There is an elephant in the room. As I write this year-end letter, summarizing the activities of SLPA seems rather shallow. In March of this year, we heard new phrases: novel coronavirus and then Covid-19. This was an earthquake kind of moment for all Americans. As I write, over 134,000 citizens have lost their lives in a three month period, and we approach almost three million cases diagnosed with the tally increasing every day. Choices need to be made on a personal level and also as a family. Is there really a right or wrong decision or simply making choices about our own behavior? It has been noted that every generation faces some type of catastrophic moment that causes us to examine the very soul of our nation. Well, this is our moment in time with no easy answers going forward. Perhaps all that can be said is “stay safe, treasure your family and keep hope alive!”

We always strive to support our mission statement of the Spirit Lake Protective Association (SLPA). “The SLPA exists to preserve and protect the quality of life and the quality of water so that we can enjoy our beautiful lakes.” We have been blessed with generations of dedicated volunteers who strive to live out these values for the benefit of all who call this place home. We have also been blessed with our membership which responds to the ecological and quality of life issues on Big Spirit.

The annual fireworks display has gone on for decades on July 3 of every year. People enjoy this celebration of our nation and the privilege of living in America. This responsibility falls on SLPA to coordinate the effort to pay for the fireworks show. For our board, this is a “quality of life” issue where thousands of people gather at the lake for the event. Last year $19,000 was raised on the show and our “Century Club” members paid for 80% of the total cost. We stated the need and you responded. Thank you to all who made this happen.

On the dues statement there is a line item “Dock Contributions.” As one example, the SLPA board felt the need to have a public access dock located at the Pump House on the south side of the lake. This dock was paid for by your donations in that category and also includes the expense to install and take the dock out every year as well as pay for insurance. Another dock project that, we hope, will take place in 2020 is the DNR renovation at the Spillway boat ramp. When you make application for state funding, it is always beneficial to have “local participation.” The DNR approached the SLPA board over 5 years ago to participate in this project. A commitment was made to contribute $10,000 towards this renovation of the Spillway boat ramp. We look forward to this project coming to fruition. Your dollars do make a difference!

Let’s also give thanks to the State of Iowa for recognizing the need for a major overhaul of Marble Beach campground. This was a project of over $3 million and will be a treasure for years to come.

Over 5 years ago, the SLPA board was informed that 43 acres on the east side of the lake known as Reed’s Run would be sold and perhaps developed for additional housing. A partnership was forged with Dickinson County Conservation and their ties to Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) to provide another option for the best use of the land. The land was acquired with SLPA as the lead fundraiser. So we made our voice heard within the community at large stating our case that this piece of land was critical for water quality not only on Big Spirit but for the entire Iowa Great Lakes. When you have a small group of volunteers such as SLPA, we recognized the need for meaningful partnerships going forward. The message went to the Okoboji Foundation and Dickinson County Water Quality Commission. We discovered a remarkable thing—this community responds to the need for water quality. The balance of the fundraising took two years! Wow! We also learned if you present water quality as fundamental to our existence, people will respond here in the lakes area.

One partnership we treasured was with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Anita O’Gara and her staff were instrumental in the Reed’s Run project. This relationship did not end with Reed’s Run as INHF could see other potential projects pivotal for Big Spirit and the entire Iowa Great Lakes. Consequently, during the last three years INHF has worked with two families to purchase 160 acres of farmland north of Shore Acres. This is now known as Wallace-Bowers Nature Area. One year later, INHF acquired the remaining farmland at McClelland’s Beach area. Both parcels will be used for conservation and be a great filter for water quality south of the grade. If you add these 3 parcels of land, our total land designated towards water quality approaches 250 acres of land! Thank you, Iowa Natural Heritage! We are honored to have worked with you and hope we are not finished yet.

In conclusion, today is a beautiful, sunny day with temps in the 80’s. Boats are on the lake, kids are in the water with numerous devices to keep them afloat. It would appear that everything is back to normal, but there is this fog in the air about the virus. I’m confident the members of the science community are working their tails off to develop a vaccine, but that seems to be a ways off. I believe we can confidently say that life on Big Spirit will return to normalcy someday, and this will be in the window looking back. Until then, enjoy your time with family and friends, and look to a future with promise of hope and joy.
THANKS, JIM!

Membership on the board is fairly stable; some members have served 20 years or more and have contributed hundreds of hours to achieve our goals. When we do lose a member, we lose valuable knowledge and experience. Jim Howard retired last fall after serving on the board for nearly 40 years. We also include thanks to Jessie Howard because she has been an equal partner in all of Jim’s activities. As a retired college professor, he brought with him an understanding of biology that paired well with his love for hunting and fishing. The Howards are known locally as the Jessie James Band or with the group Jessie James and the Outlaws. Starting with the Jamboree and continuing with the Opry at the Sami Center, they were instrumental in raising thousands of dollars that supported projects such as the “Save the Bulrushes” and the restoration of the Mini-Wakan shelter house. Jim’s main responsibility was the buoys. He found lost or misplaced ones, repaired them when necessary, sourced new buoys when they were needed, and handled dozens of phone calls—some just curious and others angry. Jim has also been a source of endless tales—some true and others not so much—that always enlivened a conversation. We’ll miss you, Jim. We’ll miss you a lot.

