FALL CREEK POND Management Plan 2020

Village of Fall Creek
2020

FALL CREEK POND
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP
Team 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VISION STATEMENT:

Fall Creek Pond is a valued community asset which provides outstanding recreational and aesthetic opportunities for our community members and visitors to enjoy today and into the future.

Fall Creek Pond Community Partnership Team 2020.

The Fall Creek Pond Community Partnership team collaborated over the summer of 2020 to develop lake management goals and activities to restore Fall Creek Pond. Members of the Fall Creek Village Board, Fall Creek Pond Lake Management District, Village of Fall Creek staff, Fall Creek School District staff, Fall Creek Lions Club, several Fall Creek community members, Eau Claire County Land Conservation Division staff and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources staff from lake management, water resources, water management and fisheries management. It will require routine communication and long-term commitments from the Partnership Team to implement the management activities and to achieve the improvements to Fall Creek Pond outlined in this plan.

Village Board/Inland Lake District – President

Eau Claire County – Land Conservation Division

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – West Central Region

INTRODUCTION

The Fall Creek Pond Community Partnership Team (FCPCPT) completed this management plan over a series of meetings during July, August and September 2020. The FCPCPT developed this plan to guide the Fall Creek Community to improve and maintain Fall Creek Pond as a valued recreational asset. The FCPCPT determined that sedimentation, excessive filamentous algae and aquatic vegetation are the major threats limiting the community's recreational uses of the pond. The improvement of Fall Creek Pond as a community recreational asset lies in the hands of the citizens of Fall Creek and the partnerships, they have developed to implement the management activities described in this plan. The implementation of the lake management activities outlined in this plan will restore recreational uses of Fall Creek Pond.

The FCPCPT developed lake management activities and goals for Sediment Management, Habitat, Water Quality and Community Capacity. Lake management actions and responsibilities were developed to achieve each lake management goal. The FCPCPT developed:

(1) Lake management activities needed to restore Fall Creek Pond.
(2) Which team member, partner, organization or institution leads the implementation for a given lake management activity and their associated responsibilities.
(3) Who are the partners and their respective responsibilities to successfully implement the lake management activity?
(4) What is the lake management activity implementation schedule?
(5) What/who are the funding sources to complete the lake management activity.

Sustaining the recreational and ecosystem benefits that Fall Creek Pond provides to the Fall Creek community will require the continued investments of time, talent and money of the entire Fall Creek Pond Community Partnership Team.

BACKGROUND

Fall Creek Pond is an approximately 17-acre (Wildlands School Map https://www.wildlandschool.net/webfiles/fnitools/documents/2005_fall_creek_pond.pdf) shallow impoundment (average depth 4-5 feet) on Fall Creek, Eau Claire County located in the Village of Fall Creek. The pond was created in the 1873 when Simon Randall built a dam and flour mill on Fall Creek near current day Keller Park. The dam has been repaired and rebuilt multiple times over the past 150 years. The dam was most recently rebuilt in 1986 and a major dredging project in Fall Creek Pond was completed in 1987. A sediment trap was constructed in the far south end of the pond in the early 1990's.

Fall Creek Pond provides valued outdoor recreational activities to community members and visitors of the Village of Fall Creek. The Village of Fall Creek created the Fall Creek Pond Inland Lake and Protection District which is a unit of government to actively manage the pond for the use and enjoyment of community residents and visitors. Over the years Fall Creek Pond has provided countless hours of outdoor enjoyment for fisherman, paddlers, wildlife viewing and the solitude of being on or near the water to enjoy the beauty of the pond.

The very nature of the pond being created by the dam on Fall Creek lends itself to a waterbody that requires ongoing management to protect the recreational and environmental uses it provides to the community. Fall Creek Pond has a relatively large drainage area which contributes fairly high amounts of sediment and nutrients resulting in excessive plant and algae growth, as well as constant but slow infilling of the pond. The "Healthy Soils & Healthy Waters" watershed plan (WCWRPC 2017) identified goals for the Fall Creek Watershed as watershed within the Eau Claire River which requires high levels of reductions of nutrients and sediments from agricultural lands. Achieving these goals will lead to significant improvements for Fall Creek Pond.

The FCPCPT identified sedimentation, water quality, fisheries and wildlife and sustaining the community capacity needed to improve the pond as the most current management needs for Fall Creek Pond.

