METHODS FOR DETERMINING VEGETATION & FISH HEALTH

Overview

Biodiversity is important in maintaining a healthy lake ecosystem. Biodiversity is considered to be a principle driver of ecosystem function and critical to ecosystem resilience and stability. A diverse ecosystem provides a number of services such as nutrient recycling, improved water quality, and increased recreational opportunities. Human disturbances often lead to a decrease in species diversity resulting in a weakening and/or loss of support to the ecosystem services provided by healthy biotic community.

The development of health assessment indices have provided a means in which natural resources managers can evaluate and monitor the health of a lake's biological community to help focus restoration and preservation efforts. The species that make up a community vary in their tolerance to human disturbances, therefore, as the episodic and cumulative disturbances occur to a system a decrease in species richness and a shift to species that are very tolerant to disturbance. Assessment tools developed by the MnDNR use these tolerance differences to relate the relative health of a given lake. Specifically, different sets of tools have been developed to relate the health of the fish community (Fish IBI) and another set of tools for the vegetation community (FQI).

Floristic Quality Index

The Floristic Quality Index (FQI) is a vegetation health assessment tool that is based on a metric of species richness and a Coefficient of Conservatism (C), which is a score (0 - 10) that relates a species site fidelity and tolerance to disturbance. Thus, species that have narrow habitat ranges and/or low tolerance to stress have high C-values. Therefore, the more species observed in a lake and the greater the C-values the greater the system health.

FQI assessment was designed to allow for health assessment from various community sampling techniques. Three different survey methods can be used: Minnesota Biological Survey methods, MnDNR transects or point intercept surveys (most common). All three methods have limitations yet all are relatively good at capturing and evaluating the health of the vegetation community.

Due to natural differences in species composition between deep and shallow lakes and ecoregions, two unique sets of thresholds were developed for FQI scoring for the North Central Hardwoods ecoregion (Table 1). The MnDNR has performed at least one survey and FQI assessment on all of the CRWD lakes presented in this appendix. Each lake report card shows the most recent FQI score for each lake and how it relates to the impairment thresholds presented in Table 1. It should be pointed out that the report cards only show FQI assessments conducted by the MnDNR, and therefore do not include any FQI assessments based on surveys performed by CRWD or other parties.

Table 1: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources North Central Hardwoods ecoregion point intercept and transect sampling FQI impairment thresholds for deep and shallow lakes.

Classification	Deep	Shallow
Exceptional	32.4	26.0
Impaired	18.6	17.7

Fish Index of Biotic Integrity

The Fish IBI is comprised of multiple metrics that integrate aspects of species richness, community assemblage, and trophic composition. The combining of all individual metrics results in a single score that relates the relative health of the fish community with healthier systems having greater overall scores. Low scores are typically associated to imbalanced communities filled with tolerant species and high scores are typically received when communities are balanced and filled with intolerant species.

Fish IBI sampling includes trap and gill net surveys along with nearshore backpack electrofishing and beach seining. Together these various sampling gears are able to capture information from various habitats throughout a lake and also target all fish species.

Minnesota lakes that fall within lake classes 20 - 43 (Schupp lake classification) have been partitioned into four distinct Fish IBIs. Lake class groups are clustered together using eight lake attributes that account for the expected variability of a fish community due natural phenomenon (Table 2).

Table 2: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources fish IBI tool classification.

Due to these expected differences and unique IBIs each tool has its own set of thresholds to generalize the relative health of a lake's fish community (Table 3).

IBI Tool	Schupp's Lake Class	Lake Classification Group Description
2	22, 23, 24, 25, 27	Generally, deep lakes with high shoreline complexity (SDI) that are typically less than 80% littoral.
4	28, 29, 30, 31, 32	Compared to LCG 2 these lakes on average are smaller, have intermediate littoral area, have less shoreline complexity (typically rounder basins). They also typically have a low trophic status, low phosphorus levels, and clearer water compared to LCG2.
5	33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39	Central and Northern MN lakes of shallow to moderate depths (mostly littoral). Generally, naturally eutrophic lakes with lots of vegetation and soft sediment.
7	38, 41, 42, 43	Shallowest lakes typically consisting of > 80% littoral area. Primarily in the southern half of the state. Excludes winterkill lakes (w/in 10 years) and riverine lakes

Table 3: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources impairment thresholds for fish IBI tools.

Classification	Tool 2	Tool 4	Tool 5	Tool 7
Exceptional	64	59	61	NA
Impaired	44	38	24	36

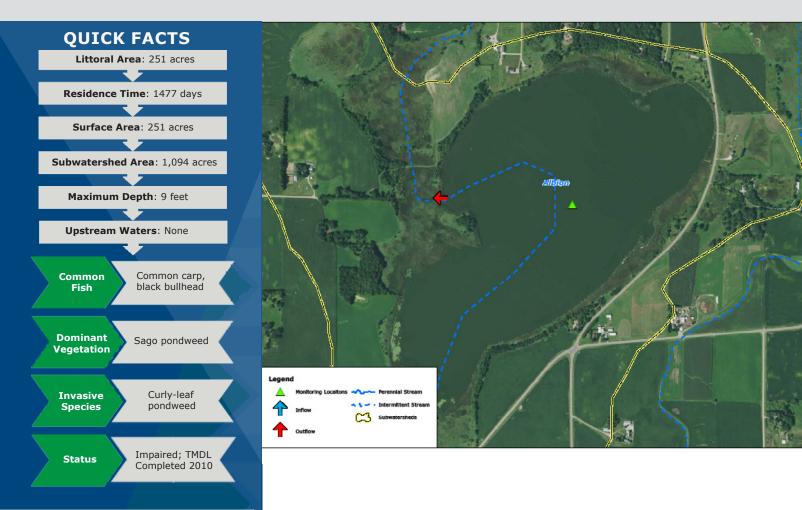
The MnDNR has performed Fish IBI assessments on six lakes throughout the CRWD: Cedar, Betsy, Louisa, Clearwater, School Section, and Bass. The lake report cards for each of these lakes present the Fish IBI score and how it relates to the impairment thresholds presented in Table 3.

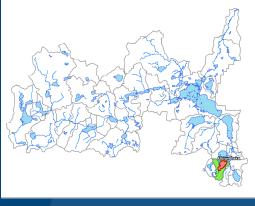
More information on Fish IBI methodology can be found on the MnDNR's website:

http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/surfacewater_section/lake_ibi/index.html

ALBION LAKE

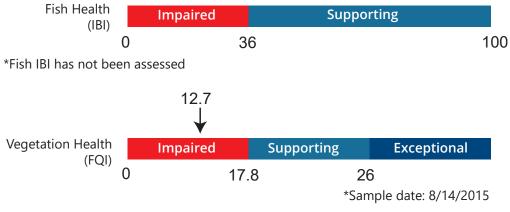


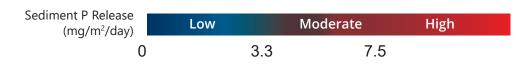




TO DO LIST

A Rough fish management
AIS management
Manage upstream loads







ALBION LAKE



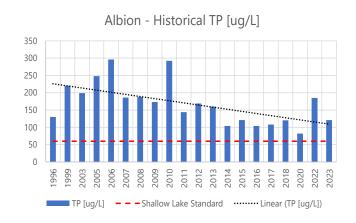
2023 Water Quality

Albion - 2023 TP [ug/l] 250 200 150 100 50 0 5/17/2023 6/17/2023 7/17/2023 8/17/2023 9/17/2023

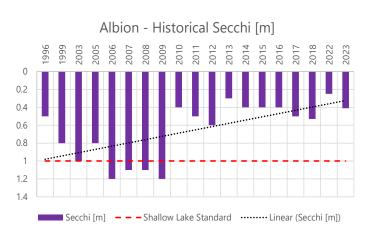












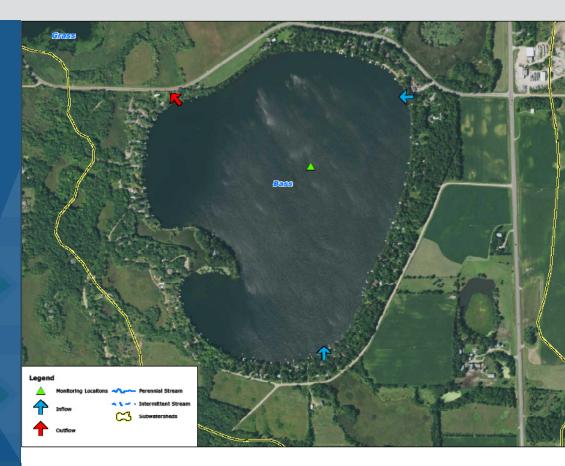


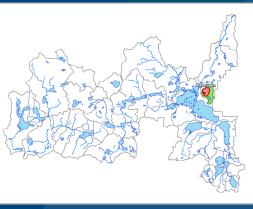
BASS LAKE



QUICK FACTS Littoral Area: 96 acres Surface Area: 222 acres Subwatershed Area: 796 acres Maximum Depth: 34 feet **Upstream Waters**: None Common Bluegill, Northern Pike, Yellow Bull-Fish head, Largemouth Bass Dominant Vegetation Currently obtain-ing vegetation info from DNR Invasive Currently obtaining **Species** vegetation info from

