

# Geneva Waters

## Fall 2009 - Vol. 25, No. 4



Fred Noer, Photo

## Geneva Lake Environmental Agency

### *Quarterly Publication*

#### Featured in this issue:

Autumn--a Time of Change, Invasives, Gypsy Moth Update, Geneva Lake Classic Car Rally, It is All Water and We Need It All, Beach Testing Help - From the Federal Level, Kettle Moraine, Fall Leaves, Happy Birthday Geneva Waters, and Lake Notes

# Geneva Lake Environmental Agency

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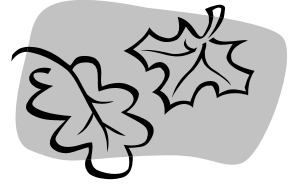
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## Autumn, a Time of Change



This fall looks like an appropriate finish to an unusual year of weather. It is scary to think what could happen this winter. There is talk of an El Niño winter.

After only a few hot days in early June, the rest of the summer was cool and damp. Then came fall, with a beautiful September and a good hard frost Oct. 9. Although it may be late for the first day below freezing, it was one of the earliest hard frosts and snows in many years. Although there were only flurries around Geneva Lake, in northern Wisconsin there was snow with significant accumulation the second weekend of October.

Records at the Geneva Lake atmospheric monitoring station indicate that between Thursday, Oct. 8 and Saturday, Oct. 10 there was a total of 15 hours of below-freezing weather. These temperature readings are taken at the top of a 10-meter tower, so ground temps may be even lower, especially in low-lying areas. Upon returning from a trip “up north,” I was amazed at how complete the frost was in the Geneva Lake area that weekend. Not much in the gardens survived.

One interesting observation following these frosts was that many plants had their leaves frozen and died before they had started to dry or start their fall change. This has resulted in the dropping of faded green leaves from some shrubs and trees.

Despite the early hard frost, fall colors around Geneva Lake were ablaze. Nature's paintbrush colored yellows, reds, and oranges throughout the watershed. On a sunny day with the clear blue fall sky as a background one can be overwhelmed by the wonder of it all. Sumacs, maples, oaks, walnuts, dogwoods, all contributed their own color and shade to nature's pallet. There's some reality entertainment for you. It is prettier and more inspiring than anything you will see on a television screen.

Precipitation during July and September was about a half inch and two inches, respectively, below the 24-year mean. Yet with a wet spring and August we are still on track to be a wetter than a normal year. With 12 days left in October we were already more than .2 inch above the 24-year mean for the month. The lake level remained above the spillway for most of the summer.

## **Invasives**

In past Geneva Waters articles we have talked about the impacts of aquatic invasives and the effort at the state level to control their spread. Just as intrusive and damaging are terrestrial invasives. Anybody who owns woodlots or open land in this part of the state has no doubt experienced honeysuckle, garlic mustard, and buckthorn. These three plants alone can destroy the bio-



diversity of a piece of property in a matter of a few years. The plants offer little if any wildlife value and can out-compete native plants for sunlight and room to grow.

Three new on-line videos can help landowners save the biological integrity of their properties while helping rid the lands of some of Wisconsin's most common and problematic invasive plants. The videos can be found on the Take Action on Invasive Species page of the DNR Web site – and the timing couldn't be better, for fall is the best time to identify and treat these invasives. This time of the year they are they only green leaves around.



## **Gypsy Moth Update**

Last year at this time we were in the woods counting gypsy moth egg masses. In several areas they were not hard to find. Summer larvae were obnoxious in many areas. Egg mass counts confirmed that the next year could result in trouble for many of our trees, especially oaks, if nothing was done.

Numerous spray blocks were identified and treated in the spring of 2009. Follow-up assessments found that where treated, the gypsy moth population was down. Perhaps the best gypsy moth story of 2009 is that once again Mother Nature outdid us. The cool, damp spring allowed many of the natural predators of the gypsy moth to do their thing and have a much broader impact on the gypsy moth. It was a “War of the Worlds”-type ending, where minute critters such as a virus, a fungus, and a wasp had much bigger impacts in reducing the watershed's gypsy moth population than anything we did. Ahhhh, the wonder of it all!



## The Geneva Lake Classic Car Rally

The first annual Geneva Lake Classic Car Rally has come and gone. It was a high-quality event that set a standard for future events. Unfortunately, the weather was not the best for a car rally, so attendance was less than we had hoped. Considering it was the first time and the weekend was cool and rainy, we can at least say the event was classy and we did not lose money.

