



Volume 13 • First Edition

A NEWSLETTER FOR OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

July 2026

WATER QUALITY UPDATE

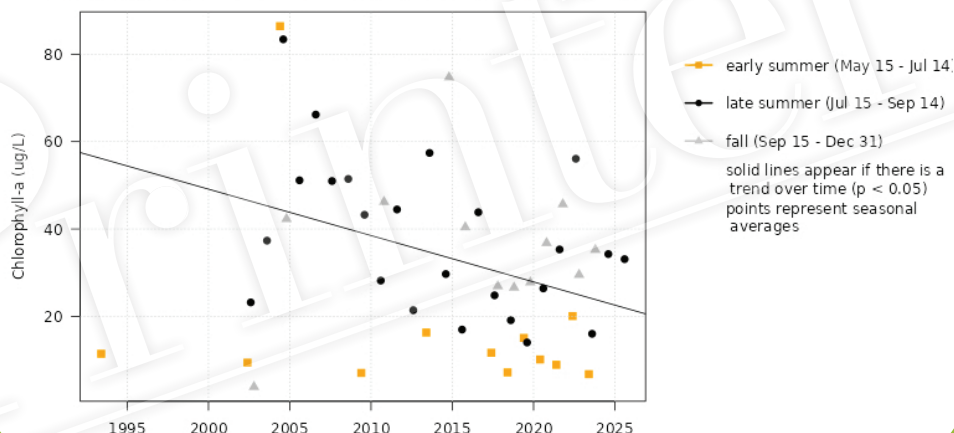
Alum treatments have improved Cedar Lake water quality over the past several years. An important result has been much lower incidence of blue green algae blooms which can be toxic to people and pets. Alum treatments began in 2017 and continued every other year through 2023. The graph below illustrates resulting declining levels of chlorophyll in the lake. Chlorophyll is a measure of algae growth.

Phosphorus is the limiting ingredient for lake algae blooms. Alum suppresses release of phosphorus from the bottom of the lake when oxygen is not present. However, when the lake mixes in late summer and brings oxygen into the water column, it is iron that binds phosphorus. Unfortunately, Cedar Lake has low concentrations of iron. While there have been improvements, undesired algae blooms have still occurred with lake mixing in recent years. Last year we discussed the potential to add iron to the lake to address late season algae blooms. Permitting and application considerations proved complicated and we found iron applications to be cost prohibitive. As a result, the board considered additional options with guidance from our lake scientist, Bill James.

The updated, selected approach will be to apply alum later in the season. This timing will not only add alum to the sediment to prevent future release but also capture and bind high phosphorus concentrations in deep water with timing planned just before lake turnover. The 2026 alum treatment is planned to occur between August 10 and August 31 based on lake turnover dates over the past decade.

Trends in chlorophyll- α

Cedar Lake - Deep Hole - Mid-Lake Off Demmings Point - 563057



Declining Late Season Chlorophyll Levels (Algae Growth) in Cedar Lake

ADDITIONAL LAKE CONCERNS

Property owner concerns go beyond having less floating and blue-green algae that result from lower nutrients in the water column, and this year that was especially evident. We heard concerns regarding filamentous algae and dense aquatic plant growth.

Filamentous Algae

You may have noticed slimy or stringy green growth on plants, rocks, and the lake bottom along Cedar Lake shorelines early this year. This growth was likely filamentous algae. While filamentous algae does not produce toxins like blue green algae, it is unsightly and can form floating mats. Many residents were pleased to see filamentous algae growth decline in June.

Even at **moderate phosphorus levels**, filamentous algae can still establish and spread, especially in **stagnant or slow-moving water** where nutrients accumulate. These algae often begin growing in winter or early spring on the lake bottom and form floating mats by mid-summer. The rapid increase in lake temperature this spring may have led to greater early filamentous algae growth. While moderate phosphorus may not cause the most severe blooms, it can still lead to nuisance growth that affects water clarity, oxygen levels, and recreation. You can remove filamentous algae strands using nets or rakes.



Filamentous Algae

Dense Aquatic Plant Growth

Aquatic plant growth interfered with navigation this spring especially near the sandbar and extending south about 700 feet. We found that some of this growth was native small pondweed. An additional area of nuisance growth occurred north of the sand bar extending several hundred feet offshore and running north/south several hundred feet. This area included invasive curly leaf pondweed and natives clasp leaf pondweed and small pondweed.

Curly leaf pondweed can grow in dense mats early in the season but generally dies back by late June to early July. Because it is an invasive species, there may be potential to manage it through herbicide applications or harvesting. However, updates to our lake management plan would be required before DNR permits would be considered for these activities.



Small pondweed close-up



Small pondweed mass



Curly leaf pondweed

The DNR scrutinizes removal of native plants much more carefully than invasive plant removal. Herbicide control of native plants is unlikely and removal by harvesting would require updates to the lake management plan. Small pondweed has fluctuated greatly over the years. The DNR surveyed aquatic plants on Cedar Lake in 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2023. Its frequency of occurrence in the shallow portions of the lake where plants grow was below 3 percent from 2017 to 2023. However, in 2012 and 2015 it was present in 25 - 34 percent of sampled locations. Small pondweed tends to grow in areas of slow-moving water.