Not impaired

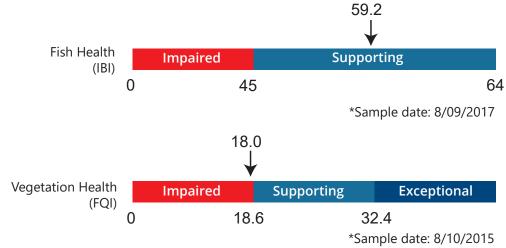




Status

TO DO LIST

Protect water qualityManage upstream loadsAIS management and prevention





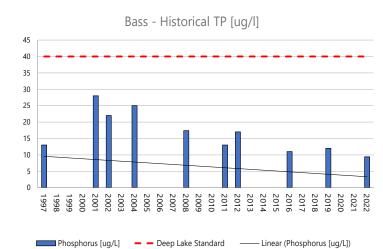


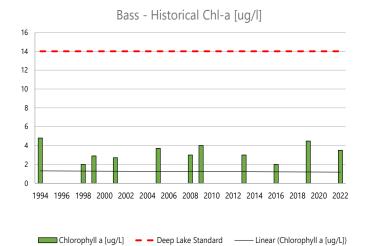
BASS LAKE



2023 Water Quality

Lake not sampled





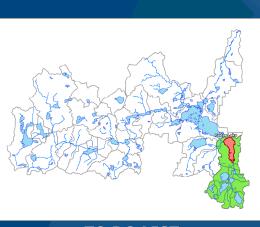




CEDAR LAKE



QUICK FACTS Littoral Area: 315 acres Surface Area: 790 acres Subwatershed Area: 9,715 acres Maximum Depth: 108 feet Upstream Waters: Swartout, Albion, Henshaw Bluegill, Northern Common Pike, Walleye, Largemouth Bass Fish Coontail, **Dominant** northern water Vegetation milfoil, chara Eurasian water Invasive milfoil, curly-leaf **Species** pondweed

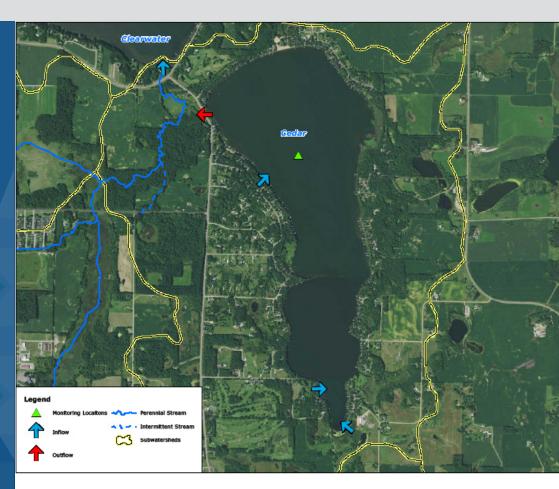


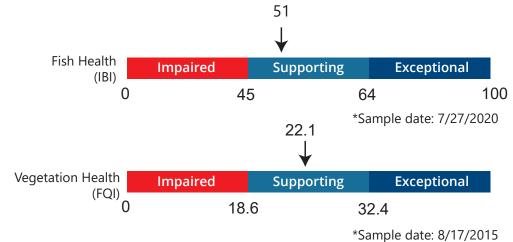
Status

Not Impaired

TO DO LIST

- AIS managementRough fish management in upstream lakes
- Manage upstream soluble P loads





Sediment P Release (mg/m²/day)

