

Nelson Lake Association **Fall 2025 NEWSLETTER**



**EVERYONE MUST TAKE TIME TO SIT AND WATCH
THE LEAVES CHANGE.—ELIZABETH LAWRENCE**

Upcoming Events

WINTER RAMA

January 3, 2026

Activities TBD

Updates can be found on
www.nelsonlakeassociation.org

KAYAKING EVENT

Saturday, August 15, 2026

10:00 A.M. — Noon

Depart from Gerlach's landing @ 10 A.M.



ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, June 20, 2026

9:00 A.M. — Noon

at Hayward Veterans Center

ANNUAL PICNIC

Saturday, August 15, 2026

4:00 P.M. — 6:00 P.M.

at Nelson Lake Park



From the President

Dale McPherson



From the President

The transforming of color from predominantly green to various hues of red, orange, yellow and just plain old brown signals time for a short message for the fall issue of the Nelson Lake Association Newsletter, the year's events and happenings are highlighted in the other articles herein:

First, I want to express a sincere Thank You to all of the Members of the Association for their new or continued membership and support.

The year was not without some anxiety related to the slower than anticipated refill of the lake in the spring following the fall drawdown to repair the ramp at the dam and, while somewhat understood, it became obvious that speeding up that refill was not within the powers of the NLA Board. That being said, it does remind us all that we can always count on Mother Nature to slip in a curve ball every now and then. Regarding the walleye recruitment effort; for better or worse, there were more walleye fingerlings stocked in the lake this year than at any time -ever- with just shy of 100,000 being stocked. And, 92,000 of those were at no cost to the Association!

As of September 22nd the NLA garage is complete. The materials were delivered on Monday, August 18th. By Thursday of that week, the building was erected, sheathed and shingled. Siding and windows were completed the following week. Once the trim kit for the overhead door finally arrived, the building was completed. I want to extend a very special thank you to all the volunteers who contributed time, effort and tools necessary to get it done and who are listed immediately below:

Ron Burton, Keith Cottington, Neil Ellis, Pete Cianci, Greg Pieterick, Larry Carlson, Jim Beck, Glenn Rolloff, Casey Stangl, Tom LeMay, Mark Schaenzer, Jerry Rasmussen, Rick Lindner and myself.

In closing I wish all of you a colorful fall, a winter with that rare thing called snow and a safe and healthy journey through the remainder of 2025.

Sincerely,
Dale McPherson

NLA Board Members



Dale McPherson



Michelle Tripp



Tom LeMay



John Welter



Scott Wied



Glenn Rolloff



Steve Bilitz



Neil Ellis

Dale McPherson	President
Michelle Tripp	Vice President
Steve Bilitz	Secretary
Glenn Rolloff	Treasurer
Gordy Christians	Director at Large
Tom LeMay	Director at Large
John Welter	Director at Large
Mike Hallum	Director at Large
Neil Ellis	Director at Large
Casey Stangl	Director at Large
Mark Schaezner	Director at Large
Scott Wied	Director at Large
	Director at Large



Mike Hallum



Gordy Christians



Mark Schaezner



Casey Stangl




NELSON LAKE

Species	Season	Daily Bag Limit	Length Limit
Walleye	General gamefish*	3	18" minimum
Northern Pike	General gamefish*	1	32" minimum
Largemouth Bass	General gamefish*		None
Smallmouth Bass	Catch and release only from first weekend in May to third weekend in June	5, both species combined	None
Panfish (Crappie, Bluegill, Yellow Perch, Sunfish)	Open Year Round	10 combined	None

*General gamefish season runs from the first Saturday in May through the first Sunday in March

3-line fishing and motor trolling is allowed (3 hooks, baits, or lures per person)



From the Treasurer

Financials as of September 1, 2025

General Fund	\$37,007.36
Fish & Wildlife	\$ -3,794.00
Lake Project	\$ 5,018.90
Invasive Species	\$ 1,731.33
Fireworks Fund	\$ 165.00
Tom Whalen Memorial Fund	\$ 2,400.90
Gerlach Garage**	\$ -1,749.46
Scholarship Fund	\$ <u>348.00</u>
TOTAL	\$41,128.03

**(\$20,080.63-\$21,830.09 Spent) (\$5,000 due October 2025)

**NLA Membership stands at 276 Households
(+22 over last year!!)**

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Nelson Lake Association membership was held on June 14, 2025 at the Hayward Veteran's Center. There were 92 people in attendance at the meeting this year.

