



## **Spring Watershed Sampling Blitz Postponed**

Due to uncertainties regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus) the Watershed Sampling Blitz that was scheduled for April 24th is postponed. We plan to continue with our fall sampling blitz (tentatively scheduled for Friday, September 18) and to add a sampling blitz in the spring of 2021. Hope you can join us!

*From Maggie Sullivan.*

**Lake Monroe  
A Resource Worth Protecting**



Lake Monroe is a popular place to visit — about a million people from Bloomington, central Indiana and beyond visit the lake every year. Most visitors enjoy the time they spend at the lake, but may not recognize the value Lake Monroe provides to the region and why the lake and its watershed are worth protecting.

Over 120,000 people obtain their drinking water from Lake Monroe, and the local economy receives millions of dollars in economic benefit from visitors to

the area. Property values, especially close to the lake, but throughout the area, are increased due to the presence of Lake Monroe. While all these things are enhanced by a healthy Lake Monroe, all would be jeopardized if lake water quality was severely degraded.

The value of Lake Monroe as a drinking water source is hard to quantify, although in 2017 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimated the value of the water supply in Lake Monroe to be over \$150,000,000 per year. A graduate class at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs found that the cost of providing quality drinking water can increase substantially if water quality in the lake degrades. That same group found that property values around the lake could decrease along with lake water quality.

The Lake Monroe ecosystem also provides a tremendous benefit for humans and wildlife that are hard to measure in economic terms. Boating, fishing, swimming, hiking, camping, hunting, bird-watching, and picnicking are popular activities where people commune with nature and enrich their lives. The Lake Monroe watershed is home to the Deam Wilderness, the only federally protected Wilderness Area in Indiana, and also provides for the state's largest concentrations of bald eagles. We are fortunate to have this tremendous resource in our back yard.

Lake Monroe, like all lakes, receives water inputs from its drainage area, or watershed. Rainfall and snow melt that drain into the lake carry with them sediment and nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, that can affect water quality and stimulate algal growth. This is a natural process for all lakes, but human activities in the watershed can result in more sediment and nutrients entering the lake.

Excess fertilizers and herbicides from agricultural and residential land, sediment from improperly managed construction and logging sites, bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet waste and faulty septic systems, and eroding streambanks can degrade lake water quality and result in conditions that are favorable to algal blooms. Frequent visitors to the lake know that recreational advisories have been imposed on public beaches at Fairfax and Paynetown during the summer months in recent years due to Harmful Algal Blooms.

The Friends of Lake Monroe was formed to help protect the lake and enhance its water quality through science, advocacy and public involvement. FLM has received a two-year grant from the Indiana Department of Environmental

Management to hire a watershed coordinator, study the lake, and develop a much-needed Watershed Management Plan. The City of Bloomington, the Monroe County government, and the Sassafras Audubon Society have shown their commitment to the process by contributing matching funds for the grant. Numerous other community partners have pledged in-kind contributions to support the project.

Two recent community forums — one in Bloomington sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Bloomington and Monroe County, and one in Nashville sponsored by the Brown County League of Women Voters — brought more than a hundred stakeholders together to discuss their concerns and to begin working toward solutions to protect Lake Monroe, a resource worth saving.

Visit the Friends of Lake Monroe website at [www.friendsoflakemonroe.org](http://www.friendsoflakemonroe.org) for quarterly updates on the Watershed Management Plan, and other news and events about this worthwhile project!

*This article was written by FLM board member Richard Harris, and originally appeared in the Bloomington Herald Times on April 21, 2020.*

## Compiling Information about the Lake Monroe Watershed

**Maggie Sullivan, Watershed Coordinator**

I am still deep into the data collection phase of developing a Watershed Management Plan for Lake Monroe. The coronavirus pandemic put a temporary halt to my fieldwork but I am back out observing streams in the watershed.

I am documenting land use, any evidence of erosion, water coloration, odors, mystery pipes, and the extent of riparian buffers. Riparian buffers are trees, shrubs, and other unmowed vegetation along a stream or river. This vegetation helps hold the streambanks in place and also provides initial filtration of rain water flowing overland into the stream. Trees provide additional benefits by shading streams, which keeps water cool and slows the rate of evaporation.

Another important task was to compile the community concerns that were raised at our community forums in December and January. I reviewed the brainstormed lists and identified the top concerns, which are currently being reviewed by our steering

committee. We will use these concerns to formulate problem statements and focus the watershed study. For more details, please check out this recent blog post: <https://friendsoflakemonroe.org/2nd-quarter-update-part-2-community-concerns/>.

In April, the IU Limnology Lab began collecting stream samples from four streams entering the lake – North Fork Salt Fork, Middle Fork Salt Fork, South Fork Salt Fork, and Crooked Creek – as well as the tailwaters of the lake. These samples will be collected and analyzed monthly, with the data used to model the flow of constituents through the lake. During the summer months, the lab will also collect samples from within Lake Monroe.