Low Moderate High

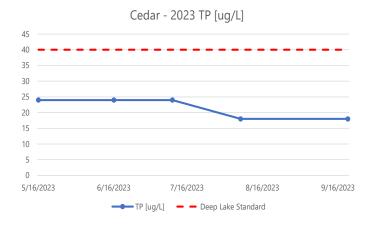
0 3.3 7.5

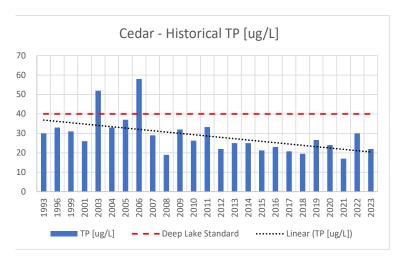


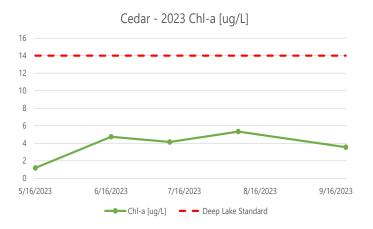
CEDAR LAKE

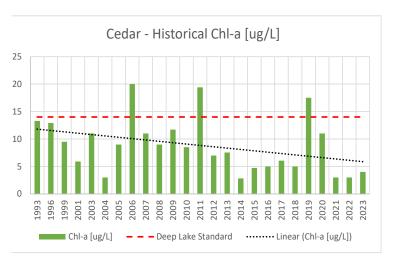


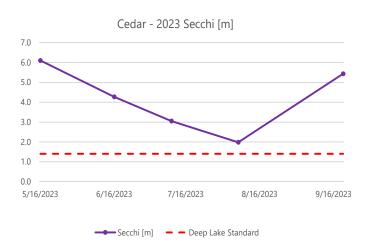
2023 Water Quality

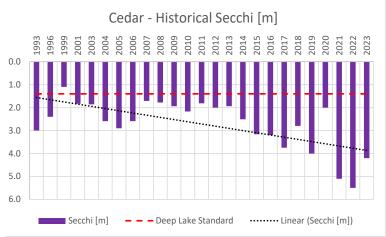








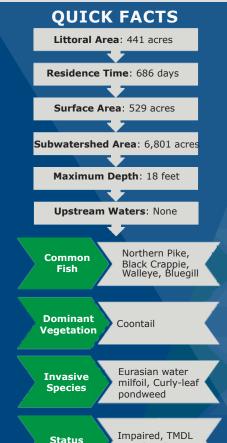


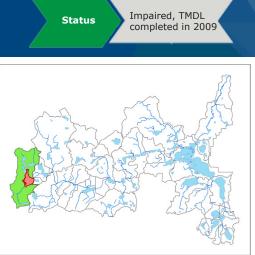




CLEAR LAKE

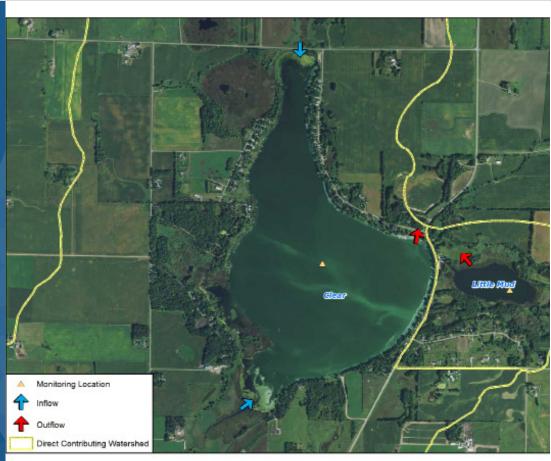


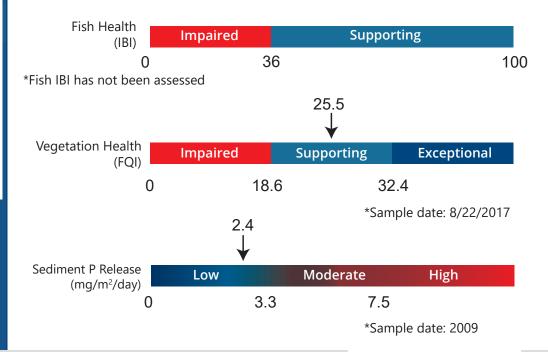




TO DO LIST

- AIS Management
- Manage rough fish
- Manage upstream soluble P loads



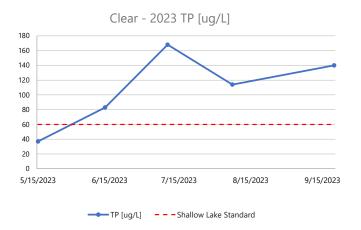




CLEAR LAKE

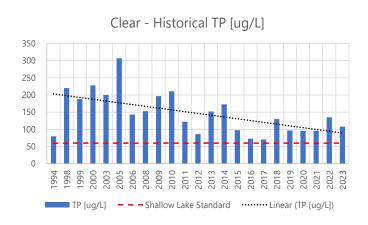


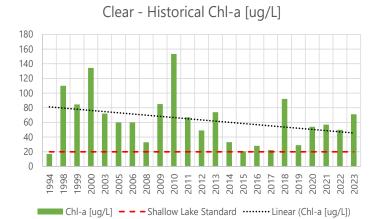
2023 Water Quality

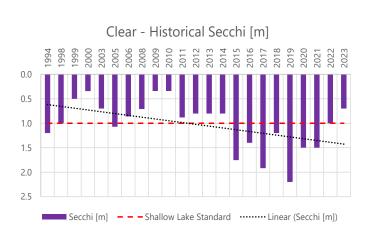








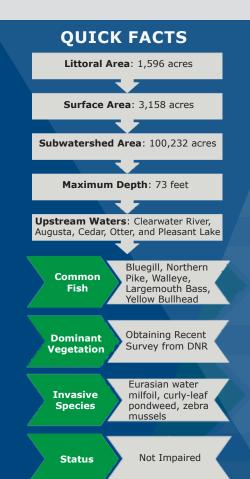


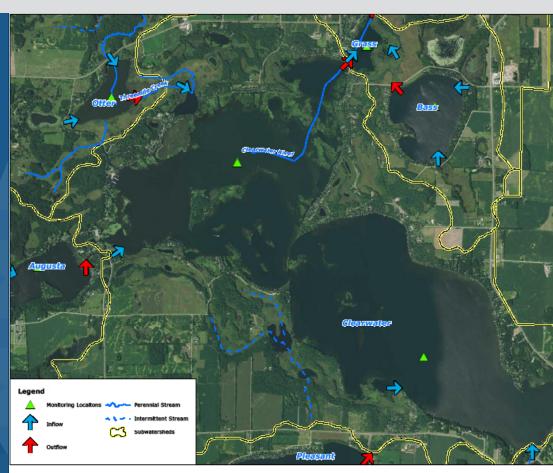


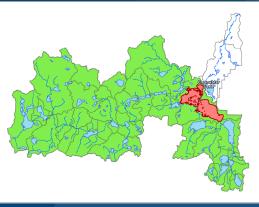


CLEARWATER LAKE





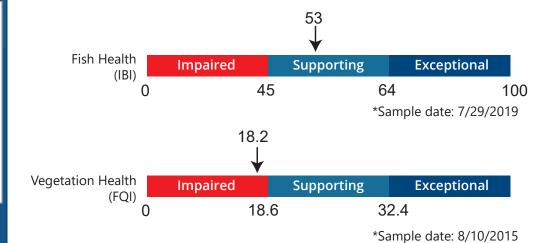




TO DO LIST

Protect water qualityManage upstream loads

AIS management



Sediment P Release (mg/m²/day)

Low Moderate High

0 3.3 7.5



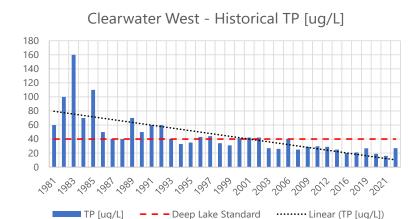
CLEARWATER LAKE

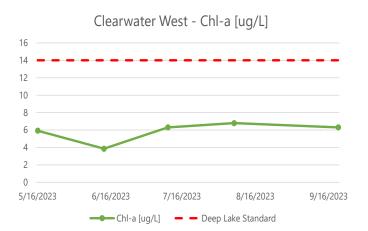


2023 Water Quality

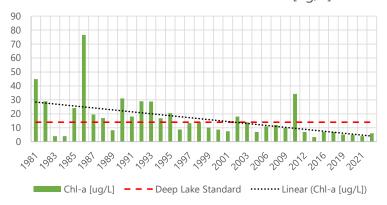
Clearwater West - TP [ug/L] 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 0 5/16/2023 6/16/2023 9/16/2023 7/16/2023 8/16/2023 ■ TP [ug/L] ■ Deep Lake Standard

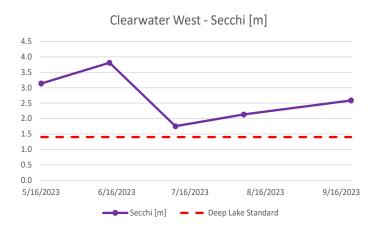
Historic Water Quality



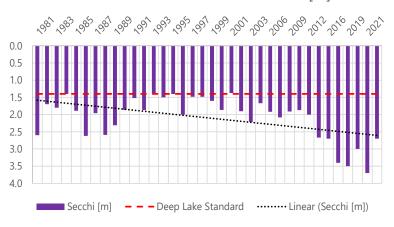


Clearwater West - Historical Chl-a [ug/L]





Clearwater West - Historical Secchi [m]

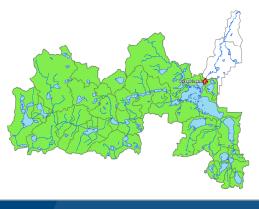




GRASS LAKE

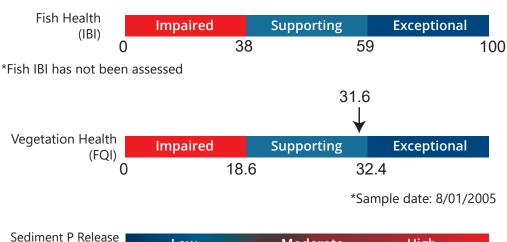


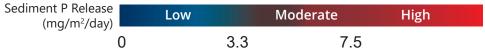
QUICK FACTS Littoral Area: 62 acres Surface Area: 71 acres Subwatershed Area: 101,508 acres Maximum Depth: 35 feet Upstream Waters: Clearwater Lake, Clearwater River, Bass Lake Bluegill, Northern Pike, Yellow Bullhead Common **Dominant** No Recent Survey Vegetation Invasive Zebra Mussells **Species** Status Not Impaired



TO DO LIST

△ Protect water quality△ Manage upstream loads△ AIS Management





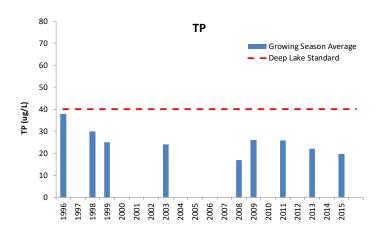


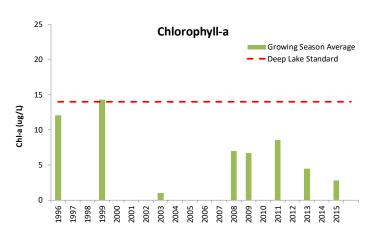
GRASS LAKE

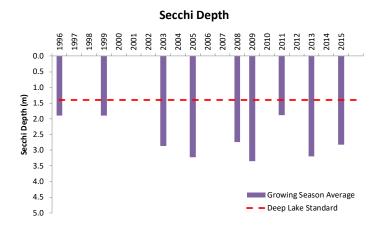


2023 Water Quality

Lake not sampled



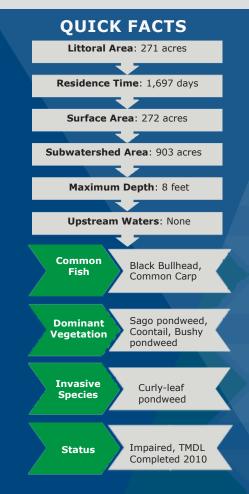


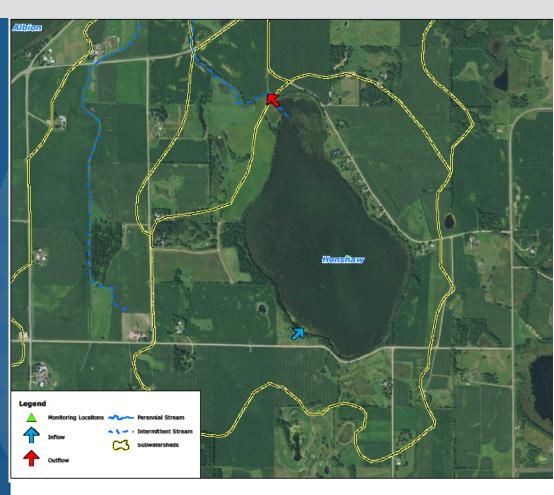


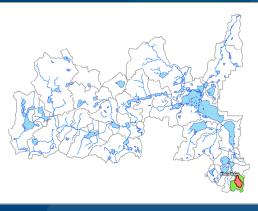


HENSHAW LAKE



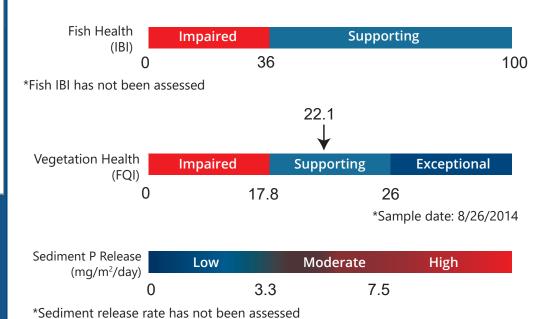






TO DO LIST

- Rough fish management
- AIS management
- Internal load management study
- Manage upstream load

