

2025 IMLPOA Board

islandmudlake@gmail.com

Officers:

Chuck Pettipiece

President

Morgan Buetow-Staples

Vice President

Jerry Finnerty

Treasurer

Kim Swatosch

Secretary

Directors:

Patrice Bogart

Linda Ferdelman

JoAn Miller

Pam Nordahl

Tom Stremski

Inside this Edition

Greetings from the dock. 1

Summer Rewind..... 2

Website Highlights..... 3

New MN Boating
Certificate Rule..... 3

AIS—Starry Stonewort... 3

Community Connections:

• Meet the Hanischs..... 4

• JoAn Miller's Intro..... 4

• Geist's Memories.... 5-6

Looking towards 2026:

• Ice In Dates 7

• IMLPOA Gear..... 7

• 2026 Calendar..... 7

• Walleye Report..... 7

• IMLPOA Benefits..... 7

• Save the Dates..... 7

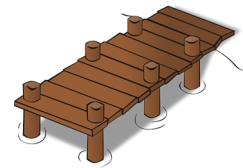


Visit us online at
islandmudlake.com

Island Mud Lakes Property Owners Association Fall 2025

Greetings from the dock

As the leaves begin to turn and the crisp air settles in, we're wrapping up another unforgettable summer on the lake. Thank you to everyone who made our summer events a success and helped grow our IMLPOA membership to 101 strong! It was great seeing both familiar faces and new friends enjoying the lake. As we head into Fall and Winter, we look forward to quieter days, cozy cabins, and continued connection. With that in mind, our Fall newsletter includes Summer event highlights, AIS updates, new boating certification information and stories from lake families. Thanks for being part of this amazing community!



Celebrating Minnesota's Common Loons

This summer, our beloved loons and their two thriving chicks reminded us why the Common Loon—Minnesota's state bird since 1961—is such a treasured symbol of wild serenity. With around 12,000 loons, Minnesota hosts more than any state except Alaska.

Remarkable Divers. Loons dive up to 250 feet and stay submerged for five minutes, thanks to their solid bones and red eyes that aid underwater vision. They consume up to three pounds of fish daily and need 100–600 feet of water runway to take off. In flight, they reach speeds over 75 mph.

Breeding & Bonds. Loons begin breeding at 3–4 years old, laying 1–2 eggs per season. Though they return to the same lakes annually, they practice serial monogamy—loyal to territory more than mate. If one partner disappears, the other quickly accepts a new mate. Both share nesting and chick-rearing duties.

Distinct Calls.

- **Tremolo:** Alarm or flight
- **Wail:** Mate locator
- **Hoot:** Family communication
- **Yodel:** Male territorial cry

Seasonal Migration. In fall, loons head to coastal waters. Males typically migrate first in late September to early October. Females follow a few days to weeks later. Chicks leave several weeks later and relying on instinct to find their way to coastal wintering grounds. Most Minnesota loons winter along the eastern seaboard (Carolinas and the Chesapeake Bay), Gulf Coast (Florida, Louisiana, and Texas), or occasionally the Pacific. A few remain on large inland lakes and reservoirs.

From their eerie calls to their deep dives, loons invite us to slow down and appreciate nature's quiet brilliance.



5 Ways to Protect Loons

1. Respect Nesting Areas

- Stay 200+ feet away from nests, especially in spring/summer
- Avoid loud noises—startled loons may abandon eggs
- Vocalizing or diving means you're too close

2. Use Lead-Free Tackle

- Lead poisons loons—switch to non-toxic gear
- Recycle old tackle and fishing line

3. Boat Responsibly

- Slow down in shallow areas
- Watch for chicks—they're tiny and hard to spot

4. Preserve Habitat

- Keep shoreline vegetation and dead trees
- Use nesting platforms if needed—consult experts first

5. Keep Lakes Clean

- Minimize fertilizer/pesticide use near water

July 4th Boat Parade Makes Waves



Perfect Weather, Perfect Vibes. At least 20 pontoons, personal watercrafts and fishing boats cruised the lake in full festive spirit. Families showed up in style, decorating their boats and bringing boundless energy. Horns blared, music played, and cheers echoed as spectators waved and snapped photos from docks and decks. Whether you were aboard a boat or cheering from land, it was a fun afternoon. A huge thank-you to everyone who joined and to Jerry Finnerty for the give aways including the 2025 IMLPOA chip clips. We can't wait to see what next year brings—until then, keep the spirit afloat!

