

Johnson Lake Improvement Association Newsletter

Volume 20, Issue 1

Spring 2025

The President's Welcome

Written by Stephanie Kessler

HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY TO OUR ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER!!

When I became President about 23 years ago, I had this idea to send a newsletter each spring to every single owner on our lake as a way to stay connected and inform everyone about water related issues. So in 2005, I wrote the very first newsletter and since then have mailed it each spring to every person who owns property on Johnson Lake. I hope you have found it informative and helpful. If you have ideas for content or thoughts about it, please let me know (stephakneeatoe@yahoo.com) because your support to continue having the association pay for the mailing makes this possible! So with that being said, happy anniversary to our little newsletter!! I hope you all continue to support your lake association by becoming members (see page 3) and continue to be good lake stewards. Most choices you make (like your dock installer or your toilet paper style) have a direct or indirect effect on the water quality. Let's all appreciate the wonderful, unique setting that Johnson Lake provides us and take good care of our water! ~ Stephanie

2025 Annual Meeting: Saturday, August 9, 1:00pm – 3:00pm

This year we are going back to Stenson's home on Wildarnessa! Coming to this once-a-year meeting is a great way to meet your neighbors. It's a relaxed setting and easy to join in! Come to Chuck and Jan Stenson's log home at 34508 Wildarnessa Rd. You can boat or drive there. We will discuss issues like water monitoring, AIS, association goals, lake concerns, County zoning and water-related issues, and more! Bring a treat to share if you like to cook and a chair to sit outside. We'll see you at Stenson's home!

Circle the Lake Challenge

This challenge has fallen by the wayside the past two summers. No one informed me that they did it. If anyone wants to revive this fun, personal challenge, please do and tell me! All you need to do is travel the perimeter of the lake (about 7.3 miles) by any non-motorized method: swim, kayak, canoe, rowboat, sail, etc. Then email me so I can announce names here! Our first couple of summers we had a few families and individuals do it, including my daughter. As her support boat driver, I can say that it was a fun time to drive around the entire perimeter of the lake. So think about it...**go for it!** Do it in a day or over a few weeks. Go solo or encourage your weekend visitors to do it with you! Simply email me the names of those who completed the Circle the Lake Challenge so I can announce it, and enjoy seeing every piece of lovely shoreline of our beloved Johnson Lake!



AIS Tool Cleaning Station at Public Landing

In April of 2024, the association ordered a tool cleaning station for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) for \$75 through a special program offered by the Itasca County AIS Program. The program had a slow start, but the station will be getting installed in May or June. This cleaning station will allow boaters to clean their boat with tools specifically targeted at AIS removal needs. Each unit will include: a weed stick, long handle brush, grabber/gripper, boat plug wrench, and an informational sign. Once installed, we can work together to keep the station functioning well for all boat users on Johnson Lake! Please report any missing pieces to me or to Bill Grantges at the SWCD at 218-256-4243. Please use the equipment yourself here and at other landings. There are 87 landings in the County getting the same AIS cleaning stations! So be sure to use them!

Boating Etiquette and Rules

Boating on our lake is one of the main reasons we all love living here. Boating etiquette can help us all enjoy the lake safely and respectfully. Please be aware of your boating behaviors. It can be easy to feel isolated on the lake and forget about onshore neighbors or nearby boats.

- As of July 1, 2025, an operator between the ages of 12-21 must possess a valid watercraft operator's permit for a motorboat or personal watercraft.
- It is against the law to operate a watercraft: in a reckless manner, so its wake interferes with personal property, or to chase wildlife. Children under 10 must wear a life jacket while a boat is underway.
- Navigation lights must be on from sunset to sunrise. Nonmotorized boats must carry a white lantern or flashlight visible two miles away and turned on if another boat is nearby.
- Personal Watercraft (Jet Skis/Wave Runners) may be operated after 9:30am to one hour before sunset, which is very different than a boat! They must go slow (no-wake/5 mph) within 150 feet of nonmotorized boats, shore, docks, swim rafts, or swimmers. They may not chase wildlife. Operators must be 12 or older.
- Skiing, tubing, etc are NOT allowed 30 minutes after sunset but can resume at sunrise the next day.
- Kayaks, canoes and stand-up paddleboards are all considered watercraft in Minnesota.

Top Five Boating Safety Tips:

Wear a life jacket. Stay sober. Tell a friend. Be weather aware. Boat smart (stay alert and seated).