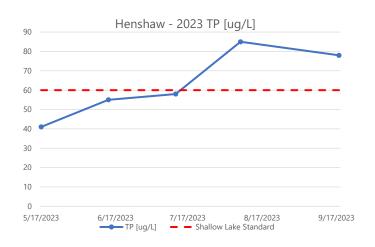




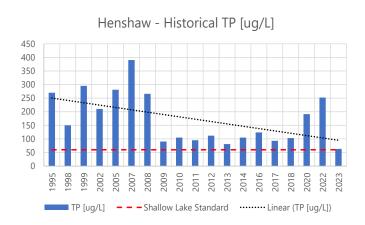
HENSHAW LAKE



2023 Water Quality

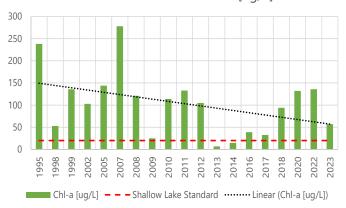


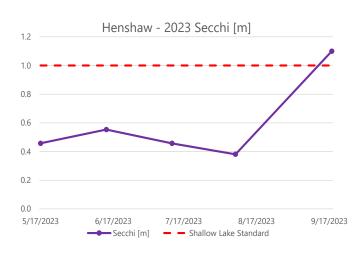
Historic Water Quality

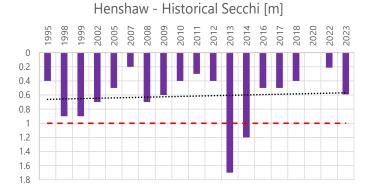








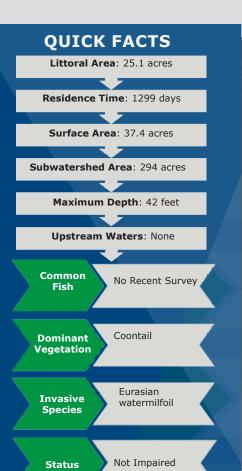




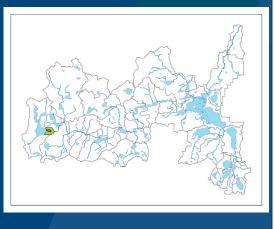
Secchi [m] --- Shallow Lake Standard ········Linear (Secchi [m])

LITTLE MUD LAKE



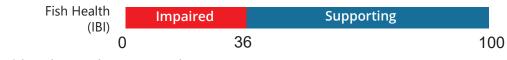




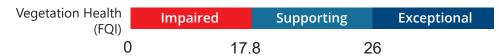




- Rough fish management
- AIS management
- Internal load management study
- Manage upstream load



*Fish IBI has not been assessed



*Vegetation FQI has not been assessed

Sediment P Release (mg/m²/day)	Low	Moderate		High
(mg/m/day)	0	3.3	7.5	

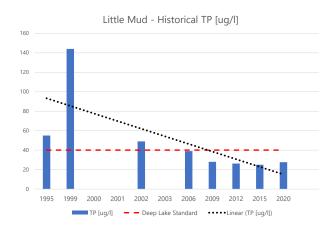


LITTLE MUD LAKE

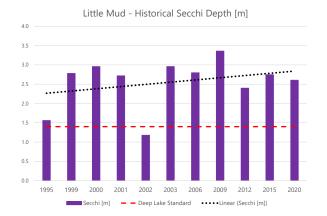


2023 Water Quality

Lake not sampled





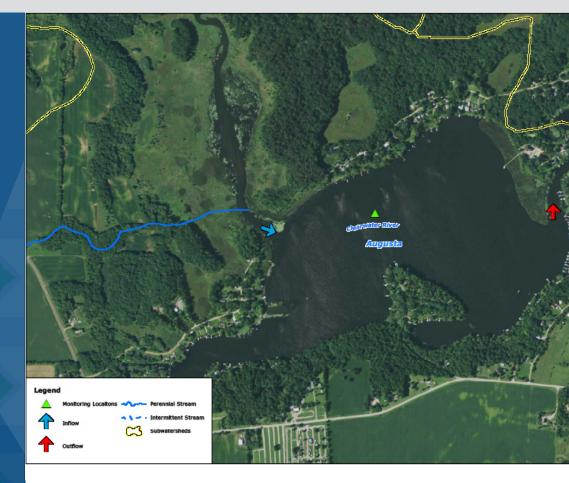


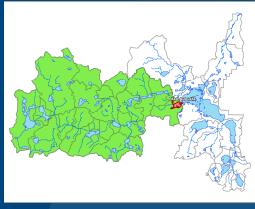


LAKE AUGUSTA



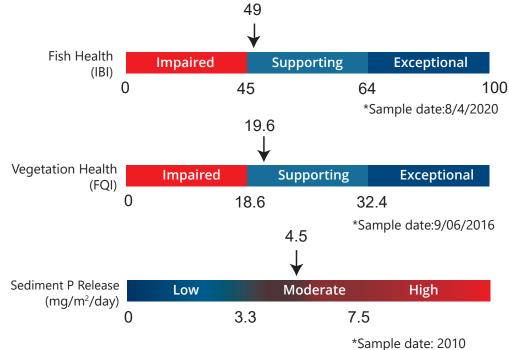
QUICK FACTS Littoral Area: 65 acres Residence Time: 55 days Surface Area: 187 acres Subwatershed Area: 62,936 acres Maximum Depth: 82 feet Upstream Waters: Caroline, Louisa, Marie Bluegill, Northern Common Pike, Crappie, Yellow Bullhead, Common Carp No species was **Dominant** dominant Vegetation (>50% occurrence) Eurasian water **Invasive** milfoil, curly-leaf **Species** pondweed, zebra mussels Removed from Impaired Waters **Status** List in 2022; TMDL completed in 2010





TO DO LIST

Manage upstream loads
AIS management



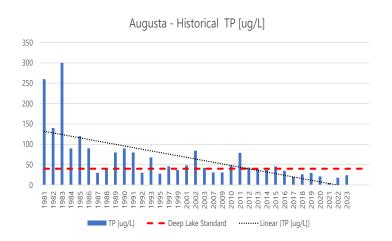


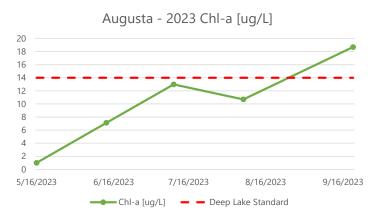
LAKE AUGUSTA



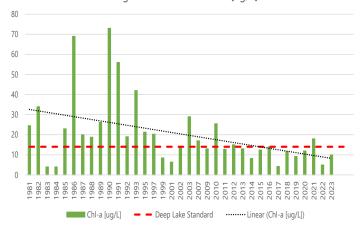
2023 Water Quality

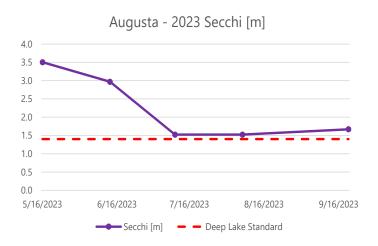
Augusta - 2023 TP [ug/L] 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5 0 5/16/2023 6/16/2023 7/16/2023 8/16/2023 9/16/2023 TP [ug/L] Deep Lake Standard

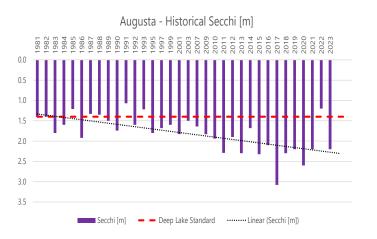














LAKE BETSY



QUICK FACTS Littoral Area: 90 acres Residence Time: 33 days Surface Area: 154 acres Subwatershed Area: 43,789 acres Maximum Depth: 29 feet Upstream Waters: Clearwater River Common Fish Channel Catfish, Northern Pike, Black Crappie, Bluegill, Common Carp Dominant Vegetation Coontail, Curly-leaf pondweed