WISCONSIN DNR FISHERIES UPDATE

The Baldwin DNR fisheries crew completed a comprehensive fisheries survey of Cedar Lake during the spring and fall of 2025. Cedar Lake is on a 4-year sampling rotation. The adult walleye population remains at relatively low levels but appears to have stabilized, likely due to stocking. The adult walleye population estimate was 1.1 per acre or approximately 1,232 adult fish. Walleye densities have decreased because they do not reproduce naturally. The stocking of large fingerlings is required to maintain an adult population. Large fingerling walleye stocking is recommended until a full evaluation can be completed during the next survey in 2029.

Muskellunge, northern pike, bluegill, and black crappie were present in moderate densities. Muskellunge exhibited excellent size structure and good growth rates with lengths ranging from 11.9 to 46.1 inches with a mean length of 26.7 inches. Low levels of natural reproduction of musky were documented. Northern pike ranged in length from 8.8 to 33.9 inches with a mean length of 19.3 inches.

Bluegill were the most abundant panfish species captured during the survey. The size structure of bluegill improved from previous surveys and they ranged in length from 2.6 to 10.2 inches with a mean length of 6.3 inches. Black crappie were very abundant as well with lengths ranging from 4.1 to 11.1 inches with a mean length of 9.2 inches. Growth rates of black crappie were slow. Large fingerling muskellunge biennial stocking is recommended at a rate of 0.5 fish per acre until an evaluation of the effects of this reduced stocking rate can be evaluated in the 2029 survey. The full report can be found online here: <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/reports#stcroix>



The angler creel survey wrapped up in March 2026 and revealed some big changes in angler activity on the lake. Overall, total angler pressure increased by 21,924 hours compared to the 2015-16 creel survey (total projected pressure in 2015-16: 37,958 angler hours; 2025-26: 53,882 angler hours). The biggest change was that anglers are targeting panfish considerably more than they were 10 years ago. This also coincides with the increases in panfish abundance in the lake documented by fisheries surveys.

There was also an increase in hours that anglers targeted walleye increasing from 8,116 hours in 2015-16 to 9,536 hours in 2025-26. Total catch of walleye increased but the catch rate declined, indicating that anglers are spending more time to catch a walleye. Angler harvest of walleye also increased from 0.03 fish per hour in 2015-16 to 0.07 fish per hour in 2025-26. From a management perspective, these increases in angler pressure can be beneficial for some species and detrimental for others. The appropriate amount of harvest can help to reduce or maintain appropriate densities of populations which can help improve growth rates and size structure. However, too much harvest can result in population declines as well. Monitoring of fish populations occur so that regulations or stocking can be implemented if declines are documented.

NORTH LANDING UPDATE

We announced last year that North Landing improvements were planned if a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources grant could be secured. Unfortunately, the grant was not awarded in 2025 because a large project in SE Wisconsin used up much of the available funding. With state cuts to the Stewardship program, future grants are uncertain. However, there is some funding still available, and the Town of Alden resubmitted a funding request this June. We await news of grant funding for 2026.

The project would replace the concrete boat launch ramp at the North Landing and construct a new handicap accessible dock and parking space. It is a partnership between the Town of Alden, the Cedar Lake District, and Star Prairie Fish and Game. The landing is owned by the Town of Alden while the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owns the parking lot.

If a grant is awarded, the work could start as early as October 2026. Lake residents should be aware that the landing will be closed during construction and for the remainder of the season if/when the landing work takes place. Visit the Cedar Lake District website for updated information.

CEDAR LAKE DAM AND LAKE WATER LEVEL

As in past years we have received calls/emails about the water level in Cedar Lake in 2026. The water level in Cedar Lake is affected by three primary factors: precipitation, inflow from Horse Creek at the north, and outflow to Cedar Creek at the SE corner of the lake. Our lake does have some spring fed sources but they are minimal.

We have an operable dam at Cedar Creek that is monitored by a Lake District dam keeper. The dam keeper can adjust the outflow by adding or removing boards. The dam keeper visits the dam often to monitor the lake level. This work is not as simple as opening and closing a faucet. The dam keeper must be aware of recent and predicted rain to try to anticipate inflow into the lake from the watershed to the north. There are Wisconsin DNR criteria that we must follow in adjusting the lake level, including maintaining the level within a specified range. Another important DNR rule is that we are to release about half of the water flowing into the lake regardless of how much rain we get.



This year started out fairly normal with average winter snowfall and average rain in the early spring. Since that time, rainfall has fluctuated greatly with periods of low precipitation resulting in the lake level dropping. The Lake District Board is very aware of issues relating to low (and high) lake levels and works with the dam keeper to do the best we can with what we are handed by Mother Nature. It is somewhat easier, of course, to deal with more rain than less rain since we have no other way to add water to the lake.

We are doing our best to maintain the lake level within the limits set by the DNR and should all be thankful that we have some control of the situation (most lakes don't have operable dams). But as explained above, our control is limited.