Septic Systems: A Critical Piece of a Lakehome's Infrastructure

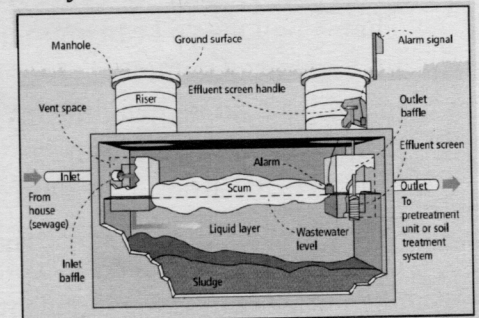
Lake life is wonderful! But...what you dump down the sink, toilet, and drain have a real impact on water quality. More than 30% of Minnesota's households use a septic system to treat their wastewater. Septic systems protect human health and the environment by safely recycling wastewater back into the environment. While government regulations ensure proper design and installation, YOU the homeowner are responsible for properly operating and maintaining your system. Just like other items around your home, a septic system needs regular maintenance and eventual replacement. Living with a septic system or not, you need to be responsible for what you put down the drain. A drain is certainly not a garbage can!

TIPS TO CARE FOR YOUR SEPTIC SYSTEM

- Be mindful of water usage;** spread use through the day (a system should not reach 70% capacity/day).
- Repair leaking faucets** and toilets and install low-flow fixtures.
- ONLY HUMAN WASTE AND TOILET PAPER** go in the toilet. NO WIPES, feminine products, cotton balls, hair, etc. Even if wipes say "septic safe", it's a complete lie. Even in a city system, they will clog it up!
- Put food waste in the garbage!** Don't treat your kitchen sink like a garbage disposal. Kitchen grease, food, and coffee grounds are all really hard for your septic system to process and they work against it.
- Don't use antibacterial products** because they kill off the good bacteria in your septic tank.
- Don't dump pills down the toilet** and reduce the use of harsh cleaners or bleach.
- Don't use septic tank additives/cleaners;** healthy systems have good bacteria to decompose solids.
- Pump the tank every 3 years** to remove the build-up of sludge (or more if you are hard on your system)
- Avoid compacting the soil** treatment or drainfield area.

System failure can be discovered by sewage backup in the house, sewage surfacing in the yard, sewage odors, sounding of system alarms, algae blooms and excessive plant growth in your beach area. Systems fail most commonly from overuse of water, lack of proper maintenance, and improper design/installation.

For more information, visit the UM Extension website <https://septic.umn.edu>. That site is full of excellent information and resources. Septics are precious to us lake owners and deserve our attention and daily kindness. Plus, your pocketbook will thank you!!



The inside of a septic tank

Don't Use Soap or Shampoo in ANY Open Water

Washing with *any* soap or shampoo in a lake or river is terrible for the water. Even if the bottle says biodegradable, natural, or organic, *it's still bad*. No soap is meant to be used directly in a waterway. To be called "biodegradable", soap must decompose by biological agents like bacteria and must break down to at least 90% water, carbon dioxide and biomass within six months (some take years to biodegrade!). So, most products could be considered biodegradable; it's just a matter of time. According to the EPA, one ounce of biodegradable soap needs to be diluted in 20,000 ounces (156 gallons!) of water to be safe for fish. That's a horrible ratio! To make this worse, surfactants are a main component of cleaning detergents because they stir up activity on the surface you are cleaning to help trap dirt. They also reduce the surface tension of water and help soaps increase their spreading and wetting properties, but lower surface tension is worse for insects on the water. Plus, lower surface tension reduces the oxygen level in the water, which can harm fish. No matter how it's labeled, surfactants in soaps are harmful to lake life, particularly tiny invertebrates. There is no "safe soap" for use right into water; it needs soil to decompose. **The solution:** Do all your washing or bathing 100' from water and dispose of your soapy wash and rinse water in a hole six inches deep to allow bacteria in the soil to completely biodegrade the soap. Better yet: **DON'T USE SOAP!** Soap simply speeds up the cleaning process, but water is an excellent solvent that attaches to dirt to wash it away. Soap simply helps to suspend the dirt that water attaches to and rinses it away quicker. So grab a washcloth and scrub away! Soap isn't always needed to "get cleaned up" in the wild. The best option: Wait to soap up in your shower where the wastewater will enter your septic system and have a chance to degrade through soil! In the lake, use the old-fashioned scrub-sans-soap to get clean!