From Hot Dogs to Hot Topics

Over 75 people attended the **2025 IMLPOA picnic and annual meeting**. The food was delicious—probably due to all the grandmothers' recipes...truth. Minnow races, guessing games and door prizes rounded out the fun. Gift card winners included; Karen Gallegher, Michele Myslicki, Dennis Schumacher, Jay Elstad, Rick Pederson, Donna Hastings, Fred Nordahl and Mike Horak. Greg Lang won the IMLPOA hat from the Geocache drawing.

Our guest speaker was Lorelei Stone, Operations Manager at the Emily Food Shelf and Resource Center. For information on resources, donating or volunteering please visit emilyfoodshelf.com.

Various board members addressed topics relevant to association and our lakes. We welcomed JoAn Miller as a new board director. Morgan Buetow-Staples moved into the vice-president role from his previous director role. Jerry Finnerty shared that membership grew to 101 people. The benefits of association were discussed and there was overwhelming support for increasing dues to \$40 in 2026. Please see the [annual meeting minutes](#) on islandmudlake.com for details on our events, finances, AIS and other important lake information.

Lures, Fish and Bragging Rights

This year's **Annual Fishing Contest**, masterfully coordinated by Morgan Buetow-Staples and Jerry Finnerty, **reeled in a great turnout!** With 55 adults and 27 juniors casting their lines there was a healthy dose of friendly competition. Each participant received a commemorative lure, which proved to be a crowd favorite—especially among the junior anglers. The fish were playing hard to get, but our anglers didn't give up. The largest catch of the day was a whopping 30-inch northern pike landed by Justin Stremski. The bass were biting including an 18-inch bass caught by Rachel Schelling and a 15-inch bass caught Henry B.S. The walleye evaded anglers this year.



Congratulations to our winning anglers:

- **Adult Northern** – Justin Stremski (30 inches)
- **Junior Northern** – Liam M. (28.5 inches)
- **Adult Bass** – Rachel Schelling (18 inches)
- **Junior Bass** – Henry B.S. (15 inches)
- **Junior Panfish** – Emma S. (14 inches)

A huge thank you to Tom Stremski for generously donating \$25 gift certificates to our winners! Until next time—tight lines and happy fishing.



Summer Days and Cool Treats

On Saturday, August 9th, 2025, neighbors gathered for one of the summer's most tasty events—**Ice Cream Day on the Lake**. From noon to 2:00 p.m., the Ice Cream Pontoon anchored near the sandbar, offering free frozen treats. More than 20 children and teens—and plenty of hungry adults—made their way to the pontoon on every kind of watercraft imaginable: boats, pontoons, kayaks, paddleboats, and paddleboards. The ice cream was delicious, the smiles were contagious, and the spirit of our lake community was on full display. Thank you to Linda Ferdelman for coordinating this year's event and keeping the tradition alive.



In the Know at Island and Mud Lakes

Your Online Hub for Lake Living: Islandmudlake.com

Whether you're a long-time lake resident or a new property owner, our website is your go-to source for staying informed, getting involved, and enjoying the best of lake life.

Pages to explore:

- [About IMLPOA & Now You Know](#): Learn our mission, read newsletters and meeting minutes, see or contact the board, get roads and fire reports, and pay dues.
- [Association Activities](#): Get information on our events.
- [Lake Info & DNR Links](#): Stay informed with water quality and conservation tips, links to DNR and Crow Wing County GIS maps, resources, permits and rules.
- [Lake Living](#): From dock maintenance to shoreline preservation and AIS prevention, get practical advice for enjoying lake life.
- [Area Photos](#): See snapshots capturing fun, candid event moments and the nature and charm of our lakes.

