

Lake Doster Lake Association

<https://www.lakedosterlakeassoc.org/> E-mail: ldla@lakedoster.net

Happy Winter!

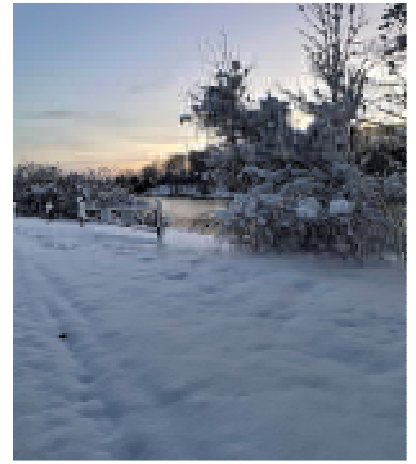
Looks like winter has finally arrived. Could ice fishing soon be a reality? We can only hope for those that enjoy the past-time.

In this issue we cover a wide range of topics from by-laws and restrictions, update on dues, sand for the beach, dredging update, beach and boat ramp vandalism, and implementing new association software as well as other miscellaneous updates. We also discuss an exciting opportunity to improve our community through a grant from the state. Please take the time to read the newsletter and let us know if you have any comments or concerns. The LDLA Board meets monthly; the meeting time/date is posted on the LDLA calendar shortly after the current month meeting. Members are welcome to attend the meeting and there is an open session during which the member can address the board.

The Beauty and Problems Caused by Swans-a-Swimming at Lake Doster

Many of us love watching swans-a-swimming by our homes. They're one of the creatures that make lake living uniquely beautiful. But all swans aren't created equal. Two swans are native to Michigan and one is actually an aggressive invasive species that was introduced in 1919 to decorate urban lakes and ponds. The native swans are the trumpeter and tundra and the invasive species is the mute swan, which in recent years has become the most prevalent swan on Lake Doster.

How do you tell the three swans apart? They're all white and are about the same size, so it actually takes a discerning eye to tell the difference. The easiest way to tell is from the swan's beak. The tundra and trumpeter



Upcoming Events

February 22

Recycle Pick-up

March 22

LDLA Board Monthly Meeting

LDLA Board of Directors

President: Mark Reed

Vice President: TJ Wilkinson

Treasurer: Jeremy Perkins

Secretary: Mary Elegert

Director: Rich Anderson

Director: Jim Giffels

Director: Nancy Gregory

have black bills, while the adult male mute swans have orange bills. Mute swans also have a distinct black knob on the top of the beak near the forehead.



Mute Swan



Trumpeter Swan



Tundra Swan

The Michigan DNR and USDA-Wildlife Services are working together to remove mute swans from Michigan waters. Why are mute swans in the crosshairs of these agencies? Mute swans are one of the world's most aggressive waterfowl species, especially while nesting and raising their young. Mute swans drive out native waterfowl and other wetland wildlife with their hostile behavior. It's rare to see a trumpeter swan on our lake anymore because they've actually been run out by the aggressive mute swans. Mute swans also have huge appetites compared to native swans. A single mute swan can consume up to eight pounds of plants a day. They uproot and destroy wetland plants that are a main food source for native birds and cover for fish and invertebrates. Continuous feeding by a flock of mute swans can destroy an entire wetland ecosystem. Mute swans, unlike the more docile trumpeter, can also be dangerous and each year the DNR receives reports of mute swan attacks on people and pets.

The LDLA Board has agreed to explore working with the DNR and USDA-WS to remove mute swans from Lake Doster in an effort to reestablish trumpeter swans – which are now on our state's threatened species list. If we proceed, trained professionals with the USDA-WS would spend one day at Lake Doster euthanizing adult mute swans and properly disposing of them. There would be no charge to the LDLA or any residents for this service.

We'd like to know your thoughts on this proposal before proceeding. Please e-mail any comments or questions to ldla@lakedoster.net by March 21. You are also welcome to come to our LDLA board meeting on 22-March at 6:30. Meetings take place at the Ransom District library with details found at www.lakedosterlakeassoc.org. If there is interest, we hope to have a representative with the DNR available to answer questions at our March meeting.