SEDIMENTATION

Sediment infilling within Fall Creek Pond was identified as the highest priority needed to be addressed to improve the recreational uses. Fall Creek Pond receives a relatively high amount of sediment from the watershed draining into the pond. The watershed above Fall Creek Pond has been as a high priority for controlling erosion (WCWRPC 2017). Protecting Fall Creek Pond from the impacts of sedimentation will require routine cleaning of the sediment trap at the south end of the pond and the continued reduction of erosion from the uplands in the watershed. Sedimentation is the act or transfer of this sand, silt, and

soil from shoreland and upland areas into the surface waters and the transport of sediment downstream resulting in the infilling of the pond.

WATER QUALITY and WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

The water quality in Fall Creek Pond is characterized by excessive aquatic plant and filamentous algae growth. The entire south half of the pond is often entirely covered with nuisance filamentous algae limiting fishing and boating uses. The nutrient associated with the excessive algae growth in Fall Creek Pond is phosphorus. Multiple studies identify the major sources of phosphorus to the pond are the agricultural and urban lands which drain to the pond (WCWRPC 2017) Figure 1.

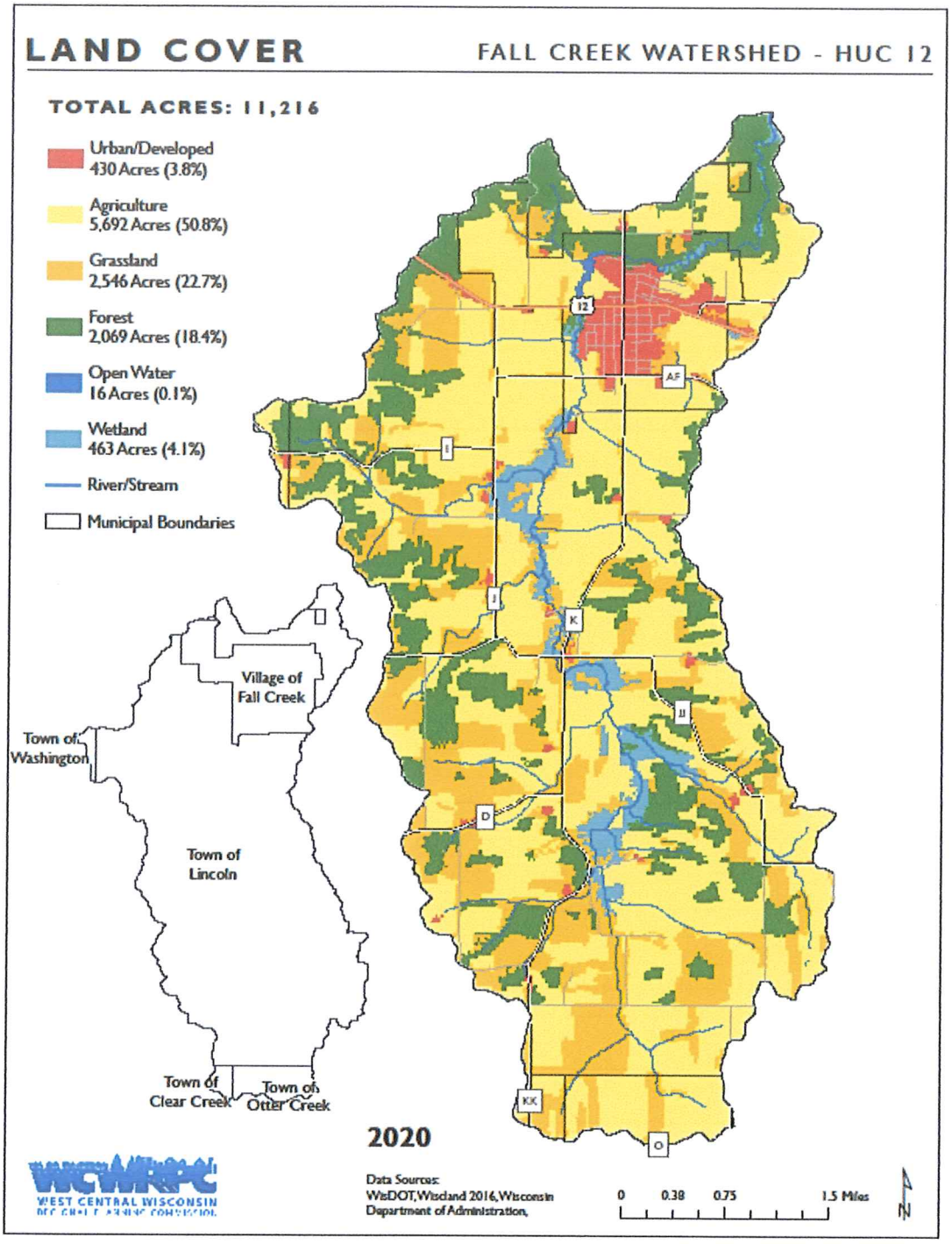
Water quality monitoring in Fall Creek Pond and Fall Creek above the pond have found total phosphorus concentrations are very high often exceeding current water quality standards by a factor of five.

The Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition was formed in 2015 and completed a comprehensive strategy for reducing phosphorus and sediment inputs to the lake from the watershed which was approved by EPA July 2017. The strategy titled "Healthy Soils and Healthy Waters – A Community Strategy for the Eau Claire River Watershed" provides the guiding strategies and priorities to reduce nutrient and sediment inputs which when fully implemented will lead to a dramatic improvement in water quality, habitat and the recreational value in Fall Creek Pond https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Nonpoint/9keyElement/planMap.html.

The Eau Claire County Land Conservation Division (LCD) is currently focused on working with farmers within the Fall Creek watershed on installation of lower cost cropland practices which can help control sediment loss and nutrient loading to the Fall Creek pond.

The Eau Claire County LCD applied for and was awarded a grant from the Wisconsin DNR through the Targeted Runoff Management (TRM) program. This grant is being used to provide financial and technical assistance to farmers within the Fall Creek watershed for the installation of conservation practices such as grasses waterways, diversions, dams, fencing to limit livestock access to streambanks, un-used manure storage closure, and cover crops. The LCD continues to provide additional funding and hosts workshops to assist farmers with the development and implementation of soil health and nutrient management plans.

Figure 1. Fall Creek Land Cover Map (WCWRPC)



FISHERIES, AQUATIC HABITAT AND WILDLIFE

Fishing is one of the primary recreational activities that occurs in Fall Creek Pond; improving the sport fishery is important. Fisheries surveys have not been conducted on Fall Creek Pond, but it is safe to assume that it contains a warmwater fish community. Speaking with anglers, the primary predator species is largemouth bass and the main panfish species is bluegill. Largemouth bass and bluegill are highly reproductive species and generally habitat limitation or predator-prey interactions limit their populations, so stocking is not necessary. Below are topics to consider when developing fish habitat and fishing opportunities in the Fall Creek Pond (Joseph Gerbyshak Personal Communication WDNR 2020):

Nearshore course woody habitat: Improving habitat for bass and bluegill, will require enhancing course woody habitat because it provides spawning habitat for adults, refuge habitat for juveniles and feeding habitat for predators. This can be accomplished though the additions of trees to the shallow water areas of the lake through tree drops or a fish stick project (Joseph Gerbyshak WDNR 2020 personal communication).

Recreational Access: Access is a critical component for public use of Fall Creek Pond. Public access to the pond is a boat landing, fishing pier and public areas along the shoreline. It is important to appropriately manage the aquatic vegetation in these locations to allow for fishing and boating opportunities. Additionally, fishing can be improved in recreational areas when adding course woody habitat near fishing piers or shoreline access locations.

Aquatic Vegetation: An aquatic plant survey was conducted and mapped by the WDNR in August 2020 (Figure 2). Eight discrete plant beds were identified. The survey found 5 common aquatic plant species and did not find any aquatic invasive plant species (Table 1). Aquatic plants were found rooting to a depth of 7 feet. The northern half of the lake has a narrow vegetated nearshore zone with open water through the center of the lake. The southern half of the lake (Bed 6) is non-navigable during the growing season due to dense vegetation and filamentous algae.

Dense aquatic vegetation can be a recreational use nuisance and create issues that can affect the fishery. Areas of dense vegetation and little flow can at certain times create areas with very low oxygen levels which decreases the amount of fish habitat. A study should be conducted within the larger dense beds of aquatic plants to determine if any significant areas of low oxygen levels are occurring during the summer. Additionally, too much vegetation can lead to slow growth or "stunting" in fish populations. Slow growth occurs because there is an abundance of cover for prey to hide and the predator cannot locate them. This creates an abundance of small bluegill and can lead to slow growth in largemouth bass. Growth rates can be determined by aging fish captured in a survey to

see if slow growth is limiting the fishery in this waterbody. (Joseph Gerbyshak WDNR personal communication 2020).

Harvesting aquatic vegetation should occur in Bed 6 to decrease the area of nuisance aquatic vegetation and filamentous algae, improve the ability predator fishes to prey on forage fish species and greatly improve lake access for recreational users. The 6.5 acres of the pond area to be harvest is identified by cross hatching on Figure 2. The Village of Fall Creek will need to obtain a WDNR Aquatic Plant Control Mechanical/Manual permit (https://dnr.wi.gov/lakes/plants/forms/). The Village should consult with the WDNR Lakes Biologist when making the application to obtain the permit.