Invasive Species

Curly-leaf pondweed

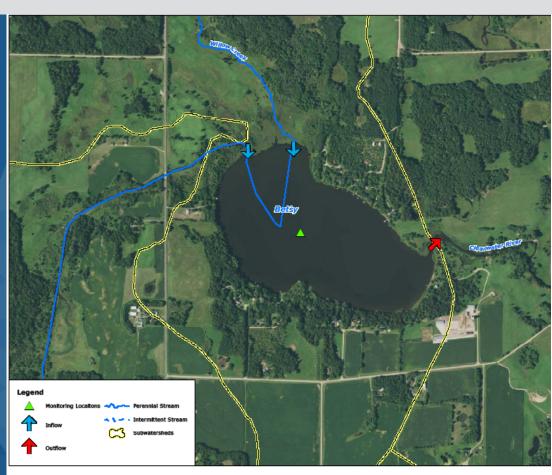
Status

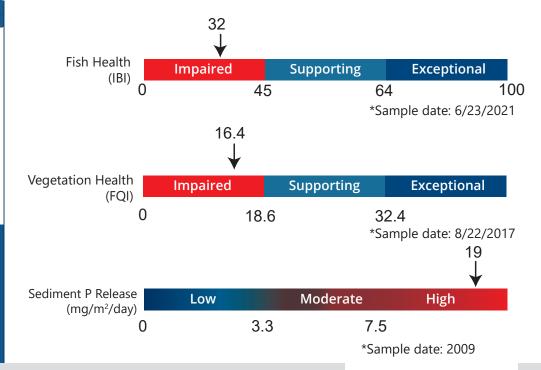
Impaired, TMDL completed in 2009



TO DO LIST

- Rough fish managementInternal load reduction study and implementation
- Manage upstream loads
 - AIS management





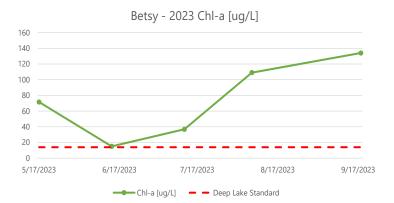


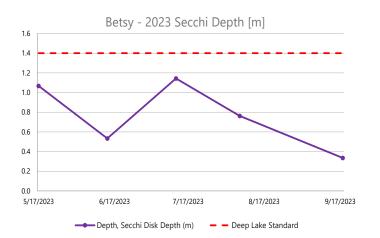
LAKE BETSY



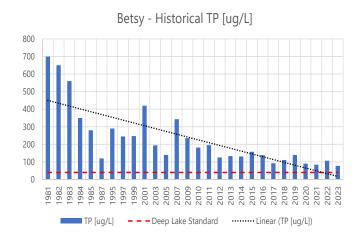
2023 Water Quality

Betsy - 2023 TP [ug/L] 140 120 100 80 40 20 5/17/2023 6/17/2023 7/17/2023 8/17/2023 9/17/2023

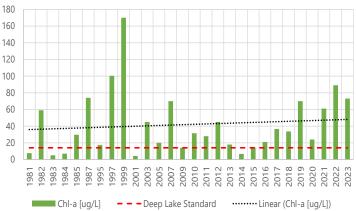




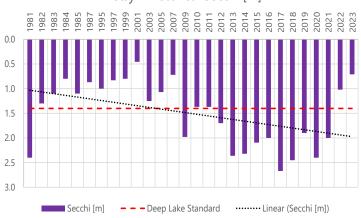
Historic Water Quality



Betsy - Historical Chl-a [ug/L]









LAKE CAROLINE



QUICK FACTS

Littoral Area: 46 acres

Residence Time: 26 days

Surface Area: 135 acres

Subwatershed Area: 60,132 acres

Maximum Depth: 45 feet

Upstream Waters: Louisa, Marie

Common Fish Black Crappie, Bluegill, Northern Pike, Largemouth Bass, Common Carp, Walleye, White Sucker

Dominant Vegetation

No Recent Survey

Invasive Species Curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil

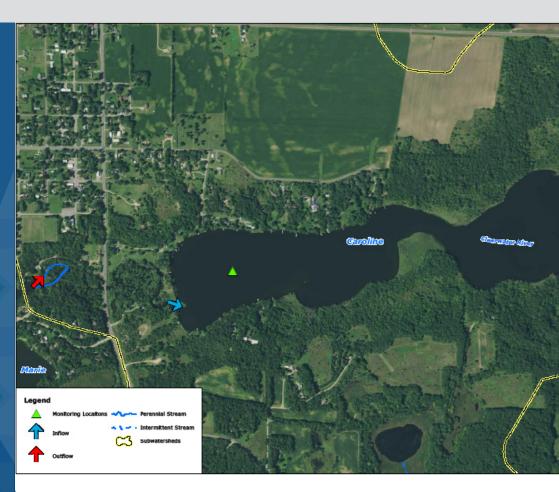
Status

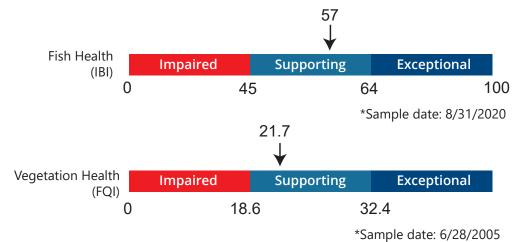
Impaired, TMDL completed in 2010



TO DO LIST

Manage upstream loads
AIS management
Internal load management
study









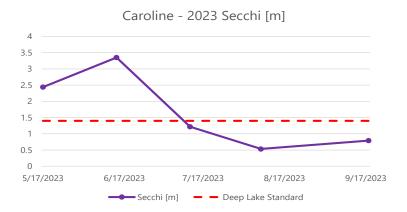
LAKE CAROLINE



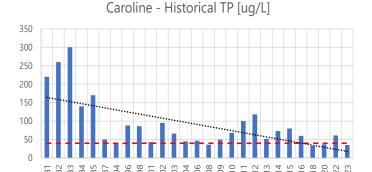
2023 Water Quality

Caroline - 2023 TP [ug/L] 60 50 40 30 20 10 5/17/2023 6/17/2023 7/17/2023 8/17/2023 9/17/2023 TP [ug/L] — Deep Lake Standard

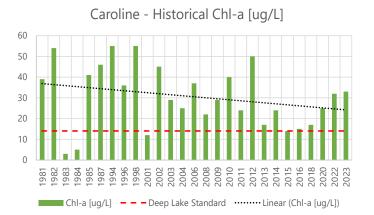
Caroline - 2023 Chl-a [ug/L] 60 50 40 30 20 10 5/17/2023 6/17/2023 7/17/2023 8/17/2023 9/17/2023

