

WINGRA WATERSHED NEWS

Promoting a healthy lake through an active watershed community

Fall 2024



As 2024 draws to a close, we're reflecting on the successes we've achieved together, thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, partners, and supporters. This year, we've been hard at work preserving the lake and fostering a deeper connection with nature. We were sad we could not spend much time this last winter walking on the lake or ice skating around the lagoon, but many of us found joy in paddling or fishing this spring and summer. From the shores to the trees, here are a few highlights of how we've come together for the future of our lake.

Thanks to our community partners, we hosted our annual spring clean up with Wingra Boats, our first Learn to Fish event at Vilas Park with the WI Department of Natural Resources, and an autumn Watershed Work Party at the UW Arboretum. You might have also seen us at First Fridays at Wingra Park this summer or our favorite community festivals like Good Neighbor Gathering and Monroe Street Festival.

As a growing board, we hope to offer more volunteer opportunities in this coming year. Let us know if you want to get involved with helping improve the health and quality of Lake Wingra. Sign up for our email list on our website www.lakewingra.org or follow us on Facebook and Instagram (friendsoflakewingra) for updates. We could use your expertise if a future event or project piques your interest. In the past, opportunities have included education programs, graphic design, rain garden installations & planting & maintenance, event planning, marketing, and grant writing & review.



Learn to Fish

Photo: Theresa Stabo



←
**Info Table
at First
Friday**

Photo: Carol
Schroeder



→
**Arboretum
Brush
Clearing**

Photo: Lisa
Grueneberg



Learn to Fish

Photo: David Ortiz



Spring Clean-Up

Photo: Emily Balsey

Follow us on Facebook or Instagram: @friendsoflakewingra

Sign up for our e-newsletter at www.lakewingra.org/newsletters to get the latest news, learn about upcoming events, and get updates on ways you can get involved.

Use the UW Arboretum's Stormwater Outreach Calendar to plan actions with your friends, family and neighbors that improve Lake Wingra's water quality: www.bit.ly/lake-wingra-calendar.

Volunteer: If you love our lake and would like to join our efforts to promote and improve it, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at info@lakewingra.org.

Donate: Click the "Donate" tab on our website at LakeWingra.org. Checks are always welcome (no fees!) and can be sent to: Friends of Lake Wingra, PO Box 45071, Madison, WI 53744-5071.

