



Lake Poinsett

MANAGEMENT PLAN

LAKE POINSETT MANAGEMENT PLAN REPORT

JANUARY 2026

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PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

WATER QUALITY

GOALS

- Protect Water Quality
- Improve Water Quality
- Reduce Algae

PRIORITIES

- Complete Sanitary Sewer System
- Manage Runoff into the Lake
- Reduce Nutrients

ACTION PLAN

- Connect the remaining 30% of homes to the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District sewer system.
- Lake Poinsett Sanitary District take over maintenance of the remaining septic systems until full connection is achieved.
- Dedicated watershed coordinator to work with landowners and organize and advocate for projects under the Prairie Coteau Project that will benefit Lake Poinsett.
- Continue efforts to encourage property owners and visitors to adopt lake-friendly practices. Utilize a website, the LPA newsletter, LPSD mailings, email reminders, and annual meetings to educate homeowners.
- Create a single website for the Lake Poinsett area. The three boards could share their information here. In addition, information like the community water quality monitoring efforts or from the watershed coordinator could be posted here.
- Hold annual meetings to keep people engaged and informed about the progress.
- Eliminate fertilizer use, where possible.
- Provide coupons, rebates, or other incentives to encourage zero-phosphorus fertilizer use.

WATER LEVELS

GOALS

- Maintain a consistent water level in Lake Poinsett

PRIORITIES

- Maintain recreational opportunities
- Protect against property damage
- Protect shorelines

ACTION PLAN

- Hydrology and Sediment study
 - Conduct a hydrology study to evaluate options such as filling the diversion channel and/or constructing levees to prevent floodwaters from entering the lake.
 - Identify sources of sediment that are filling the outlet.
- Conduct targeting dredging, based on the findings of the studies.
- Continue shoreline stabilization efforts, prioritizing areas identified by the studies; identify both structural and natural controls.
- Require erosion controls during construction. File complaints with DANR – If you see something, say something!
- Protect wetlands and riparian areas:
 - Work with the Counties to protect wetlands and riparian management through land use decisions.
 - Work with the watershed coordinator to plant grasses in waterways and protect riparian areas.
- Sweep streets and install catch basins to keep sediment from roads out of the lake.
- Continue to maintain and operate gates to prevent floodwaters from entering the lake.

TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY

GOALS

- Safe Transportation around the lake

PRIORITIES

- Improved maintenance of the roads
- Enforcement of speed limits
- Parking on Highway 81

ACTION PLAN

- Road Maintenance and Upgrades
 - Increased grading and dust control.
 - Address road erosion, especially in areas near Lake Poinsett.
 - Upgrade-high traffic segments with chip seal or asphalt.
 - Consider additional levies for services like snow removal.
- Request DOT conduct a study of speed limits on roads around Lake Poinsett.
- Community engagement on road issues.
 - Discuss during annual meetings.
 - Contact County Sheriffs regarding concerns with speed, safety, or other law enforcement issues.
 - Contact County Commissioners with concerns.
 - Attend County Commission and Planning and Zoning meetings.
 - Appoint a liaison for each county to track and report on issues that impact Lake Poinsett.
- Form road districts to access additional funding through levies.

RECREATION AND AMENITIES

GOALS

- Improve/increase recreational opportunities
- Improve safety on the Lake
- Improve quality of life
- Enhance enjoyment of Lake Poinsett

PRIORITIES

- Trails for biking and jogging
- Recreation facilities
- Fueling station(s) on the Lake
- More and improved docks
- Improved enforcement and education

ACTION PLAN

- Expand the Lake Poinsett trail network by adding more trails around the lake and linking them to the State Recreation Area.
- Improve recreation by adding amenities like playgrounds, a pickle ball court, and other sports courts.
- Upgrade existing amenities like picnic shelters and the beach areas.
- Request increased patrols by GFP and County Sheriffs to promote boating safety through stronger enforcement, education campaigns, and citizen reporting.
- Improve Lake access, such as courtesy docks or additional public docks.
- Evaluate on-lake fueling options and discuss options with local businesses.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

GOALS

- Improve communication with local officials

PRIORITIES

- Engage in local decisions
- Protect the wetlands between Lake Albert and Lake Poinsett from development

ACTION PLAN

- Engage in local decisions by participating in county-level governance and share updates.
- Develop a single website and email list for sharing information.
- Protect sensitive, undeveloped areas with zoning changes.
- Consider the development of special districts or a municipality for greater local control.

ZEBRA MUSSELS

PRIORITIES

- Reduce the spread of Zebra Mussels

ACTION PLAN

- Public education and outreach: Clean, Drain, Dry before entering or leaving the Lake.
- Establish volunteer boat inspection stations.
- Establish hot water wash stations.
- Citizen monitoring near docks and other infrastructure.
- Report sightings to the SD GFP.
- Send zebra mussels to the University of Minnesota for genetic testing and tracking.

CONCLUSION

In summary, **community input was integral in identifying issues and shaping solutions.** The alignment between the public's top concerns and the Plan's top priorities is very strong: everyone agreed that sewage, runoff, and algae are the critical issues to tackle first.

The Lake Poinsett Water Project District, the Lake Poinsett Association, and the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District – each representing local stakeholders – have formally come together to back these strategies. By uniting their efforts, these organizations amplify the community's voice when seeking support from state and federal partners.

It is also clear that the **Plan's success will depend on continued stakeholder involvement.** Lake residents and visitors will play a role by adopting the recommended best practices and helping monitor changes. The local boards will need to coordinate funding and projects, and volunteers may be called upon for initiatives like water testing or public education. The encouraging news is that Lake Poinsett's community has already shown its commitment through high engagement in the planning process.

Going forward, **regular check-ins** (such as annual public meetings or newsletters) can keep everyone informed on progress – for example, updates on how many septic systems have been converted, or reports planned road improvements. Such transparency and engagement will help maintain public support and celebrate early wins (like a successful stream bank restoration or a grant award for the sewer project).

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ACRONYMS

ACEP	Agricultural Conservation Easement Program
BIG	Bridge Improvement Grant
BMP	Best Management Practice
CDBG	Community Development Block Grants
CO	Conservation Officer
CSP	Conservation Stewardship Program
CWSRF	Clean Water State Revolving Fund
DO	Dissolved Oxygen
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program
LWCF	Land and Water Conservation Fund
MAISRC	University of Minnesota's Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center
N-P-K	Nitrogen-Phosphorus-Potassium Ratio (used for fertilizer)
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
OHWM	Ordinary High-Water Mark
PWC	Personal Watercraft
RAIF	Rural Access Infrastructure Fund
RCPP	Regional Conservation Partnership Program
RTP	Recreational Trails Program
SDCL	South Dakota Codified Law
SDDANR	South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
SDDENR	South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources
SDDOT	South Dakota Department of Transportation
SDGFP	South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
USEPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VRBO	Vacation Rental By Owner

INTRODUCTION

Lake Poinsett is one of the largest natural lakes in the state and has drawn considerable attention from environmental scientists and local stakeholders due to recurring water quality concerns. Over the past several decades, numerous studies have been conducted at Lake Poinsett to assess water quality, identify causes of degradation, and explore possible solutions. While some progress has been made to improve the lake, more work remains.

The Lake Poinsett Association, Lake Poinsett Sanitary District, and Lake Poinsett Water Project District were each formed to help address specific issues, such as wastewater treatment, shoreline stabilization, and water quality. Through the efforts of the Lake Poinsett Task Force, these three entities came together to work on lasting solutions for the community around the lake.



BACKGROUND, PURPOSE & GOALS

Lake Poinsett is approximately 8,000 acres, or about 12.5 square miles. Home to over 600 property owners and businesses, Lake Poinsett continues to grow in popularity for residents and visitors alike.

Lake Poinsett gets most of its water from Dry Lake and Lake Albert. The average depth of the Lake is about 17 feet, with the maximum depth being 22 feet. Lake Poinsett's only natural outlet is in the northeast section of the Lake, and it flows roughly three miles to the Big Sioux River.

Lake Poinsett lies within Brookings and Hamlin Counties and includes three townships – Norden, Estelline, and Laketon – along with several special purpose districts:



LAKE POINSETT WATER PROJECT DISTRICT

The Lake Poinsett Water Project District is a special purpose district with powers set by statute in the South Dakota Codified Laws (SDCL). Under SDCL Chapter 46A, a special purpose district is a local government entity created to perform a specific function or provide a particular service within a defined geographic area, such as water management, fire protection, or recreation. These districts have the authority to levy taxes, issue bonds, and manage resources to fulfill their designated purpose, operating as a political subdivision of the state, independent from city or county governments.

The Lake Poinsett Water Project District receives its funding from a mill levy assessed on all properties within 1,000 feet of Lake Poinsett's ordinary high water mark, which is set at an elevation of 1,651.5 feet. The Water Project District collaborates with other entities to obtain grants. These grants help them partner with local, regional, and state agencies, as well as watershed residents, on projects to reduce pollution in the Lake Poinsett watershed.

A seven-member board of directors is elected to represent the District and has the authority to take action and raise funds for lake projects.

More information about the Lake Poinsett Water Project District and the services they provide is available here:

Lake Poinsett Water Project District

www.lakepoinsettwaterdistrict.org

lpwaterdistrict@gmail.com

LAKE POINSETT SANITARY DISTRICT

The Lake Poinsett Sanitary District is a political subdivision of the state of South Dakota, established in 1976 to manage wastewater treatment and sanitation services for properties around Lake Poinsett. The Sanitary District was formed under SDCL Chapter 34A-5 and also includes all land within 1,000 feet of Lake Poinsett's ordinary high-water mark.

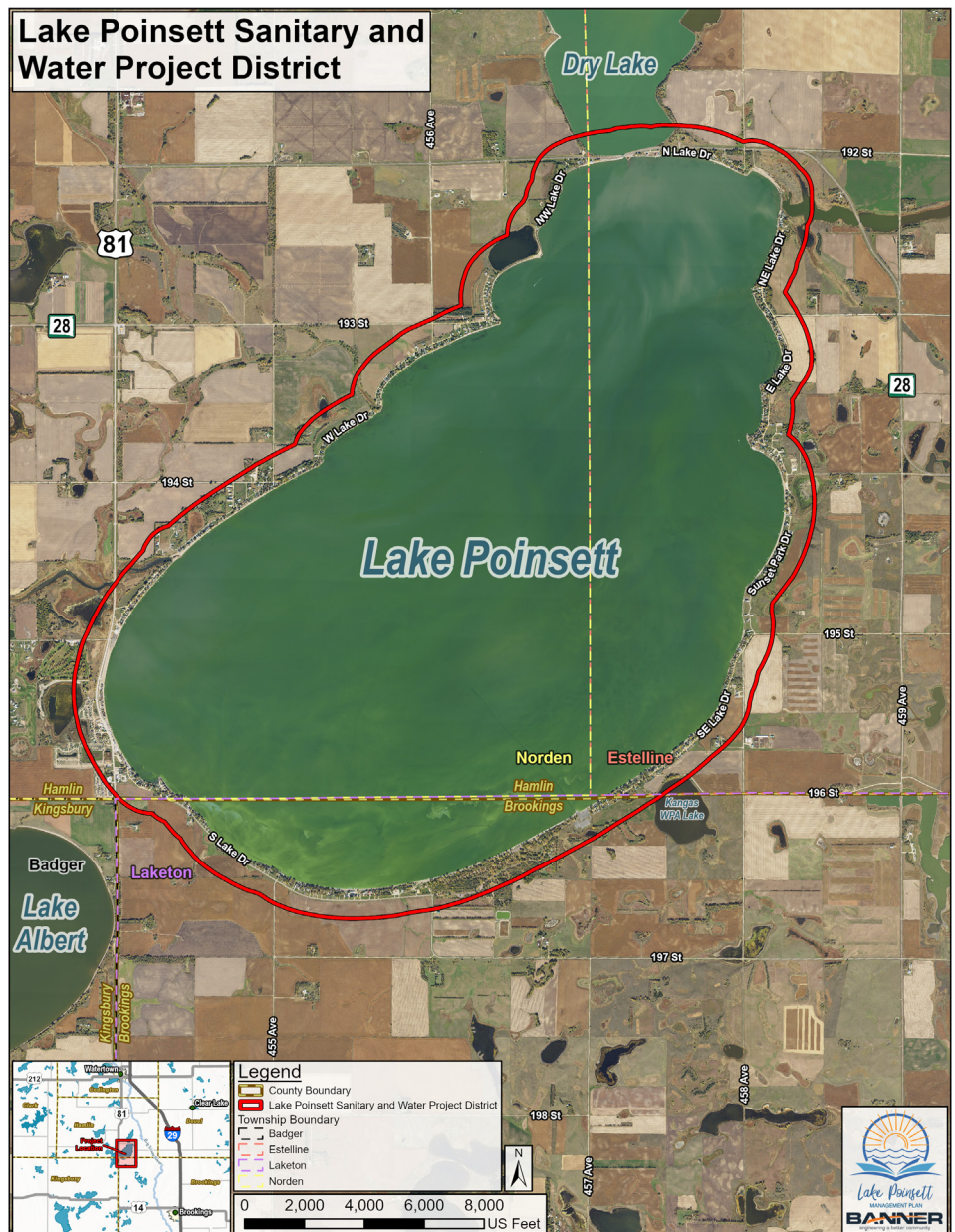
The Sanitary District's primary responsibilities include overseeing the collection, treatment, and disposal of sewage to protect water quality and public health in the Lake Poinsett area. The Sanitary District works to ensure that wastewater collection and treatment systems around the lake comply with environmental standards, protecting human health and water quality.

