

LAKE MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

The Lake Wapogasset and Bear Trap Lake Sanitary District (Sanitary District) and the Lake Wapogasset and Bear Trap Lake Improvement Association (Lake Association) work together to manage the lakes and provide services to their residents. The organizations are also working together to update and implement a Comprehensive Lake Management Plan in 2026. The Sanitary District is leading the project by applying for and managing grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Lake Association is providing a substantial portion of the required match for the project. Representatives of both organizations are serving on an advisory committee to update the plan.

LAKE WAPOGASSET AND BEAR TRAP LAKE SANITARY DISTRICT

The Sanitary District was first created in 1926. In the early decades, the Sanitary District was engaged in various lake improvement projects. The formal Sanitary District was created by an order of the Town of Lincoln board in April 1941. In the 1940's the Sanitary District's main function was weed control, and membership was optional.



The Sanitary District's current main function is the operation of a sanitary sewer system and wastewater treatment plant. The sanitary sewer system was created in 2 phases. The first phase, completed in the fall of 1975, resulted in construction of the aeration ponds, 3 lift stations, and service for about 140 properties. Phase 2, completed in 1978, served an additional 300 properties and the 2 camps.

The Sanitary District is governed by a 4-member Board of Commissioners nominated by the board and approved by the Town of Lincoln. The Sanitary District operates under an ordinance that is reviewed bi-annually by the commissioners. The management, operation, and control of the sewer system are vested in the Commissioners of the District. Most of the ordinance addresses the operation of the sewer system. The ordinance also includes a section assigning significant fines for transporting boats, trailers, or equipment from a lake contaminated with Eurasian water milfoil to Lake Wapogasset or Bear Trap Lake without proper cleaning to remove all plant fragments. In addition, the Sanitary District has an "Ordinance Regulating Use of Fertilizer."

The Sanitary District took an active role in financing the alum treatment for the lakes in October 1999. It continued active involvement in lake management by sponsoring the development of an aquatic plant management plan in 2009, with updates in 2015 and 2022 and a comprehensive lake management plan in 2010. The Sanitary District provides information through its web site <https://wapobear.com>.

The Sanitary District established a Conservancy Committee to address conservation of resources within the district. The Conservancy Committee oversaw the purchase of an 8.45-acre preserve on the shores of Lake Wapogasset in 2022 with financial assistance from the Lake Association and a Department of Natural Resources grant.

Sanitary District functions

- Sanitary waste management and sewage treatment
- Aquatic plant and comprehensive lake management planning (lead)
- Aquatic plant harvesting operations

LAKE WAPOGASSET/BEAR TRAP IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

The Lake Association was formed in 1911. The object of the association was to “foster local interest and pride in the lake, local and popular interest in its attractions, and to enhance its beauty and usefulness as far as possible.” In the 1960’s the Lake Association expanded to include Bear Trap Lake, and the scope of the association was broadened to include social functions.



The primary purpose of the Lake Association is "to protect and promote the improvement of Lakes Wapogasset and Bear Trap and their surroundings for the current and future benefit of recreational users, the general public, riparian and adjacent watershed landowners and residents. Also, to provide a forum for public expression on lake and watershed issues, to enhance water quality, fishery, recreational use, social activities, public safety and related education/communications."

The Lake Association’s first project was to acquire the dam site near the outlet of Lake Wapogasset to maintain an appropriate and consistent water level in the lakes. Lake Association leaders also created the Sanitary District. Current efforts of the Lake Association are listed under committee functions below. In the past, the Lake Association was involved in chemical treatments, channel dredging, fish stocking, carp removal, water patrol, and weed harvesting. The Lake Association provides information through the website <https://www.wbtlakes.com> and the Lake Scene newsletter.

The Lake Association is governed by an executive committee of seven individuals. A board of trustees, appointed by the executive committee to represent neighborhoods of the lakes, has final authority over all actions, activities, and assets of the Lake Association.

LAKE ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE FUNCTIONS

Lake Management Committee (Mark Jacobson, Chairman)

- Shoreline, in lake, and watershed water quality research and improvement projects
- Comprehensive Lake Management Plan
- Liaison with the WI DNR, Polk County Water Resources Department and Polk County Lakes and Rivers (PCLAR)

Healthy Lakes Committee (Craig DiLorenzo, Chairman)

- Coordinates projects for DNR Healthy Lakes installation

Lake Monitoring Committee (Ryan Hanson, Chairman)

- Shoreline, in lake, watershed quality, and Citizen Lake Monitoring Network data collection
- Lake water samples
- Buoy management (Don Springer)
- Aquatic invasive species monitoring (Dave Millard)
- Clean Boats/Clean Waters program
- Fish and dam inspections (John Mahoney)
- Neighborhood watch programs (Joel Anderson)

Social and Events Committee (Karen Ohm, Chairwoman)

- Trustee network representing lake association members
- Resident and business memberships
- Social and outreach activities

Communication Committee (Sandy Noonan, Chairwoman)

- Educational presentations/publications
- Annual lake directory
- Email, website & Facebook accounts and Lake Scene (newsletter) distribution.

Nominating/Review Committee (Marty Noonan, Chairman)

- Executive committee membership and officer candidate
- Financial account review and reports

Ways and Means Committee (Linda Lawrence, Chairwoman)

- Oversees donations and their use

Outstanding Recognition Committee (Dave Nelson, Chairman)

- Volunteer recognition program

Membership Committee (Don Springer, Chairman)

- Member and volunteer drive and database

LAKE MANAGEMENT PARTNERS

The Sanitary District and Lake Association rely on local and state government partners to carry out and support lake management activities.

POLK COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION

LAND AND WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT ([Welcome to Polk County, WI](#))

- Manure and Water Quality Management Ordinance
- Stormwater and Erosion Control Ordinance
- Illegal Transport of Aquatic Plants and Invasive Species Ordinance
- Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance
- Technical Assistance for Water Quality Projects
- Technical and Financial Assistance for Agricultural Conservation Projects
- Annual Tree and Shrub Sale

PLANNING AND ZONING ([Zoning Polk County WI](#))

- Comprehensive Land Use Planning
- Zoning, Shoreland, and Subdivision Ordinances
- Land Use Permits
- Sanitary Permits
- Regulation of Short-Term Rentals

TOWNS OF GARFIELD AND LINCOLN

- Boat Landing Ownership
- Public Road Maintenance
- Slow No Wake Ordinances

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

- Boating Regulations and Enforcement
- Fisheries Management
- Shoreline Stabilization Regulations
- Aquatic Plant Management Planning and Regulation
- Dredging Regulations
- Surface Water and Recreational Facilities Grants
- Citizen Lake Monitoring Network Support
- Healthy Lakes Program

SOURCES

A Brief History of Lake Wapogasset and Bear Trap Lake and its Sanitary District. Sanitary District web site: <https://wapobear.com>

By-Laws of the Lake Wapogasset and Bear Trap Improvement Association, Inc. Updated August 14, 2024.

Excerpt from the Amery Free Press - August 24, 1911.

Lake Association web site: <https://www.wbtlakes.com>