Lake Wingra Loop App Brings History To Your Fingertips

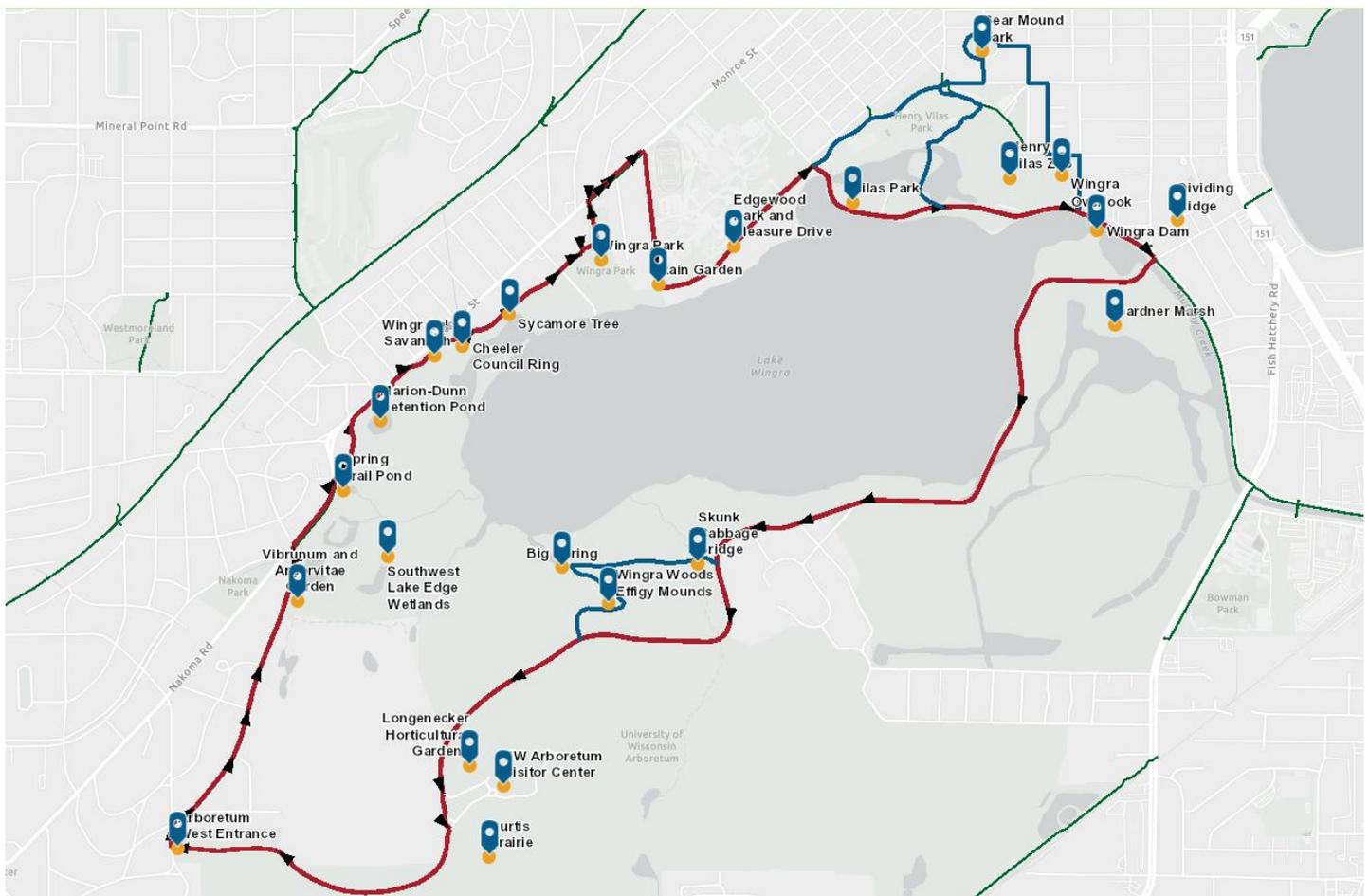


A group of Lake Wingra lovers has recently published a Lake Wingra Loop “StoryMap”, which documents a recreation trail around the lake with historic and natural features of note highlighted with additional information and photos. This group included representatives from the city council, city Engineering Division, UW Arboretum and Friends of Lake Wingra, all of whom treasure the lake and want to share their knowledge and appreciation with others.

The Lake Wingra Loop guides the urban explorer through a mix of unique natural, historical, and cultural features. Best traveled on foot or by bike, the 6.5-mile journey circles the lake, passing through portions of the Vilas, Dudgeon-Monroe, Nakoma, Arboretum, and Greenbush neighborhoods. This journey allows for pauses at sites of interest. Along the way, one can appreciate the area as an oasis within urban Madison, with vistas of the lake and visits to adjacent woodlands, wetlands, parks, ponds, gardens, effigy mounds, and other points of interest – something to explore for everyone.

The Loop is about 6.5 miles long, with a number of suggested “detours” along the way to investigate some of the numerous native mounds that are so abundant around the lake, or various natural features like Curtis Prairie or Big Springs in the Arboretum. And if you stay on the main paved path the whole way, you will be following the 10-kilometer course used each April for the “Mad City 100K”.

You’re invited to explore the StoryMap on your mobile device using the QR code above, or online at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/52bda717b8a544169a62f691746c77b8> . Enjoy!



Jan	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
			1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	New Year's 8	9	10	11	12
	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
	MLK Day 27	28	29	30	31		

Apr	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
	28	29	30	Look for muskie trying to jump the dam to spawn in Wingra's warmer waters			

Feb	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	Valentine's Day 14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	24	25	26	27	28		

May	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
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	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	Memorial Day 26	27	28	29	30	31	

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	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	30						

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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1st Friday Wingra Pk		
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
				1st Friday Wingra Pk		
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Labor Day	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1st Day of Autumn	29	30				

