policy proposals.
        - Consider reaching out to Melissa (wake boat owner) about a **voluntary time window** (e.g., 11–2) for most wakeboat activity.
12. **Door Hanger / Paperless Campaign**
    - Design a **final door hanger** for spring including:
        - QR codes for website, newsletter, social channels, and volunteer page.
        - Clear messaging that communications will be **paperless** going forward (beyond this last drop).
13. **LaRock's Gifts**
    - Holly to send receipts to Mike for reimbursement.
    - Coordinate presentation of gifts at annual meeting or personal delivery in May.

---

18. Adjournment

- No additional business was raised.

Meeting adjourned.