

March 26, 2021: INFORMATION REGARDING DRAWDOWN REFERENDUM

At the July 2017 annual meeting of the Mt. Morris Lakes Management District, the board was requested to look into alternatives to address silt accumulation at some locations in the lakes, specifically at the mouths of Porters and Rattlesnake Creeks. At the July 2018 annual meeting a preliminary report was presented that addressed two possible responses: lake drawdown and dredging. Following the drawdown/dredging presentation, a motion was made, seconded and approved by the membership that “the drawdown and dredging issue will remain as a forefront issue of the Board’s agenda”. As a result of this motion, a drawdown/dredging subcommittee was formed to provide additional details and explore options and solutions considering both drawdown and/or dredging. The subcommittee members were Dave Murphy, Rob Adams, Jeff Morzinski and Denis Sutton. In March 2019, an informational meeting was conducted for all district membership that included presentations by Ted Johnson (DNR) and Onterra (MMLMD consultant). The alternatives, advantages and disadvantages were presented and discussed. The MMLMD subsequently obtained a DNR grant to offset some of the drawdown engineering study and testing costs.

The board originally planned to present the subcommittee findings and recommendations at a special meeting in March 2020. A membership vote was then planned for the annual meeting in July 2020. Since the Covid-19 lockdowns prevented large in person gatherings, the Board recognized that other forms of educational outreach to the membership was essential in order to have informed voters. Onterra was retained to prepare an informational video regarding the science, advantages, and disadvantages of the alternatives. This video is available for viewing at the MMLMD website or at <https://youtu.be/ZdTuqTwR4eg>. If you have not watched this video, please do so.

As indicated on the MMLMD website under the drawdown tab, two drawdown options were to be considered. The first was an over winter 6 foot drawdown from October 2021 to May 2022 to primarily reduce aquatic invasive species in our lakes. We anticipate there to be some peripheral benefit of modest silt compression and channel cutting from the lake currents during this drawdown. This option will have minimal recreational impact.

The second option considered was a longer 6’ drawdown from October of 2021 to May of 2023. The purpose of the extended drawdown was to compress silt (organic soil) in our lakes with the obvious loss of recreational use of the lake during the summer of 2022. A sediment core analysis was conducted by Onterra in the fall of 2020 to measure silt content in our lake and to establish a baseline for measuring silt compression post drawdown. This analysis indicates that there are only a few zones where silt accumulations are significant. Our collective conclusion is that an extended drawdown would not provide the dividends expected when this option was originally considered. Based on this information the district board recommended back to the subcommittee that the extended drawdown option be tabled until additional data can be collected from the winter drawdown. The subcommittee supported this recommendation by a vote of 3 to 1. As a result, the only option to be proposed, until further notice, will be the winter drawdown from October 2021 until May 2022.

Mail-In Referendum

MMLMD Board has reviewed feasible options, as presented by the drawdown/dredging subcommittee. Since the Covid-19 pandemic impacts continue and prevent large in person meetings for the foreseeable future, the Board determined the bylaws allow us to solicit the membership's vote on this matter via a mail-in ballot referendum. The results of this referendum will be reported at the annual meeting scheduled for Saturday, July 17, 2021. At that time fiscal budgets to support of the drawdown and other lake management activities will also be presented for member approval.

On the enclosed ballot, please provide the property owner name, vote YES or NO and return the ballot by no later than **May 1, 2021** , using the enclosed return stamped envelope, to this address:

Joe Slezak
MMLMD Secretary
9425 Memory Lane
Neenah, WI 54956.

If you have any questions prior to completing and sending your ballot please contact either Tim Dahlstrand or Rob Adams at 847-609-1380 or 414-412-2290 respectively.

Thank you for your prompt response to this referendum.

Timothy Dahlstrand and Rob Adams
Mount Morris Lakes Management District

Enclosure: Winter Drawdown Referendum

2020 (JUNE – SEPTEMBER) DRAWDOWN RESEARCH RESULTS & SUMMARY REPORT FOR MT. MORRIS LAKES

This document report intends to provide an update on the activities conducted in 2020 on Mount Morris Lake. Some of the activities were conducted under the Drawdown Scoping Grant (AEPP-596-20) and others were conducted outside of grant funds.

Drawdown Scoping Grant

- **Sediment Decomposition/Consolidation Assessment** – Onterra collected surface sediment cores from 18 locations around Mount Morris Lake in an effort to understand the percent organic matter at these key locations within the lake. The higher the organic content, the more depth would be gained if the sediments are oxidized during a summer drawdown. Said another way, if the organic content was low, a summer drawdown would not likely cause significant increase in depth from consolidation. Using the acoustic data collected during early-spring of 2019, we also created a sediment hardness model. The acoustic data collected in waters less than 2 feet deep can be problematic due to interference, but these data look fairly sound. *MM_HardnessModel_SedimentAnalysis.pdf* displays these two datasets.
- **Water Quality Assessment** – The project included the collection of a series of water quality data to serve as a pre-drawdown dataset. Replicating the same sampling regime after the drawdown will aid in the understanding of this management tool. We had already collected the spring water quality sample when the decision to postpone the project until 2021 was made. Therefore we continued to collect these data in 2020 as it is important to have a full series when making comparisons. These data are all housed in the WDNR's online database, SWIMS: <https://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/waterquality/Station.aspx?id=703041>. *MM_LakeD_WQ_2020_Draft.pdf* contains updated figures of these data, as explained within your management plan. We will report on the relevant data within the Drawdown Scoping Project Report next fall.

Outside of Grant Funds

- **Early-Season AIS Survey (CLP Mapping)** – *MM_CLP_June20.pdf* shows the results of the early-June curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) mapping survey; I previously sent you this map. *MM_CLP_ES2019vsES2020.pdf* shows how the CLP population changed from 2019 to 2020. Overall, the CLP population remains low in the lake, but slight increases can be seen in this map series.
- **Late-Season AIS Survey (EWM Mapping)** – *MM_EWM_PB_Aug20.pdf* shows the results of the Late-Season Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) mapping survey. *MM_EWM_LS2019vsLS2020.pdf* shows how the EWM population changed from 2019 to 2020. Overall, the CLP population remains low in the lake, but slight increases can be seen in this map series. EWM occupied a similar, albeit potentially smaller footprint in 2020 compared to 2019. Higher density EWM was observed in Lake C, whereas some density reductions were observed in the downstream part of Lake D. We suspect EWM is approaching a dynamic equilibrium, where changes in density and location may go up and down based upon environmental conditions. While the jury is still out on when EWM causes ecological impacts to a lake, it is likely at much higher densities than currently exist in Mount Morris. Concerns are currently greater about the human use impacts that the EWM is imparting. In our experience when EWM densities are *dominant* or greater, nuisance conditions are starting to present themselves. When EWM densities are below *dominant*, there aren't typically navigation or recreational impediments.

Eddie J. Heath
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