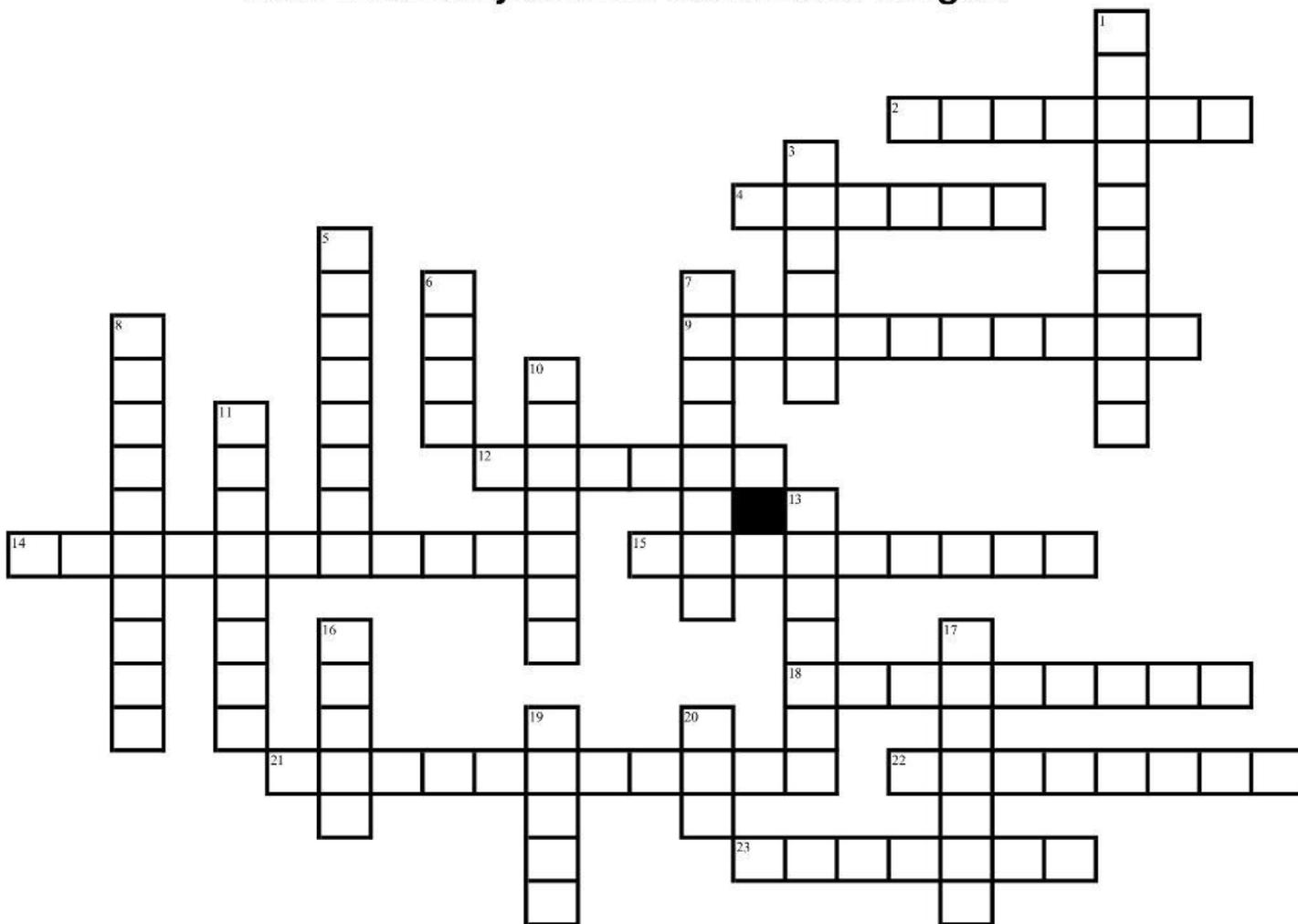
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29	30	31				



How much do you know about Lake Wingra?



ACROSS

2. ___ plants, dominate Lake Wingra
4. Ice ___ is often played in the Vilas Park lagoon
9. _____ Zoo
12. Lake Wingra water is rich with what gas?
14. Large predatory fish found in Lake Wingra
15. Area that drains into a lake
18. Lake Wingra is primarily surrounded by the _____
21. Popular standing watercraft
22. Major pollutant found in Lake Wingra

23. ___ are culturally important to the Ho-Chunk; source of water for Lake Wingra

DOWN

1. Gas powered ___ are not allowed on the weekends or holidays on Lake Wingra
3. Water flows from Lake Wingra to Lake _____
5. The most common fish in Lake Wingra
6. What fish species was removed by DNR in 2008?
7. Important tree species that dominated the landscape before colonization
8. Popular winter activity when Lake Wingra is frozen
10. Age which you need a fishing license
11. School on the shoreline of Lake Wingra
13. Landscape that filters water before arriving at Lake Wingra
16. Popular sitting paddle watercraft
17. Lake Wingra is part of the ancestral lands of the _____ people
19. Large birds found year-round on Lake Wingra; Canadian
20. Lake Wingra discharges over a _____

Spring Rains “Flood” Wingra Dam...