Annual Maintenance Fee Increase

As mentioned at our annual meeting in 2022 we would be reviewing our second ever annual maintenance fee (dues) increase for all LDLA members. Our insurance expenses continue to be a challenge for our community. In 2019 our insurance costs represented 7% of our overall annual maintenance fees. In 2020 this increased to represent 21% of our annual maintenance fees. In 2023 insurance is projected to represent 56% of our annual maintenance fees.

Many of us recall the special assessment issued for insurance in 2021. This was designed to offset these costs for 2022 and 2023 and we will accomplish that goal. This has allowed us to properly plan for the future and will help avoid additional special assessments as we continue to invest in our community and our lake.

We would like to inform all members of our planned annual maintenance fee increase of \$35 or about 9.17% per member. The maintenance fee will be \$420 for 2023 and collected on the normal schedule. This increase will allow us to stabilize our budget and create a maintenance plan for beach sand, signs, buoy's, mooring posts, etc.

Dredging Update

A big thanks to everyone for your patience and support during the dredging process, which is nearing completion. The LDLA Board, Lake Enhancement Committee, and a whole team of volunteers have worked diligently to bring enhanced dock access and an expanded boat landing area to the main beach. We have demonstrated that we can unite as a community and execute an expensive but rewarding project while adhering to the tight restrictions imposed by the State permit. We're on track to be completed on time and under budget. And these efforts should both improve enjoyment of the lake and positively impact home values!

This coming summer the dredged silt that has been deposited in the beach area will be landscaped, covered with topsoil, and seeded. We'd like to identify new volunteers who might be interested in helping to develop plans to proactively maintain the condition of our wonderful lake on an ongoing basis. Please contact an LDLA board member if you are interested in helping out. Thanks!

Miscellaneous Updates

- **By-laws:** The By-law changes approved at the last annual meeting have been filed with the Allegan and Barry County Clerks. The updated By-laws are on our website, (<https://www.lakedosterlakeassoc.org/>)
- **New Restrictions:** Restrictions have been created for Metal Roofs and Alternative Energy. Please see the Lake Doster Lake Association website (<https://www.lakedosterlakeassoc.org/>)
- **Wake Surfing:** Due to safety concerns as well as the impact to our shoreline, boats using wake enhancement have been restricted on Lake Doster. The Lake Use Restrictions have however been updated to prohibit wake surfing – which utilizes wake enhancement. The new text reads:

“Wake enhancement (including the use of fat sacks, wedges, ballast tanks, strategic placement of passengers, reduced speeds, and other devices or techniques not listed) is not allowed on Lake Doster. Wake-surfing by any method is not permitted.”

- **Landscaping and Home Projects:** *Although discussed previously in a newsletter this reminder bears repeating.* When a homeowner is thinking about a lakeshore project they must consider whether they will need permits from the state. The best place to start is with a **Restriction Compliance Application (RCA)** form found on the Building Control webpage. The State of Michigan may require a permit for shoreline work and if so, it is the homeowner's responsibility to obtain the proper permits. If not, the homeowner as well as the Association can be subject to fines. Additionally, it is the homeowner's responsibility to obtain all necessary building permits. Don't know what could possibly be required, the BCC is a great resource. Start the conversation with them by completing a RCA. When they come out to evaluate the project, ask for their advice. The BCC is quite knowledgeable and willing to help. They want you to have a successful project.
- **Beach Membership fees:** 2023 Beach memberships for non-LDLA members are \$100 and once again are limited to the first 50 LDHA members who apply. To be clear this membership is only for non-LDLA Lake Doster residents. If you know of anyone interested in purchasing a beach membership, have them contact Nancy Gregory.