New Boating Certification

As of **July 1, 2025**, Minnesota requires anyone **under 21** to obtain a **Watercraft Operator's Permit** before operating motorboats or personal watercraft like jet skis. This new rule, introduced by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), is designed to improve safety and accountability. The DNR's goal is to ensure that young operators understand basic navigation rules, emergency procedures, and environmental responsibility before taking the helm.

Permit Details:

- **Course**: 3–4 hour online boater safety course
- **Exam**: Must pass a final test
- **Cost**: \$34.95 (one-time fee)
- **Validity**: Lifetime—no renewal required
- **Certificate**: Temporary version available immediately; permanent permit mailed

Age-Based Restrictions:

- **Under 12**: Cannot operate personal watercraft or boats with motors over 75 horsepower
- **Ages 12–20**: Must have a permit or be accompanied by someone **21+** who holds one

Phased Rollout by Birthdate:

Born After	Permit Required Starting
June 30, 2004	July 1, 2025
June 30, 2000	July 1, 2026
June 30, 1996	July 1, 2027
June 30, 1987	July 1, 2028

For more information visit [Boat and water safety education | Minnesota DNR](#)¹.

What is Starry Stonewort and Why Should We Care about It?

Starry Stonewort is a type of invasive macroalgae that spreads rapidly and aggressively. This aquatic invasive species (AIS) poses a serious risk to the health of Minnesota's lakes. It has now been **confirmed in 35 water bodies across the state**, including recent infestations in **Garfield Lake (Hubbard County), Gull Lake and Three Island Lake (Beltrami County), and Two Rivers Lake (Stearns County)**.

Starry Stonewort can travel from lake to lake by hitching a ride on boats, trailers, anchors, fishing gear, water toys like pails, floats, and even sandals! Just one tiny fragment or bulbil (a small, star-shaped reproductive structure) can spark a new infestation.

Why It Matters. If left unchecked, Starry Stonewort can:

- Destroy critical fish habitat
- Crowd out native aquatic plants essential to ecosystem health
- Reduce water clarity
- Block boat navigation, shoreline access and limit recreational use of lakes
- Choke shorelines and wild rice beds—see this eerie [video](#)² of Starry Stonewort in action

Help Stop the Spread. Early identification is key—it provides a better chance to contain and manage the spread before it becomes unmanageable.

If you suspect an AIS Infestation:

- 1) Collect a sample
- 2) Wrap it in a wet paper towel
- 3) Seal it in a plastic bag
- 4) Chill or refrigerate
- 5) Report it to any IMLPOA Board member or call the Minnesota DNR at **651-259-5100**



Every lake visitor plays a role in protecting our waters. Follow the **CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY** protocol posted at Island Lake Public Access:

- **CLEAN** all equipment and gear
- **DRAIN** water from boats and live wells
- **DRY** everything thoroughly before entering another water body

Scan this QR code to learn more from the DNR about Starry Stonewort and other AIS:



¹ <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/boatwater/education.html>

² <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/>

Community Connections: Meet the Hanischs

We're delighted to introduce Troy and Melani Hanisch, who joined our lake community less than a year ago. Since purchasing their cabin from Chuck Schatz in October 2024, they've jumped right in and are thoroughly enjoying lake life.

Troy and Melani live in Rosemount, MN. Their story began in Madison, South Dakota, where they met. Melani grew up there and Troy went to Dakota State University. Over the years, they talked about buying a cabin, but the timing never quite worked out—until a family vacation to Crosslake last summer. Melani suggested checking out a few cabins, and that spontaneous idea led them to Island Lake.

The Crosslake area holds a special place in the Hanischs' hearts. Their daughter, Ellie, and her husband, Colin, live and work in Crosslake. Ellie works at [Camp Knutson](#), an adaptive camp for youth and adults with developmental, medical and other identified needs, along with being a retreat center. Troy and Melani's son, Austin, 29, has Down syndrome and attended Camp Knutson for years. Island Lake's proximity to Crosslake was a major draw. Once they saw the Schatz cabin, they knew it was the one! The home was spacious, fully furnished, and well maintained. Plus, the lake—with its islands and bays—has a charm all its own. Both Austin and Ellie gave it their stamp of approval.

