

A Note From the President

Greetings,

We are in the midst of changing seasons. It has been a busy year, and the Big Sand Lake Association has worked on many projects. We continue to dedicate funds to the prevention of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in the lake. We have increased hours of boat inspections at the public access. Currently we are reviewing hours and activity at the access so hours can be more efficiently used in the coming year. Our lake monitors continue to gather data and do the water quality testing.

As President, I would like to thank everyone who has worked on the many different projects and activities someone. This thank you is extended to the members of the board and to the many helpers that step forward to help with our many projects and social events. THANK YOU.

Membership continues to grow; we encourage everyone on the lake to become an active member of the Big Sand Lake Association. The board encourages everyone to stay connected via the Big Sand Lake Website. The information on the website continues to increase and it has a full directory of lake owners.

The Lake Management Plan is being updated and will be posted on the website. The website has a plethora of information and members are encouraged to visit it often.

Linda Van Bruggen, our current social chairperson, is looking to pass the opportunity on to someone else. If you are interested, please contact me (candy.malm@gmail.com) or Linda Van Bruggen (freddie54mn@yahoo.com). Linda has done a fantastic job of organizing the social activities, and has great organized records for reference.

Thanks again to those of you who hosted a social the past summer. The socials are well attended and a great way to meet new people on the lake.

Enjoy the articles in the newsletter that focus on many topics and activities. Have a great winter!

Candy Malm

Big Sand Lake Association President

Candy.malm@gmail.com



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NEWS FLASH! VIEW BIG SAND SUNSETS FROM YOUR COMPUTER

Yes, finally Big Sand sunsets will be available year round from the comfort of your own computer.

To access the webcam go to the Big Sand website, www.bigsandlake.org. Click on 'Webcams' in the left-hand column. A fly-out menu will appear for 'Webcam #1 - East View (Evergreen location) and Webcam #2 - West View.

Links have been added to the new webcam page for viewers to connect to a live view of the Headwaters at Itasca Park, and the live loon and eagle webcams available from MN Bound.

If you enjoy the view and the opportunity to see Big Sand sunsets, we encourage you to show your appreciation by becoming a BSLA member, if not already, or by making a contribution to the Big Sand Charitable Fund.



“MEET THE MATCH” FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE!

Support and Protect the Lake You Love!

As reported earlier, an anonymous donor will contribute \$25,000 in matching funds for new donations made to the Big Sand Lake Charitable Fund during 2015. Thanks to generous donations, we are pleased to report that to date approximately \$19,500 has been raised. Our goal is to meet the match of \$25,000 by December 31, 2015! Please Take Advantage of this Wonderful Opportunity to Double your Contribution — Your donated amount X 2 = Doubling your Money!

Please Support the Lake You Love with your Contribution

Have you Already Donated?
Please Help us Reach the Goal, and Add to your Contribution.

Go To: BigSandLake.org and click 'Donate Now'
OR Mail a Check
(Note-Big Sand Lake Charitable Fund -Spendable)
to NWMF 201 3rd St NW Bemidji MN 56601.

LET’S GO — MATCH IT!!! By December 31, 2015!

Questions: Please Call or Email
Linda Lee pjlee6005@aol.com 636-222-7462
or
Catharine Williamson spiritw@me.com 952-936-0204.

For Security or Asset Donations
contact Lisa Peterson NWMF, 218-759-2057



**The BSLA Board on behalf of the BSLA Membership would like to publicly thank
the Very Generous Anonymous Donor gifting the \$25,000 match.**

This generous gift will contribute to the creation of a significant pool of money
supporting the Mission Statement of the Big Sand Lake Charitable Fund:

"The Fund shall be used to provide financial support to protect,
preserve, restore and enhance the quality of Big Sand Lake and its environs."

**This is a giant step toward providing support and protection for Big Sand Lake!
Thank You Very, Very Much!**

NANCY WENZEL REMEMBERS

by Nancy Wenzel

“Good idea about having an interview with an ‘Elder Lakeperson,’” the letter said. “I suggest Nancy Wenzel. She came to the last ladies coffee and was sharp as a tack and hilarious.” Having known the lady since she helped me wave bye-bye to the last sad glacier melting northward, your unworthy editor agrees. So:

In 1945, my folks bought the little cabin, a shack really, on Big Sand, along with about 40 acres of forest back-lots, and a swamp. I was a teenager then, but my family had spent a great many summers in the area, mostly at Wambolt’s on Upper Bottle. But I wasn’t ready for my first look at what has become the family “camp” now for several generations of us.