WELCOME, GAYLE MAYER

Gayle is one of the SLPA’s new board members. She has a life-long connection to the lakes area and moved to her current Big Spirit home in the ’70s. Following a career as a pharmacist, she wanted to be active with groups that interested her. Currently, she is on the board of the Templar Homeowners’ Association, she serves on Iowa’s State Board of Pharmacy, she is the secretary of the Dickinson County Museum, and she does current events sessions with area senior living facilities. Her involvement with the SLPA comes from the feeling that this is a family community and a great place to live. Gayle is pleased that the SLPA reaches out to other groups that share our goals to keep the lakes area healthy. Welcome, Gayle. We’re glad you joined the board.

WELCOME, CRAIG LAWRENCE

Craig’s farm family from northwest Iowa first came to Big Spirit in 1956. He would drive his 12’ Crestliner to Crandall’s Lodge for an ice cream and dreamed of someday living on that sand beach. His dream came true, and Craig says he is passionately committed to maintaining and improving the lake’s water quality. He is also proud of what the SLPA members have done to acquire land around the lake, acquisitions that preserve the area for our kids. He adds that “donations make a huge difference.” Craig co-founded his company, Lawrence & Schiller, a marketing and advertising agency in Sioux Falls in 1972 and retired in 2012. Now he works on ministry projects in Central Asia. Big Spirit has become his family’s area of choice. His brother, cousins, daughter and son have all located nearby. Welcome, Craig. We’re glad you—and your family—are here.
The annual fireworks display was held on Friday, July 3, 2020 in spite of the Covid-19 restrictions. We truly look forward to this time each year with great anticipation. We would like to thank Scott Zeigler for his many years of fireworks display service. Board member Maggie Wilcox has taken on the challenge of continuing the display's success, and this year gave Maggie plenty of hoops to jump through due to Covid-19. We were thrilled again to have Kabele’s Trading Post and Lodge as our corporate sponsor of the 2020 Fireworks Display. Thank you to Thane and Tanya Johnson. In addition to being our corporate sponsor, they have been a vital and generous friend of the Iowa Great Lakes region. The SLPA message is reaching not only the Spirit Lake residents but local business members as well. We depend on the SLPA members who generously provide funding whether the donations are large or small. We are also grateful for the support of our Century Club and Business Members. The support of these groups is invaluable to presenting a successful fireworks display. Thanks to Kuhlman’s Lake Service and Welding, Inc., for their lake excursion with their barge and large American flag that starts our evening. Thank you to the Spirit Lake Fire Department who staffed the fire boat and provided emergency services. They also picked up all the perimeter buoys following the display. Last, but not least, we would like to thank Tal Allen at J&M Displays Inc. for his many years of providing the local area with spectacular fireworks displays. His efforts and dedication are greatly appreciated. This is an unforgettable evening where families and friends gather around Spirit Lake for fellowship, fun, and food. The fireworks displays are special with a beautiful array of color, light, and patriotic music. Here is hoping that you enjoyed the fireworks display in 2020 and are eagerly looking forward to the 2021 fireworks display. The SLPA Board sends out best wishes to all our members, their families and friends and hope that you all stay safe and healthy during these ever evolving times.

**WHY IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP IMPORTANT?**

Your membership is vital to the mission of the SLPA. We depend on the generosity of people like you who understand the “Quality of Water—Quality of Life” value of Big Spirit. Cleaner water means better swimming, skiing, and boating during warm weather. Cleaner water means better fishing all year long. Quality of life activities like organizing the fireworks, hosting the pancake breakfast, or providing docks for public use all require funding. Quality of life includes the opportunity to enjoy a tranquil evening watching a sunset or to marvel at the power of a thunderstorm coming across the lake. This funding comes from you. If you have not yet become a 2020 member of the SLPA, please send the enclosed card with your dues and donation to Box 51, Spirit Lake, IA 51630.
The SLPA funds the July 3rd fireworks through membership dues and other donations, and we thank all our members for their generosity. The people listed here are Century Club members who have donated $100 or more to be used exclusively for the fireworks.