President Dale McPherson gave an overview of the year to date lake levels. There was an extensive discussion about the Nelson Lake water levels and actions that can be taken in the future regarding lake drawdowns. A number of members recommended that all the parties involved in the lake levels actions coordinate in advance of any drawdowns to capture a plan for the future (DNR, Town of Lenroot, NLA Association Board, etc.) Further, members requested that it would be helpful to have these leaders attend the NLA Association annual meetings in the future. Many logs on the Nelson Lake dam are over 80 years old and will need to be replaced. Currently, the NLA Board has no plans for any future lake drawdowns.

Lenroot Township Report: A number of projects were completed by the Township Board this past year. A new cement slab was added to the boat landing at the park. The NLA is building a garage to house the Association's pontoon and many other items currently stored in Board members' residences. Lenroot Township Plans for 2025 include: installing blacktop in the following locations: Porkey's Rd, parts of Phipps Fire Lane, Mosquito Brook, and Totogatic Lake roads and the Gerlach Landing parking lot. Prep work is also being done to replace the Namakagon River bridge on Phipps Road.

The Treasurer's Report by Glenn Rolloff included financial balances in the NLA checking and savings certificate. At the time of the annual meeting, we had 218 members.

Elections to NLA Board of Directors: Rick Lindner and Jeff Hansen both stepped down from the Board. The Vice-President position and three at-large board members were open for election. Michelle Tripp was elected to the Vice President position; Neil Ellis, Tom LeMay and Gordy Christians were elected as at-large board members. As a reminder, all NLA Board Meetings are open to the public.



The NLA garage is complete at Gerlach landing. Thank you to all of those who participated and continue to do great work for the Nelson Lake Association.

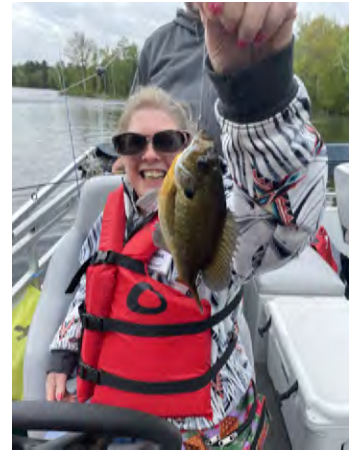


Nelson Lake Association Scholarship

This year Nelson Lake Association awarded its \$1000 scholarship to Anna Maina. She is a graduate of Hayward Community Schools. NLA has been giving a scholarship to a student going into environmental studies for many years. It can be a college or vocational school. Anna plans to attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison and study plant pathology. We wish her success in her studies.

Fishing Has No Boundaries (May 16 & 17, 2025)

Once again Nelson Lake board members were active with Fishing Has No Boundaries (FHNB). On May 16th & 17th FHNB (Hayward division) hosted the main event at the Chippewa Flowage. There were hundreds of volunteers and participants.



The weather was typical spring weather, Friday was overcast and windy, Saturday was on and off rain in the morning. The participants enjoyed catching fish both days. Our guide Szymon, did a great job in getting us into the fish (mostly Blue Gill and Sun Fish).

The board members this year were: Mark Schaezner (pontoon boat driver), Rich Lindner (pontoon boat provider). Dale and Lisa McPherson helped at the gas dock.





WALLEYE STOCKING PLAN UPDATED 2025

By Gordy Christians

Background: Nelson Lake had high walleye numbers in the first fifty years after flooding with a shift to high crappie numbers in the last twenty years. As panfish numbers increased, the average individual fish size decreased. To try to shift fish populations back to a more balanced population of predator/prey, stocking extended growth walleyes (5" – 6") was begun in 2003 with a few hundred per year to 25,000 stocked by DNR every other year. It was felt that larger walleyes avoided losses to predation. DNR stocking ended in 2022 with a total of over 200,000 extended growth walleyes stocked.

After more than twenty years of stocking tens of thousands of extended-growth walleyes at up to \$3- \$4 each, there has been very limited success. The NLA board felt it was time to re-assess the program and try to determine the causes of the stocking program failure to significantly increase walleye numbers.