Many people helped make the event what it was, and we thank them all – the venue and those who donated prizes, food, time, and energy. A special thank you to the participants who braved the unpredictable weather and brought their classic cars.

The more than 50 high-quality raffle prizes help generate some revenue to keep us in the black. The poker run was won by a queen high straight flush. The sock hop offered a means of keeping people warm as the evening turned cool and damp.

Planning for next year's event already has started. The rally will be a two-day event on the last weekend of September. The rally again will be at the Lodge at Geneva Ridge, but we are planning on having the activities at the chalet. Mark your calendars for Sept. 25-26. A good time is guaranteed for all.

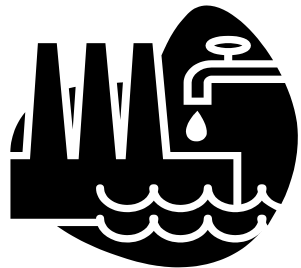
## It Is All Water and We Need It All

The recently completed Geneva Lake Groundwater Study has given us a better understanding of the role of groundwater in the hydrology of the lake. Unfortunately, the role of groundwater in many lakes is not understood. In the past, groundwater was not always perceived as being important in the management of a lake. In fact, the needed legislative protection for groundwater is an important component in lake management that hardly exists.

With increasing demands for groundwater and increased threats to groundwater quality, yet realizing the importance of groundwater to our lakes, the Wisconsin Association of Lakes (WAL) has been working with a coalition of the interests for changes in groundwater policy. The goal of the group is to establish a statewide water-management policy that will protect the quality and quantity of all of Wisconsin's waters, including groundwater.

Our dependence on groundwater and the relationship of groundwater to our surface water require sustainability for a desirable quality of life and a healthy economy.

Just as we have managed our surface water with a pollution discharge system, in which waste load allocation is based on the assimilative capacity of a surface watershed, perhaps groundwater withdrawal also could be managed on a



groundwater sustainability basis. The battle in this approach would be in defining what would be an acceptable level of withdrawal. If groundwater withdrawal affects surface water quality or quantity, there needs to be a significant justification for those withdrawals.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done to identify those withdrawal rates. The role of precipitation in groundwater levels is difficult and variable. Perhaps this effort by WAL is the first step in perceiving all the water on this planet as being the same resource, just in different places and forms. When we grasp that concept, we have begun the journey to worldwide water resource management.

## **Beach Testing Help May Be Coming From the Federal Level**

This summer the U.S. House of Representatives passed a beach-monitoring bill that reauthorizes grants to states to improve coastal beach testing. Although Geneva Lake has had its public beaches tested every summer since 1976, the major problem with the status quo in beach testing is that it takes at least one day if not more to get the results back. By then conditions may have

changed for better or worse.

With this new legislation, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is being directed to approve rapid testing methods that



detect water contamination in a matter of hours, as opposed to current testing methods. Not only will the legislation look at new means of evaluating beach quality but will require states to notify the public of water contamination in a quicker manner.



How this legislation will affect Wisconsin and specifically Geneva Lake is yet to be seen. Perhaps this legislation and associated funding allocation will help find other dependable criteria that have a quicker lab turnaround time than bacterial incubation. The Wisconsin State Lab of Hygiene, which does the analyses of Geneva Lake beach samples, does have a Web page for posting beach-sampling results, yet it often takes 3-4 days before Geneva Lake sample results are posted.

### **Wisconsin's Kettle Moraine**

The Southern Unit of the Kettle Moraine, found in the northern part of Walworth County, contains more than 20,000 acres of some of the most unique landforms and beautiful scenery found in this part of Wisconsin. This stretch of rolling hills, prairies, hardwoods, and pine forests is occupied by a variety of wildlife. The area was formed more than 10,000 years ago by the interlobate deposition between the Delavan lobe and the Lake Michigan lobe of the Wisconsin Glacier. The unit stretches from Dousman to Whitewater. The 3,500-acre Scuppernong River Habitat Area is the largest wet prairie east of the Mississippi River.



Many of us take for granted this wonderful resource located only a few miles to our north. Numerous recreational opportunities exist within Kettle Moraine. Camping, swimming, fishing, and designated trails for hiking, biking, snow skiing, horseback riding, and running exist throughout much of the Kettle Moraine.