**CENTURY CLUB MEMBERS**

- Daniel & Marcia Allen
- Asquenonin LLC
- Boyd & Cheryl Bahney
- David & Sue Benson
- Sheldon & Linda Bieri
- Greg & Rosemary Brandt
- David & Martha Chozen
- City of Orleans
- City of Spirit Lake
- Cornwall Appraisal
- Keith & Diane Culver
- Gloria Currell
- Greg J Currell
- James & Phyllis Currell
- John & Jeanne Den Hartog
- Joe & Linda Devitt
- Brad Dykes
- Erpelding, Voigt & Co., LLP
- Joe Estes
- Exit Realty Midwest
- Shawn & Jolene Fechter
- Marilyn & Jack Feimster
- Joe & Jane Feller
- Michael & Harriet Fliss
- Brian & Jane Ford
- Brad & Meg Freking
- Julie Gibson
- Lee & Gina Glasoe
- Gretchen Graff
- Carol A Gronstal
- Richard Hoberg
- Kirk & Becki Huisenga
- Mark G & Kay Hulst
- Terry & Kim Hummel
- Jennings Tow & Repair
- Trent & Jeanne Johnson
- Susan & Ned Jones
- Dwain & Marcia Jorgensen
- Kabele’s Trading Post & Lodge
- Chris & Laura Kabele
- David & Mary Ann Kapaska
- Sally Ketcham
- Andrew Kleis
- Charles W Kraut
- Kuhlman Lake Service & Welding, Inc.
- Craig & Marcia Lawrence
- Scott & Marlys Lawrence
- Michael J. Lenz
- Frank Leupold
- William & Julia Leupold
- Amber Long
- Rosie Lundquist
- Alan & Lori Madsen
- John & Juliana Mayne
- Frank & Marilyn McDowell
- Jerry & Candie Nelson
- Allen & Linda Nepper
- Dennis Neppl
- Rachele Norcross
- Wayne & Margaret Northey
- Stephen & Maureen Nowak
- Oak Hill Marina, Inc.
- Alex & Chris Oponski
- Polaris Industries, Inc.
- William & Linda Prescott
- Doug & Nancy Pringnitz
- David & Mary Jo Rapp
- Kirt Rasmussen
- RE/MAX – Lakes Realty
- G. Wallis Reed
- Roger Rieck
- Margaret Wilcox Rogers
- David & Megan Ruzicka
- Larry & Kathy Sather
- Rod Sather
- Dean & Julie Schmidt
- Tom & Jane Schmidt
- Steve & Sandra Schultz
- Douglas & Suzanne Seltz
- John & Joan Shanafelt
- John & Marsha Smeltzer
- Brett & Meridith Spykerman
- Stephen & Kim Stroud
- Jeff & Lurene Swalve
- Scott & Nancy Taylor
- Joseph & Karleen Ulman
- Gary & Peggie Van Den Brink
- Robert & Mary Jane Willson
- Zach’s Lift Service
- Scott & Melanie Zeigler
- John & Sue Ziegenbusch

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE DONORS WHOSE NAMES ARE BOLDED FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION OF $500 OR MORE.

**THANK YOU**

The Spirit Lake Protective Association wishes to thank Rick Ayres and his staff at Lakes Marketing and Print for the hours of work to help us produce this publication for our members. His guidance while we create and proof this document is a testament to his love of Big Spirit. We’re happy to have your collaboration on this product.

[amazon smile banner]

You can contribute to the SLPA without donating even a dime. Sign up for Amazon Smile and identify the Spirit Lake Protective Association as your designated charity. Just use this link to directly sign into Amazon Smile smile.amazon.com/ch/42-1375213 which helps avoid the hassle of finding us in the list.

Amazon Smile pays SLPA quarterly for 0.5% of all purchases made from buyers who identify SLPA as their choice of Non-Profit. We thank you for all who are willing to do so; it is a painless way to make a difference.

**DONATIONS**

**MEMORIALS**

The SLPA gratefully acknowledges the memorial contributions that we receive and we thank the donors for their thoughtfulness. This year we want to recognize a donation in honor of the following people: Ida K. Estes, Duaine Hamling, Ann Chozen.

**IN-KIND DONORS**

We appreciate the help we receive from all our donors. Say thanks to these good folk when you see them.

- Kuhlman’s Lake Service and Welding, Inc.
- Zach’s Lift Service
- Lakes Marketing and Print
- Spirit Lake Fire Department

**COMMERCIAL MEMBERS**

**Regular Membership $50**
- Spirit Lake Chamber of Commerce
- Lakes Plumbing, Heating & Cooling
- Dowden-Hinn Realtors
- Exhaust Systems Inc.
- Indian Hills Golf Course Inc.
- Consumer Lumber Co.
- Zach’s Lift Service

**Sustaining Membership $100**
- City of Spirit Lake
- City of Orleans
- Cornell Abstract Company
- Lakeland Realty of Iowa
- Great Lakes Marine Inc.
- Bank Midwest—Spirit Lake
- Okoboji View Golf Course
- Jennings Tow & Repair
- KUOO, Q102, Y100 Radio
- Erpelding, Voigt & Co., LLP
- Kuhlman Lake Service & Welding

**FIREWORKS DONATIONS**

**Corporate Sponsor**
- Kabele’s Trading Post & Lodge

**Corporate Supporting Sponsor**
- Exit Realty Midwest

**EXIT REALTY MIDWEST**

- Starbursts ($250-$499)
- Jennings Tow & Repair
- Kuhlman Lake Service and Welding, Inc.
- Rockets ($500-$999)
- City of Orleans
- City of Spirit Lake
- Oak Hill Marina
- Polaris Industries, Inc.
- Zach’s Lift Service
- Aerial Bombs ($1000 or more)
- John and Jeanne Den Hartog
- Greg Currell

**OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS**

- Michael & Harriet Fliss
- Shell Oil Company Foundation Employee Match
There is no doubt this year will be one of the most memorable times in our lives. Everyone has a story to tell with the crisis impacting each of us in different ways. Heroes and leaders emerge where we least expect, and one strange solace has been the entire human population seems to be in this thing together. Beyond the hardship and sadness, it is heartening to see so many families enjoying the outdoors together, reinforcing our connection to natural resources and the peace we experience from simply taking a hike or wetting a fishing line. Like many, I spent the first few weeks transitioning my work to home, setting up a makeshift office, making sure our two middle schoolers had what they needed to begin distance learning, and trying desperately not to watch too much news. However, spring isn’t the time when you find many fisheries biologists sitting in an office. During the winter months we do a lot of data entry, analysis, and report writing. We try to squeeze in a couple of professional conferences or seminars, complete yearly training and then begin the task of making sure all of our equipment and facilities are ready for the upcoming season. First and foremost, for almost every fishery employee in the state, is the spring northern pike, walleye, and muskellunge brood stock collection and hatching efforts. Only about a third of our staff specialize in fish culture (the raising of fish), but we all pitch in during spring to complete this huge task. Shortly after ice comes off the lakes, approximately eighteen two-person crews head out each night across Lake Rathbun, Blackhawk Lake, and the Iowa Great Lakes to net thousands of broodstock fish. These aren’t the normal little guys most of us catch from the dock. Walleyes up to 10 pounds and muskies up to 40 pounds fill the catch. Crews use gillnets which are run perpendicular to shore and left to soak for two hours. At the end of two hours the nets are checked for fish. All fish are removed and the broodstock walleyes and muskies are put into tanks and hauled back for sorting. The nets are left to soak for another two hours before crews wrap up around 2 a.m. with a final haul. Some nights the nets are light with fish and the work goes quickly. Some nights, like this year, the nets are heavy with fish, and work can become frenzied as the boat crews keep tabs on how much tank space they have, how much net they have yet to run, and how quickly they can offload the catch. The cold lake water and onboard oxygen tanks help to keep the precious catch healthy, but a good run can yield hundreds of pounds of big walleyes and muskies. Iowa’s spring wind and wild weather can make things even more challenging. Crews head out in almost all weather conditions with some nights feeling a little like a night on the Bering Sea. Those staff not out working at night are in our hatcheries sorting fish, watching over water systems, taking eggs and fertilizing them using methods developed over the past several decades. The fertilized eggs are placed in dozens of large hatching jars where fresh lake water gently rolls them until they hatch some 20 days later. This year has obviously been different. Efforts this year were drastically cut to make sure employees and the public were kept safe. Travel was restricted and social distancing policies were quickly put into place. This limited us to netting Lake Rathbun, Blackhawk Lake, and the Iowa Great Lakes with local staff only. Enough local staff were available at each lake to run two to three boats and skeleton crews worked the long days in the hatchery. Although we didn’t collect the egg numbers of a typical spring, we made a great effort and found a window of good weather that allowed us to catch enough fish to hatch nearly 100 million fry (approximately 30% less than normal spring collection efforts).

Why do we do all this? The main reason most state agencies and the federal government operate fish hatcheries is to produce fish that have had a hard time reproducing and sustaining populations on their own. Typically this is because of habitat degradation that impacts a species’ ability to spawn or for their young to survive. For walleyes, only a fraction of 1% of eggs spawned in the wild actually hatches. In the hatchery, 70–80% of the eggs taken will hatch. Not all species need the help of hatcheries, but these efforts keep walleye and musky populations from dwindling to unsustainable levels. The Iowa DNR Fisheries Bureau helps manage most of the public water in the state while relying heavily on partnerships with lake associations, communities, other agencies, and user groups. Hatching fish isn’t the only thing we do, but it is a very important component of managing Iowa’s water and keeping our resources healthy. When times like these hit, the efforts of everyone working to protect these resources give us a place to connect to our natural environment and a beautiful place to just take a deep breath.
WALLACE and BOWERS NATURE AREA - THINGS TO SEE IN 2020

Watch for prairie seedlings emerging now in their second year in the buffer strip across 105th Street. The prairie is coming! The prairie will be mowed once or twice again this summer to help the native plants compete with the weeds that also emerge. Digging and other machine activity in the NW corner of the land, near the highway, will be in action to help the wetland take shape. Hopefully this will occur during summer or maybe early fall. The work depends on weather, ground conditions, and contractor schedules; you know how unpredictable that can be. This work includes a new culvert across East McClelland Lane which will affect road access that day. The wetland basin will be shaped, and native plants will be seeded around it. Then you can patiently watch over the next few seasons as the basin fills, the prairie and wetland plants emerge, and the birds, frogs and wildlife gather there.

Haying, corn/soybean production and cover crop usage will be much the same as last year. We’re pleased with how the alfalfa is absorbing rainwater that would otherwise run off. Thanks to the Johnson family for their farm tenant services. Water sampling and soil sampling will continue this year. Thanks to Iowa Lakeside Laboratory for leading this effort. You may see someone on the prairie occasionally—pulling or spot spraying weeds or on the tractor. This “someone” is likely our INHF board member Greg Grupp who continues to volunteer here. If you have concerns about weeds, cropping, or the property in general, please contact Ryan Schmidt at rschmidt@inhf.org or 515-249-1807.