The Sanitary District's funding comes from sewer use fees charged to each resident within the district. A five-member elected board serves as the governing body for the Sanitary District. The district maintains the existing wastewater pipelines and treatment systems around the lake and is working to complete the system, which will provide centralized sewer service to all residents around Lake Poinsett.

By maintaining and upgrading infrastructure, the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District supports the ongoing recreational enjoyment and development of the community. More information about the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District and the services they provide is available here:

Lake Poinsett Sanitary District
19553 US Hwy 81, Suite 3
Arlington, SD 57212
<https://sites.google.com/site/lakepoinsettsanitarydistrict/home>

The figure to the right shows the boundary of the Lake Poinsett Water Project District and the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District.



EAST DAKOTA WATER DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

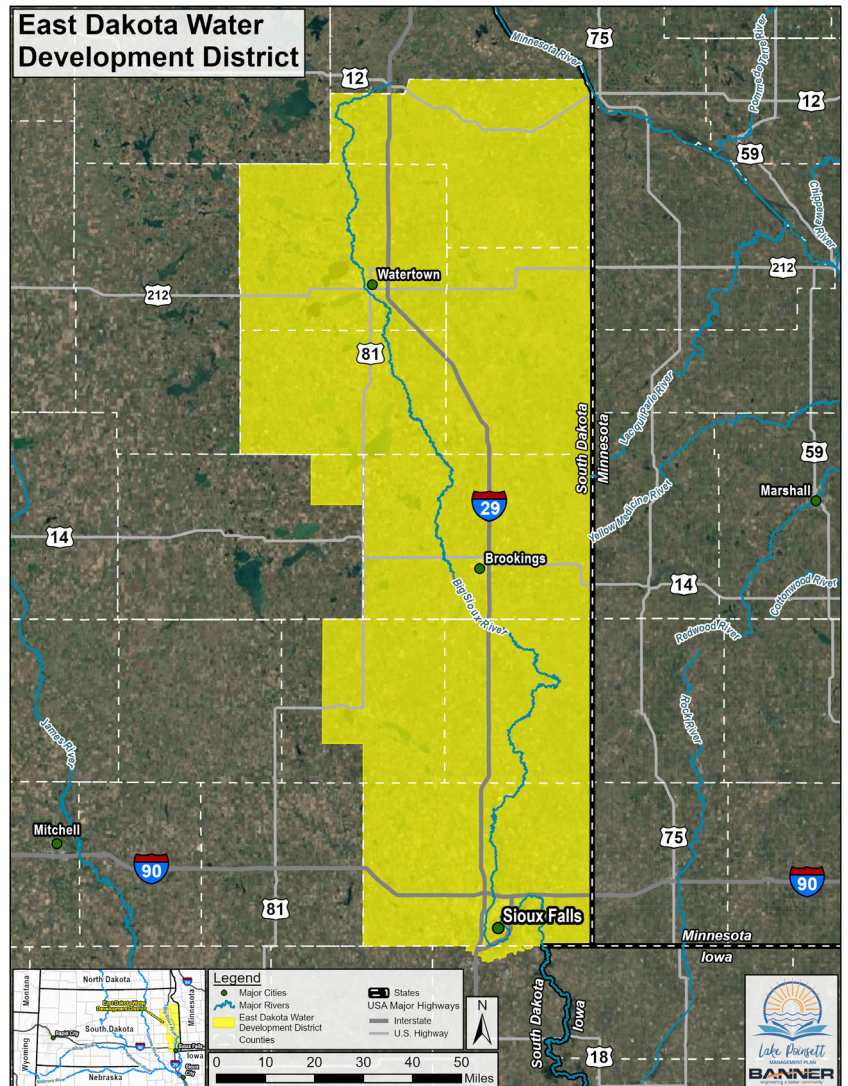
The East Dakota Water Development District is a political subdivision of the State. The purpose, duties, functions, and other controls relating to water development districts are found in SDCL Chapters 46A-3A through 46A-3E. The districts have a broad mandate to work to promote the conservation, development, and proper management of water resources within their respective boundaries.

East Dakota is one of seven water development districts in the state. It consists of all of Grant, Codington, Deuel, Hamlin, Brookings, Moody, and Minnehaha Counties, and portions of Lake, Kingsbury, and Lincoln Counties. See the figure to the right.

East Dakota is authorized by (SDCL 46A-3E-1) to levy taxes within the District. The District provides technical and financial support to watershed assessment studies designed to identify the source(s) of the pollutants that are degrading water quality within the District, including the Lake Poinsett Management Plan.

More information about the East Dakota Water Development District and the services they provide is available here:

East Dakota Water Development District
132 B Airport Avenue
Brookings, SD 57006
(605) 688-6741
<https://eastdakota.org/>



LAKE POINSETT ASSOCIATION

The Lake Poinsett Association is an all-volunteer organization started by a group of concerned lake residents in 1964. They formed the first Board of Directors to address lake water issues. The Association's Board of Directors continues to promote healthy lake awareness and action through education, social activities, publications, social media outreach, and water quality monitoring. The Lake Poinsett Association is a non-profit corporation, funded by annual membership dues and business sponsors.

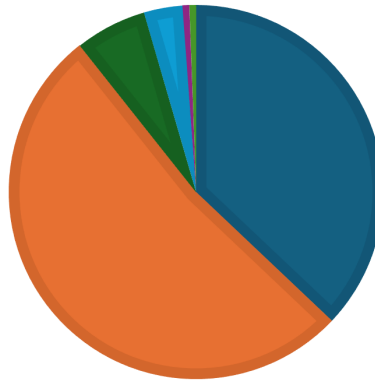


INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

ELECTRIC SERVICE

Most of the residents around Lake Poinsett receive electrical service from the H-D Electric Cooperative. The H-D Electric Cooperative was formed in 1940 and currently provides electricity to nearly 3,000 members through a series of overhead and underground lines in Hamlin and Deuel Counties. The residents in Brookings County are provided electrical service by Sioux Valley Energy. Sioux Valley Energy was formed in 1938 and currently serves nearly 30,000 members in South Dakota and Minnesota. A public survey of residents around the Lake found that 89% of Lake Poinsett residents are satisfied with their electrical service.

ELECTRICAL SERVICE



■ Very Satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Neutral ■ Dissatisfied ■ Very Dissatisfied ■ Not Sure

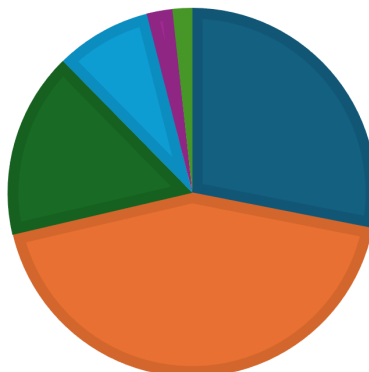
INTERNET SERVICE

The public survey asked residents about their level of satisfaction with their internet service. 89% of respondents stated they were satisfied with the internet service available. The survey did not capture the type of internet service or the providers.

DRINKING WATER

The Kingsbury Rural Water System provides drinking water service to the residents of Lake Poinsett, along with 5,700 members in Hamlin, Brookings and other surrounding counties. The public survey found that 71% of Lake Poinsett are satisfied with the rural water system.

DRINKING WATER

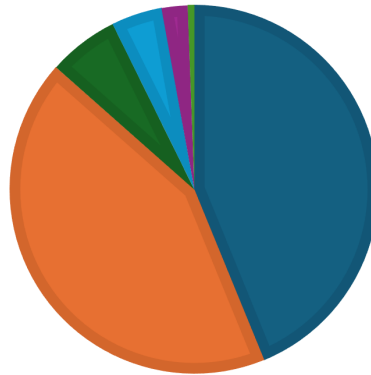


■ Very Satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Neutral ■ Dissatisfied ■ Very Dissatisfied ■ Not Sure

SOLID WASTE AND GARBAGE COLLECTION

As noted above, the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District provides sanitary sewer and garbage services for the Lake Poinsett area. The public survey indicated a high level of satisfaction with the garbage collection services provided by the Sanitary District.

GARBAGE COLLECTION



■ Very Satisfied ■ Satisfied ■ Neutral ■ Dissatisfied ■ Very Dissatisfied ■ Not Sure

The condition of the roads and the completion of the sanitary sewer system were identified as high priority issues and are addressed in more detail later in the plan.

LAKE POINSETT MANAGEMENT PLAN AIMS TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AND PREVENT FLOODING ISSUES

The primary goal of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan (Plan) is to identify and prioritize critical needs and solutions for Lake Poinsett, with a focus on water quality, water quantity, economic development, roads, and land use.

Flows between Lake Poinsett and the Big Sioux River have been managed via the Boswell Diversion Structure and Lake Poinsett outlet. In the past, floodwater from the Big Sioux River was intentionally diverted into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett to help regulate lake levels. However, the lower water quality in the Big Sioux River led to pollution and nutrient overload in Lake Poinsett. This diversion is now prohibited. Still, during significant events, flood water from the Big Sioux River can overtop the Boswell Diversion Structure, allowing nutrient-laden water to flow directly into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett.



LAKE POINSETT MANAGEMENT PLAN PROCESS

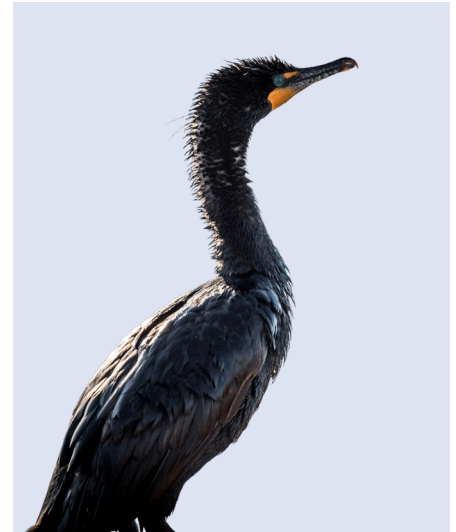
A Management Plan is like a handbook for maintaining and improving a specific area. Management Plans can vary in scope, but they typically include the same basic parts: goals, objectives, project opportunities, and strategies for maintenance and improvement. Management Plans can also open the door to project funding opportunities like grants!

Specific to our needs at Lake Poinsett, we needed a Management Plan that encompasses two broad subjects: the Environment and Area Development. These two subjects break down into smaller focus areas, too.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Environmental scientists and engineers reviewed the available data on the conditions of Lake Poinsett and the surrounding environment. This data helped us determine what actions we should take to best protect and preserve Lake Poinsett. We can use the Lake Poinsett Management Plan to check our progress in the years to come and then adjust accordingly. The Management Plan will address topics such as:

- Lake Poinsett and its watershed
- Aquatic invasive species management/control
- Shoreline protection
- Water quality protection
- Recreational management
- Watershed management



AREA DEVELOPMENT



From roads and utilities to tourism and businesses, Area Development encompasses dozens of economic and social aspects that affect our day-to-day lives. These segments of the Plan will identify projects that can improve the quality of life for residents and enhance the visitor experience.

Like the Environmental portions, the Area Development segments of the Plan will use data to help us make effective decisions. To gather this data, we asked for **your** help. We wanted to know what things are working well and the things that need to change. Your input, ideas, and feedback created a shared vision for Lake Poinsett, one we can pursue together.

STUDY ADVISORY TEAM

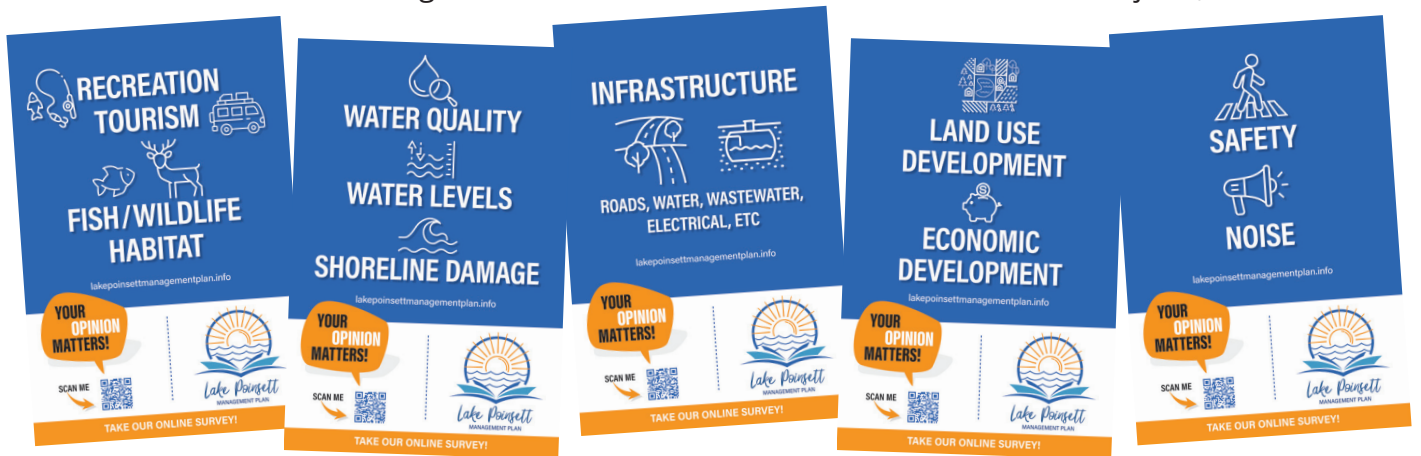
A Study Advisory Team was established to guide the development of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan and provide representation for the following stakeholders:

- Lake Poinsett Task Force
- Lake Poinsett Association
- Lake Poinsett Sanitary District
- Lake Poinsett Water Project District
- East Dakota Water Development District
- South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources
- South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks
- Lake Poinsett Camp & Living Waters Retreat Center
- Hamlin County Conservation District

Banner Associates, Inc. was the consultant selected to coordinate the stakeholder input and develop the Plan. Brookings and Hamlin Counties, Estelline Township, the South Dakota Department of Transportation, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided input and subject matter experts.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement was a key component in the development of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan. An Open House was held on June 8, 2024, at the Lake Poinsett Retreat Center to provide a platform for the public to express their opinions and kick off the development of the Plan. Study Advisory Team members were available at stations throughout the center with information about various subjects, such as:



A pre-recorded presentation was developed and shown during the public meetings and on the Plan's website to explain the purpose and need for the Lake Poinsett Management Plan and to identify the key issues.