AIS INFORMATION ONLINE www.itascaais.info or YouTube: Itasca AIS.

Call the AIS Information Hotline: 218-256-4243 with any concerns of finding AIS or AIS violations.

Johnson Lake Association supports the Itasca FiveStar Program by asking residents to use lake service providers that work with the Itasca AIS Program to be DNR-certified and agree to apply additional AIS best-practices and safeguards. They are below:



38 Outpost 218-259-9997

Domanick David 218-929-7119

Fish Lake Dock and Lift 651-674-8581

Grand Rapids Marine 218-326-0351

Marine dealers: **Grand Rapids Marine** and **Ray's Marine**.

Landscaping firms: **Lange Nursey**, **McNeil Excavating**, and **JV Tree & Landscaping**.

Other FiveStar businesses: **R&R Rental**, **Paddle Hoppers**, **Cross Country Boat**

Transport, **RMB Labs**, and **PLM Lake and Land Management**.

Groom's Property Service 218-259-2157

JJ's Barge Service 218-244-5194

Lake Home Helpers 218-969-5028

Thousand Lakes Dock & Lift 218-398-7553

Become a Member Today!

Join the Johnson Lake Improvement Association

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, ST, Zip: _____

Email: _____

Annual dues are \$15 per household.

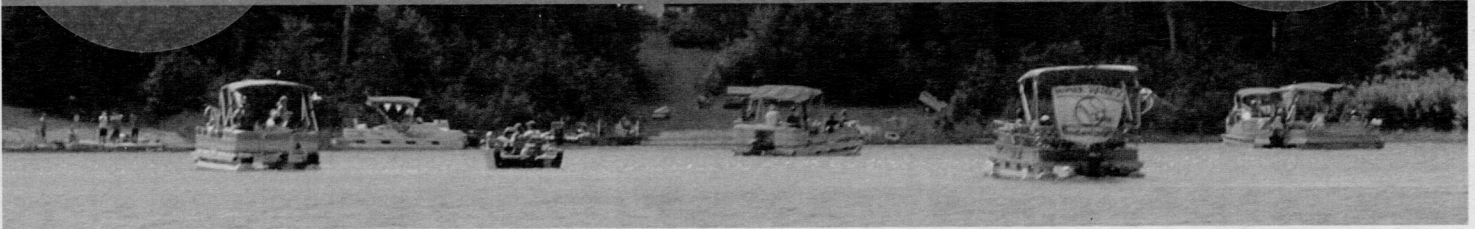
Your money is well spent on water quality testing fees to maintain our data!! And email is for year-round updates *only*.

Make your \$15 check payable to:

Johnson Lake Improvement Association.

Mail this form today to the Johnson Lake Association President, Steph Kessler, 35003 Red Pine Rd, Deer River, MN 56636 or bring it to the annual meeting August 9.

Thanks for supporting your lake!



Boat parade photo by Jon Helmberger

Annual July 4th Boat Parade

Let the July 4th Boat Parade begin your celebration!
Decorate your boat and yourself and spread the cheer!
This is our **18th year** of the parade, and we love this
fun event! Join us on the water or on your dock!!

WHEN: Friday, July 4, noon; meet in NW bay
HOW: At 12:00 cruise south to the SE bay
WHO: Any and all watercraft
WHAT IF: If it rains, parade is cancelled

Did You Know? Minnesota now has lakes and rivers that have fish consumption advisories based on PFAS or “forever chemicals”. PFAS are per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, human-made chemicals found in thousands of consumer, commercial and industrial products but that never truly degrade (hence “forever”). MN began PFAS testing in fish in 2004 (mercury advisories began in ‘74). Thousands of fish from 200 lakes, rivers, and streams were tested and 85% had fish containing PFAS, most with levels far below the consumption advisory threshold. Ten counties now have the PFAS advisory. Some rivers and creeks in St. Louis County have been identified as high risk for consumption. To find the latest info visit the MN Dept of Health website (search April 2025 PFAS consumption update). Also, MN has a new law (part of Amara’s Law) that as of 1/1/25 will prohibit the sale of 11 categories of products with intentionally added PFAS. Find more about that law at pca.state.mn.us (search PFAS use prohibitions).

(at Stenson’s home)

LOCATION: 34508 Wilderness Rd

Saturday, August 9, 1 - 3pm

Annual Meeting

Johnson Lake Association
Stephanie Kessler
35003 Red Pine Rd
Deer River MN 56636

Save the Date