John and Marsha Smeltzer continue to take reference photos at various locations around the property in a cooperative effort between SLPA and INHF. If you would like to learn more deeply about this project, INHF’s Emily Martin will present a session at the virtual Soil and Water Conservation Society Conference July 27-29. INHF owns and is planting prairie on the field immediately west of Wallace & Bowers (adjoining East McClelland Lane). We hope you enjoy watching it change and grow, too – all for the benefit of Big Spirit Lake water quality!

ANITA O’GARA VP and Development Director for INHF • 515-249-4490 • aogara@inhf.org
INHF can be found at 505 5th Ave., Suite 444, Des Moines, IA 50309-2321
Ice fishing tourism has continued to grow at the Iowa Great Lakes. The yellow perch and walleye on Big Spirit were highly sought-after species during the winter of 2019-2020. Even when they did not bite consistently, they still kept anglers coming back to Big Spirit Lake.

Access to the lake is just as important in the winter as it is in the summer. On any given day in the winter, there are usually more fishermen on Big Spirit Lake than during the summer. Parking at the access points is very limited and needs thoughtful consideration on expansion at the following locations: Sunset Park (east side) and Mini-Wakan State Park. Special thanks should be given to Charlie Wedeking, Brett and Tracy Bartels, Matt Englert, Josh Kirshbaum, Rich Menken and any others who contributed to maintaining angler access to Big Spirit Lake. Enhanced cooperation from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources by helping to keep the state boat ramp parking lots plowed and open for access would be a huge benefit to ice anglers in the area. We would also like to thank the SLPA for their focus on the overall concept of access, and particularly, access for ice fishing on Big Spirit Lake. We are always looking at ways to improve and expand angler access.

THANE & TANYA JOHNSON, Owners of Kabele’s Trading Post and Lodge

WEST O GIVES BACK

West O Beer in Okoboji began a philanthropy program called West O Gives Back in 2019. During certain identified days and hours of operation, West O Beer donates a portion of their proceeds to local non-profits. While there were limited opportunities available in 2019, the SLPA will be participating at some time in 2020-2021. It will be a fun way to raise funds for the SLPA and to enjoy some time with friends at West O. Keep your eyes on our Facebook posts for the date.

BUOYS

There are approximately 50 buoys on Big Spirit Lake, and Jim Howard was the SLPA/DNR liaison until his retirement. We are currently seeking an individual who would work as this liaison to review buoy condition, conduct the purchase of buoys and respond to buoy issues. This individual could be a member of the board in this capacity or just report to the board as needed or requested. If you would be interested, please contact President Kirk Huisenga.

The function of the buoys is to inform the public and boaters about the hazards and restricted areas as well as reminding boaters about the 300’ no-wake regulation around the lake. The buoys are installed on prominent points, rock piles, shallow areas, swim beaches and loading areas to assist the lake safety of boaters and the public. They are placed in specific locations by the DNR each spring.

The SLPA pays Kuhlman Lake Service and Welding, Inc. for the removal of the buoys each fall at which time repair and maintenance is done. When the buoys need to be replaced due to age, accidental damage, or vandalism, we purchase them. The SLPA did not need to purchase buoys for the 2020 season but, when new ones are needed, the entire apparatus—the buoy, chain, and anchor—cost about $400.00.

If you should find one of these buoys on your personal shoreline, please contact the DNR so it can be retrieved, repaired, and reinstalled to its proper location for your safety. This is another way in which your donation dollars contribute to our “Quality of Life” on Big Spirit.

PICNIC TABLE REFURBISHING

“Quality of Life” includes having a great picnic experience! To that end, the SLPA has been given the go-ahead to refurbish picnic tables located at Mini-Wakan, Templar Park and the Crandall’s swim beach. As of this newsletter, SLPA volunteers and friends continue to replace boards, sand and to stain picnic tables in these locations. We always welcome volunteers to assist us in these kinds of activities because we know they make a better experience for our users!
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The SLPA is part of the Spirit Lake and greater Iowa Great Lakes communities and participates in activities to raise awareness of the SLPA and to support community groups. In August 2019, the SLPA participated in the Hometown Heroes sponsored by the Iowa Great Lakes Chamber of Commerce. It was an opportunity for local groups to share about themselves and to conduct some activities with local youth. In addition to an information booth, we had a casting contest and fish stringer activities for the kids. In September 2019, the SLPA was one of 200+ participants in the Spirit Lake Community School’s Homecoming Parade. With a float decorated with “Hook the Jaguars” and “Clean ’Em Up,” we shared our Quality of Water–Quality of Life motto with the community.

The SLPA continues to be a part of the Okoboji Bluewater Festival that occurs the same weekend as our SLPA Annual meeting. This activity places an emphasis on the quality of water in the Lakes Region. The SLPA conducts our annual meeting in the morning of this festival and then participates in having an informational booth at the sidewalk event for organizations.