[WATCH NOW](#)



An online survey was developed to help guide the public's input and provide a forum to share their concerns. The survey was developed using Microsoft Forms, which allowed users to complete the survey electronically and automatically submit the results to the Study Advisory Team.

The team developed a database of stakeholders' addresses and began outreach to encourage participation in the survey. Postcards and emails were sent to stakeholders with a link to the survey. A full page ad was included in the Lake Poinsett Association's directory, providing a QR code link and encouraging people to take the survey. Door hangers were placed on homes and posters were placed in businesses around the lake.

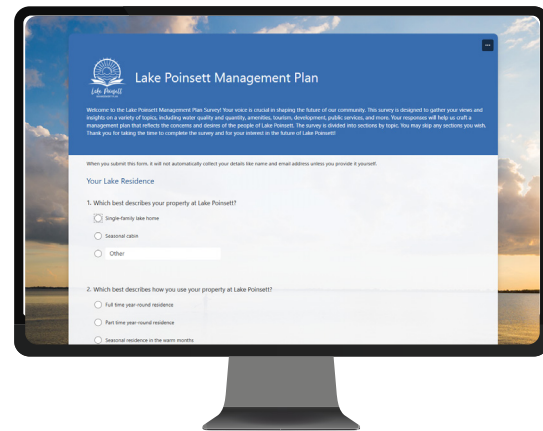
The survey questions included both multiple choice and open-ended questions to help guide the feedback and encourage people to think through their concerns and issues. The survey covered topics including water quality, water levels, recreational use, amenities around the lake, tourism and economic development, land use and zoning, infrastructure, and law enforcement and safety, along with general demographic questions about the responders.

The survey was made available to the public from April 30, 2024, to July 10, 2024; 340 people provided input to the Plan through the online study.

THE RESULTS

The results from the survey are summarized in Appendix A. The survey and open house were used to draft the goals and priorities for the Plan, which were presented in a Public Meeting on September 14, 2024.

The public meetings, online survey, and Study Advisory Team ensured stakeholders' voices were heard throughout the process. The result is a set of practical solutions that reflect both expert analysis and community input.



PUBLIC MEETINGS



WATER QUALITY CONCERNS



Lake Poinsett has been the focus of numerous water quality studies over the years, reflecting growing concerns about environmental health, recreational safety, and ecological sustainability. Past reports have identified the following issues:

- High levels of nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus
- Water clarity and algal blooms
- Excess sediment
- Bacterial contamination



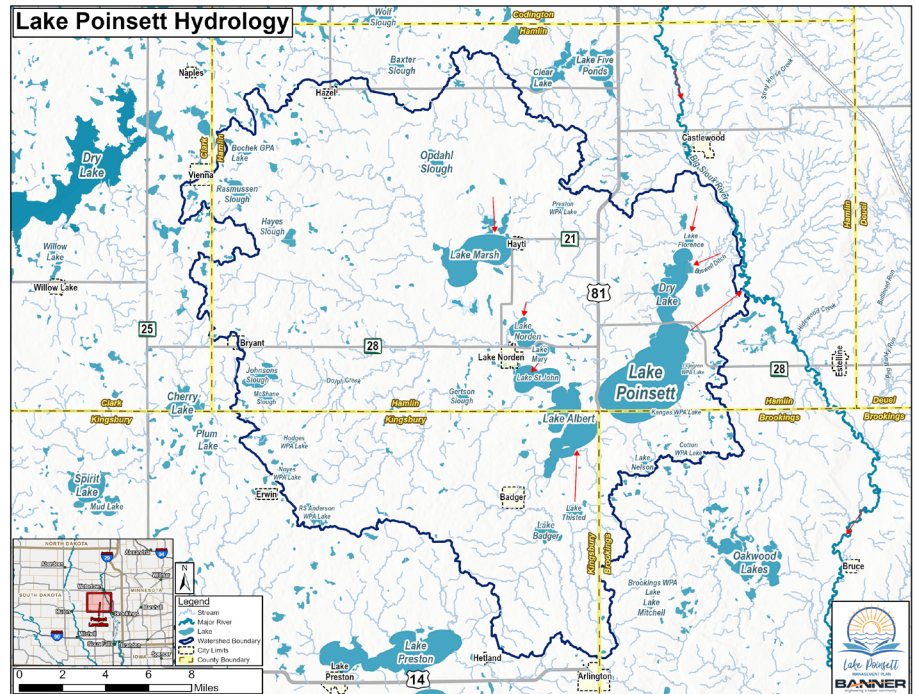
FACT Lake Poinsett's Watershed is more than 350,000 acres

FACT The Lake Poinsett Watershed is the land area draining into the lake from streams and runoff.



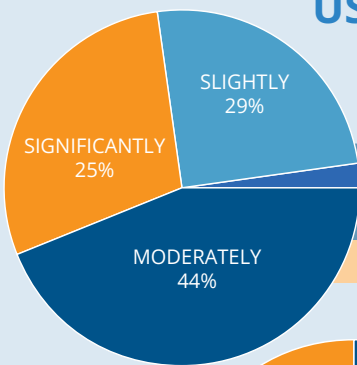
Rainfall and snowmelt runoff carry sediment and other pollutants into the waters upstream of Lake Poinsett. The other lakes in the watershed help buffer the pollutants and prevent them from entering Lake Poinsett.

During high flows and flooding, water from the Big Sioux River backflows into Dry Lake and then Lake Poinsett, contributing more pollutants. A detailed summary of the past water quality studies on Lake Poinsett are included in Appendix B.



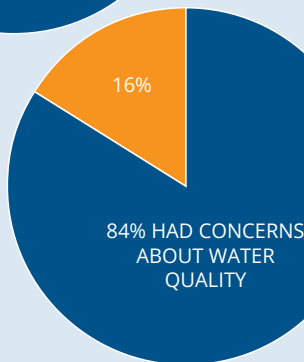
USE IMPACTED BY WATER QUALITY

SURVEY RESULTS



98% SAID THE WATER QUALITY IMPACTED USE

SWIMMING WAS THE ACTIVITY THAT WAS MOST IMPACTED // 75% OF RESPONDENTS



285 OF THE 340 SURVEY RESPONDENTS (84%) HAD CONCERNS ABOUT WATER QUALITY



FACTORS AFFECTING USE	
Presence of Algae	262
Clarity	239
Odor	215
Presence of Weeds	198
Color	168
Presence of Debris	139
Temperature	26
Other	21

BACKGROUND: LAKE POINSETT'S WATER QUALITY CHALLENGES AND COMMUNITY INPUT

Lake Poinsett is one of the largest and most popular lakes in South Dakota, used for fishing, boating, and swimming. Over time, the Lake has faced water quality challenges, especially from nutrient pollution (excess nitrogen and phosphorus), which can fuel algae blooms and reduce water clarity. Some nutrient input is natural from the region's soils and rocks that release nutrients, but much of it comes from human activity – runoff from farm fields and lawns, livestock waste, and older septic systems around the lake. These pollutants lead to frequent algae and weed growth, which affect the lake's appearance and ecosystem.

Lake Poinsett's community is working together to protect and improve the lake's water quality. The Lake Poinsett Management Plan identifies specific solutions to address water quality concerns, focusing on practical actions that residents, local authorities, and partners can take. The Plan outlines those water quality solutions, how they will be funded, and how community input shaped the Plan. It is written for lake residents, visitors, and stakeholders, with enough background to explain the solutions.

WATER QUALITY PRIORITIES

REDUCE ALGAE, IMPROVE WATER CLARITY, AND PROTECT WATER QUALITY

Residents and stakeholders have voiced strong concerns about these water quality issues. 340 people responded to the 2024 outreach survey conducted as part of the Plan development. 84% of respondents said they are concerned about Lake Poinsett's water quality. People most often cited algae blooms, poor water clarity, odor, and weeds as top concerns affecting their enjoyment of the lake. In fact, 98% of survey respondents felt that water quality affects their use of the lake (with 69% saying it impacts them "moderately" or "significantly"). Swimming and in-water recreation were the uses most affected. This community input helped pinpoint clear priorities for action: reduce algae, improve water clarity, and protect overall water quality.

The Plan focuses on three major water quality solution strategies, each targeting a different source of pollution:

- Completing the Sewer System
- Restoring the Watershed
- Promoting Lake-Friendly Practices



WATER QUALITY SOLUTIONS

COMPLETING THE CENTRALIZED SEWER SYSTEM

Completing the centralized sanitary sewer system around Lake Poinsett stands as one of the most important solutions within the Plan. Outdated or poorly maintained septic systems can be a significant source of nutrient pollution near a lake. Phosphorus and nitrogen can seep into the surrounding soil and eventually into the lake, contributing to algal blooms and nuisance aquatic vegetation. These nutrients can also lead to drops in dissolved oxygen and fish kills.

Upgrading and expanding the central sewer system around Lake Poinsett is a top priority. Currently, about 450 homes (roughly 70% of the lakeshore properties) are connected to a modern sanitary sewer network, but an estimated 160-180 homes still rely on private septic tanks. The Management Plan recommends connecting remaining homes to the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District's sewer system. Properly collecting and treating wastewater away from the lake would remove that source of nutrient pollution to the Lake.

To connect the remaining residents to the sewer system, it will be necessary to construct an additional treatment facility. Figure 1 shows the additional areas along the northwest shore and east shore of the lake yet to be connected to a central sewer system and the areas currently served by the existing central sewer system.

Expanding the sewer infrastructure is a significant undertaking. The cost is currently estimated at around \$17 million to complete the sewer system. Because of the high cost, the Plan suggests breaking the project into phases. Phased construction will make it easier to secure grants and loans, rather than funding the whole amount at once. Potential funding sources include state water improvement grants and low-interest loans.