It really was a shack! The outside of the little place was covered in tar-paper with a siding of saw-mill scraps slapped on. The inside was wall-papered in magazine covers that decorated the layers of old newspaper that passed as insulation. No electricity. No running water. Plenty of drafts. But it did have a rickety screen-porch that we loved to sleep in in almost any weather. Even after my parents had built their own cabin, it was that porch that the family tended to gather in.

And I could swim! which I loved, any time—and in any water temperature, mostly cold! I could sleep with breezes blowing on my face.

In those days, the other place the family—the adults that is—spent many happy hours, was down the road at Chateau Paulette’s (Zorbaz these days), where we could dance to the band “Upper Mississippians,” a great band, and still is! I loved to dance, and I love remembering those happy hours when we would “swing and sweat with Old Paulette.”

After my father, Hugh Fenton, died, a hunk of that property, on the high bank overlooking the lake, was given to me and Jim, and we built our own cabin there and have had a wonderful life. Our kids did lots of fishing and have caught many fish— walleyes, crappie, sunnies, perch—over the years. Swimming, canoeing, sailing are just a few of the other activities we enjoyed here. Maybe the greatest experience for the children came from the horses for our three boys and our daughter to ride!

We became permanent residents at the lake about 27 years ago, having lived in Fargo for many years. We spent most of the winters in Florida, until three years ago, and we now live at the cabin year-round. But we spent parts of many more winters here, and we had a wonderful time skiing at Val Chatel and sno-mobiling on the frozen lake. In the early days, I remember, the lake was stocked with walleyes from a pond behind Daughertys’, and all the members on the lake in those days invested \$25 to support the stocking.

So it’s been a good life here on Big Sand. We’ve raised a good family here, we’ve had a friendly life with generations of parents and all sorts of kids, and we have made dozens of friends. Some lives may be more glamorous than ours, but we wouldn’t have wanted our life to be different. A cabin on a lake!

OUR SPECIAL LAKE

by Mimi Long

Big Sand is so special. You may – or may not – know how far back my connection goes with Big Sand: WAY BACK – in the late '20's – my Grandparents, who lived in Dixon, Illinois – somehow found Big Sand – and after searching for 'just the right place' found and bought our little Cabin there: and so – from the time that I was very little child, we all made the summer vacation trip from Northern Illinois to Big Sand Lake.

That little Long Cabin is still more or less the same as it was when it was a Lumber Company's headquarters back then in the 20's. Much later – after my Grandparents had passed away - my parents added another bedroom, a bathroom and a modern kitchen.

Dick's family – at a much later date!! – owned a cabin on Lake Emma...which is how Dick and I met at the lake one summer – a summer romance that continued and continued!!

And as it happens...about seven years ago or so. – After Dick retired , we had his family cabin here on Lake Emma more or less completely remolded – and so now we live here from mid-fall to early summer – and then move down to my beloved Big Sand Lake Cabin for the summer months.

So – you can certainly understand just why it's so very important to us to make every effort to TRY to keep Aquatic Invasive Species out of the entire Mantrap Chain of Lakes. Hopefully – everyone appreciates the fact that it doesn't do any good to do all things possible to keep AIS out of Big Sand – IF the Mantrap & Bottle Lake people don't do likewise!!!

(Editor's note. Mimi's final sentence promotes an idea that we may not have discussed as much as we should. It might be good if volunteers who enjoy the connection of Lakes Emma and Big Sand were to get their heads together on the matter.)



CISCOS, LAKE TROUT AND CHIMAERAS—THE FISHING REPORT

by RFS

Not often, but on some light-blessed days the Secchi disc reading on Big Sand reaches to below forty feet. Apart from the greenish glow of the disc, we peer through dark translucence into an obsidian mystery. Off a bar, in water usually dimly lit, a school of walleyes (or maybe only suckers) drifts off and slowly down. Crappie show themselves clearly, as do bass, black and small-mouth, a snapping turtle, and then another one. Hoards of minnows and fry skitter from a small northern lurking in cabbage weed. Shells shine from the bottom.

We would like to have seen the mysterious cisco down there, or on the surface as we did when the surface water was cold enough for them. They were a joy to watch in evening light, splashing on the surface in their quest for food. Their display attracts walleyes, which in turn attract fisherpersons, who in their turn attract people to the dining table and, in the dark of night, raccoons to garbage cans.

* * *
During our annual meeting this past June, Shannon Martin, of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, spoke to us about a new study of the cisco, once abundant in the lake, now gone from sight and, to a number of residents, memory. Nets have been placed in two spots on the lake, placed vertically in order to study deep-water fish. Ciscos have been found, and the population is healthy, with a good population of young fish, showing evidence of "spawning and recruitment," (Recruitment? I have no idea.) but only in the depths, loath to float about in the tepid surface water that has been the norm for all the years since we last saw them play.