The SLPA, in cooperation with the Iowa Great Lakes Association, the DNR, and the Water Safety Council, publishes and distributes lake maps and other boating safety information brochures. These maps and brochures are available at the Spillway, Templar Park, Marble Beach, and Mini-Wakan boat ramps on Big Spirit. SLPA board members ensure that the materials are available.

BRASL

BRASL is another unfortunate cancellation due to Covid-19. The SLPA will look forward to 2021 when board members will be back staffing the table at Mini-Wakan for the ride.

TRAILS

The Jones Pasture portion of the trail on Big Spirit from 125th Street to Pasture Road was completed during the fall of 2019. Asphalt paving also took place this summer along the east side of Big Spirit to repair worn sections of the trail. We hope you have had the opportunity to ride the Big Spirit portions of the trail along with the many wonderful miles available in Dickinson County.
**MARBLE BEACH CAMPGROUND**

After a two-year closure and 3.5 million dollar renovation, the Marble Beach Campground opened to campers once again on July 1. Throughout the remodel, camping sites were modified to better meet the needs of the camping crowd of today. Sites now are built for larger camping units; they have water as well as sewer available and have picnic tables and new fire rings. The roads to the sites are all concrete, and there is a new bathroom in the south area of Marble Beach. The main entrance also has new concrete and reconfigured parking with the ability to close areas of the campground as needed. To cater to the different camping styles, Marble Beach offers the following:

- 122 total sites including north campground area
- 66 - full hookup sites (50 amp/water/sewer)
- 13 - electric only 30 amp - tent / small pop up sites
- 13 - water / 50 amp electric sites
- 28 - non electric tent sites
- 2 - camp host sites

The DNR upgrade also created two new restroom facilities—a boat ramp bathroom and a south shower building. The new shower building has six individual stalls with doors. Each stall includes both a toilet/sink area and a shower so that they are more private and family friendly. There are no men's/women's sides as they are all unisex and lockable for private use.

As it has been requested many times, the far north area of the main campground now has a parking lot and designated beach area with an outdoor shower pedestal. A designated swim area at a park with “Beach” in the name? It's a natural!

**SPILLWAY BOAT RAMP**

Although you haven't seen any activity at the Spillway ramp, improvements are coming. The Dickinson County Conservation Board has hired an engineering firm, a survey has been completed, and plans and specs have been drafted. The SLPA has pledged $10,000 to the project which will include a new ramp as well as a new dock with room for loading and unloading from both sides. Our donation is the direct result of funds received via the Iowa Lakes Chamber of Commerce from the registration fees collected for Walleye Weekend. Each of the lakes’ protective associations gets a portion of the proceeds from the weekend, and it is the SLPA’s decision that the funds we receive should be used to enhance the fishing and boating experience on Big Spirit. The Spillway ramp is the beginning of that effort.

**WALLEYE WEEKEND**

Well, Walleye Opener did happen. We did have 2020 T-shirts and some tagged fish but no weekend contest and no Thul Shed barbequed meats at Kabele’s Trading Post and Lodge. All of these deficits were “Covid-19 induced.” There was sadness all around.

In spite of it all, the extended contest for Walleye Weekend did continue, and there were still many walleye anglers on Big Spirit Lake for both the opening weekend and those who stayed through much of the next week fishing the extended season. Currently, we have heard of three tagged fish that have been caught on Big Spirit Lake BUT by anglers who had NOT registered for the contest. Well, maybe they will register NEXT YEAR.

We appreciate the continued efforts of the Iowa Great Lakes Chamber of Commerce and Kabele’s Trading Post and Lodge in keeping this tradition alive in the Iowa Great Lakes. The money the SLPA has received from previous Walleye Weekend events will be spent in 2020 to expand and to enhance the ramp and to improve the Spillway dock at Ainsworth-Orleans Beach. For more information on this project, please see the article on that effort in this newsletter.
The CLAMP (Cooperative Lakes Area Monitoring Project) continues on both Big Spirit Lake and Little Spirit Lake. CLAMP was started in 1999 by the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory as a follow-up to a 1974 Iowa Great Lakes water quality report by Bachman and Jones (Water Quality in the Iowa Great Lakes, May 1974). SLPA has been a partner in the project for many years, contributing resources and time in support of the effort. CLAMP data continues to play an important role monitoring water quality throughout the Iowa Great Lakes, but we are particularly interested in both Little Spirit Lake and Big Spirit Lake. We are thankful for the volunteers over the years who have helped collect and process the data. Should you like to become a volunteer, training sessions are held each summer. For more information about CLAMP see the following website: clamp1909.blogspot.com/

In addition to CLAMP data, we can now follow the GLEON (Global Lake Ecological Observatory Network) buoy data on Big Spirit Lake as well. The GLEON buoy gathers real-time information regarding several important lake water chemistry elements and movements (wave height and wind direction). SLPA is a partner in the GLEON process with Iowa Lakeside Laboratory as well.

Did you see the big black clouds of smoke this spring on the east side of Big Spirit? It was the Dickinson County Conservation Board conducting a burn on the Reed’s Run property. Prescribed burns on properties such as this help eliminate unwanted trees and bushes that have taken root and encourage the growth of the native prairie plants which help secure the soil and contain water runoff, both of which are important to Reed’s Run and to water quality. In a short period of time after the fire, green plants begin their march to the sky and move the area closer to a fully restored prairie. A new permanent sign will be erected on the site this summer to recognize the groups and individuals who donated to make this restoration possible.