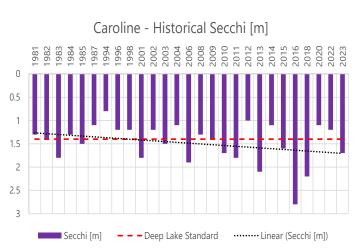


Historic Water Quality



- - Deep Lake Standard

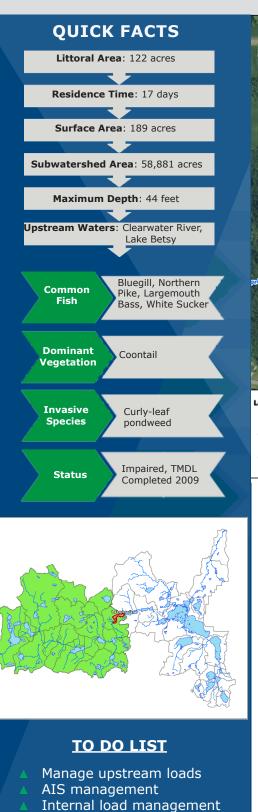




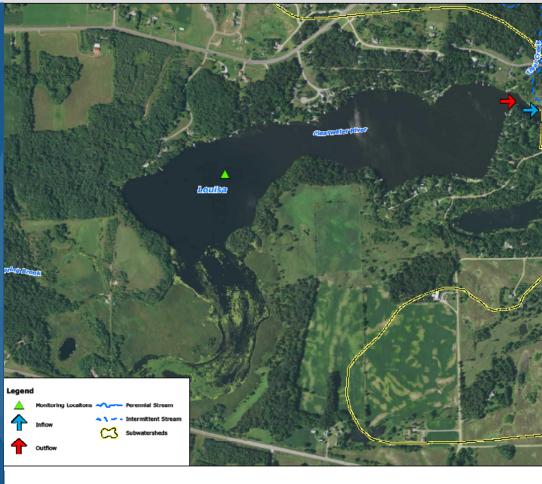


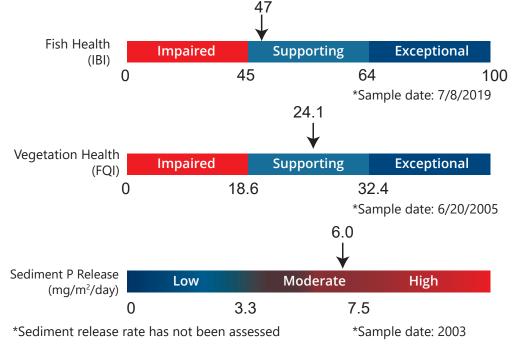
LAKE LOUISA





study



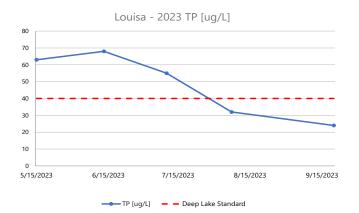


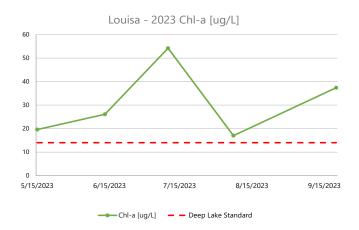


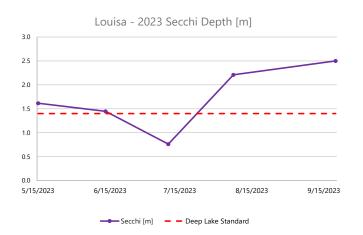
LAKE LOUISA

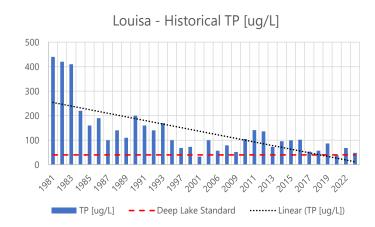


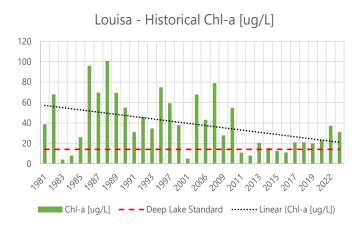
2023 Water Quality

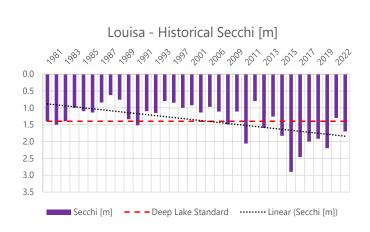








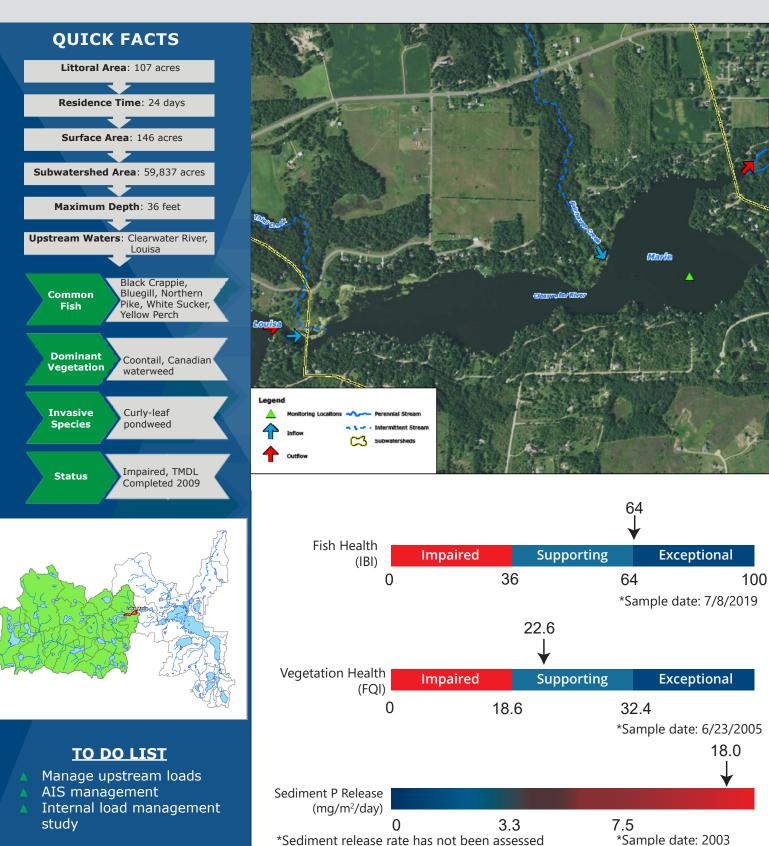






LAKE MARIE



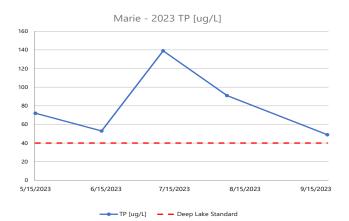


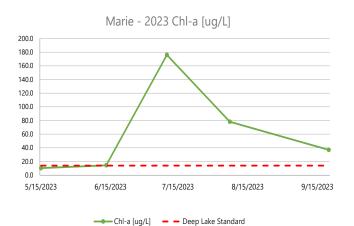


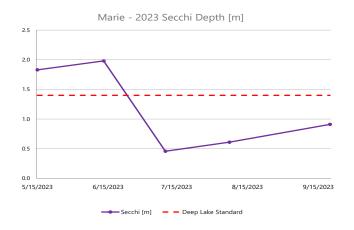
LAKE MARIE

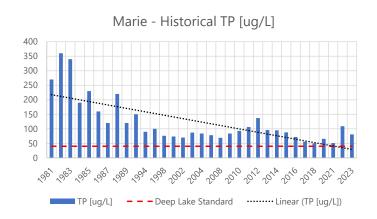


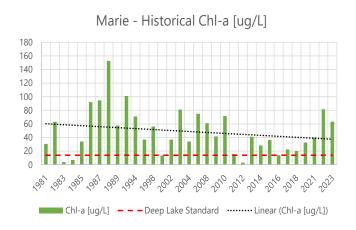
2023 Water Quality

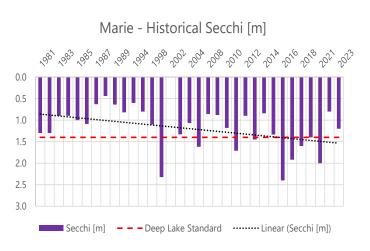








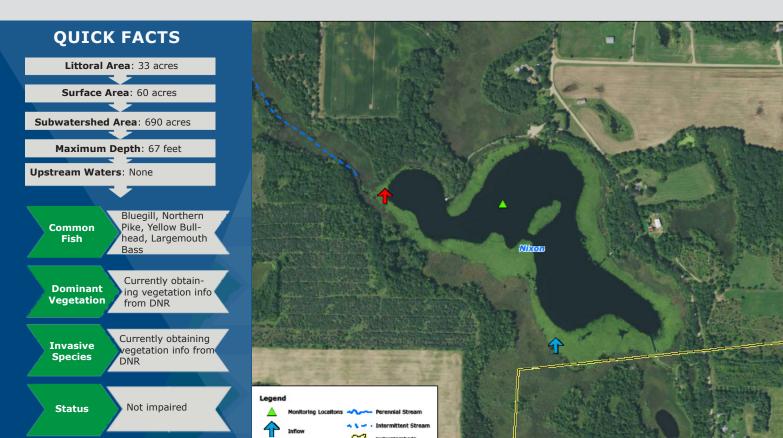


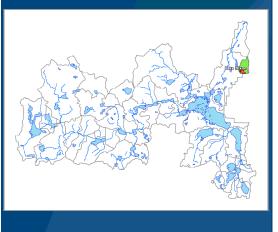




NIXON LAKE



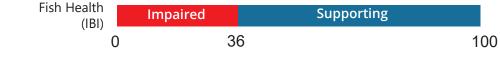




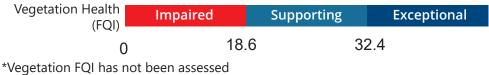
TO DO LIST

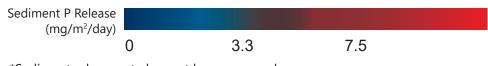
Protect water quality Manage upstream loads