SEPTIC TANK DIAGRAM

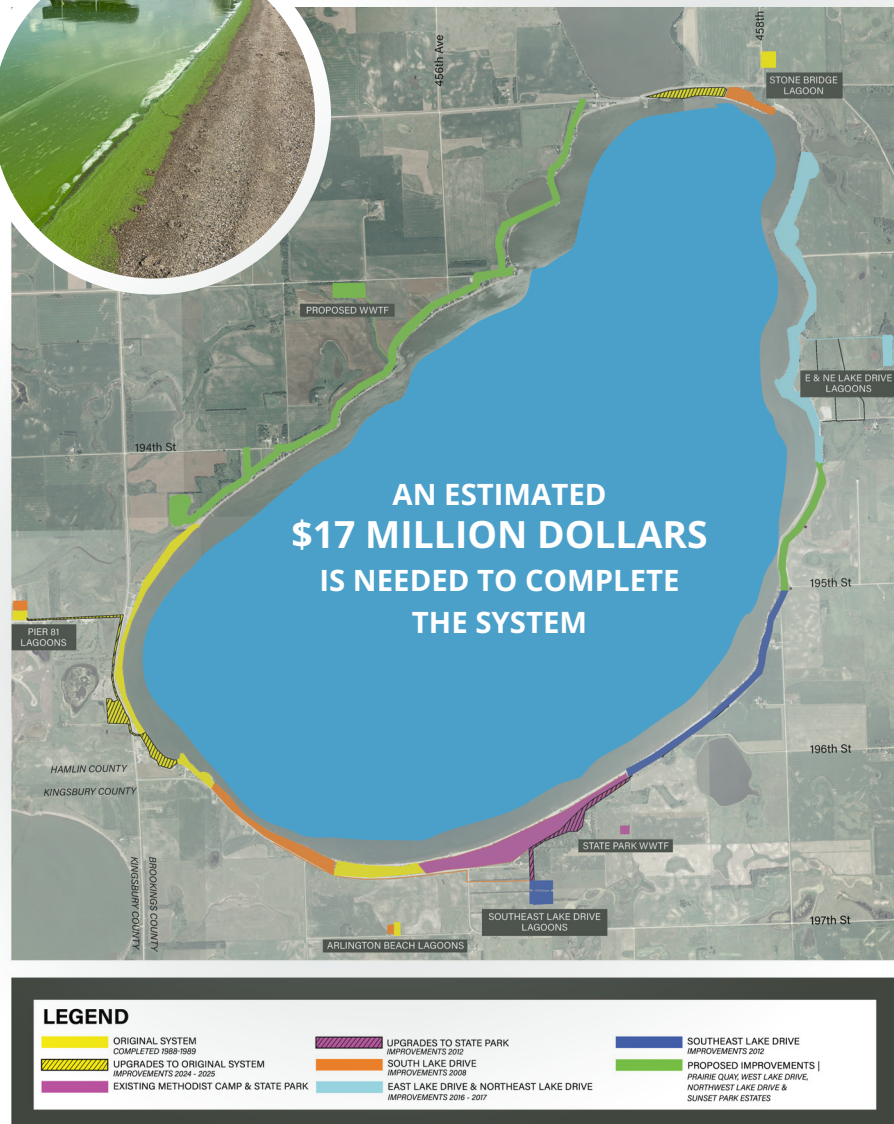
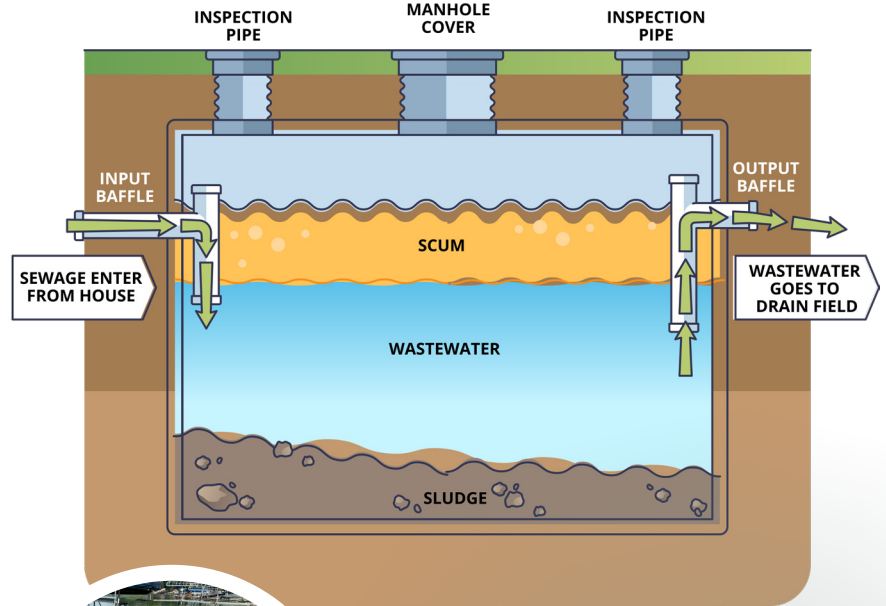


Figure 1: Lake Poinsett Sanitary District Wastewater Systems

The Plan also recommends consistent management of septic systems until the central sewer system is complete. The Sanitary District could take over maintenance of the remaining septic tanks until the homes can be connected to the new sewer system. If the district regularly pumps and maintains those septic systems, they could ensure the septic tanks operate as safely as possible. The district could charge a fee for this service, which both covers maintenance costs and helps build up a fund for future sewer expansion. This short-term measure would reduce the risk of septic leaks, while everyone works toward the long-term centralized sewer solution.

Overall, **completing the central sewer system is seen as a foundational step.** Public feedback strongly supported this solution, as many residents recognize that a fully sewered lake community is critical for water quality.

The funding sources identified for completing the sanitary sewer system are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Wastewater Funding Sources

FUNDING SOURCES FOR WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM	AGENCY
Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) State-administered funding program, supplemented with federal funding to offer low-interest loans for the planning, design, and construction of wastewater treatment facilities.	SD Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SDDANR)
Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) State funded grant program that can support infrastructure projects, including wastewater treatment, in eligible communities.	SD Governor’s Office of Economic Development
USDA Rural Development Water & Waste Disposal Program Federal funding program that offers grants and low-interest loans to rural communities for building and improving wastewater treatment systems.	US Department of Agriculture (USDA) / Rural Development
WaterSMART Grant Federal grant to support water conservation and protect water resources, including the construction of wastewater treatment facilities.	US Bureau of Reclamation
Sewer Use Fees Charges collected from the local residents and businesses for the use of wastewater treatment services.	Lake Poinsett Sanitary District
Bonds and Tax Levies Sanitary districts have the power to issue bonds and levy taxes to construct wastewater treatment facilities	Lake Poinsett Sanitary District

RESTORING THE WATERSHED

Lake Poinsett’s water quality is greatly influenced by its watershed – the land area that drains into the lake. Rain and snowmelt runoff from farms, roads, and ditches carry soil, fertilizers, and manure into streams that feed the lake. According to state reports, Lake Poinsett is officially listed as an “impaired” water body for nutrients and mercury in fish tissue (meaning it does not meet the state’s water quality standards due to those pollutants). To tackle pollution at its source, conservation practices are needed across the watershed.

Locals understand that what flows into the Lake matters. Controlling upstream runoff was identified by stakeholders as a key goal, second only to completing the sewer system. At public meetings, there were discussions about needing a whole-watershed approach, not just fixes at the Lake shore.

A major vehicle for this work is the **Prairie Coteau Project**, a regional water quality initiative that is getting underway. This program, run by state and local conservation agencies, aims to protect and improve water quality in northeastern South Dakota lakes by helping landowners implement best practices on their lands. Importantly, because Lake Poinsett is classified as impaired, its watershed will be given priority for technical and financial assistance through this project.

Many of the conservation solutions to be implemented as part of the Prairie Coteau Project have been outlined in past water quality studies, including:

- Stabilizing stream banks
- Installing livestock crossings and alternative watering sources
- Converting some cropland back to natural grass or wetlands
- Establishing buffer strips along streams and shorelines
- Creating grassed waterways in fields
- Improving manure management at livestock feeding areas
- Promoting rotational grazing systems

A more detailed summary of the past water quality reports is available in Appendix B.

Each of these actions helps slow down or filter runoff: for example, restoring a buffer of native grasses along a creek or lakeshore traps sediment and absorbs excess nutrients before they enter the water. Likewise, reinforcing an eroding stream bank prevents soil (and the phosphorus attached to that soil) from washing into the lake.

These larger watershed projects were beyond the scope of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan but will be essential to the success of the goals outlined in the Plan. Therefore, the Plan proposes a **Watershed Coordinator** for the Lake Poinsett area. A Watershed Coordinator could work with farmers, ranchers, and agencies to plan and implement the projects under the Prairie Coteau Project with a focus on the projects that would most benefit Lake Poinsett. This person could also help coordinate funding through grants and cost-share programs, to help local landowners take advantage of the opportunities. Having a dedicated advocate is important – it keeps momentum going, turning plans on paper into on-the-ground improvements.

The Plan recommends coordinating with entities such as South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, the East Dakota Water Development District, or the local Conservation Districts to pursue the possibility of a Watershed Coordinator to support the efforts of the Prairie Coteau Project.

It is worth noting that **the Plan considered and ruled out certain in-lake treatments**. Some community members asked whether anything could be done within the lake to remove nutrients, such as dredging sediment or using chemical treatments. The unfortunate reality is that dredging Lake Poinsett would be astronomically expensive – the state estimates it could be on the order of \$1 trillion! However, targeted dredging may be an effective option to slow the movement of sediment to the lake outlet.

Alum (aluminum sulfate) treatments were also evaluated. The SDDANR advised that Lake Poinsett is **too large and shallow for alum treatment to be effective** – the phosphorus load is simply too high and widely dispersed.



“Improving water quality in South Dakota starts with public involvement. When community members and local partners share their perspectives, we can better decide where funding and resources should go. By working together, we can keep Lake Poinsett healthy for everyone to enjoy.”

-- DANR

In short, there is no magic water quality fix in Lake Poinsett. Therefore, the focus is on **preventing pollution at its source** (in the watershed and around the lake) rather than trying to clean it up from the lake bottom. This prevention approach is not only more practical, it focuses the efforts towards correcting ongoing inputs so the problems do not continue to recur.

By partnering with the Prairie Coteau Project, Lake Poinsett stands to benefit from broader efforts in the region. Many of the upstream conservation measures will take time to implement and show results, but over the long run they can **significantly reduce the nutrient and sediment loads reaching the lake**. This means clearer water and fewer algal blooms in the years to come. The Plan recognizes that the lake’s health is tied to the health of its watershed – **a holistic, big-picture strategy** that received strong support from experts and locals alike.

The funding opportunities in Table 2 were identified to provide resources and incentives for landowners to adopt practices that conserve land and enhance water quality, supporting both local and regional conservation goals.

Table 2: Watershed Funding Sources

FUNDING SOURCES FOR WATERSHED PROJECTS	AGENCY
319 Grants Federal funding source administered by the state; requires a local match.	SDDANR
Riparian Buffer Initiative State funding to establish buffer strips, improving habitat and protecting water quality.	SDDANR
WaterSMART Grant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal grant to support water conservation and protect water resources Cooperative Watershed Management Grants can provide funding to watershed groups for a watershed coordinator 	US Bureau of Reclamation
Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Provides financial and technical assistance for agricultural producers to implement conservation practices that improve soil, water, and habitat quality.	USDA / Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) Rewards producers for maintaining and enhancing existing conservation efforts on their land, including water quality improvements.	NRCS
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP) Offers funding for the purchase of easements that protect wetlands and agricultural land from development, preserving water resources and wildlife habitat.	NRCS
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Supports partnerships to address regional conservation challenges, including water quality and land protection.	NRCS
Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program (PL-566) Assists with projects that reduce erosion, improve water quality, and address watershed issues.	NRCS

PROMOTING LAKE-FRIENDLY PRACTICES

The third prong of the water quality strategy focuses on what individuals — especially lakeshore homeowners and lake users — can do to help. **Even small behavior changes can add up to a noticeable water quality improvement when everyone around the lake participates.** The Plan promotes several “lake-friendly” practices:

VEGETATIVE BUFFERS

Property owners can create a strip of plants (native grasses, wildflowers, and trees) between their lawn and the lake.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS:

- Buffer plants slow down runoff and take up nutrients.
- Stabilize shoreline – roots hold the soil in place.
- Buffers provide privacy and can dampen noise.
- Vegetative buffers provide essential habitat for wildlife.

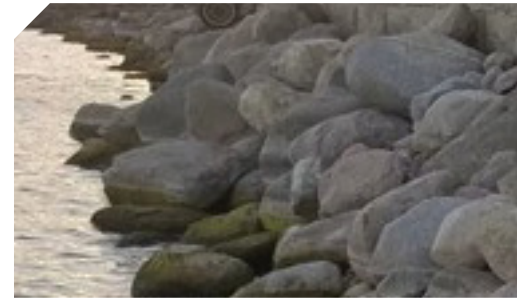


REDUCING SEDIMENT

Keep soil on the land and out of the water.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS:

- Rock riprap or other shoreline stabilization methods preserves wetlands and low areas that catch runoff.
- Construction sites need proper erosion control measures (silt fences, etc.) so sediment does not wash into the lake.



PHOSPHORUS-FREE FERTILIZER

Excess fertilizer enters Lake Poinsett causing algae to bloom.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS:

- Property owners should eliminate the use of fertilizer where possible.
- If lawn fertilizer is needed, use phosphorus-free fertilizer.
- Lake Poinsett Association could encourage zero-phosphorus fertilizer and provide discount coupons to buy the right kind.
- Homeowners should avoid overwatering and promptly pick up grass clippings and debris.



PET CARE

A dime-sized piece of dog waste contains 40 million bacteria!

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS:

- Pet waste left on the ground adds bacteria and nutrients to runoff entering the Lake.
- Keep extra bags on hand when you go for a walk to pickup waste.
- Provide pet waste stations around the lake to encourage proper disposal of pet waste.



MINDFUL RECREATION and EVENTS

What happens at the lake, stays at the lake! When debris and trash is left behind, it creates a pollution hazard for the lake.