* * *
The ciscos were famous during the 1950s, when they performed every summer before they disappeared completely, where to, we couldn't fathom—maybe into the cloudy ether above, feeding our wonder. Fisherpersons fished at night, not the most convenient of conditions, but profitable and sometimes exciting. Walleye were not so common as they became later, but they were big.

Then, at about the beginning of the 60s, all of this entertainment disappeared. Instead of the large walleyes caught at night, the walleyes were much more numerous, easily caught still-fishing before dark, but much smaller—and, we all insisted, not without reason, tastier than the baking-sized fish of the previous decade.

And so it remained. The ciscos had disappeared, and they stayed disappeared until the average temperatures dropped, coinciding with much wetter summers, sometime around the late 80s, and remaining that way until temperatures began to fall with the rainfall averages in around 2000. And now the ciscos have returned to the cloud-world of fantasy and myth.

* * *
Humans wonder about the nature of the depths anywhere, including Big Sand, where the water is normally a clear, cool green, but which goes almost black as you peer down, that obsidian mystery leading . . . to the *Abyssal Deep*.

Many decades ago, Theron Hatch, one of the first owners of Evergreen Lodge, declared that a lake as deep and as cold as Big Sand simply *must* be host to lake trout. One of the favorite prey of lake trout happens to be the cisco. So why, he reasoned, are there ciscos in the lake if not to feed lake trout? As it is with most devotees of wishful thinking (political prognosticators come to mind), the tantalizing absence of evidence was perfect proof of the factuality of the observation. And the fewer lake trout were observed—none, of course—the more there had to be, and the bigger—and bigger!!!—they grew.

It is cold down there, almost too cold for a diver in a wet suit. The lake bottom drops to about 135 feet. It is dark. The lake trout have taken shelter down there for so long, none having ever been seen or caught, that no one can tell how big they must be by now. Two feet, three feet, five feet? Ten? Three pounds, ten pounds, a hundred pounds? And from 135 feet, who knows what stygian current might lead even farther into the abyss? It is a Leviathan enormity down there, an implosive maelstrom of appetite, where imaginary monsters grow to the magnificence of, well . . . fish-tales.

This is the deep where dreams and ciscos live in whopper-proof silence, the deep—deeper than did ever plummet sound, about which old men dream and invent wonders for a waking future.

This summer our plummet, the Secchi disc we use to test clarity, sounded as far as 30 feet, with a pleasant average of 25.5 feet. The normal average for the past couple of decades has been about 24 feet, or twice the clarity of the lake in the seventies.

Of monsters more to be feared than imagined: once more this year no evidence has been found of any invasive species, with especial reference to the justifiably dreaded zebra mussel. Note as usual that this is a negative finding, and not proof that no such problems exist unobserved somewhere on the lake. Still, it comes as good news, qualified of course by our continued need for vigilance.

In Memory BENJAMIN
E. STEIN

Benjamin E Stein, 22, Moorhead, MN, passed away on Sunday, January 25, 2015. Ben fought a two and a half year battle with brain cancer, never complaining and always having a smile to give. Ben leaves behind his loving family, parents, Kevin and Jane Stein, Moorhead, MN; brother Mathew and sisters Elizabeth 'Lizzy' and Kate; and grandparents, Phyllis Anderson and Earl and Kathy Stein. The Anderson and Stein families are long time residents of Big Sand Lake, having begun their cabin life in 1966.

A Foundation, Ben's Helping Hand, has been established in Ben's name to provide compassionate support for families dealing with Cancer.

You may visit Ben's Helping Hand and learn more about Ben's life through the link: Ben'sHelpingHand.com.

In Memory HELEN
BILLING

Helen Ruth Billing died Sunday, May 10, 2015 in Park Rapids after a long, eventful life. Music was a constant theme in Helen's life. She received both a bachelor's and a master's degree in organ performance from the U of MN. Helen was an organist and choir director at several churches in St. Paul and Park Rapids. Helen and Don Billing first visited Big Sand in 1953 and in the early 60's bought three cabins from Vera Simpson, then owner of Hurd's Acres Resort. Beginning in 1967 she and Don purchased the rest of the Hurd's Acres property. This included the Lodge, built in 1925, that sits on the creek between Lake Emma and Big Sand. With the help of their 11 children they rented cabins, continuing the tradition of the Hurd's Acres name. Helen retired from the resort business in 1997. Her love for the property and the lake led her to move permanently to the Park Rapids area five years ago. The Billing family continues to own and use the property, sharing the beauty of Big Sand with the next generation of Billings.

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