

Big Sand Lake Association Annual Member Meeting

July 18, 2026

Location: Siren Senior Center

Board Members Attending: Paul Hassing, Dennis Loots, Jane Jensen, Steve Farnham, Chip Applegath, Don Button, Karen Pavlicek

Absent: None

BSLA President, Paul Hassing, called the meeting to order at 10:05 am

- **27** Big Sand Lake Association members were in attendance
- Arnie DeWitt and Paul Thompson from YRPC attended as invited guests

Approval of 13June2026 BSLA Board Meeting Minutes

- Approval was done via board email vote, vote was unanimous
- Minutes were published on the BSLA website & emailed to members via MailChimp tool June 30th

2026 Annual Meeting Agenda with Notes:

1. Welcome/Board Intro – Paul Hassing

- Paul introduced the board members
- Dennis Loots was recognized for his many years of leadership with the Big Sand Lake Association as he retired from the BSLA Board at this meeting

2. Guest Speakers: (Chip captured a few scribble notes below)

1. Arnie DeWitt – Yellow River Protection Conservancy (YRPC) Stream Monitoring Coordinator: “Stream Monitoring on the Yellow River”

- *YRPC is currently working to acquire, then protect via conservation easements, 450 Acres on the east side of Spooner Lake. This property was originally going to be a campground. They currently own 1500 feet of shoreline adjacent to this*
- *YRPC was recently featured in an article written by UW Madison Division of Extension as of the top two (of 50) stream monitoring organizations*
- *They monitor: Water Clarity (120 cm typical), Stream Flow (20’ corridor, 4 measurements), Dissolved Oxygen, Biotic Index, Water Temp*
- *Biotic Index starts with a scrape net to get the macroinvertebrate from bottom*
- *They sort into live, vs dead and analyze the findings. Macroinvertebrates are sorted into 4 tiers based on ability to thrive in bad water*
- *Conrad suggested they sort the invertebrates counts into native/non-native for the area*
- *Each of their 9 test points along the river is monitored by a specific volunteer*
- *Connors Bridge is currently the closest measurement point to where BSL eventually flows into the Yellow River. Chip asked if they could add a test point nearer to*

where Big Sand Lake eventually flows into the Yellow River. Paul Thompson said they have a volunteer that may be interested in adding that test point

- *Rusty crayfish are the only invasive species they have found in their testing*
- *The DNR provides protocols on how to test and all data is fed back into the DNR systems in Madison*
- *They continue to add sites to try and identify the sources of any water issues*
- *Arnie acknowledged that their work is mostly reactive vs proactive right now*
- *They take pictures of the site while testing to augment the data, for example to show algae growth over time. They are archiving the test site photos*
- *Above the Spooner dam, phosphorus is low. They have identified Rabbit Ear Creek in Spooner as key source of phosphorus due to storm discharge, and this is being explored further*
- *Conrad noted he felt agricultural runoff is source of 95+% of phosphorous*
- *If you are interested in subscribing to the YRPC weekly news article contact Arnie at arnie.dewitt@yrpc.ltd*
- *Link to Arnie's presentation: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1tRBkzy7ttfluftEq-2qkTjUR7MzIQI_B/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=114175095206468696862&rtpof=true&sd=true*
- **Scott Button – BSLA Surface Water Grant Coordinator: “Understanding Big Sand Lake’s Past to Protect its Future” – A Paleolimnological Study of Big Sand Lake**
 - *Paul thanked Conrad for the Tribe’s support via their \$4K Partnership Contribution to the study and a quick picture was taken of BSLA receiving the check*
 - *Scott is a retired Boeing Associate Technical Fellow who volunteered to lead this study/grant work. He is Don Button’s son*
 - *The purpose of this study is to understand BSL’s past to protect it for the future*
 - *The project is a study of the lake sediment, layer by layer, from which the history of the lake can be created*
 - *The study will establish a pre-settlement baseline (prior to 1860), determine how the lake has responded to the changes from human and nature impacts*
 - *St. Croix Water Research Station (SCWRS) is doing the core analysis for us*
 - *The core sample was taken at a 34-foot-deep area. Sample wasn’t taken at the 50-foot hole due to steepness of the sides of that hole which could distort the sediment accumulation history*
 - *Each slice of the core sample is carbon dated then analyzed for*
 1. *Loss-on-ignition: organic matter, carbonates, dry density*
 2. *Diatoms – to determine past phosphorus levels and water quality*
 3. *Sediment Phosphorus Fractions – internal loading risk*