Thanks to flexible work arrangements—Troy working remotely for Thomson Reuters and Melani working part-time from home—they've been able to spend extended time at the lake. When they're not working, they've been busy upgrading the property: new furnace, new roof, landscape and flower bed cleanup. Next up? Updating a basement bedroom and bathroom.



Their cabin sits along one of the lake's favorite walking routes, and neighbors have been quick to stop by and say hello. The Hanischs enjoy getting to know everyone and participating in community events like the July 4th boat parade and annual picnic.

One of their favorite spots is the sandbar, where Austin shines—chatting with fellow lake-goers and soaking up the summer fun. It's become a highlight of their time at the lake. Here's another fun twist: Troy noticed a familiar name—Karen Stremski—on a lake sign. It turns out he works with a Karen Stremski and reached out. Yes, same person! She has a cabin here too. Small world!

For great food off the lake, Melani and Troy recommend [Red Pine Cookhouse](#) and [Moonlight Bay](#). Craving a sweet treat? [The Yellow House](#) (aka Lake Country Crafts and Cones) is a must. Camp Knutson brings its campers there, and Austin insists on getting an ice cream cone whenever they visit Crosslake.

We're so happy to welcome Troy, Melani and family to the Island and Mud Lakes community. It just goes to show how a spontaneous idea can lead to a perfect fit!

Get to Know Your IMLPOA Board

Greetings from Mud Lake.



My name is JoAn Miller. I'm currently completing Jim Luttrell's term on the IMLPOA Board.

My husband, Ernie, and I moved to Mud Lake in 2014, leaving behind the demands of operating a 10-acre working farm in west-central Minnesota. For over a decade, we offered berries,

vegetables, and perennials to the public—but we didn't retire!

Once we settled in at Mud Lake, I continued my china and pottery restoration business, which I closed in 2022 after 25 years in the industry. Ernie carried on with our cross ministry until his passing in 2023. I recently shuttered that ministry, but not before

more than 500,000 of those little crosses had literally journeyed around the world several times. Ernie and I were always humbled to be called to that work. I remain deeply joyful about the testimonials we received from the many lives they touched.

Now, until my next adventure unfolds, if I'm not enjoying the serenity and quiet beauty of our little lake, you'll find me volunteering, crafting, or just chillin' with my pup child, Nancy.



Questions? Contact the IMLPOA Board at islandmudlake@gmail.com.

Community Connections: Geist Family Stories

Generations on Island Lake. For Rosemary Geist, Island Lake has been part of her life for as long as she can remember. She first visited in 1934 at the age of six, invited by her childhood friend Patty Ryan. Patty's father, Morris Ryan, owned property and a couple of cabins on the lake, and the girls spent their summers swimming, exploring, and building a lifelong friendship.



In later years, Rosemary and her husband, Bob—who had been visiting Island Lake since 1953—joined with Thomond and Alvina O'Brien in purchasing the property and surrounding properties. The sale included the original cabin, a cabin on stilts, and a small bunkhouse. Over time, the property was divided between the families. Rosemary and Bob built a larger lake home, while the original cabin, now remodeled, became the lake home of Tim and Francine O'Brien.

The Heart of Family Life. Before the new lake home was built, the original cabin was the center of activity for the Geist and O'Brien families. Each had seven children, and summers were filled with the energy of many cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents swimming, playing, and spending time together. Bob called it "cousin's camp," and Rosemary enjoyed cooking big meals for everyone.

Island Lake was a year-round gathering place. Autumn brought deer hunting and colorful scenery, winter meant skating on the ice and celebrating New Year's, and spring and summer offered fishing and quiet mornings by the water. The cousins formed close bonds that felt more like those between siblings.



The "Witch's Cabin". The small bunkhouse had its own bit of mystery. Inside were an old broom and a jar of strange "goop," which led the children to believe it belonged to a witch. Rosemary played along, telling stories about witches who protected the cabin during the winter and turned into toads in summer. Bob had fun giving the children broomstick rides. The tale kept the kids out of the bunkhouse, which was in poor condition at the time. Today, fully renovated, it is a favorite spot for sleeping.

