



2039 Sunset Drive Tomahawk, WI 54487 Telephone: 715-453-3709

**Subject: Petition for Lake Nokomis and Bridge Lake Landowners to Form a Lake District**

Celebrating its 24<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2006, the Lake Nokomis Concerned Citizens (LNCC) has worked to preserve and protect the Lake Nokomis chain while promoting the entire lake area as a wonderful vacation destination and an incredibly desirable place to raise a family and retire. We found that when we all work together toward common goals, great things can be accomplished. LNCC's funds are too limited to accomplish its goals. It is thought that a Lake District would better serve our community. There are approximately 215 Lake Districts in Wisconsin. **The LNCC's Board unanimously supports the petitioning for a Lake District to represent Lake Nokomis and Bridge Lake.**

The formation of a Lake District is being expedited because additional funding is urgently needed for weed control. The Nokomis chain is experiencing a **major milfoil weed problem**. More funds are needed to help eradicate the weeds before they invade the entire lake. The LNCC is a volunteer organization that does not have enough financial resources to solve the problem because money is collected through donations and fundraisers. When a Lake District is formed, each property is charged based on the assessed property value. We anticipate that adequate funds can be raised to save the lake before weeds take over the entire lake chain. Thick weed invasion could make the lake impossible to boat, swim or fish, possibly resulting in deflation of property values.

You are probably asking:

- **What is a Lake District?** Its purpose is to maintain, protect, and improve the quality of a lake and its watershed for the mutual good of members and the lake environment.
- **How is a Lake District funded?** The Lake District has the ability to tax property's owners within its boundaries. Fees are based proportionally according to the property assessed value.
- **What will it cost me?** The district has an approximate value of \$300 Million. It is anticipated that we would recommend a tax rate of 25 cents per thousand. This would raise \$75,000 per year compared to LNCC's current budget of less than \$20,000. **A home assessed at \$200,000 would pay \$50 per year.**
- **How is the budget set and how can I vote?** The budget is set at the annual meeting which must be held between May 22<sup>nd</sup> and September 8<sup>th</sup>. ANY Lake District resident or land owner can vote at the annual meeting. You don't have to live in the district, only have property in it.
- **What benefits would a Lake District create?** Each Lake District property owner is contributing based on the property's assessed value. This creates a district that is in a **better financial position** with the ability to **undertake various lake management activities** that we currently have not been able to fund.
- **What type of activities would be provided by a Lake District?**
  - Weed control-currently a fast-spreading milfoil weed will cost approximately \$40,000 to treat. It is critical to carry out the treatment in spring.
  - Expand our role in lake protection by reviewing, updating, and coordinating long-range plans for lake management activities including water quality, development, and safe lake use.
  - Increase our opportunities for lake planning and protection grants.
  - Provide a Forum to discuss lake-wide issues.

Attached are details on the formation of the Lake District. **It is hoped that you will vote "YES" by signing the petition** when a LNCC representative approaches you. Let's keep the Lake Nokomis chain a great place to live and play. It is YOUR Lake!

Ken Dirks  
Lake District Formation Chair

YOUR SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR THE LNCC TO CONTINUE THE  
IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY MISSION OF FORMING A LAKE DISTRICT.

**PLEASE SIGN THE PETITION!**  
**YOUR SIGNATURE WILL HELP PROTECT THE FUTURE OF**  
**LAKE NOKOMIS AND BRIDGE LAKE!**

**By signing the petition, it is a “YES” vote for forming the Lake District.**

**WHO CAN SIGN THE PETITION?** If the property is owned:

1. Jointly: all owners should sign the petition Example: Bob,  
John and Jane are listed as owners. All 3 should sign the petition; otherwise the lack of a signature means  
that person opposes forming the Lake District.
2. If multiple parcels are owned in the District, sign the petition only one time. Example: three parcels are  
owned by the same parties, each person only signs 1 time, not 3 times.
3. By a Corporation or Trust: only the authorized person may sign. **ONLY ONE SIGNATURE**, no matter  
how many parcels are owned. XYZ Corporation owns 25 parcels. The trust/corporation only gets one  
signature—not 25. Therefore, only Jane OR John can sign.