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS:

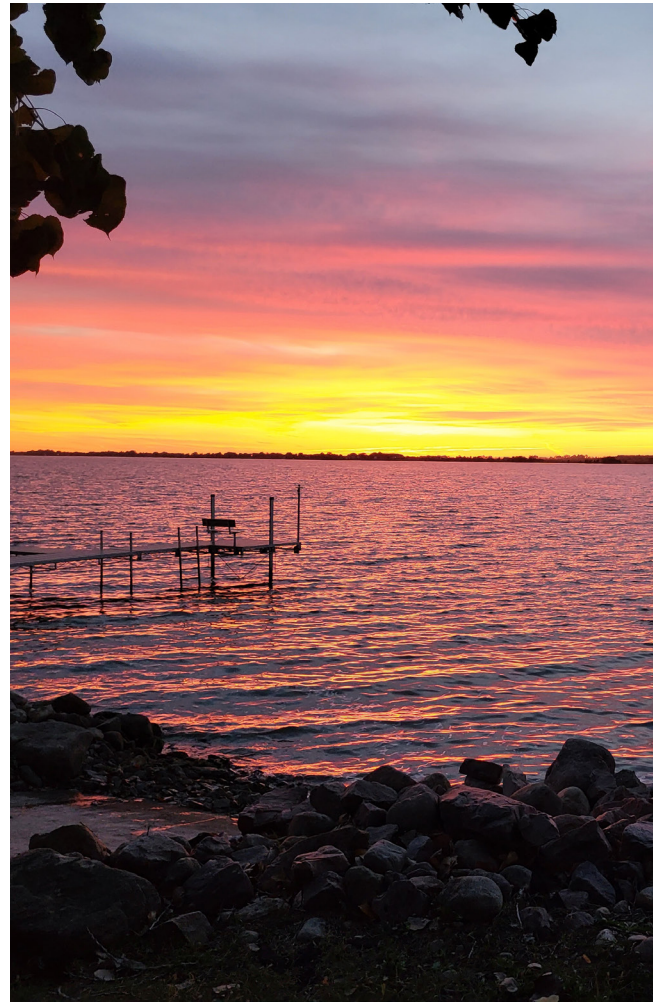
- Fireworks contain heavy metals and toxic pollutants. Direct them away from the lake and clean up the debris. Better yet – enjoy them elsewhere!
- Wash cars and boats away from the lake.
- Haul out whatever you bring to the beach.
- Take care with water craft to avoid fuel spills or damage to the shoreline.



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The Plan emphasizes education and outreach to promote these practices. Many lake residents are eager to help if they know what to do. The Plan effort itself created a project website and social media outreach to share tips and updates. Going forward, sustaining a **single website or resource center for Lake Poinsett** could be beneficial – a place to see water quality monitoring results, report algae blooms, learn about meetings, and get guidance on lake-friendly living. In essence, making it easy for people to stay informed and engaged will support the success of all the other solutions.

Finally, it is important to set realistic expectations. The Plan notes that **lakes naturally age and go through a process called eutrophication** – accumulating nutrients over time. Lake Poinsett is already classified as eutrophic (nutrient-rich). This means it will never be a crystal-clear mountain lake, and that is okay. In fact, some nutrient enrichment means the lake is productive for fish. **The goal is to slow down any human-caused nutrient loading and avoid frequent harmful algal blooms**, not to make the lake unnaturally pristine. Current community activities, such as the volunteer water monitoring program—recognized as the best in the state—help Lake Poinsett maintain a healthy balance. The Plan’s water quality solutions, taken together, aim to **preserve the lake’s health for recreation and wildlife, while acknowledging the lake’s natural conditions**.



CONCLUSION

In summary, **community input was integral in shaping these water quality solutions**. The alignment between the public’s top concerns and the Plan’s top priorities is very strong: everyone agreed that sewage, runoff, and algae are the critical issues to tackle first. The Lake Poinsett Water Project District, the Lake Poinsett Association, and the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District – each representing local stakeholders – have formally come together to back these strategies. By uniting their efforts, these organizations amplify the community’s voice when seeking support from state and federal partners.

It is also clear that the **Plan’s success will depend on continued stakeholder involvement**. Lake residents and visitors will play a role by adopting the recommended best practices and helping monitor changes. The local boards will need to coordinate funding and projects, and volunteers may be called upon for initiatives like water testing or public education. The encouraging news is that Lake Poinsett’s community has already shown its commitment through high engagement in the planning process.

Going forward, **regular check-ins** (such as annual public meetings or newsletters) can keep everyone informed on progress – for example, updates on how many septic systems have been converted, or reports on improvements in water clarity. Such transparency and engagement will help maintain public support and celebrate early wins (like a successful stream bank restoration or a grant award for the sewer project).

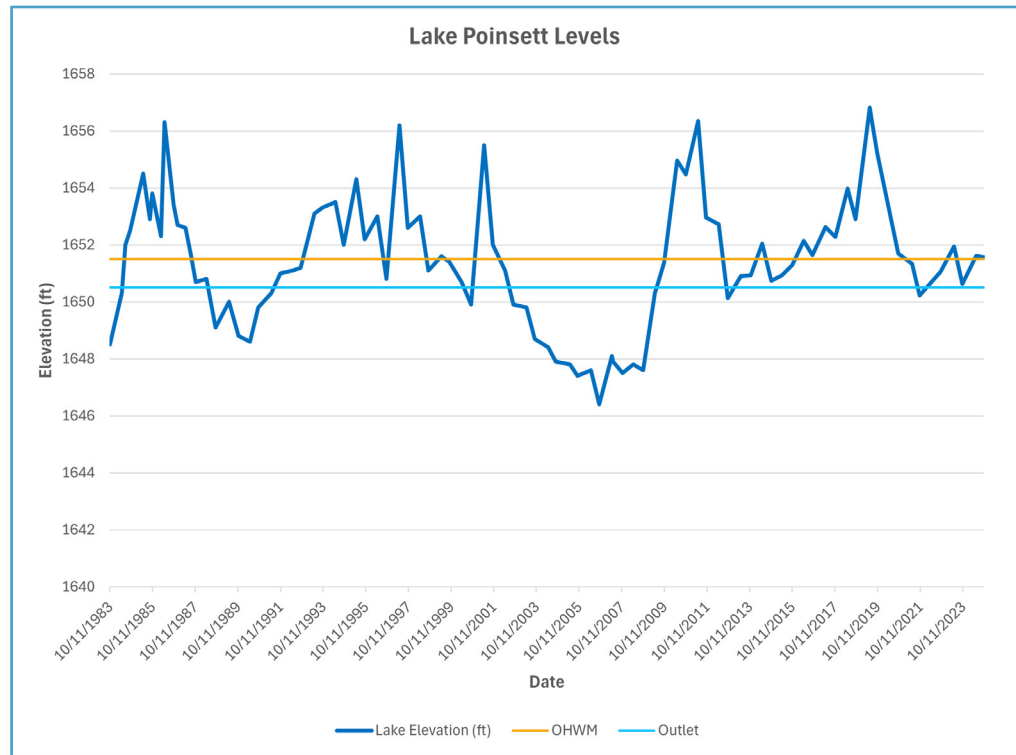
WATER LEVEL CONCERNS



Lake Poinsett is a dynamic system; the health and usability of the lake depend significantly on water levels. Water levels in Lake Poinsett change throughout the year. Spring rains and snowmelt usually raise the lake, while hot summer days and dry spells can lower it. These ups and downs affect:

- Shorelines and property
- Fish and wildlife habitats
- Recreation
- Water quality

Constructed water control structures, people’s management decisions, and Mother Nature all work together to affect how Lake Poinsett supports fish, wildlife, and recreation, as well as its importance to the community. Finding the right level means finding the balance between what nature does on its own, what engineers can control, and what the community needs and wants.



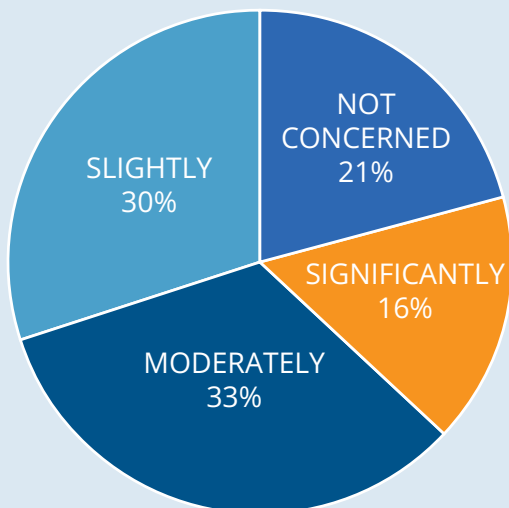
“Water level and water quality goals are incompatible if diverting water from Big Sioux River to Lake Poinsett.”

-Max Eugene Van Den Berg / 1967 Master’s Thesis

Too much water can cause flooding and erosion. Too little can hurt fish, make boating difficult, and reduce the lake’s appeal. This graph shows the variability in the water levels at Lake Poinsett over the last 40 years.



CONCERNS ABOUT THE WATER LEVELS



55% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THERE WAS TOO MUCH FLUCTUATION IN THE WATER LEVELS

68% SAID WATER LEVELS IMPACTED THEIR ACTIVITIES MODERATELY TO SEVERELY

50% SAID THEY WERE CONCERNED ABOUT FLOODING

SURVEY RESULTS

WATER LEVEL SOLUTIONS



GOALS

- › Maintain a consistent water level in Lake Poinsett

PRIORITIES

- › Maintain recreational opportunities
- › Protect against property damage
- › Protect shorelines

SURVEY RESPONSES



KEY SOLUTIONS



HYDROLOGY STUDY AND SEDIMENT MANAGEMENT

KEY ACTION | Conduct a study to identify the sediment sources and address the accumulation of sediment.



SHORELINE STABILIZATION

KEY ACTION | Use rocks, plants, and other methods to protect shorelines from erosion.



EROSION CONTROLS DURING CONSTRUCTION

KEY ACTION | Require best practices (like silt fences and quick re-seeding) for any construction near the lake.



PROTECT WETLANDS

KEY ACTION | Maintain and protect wetlands around the lake through riparian management and land use decisions.



MANAGE ROAD RUNOFF

KEY ACTION | Sweep streets and install catch basins to keep sediment from roads out of the lake.



FLOOD CONTROL STRUCTURES

KEY ACTION | Maintain and operate gates and consider filling the diversion channel to prevent floodwaters from entering the lake.

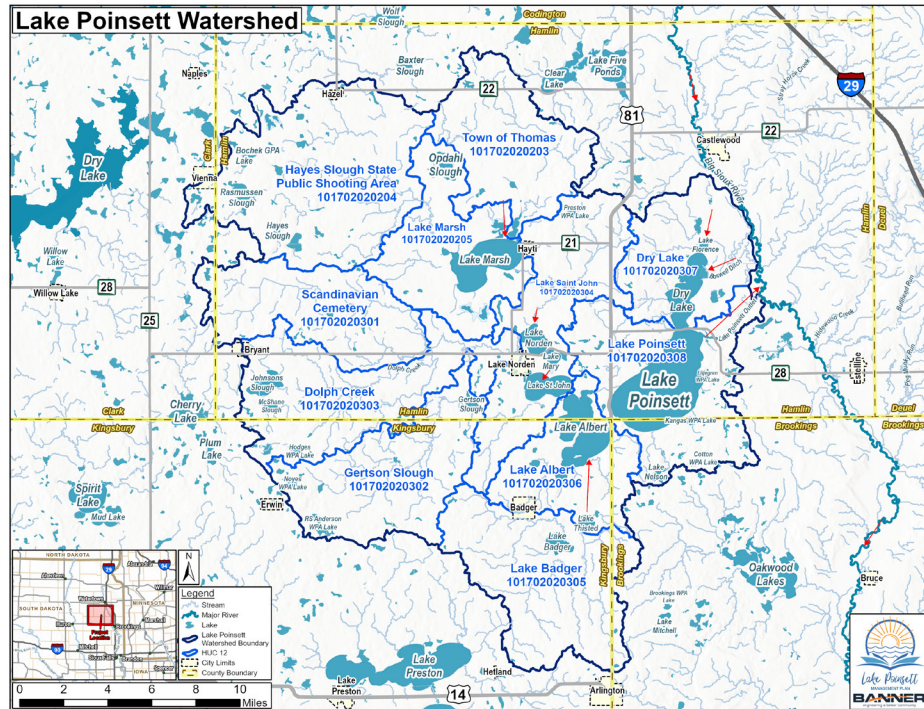
BACKGROUND: LAKE POINSETT'S WATER LEVEL CHALLENGES

To understand the complex factors that affect the water levels in Lake Poinsett, it is important to understand the sources of water that enter Lake Poinsett.

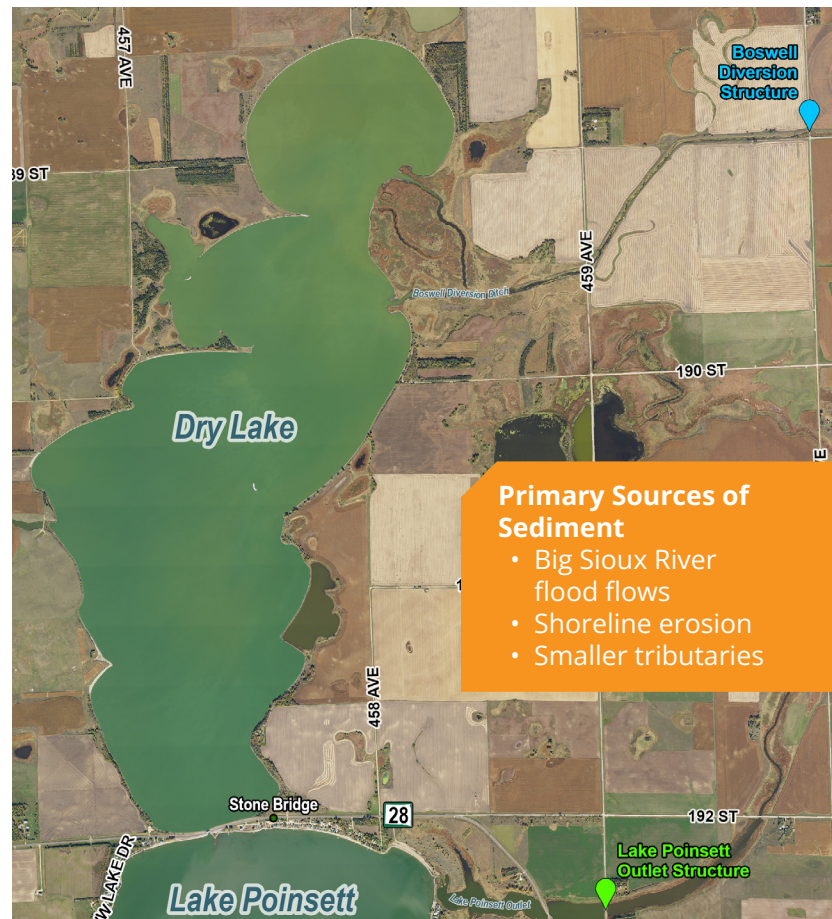
Surface waters flow through a series of lakes located west of Lake Poinsett, flowing through Lake Norden, Lake Mary, Lake St. John, Lake Albert, and finally into Lake Poinsett. These upstream lakes store nutrient and sediment from the watershed, preventing these pollutants from entering Lake Poinsett. Flows also enter from the north through Dry Lake. Groundwater contributes flow to Lake Poinsett, especially between Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett.