Adventures and Traditions. Rosemary and Bob loved teaching their children to ski, fish, hunt, and canoe. Their son, Harry, and daughter, Rosemary Geist Furst, remembered hiking to the old fire tower near Emily and enjoying the view from the top. Without phones or screens, the children often spend time reading books from the family's diverse collection. The reading tradition continued with the grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Harry recalled the joy in his father's voice when talking about one-on-one times with his granddaughters, teaching them about boating and lake life.



Wild Visitors. Wildlife encounters have been part of Island Lake life for generations. When the Ryans owned the property, they kept two horses, Buster and Pogo. Rosemary and Patty would ride them to collect mail or pick up eggs and milk from the Bodle farm. Buster, an ex-circus horse, was known for opening the cabin door and letting himself in.

The Big Pine Resort also used to have horses, and one of them got loose. At night, the family would hear it down by the lake, splashing as it drank. It took a few months before the horse was finally caught and brought back.

Other animal stories rooted in family memories:

- John O'Brien, one of the cousins, had made a batch of fudge and left it out to cool before heading to the lake. When his mother, Alvina, returned to the cabin, she found a mama bear and her two cubs sitting on the stoop eating the fudge. They had climbed in through the window, helped themselves to the fudge, and then exited through the back screen door.

Community Connections: Geist Family Stories

Wild Visitors (continued)

- On another visit, Rosemary Geist Furst and a friend arrived to find a skunk inside the cabin. Joe Banks and John Bodle came to help, building a makeshift path of benches, boxes, and chairs to guide the animal safely out the door.
- Porcupines once found their way into the cabin, leaving behind lasting evidence — chew marks on the kitchen windowsill that remain to this day.
- Harry was teaching a 17-year-old how to track and hunt deer along a ridge when they came across a



group of downed trees forming a small cove. A large wolf emerged from the area, about 20 yards away. It looked in their direction and began moving toward them. They quickly raised their rifles, the wolf stopped, changed course, and sauntered back into the forest.

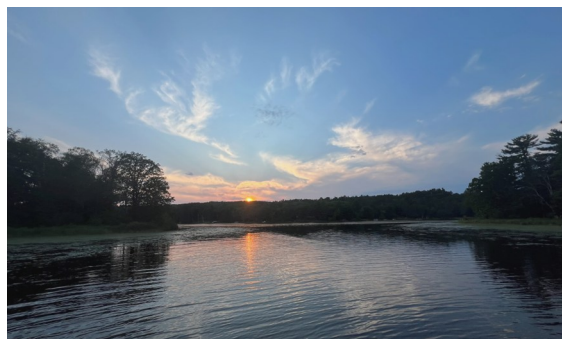
- On other occasions, while hunting from a deer stand, Harry has heard wolf packs howling for stretches of up to 20 minutes.

The Lake Community Through the Years. Over 90 years, Rosemary has watched Island Lake's community change. The lake went from having a handful of cabins and Walworth's turkey farm to its current level of occupation. Rosemary Geist Furst and Harry Geist remember when the Big Pines Resort, owned by Bea Dierling and Margaret McLaughlin, was the center of activity. Resort families came back each summer, and guests and local kids played softball and volleyball together. Bob would sometimes pay to open the pop machine so everyone could enjoy a cold drink.



Swimming at Geist and O'Brien Beach was another regular pastime. The families' large yellow speedboat was a familiar sight cruising around the lake or pulling water-skiers. Like today, the sandbar was a popular spot on the lake and the family enjoyed meeting other lake neighbors there.

There were also local legends, like Shorty Walters. A skilled angler, he is said to have caught the lake's largest walleye. It was mounted and displayed at the Big Pines Resort store. Boys followed him on the water, hoping to find the big fish!



The lake has also weathered its share of challenges:

- The Halloween blizzard of 1991 blocked all entrances to the lake.
- In 1993, a beaver dam broke and caused widespread flooding.
- In the wee hours of the morning, a lightning strike once scorched a huge Norway red pine from top to bottom less than fifteen feet from the log cabin, jolting everyone out of their sleep and the odor of burning pine pitch filled the air.

A Place of Magic. For Rosemary and Bob Geist, Island Lake has always been more than a vacation spot—it has been the backdrop for a lifetime of family, friendship, and community.