Analysis: During the previous twenty years weather was within the normal range of conditions for northern Wisconsin. In all cases, the fish being stocked appeared to be healthy with little or no mortality at the stocking sites. No dead fish were seen in the weeks following late fall stocking (though cold water may have played a part in this). All of the hatchery fish had been raised in ponds and fed a steady diet of minnows to keep them from cannibalizing each other. (With the exception of one year, 2017, that minnows were stocked with the walleyes, there was no concentration of food at the planting sites.) During the twenty years that stocking was done, crappie (and to a lesser extent bass) numbers were high with large fish numbers being relatively small. By the spring following stocking events, few or none of the stocked fish were seen by fishermen or by DNR surveys.

By comparison, the Minong Flowage which is down-stream on the Totogatic River has a healthy population of walleyes and does not need to be stocked. If disease, water temperature, lack of dissolved oxygen, or predation were not obvious consistent causes of mortality, the only other logical cause would be starvation. If there was a normal amount of prey availa-

ble at any one site, a concentration of predators (the young walleyes) could have depleted it in short order. Also, hatchery-raised fish that are accustomed to being fed and not having to hunt for their food might not disperse far enough to avoid starving. In addition, large numbers of 4"-6" crappies could have easily depleted any natural walleye reproduction soon after hatching, thus keeping overall walleye numbers from any source depressed while their numbers increased. (Suckers and bullheads have also declined.)

(Anecdotal evidence was provided by guides and others, of significant (for Nelson Lake) numbers of 19" to 22" walleyes being caught in the summer through early winter in 2023. These fish should have been about seven years old – fish stocked in 2017 with minnows!??)

The plan: To test this theory, we planned to purchase and stock about 9500, 2 ½"-3" walleye fingerlings in late June/early July in an effort to taking advantage of large numbers of "young of the year" pan fish and lake flies that appear in midsummer that they could feed on. These fish, from the St. Croix tribal fish hatchery, will have been fed pin-sized minnows for around two weeks so should be focused on eating them instead of plankton that they had been fed earlier. The cost of these fish was \$.79 each. In addition, we stocked these fish at several sites around the lake.

This stocking plan is to be done over four years to cover year to year variations in weather, prey availability, and predator numbers. Compared to natural reproduction, 9500 is a pretty small number so change may not be evident for a number of years. (The change in northern regulations scheduled for 2026, which allows smaller fish to be taken, while increasing population average size should also help reduce total panfish numbers.) A more balanced fish population should begin to show a smaller number of crappie of larger average size and increased numbers of walleye.

2025 was the second year of the four-year stocking plan. 9700 walleye (2 ½"-3") were stocked July 16; An additional 93,000 fingerlings (1 1/2") were stocked on June 11 by DNR from a surplus at the Spooner Hatchery.



Annual Membership Dues Increase

The Nelson Lake Association funds the payments of wages for the people who perform boat inspections at the two launch ramps on weekends with funds obtained from the DNR through grants, which are applied for each year. These inspectors provide a valuable service in our quest to prevent the introduction of Invasive Species into our lake. In the past, the funds received through the DNR grant was sufficient to cover those payments. However, due to the need to increase the rate paid to continue to attract individuals to perform the inspections, it was necessary to increase the hourly rate to \$20 which was done by Board action at the October 6 th regular meeting.

At the \$18/hr rate paid in 2025, the grant money received was insufficient to cover the costs of paying Inspectors by just under \$500, with the shortfall having to be made up from the Association's Invasive Species fund. Based on the new hourly rate, the annual shortfall would be \$1,100 dollars per annum. Accordingly, to avoid continued erosion of the Invasive Species fund, the Board also took action at the October meeting to increase the annual membership dues amount from \$30 to \$35.

Keeping Nelson Lake Clean



**STOP AQUATIC
HITCHHIKERS!**

Be A Good Steward. Clean. Drain. Dry.
StopAquaticHitchhikers.org

Our boat inspectors play a key role in keeping invasive weeds out of Nelson Lake. We appreciate their willingness to spend weekend days checking boats and trailers for weeds or water from other lakes, and informing boaters about the

laws regulating the spread of invasives. Many boaters thank them when they meet at our public landings.