### **BOUNDARIES**

It was necessary to define the legal boundaries per Wisconsin Statutes. Therefore the LNCC decided to set them  
by ¼ Sections. The boundaries of the district include properties that are on the water. Also included are some  
parcels that do not have lake access. Properties that are not on the water will most likely profit from the higher  
value of the lake property, resulting in a greater share of the State, School, and County and Local tax.

### **WISCONSIN STATE STATUTES**

The details of the laws governing lake districts can be found in Chapter 33 of the Wisconsin State Statutes and  
are encapsulated in the Guide to Wisconsin’s Lake Management Law. The Wisconsin State Statutes website is:  
[www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html)

### **The following are abbreviated highlights:**

**WHAT IS A DISTRICT?** A lake district is a special purpose unit of government. The first districts came into  
existence in 1974 with the passing of Chapter 33 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. There are approximately 100  
lake districts in Wisconsin today.

### **WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?**

The purpose of a district is to maintain, protect, and improve the quality of a lake and its watershed for the mutual  
good of the members and the lake environment.

**HOW IS IT FORMED?** A lake district can be formed in one of four ways. By:

1. 51% of the landowners in the proposed district petitioning the county or town board; or
2. Owners of 51% of the land in the proposed district petitioning the county or town board; or
3. Resolution of a village board or city council; or
4. Conversion of a town sanitary district.

### **WHO IS INCLUDED?**

The boundaries usually include the property of all riparian (lake front) owners and can include off-lake property  
that benefits from the lake or affects the lake’s watershed. The district may include all or part of a lake or more  
than one lake. A city or village must give its approval to be included in a district.

### **HOW IS IT RUN?**

Within a lake district, all property owners share in the cost of management activities undertaken by the district. A lake district is a true example of participatory democracy. Residents who **live** in the district are eligible voters; and also all property **owners** have a vote in the affairs of the district. This is accomplished at an annual meeting which must be held between May 22 and September 8 each year.

Major decisions of annual meetings can include:

- Election of commissioners;
- Approval of budgets; and
- Approval of contracts or projects costing over \$10,000.

### **HOW IS A LAKE DISTRICT FINANCED?**

Property owners living within the boundaries of a lake district are required by law to pay the fees. The amount of those fees is voted on by the members at the annual meeting. This fee is usually a part of your property tax bill and may come in the form of a mill levy (it can be no more than 2.5 mill and is often much less—some districts have no fees of any sort), a special assessment, or user charge. Borrowing or grant programs can also be used to raise money if approved at the annual meeting.

### **WHAT CAN A DISTRICT DO?**

- Make contracts, purchase or sell land, disburse money, take out loans, accept grants, sue and be sued.
- Develop and carry out surveys or studies, manage aquatic plants, aeration, control erosion, dredge, control dams, and monitor water quality.
- A town, village or city may delegate to the district the authority to adopt lake use regulations. These may include regulations of boating equipment, use or operation; aircraft; and travel on ice-bound lakes.

*Permits are needed from the DNR for some of these operations. The district has no authority to control land use.*

### **WHO RUNS IT?**

Normally, a lake district's day-to-day activities are carried out by a board of from 5 to 7 commissioners. One is appointed by the county and one by the town. The remaining commissioners are elected by the membership. One elected commissioner must be a resident unless no resident is willing to serve, and the others must be either residents or property owners in the district. An exception to this convention could be if the district was formed by the resolution of a town or village board or city council. Then the governing body itself serves as the board of commissioners. At all times, the powers of the commissioners are subject to the decisions of the membership at the annual meeting. The commissioners must meet quarterly, and open meeting laws apply.

Commissioners can:

- Manage fiscal matters;
- Maintain working relations and cooperation with government and agency officials;
- Develop plans, goals, research and surveys for the protection and rehabilitation of the lake.

### **CAN THE DISTRICT BE DISSOLVED?**

An existing district may be dissolved by a 2/3 vote of members at an annual meeting.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** Contact the UWEX-Lakes Partnership College of Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point, WI 54481, telephone 715-346-2116; your county Cooperative Extension Office or DNR District Lake Coordinator.

Wisconsin State Statutes 33/Guide to Wisconsin's Lake Management Law is available at [www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html](http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html)