AIS management and prevention



*Fish IBI has not been assessed





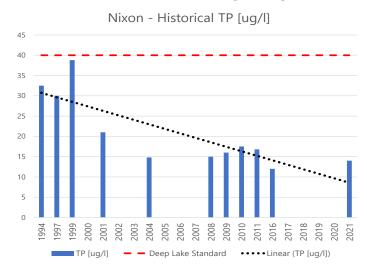


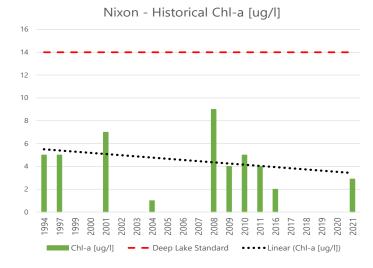
NIXON LAKE

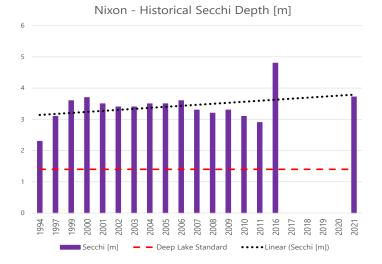


2023 Water Quality

Lake not sampled



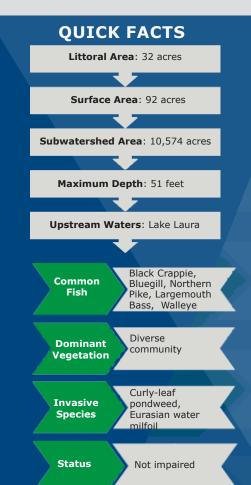


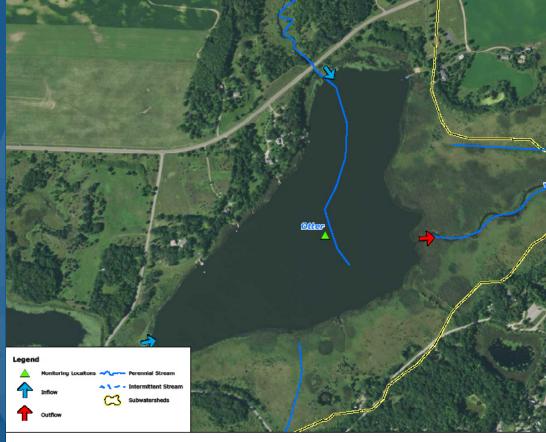


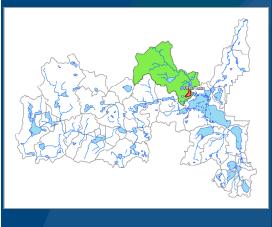


OTTER LAKE









TO DO LIST

Protect water quality
Manage upstream loads



Sediment P Release (mg/m²/day)	Low	Moderate	:	High
(mg/m/day))	3.3	7.5	

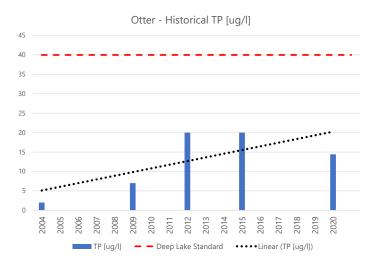


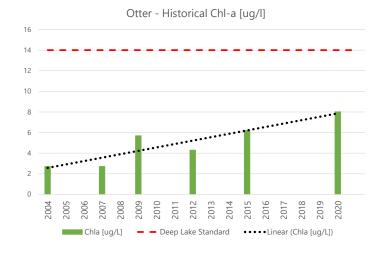
OTTER LAKE



2023 Water Quality

Lake not sampled



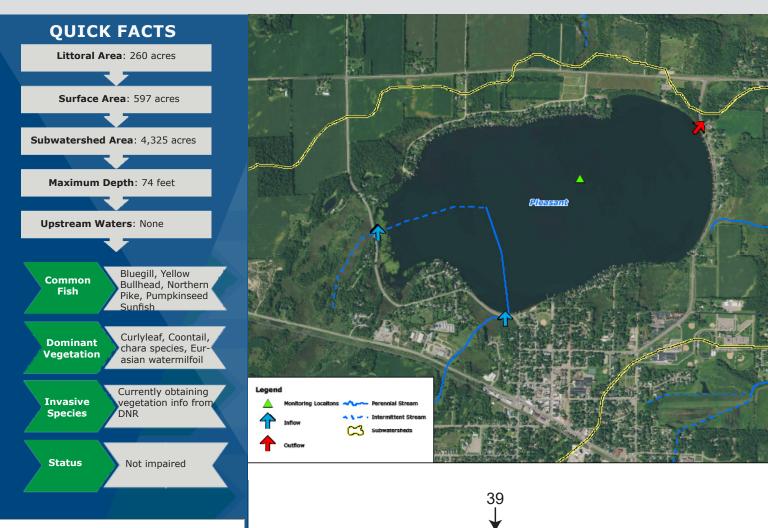






PLEASANT LAKE





Fish Health

Vegetation Health

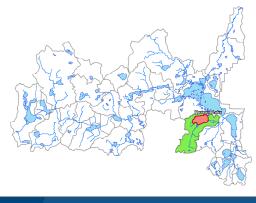
(IBI) 0

(FQI)

0

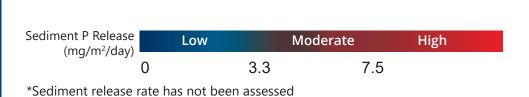
Impaired

Impaired



TO DO LIST

Manage watershed loadsProtect water qualityOperate outlet to minimize flooding



18.6

45

Supporting

Supporting

64

32.4

31.2



Exceptional

*Sample date: 8/15/2019

Exceptional

*Sample date: 8/21/2017

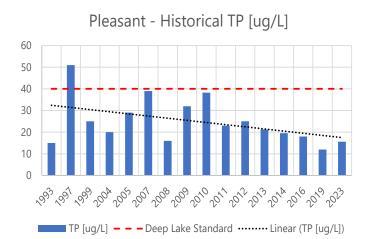
100

PLEASANT LAKE



2023 Water Quality

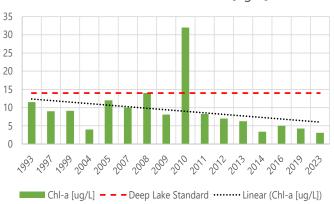
Pleasant - 2023 TP [ug/L] 45 40 35 30 25 20 15 10 5 5/16/2023 6/16/2023 7/16/2023 8/16/2023 9/16/2023



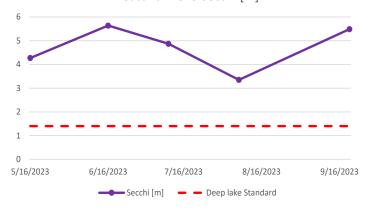




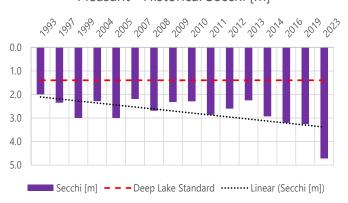
Pleasant - Historical Chl-a [ug/L]



Pleasant - 2023 Secchi [m]



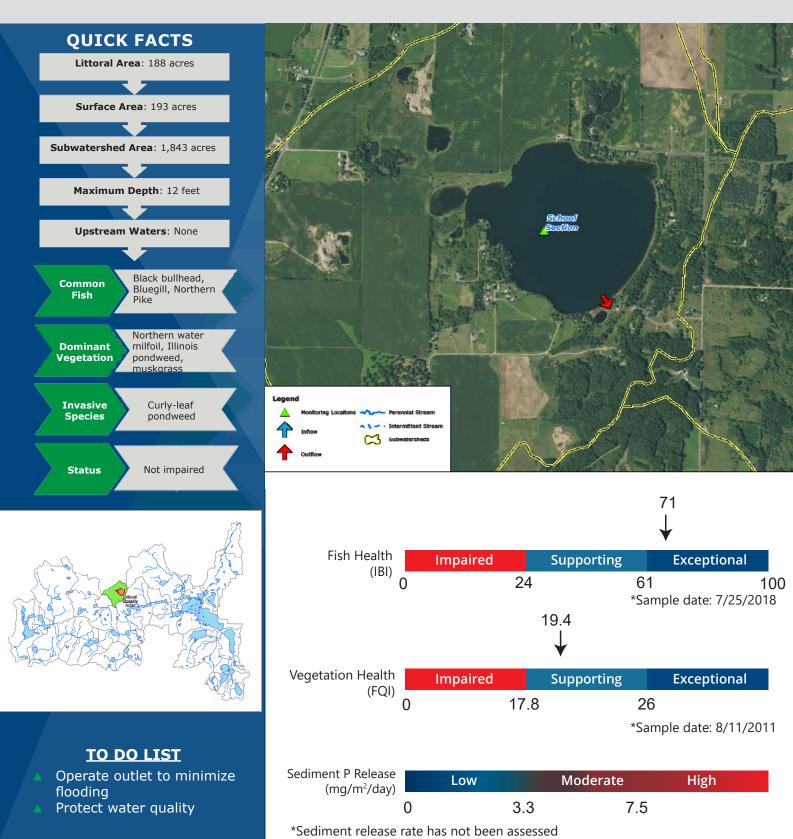
Pleasant - Historical Secchi [m]





SCHOOL SECTION LAKE





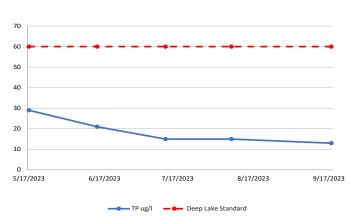


SCHOOL SECTION LAKE



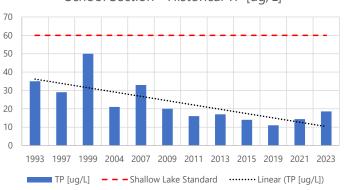
2023 Water Quality

School Section - 2023 TP [ug/L]

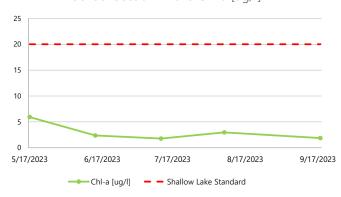


Historic Water Quality

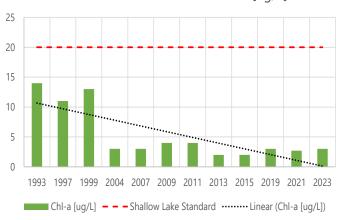
School Section - Historical TP [ug/L]