Precipitation and surface water runoff directly influence the quality and quantity of water entering the watershed. As precipitation and surface runoff increases, the potential for flooding increases, especially due to the Big Sioux River. Flows between Lake Poinsett and the Big Sioux River have been historically managed via the Boswell Diversion Structure and Lake Poinsett outlet.

In the past, floodwater from the river was intentionally diverted into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett to help regulate lake levels and mitigate flood impacts. The Boswell Diversion Structure and associated channel were constructed to allow water to be directed into Dry Lake, which flows into Lake Poinsett. The Big Sioux River generally has poorer water quality than Lake Poinsett. The practice of diverting the Big Sioux River into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett led to nutrient overload and water quality issues. As a result, the Big Sioux River is no longer intentionally diverted into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett. Hamlin County has established a base flood elevation of 1658.7 for this area. During significant events, flood water from the Big Sioux River can backflow into the channel and overtop the Boswell Diversion Structure, which has an elevation of 1659.3 feet.



Lake Poinsett is approximately 8,000 acres (about 12.5 square miles). The lake is relatively shallow and small changes in water levels can have a sizeable effect on the shoreline.



Primary Sources of Sediment

- Big Sioux River flood flows
- Shoreline erosion
- Smaller tributaries

The Lake Poinsett outlet is in the northeast corner of the lake. The allowable outlet elevation of 1651.5 feet has been set by the South Dakota Water Management Board. Flood flows from the Big Sioux River can also backflow into the outlet channel. A gate was constructed near the outlet to prevent sediment-laden river waters from flowing into Lake Poinsett. The Water Management Board issued a flood control permit (FC-5) that allows the Lake Poinsett Water Project District to operate the gate. See Appendix C for more information about the flood control permit.

The management of the outlet is compounded by the accumulation of sediment near the outlet, as it prevents water from flowing out of the lake normally. In addition, the accumulation of sediment prevents accurate reading on the lake level gauge. The sand bar that forms can obstruct the measurements by as much as one foot. To obtain a true and accurate measurement of the lake levels, the District utilizes a well on the northeast side of the lake. When the sediment accumulates, the Lake Poinsett Water Project District removes sediment from the outlet to maintain water flow and comply with flood control permit requirements.

The Lake Poinsett Water Project District relies on a flow gauge that has been provided by the United States Geological Survey (<https://water.noaa.gov/gauges/PONS2>). The US Geological Survey is no longer willing to maintain this gauge after May 31, 2026. The SDDANR is planning to take over management of this gauge and upgrade the existing equipment. Once the equipment is upgraded, SDDANR will be able to transmit data through the National Weather Service's environmental satellite service, making the data available on their website.



WATER LEVEL SOLUTIONS

HYDROLOGY STUDY OF SEDIMENT SOURCES

The outlet to Lake Poinsett becomes plugged with sediment that must be removed to maintain water levels and flows from the lake. Removing the sediment is a critical but short-term solution. The sources of this sediment are due to:

- Washing, flushing, and eroding of sediment is washed into lakes throughout the watershed.
- Eroding of shorelines.
- Existing sediment at the bottom of Lake Poinsett can be disturbed and transported through storm events, recreational activity, and high flows into the lake.
- Sediment from the Big Sioux River is backwashed into the lake during flooding events.
- Sediment captured by upstream lakes is washed downstream during high flow events

A hydrology study could determine the specific source(s) of sediment that are clogging the outlet, allowing for targeted solutions such as shoreline stabilization or selective dredging to provide a more long-term solution to the sediment accumulation.

SHORELINE STABILIZATION

The health of Lake Poinsett is tied to the condition and stability of its shorelines. Shoreline erosion not only degrades the aesthetic and ecological value of Lake Poinsett but also increases the sediment deposited at the lake's outlet and on shoreline properties.

Accelerated erosion—driven by natural forces, lake-level changes, development, and storm events—has increasingly contributed to sediment loading, threatening water quality, aquatic habitats, recreational opportunities, and the function of the outlet. The hydrology study could help identify and prioritize erosion “hotspots” through sediment source assessments. This would allow a targeted approach to prioritize the areas that need stabilization first.

MAINTAIN EROSION CONTROLS DURING CONSTRUCTION

In just a short period of time, construction sites can contribute more sediment to waterbodies than would be deposited naturally over several decades. Construction of businesses, homes, roads, and utilities near Lake Poinsett are a potential source of sediment discharge into the lake and wetlands near the lake.

Best management practices such as silt fence, straw wattles, erosion control blankets, and prompt re-seeding following construction are all effective measures to prevent sediment runoff when used and maintained properly.



GRASSED WATERWAYS AND RIPARIAN MANAGEMENT

Riparian zones—those vegetated strips along the shoreline and streambanks—act as natural filters, trapping sediment and absorbing nutrients before they can reach the water. Maintaining healthy riparian areas and establishing grassed waterways throughout the watershed are critical strategies to further reduce sediment transport into Lake Poinsett. Riparian zone root systems stabilize banks, minimizing erosion and protecting the habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species alike.

Similarly, grassed waterways slow down the movement of water and capture soil particles, effectively reducing sediment delivery from upland fields and developed areas. By prioritizing the restoration and preservation of riparian buffers and grassed waterways, sedimentation into the lake will be minimized.



PROTECT WETLANDS ADJACENT TO LAKE POINSETT



Another critical solution lies in the preservation and protection of wetlands adjacent to Lake Poinsett. Wetlands function as nature’s own filtration systems. As water from rainfall, surface runoff, or small tributaries passes through these areas, the dense stands of grasses, reeds, and aquatic plants slow its movement, allowing suspended sediments to settle out before reaching the open waters of the lake. This physical filtering is complemented by the wetlands’ ability to trap and bind sediments within their organic soils and root networks.

The wetlands between Lake Albert and Lake Poinsett are particularly critical and vulnerable. The Lake Region Golf Course was constructed near the wetlands between these two lakes. The remaining wetland area should be protected through zoning restrictions to prevent further development and destruction of the wetlands’ natural buffer.

MANAGE RUNOFF FROM ROADS

SD Highway 81 runs along the western point of Lake Poinsett. The highway has stormwater inlets that direct runoff from the roads into Lake Poinsett. Sediment and gravel accumulate on the road and are washed in the inlets during storm events.

There are two suggested solutions:

- **Short-Term Solution:** Regular street sweeping in the area that drains directly to the lake will remove the sediment before it is washed into the storm sewers.
- **Long-Term Solution:** Catch basins (see Appendix D) can be installed as part of a storm sewer system, allowing sediment to settle out of the water before discharge to a wetland, stream, or lake. Installing these basins into the storm sewer system on Highway 81 would allow the sediment to be captured and minimize the discharge to Lake Poinsett and nearby wetlands.



ELIMINATE THE BOSWELL DIVERSION

The Boswell Diversion structure and associated channel no longer serve their intended purpose. Instead, they have become a source of nutrients and other pollution into Lake Poinsett when flood waters from the Big Sioux River watershed flow into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett.

Filling in the man-made channel could reduce or eliminate this source of pollution and excess flows to Lake Poinsett. Alternatively, small dam structures could be placed in the Boswell Diversion Channel to slow water flows and allow settling of sediments before the flood waters reach Dry Lake.

However, neither of these solutions can be implemented without careful thought and study. A **hydrology study** is needed to determine the effect of eliminating the channel on Lake Poinsett, the Big Sioux River, and the landowners in the area. In addition, an environmental study would be needed, along with federal permitting requirements.



FUNDING SOURCES

Sustainable natural resource management depends on diverse and well-coordinated funding. Projects often draw from a mix of public and private sources to support planning, implementation, and long-term impact. By aligning financial resources with strategic goals, organizations can deliver effective, collaborative solutions that benefit both communities and ecosystems.

Funding Sources

- Lake Poinsett Water Project District
- 319 Grants
- NRCS Grants & Programs
- Partnerships

LAKE POINSETT WATER PROJECT DISTRICT

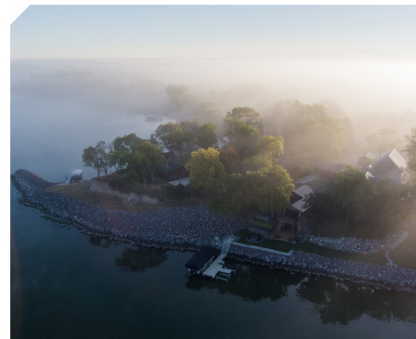
The Lake Poinsett Water Project District has prioritized shoreline stabilization initiatives, focusing on both immediate action and long-term strategies. Central to the success of these efforts is the acquisition, management, and allocation of funding.

Funding for shoreline stabilization at Lake Poinsett is typically a combination of local, state, federal, and private sources. The Lake Poinsett Water Project District pursues and manages these funds to maximize the impact of erosion control work. The District allocates a portion of its annual budget to shoreline stabilization, providing incentive payments and technical support to landowners that wish to install stabilization.

These funds are used to:

- Design and engineer stabilization structures (e.g., rock revetments, native plantings)
- Purchase materials and contract construction services
- Monitor project effectiveness and adapt approaches as necessary
- Promote public education on shoreline stewardship
- Encourage voluntary adoption of best management practices by property owners

The application form for the District's shoreline stabilization program is available online at https://www.lakepoinsettwaterdistrict.org/_files/ugd/aa95ee_447697f8537944978f23d9b76949e331.pdf. A copy of the application has been included in Appendix E.



SECTION 319 GRANTS

Section 319 Grants are authorized under the federal Clean Water Act and are provided to the state by the US Environmental Protection Agency. The SDDANR is responsible for implementing the 319 Grant Program in South Dakota.

Local and in-kind sources must match at least 40% of the funds to the project. The project must be led by local entities such as local government, tribes, nonprofit organizations, universities and colleges, or by concerned citizens. Education of the public and water quality monitoring are required elements for 319-funded projects.

Section 319 grants can provide essential funding for shoreline demonstration projects, installation of erosion control measures, and community outreach. These funds enable local organizations and landowners to implement best management practices along shorelines, directly addressing nonpoint source pollution and promoting healthier aquatic ecosystems.

Applications for 319 Funding are due in October of each year and must be submitted to the SDDANR. The application form and guidance for completing the form are available online at <https://danr.sd.gov/Conservation/WatershedProtection/docs/FY2024%20RFP%20319%20Application.pdf>.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PROGRAMS

The United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offers technical and financial assistance through initiatives like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), often supporting shoreline stabilization and buffer establishment.

By aligning funding strategies with technical expertise from NRCS and leveraging the flexibility of programs like the Section 319 grants, multi-phase stabilization initiatives can be developed to address both immediate erosion challenges and long-term watershed health.

To maximize the impact of available resources, many shoreline programs encourage applicants to pursue layered funding—combining federal, state, and private grants with local cost-share and voluntary contributions. Cory Zirbel, the Project Manager for the Prairie Coteau Watershed Improvement and Protection Program, is available to help devise a funding package that leverages these available funds:

Cory Zirbel, Project Manager

Day Conservation District | Prairie Coteau Watershed Improvement and Protection Project

600 E Hwy 12 Suite 1, Webster, SD 57274

Office: 605-345-4661 ext. 118 | Cell: 605-520-9255 | Email: cory.zirbel@sd.nacdnet.net

Successful shoreline initiatives often hinge on cultivating relationships with local businesses, philanthropic organizations, and environmental advocates. These partnerships can unlock new avenues for support, whether through equipment donations, technical consulting, or targeted fundraising campaigns. Sustained engagement ensures that shoreline stabilization remains a shared priority, with benefits extending beyond immediate project boundaries.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATIVE FUNDING

Recognizing the interconnectedness of land and water management, Lake Poinsett Water Project District frequently partners with neighboring conservation districts, lake associations, and non-governmental organizations. These collaborations leverage additional resources, including:

- Matching funds from partner organizations
- Cost-share agreements with landowners who implement shoreline best management practices (BMPs) on their properties
- Support from foundations and environmental grant makers focusing on watershed health and community resilience

Securing adequate and sustained funding is an ongoing challenge. Grant cycles are competitive, matching requirements can be significant, and the cost of engineered shoreline solutions can be high—especially for large, high-priority reaches. However, every successfully funded project demonstrates the value of persistence and collaboration. By building a track record of effective stabilization work, the Lake Poinsett Water Project District positions itself to attract future funding and to serve as a regional model for lake protection.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, effective water level management and sediment control are vital to sustaining Lake Poinsett’s health, usability, and ecological balance. The strategies outlined—from shoreline stabilization and erosion controls to wetland protection and improved infrastructure—demonstrate the community’s commitment to preserving the lake for future generations. Continued investment in hydrology studies, targeted restoration efforts, and collaborative funding will be essential for addressing ongoing challenges and adapting to changing conditions. The ongoing engagement and proactive stewardship of all stakeholders will ensure the lake remains resilient, productive, and treasured for years to come. By working together—residents, local organizations, and state and federal partners—Lake Poinsett can maintain its role as a vibrant resource for recreation, wildlife habitat, and community well-being.

TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC SAFETY CONCERNS

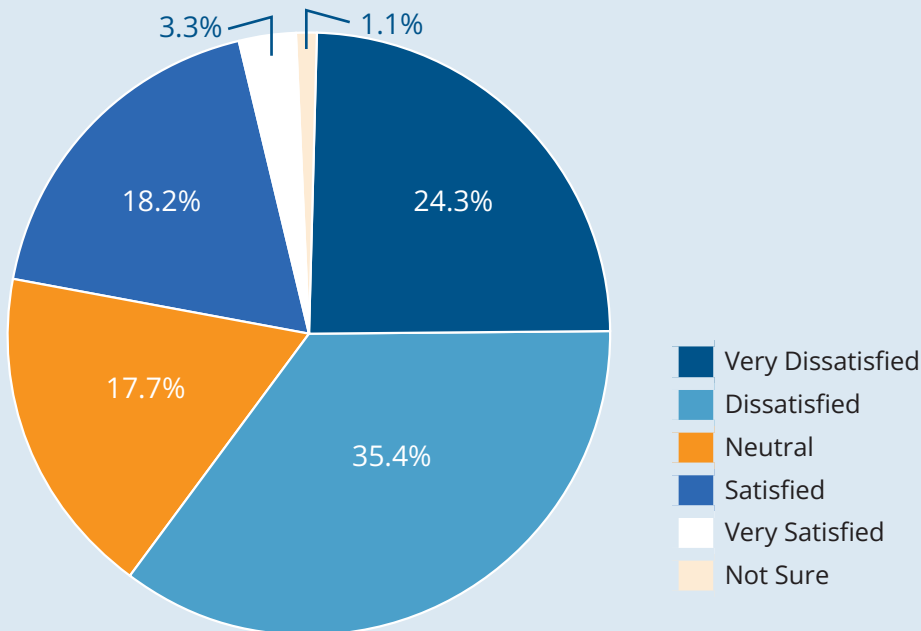


Road infrastructure and safety are central concerns for the Lake Poinsett community. Recent meetings and public outreach have highlighted persistent issues with road maintenance, traffic management, and pedestrian safety, especially during peak recreational seasons. This chapter summarizes the current state of transportation networks around Lake Poinsett, identifies key challenges, and proposes actionable solutions based on stakeholder input and agency collaboration.



ISSUE	IMPACT
Excessive dust from unpaved gravel roads	Water quality, air quality, properties, and outdoor enjoyment
Washboard surfaces and potholes	Rough driving conditions and frequent grading
Shoulder erosion after heavy rains	Hazards due to narrow roadways and washouts
Winter road maintenance	Dangerous road conditions, difficult access, and waiting for snow plows
Limited paving of heavily used roads	Excessive dust and safety concerns
Excessive speeds	Safety, damage to the gravel roads

SATISFACTION WITH ROADS & TRAFFIC



59% WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE ROADS

SURVEY RESULTS



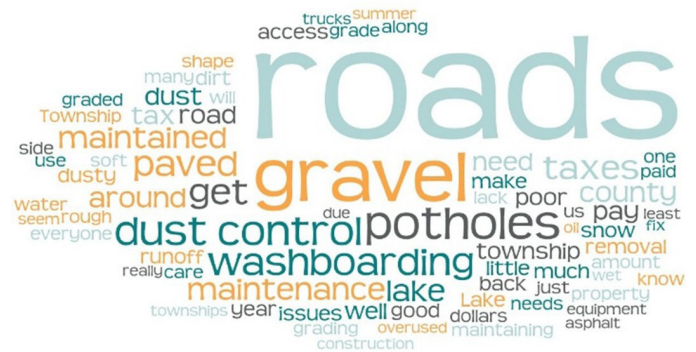
GOALS

- › Safe transportation around the lake

PRIORITIES

- › Improved maintenance of the roads
- › Enforcement of speed limits
- › Parking on Highway 81

SURVEY RESPONSES



KEY SOLUTIONS



ROAD MAINTENANCE & UPGRADES

KEY ACTION | Improve gravel roads through increased grading and dust control, upgrade high-traffic segments with chip seal or asphalt, apply for state funding, and consider additional levies for services like snow removal.



TRAFFIC SAFETY & REGULATION

KEY ACTION | Improve roads safety by requesting a study of the speed limits on roads around Lake Poinsett to better align with residential and recreational use.



LAW ENFORCEMENT & EMERGENCY RESPONSE

KEY ACTION | Strengthen public safety through continued coordination with law enforcement and increased patrols during peak weekends.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

KEY ACTION | Foster public involvement by holding an annual Lake Poinsett forum to share concerns, communicate road funding priorities, and explore the formation of road districts to support long-term infrastructure planning.



BACKGROUND: LAKE POINSETT'S TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC SAFETY CHALLENGES

Transportation and safety issues ranked high among community priorities. While water quality was the top concern (84% of respondents had water quality concerns), more than half of survey respondents (59%) were not satisfied with the condition and safety of the roads around Lake Poinsett. Through the survey, it was clear that residents value the lake's rural character but seek improvements to make the area's roads safer, cleaner, and better maintained. The most common issues identified include:

ROAD CONDITION & MAINTENANCE

Road Conditions

Many roads around Lake Poinsett are unpaved, leading to excessive dust and "washboard" surfaces. During summer, dust from gravel roads can affect air quality, water quality, and enjoyment of outdoor spaces. Rough road conditions (due to washboard bumps and potholes) indicate a need for more frequent grading and maintenance.

Desire for Paving

Residents expressed that more of the heavily used gravel roads should be paved or surfaced, to reduce dust and improve driving conditions.

Road Erosion

On gravel roads, shoulder erosion and washouts after heavy rains have been observed. This can narrow the roadway and create hazards. Sediment from roads can wash into Lake Poinsett.

Winter Maintenance

In winter, timely snow plowing is a concern – residents want to ensure year-round access to homes, as well as school transportation and emergency services. Some seasonal residents have become year-round inhabitants, increasing expectations for prompt winter road service.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Traffic Speed and Pedestrian Safety

High vehicle speeds were raised as a safety issue. Community feedback noted dangerous conditions, specifically in the summer when families cross Highway 81 on foot or park along the shoulder. There were requests to reduce the speed limit near the lake, at least during peak seasons. Residents also asked how speed limits on county and township roads are set and whether they can be lowered in the lake area for safety.

Parking and Highway Crossings

At certain locations, such as lakeside resorts or public fishing areas, cars park along the highway and people cross on foot to access the lake. This mix of pedestrians and high-speed traffic is seen as a hazard. The community inquired if crosswalks, parking improvements, or signage could be added by the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) to improve safety for people crossing or walking near the highway.

Law Enforcement Presence

Located in a rural area split between two counties, Lake Poinsett does not have a local police department. Some community members felt that police patrols and law enforcement around the lake are not as present as needed, especially during busy summer weekends. They worry about response times and the enforcement of speed limits, drunk driving, or other safety laws around the lake. This issue was significant enough that a special discussion was held with both county sheriffs and a state conservation officer in November 2024. A full summary of this discussion is included in Appendix G.

Emergency Response and Jurisdiction

Because the lake lies on the border of Brookings County and Hamlin County, residents wanted clarity on how law enforcement responsibilities are divided and coordinated. They also brought up the need for cooperation between counties so that no matter where an incident occurs around the lake, help can arrive quickly.

NOISE FROM TRUCK “JAKE BRAKES”:

Another concern is noise from large trucks using engine braking (“jake brakes”) on the highway. Loud brake noise, especially at night, disrupts the otherwise peaceful environment. Residents asked if “No Engine Brake” signage or ordinances could be implemented around the lake to reduce this nuisance.

Perceived Tax vs. Service Imbalance

Several lake homeowners said their property values and property taxes have increased in recent years, but they have not seen an increase in road maintenance services. One long-time resident noted paying 60% more in property taxes since 2020 due to rising property values and feared that locals are being “taxed out.” This sentiment has led to frustration and calls for better representation with county officials. In a 2024 public meeting, a resident stated, “We need better representation with the counties; I do not feel the counties care enough about the residents around the lake.” This highlights a desire for more engagement and tangible support from local government proportional to the tax contributions of lake properties.

ROAD JURISDICTIONS

The Lake Poinsett area features a complex network of roads managed by multiple entities, including the SDDOT, Hamlin and Brookings Counties, local townships, and special road districts. Maintenance responsibilities are divided among these groups, with SDDOT overseeing state highways, counties and townships managing local roads, and special districts like Sunset Park Addition Road District handling specific roadway segments. The figure on the next page shows which entity is responsible for each road around Lake Poinsett:

STATE-LEVEL RESPONSIBILITIES (SOUTH DAKOTA)

The primary state highway in the area is SD Highway 81, which runs along the west side of Lake Poinsett.

State Highway

The **SDDOT** is responsible for Highway 81. This includes surfacing, repairing, and winter snow removal on that road, as well as managing its speed limits and signage. Any changes to speed limits or traffic controls on Highway 81 must be approved and implemented by SDDOT.

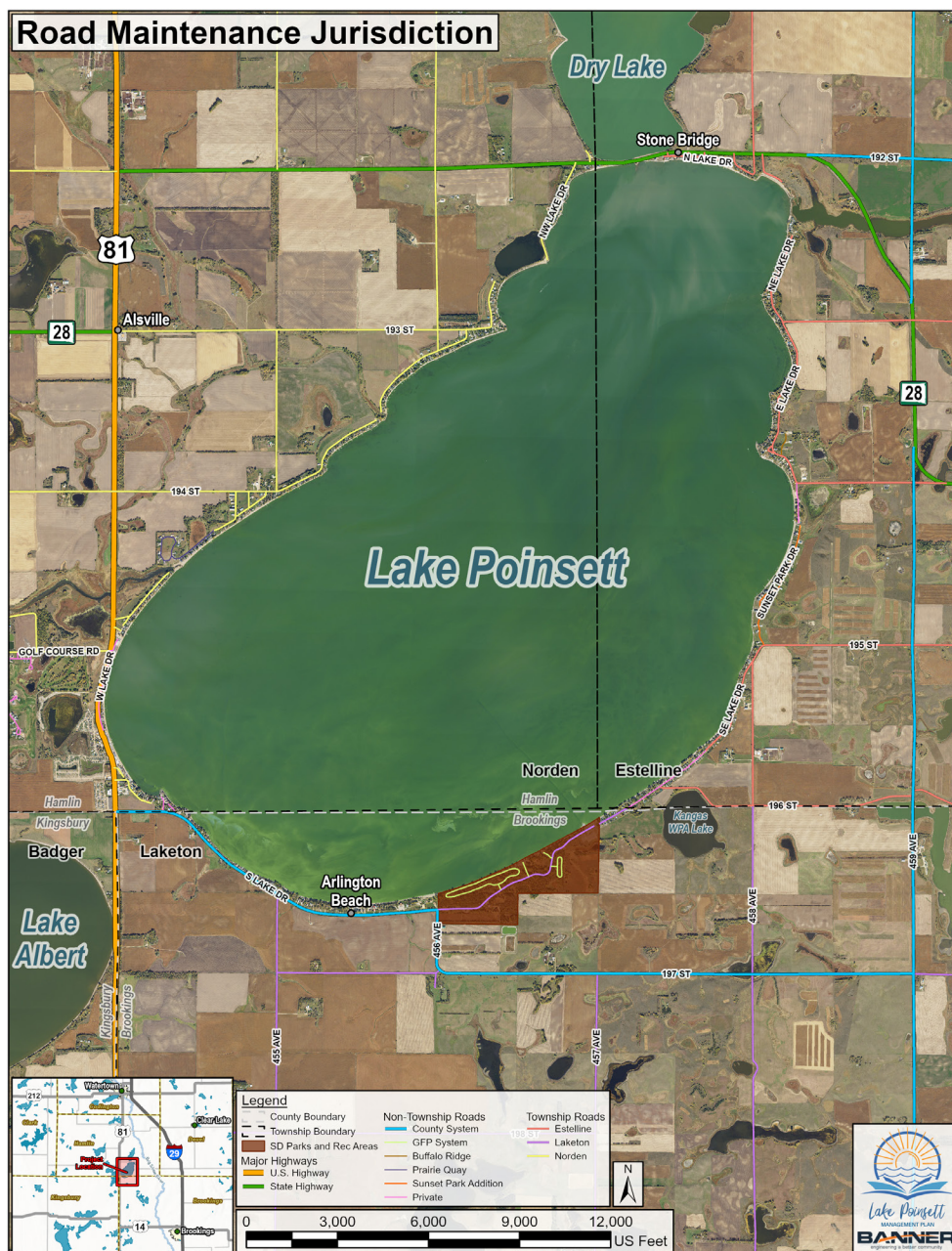
Law Enforcement

At the state level, **South Dakota Highway Patrol** can enforce traffic laws and policies on state highways like Highway 81. Major traffic enforcement resources (like highway safety campaigns) come from the state patrol.

