



Friends of Lake Wingra



Promoting a healthy Lake Wingra
through an active watershed community

Goals for a Healthy Lake Wingra: Where We Want to Be in 2030

Lake Wingra is a unique community resource that contributes to the quality of life of a much larger geographic region. The lake and its surroundings support diverse open spaces and natural habitats that are protected, restored, and regenerated for future generations, and provide refuge from the noise, lights, and pavement of the surrounding urban area. People, plants, and animals benefit from this oasis within the city.

A Healthy Lake

Clear, Clean Water: The lake water is free from excessive pollutants, and clear enough for people to see their feet when standing waist-deep.

The lake has moderate productivity without large algae buildups. Sunlight reaching deeper water supports diverse aquatic plant and animal communities, which are visible to Lake users. The “Trophic Status Index” (as calculated from water clarity, phosphorus level, and chlorophyll plant pigment measurements) does not exceed a value of 50. Average annual chloride levels do not exceed 40 mg/L. Toxic heavy metal and organic pollutants are below detectable levels.

Restored Spring Flow: Cool, clear spring water replenishes the lake, and maintains year-round flows into Wingra Creek.

The hydrological conditions and ecological value of the lake and its shoreline are enhanced and, to the extent practical, restored. The Lake becomes predominantly groundwater fed. Protection and recharge of groundwater throughout the watershed increases flow from existing springs, and renews “lost” springs.

Native Plants and Animals: The ecology of the lake and its surroundings are enhanced by the protection and restoration of habitats for a wide variety of plant and animals.

Lake, wetland, and terrestrial habitats provide refuge for common, endangered, and threatened native species. Non-native and invasive species are under control. Lost or threatened habitats (e.g., sedge meadows, fens) and species (e.g., wild rice) have been restored or enhanced. Species richness (total number of species) remains high and indicative of comparable high-quality ecosystems in the region. Diverse habitats attract resident and migrating birds. No new invasive species have been established.

Stewardship and Enjoyment

Public Access: Lake Wingra’s unique amenities are accessible to responsible public use and support a wide range of complementary recreational activities in all seasons.

Citizens and public agencies are good stewards of the lake and its watershed. Policies are in place to avert user conflict and prevent a “tragedy of the commons’ caused by overuse.

Swimming: The Lake is healthy and attractive for swimming.

There are no beach closings due to elevated bacterial levels or other standard measures of safe swimming conditions.

Fishing: The fishery meets the needs of many types of anglers; fish are safe and delicious to eat.

Populations of native species, able to reproduce naturally in the lake, make up the foundation of the fishery. Opportunities range from sport fishing by boat to subsistence fishing from the shoreline.

Boating: An emphasis on quiet use provides a refuge for paddling and sailing.,

Water trails provide access to paddlers throughout the lake and its associated waterways (including Wingra Creek and Gardner Marsh). The lake surface is calm (weather permitting).

Nature Viewing: The lake and its surroundings abound with opportunities to view a large variety of species (such as coyotes, otters, dragonflies, orchids, turtles) and natural features (such as springs, fens, and sedge meadows). The shoreline is recognized as a “dark sky preserve,” without obtrusive lights.

Learning: The lake and its surroundings act as a magnet for learning, drawing individuals, youth programs, schools, and families.

People know about the lake from excellent print and internet material and also from experiential learning that involves them in hands-on observation, reflection, monitoring, and action.

Restoring and Enhancing: People of all ages are engaged in activities that restore and enhance the ecological importance, natural beauty, and recreational value of the lake and its surroundings.

Volunteers assist with restoration of native plantings on public property. Property owners and public agencies manage storm water runoff, favor healthy lawn and garden practices, and plant rain gardens. Caring for the lake through individual and collective action is the norm, and it is fun.

Management Strategies: How We Can Get There

After the Friends of Lake Wingra completes a review of the above goals by citizens and partner groups, the next step will be to develop concrete strategies and measurable outcomes. These will include strategies that address both ecological management and social/political management. Many of these strategies have already been developed in existing Storm Water, Invasive Species, and Citizen Stewardship management plans (see FOLW Library at <http://lakewingra.org>). To get involved, contact the Friends at info@lakewingra.org or 608-663-6921.

Ecological Management includes attention to surface & groundwater hydrology, stormwater, ecosystem services, invasive species, and Wingra Creek restoration.

Social and Political Management includes attention to urban redevelopment, coordinated leadership, planning and action (government, business, and nonprofits), citizen stewardship, schools (curriculum development, action learning), and regional land use and transportation.