

# Geneva Waters

## Spring 2020 - Vol. 36, No. 2



“Going for A Hike”

In front of Stone Manor

Photo By Fred Noer

### ***Geneva Lake Environmental Agency Quarterly Publication***

#### **Featured in this issue:**

*Lake Level; Clean Boats, Clean Waters; Big Foot Creek Watershed Study; Geneva Lake Task Force; Starry Stonewort Update; Needed Information; Lake Notes*

# Geneva Lake Environmental Agency

## Our Mission:

**The Geneva Lake Environmental Agency is determined to maintain Geneva Lake's resources by protecting, preserving and enhancing a desirable lake and watershed quality.**

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## SPRING 2020

Without a doubt, the spring of 2020 was unique. The coronavirus and the resulting changes in habits and lifestyles have touched us all. The GLEA hopes you are healthy and enjoyed the wonders of spring even if under dissimilar and somewhat restricting conditions.



Regardless of what the times have done to change our daily routines, life goes on in the natural world. More daylight hours, the sun moving north and higher in the sky, and all kinds of biological process that have been on hold during the cold winter are preparing to start a new life. Migrating birds show up at the bird feeders, spring bulbs begin to break ground, and buds begin to swell.

Although cool but not cold, this spring did bring some nice, dry days of sunshine, light breezes, and dry air. A few late frosts did nip some buds that had exposed themselves too early.

The March total precipitation of 3.38 inches is above the 25-year average of 2.38 inches, making for a wet start of spring. To paraphrase Bearclaw in response to Jeremiah Johnson's question of what month is it, Bearclaw responded, "March is a green and muddy month down below. Some people like it. Mostly farmers."

The total April precipitation of 4.70 inches was above the average of 3.52 inches. May precipitation of 4.32 inches was slightly below the 25-year average of 4.46 inches. Overall, spring was wetter than normal, with March and April above the 25-year average and May below. Total precipitation for the three months was 12.2 inches, compared to 10.36 inches as the 25-year average.

Intense storms in which more than an inch of rain fell during the storm occurred March 27-28 when 1.35 inches fell, April 29 when 2.85 inches fell, and May 17 when 1.84 inches fell. A wet spring, but not like last year's spring with 13.4 inches.

Spring temperatures brought cool weather with a few warm days, but none hot. Since the shutdown of the atmospheric-monitoring site near the north shore of Geneva Lake, local temperature and wind are not recorded locally. Temperature data can change from site to site based upon the topography and other physical influences. Temperature data from the Southern Wisconsin Airport in Janesville can give us some idea of the temperatures in the Geneva Lake area but does not represent actual temperatures experienced here.

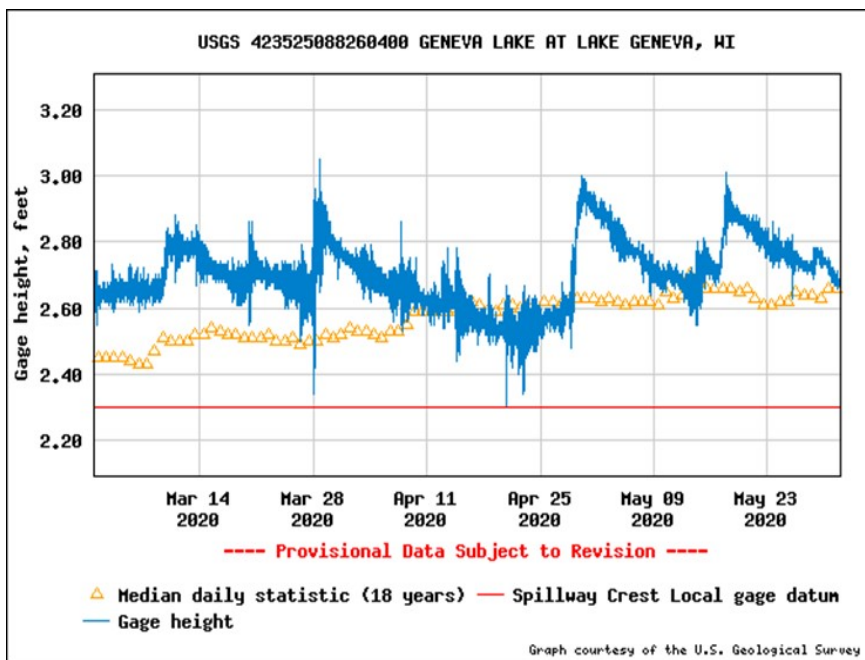
In March the Janesville airport recorded a monthly high temperature of 59 degrees on March 8 and a monthly low of 23 on March 21. The average high for March is 46.4 degrees, and the average low for March is 33.4 degrees.

