Commissioners’ Corner

Healthy Lakes

October 2016

There are two primary objectives to maintaining and protecting the water quality of Pipe and North Pipe Lakes. The first is preventing aquatic invasive species (AIS) from being introduced into the lakes. The second is to minimize runoff into the lakes. Preventing introduction of AIS is primarily minimized with our efforts at the public landing through our landing monitors. Preventing and minimizing runoff into our lakes is more complicated and challenging.

Northern Wisconsin had a 7-inch rainfall earlier this year. The Pipe and North Pipe Lakes watershed had a similar rainfall a few years ago. Mother Nature is delivering many more significant rainfalls with more and more frequency. These heavy rainfalls have the potential to create more runoff into our lakes that in turn means more sediment, more phosphorus and more of the many things we do not want in our lakes that compromises our lakes’ water quality and clarity. Protecting our lakes shorelines is the only defense we have against these natural events.

Studies show that there can be as much as 500% more diversity of plant and animal species along a natural shoreline compared to upland areas.Changing natural shoreline or not protecting/preserving it could also be contributing to water pollution or increasing the amount of sediment entering the water by a magnitude of 18 times. These are but a few reasons that we as landowners along our lakes, should think about how we can best limit the runoff from our land.

In 2009, Pipe Lakes District received a protection grant that included money for shoreline restoration. Many land owners participated by creating buffer zones, establishing rain gardens, preventing runoff by creating diversions, and establishing infiltration practices. Unfortunately, not as many participated as we had hoped. Some wanted to participate but after the required consultation, they could not find a landscape company who had time to even provide a quote much less complete the work. Others were hesitant to add a lien to their title that was necessary to receive funds from the grant.

We now have another opportunity to pursue if we can identify individuals willing to improve their shoreline and decrease the amount of runoff from their land. This program, entitled: “Healthy Lakes” has as its goal to, “Improve habitat and water quality with simple and inexpensive projects…” The “Healthy Lakes” program allows one to complete small projects on one’s property to enhance the shoreline, create more living space for native plants and animals and protect our lakes; such as using any or all of the following:

 1. Native planting down by the shoreline to slow and absorb runoff

 2. Diversion--prevent runoff from getting into the lake

 3. Rain Garden to capture and clean runoff

 4. Rock Infiltration--capture and clean runoff

Unlike our previous program, Healthy Lakes DOES NOT require any change to one’s deed. All one has to do is agree to maintain the project for 10 years. Now the really good part; these are all intended to be relatively small projects: a maximum of 350 sq ft for the native planting and cost of the any one project cannot exceed $1000. Pipe and North Pipe Lake Protection and Rehabilitation District can apply for a grant to help pay for these projects. This is a cost sharing grant, meaning that this grant, if approved, will pay for 75% of the total cost and the land owner pays for 25%. Thus, if your project costs $1000, you pay only $250.

If you have projects in mind that will protect your shoreline and minimize runoff into our lakes and are interested in participating under this grant, please contact Greg Warner at gregpnpl@gmail.com before January 1, 2017. Grant applications are due to the State February 1, 2017, and some time will be needed to put the grant together and get it submitted before the deadline. The more participants we have, the higher the likelihood we will get approval.

Want more information? The University of Wisconsin-Extension has published an excellent 3 part series entitled: “The Shoreland Stewardship Series.” These articles are available at <https://learningstore.uwex.edu/Search.aspx?k=shoreland+stewardship+series>. Also you can go to http//healthylakeswi.com/.