As their daughter Rosemary Geist Furst once said, *"There has always been something magical about Island Lake, and there still is today."*

Looking towards 2026

Ice-in Dates

As temperatures drop and the days shorten, the lakes begin transitioning into winter. From ice fishing and snowmobiling to simply knowing when it's safe to walk across the lake, tracking ice-in dates helps us prepare the months ahead.

Here are our **recent ice-in dates**:

- ♦ 2024—Nov. 30th
- ♦ 2023—Nov. 28th
- ♦ 2022—Nov. 23rd
- ♦ 2021—Nov. 23rd
- ♦ 2020—Nov. 30th
- ♦ 2019—Nov. 18th

IMLPOA Gear: Recap & What's Next

Thanks for the support of the 2025 IMLPOA online store. It's fun spotting people on the lakes wearing our gear!

By the Numbers

- **36 Orders** placed
- **196 Products** shipped
- **\$190 in Donations** raised

This year's design was a hit—fresh and stylish. We offered popular items like t-shirts, tank tops, performance shirts, sweatshirts and hoodies. These favorites will return in 2026, with possible new additions!

Coming Spring 2026

The store will reopen next spring—and we want your input! Three new designs will be shared, and the community will vote for the winner to feature 2026 gear.



Your Lens, Our Calendar: Photo Submissions Open!

We're gathering photos for the 2026–27 IMLPOA calendar (July–July). We'd love your shots of wildlife and natural beauty around our lakes—think hummingbirds, owls, eagles, deer, wildflowers, water lilies, and the like.

Deadline: May 15, 2026

Photo Specs:

- High-resolution (300 DPI at 11" x 8.5" or better)
- JPG or PDF format
- Landscape orientation, no zoom

Send your best to: imlpoawebmaster@gmail.com or merffot@gmail.com. Let's showcase the lakes' magic!

Hooked on Data: Walleye Trends

In 2025, the number of reported walleye catches saw a dip compared to previous years. We received 11 catch reports this year, with an average fish length of 17 inches. Of those, 40% were released back into the lake.

Since we began tracking walleye catch data in 2022, we've collected over 81 reports. The overall **average size across all years is 15.6 inches**, and an impressive 70% of the fish have been released, supporting sustainable fishing practices.

We share this data with the DNR to support the ongoing stocking program, which occurs every three years. Your continued catch reporting plays a vital role in demonstrating that the stocking efforts are making a positive impact on Island and Mud Lakes. **Keep the reports coming!**



IMLPOA Membership Benefits

Being a member of IMLPOA means enjoying exclusive perks while helping protect and celebrate our lakes:

- **Custom Lake Sign:** Complementary, personalized engraved name sign posted at your lake's entrance.
- **Free Pontoon Trailer Use:** Convenient and eco-friendly—helps prevent invasive species by reducing outside boat traffic. Contact Mark Caspers at 763-258-3842 to reserve the trailer.
- **Newsletter, Website & Updates:** Stay informed with seasonal news, lake happenings, and important info.
- **Custom Calendar:** A beautiful yearly calendar with lake photos and event dates.
- **Lake Stewardship:** Support channel cleanup, erosion control, and water quality monitoring in partnership with MPCA, DNR, and others.
- **Free Community Events:** Enjoy fun events like the annual picnic (with prizes), fishing contest, ice cream social, and boat parade—no fees, just good times!

Thank you for being part of IMLPOA—your support keeps our lakes thriving and our community strong.

Save the Dates!

We're gearing up for more fun this Fall and in 2026. **Make sure these dates are on your calendars—**and don't forget to **submit your best snapshots** for the 2026–27 calendar **by May 15, 2026.**

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| • Morgan's Booyah | Friday, Nov. 11th |
| • Morgan's Winter Fishing Contest | Friday, Jan. 16th & Saturday, Jan. 17th |
| • Annual Fishing Contest | Friday, July 3rd |
| • Pontoon Parade | Saturday, July 4th |
| • Picnic/Annual Meeting | Saturday, July 25th |
| • Ice Cream Day | Saturday, August 8th |