



Big Eagle Lake Improvement Association

October 20th, 2023

Sherburne County Board of Commissioners

13880 Business Center Dr. N.W.

Elk River, Mn. 55330

Dear Sherburne County Board of Commissioners,

Please accept this letter as an official request by the Big Eagle Lake Improvement Association (BELIA) to approve the formation of an Eagle Lake Improvement District (ELID).

Minnesota statute requires petition signatures of a majority of property owners (50% plus 1), or 120 signatures, within our proposed district. Included are 176 signatures as evidence of support for the formation of an ELID. These 176 signatures represent 74% of the 239 potential signatures from 151 parcels within the proposed district.

As discussed in previous meetings, the current challenge to maintain Eagle Lake in a quality manner exceeds the combined funding capabilities of BELIA, that includes a partnership with our lake water quality committee, Sherburne SWCD and MN DNR that has been in place for several years. Addressing issues like algae/water quality and invasive species have become too extensive and expensive for traditional budgets alone. To complement existing funds, the formation of an equitable lake property owner funding mechanism needs to be put in place.

Statement of Problems and Objectives

In 2022, Eagle Lake was placed on the State of Minnesota Impaired Waterbodies List due to the excessive phosphorus levels. The included lake management plan provides detail on the problems to be addressed. In summary, there are 3 specific action areas where the ELID funds would assist. They are:

1. Alum Application. Alum or aluminum sulfate is an effective management tool to improve water quality. Alum inactivates phosphorous by first forming a flocculent or “floc” that settles to the bottom. This floc forms a barrier to the sediment phosphorous release and binds phosphorous in the sediment. These treatments generally last for many years and improvements in water clarity can occur within a growing season. According to Huser (2016) the average treatment longevity for alum treatments was 11 years (ranging from 0-45 years). Based on the dissolved oxygen profiles documented in 2019, the potential treatment area would be roughly 183 acres, or the portion of the lake greater than 12 feet where the lake becomes anoxic.
2. Integrated Pest Management plan (IPM). Integration of carp specific IPM may provide phosphorus load reduction benefits as well as other ecological improvements. IPM provides a more sustainable approach to managing invasive populations, specifically carp, by providing additional control tools rather than just adult removal and ensuring that biomass that is

removed will not simply be replaced through recruitment. Blocking springtime movement and reducing the adult population.

3. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Curly-Leaf Pondweed (CLP) and Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM) have been present in Eagle Lake for decades and when unmanaged, choke out native vegetation and are a nuisance to safe navigation and lake users. BELIA has appreciated the ongoing support and guidance from MN DNR staff in permitting within standard 15% treatment requirements for both aquatic invasive species and aquatic plant management in public waters and on private lakeshores the last few years. The herbicide treatments have proved to be effective.

Other lake improvement and water quality goals that may be considered in the future are as follows:

- In addition to phosphorous sediment, carp management and AIS control specific to CLP and EWM, monitor and manage (as necessary) additional forms of AIS should they occur (e.g., zebra mussels). The ELID would then coordinate with the MN DNR to devise, adopt, and carry out any additional management actions needed.
- Contract hours for certified Level 1 AIS inspections at the public boat landing.
- Conduct water quality improvement and other conservation programs.
- Serve as local sponsor and/or recipient for state, federal and private project grants. As a local unit of government, the ELID is eligible for grants, including federal, to support its efforts to control, manage and contain AIS.
- Apply for and comply with the MN DNR and other state agency's local permits and policies required for specific lake management projects. Support water quality monitoring and other lake research projects currently being conducted by the BELIA Lake Quality Committee.
- Undertake lake research projects. The ELID will review all available data and work collaboratively with Sherburne SWCD, Sherburne County COLA, MN DNR and MPCA on projects warranted by the data.

Necessity of the Proposed District to Promote Public Health or Public Welfare

The Eagle Lake Improvement District (ELID) is needed to achieve an equitable and stable ongoing funding means to manage water quality, sedimentation, algae, existing AIS, nuisance weeds and to be positioned to cope with future AIS threats. The funds would complement County, State and Lake Association investments that alone are not sufficient due to the extensiveness of the concerns. Studying the sources of and solutions to lake problems, preserving and improving water quality by means of water and related land management, sedimentation and siltation control, shoreline erosion control, aquatic nuisance control, preserving and improving fish and wildlife habitat, preserving, and improving recreational potential of the lake.