This year some changes occurred and more are to come. Dave Pixley had to resign for personal reasons so by shifting responsibilities and adding Jim Beck to our staff we successfully completed the season. I want to thank Dave for his help for three years and Jim for his willingness to help with our inspection duties. Jim will continue doing inspections next year at the Park Landing by the Dam.

One of our long term inspectors will not be returning next year. Gavin Erickson-Rubenzer, who has been doing boat inspections for five years, graduated from high school and will be leaving for college. He will not be returning next year. Gavin has been a very dependable worker and deserves huge thanks for doing such a great job.

NLA Picnic August 16, 2025

Despite on and off showers all day, the annual picnic was well attended by close to 150 people. There were numerous compliments on the overall event and great food. The fabulous food which included: fried and grilled chicken, pulled pork, salads and desserts was provided by Lynn's Custom Meats and Tall Pines. Nelson Lake Landing provided a beer keg and lots of service support. Special thanks to Pete and Gina Cianci for organizing the food again this year!



Seven door prizes in the amount of \$25 each were awarded for the following businesses: Nelson Lake Resort, Nelson Lake Lodge, Park Island, Revelle's, Tall Pines and Reiske's.

Raffle prizes awarded at the picnic:

Blackstone Grill – Greg Olson

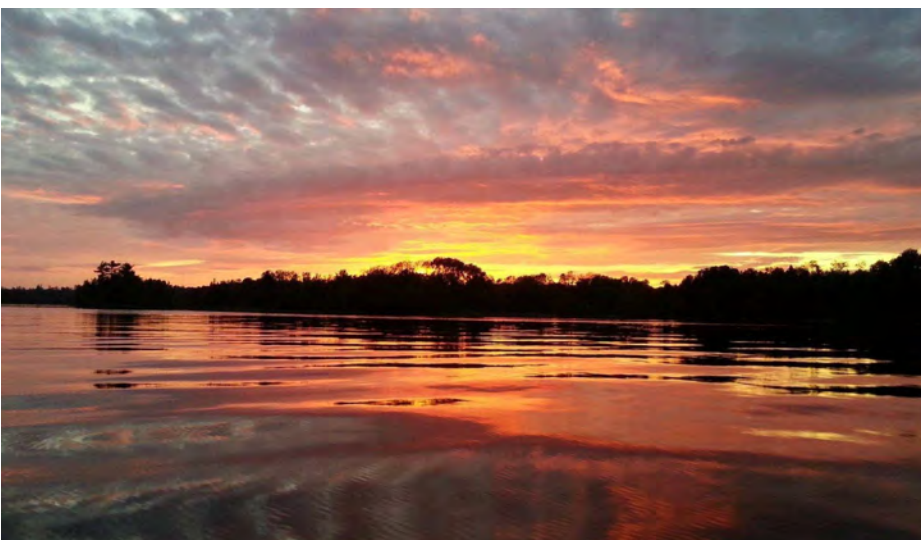
Yeti Cooler – Geris Kraus

\$250 Gift Certificate for Lynn's Custom Meats – Curt Kessler

Congratulations to all the winners!!

The minnow races were well attended again this year with winners for first and second place and youngest winner. Prizes included new fishing rod and reels from Minnow Jim's Bait Shop.

With the rain returning at the end of the picnic, a special thank you to all the attendees that assisted with take down of the event tables, tents and chairs. We were able to get everything loaded before getting completely soaked!!



*for supporting
our Association*

HAYWARD, WI

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A Cut Above The Rest

Thanks to all the volunteers that make Nelson Lake a fun place to live and play. Your assistance with the many activities the association hosts during the year is much appreciated.

Our association depends on volunteers like YOU!

Nelson Lake Lodge

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Working
with boaters
to protect
our waters



The purpose of the Association is to preserve and protect Nelson Lake and its surroundings, to enhance the water quality, fishery, boating safety, and aesthetic values of Nelson Lake as a public recreational facility for today and for future generations while respecting the interests of property owners and the public and to provide the opportunity for fellowship among Association members.

www.nelsonlakeassociation.org

Nelson Lake Association is a 501(c)3

non-profit Organization