Figure 2. Aquatic Plant Survey and Proposed Harvesting Map 2020 WDNR.

Table 1. Aquatic plant species list

Scientific name	Common name	Beds where found
Ceratophyllum demersum	Coontail	1,2,3,4,5,7
Elodea canadensis	Common waterweed	2,3,4,5,7,8
Potamogeton natans	Floating-leaf pondweed	1,2,4,5,7
Potamogeton pusillus	Small pondweed	2,3,4,5,7,8
Sagittaria cuneata	Arum-leave arrowhead	1,3

Goose Management: Fall Creek Pond currently and historically has a large resident population of Canada geese. The geese create a nuisance problem in the nearshore areas of Keller Park and cause crop damage to the agricultural fields adjacent to the pond. Controlling the number of Canada geese on the pond will be accomplished by conducting an egg oiling program each spring, maintaining a wide riparian buffer of natural vegetation around the shoreline of the pond and conducting a goose round up when the population builds to a nuisance level. The Village of Fall Creek will need to contact the USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services Office in Rhinelander, WI (https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/wildlifedamage/sa_reports/sa_informational+notebook/sa_contacts/ct_offices1) to develop and get approval for the management of the nuisance Canada Geese population on the pond.

COMMUNITY CAPACITY

The single most important activity for the community of Fall Creek to achieve will be to develop and sustain the community support, interest and citizen and financial resources to implement the lake management activities included in this plan. This will require the leadership of the village board, lake district board, school district, community organizations and partners to prioritize their respective responsibilities outlined in the lake management implementation tables to ensure the lake management activities are implemented and completed as scheduled. Implementing the lake management activities will make Fall Creek Pond a highly valued recreation asset for our community to enjoy.

LAKE MANAGEMENT GOALS AND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Sediment Management Goal:

Sedimentation in Fall Creek Pond will be minimized by maintaining the sediment trap near the head end of the Pond and assisting implementing watershed soil erosion control goals for the Fall Creek Watershed.

Table 2. Sediment Management Implementation Activities.

Lake Management Activity	**Activity Leader and Responsibilities**	**Activity Partners and Responsibilities**	**Implementation Schedule**	**Funding Sources**
Annual sediment trap maintenance and evaluation of sediment traps for sediment infilling	*Fall Creek Inland Lake District* • Assess Traps • Advocate within Village of Fall Creek community • Coordinate Permitting activities and Project Management	*Eau Claire County-Land Conservation Division* • Permitting and technical assistance *ECRWC* • Coordination and implementation of EC River Watershed Plan *WDNR* • Issue maintenance dredging permit	Dredge sediment trap when trap water depth is 5 feet. Update maintenance dredging permit as needed	*Fall Creek Inland Lake District* • Annual tax levy • Community fund raising events
Obtain a maintenance dredging permit as needed clean sediment trap	*Village of Fall Creek* • Prepare and submit permit application	*WDNR Water Management* • Review and Approve Permit	Fall 2020	*Fall Creek Inland Lake District* • annual tax levy
Implementation of Fall Creek Watershed recommendations for sediment and nutrient reduction goals in the "Healthy Soils and Health Waters – A Community Strategy for the Eau Claire River" watershed plan	• *Eau Claire County – Land Conservation Division* lead implementation	*Fall Creek School District* • Implementation of Eau Claire River Watershed Grant *Village of Fall Creek* • Continue participation in ECRWC	Annually	*Eau Claire County-Land Conservation Division* • Water grants (WDNR Targeted Runoff Management Grant and EPA Environmental Education Grant)

Eau County Budget Process

The Eau Claire County budgeting process begins annually in March and the final budget is approved at the November county board meeting. It will be critical for the FCPCPT to understand their role in this process and to participate at the critical points within the process.

Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat Goal:

Maintain a healthy fishery and the associated in lake and shoreland habitats providing visually appealing natural environment supporting a diverse and resilient community of fish, wildlife and native plants.

Table 3. Habitat Management Implementation Activities.