Remember all that rain we had late spring and early summer? During a 5-week stretch in late May and June, over 15 inches fell. While rainfall has dropped back below normal levels the past three months, for the year overall through October over 46 inches have fallen, well above the 40 inch annual average this century.

Having all that rainfall in such a short period of time resulted in the Wingra Dam overflowing. Essentially, Wingra Creek and Lake Mendota downstream couldn't keep up. For all the water that rains down directly onto Lake Wingra, a similar amount enters the lake through the watershed's stormwater management system. So that 15 inches of rainfall translated into 30 inches (2 ½ feet) of water depth being added to the lake, a lake that's only 9 feet deep on average.

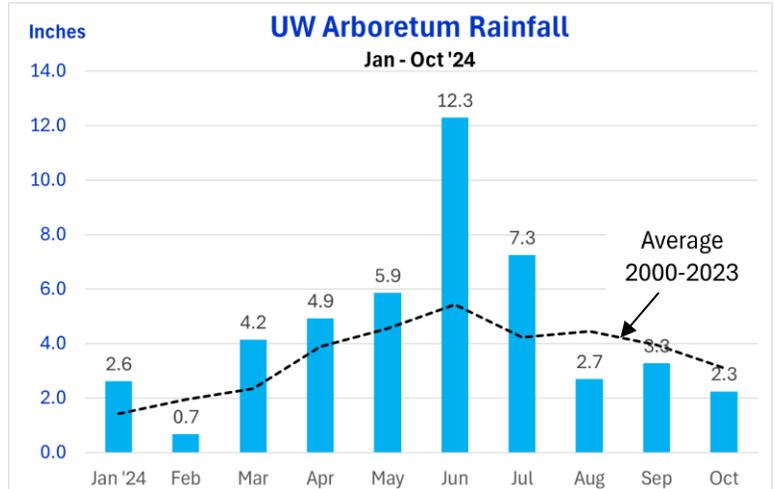
No wonder that for several weeks people were able to witness the fairly infrequent, but remarkable phenomenon of “flooding” at Wingra Dam.

... and Reduce Salt Levels

Aside from a welcome relief from the drought we've been experiencing the past several years, that rainfall brought an additional benefit to Lake Wingra: a reduction in the lake's chloride (salt) level, from about 140 milligrams per liter (mg/L) last year to around 90 mg/L since late spring.

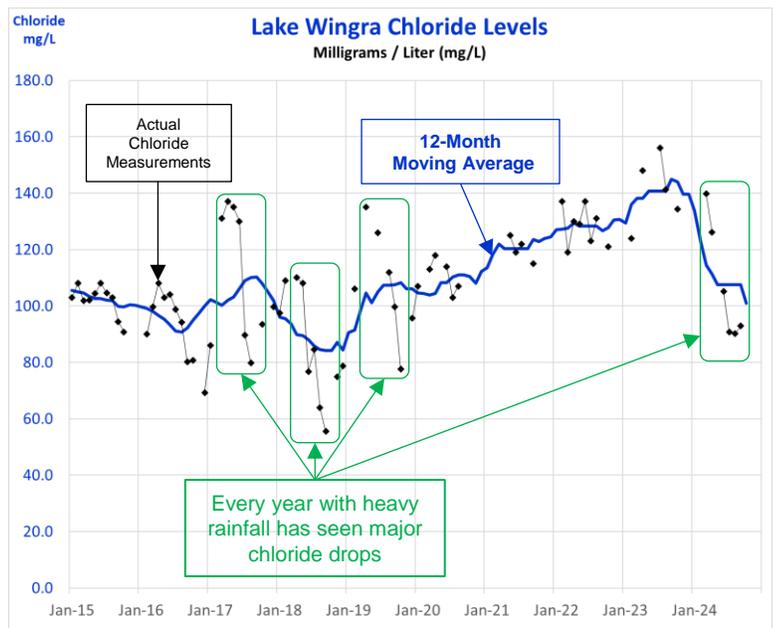
All the extra rain effectively helps “flush” the lake of some of that chloride. However, this reduction will unfortunately prove temporary (unless every year sees heavy rains). In 2017, 2018, and 2019, chloride levels plunged as rain totals surged, only to see chloride climb back up again. High chloride levels are a concern as they can harm fish & vegetation.