Vandalism at the Beach and Boat Launch

In 2022 we experienced an unprecedented amount of vandalism in our community. We had multiple signs defaced/destroyed, deceased animals placed on the playground equipment, a bench burned and multiple boat launch issues as a few examples. As a result, we are investigating the potential use of cameras at the boat launch and beach areas (after it's closed at night). We know this is not an ideal solution and would like to hear your ideas on how to address these concerns.

Beach Sand Refresh!

It's been a couple of years since we've refreshed our beach sand, but this spring we're bringing in tons (literally) of sand. The LDLA board budgeted for sand along the lakefront - addressing the dropoff that's formed, the playground, and all the areas by the southwest picnic table and grills where we're starting to grow grass. We're essentially refreshing the entire beach with the exception of the volleyball court.

Given that we have tons (literally) of work to move the sand into place, we need volunteers to help. The board will communicate beach sand day (in addition to the annual beach cleanup) a few weeks before and all are welcome to join.

Is there a walking path around the lake?

Last summer, someone asked on Facebook about walking around the lake - is there a path to do so? The short answer is no, unless you're dedicated to Park E. We, as a board, would like to provide clarity on this.

While there is a path that connects Midlakes to Drake Court, it exists within Park E to allow those with dedicated access to utilize the park. As with the rest of our parks, access to Park E is only permitted to those who are dedicated.

Section 7.3 of our bylaws states:

"The Association's "Private Roads" and "Private Parks" are those portions of the Association Property so labeled and described on attached Exhibit "A". The Private Roads and Private Parks are dedicated exclusively to the Eligible Parcels indicated within the applicable Plat Restrictions listed in Section 7.2 above or to which an easement, license or other written right to use is granted. The Association reserves the right to use the Private Roads and Private Parks as access for oversight of the Association."

Coming soon - AppFolio!

A couple of summers ago, I (TJ) received a violation letter for my shed. I thought ... How could this be? (That's not exactly what I thought, we can't print that) Before moving in, I read all of our documentation and knew that sheds weren't permitted, however some that were here before 2006 had been allowed. I assumed that mine was one of those. And truth be told, if it wasn't, the shed was really just a storage locker so worst case, it was approved by an RCA, right? I was wrong.

Once Julia and I stopped arguing about whether it was or wasn't a shed and whether we should or shouldn't be allowed to have it, I thought ... This would have been a lot easier if I was able to see what RCAs had been approved for my home when I moved in.

That thought planted a seed that, along with a few other nuts we were trying to crack, led us to AppFolio. After discussions with our previous board and review from the current board, we recently subscribed.

In the coming weeks you will receive an email asking you to register to AppFolio. There is no cost to you to register, and you do NOT need to register. But we would love it if you do!

As a member, benefits to registering include:

- Online membership payments (eCheck, credit card, debit card)
- Access to shared association files (Association Directory, for example)
- Access to your properties files - for example, are you sitting on a storage locker wondering if it's a shed or approved? Note: we have not determined how much (if any) historical data will be loaded, but intend to capture the documents going forward.
- Submit online RCAs

Benefits to the Board include:

- Automation and efficiencies in accounts payable and receivable
- Streamlined board communications to members - we can easily send emails by groups (parks for example) without having to rebuild email groups every time someone moves in or out.
- Visibility into RCAs, and status, submitted by members
- Move away from paper based RCAs / Variances
- Document Management - data is stored in the cloud vs someone's basement or the association laptop - and it's accessible by the entire board

What Would You Do With \$15,000+?

The LDLA is looking for creative ideas and a grant writer to help secure funds to enhance our wonderful lake. The State of Michigan is giving away a million dollars this year for projects that improve wildlife habitat and increase positive interactions between people and wildlife. The minimum grant is \$15,000 and applications must be submitted by March 16th.

Got any thoughts on how the LDLA might improve our wildlife habitat and enhance member interactions with the critters in and around our lake? TJ would like to see walleye thrive in Lake Doster. Maybe a grant could help stock the lake. Could we, should we, attract more butterflies, birds, or bees? Please share your ideas and willingness to help with a board member or by emailing LDLA@LakeDoster.net. Details on the grant process are available at Michigan.gov/dnrgrants.