For April, things started to warm up with the monthly high of 71 on April 7 and a low of 23 on April 16. The monthly average high was 53.5, and the average low was 36.1.

For May, a high of 78.5 was recorded on May 26. The low was 30.5 on May 9. The average high and low are 62.5 and 46.0, respectively.

## LAKE LEVEL

The Geneva Lake level was maintained above the spillway during the spring. The lake level was above the daily median for most of the spring except for a short period in mid-April. Several storms caused significant increases in the lake level as represented by the quick rise and peak in the lake-level figure.



A comparison of when those peaks occurred to the data of the intense storms mentioned in the above discussion on precipitation shows the impact of those storms on the lake level.

## **CLEAN BOATS, CLEAN WATERS**

With the assistance of a State of Wisconsin DNR grant, four inspectors were hired to implement the survey-and-education efforts of the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program. The four inspectors are staffing the five municipal launches at busy times to help boaters understand and meet their responsibilities as boaters in the never-ending fight against aquatic invasives. After four hours of training and getting to understand the Clean Boats, Clean Waters program and aquatic invasives, the inspectors hit the launches the first week of June. If you encounter any of the inspectors, recognized by their blue shirts with the white lettering and Clean Boat Clean Waters logo, work with them and take a couple of minutes to answer their few questions.



## **BIG FOOT CREEK WATERSHED STUDY**

Phase II of the Big Foot Creek Watershed Study has been initiated for the summer. Applied Ecological Service has been hired to better understand the water-quality impairments of Big Foot Creek and their severity and develop implementable solutions. Tasks include geospatial analysis of the watershed, water-quality modeling, investigation of the source and cause of “orange pollutant,” analysis of best management practices efficacy, stream monitoring, and a final report in October.

The first set of samples was collected in early May. The results were interesting, as the data indicated water quality much better than any of the data collected during the Phase I monitoring last summer. This concurs with the variability of water quality observed last summer. Total phosphorus values in the creek are still a concern.

A sequential stream sampler is being installed on the creek to allow for composite sampling during a storm. This will allow for the capture of runoff water every 15 minutes during a rain. During a storm the first 15 minutes is when the most pollution is transported to the lake by runoff. After that, the rain actually may dilute the stream water, and concentrations of pollutants in the water decrease.

## **GENEVA LAKE TASK FORCE**

A cooperative effort by several groups is taking a new look at lake management. Put together by Geneva Lake Conservancy, the Geneva Lake Task Force involves representatives from the conservancy, Geneva Lake Association, Geneva Lake Environmental Agency, Geneva Lake Level Corporation, DNR, Walworth County Land Use and Resource Management Department, Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), UW-Whitewater, and various levels of government all are working toward improving the water quality of Geneva Lake. The effort was brought on by the many heavy storms and accompanying runoff the last two years.

Three committees have been established and are looking at different water-quality issues: the phosphorus and erosion committee, invasive species committee, and the agriculture and septic system committee. Each committee is working on issues relative to its name.

The task force has entered into an agreement with SEWRPC and UW-Whitewater to design and implement a watershed-sampling program to identify locations of issues and then draft a watershed management plan. It is hoped an updated lake-management plan is also an ultimate goal, since the last plan was released in 2008.



## **STARRY STONEWORT UPDATE**

As of last fall, the Geneva Lake Environmental Agency's approach to controlling starry stonewort is four-prong. First, to address the existing populations of starry stonewort, a dive team has been contacted to hand-pull starry stonewort during the second week of July. Although several management options have been tried at different lakes, hand-pulling has shown the most promise.

The second effort is the inventory of the plant community to quantify the existence of starry stonewort in Geneva Lake. A lakewide comprehensive lake-plant survey will be conducted this summer.

The third effort to control starry stonewort is to keep the lake, lake bottom, and aquatic plant community healthy. Geneva Lake has a very diverse and rich aquatic plant community. If left alone, it can do a pretty good job of dealing with invasive non-native aquatic plants. The lake has had several non-native aquatic species for years. Because the lake is healthy and the plant community has not been disturbed by dredging, chemical treatment, or shading, these non-native aquatic plants have been held in check and have not become a major problem. This approach should be continued.

