

History of Lake George Conservation Club and the Lake George Improvement District

History of the Lake George Conservation Club

The Lake George Conservation Club has a long history of serving the Lake George community.

In the early 1970s, the character of the Lake George neighborhoods began changing as permanent homes increasingly replaced seasonal cabins. As new residents came to the area, the history and role of the Conservation Club became less familiar, and Club activity declined.

In 1981, issues concerning regulation of motor horsepower on Lake George brought residents together and renewed interest in the organization. The Club was reorganized and has remained active ever since.

Over the years, LGCC has functioned much like a lakeshore owners association, addressing issues affecting Lake George, its residents, and the surrounding community.

Among the Club's past activities and projects are:

- Funding swimming lessons at Lake George Regional Park;
- Providing leadership and gun-safety instruction for youth;
- Providing trash barrels for campers and people fishing at the lake;
- Conducting an annual Paint-a-Thon for many years;
- Assisting with pheasant feeding during severe winters;
- Working to increase the wood duck population on the lake;
- Conducting rough-fish trapping and removal programs;
- Providing scholarships in science and environmental studies for St. Francis High School students;
- Working with the City and Park Board on the planning of Lake George Regional Park;
- Working with the Sheriff's Office and Minnesota DNR regarding boating regulations and lake safety;
- Participating in twice-yearly roadside cleanups along a portion of County Road 9; and

- Participating in Oak Grove community activities.

The Club's current bylaws continue to reflect this broad purpose. They direct LGCC to maintain relationships with LGID, the Minnesota DNR, the City of Oak Grove and other local agencies; work toward improving the environment of Lake George; support environmental education and safety programs; engage in community-service projects; and cooperate with the State, County and City regarding park lands that abut Lake George.

LGCC's Role in Creating the Lake George Improvement District

An important part of LGCC's history is its role in the creation of the Lake George Improvement District.

When Eurasian watermilfoil became a significant concern in Lake George in the late 1990s, the Conservation Club became heavily involved in efforts to control it. Through the work of Club members, including establishing a strong working relationship with the Minnesota DNR, LGCC was able to obtain grants and involve Anoka County Parks in helping fund treatment.

During this period, grant funds were deposited into LGCC accounts and then spent on lake treatment, mapping and inspections. As membership also increased, the Club's account balance fluctuated depending upon grant receipts and treatment expenses. By 2008, LGCC had approximately \$11,000 in the bank while also spending thousands of dollars on lake treatments and related activities.

As the scope and cost of managing invasive species increased, LGCC recognized that a voluntary membership organization was not the ideal long-term structure for managing such an important and expensive responsibility.

In 2008, a committee of LGCC members began researching the creation of a Lake Improvement District. Club members went door-to-door around Lake George and obtained the required support from property owners to move the proposal forward.

That effort resulted in the establishment of the Lake George Improvement District in 2009.

Even after LGID was formed, it did not immediately have assessment revenue available to assume all lake-management responsibilities. During that transition, LGCC continued obtaining grant funds and supporting treatment.

The Conservation Club also made direct financial contributions to the newly created LGID. LGCC financial records show a \$500 contribution in 2009 followed by an

additional \$3,000 contribution later that year. In subsequent years, other funds received by LGCC for lake purposes were also passed along to LGID.

Once LGID had an established funding source through assessments, responsibility for invasive-species treatment and other lake-management functions shifted primarily to LGID.

This history is important in understanding the funds LGCC holds today.

The Club's current balance is not made up of unused LGID funds or remaining DNR grant money. Those grant funds were used for their intended lake-management purposes. The funds LGCC holds today have accumulated over the years through membership dues, donations, fundraising and careful management of Club resources.

LGCC and LGID remain separate organizations with different roles and funding structures, while continuing to work cooperatively for the benefit of Lake George.

Looking Forward — Using LGCC Resources for the Community

While we may have different perspectives regarding the amount of funds LGCC should maintain and whether those funds should be transferred to LGID, your comments raised an important question that our Board and membership have also been discussing: How can LGCC best use some of its resources for projects that provide a meaningful and lasting benefit to Lake George and our community?