

Here is the first of the quarterly updates of the citizen led 14 Mile Joint Watershed Committee. Most of you know that this watershed feeds into all our lakes here in Rome; Camelot, Sherwood, Arrowhead and Petenwell, so its important to the future of our community. Watch for future updates and agendas through the Town of Rome and TriLakes websites.

### **14 Mile Watershed Joint Committee Fall Report November 21, 2017**

Many of you were there when this committee was formed with a motion at the 2016 TriLakes annual meeting, following two years of blue-green algae warnings. Its purpose was to provide assistance to TriLakes in identifying the causes of our lakes' water quality issues and helping to identify solutions. There have been a few changes since then and the committee is now called the 14 Mile Watershed Joint Committee. The change in name reflects the inclusion of the Town of Rome as a joint supporter of this committee, as well as an expansion of members to include our friends at Petenwell, and all waters within our town. It's an all-inclusive body dealing with all surface water issues in our town, with guidance and funding provided by the Rome Town Board and TriLakes Board.

We are a working committee with groups established to investigate water quality issues from the start of our watershed upstream to the final emptying into Lake Petenwell, as well as all water resources within Rome. Our objective is to identify issues originating within our own lakes, as well as those caused by upstream sources. So far, our workgroups include the following:

- **Watershed flow and nitrate testing** at the start and end of each lake, as well as at key upstream points. Monthly tests are performed for nitrates, phosphorous and dissolved oxygen, all indicators of water quality. Flow monitoring is also performed to link readings with water volume. Event testing is performed after heavy rainfall or discharges to monitor the effect.
  - **Soil testing** was begun around our lakes this past spring to identify nutrient levels resident within soils around our lake lots and beach clubs. Some nutrients occur naturally, while others are residual fertilizer or septic system output not absorbed by plants and grasses. Tests will be expanded next season
  - **Lake Friendly Fertilizer** program was begun to establish standards that could be
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applied around our lakes community to minimize the runoff of excess fertilizer into our lakes. The workgroup took input from applicators to determine the best practices that insure a healthy lawn while also insuring a healthy lake. These recommended practices will be adapted to town ordinances and communicated to applicators and citizens in a series of workshops.

- **Water Turbines** to reduce the algae buildup in some bays and coves around our lakes. Experience this summer shows success in moving the algae away from shorelines and also eliminating some growth as it's moved into deeper water. The program will be structured and expanded to confirm the early observations and help property owners find some relief.
  - **Shoreline habitat restoration** has been recommended to reduce erosion of soils and nutrients into our lake system and also improve fish habitat, thereby reducing the need to plant fish. Two members have attended workshops and have become certified habitat specialists who will help identify how minor changes can be made to shorelines to reduce erosion and seepage of fertilizers into our lakes. A workshop is planned for next season.
  - **Upstream agriculture inclusion** is a major part of our focus. We know some of our issues come from upstream and we are taking steps to quantify the issue and build relationships with our neighbors to work with them on solutions.
  - **Outreach** to political and professional resources is important to understand what programs or expertise is available to help us resolve our water quality issues. Additionally, there are other watershed groups and lakes groups already working on similar issues who may be able to help us.
  - **Nine Key Element Plan** - through the efforts of our Adams County Conservationist and advisor Wally Sedlar, we received a grant for the study of our watershed. The DNR is funding the grant and collaborating on the steps. It's a multi-agency public sector endeavor and some of the land use mapping and analysis has been already done. Here are the steps:
    - Identify the causes and sources
    - Estimate pollutant loading into the watershed and the expected load reductions
    - Describe management measures that will achieve load reductions and targeted critical areas
    - Estimate the amounts of technical and financial assistance and the relevant authorities needed to implement the plan
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- Develop an information/education component
- Develop a project schedule
- Develop the interim, measurable milestones
- Identify indicators to measure progress and make adjustments
- Develop a monitoring component

The Improvement of our 14 Mile watershed is an ambitious undertaking, but very necessary when you consider that three of the four lakes inhabited in Rome are on the state's impaired list. While we have a great committee of volunteers, this issue will take all of us in Rome to resolve it. There are two members from each of the four lakes on our committee, a non-lake resident representing streams and other water bodies, a DNR adviser, an Adams County Conservationist adviser, and our Rome town board and Trilakes advisers.

Here's our committee member list. Give them a big pat on the back and thank you when you see them.

- Joe Greco                      Arrowhead
- Ron Foster                     Arrowhead
- Carson Heineke               Camelot
- Jerry Jensen                   Camelot
- Scott Bordeaux               Petenwell
- Rick Georgeson               Petenwell
- Dave Trudeau                Sherwood
- Jerry Wiessinger               Sherwood
- John Endrizzi                 Town-wide
- Scott Provost                 DNR Water Resources Management Specialist
- Wally Sedlar                  Adams County Conservationist
- Bob Benkowski               TriLakes Board advisor
- Wayne Johnson               Rome Town Board advisor

**A resident attendee at our last meeting volunteered to assist one of our workgroups. We encourage that, and we encourage everyone's attendance at our monthly meetings.**

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**We meet the second Monday of each month at the Rome Town Hall at 2:00 PM. Join us there, and if you can't make it, watch for us on the community cable channel. And if you have some skills to share, come help us in this endeavor.**

**Don Ystad Chairman**

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