Benefits to Property from the Establishment of the Lake Improvement District

Property owners and all those who use Eagle Lake will enjoy a cleaner, clearer, and safer to-navigate lake that will provide better recreational opportunities and improve wildlife habitat. A managed lake will also

maintain and improve property values as well as add to residents' enjoyment. It would also be an added way to be eligible for public grants. We find it is necessary to create this District to promote public health and public welfare.

Boundaries of the Proposed District

The proposed ELID would include as members all riparian properties that abut Eagle Lake that are not tax exempt.

Number of Directors Proposed for the District

It is proposed that an ELID have 5 directors established by BELIA. As per statute the Sherburne County Board of Commissioners will appoint the first board, but after that all directors are elected by the membership at the annual meeting. All directors must be property owners in the district and the majority must reside in the district.

Proposed Water Related Management Programs to be Undertaken.

The primary and initial goals of the ELID is to assist in implementing a comprehensive program to alleviate current ecological stressors and recreational impairment on Eagle Lake, brought about by algae proliferation, excess nutrients, sedimentation, and aquatic invasive species, native plant overgrowth.

Current and Projected Funding for AIS:

Current and previous activities to control AIS have been funded and implemented by BELIA, including annual surveys, herbicide treatments for CLP, Eurasian Milfoil, and private property owner lakeshore treatment. CLP and Milfoil treatment funding sources include individual residents, BELIA and Sherburne SWCD grants funded through Minnesota's AIS Prevention Aid program.

CLP has been present in Eagle Lake for decades and Eurasian Millfoil for the last decade. At present there is no evidence of zebra mussels or other AIS in the lake. BELIA has determined that sustainable and predictable funding is critical and necessary to address the growing algae, AIS problems and challenges.

- Without addressing the phosphorus and excessive nutrient issues with alum treatments, algae blooms will continue, increase in volume, and reduce property values, hamper recreation on the lake and damage wildlife habitat.
- Without continued herbicide treatments, survey documentation CLP and Eurasian Milfoil will be unmanaged and continue spreading.
- Though laudable, individual donations are trending down and are not sustainable. Costs for lake vegetation management plan elements and herbicide treatments are increasing. BELIA dues, donations and publicly available grants are not sufficient to address the growing AIS and Phosphorus problems and challenges.

Proposed Method of Financing the ELID Operations

BELIA recommends a variety of sources be considered in funding the operations of the proposed ELID, including an equal pay assessment or service charge on all properties within the proposed district when needed. Other funding sources such as federal and state grants will be the first choice as sources of financing programs and projects. Other funding methods may include general obligation bonds, grants, and other donations. In addition, existing funds through or obtained by the BELIA partnership will

continue to complement those generated by the ELID to support our Lake Management Plan. Initial estimate of assessment or service charge is \$250.00 per year, per parcel in the district.

Assessment if Adverse Impacts

No adverse effects from the implementation of the ELID are anticipated. All procedures for controlling and maintaining water quality/algae, aquatic invasive species, aquatic plant management and fisheries or habitat will adhere to the guidelines provided in MN Statute and rules, and requirements of the MN DNR.

Procedures for Planning, Decision Making, Public Involvement and Program Monitoring

One public open house information and feedback session and 1:1 homeowner visit's regarding ELID needs for establishing, purpose and procedural steps for creation has already been conducted. Organizational procedures and processes will be developed within the ELID's by-laws, and will include regular and special meetings, annual meetings, official notices, mailings, and a website. Long-term Monitoring of ELID programs and projects will be the responsibility of the ELID, in close collaboration with the MN DNR, MPCA, BELIA, Sherburne SWCD and Sherburne County Coalition of Lakes.

Statement of Adequacy and Ownership of Public Accesses, Lands and Beaches

- Ownership: MN DNR
- Type: Gravel
- Description: West side of Eagle Lake adjacent to Sherburne Co. Rd. 75
- 1 Dock

Attachments

Map of proposed boundaries of the Lake Improvement District
Sample ELID Petition Signature Form
Eagle Lake ELID Petition Signatures

Respectfully,
Gordon Westerlind, President, BELIA
Jeffrey Johnson, Treasurer, BELIA

Cc: Kathleen Metzker, Land Use Hydrologist, Mn. DNR