Brew and Brainstorm is a winter activity for the SLPA. From November to March, we conduct drop-in meetings at local coffee spots or breweries. It is an opportunity to socialize with other Big Spirit residents or to discuss a specific topic, the “brainstorm” part! There is no agenda to the meeting, and the date, time and location are shared via our Facebook page. If you are here in the winter, come have a brew and visit with others who have a passion for Big Spirit Lake!
LAKE ASSOCIATIONS MEETING

During the summer of 2019, the SLPA Board conducted a discussion about the many organizations around and adjacent to Big Spirit Lake that could become involved with the SLPA. As a result of this discussion, the SLPA invited individuals who might represent lake associations or organizations to attend a meeting at Mini-Wakan on August 27, 2019. The outcome of this meeting was the development of four subcommittees composed of SLPA Board members and lake association/organization members. These four subcommittees were: Templar Park, Loon Lake, Little Spirit Sewer, and Lake Groups. Should you be interested in more information or joining any of these subcommittees, please contact the SLPA board member listed on the subcommittee.

Templar Park State Recreation Area Subcommittee—Marsha Smeltzer

This group brainstormed some ideas for enhancing the Templar Park State Recreation Area as this area has such historical context for Big Spirit. The area has some great possibilities for usage but could use improvements. In keeping with our “Quality of Life” theme, the initial meeting of the committee resulted in discussion about upgrading the dock, and renovating—but keeping—the current stair structure. Also important would be creating some historical information kiosks so visitors might better understand the relevance of Templar Park and how it got its name. The group recognizes that the area is owned by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and will ultimately need their participation, but they are working toward a plan to bring to the SLPA for consideration.

Loon Lake Subcommittee—Joe Ulman

The Loon Lake committee was identified due to the flow of water into Big Spirit and its impact on the quality of water on Big Spirit. While the lake does not have an association, members of a Jackson County conservation group attended. Board members Joe Ulman and John Smeltzer met with them in the fall of 2019 at the Loon Lake Golf Course to continue discussions.

Little Spirit Sewer Subcommittee—Karen Baker

There continue to be areas of Little Spirit, primarily in Minnesota, that rely on septic systems. Since these septic systems ultimately make their way into the watershed, it is imperative to continue seeking out solutions to adding these homes to a sanitary sewer system.

Lake Groups—Rosie Lundquist

While the SLPA focuses on the greater Big Spirit area, we recognize that there are neighborhood organizations/groups around the lake that have specific interests relative to Big Spirit. These groups range from being highly organized with boards of their own to small neighborhood groups. The SLPA would like to better know these groups and their hopes for Big Spirit as well as needs in their areas. For the 2019 meeting, the SLPA was able to contact the Templar Homeowners’ Association, Shore Acres Homeowners Association and the McClelland’s and Crandall’s Beach neighborhoods. We would like to expand this contact with other groups. If you are aware of a group and a contact person for that group, please get in touch with one of our board members.
First, from Karen Baker

With spring here and summer just around the corner, we welcome our summer residents, vacationers, and weekend visitors to the Iowa Great Lakes area. So too, we welcome our feathered friends who are flocking here to spend the summer with us.

Of all the sports or hobbies that people participate in such as hiking, biking, boating, water sports, golf plus many more, the #1 pastime in the United States is fishing. Birding is #2. No wonder then that the lakes area is so popular with its spectacular lakes and variety of habitats.

What birds can we expect to see at our backyard bird feeders, the woodlands, prairies, wetlands and lakes that we don’t see at other times of the year? Here’s a few to look for:

- **At birdfeeders:** Baltimore Oriole, Orchard Oriole, Indigo Bunting, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Ruby-throated Hummingbird (if there is a hummingbird feeder)
- **Woodlands:** Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Cedar Waxwing, Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting, and Baltimore Oriole
- **Bushes & thickets:** Chipping Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Yellow Warbler, Common Yellow-throat, American Redstart, Eastern Phoebe, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher
- **Prairie & Grassland:** Meadowlark, Bobolink, Ring-necked Pheasant, Eastern Kingbird, and Eastern Bluebird
- **Marshes & Wetlands:** Red-winged Blackbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, and Tree Swallow,
- **Lakes and Ponds:** Ring-billed Gull, American White Pelican, Hooded Merganser, Trumpeter Swan, Pied-billed Grebe, and Osprey

These are just a few birds that spend the summer here, and the list does not include those birds that pass through on their way to breeding grounds further north or those that stay here all year. Now, when the cares and worries of the world get you down, pick up your binoculars and your bird field guide and escape into the bird world. Take time to visit some of the wonderful areas in our beautiful Iowa Great Lakes to find and observe some of our feathered friends. Happy birding!