We had planned on conducting a volunteer-driven sampling blitz in April to collect water samples from 125 stream sites throughout the watershed. Due to the pandemic, our spring sampling blitz has been rescheduled for April 2021 but we will be conducting a watershed sampling blitz this fall on September 18th. Stay tuned for more information on how to volunteer.

Our other focus this summer is community outreach. We are looking at ways to adapt our outreach efforts based on safety guidelines and changes to community events like farmers markets and county fairs. Our watershed tour has been rescheduled for next summer and we are exploring ways to connect virtually. Hope you can join us at the July 15th Friends of Lake Monroe public meeting via Zoom.

If you have questions or comments about the project, please don't hesitate to contact me at [watershed@friendsoflakemonroe.org](mailto:watershed@friendsoflakemonroe.org) or by phone at (812)-558-0217.

## **Hoosier National Forest Project: Lawsuit Gets National Attention**

Headlining the phrase "Could Taint Water Supply," publications around the U.S. have run an Associated Press story datelined Bloomington, Ind., May 15, 2020. The story was carried by The New York Times, The Washington Post, Bloomberg News, ABC News, and U.S. News & World Report, in addition to Hoosier outlets including the Indianapolis Star and a number of radio and television stations' websites.

Litigants listed in the story are the Monroe County board of commissioners and environmental commission, the Indiana Forest Alliance, the Hoosier Environmental Council and "others." Describing the lawsuit's claims, the litigants' attorney is quoted as saying "the Forest Service has downplayed or ignored the environmental impacts in order to make the argument that they're

not significant."

For the full story, click here: "[Lawsuit: US Plan for Indiana Forest Could Taint Water Supply.](#)"

*Source material from Sherry Mitchell-Bruker.*

## 2020 Shoreline Cleanup Schedule



Limited shoreline cleanups were conducted in December, January, and February by board members of the Friends of Lake Monroe at the Paynetown State Recreation as part of the DNR's Adopt-A-Shoreline program.

Our experience is that outdoor volunteer activities are difficult to conduct due to the unpredictability of the weather. Past cleanups scheduled during winter months were often cancelled at the last minute due to the weather conditions, and it became easier to have a board member conduct a spontaneous cleanup as the weather allowed.

We expect regular monthly cleanups at Paynetown to resume in May, continuing through November, and the schedule for the year is as follows:

Thursday, June 11, 6 pm  
Thursday, July 16, 6pm  
Thursday, August 20, 6 pm  
Thursday, September 24, 6 pm  
Sunday, October 18, 2 pm  
Sunday November 15, 2 pm

Interested volunteers can sign up for cleanups on the Events calendar of the Friends of Lake Monroe website at [www.friendsoflakemonroe.org](http://www.friendsoflakemonroe.org).

**Needed:  
Volunteer to Assist FLM Treasurer  
for Financial Reporting**



**Are You Good with Numbers?**

FLM is looking for assistance from someone with finance or accounting experience who would be interested in working with our treasurer, Richard Harris, to see that our organization produces quality financial reports,

appropriate for an Indiana non-profit organization.

The volunteer will also help report on implementation of the U.S. Government grant that FLM has received through IDEM for creating a Lake Monroe Watershed Plan.

Willing to help? Contact Richard Harris at [harrisra52@gmail.com](mailto:harrisra52@gmail.com).

## **Ways To Get Involved With FLM**

### **Become a Member!**

For those interested in financially supporting our work, memberships are available at the individual (\$20), family (\$50), supporting (\$100), and sustaining (\$250) levels.

### **Donate!**

Donations can be made on our website at [www.friendsoflakemonroe.org](http://www.friendsoflakemonroe.org).

### **Participate in the Monthly Meetings!**

Our public meetings have usually been held in Bloomington at Monroe Public Library, 303 E. Kirkwood Ave. In the interests of social distancing, the March 2020 meeting has been cancelled, but once we are able to resume — either in person or on-line — we will announce the meeting and hope to see you!

### **Join One of FLM's Committees!**

We are looking for volunteers to serve on these committees.

Development: (Co-chairs Mary Madore and Jim Krause) fundraising, membership, volunteer program, marketing, outreach, public relations, media, communications, events.

Governance: (Co-chairs Cheryl Munson and Kevin Dogan) evaluation, monitoring executive director, succession planning, nominating



committee, strategic plan, annual report, by-laws, some contracts.

Finance: (Chair Richard Harris) tracking money spent, some contracts.

Programs: (Chair Sherry Mitchell-Bruker) tracking legislation, science and other programs.

### **Clean the Lake!**

Get together with friends at the lakeshore for our monthly contribution to picking up harmful plastics and other debris.

### **Share Your Enjoyment of the Lake!**

Share a picture of Lake Monroe to show its beauty and to celebrate people enjoying and maintaining it.

Share events and news on our Facebook page: "Friends of Lake Monroe." Over 400 users have "Liked" our page!

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## **Upcoming Events**



Check FLM's [website](#) for future opportunities, including monthly shoreline cleanup get-togethers.

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Got a friend or neighbor who should know about Friends of Lake Monroe?



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