

The History of the Silver Lake Association (SLA) Chapter #8

Agricultural Run-off

Guest speakers Robert Hartrick of USDA Soil Conservationist and Richard Tillman of the Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District discussed agricultural run-off and possible avenues of action the committee would initiate for survey studies. A cottager's complaint about the odor of liquid fertilizer was noted. Committee Chairman Howard Benedict agreed to obtain an update on the agricultural run-off study. At the Annual meeting of 1981 a concern was brought up for discussion about a particular agricultural spraying firm may be endangering waters entering Silver Lake. Inquiry would be requested from the Department of Environmental Conservation. The Department of Environmental Conservation responded to the letter sent by the SLCOA over the concern of the agricultural spraying firm located near the lake's inlet. The D.E.C. is fully aware of that operation and the firm complied with recent requirements set by the D.E.C. Howard Benedict of the AG Run-off Committee said that the Wyoming County Soil and Water Conservation District will apply for project funding in January of 1982.

According to the Kent State report, the SLCOA needed to stop farm run-off and monitor the ditches. The Watershed Committee needed to work with the farmers. Jane Bellamy and Howard Benedict reported that three special farm projects were already underway in the run-off control program. Approval was given for the SLCOA to purchase erosion control seed mix for the area Girl Scouts to use in their project to seed certain eroded ditches entering the lake. The towns and the county have agreed not to remove the grass from the highway ditches which holds back run-off and pollution. Both projects are in conjunction with the Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District. The Wyoming County Soil & Water Conservation District received a \$40,000 grant from the State for the purpose of the agricultural run-off project. The work had already begun with the farmers around the lake and they were very cooperative. As of late July of 1983, 6 farmers were involved with the Agricultural Run-off Project. Three have completed their part of this project with the other three in the process of carrying out their plans. The SLCOA thanked directors Jane Bellamy and Howard Benedict for a job well done supervising this project. It was noted that some of the farmers around the lake were taking part of a 5 year project to control the run-off from their farms to the lake. Concerns were still being made about farm run-off polluting the lake. It was told that if anyone notices such run-off they should report the location to the county health department or the DEC.

Lake LaGrange, one of LeRoy's sources of water was shut down because of high phosphorous levels and pollution from agricultural run-off. They are considering ways to remove the contaminants, e.g., using Alum. The DEC advocates voluntary compliance by farmers regarding run-off and pollution. If the farm is over 25 acres, they are required to have a farm plan drawn up by the Soil and Conservation Office. Tony Fricano attended a Watershed Committee meeting with representatives from Perry, Castile and LeRoy in attendance. This included 3 of the 4 towns taking water from Silver Lake. LeRoy had to close Lake LaGrange because it was polluted with farm run-off. The concern was that Silver Lake may be next. Tony wanted to see testing year-round as winter samples show more of the nutrients that were absorbed by plant life in the summer. It was suggested to consult a lawyer to determine if the testing procedures and documentation was appropriate for future use in the event of legal battles. John Pachuta provided a name of an Environmental attorney.

The Council wanted to conduct lake testing of run-off and would prefer to have independent laboratories rather than public agencies; this would possibly be a cost to the SLCOA. Bob Moscicki suggested that cottage owners who lived outside of Wyoming County take water samples home to their respective county health departments for testing. A map was included with the minutes report to have directors mark on the map locations where run-off to the lake occurred and to identify neighbors on either side of the problem area. Joe Elias reported that the Rochester Board of Health took six gallons of water from the inlet to be tested. This was being done for Mt. Morris which used Silver Lake water,

although they were in Livingston County, it comes under the Rochester Board. A motion was passed to appropriate \$350 to the SL Water Quality Council for water testing by an independent Laboratory. The SLCOA received a copy of a letter stating that Wyoming County was in the Resource Conservation Development program. Money was available for land management practices and water quality measures. Tony Fricano learned that LeRoy hired two professors and a student from Kent State University to study the chemical make-up of the water in the LeRoy reservoir. They toured Silver Lake and determined it had a “eutrophic condition” – the lake is over fertilized with nitrates and phosphates. They thought it would help to have an outlet at the southern end of the lake to allow a flushing action.

Dick Popp, a farmer on Middle Reservation Road, is awaiting approval of a permit to operate a ten-million gallon manure separating pond. Surrounding neighbors believe he had already polluted their wells and are fighting approval of the permit. The case could precedent setting for other farmers in the county, most notably farmers closer to Silver Lake.

Town of Perry Supervisor Ross Roberts provided a proposal from the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Army Corps of Engineers to assist in cleaning up the lake. To qualify a survey must be completed to describe the recreational benefits of the lake. The SLCOA Directors Don Cook and Margaret Kirkgasser will complete the survey. If approved the DEC and the ACE will allot money and determine projects to be undertaken.

The sewer system was one big step in improving the water quality of Silver Lake. The next phase would be to work with the farmers to help control agricultural run-off. This area is considered a vacation destination, so the SLCOA will fill out the survey for the DEC and the ACE to help get funding for this necessary plan to clean up Silver Lake.