Perhaps the most familiar trail within Kettle Moraine is the National Park Service's 1,200-mile Ice Age Trail that winds through Wisconsin glacial remnants. Numerous trailheads or access points allow for walks of various difficulty and distances. This area's beauty is so impressive that even a windshield observation is worth the drive.

### **Fall Leaves and Trying to Stay *Green***

As the colors of fall drop from the trees, we are left with a clean-up problem that for years has been a tradition of fall – burning leaves. There are several reasons why that tradition should be discouraged. However, realizing the number of fallen leaves can be overwhelming, some leaves will be burned. The following information was taken from a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources publication and should be given serious consideration in addressing the build-up of leaves in your yard.

There are numerous reasons for not burning leaves, but the most important consequences are: it is unhealthy,

unneighborly, unsafe, and maybe illegal.

Unhealthy – burning leaves releases a wide range of pollutants that include fine particles, hydrocarbons, and carbon monoxide. These pollutants not only affect air quality but can harm human health and cause extreme discomfort.

Neighborly – Smoke from your fire travels throughout the area, drifting into neighbors' yards and may cause serious respiratory problems with asthmatics and children in addition to ruining a nice autumn afternoon.

Unsafe - Each year many wildfires in the state are caused by open burning fires, such as those burning leaves and other yard waste, that get out of control. Fighting these fires is costly and dangerous.

Illegal – Many communities have initiated composting programs and have burning restrictions. Check with your community to see if and when it allows burning.

Consider mulching and composting some if not all leaves. Mulching involves chopping up leaves as much as possible and letting them set where they are. With oaks and maples this may not be possible with all the leaves, as they may mat down. Leaving them on site also allows them to decompose and returns needed nutrients and minerals to the soil for the trees to use again.



If you live in an area where composting is possible, piling up leaves for the winter not only creates habitat for Wisconsin's wildlife, but also allows the leaves to decompose and creates a nutrient-rich soil.

You also can call your local government and see if it collects leaves and yard debris. Check with it to see if special containers are needed or if it picks up leaves on a certain day.

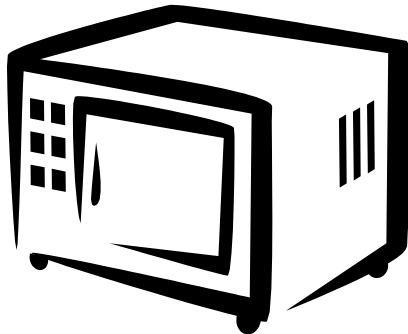
## **Happy Birthday, Geneva Waters**

While going through some old files, a copy of the Volume 1, No. 1, 1984 fall edition of Geneva Waters was discovered. It is hard to believe it has been 25 years since the first issue of the newsletter. Items discussed in that first edition included a tribute to Fillmore Galaty, who had just moved out of the area; a Wisconsin Conservation Corps Restoration project on Conference Point coordinated by the GLEA; 100,000 walleye fingerlings planted in Geneva Lake by the DNR; the loss of the Loramoor building; lakefront improvement efforts in Fontana, Lake Geneva, and Williams Bay; and the GLEA's hosting of the North American Lake Management Society's International Symposium on Applied Lake Management.



## Lake Notes

- ◆ The Village of Fontana is taking a serious look at the storm water management problems in the village. A vital component of that assessment, an in-depth look at Van Slyke and Potawatomi creeks and their watershed, has recently been completed.
- ◆ As of January 1, 2010, manufacturers of certain electronic products sold in Wisconsin will be required to assume responsibility for the collection and proper disposal of discarded household electronic devices under a new recycling bill signed into law October 23, 2009.



- ◆ More than 23,000 votes were cast to help select a new Wisconsin license-plate design to benefit Wisconsin's endangered resources. The hands-down winner was the badger with 68 percent of the total.



- ◆ A new video is available to help lakefront property owners determine if they have to change their piers over the winter so they are in compliance when they go back into the water next spring. The video is available on the pier page of the Department of Natural Resources Web site.
- ◆ One of the major debates about the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is whether lands purchased with taxpayer money through the program should be open to any of five nature-based outdoor activities defined as hunting, trapping, hiking, fishing or cross-country skiing. Good arguments may be made for both sides of the issue, although some uses by their very nature become exclusive of other uses.



# Geneva Lake Environmental Agency

## Contribution Form

YES, I want to help Geneva Lake Environmental Agency in their efforts to protect and preserve Geneva Lake for generations to come. Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution for 2009.

*All contributors will receive a one year subscription to Geneva Waters.*

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