

## Fall 2024 RLAA Member Communication

Hello RLAA Members!

After a wet spring, nicely balanced summer, and bone-dry autumn, Rice Lake is again trickling over the dam and ready for winter. The 2024 plant survey determined invasive Curly Leaf Pondweed and Eurasian Watermilfoil was a nuisance in the creek but not too bad in the lake. Not surprisingly, the extensive invasion of zebra mussels in Fish Lake has now spilled into Rice Lake. Watch out - their shells are wicked sharp! Zebra mussels outcompete many other organisms that feed on algae. For the shallow, (too) nutrient rich waters of Rice Lake, less algae means clearer water, deeper sunlight penetration and perhaps robust growth and spread of aquatic vegetation. Note that zebra mussels don't eat the dreaded blue-green algae (which is really a photosynthetic cyanobacteria, not an algae). We'll rely on the next plant survey to determine the need for a drawdown next year. Core samples of the lake bottom were taken in October to see how much phosphorus has settled there over the years, available for plant growth (including algae). In the meantime, we all need to follow good practices to keep Rice Lake zebra mussels from going elsewhere or from letting more invasive species like Starry Stonewort invade Rice Lake.

This year's fish survey report has yet to be issued, but a few things were obvious during the sample netting operations. Last year's huge boom in black crappie went bust. Also, our resident flock of cormorants has done a poor job of keeping the bullhead catfish population in check. Though a good variety of fish were netted, no Walleye were caught. Over the summer, several RLAA members participated in baited box netting to reduce carp numbers in Fish Lake. By rooting around on the lake bottom, carp stir even more nitrogen and phosphorus back into the water, so fewer carp might mean less agitation and less available phosphorus. We hope to expand the carp management to a joint venture between FLARA and RLAA since our two lakes are connected. The no-wake and shoal buoys have been pulled for the winter and folks have attended to their boats, docks, and boat lifts accordingly. We expect to fire up the aerator again this winter to reduce the potential fish kill under the thick ice of shallow Rice Lake.

If you have ambitions to improve habitat and/or water quality on your own property, don't forget that Good Steward grants are available to help ([Good Steward Grants](#)). Thanks for supporting a healthy Rice Lake ecology. Your neighbors and fellow citizens appreciate it, and the native vegetation and wildlife appreciate it even more!

Cordially,

Your RLAA Volunteer Board