The fourth component to our starry-stonewort management is to keep it from being transported into, around, and out of Geneva

Lake. Using the Clean Boat Clean Waters program, the GLEA has hired four boat inspectors to work the public municipal launches on the lake. These inspectors not only check out the boats as they come and go but interact with boaters, educating them about how they must clean their boats, anchors, trailers, bait buckets, live wells, and bilge water when the boaters leave a lake and go to another lake. They are instructed to leave it all and not take anything from one lake to another. As of the second week of June, more than 155 hours have been put in working with more than 850 boaters at the five municipal launches.

When it all comes down to it, only lake users can prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species in our lakes. Keep your boat, trailer, car, anchor, bilge, bait bucket, and live well all clean. Take nothing living from one lake to another. You never know what you are transporting, especially if it is so small you cannot see it.

For more up-to-date starry stonewort information, visit these links to recently released DNR information sheets:

DNR starry stonewort statement: [http://legis.wisconsin.gov/eupdates/asm31/SSW\\_Statement.pdf](http://legis.wisconsin.gov/eupdates/asm31/SSW_Statement.pdf)

Frequently asked starry stonewort questions: [http://legis.wisconsin.gov/eupdates/asm31/SSW\\_FAQ%20\(1\).pdf](http://legis.wisconsin.gov/eupdates/asm31/SSW_FAQ%20(1).pdf)

Starry-stonewort research: [http://legis.wisconsin.gov/eupdates/asm31/SSW\\_ResearchFactsheet%20\(1\).pdf](http://legis.wisconsin.gov/eupdates/asm31/SSW_ResearchFactsheet%20(1).pdf)

## **NEEDED INFORMATION**

The Geneva Lake Environmental Agency emphasizes that two surveys are important in defining our lake-management efforts that need to be updated. It has been more than 20 years since a lake-use survey was conducted on Geneva Lake. The last study looked at the lake user and lake residents' perspectives of Geneva Lake, its issues, what people like, and what they feel needs to be done to protect Geneva Lake. This survey was vital in the preparation of the last lake-management study.

A second study is more a compilation of existing data. It is well known that Geneva Lake is the ideal boating lake. There are many years of data on 5,000-plus boats docked or moored on Geneva Lake. Yet, there is no recent record of the number of boats that are launched on the lake during a summer. Some old numbers of more than 30 years ago indicated more than 20,000 boats were launched during the summer. The communities have those numbers in terms of passes and launches sold. Someone needs to compile that data from each community and get a full lake total. Private launches should also be included in this count. With the threat of invasive species coming from transient boats, it is needed information.

## *Lake Notes*



- The GLEA has applied to two local groups for grants to help with our local lake-management efforts. We are asking the Geneva Lake Association to assist with our Clean Boat, Clean Waters program and the Lake Geneva Garden Club for assistance with our Big Foot Creek Study.
- The local summer master naturalist training program has been canceled for 2020. Hopefully, it will be offered in 2021.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers predicts that only Lakes Huron and Michigan are expected to set all-time highs this summer, a reversal from last year when the other three main lakes set record highs.
- Check with the website of your municipality or call its offices to learn how it is handling business and meetings in the context of COVID-19.

– This summer the Linn Sanitary District will be inspecting more than 50 private on-site wastewater treatment systems to assure that they are functioning properly and not contaminating the groundwater.

– Walworth County is sponsoring appliance and electronic recycling at 9 a.m.-noon, Saturday, July 11 at the Walworth County Fairgrounds. For more info, visit the website of Walworth County Public Works, click on Solid Waste and Recycling, and scroll down to the bottom to the link for the Electronic Appliance Recycling Event flyer.



## Say NO to Phosphorus Fertilizer



### SAVE GENEVA LAKE

Phosphorus is the most problematic pollutant in the lake. Most lawns in our area don't need phosphorus. When lawn fertilizers run off into the Geneva Basin, they feed the unsightly, smelly and potentially toxic algal bloom and promote the growth of weeds in the lake.

### USE OF PHOSPHORUS FERTILIZERS IN THE GENEVA LAKE SHORELINE AREAS IS

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# Geneva Lake Environmental Agency

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