In the chart, the black diamonds are actual chloride measurements taken at the dam. As many months lack a measurement, and to make the trend easier to read, the heavy solid blue line shows the 12-month moving average.



Wingra Dam

Photo: Adrianna Gorsky (7/14/24)



Dividing Ridge

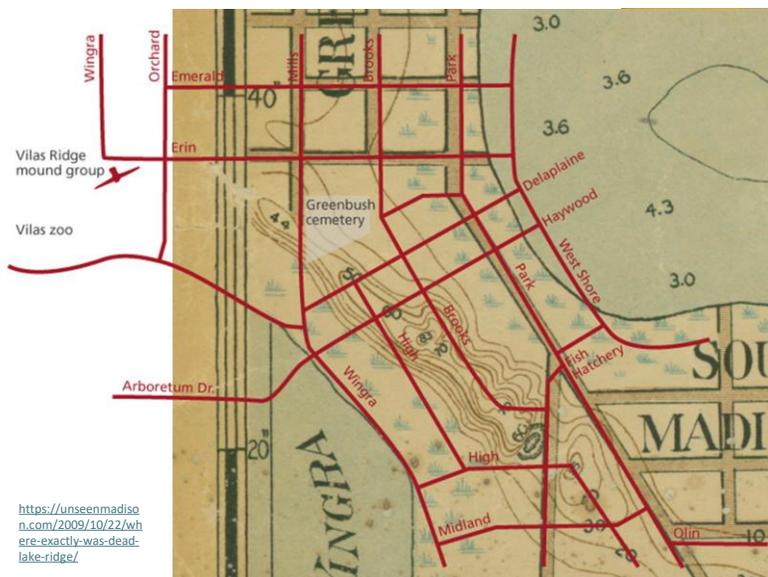
The Dividing Ridge was a line of hills that once existed just to the east of Lake Wingra. Roughly situated between today's St. Mary's Hospital to the north and Midland St to the south, and bound by High St and Brooks St, the hills stood 40-75 feet in height, with a peak of 83 feet near the back yard of 909 High St. That peak made it the highest point in all of Madison, and as the crest of the hills were generally bare of trees, afforded some of the best views of the city. James Doty came here to map out his vision for the state capital to be. For centuries before him, the ridge was a site for a host of native villages taking advantage of the excellent observation post. The hills were referred to as the Walnut Mounds, Dead Lake Ridge, and ultimately, the Dividing Ridge that separated Lakes Wingra and Monona.

The ridge was steeply sloped, with a crest of 30-150 feet width. It was a moraine from the last ice age that left Madison some 15,000 years ago. Without it, Lake Wingra might not exist as its own separate lake, for its elevation of 845 feet is virtually the same as Lake Monona. The ridge is perhaps responsible for a prior name of Lake Wingra, Dead Lake, so named because it was erroneously believed there was no connection between the two lakes.

Given its height, vantage point, and proximity to Lake Wingra, it is not surprising that the Late Woodland peoples constructed numerous mounds here. An 1859 report by Increase Lapham indicated some twenty-five mounds were strung along the ridge, more than in any other location around Lake Wingra. The mounds measured 4 to 9 feet in height, some made from black soil that must have been brought up from the marshy ground below, no mean feat, and testimony to their significance. In shape, there were effigies of a thunderbird, panther, water spirit, turtle, as well as a host of linear and conical mounds. Remains of fireplaces were later uncovered, as well as numerous bits of pottery, flint chips, stone axes, arrowheads, and... human remains; most of the mounds were graves.

Starting in 1870, the ridge began to be used as material for the growing city's streets, and as landfill along some of the lakes. Pits at each end would haul away clay and gravel and other material over the next fifty years. Much of the land comprising Vilas Park and Zoo was formerly marshland along the lake's edges. Today, some of that land is the progeny of the Dividing Ridge.

Map showing contours of former Dividing Ridge



Undated photo: Dividing Ridge in foreground