And then from Ed Thelen:

Many Dickinson County people who feed birds and were staying at home this spring during this Covid-19 pandemic were treated to an influx of birds on the weekend of May 16-17. Orioles, Grosbeaks, Goldfinches, Indigo Buntings and even Tanagers fell from the skies and showed up at feeders. A large influx of migrating birds appearing suddenly is called a “fallout.” Usually a weather pattern will cause birds to suddenly stop migrating and drop from the skies. Although many resume their journey north when conditions are favorable, many birds choose to stay in Dickinson County for the same reason people do—because of the tremendous natural resources our county has to offer.

Our large natural lakes plus the many sloughs, prairies, wetlands, and woodlands make this area a premier birding area. This diversity in habitats provides fantastic birding opportunities. Dickinson County ranks fourth overall in the state of Iowa with 323 bird species reported. Only Polk, Johnson, and Story counties have reported more bird species.

Dickinson County has several areas as does Big Spirit that support many bird species with their unique habitat, but the area with the most opportunity in the Big Spirit area is the Spirit Lake/Kettleson Area. Some of these other areas are:

1. Spring Run Wildlife Area
2. Silver Lake Access and Fen/Trappers Bay
3. Dugout Creek Lake Wildlife Protection Area (WPA)
4. Caylor Prairie State Preserve
5. Jemmerson Slough/Center Lake WPA/Welch WPA
6. Christopherson Slough/Little Swan Lake

Diamond Lake WPA located northwest of Spirit Lake was drained in 2007 to revitalize it. Before that, it was a poor wetland and poor fishing lake. Research on lesser scaup showed that when they migrate north through Iowa they lose body fat. Because of the low body fat, they produced fewer eggs development. Historically our wetlands fluctuated more often than they do now; draining these lakes periodically will mimic the way it used to be. Hopefully it will become a much better wetland and lake. While it was being drained, it provided excellent shorebird habitat, something that was missing in our area most years.

Many rarities are spotted in Dickinson County each year. Usually when a rarity is spotted, many people are quickly notified thanks to the internet. The Iowa Ornithological Union has a hotline to report rare birds so other people can see them. Also be sure to check the Facebook page “Iowa Great Lakes Area Birding” for reports of rare birds in our area. Keep those binoculars handy because you never know when a bird you have never seen before decides to land in your yard!
2020 SLPA TREASURER’S REPORT

Each year presents us with unexpected challenges, exciting projects and extraordinary opportunities. This year has been one to remember. Members of the Spirit Lake Protective Association took the craziness of the Covid-19 pandemic and found ways to carry on with our work. We are so thankful for the enthusiasm of this Board and the strong support of the community. Our newsletter shares many of our projects and areas of concern that beckon our active Board to make our lakes area a desirable place to live.

Hats off to everyone who supported the Fireworks celebration! With Kabele’s Trading Post and Lodge leading the way as corporate sponsor, we can say our Fireworks is self-funded. Appreciation also goes to Exit Realty and to our awesome Century Club Members. With this continued financial support, we will be able to celebrate with a spectacular show each July 3! Thank you all!

This year our board meetings were reduced to ZOOM! We were amazed at how much we could accomplish in 40 minutes. The ZOOM people felt sorry for folks like us and gave us unlimited time for our meetings but we still accomplished much in a short time! We were thrilled to have our first outdoor board meeting. Because of Covid-19 and the desire to take a great deal of caution, many of our activities were canceled. The Red, White & Blue Pancake Breakfast on July 3rd was not held. See you all next year! Additionally, Walleye Weekend was canceled which was another revenue stream we are missing this year.

A big thank you for your generous support. This is a Board you can be proud to recognize. Trust that this outstanding group of people will be working hard to make you proud, safe and happy you live in this beautiful area. You enable us to work diligently to preserve and protect the quality of life and quality of water we treasure.

Respectfully,

BECKI HUISENGA
SLPA Treasurer

INCOME

DIRECT PUBLIC SUPPORT
- Business Memberships 1,550.00
- Individual Memberships 9,705.00
- Donations 130.00
- Foundation and Trust Grants 7.26

INVESTMENTS
- Interest-Savings, Short-term CD 34.60

SPECIAL EVENTS INCOME
- Dock Contributions 6,025.00
- Fireworks 21,110.00
- Reed’s Run 2,941.70
- Silent Auction 70.00
- Chautauqua Breakfast 983.30
- Memorials 600.00
- Special Projects 12,220.90

EXPENSES

BUOY/SNOW
- Removal 1760.00

BUSINESS EXPENSES
- Memberships 1200.00
- Advertising, Promotion 1888.01

CONTRACT SERVICES
- Accounting Fees 1100.95

OPERATIONS
- Books, Subscriptions, Reference 20.42
- Insurance 2,266.00
- Miscellaneous Expense 150.00
- Postage, Mailing Service 462.85
- Printing and Copying 4,906.61
- Fireworks 19,500.00
- Stipend Expense 1,100.00
- Storage Unit 256.80
- Website 1,280.19
- Travel and Meetings 675.00

SPECIAL EVENTS FUNDRAISER
- Dock Removal 1,750.00
- Reed’s Run Funds Donations 2,941.70

NET INCOME $14,119.23
SPLA ANNUAL MEETING
SATURDAY, AUGUST 8 - CANCELED