4. Biogenic silica & algae pigments – productivity and cyanobacteria history

- *Project Timeline: The DNR Grants were awarded in February, Scott researched and wrote the Land History document 1H2026, Core Sample was taken in May*
- *Next up – preliminary data will come in around 1Q2027. We will get the final analysis report in late 2027*
- *Final step is BSLA board will partner with the Tribe to make some recommendations for the future based on what is discovered*
- *Conrad asked a question on next steps - any scientific data we can push on? – summary was yes, this will be the final step in the process. Conrad noted Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the Tribes focus on protecting the lake*
- *Link to Scott's presentation: https://www.bigsandlakewi.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/v02_PaleoLimUpdateJuly2026BSLA.pdf*

3. Financial Report – Steve Farnham

- Core Study money is accounted for separately from general ledger. \$15K of the \$20K DNR total grant money received now
- Revenue and expense are in line with previous years. See a board member for specific numbers
- **32** families had paid dues before the meeting. **7** more paid at the meeting or picnic
- Reminder if you have not yet paid your 2026 dues, please do so to support our efforts. Payment instructions are at the end of these minutes

4. August 4th Invasive Cattail project at Sand Lake Rd Culvert – Steve Farnham

- Aug 2025 we did a small project at the culvert to clear a 30 feet width on the lake side, 8 feet other side. In conjunction, the Town of Sand Lake augured the culvert. 4 trailer loads of invasive cattails were removed and composted on Don's property
- Aug 4th 10am-2pm we are doing it again. This year we will have Burnett County Land Service Interns and Tribe Youth help!
- A Tree Pruning saw is used to cut the cattails below the water line which drowns them
- Question on if clearing the cattails lowered lake water levels; answer was not significantly
- We could use a couple more BSLA volunteers to help this year. Please contact Steve Farnham if you would be willing to help.

5. Big Sand Lake AIS early detection & lake Water Testing – Chip Applegath

- **Lake Water Test done by Garry Loufek on 6/7**
 - Our Association doesn't do regular water testing since the Tribe does it
 - This single one-time water sample analysis showed lake health is good
 - Reference 13June2026 Board Mtg Minutes for specifics
- **BSL Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) early detection "Citizen Monitoring Program"**

- BSLA would like to start a formal AIS monitoring program via volunteers
- Volunteers would periodically look around the lake for AIS water and shoreline plants
- Looking for things like: Eurasian watermilfoil, curly-leaf pondweed, zebra mussels and shoreline purple loosestrife
- Findings are noted in the DNR SWIMS database
- If we can get a ½ dozen or more people, we will explore setting up training
- 3 people signed up as interested at the meeting. More would be ideal, let Chip know if you are interested

6. BSLA expiring board Positions – nominations, vote

- **President** (currently: Paul, elected in 2024)
 - Paul had volunteered for an additional term
 - Paul Hassing was nominated by Chip 2nd by Steve
 - Discussion: None
 - *Vote: Approved Unanimously*
- **Vice President** (currently: Jane, re-elected in 2024)
 - Jane had volunteered for an additional term
 - Jane Jensen was nominated by Paul. 2nd by Kelly Schultz
 - Discussion: None
 - *Vote: Approved Unanimously*
- **Director At Large #2** (Currently: Don, re-elected in 2024)
 - Don had volunteered for an additional term
 - Don Button was nominated by Paul. 2nd by Chip
 - Discussion: None
 - *Vote: Approved Unanimously*
- **Director At Large #1** (Currently: Dennis, elected in 2024)
 - Dennis is retiring from the BSLA board after many decades of service
 - Conrad St. John, Chairman of Tribe was nominated by Paul, 2nd by Jane
 - Discussion: None
 - *Vote: Approved Unanimously*

7. Open/Q&A Session

- None

8. **Closing** – Paul

- Meeting was adjourned by consensus at 11:25am

9. **Annual Picnic:** A huge **Thank You** to **Karen Pavlicek** and family for hosting the 2026 picnic at the Eagle Deer Reserve Commons area and special thanks to **Joe Pavlicek** for running the grill. Also thanks for all that attended and brought items to share. We had approximately **47** people who attended the picnic. We had a beautiful, fun day with lower temps and little wildfire smoke!

Reminder \$40 yearly BSLA dues can be paid by:

- Mail check Payable to: Big Sand Lake Association and mail to:
Big Sand Lake Association
PO Box 145 Siren WI 54872
- Or give check, or cash, to any board member
- Or pay via Venmo: https://account.venmo.com/u/Big_Sand_Lake_WI_Association

Respectfully submitted,

Chip Applegath, BSLA Secretary