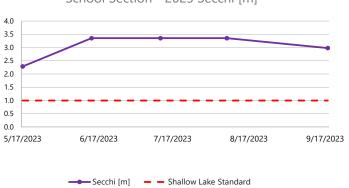
School Section - 2023 Chl-a [ug/l]



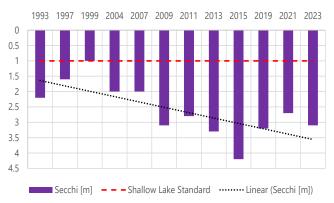
School Section - Historical Chl-a [ug/L]



School Section - 2023 Secchi [m]



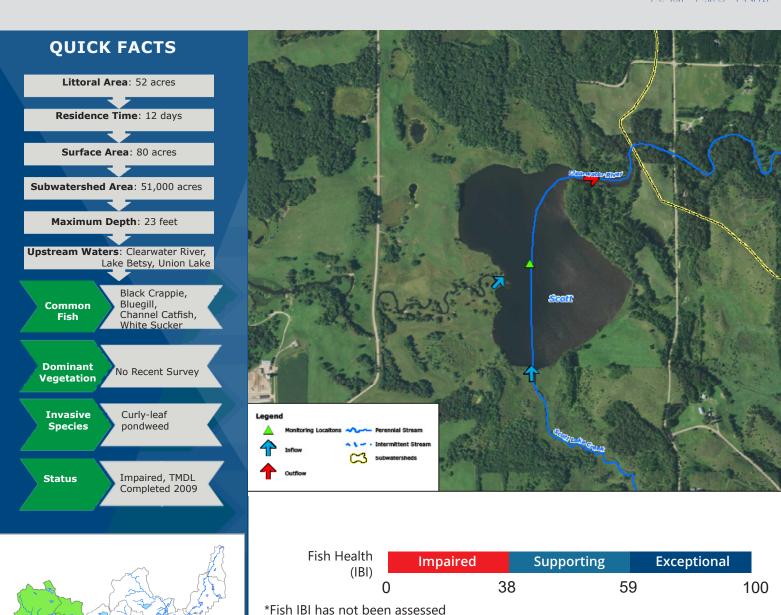
School Section - Historical Secchi [m]





SCOTT LAKE

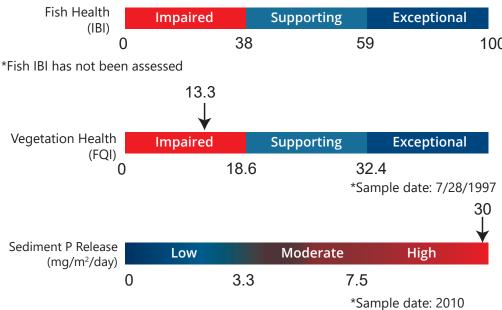






TO DO LIST

Rough fish management
Manage upstream loads
Internal load management
study



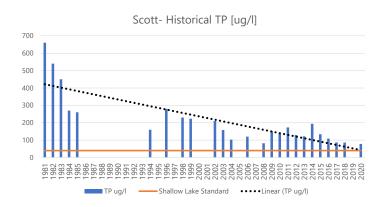


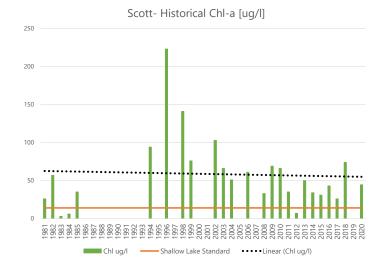
SCOTT LAKE

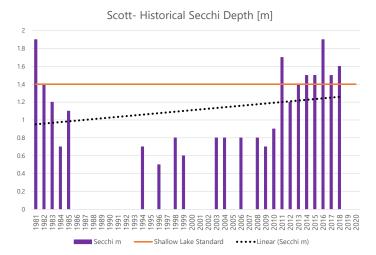


2023 Water Quality

Lake not sampled









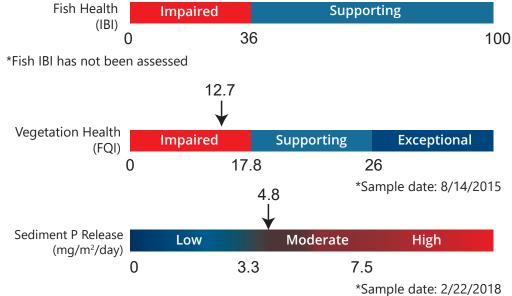
SWARTOUT LAKE



QUICK FACTS Littoral Area: 171 acres Residence Time: 460 days Surface Area: 171 acres Subwatershed Area: 5,551 acres Maximum Depth: 12 feet **Upstream Waters**: Henshaw, Albion Black Bullhead, Black Crappie, Common Fish Common Carp **Dominant** Coontail, sago Vegetation pondweed, bushy pondweed Invasive Curly-leaf **Species** pondweed Impaired, TMDL Completed 2010 Status Fish Health **Impaired** (IBI) 36 *Fish IBI has not been assessed 12.7 Vegetation Health **Impaired** Supporting (FQI) 0 17.8

TO DO LIST

- AIS management
- Rough fish management
- Manage upstream loads



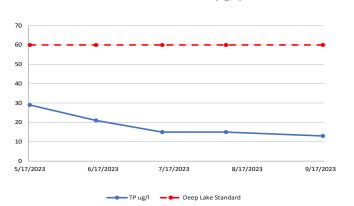


SWARTOUT LAKE

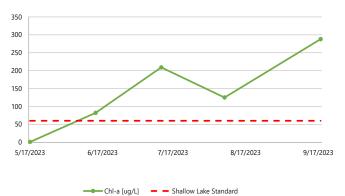


2023 Water Quality

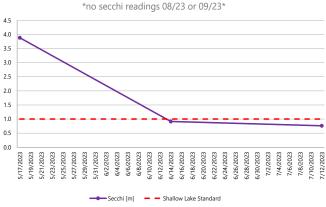
School Section - 2023 TP [ug/L]



Swartout - 2023 Chl-a [ug/L]

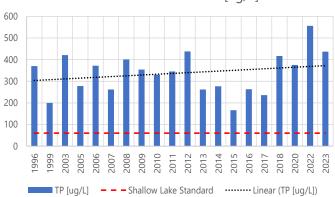


Swartout - 2023 Secchi [m]

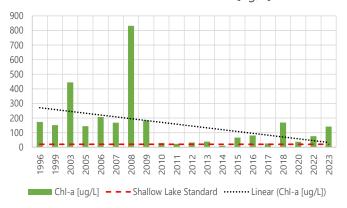


Historic Water Quality

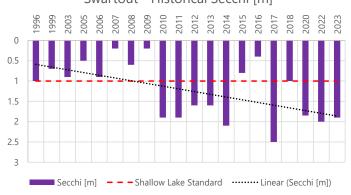
Swartout - Historical TP [ug/L]



Swartout - Historical Chl-a [ug/L]



Swartout - Historical Secchi [m]

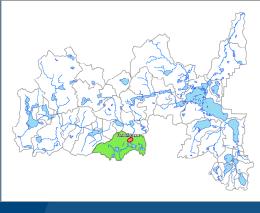




UNION LAKE

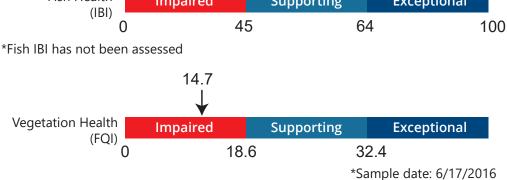


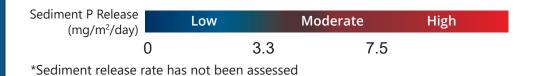
QUICK FACTS Littoral Area: 27 acres Residence Time: 291 days Surface Area: 93 acres Subwatershed Area: 4,741 acres Maximum Depth: 35 feet **Upstream Waters**: None Black Crappie, Bluegill, Northern Common Pike, Largemouth Bass Coontail, curly-leaf **Dominant** pondweed, sago Vegetation pondweed Curly-leaf Invasive pondweed **Species** Removed from Impaired Waters **Status** List in 2022, ,TMDL Completed 2009 Fish Health Supporting **Exceptional Impaired**



TO DO LIST

Manage upstream loads







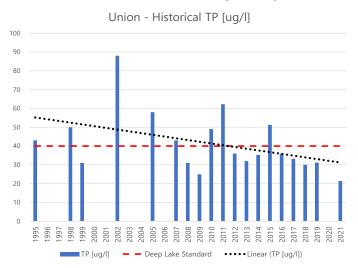
UNION LAKE



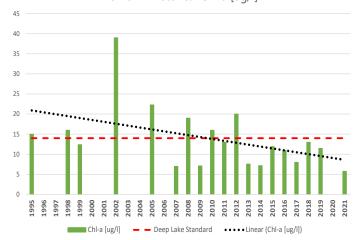
2023 Water Quality

Lake not sampled

Historic Water Quality







Union - Historical Secchi Depth [m]