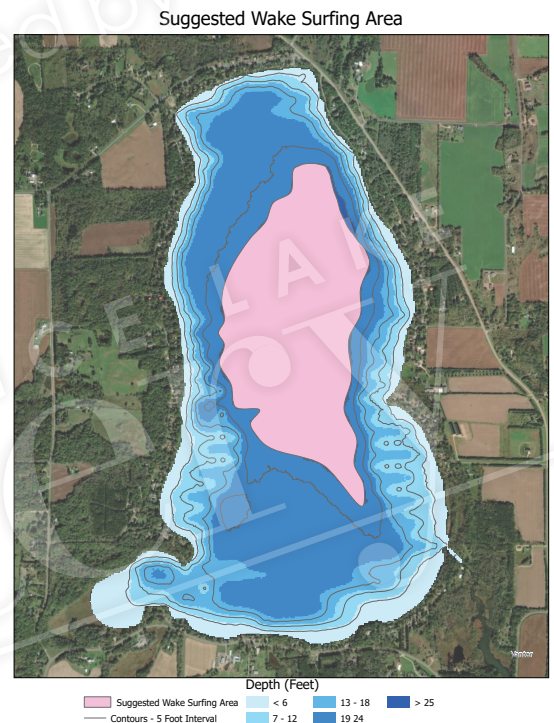
WAKE AND SURF BOATS ON CEDAR LAKE

Please take extra care when operating wake surf boats on Cedar Lake. They are a concern for several reasons.

Wake boats create high energy waves that can erode shorelines and create hazardous conditions for other boaters. **The motor down thrust can disturb sediments as deep as 25-30 feet, including the zone where alum has been applied in Cedar Lake (20 feet deep and greater). When the alum layer is disturbed, it can drift to areas of the lake where it is not effective. With an investment of over \$2 million in the alum treatment, care in choosing wake boating areas is critical.** To avoid disturbance to shorelines, lake sediments, and the applied alum layer, wake boaters are asked to operate at wake surfing speed (with the bow high) **ONLY** in the middle of the lake at least 600 feet from shore and at depths greater than 25 feet. Use the QR code to identify the suggested wake surfing area while out on the lake.



Another concern is that the ballast tanks on these boats cannot be drained completely and remaining water readily transports zebra mussel larvae and other invasive species such as spiny water fleas. Avoid traveling between lakes, and when you do so, seek professional cleaning stations that use hot water to destroy aquatic invasive species. Wisconsin has few hot water decontamination stations. However, you can request a courtesy decontamination at a boat cleaning station in Minnesota. To find a station go to:
https://apps.dnr.state.mn.us/ais_decon_sites



VOLUNTEERING FOR THE LAKE DISTRICT

By volunteering to participate on one of Cedar Lake District Committees, you have an opportunity to contribute to lake health and community while meeting some of your Cedar Lake neighbors. Volunteers are needed for specific tasks outlined below:

Aquatic Invasive Species

- Monitor the lake for invasive Eurasian Water Milfoil and Curly Leaf Pondweed. Training is provided.

Outreach

- Write or review content for Lake District emails and newsletters, maintain owner email lists.

Shoreland/Native Plantings

- Encourage your lake neighbors to use native plants in their shoreland landscaping.
- Share your experiences planting and maintaining native plantings.
- Help others choose, layout, and install native plants.

Cedar Lake District Committees

Aquatic Invasive Species

Outreach

Shoreland/Native Planting

COMMITTEE VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED!

For more information email:
district@cedarlakewi.org

STAY CONNECTED BY SHARING YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

The Lake District increasingly relies on email to send news, reports, newsletters, and other information to Lake District residents. We currently have about 250 email addresses on our mailing list. Timeliness and the cost of paper mailings are the two most important reasons that email makes sense.

We do not share the list with anyone.

You can add your email to the list by going to our website (cedarlakewi.org). On the Home page click on the "Stay up-to-date by joining our email list."

Cedar Lake District Commissioners

Warren Wood, *Chair*
Jim Reckinger, *Treasurer*
Tom Deans, *Secretary*

Dan Early
Ted Johnson, *Town of Alden*
Danielle Olson



P.O. Box 93
Star Prairie, WI 54026
cedarlake-wi.org

CEDAR LAKE PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION DISTRICT ANNUAL MEETING

*9:00 a.m., August 1, 2026
Star Prairie Town Hall, 2118 Cook Drive, Somerset, WI*

AGENDA will include approval of minutes from 2025 annual meeting, review and approval of 26/27 budget, audit committee report, updates of Lake District activities, election of commissioners (Dan Early is up for re-election), and public comments. The agenda is posted on the Lake District website homepage <https://cedarlakewi.org/>. State regulation requires that eligible Lake District members be in attendance to vote. No absentee ballots or proxy votes are permitted.

BUDGET includes income and expenses of \$84,625. \$37,600 of income is expected from grant funding from the WI DNR, and any net income from 2025/26 fiscal year will be carried forward to reduce next year's taxes.

Regular board meetings are held at 5:30 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of the month at the Alden Town Hall, 183 155th Street, Star Prairie, WI or the McMurtrie Preserve (when weather permits). Meeting agendas and announcements are included on the Cedar Lake District website.