

2018 Annual Meeting Chairman's Report

Welcome to the first Annual Meeting of the Lake Francis Improvement District! LFID was established by order of the Isanti County Board of Commissioners on September 6, 2017. That order went into effect 30 days after the notice was officially posted in the county's newspaper. The County Board acted under a process prescribed in Minnesota Statute 103B.535 that requires a positive endorsement by a majority of eligible and affected property owners. The County's order was followed by another, a month later, appointing the people who sit before you today as an Interim Board of Directors through the year of the first assessment. We are the same people who had, in May of 2017, volunteered to initiate the process of establishing a Lake Francis Improvement District and who went door-to-door that summer to answer your questions and ask for your support. We have volunteered to serve as an Interim Board until the 2019 Annual Meeting, when an election to affirm or replace one of us will be held. Each year thereafter, two additional members of this board will stand for re-election or replacement. We thank the strong majority of you who endorsed the creation of this entity, and we look forward to honoring your trust, and earning the trust of all Lake Francis property owners.

In our capacity as an Interim Board, we have established a Mission Statement: **"To serve as a steward of Lake Francis, protect and improve the quality of Lake Francis, and enhance the community experience of living on Lake Francis"**.

As the initial Chairman of this Board, it falls to me, as it will to those who chair this body in the future, to offer an annual Chairman's Report on our activities over the past year, and to articulate the goals and ambitions we have established for the Improvement District in the coming year(s).

Because this is our initial year, that report of our successes will naturally be abbreviated. Rather, we will take some time later in this meeting to offer a list of possible goals and activities that we might undertake in the next few years and learn your suggestions and priorities. We know full well that this endeavor will be slow and will require the ongoing support of public agencies, other institutions, consultants, potential partners, a variety of interested parties, and of course, YOU. We full well recognize that the complete eradication of Curleyleaf Pondweed is unlikely - the best we can do is reduce its impact on our lake and then manage it as best possible. Given the wide array of aquatic invasive species impacting Minnesota lakes today, we must also be on guard against an invasion by other unwelcome pests. And we know from the diagnostic study of Lake Francis completed in 2002 by Water Research and Management, Inc. for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Isanti County, that most of the lake's problems with clarity and nutrient load stem from its origin as a wetland, and that it is thus unlikely to ever become Minnesota's most crystal clear and pristine lake. But without expecting perfection, there is still much we can do to improve the lake and protect it from other emerging threats.

Knowing that Curleyleaf Pondweed control is our first priority, we ,as an interim board, contracted

with the Isanti County Soil and Water Conservation District to undertake a survey of the lake to identify the location, density and coverage of Curleyleaf when it was in full bloom in June of this year. The cost of that survey and plan was \$2,000. The survey has been completed and in the near future they should be able to provide us with a prioritized treatment plan. With that plan in hand we will be ready to approach the Minnesota DNR next winter to secure a permit to treat the lake in the spring of 2019. If available we may also be able to secure some grant monies to supplement what resources we will have available from property assessments. Such a survey and plan prepared by a qualified water specialist is required by DNR for such permits. Because it is critical to treat the lake at the optimum time in the growth cycle of Curleyleaf, when it first fully emerges and water temperatures are between 40-50 degrees, one cannot survey and treat in the same year. By surveying and planning this year we will be able in 2019 to secure a DNR permit, solicit bids from the handful of qualified treatment firms in the state late this winter, and be ready to apply control agents in May when the weed usually emerges. But because the establishment of the LFID last year occurred too late to hold an annual meeting like this in 2017, which by state law must occur in July or August, we were unable to secure your approval of the first assessment in time to have it apply to the 2017 tax levy. Therefore, we technically have no money with which to operate in 2018. To bridge this gap, we were able to secure an advance on our 2018 levy from the County Board. That Board has done this for other start-up LIDs in the county, and occasionally for other special projects too.

The impact of this “loan” is to reduce the amount we will have available from the 2018 levy to treat Curleyleaf Pondweed in 2019. Until the survey and treatment plan are in place we will not know precisely how much of the lake DNR will permit us to treat in 2019, and until we secure bids we will not know the costs of that work. Therefore, I believe we should look at this first assessment as a down payment to build our capacity to treat as much of the lake as possible. With a lake area of approaching 300 acres, the likely limit we will be able to permit for treatment is 15-20%, we should expect to be able to treat somewhere in the range of 45-55 acres. We know from the experiences of Long Lake and others, that treatment costs can run as high as \$350/acre in such small zones. Doing the math at \$350/acre over 50 acres, we find that we should expect our total treatment costs next year to be in the \$17-\$18,000 range. Adding the \$2,000 we must repay the county for a survey this year, our expenses for 2019 treatment will be approach \$20,000. Dividing that sum by the 74 Members of the Lake Francis Improvement District yields an assessment of \$290 each. Thus, we will propose this year an assessment of \$290/Member. Because we know we are playing catchup on a Curleyleaf problem that had gone untended for too long, we would like to lobby the DNR to let us treat as much as possible to maximize our impact. It is unclear if they will accede to that request, but if we do not have sufficient resources, it would be a moot request nonetheless. Thus, we ask you to consider a slightly higher assessment in these first years. Any monies not expended for treatment next year will remain available for use in subsequent years and over time we would hope to slowly reduce assessments, or better, expand our activities to other areas of lake improvement you feel we should also address.

But know that the pondweed problem will never go away. Even if we get it under control in the next few years, the experiences of Long Lake and others demonstrates that some treatment to manage it will be necessary most years.

Our long-range goal should be to attack the pondweed as aggressively as allowed until we get it

under control over the next five years and then manage it year to year as necessary to maintain control while shifting our activities to other programs to improve water quality, like shoreline vegetation workshops and grants, septic system improvement assistance, and access inspections to reduce the risk of invasion by other unwelcome species, and more. We hope to follow the path taken by the Long Lake Improvement District which was established in 2007 and over ten years of prudent budgeting and good grantsmanship has built up a viable operating reserve and developed a full range of activities. To have that kind of impact will take all of us laboring in accord over time. I have confidence that we will slowly and steadily improve the life of, and life on Lake Francis, if we all work together.

Thinking long term, I draw your attention to the handout in today's packet entitled 2018/2019 Work Plan. There we have compiled a list of potential activities, based on the board's brainstorming and discussion with other Improvement districts in the County through the Isanti County Organization of Lake Associations, also known as ICOLA. In a few minutes we will briefly discuss that list to gain your insight. But because our time is short here today, I have also posted large-scale versions of the goals on the wall of this room. When you checked in at this meeting, each Member/Owner was issued three blue dots. Before you leave here today, please place your dots on the large-scale poster opposite the items you feel should warrant our highest priority attention. I will presume that you will place one dot on the goal of controlling the Curley Leaf, though you need not if you feel other issues should take priority, but please place no more than one dot there if you do, so we can get a sense of your broader concerns. Note that I have also left room for additional goals and suggested activities, so please feel free to pencil in any goal you do not find on our initial list and to lobby us and all your neighbors to that cause. Also notice that I have posted one sheet with space for folks to sign onto small committees we might form to us address each of those issues.

Our efforts must surely begin with the treatments to control the Curleyleaf Pondweed, and that may well take all of our capacity in the first couple of years, but with your help we can begin to plan for a broader range of activities in time, and perhaps sooner if grant sources can be found and if you are willing to join us by volunteering to work on a specific committee toward additional goals.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Royce Yeater". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Royce Yeater, LFID Chairman