Lake Management Activity	**Activity Leader and Responsibilities**	**Activity Partners and Responsibilities**	**Implementation Schedule**	**Funding Sources**
Coarse woody habitat improvement	*Fall Creek Lake District* • Organize project, permitting • Community Volunteer Labor	*WDNR Fisheries* • Technical Expertise • Labor	Annually as trees become available	*WDNR* • Labor *Fall Creek Inland Lake District* • Annual Tax Levy
Dissolved oxygen assessment in dense aquatic plant beds	*WDNR Water Resources* • Conduct Assessment		2021	*WDNR* • In Kind
Fisheries Survey	*WDNR Fisheries Management* • Conduct Assessment		2021	*WDNR* • In Kind
Canada Geese Management	Lake District – Obtain approval from USDA-APHIS-Wildlife Services	*Community volunteers* • Conduct goose egg oiling *APHIS* • Conduct goose roundup when goose population exceeds 20 geese	Annually Mid to Late April	*Fall Creek Inland Lake District*

Water Quality:

Water quality will be improved by maintaining a major portion of the surface of the pond clear of nuisance algae and aquatic vegetation, making the pond aesthetically pleasing. Water quality will be improved by routine harvesting of nuisance aquatic vegetation, minimizing the amount of sediment entering the lake and implementation of watershed management goals and activities.

Table 4. Water Quality Management Implementation Activities.

Lake Management Activity	**Activity Leader and Responsibilities**	**Activity Partners and Responsibilities**	**Implementation Schedule**	**Funding Sources**
Harvest aquatic plants	*Village of Fall Creek* • Obtain aquatic plant harvesting permit • harvest aquatic plants • Maintain and operate aquatic plant harvester	*Fall Creek Inland Lake District* • Labor and Funding *WDNR* • Issue aquatic plant harvesting permit	Annually	*Fall Creek Inland Lake District* • Annual tax levy
Implement Eau Claire River Watershed 9 Key Element Plan	*Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition* • ECRWC Plan Implementation	*FCPCPT* • Participate in plan implementation activity and advocate for plan implementation strategies	Annually and ongoing	*EPA* *WDNR* *Counties in Eau Claire River Watershed* *USDA*

Community Capacity:

The community of Fall Creek will engage its citizens, community organizations and partners in making collaborative decisions and sharing responsibility for implementing management activities which sustain and improve Fall Creek Pond as a valued community asset.

Table 5. Community Capacity Development Implementation Activities.

Lake Management Activity	Activity Leader and Responsibilities	Activity Partners and Responsibilities	Implementation Schedule	Funding Sources
Build community, social, cultural, organizational and institutional support	*Fall Creek Inland Lake District* • Encourage Leadership to participate with other community organizations sharing importance of Fall Creek Pond with the community • Schedule annual meeting with FCPCPT to develop annual Lake Management Plan implementation activities, budgets and celebrate successes	*Eau Claire County-Land Conservation Division* • Continue to represent community importance of Fall Creek Pond within Eau Claire County governmental institutions and agricultural organizations .	Annually and Ongoing	All Partners
Sustain the capacity to implement lake management activities	*FCPCPT* • Be the advocacy organization for protecting and improving Fall Creek Pond which meets two times annually ensuring the lake management activities are implemented	*Fall Creek Community* • Recognize Fall Creek Pond as recreational infrastructure that is critical to sustaining our community and celebrate the pond as a community resource	Annually and Ongoing	Partner Organizations

It was a privilege to assist the Fall Creek Pond Community Partnership Team in developing the Fall Creek Pond Management Plan 2020. Buzz Sorge, Buzz Sorge Consulting, LLC. The FCPCPT would like to thank Dane Zook for his time and talent organizing this planning effort.

State of Wisconsin
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
1300 W. Clairemont Ave.
Eau Claire WI 54701

Tony Evers, Governor
Preston D. Cole, Secretary
Telephone 608-266-2621
Toll Free 1-888-936-7463
TTY Access via relay - 711

January 11, 2021

Jared McKee
122 E Lincoln ave
Fall Creek WI 54742

Subject: Lake Management Plan Approval

Dear Mr. McKee:

This letter is to notify the Village of Fall Creek that the Fall Creek Pond Management Plan meets the criteria of Administrative Code Chapter NR 193 and thus the Wisconsin DNR has approved the Plan. Management activities identified in the Plan are eligible for funding under NR 193 subject to the eligibility requirements of that program.

The Department must certify that all proposed projects recommended in an approved plan comply with the provisions of the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA). This certification could involve additional public informational meetings or other environmental assessment action.

Thanks to you and the lake community for continuing your efforts to protect and improve Fall Creek Pond.

Sincerely,

Jodi Lepsch

Water Resources Management Specialist
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Phone: (715) 495-0765
Fax: (715) 839-6076
Jodi.Lepsch@Wisconsin.gov