South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks (SDGFP) Conservation Officers have law enforcement authority on the lake itself and in the state-managed recreation areas. SDGFP officers focus on boating safety, fishing and hunting regulations, and they can enforce laws such as boating under the influence or life-jacket requirements. These officers are often the first responders to on-the-water incidents and coordinate with county sheriffs for serious emergencies. While the state does not provide a regular “police patrol” around the lake or on land, its officers (Highway Patrol and SDGFP) play key roles in overall safety enforcement.

Public Recreation Areas

The **State of South Dakota (through SDGFP)** manages the Lake Poinsett State Recreation Area, which includes campgrounds, a swimming beach, and boat ramps on the east side of the lake. SDGFP is responsible for the roads inside the recreation area and the safety of visitors there. They maintain those internal park roads and parking lots, and park staff, the conservation officer, or sheriff deputies handle enforcement of park rules (such as speed limits within the campground, no alcohol rules, etc.).



COUNTY-LEVEL RESPONSIBILITIES (*BROOKINGS AND HAMLIN COUNTIES*)

Lake Poinsett spans two counties; most of Lake Poinsett is in Hamlin County, with the southern shores in Brookings County. The counties are the middle layer of governance; they maintain larger local roads, provide police protection via the sheriff, and can enact local regulations outside municipal city limits. Strong partnership with the counties is essential to carry out many of the Plan’s actions. Each county government has responsibilities in its portion of the lake area.

County Roads

Both Brookings and Hamlin Counties maintain the county roads in their jurisdictions around Lake Poinsett. The County Highway Departments handle grading of gravel, fixing potholes, resurfacing, and snow plowing on these roads. If a road is to be paved or upgraded from gravel, it usually falls to the county to plan and fund that project (often with state aid). Counties also post local traffic signs (stop/yield signs, local road speed limits set by ordinance, etc.) for the roads they oversee.

Each County has a limited budget for highway maintenance funded by property taxes, wheel taxes, and state aid. Brookings County Highway Department and Hamlin County Highway Department must prioritize maintenance across the entire county, so lake-area roads compete with other rural roads for resources.

Law Enforcement

County Sheriffs are the primary law enforcement authorities on land around Lake Poinsett. The lake community does not lie within any incorporated city, so the Brookings County Sheriff's Office and Hamlin County Sheriff's Office cover all the territory. Sheriff's deputies respond to 911 calls, conduct routine patrols, and enforce laws (including traffic laws on county and township roads).

Crucially, the two sheriffs coordinate where their jurisdictions meet. The county line runs through the lake area, but, through a mutual aid agreement, emergency calls will be answered by whichever unit is closest. Both Sheriffs are aware of the lake's issues and are in regular communication. A joint meeting was held in November 2024 with both sheriffs and an SDGFP Conservation Officer to discuss law enforcement issues for the Lake Poinsett Plan, showcasing cross-agency collaboration on safety matters. The notes from this meeting can be found in Appendix G. Each sheriff's office will typically increase patrol visibility during peak summer weekends or events at the lake, as resources allow.

Both Sheriffs emphasized the importance of receiving timely complaints about problems around the lake. There is little they can do to address problems when they receive the information hours or days later.

Speed Limits and Traffic Regulation

Counties in South Dakota can establish ordinances on speed but changes to the speed limits on county highways must be approved by the SDDOT. Counties can also approve changes on township roads, which by default follow state statutory speed limits. If residents want a lower speed limit on a particular road (e.g. a popular lakeside route), they would need to petition the County Commission. The SDDOT would be willing to conduct a speed study, if requested by either County. It is important to note that the speeds cannot be lowered on all roads – an engineering study or safety rationale is often needed, especially for significant changes. Lowering speed limits without a careful analysis of the road conditions can create unexpected hazards for drivers.

In the lake area, county officials have been asked whether they can implement “no jake brake” zones. Noise measures, such as ordinances regarding jake brakes, are not within county authority and are typically addressed by municipalities.

Emergency Management

The counties have the primary responsibility for emergency management for the Lake Poinsett area. The lake is served by volunteer fire/ambulance services from nearby towns such as those from Arlington, Badger, Castlewood, DeSmet, Estelline, Hayti, Lake Norden, and Lake Preston. Ensuring these responders can reach lakeshore properties (via good roads or clear signage) is a county responsibility as well.

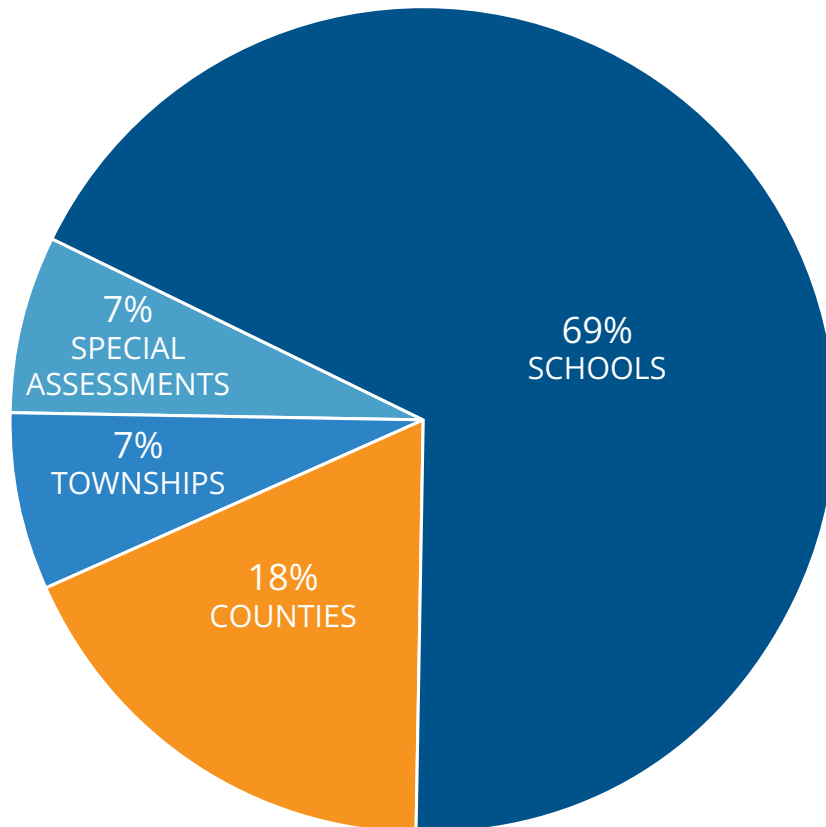
The Lake Poinsett Association, Hamlin County, and the SDGFP have expressed interest in a Memorandum of Understanding for the operation and maintenance of a storm siren system around the Lake. SDGFP would be responsible for providing three storm sirens and four properties for the placement of sirens, along with the electricity needed for the sirens. Hamlin County would be responsible for providing the fourth siren and for testing and operating the sirens. The Lake Poinsett Association would be responsible for the maintenance and repair of each siren, up to a maximum of \$2,500 for each repair. If the cost for a single maintenance repair exceeds \$2,500, the three parties can discuss a cost share. A copy of the draft Memorandum of Understanding is included in Appendix F.

TOWNSHIP-LEVEL RESPONSIBILITIES (LOCAL TOWNSHIPS)

At the most local level, Lake Poinsett falls within three townships: Estelline Township, Norden Township, and Laketon Township. Townships in South Dakota have elected boards (usually three supervisors) responsible for certain local services, primarily maintenance of township roads. Township roads are typically the smaller gravel roads that access homes and fields off the county highways. Around Lake Poinsett, for example, roads within one mile of the Lake are typically township roads and are maintained by the townships. The township acts as the grassroots level of government; they are closest to the residents but have the fewest resources.

Road Maintenance (Township Roads)

The township boards oversee grading, graveling, and minor repairs on their roads. They often own a grader or contract with the county to grade the roads a few times a year. Townships are also responsible for winter maintenance, such as snow removal. However, townships have very limited funding. Only a small portion of property tax portion of property tax revenue is allocated to townships – on the order of about 7% of the property tax bill for rural residents. This means townships often struggle to afford major improvements like paving or extensive dust control. An Estelline Township official participated in the May 2025 meeting with state and county officials to discuss the roads around Lake Poinsett. He noted that the township could raise additional funding for township roads by implementing an additional levy for snow removal. But, to date, this has faced widespread opposition from residents.



If there are potholes or dust, the township board is the first line of response – but their capacity to fix it may be limited by budget. Townships can apply magnesium chloride (dust suppressant) on gravel if they can afford it; this is sometimes cost-shared with residents. They set priorities based on resident complaints and safety (school bus routes, for instance, get priority maintenance).

The Estelline Township official noted that excessive speed causes damage to gravel roads. During a 2024 traffic study, the township found that 85% of the vehicles traveling on 195th Street were traveling more than 10 miles over the speed limit of 35 miles per hour (mph). The maximum speed recorded was 73 mph!

Law Enforcement

Townships in South Dakota do not have their own police or enforcement arm. They rely entirely on the County Sheriff for law enforcement and, any policing on township roads (speeding, etc.) falls to the county deputies. The township can work with the county to lower the speed limits, but if the public does not comply and there is not active enforcement, this is not an effective solution.

TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC SAFETY SOLUTIONS

Through a series of stakeholder meetings (including targeted discussions on roads and law enforcement), a range of solutions have been developed. These recommendations are meant to be practical and actionable by the responsible entities (state, county, township), with support from the lake community. Below is a summary of key proposed solutions, aligned with the concerns identified earlier:

SOLUTION	PRIMARY ENTITY	SUPPORTING ENTITIES
Road Maintenance & Upgrades		
Increase grading and dust control on gravel roads	Township Boards	County Highway Departments
Improved surface (such as chip seal or asphalt) for high-traffic gravel segments	County Commissions Township Boards	SDDOT (funding for County roads)
Apply for Rural Access Infrastructure Fund (RAIF) and Bridge Improvement Grants (BIG) funding	County Highway Departments	SDDOT (funding)
Implement additional levies, such as snow removal	Township Boards	Residents (through increased taxes)
Traffic Safety & Regulation		
Request a study to reduce speed limits on Highway 81	SDDOT	County Commissions
Post lower speed limits on local roads	County Commissions	Township Boards
Install "No Jake Brake" signage	N/A - Only municipalities have this authority	
Law Enforcement & Emergency Response		
Continued law enforcement coordination	Brookings & Hamlin County	SDGFP Conservation Officers
Increase patrols during peak weekends	Brookings & Hamlin County	SDGFP Conservation Officers
Community Engagement		
Hold annual Lake Poinsett public forum	Lake Poinsett Association	Residents
Communicate Concerns	Residents	County Commissions Township Boards
Reduce Speed	Residents	County Sheriffs (Enforcement)
Form a Road District	Residents	County Commission

STRENGTHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT COVERAGE

To respond to the concerns about law enforcement presence and response, the two county sheriffs and representatives of SDGFP sat down with the planning team to discuss solutions. The following steps are being pursued by the counties and SDGFP:

JOINT PATROL EFFORTS

During peak times (holiday weekends, fishing tournaments, etc.), Brookings and Hamlin County deputies conduct joint patrols around the lake, covering both sides in a coordinated manner. They have established clear protocols so that if a Brookings deputy is closer to an incident in Hamlin County (or vice versa), they can respond immediately and sort out jurisdiction later – eliminating delays.

SDGFP CONSERVATION OFFICER INTEGRATION

The SDGFP Conservation Officer (CO) assigned to the lake will regularly share information with the sheriffs. For example, if the SDGFP CO observes unsafe behavior on the water (like intoxicated boaters who then drive vehicles home), he can alert the deputies on duty. Conversely, deputies can call on the SDGFP CO when an incident involves boats or fishing.

COMMUNITY POLICING AND RESPONSE

The Plan encourages a community-watch approach as well. Residents are urged to promptly report suspicious or disruptive activity or dangerous driving to 911. Both counties noted they often do not hear about problems from residents until days later, which is too late to address the issue.

INCREASE COUNTY-RESIDENT COMMUNICATION

Given some residents' feeling of being unheard by county officials, there is a need for better communication channels. The Lake Poinsett Association could hold an annual forum – a public meeting specifically for lake-area residents to voice concerns and hear updates from the County Commissioners, Highway Superintendents, and Sheriffs. Such a forum would ensure ongoing dialogue and help set expectations (for example, explaining which roads will be fixed that year, or what law enforcement coverage to expect on July 4th). This would also lead to greater transparency about the availability of funding and local priorities.

In addition, the Lake Poinsett Association could appoint a liaison (point of contact) for each county. The liaisons would be responsible for tracking lake-related issues and communicating the concerns of the residents to the Commissions. In addition, they could track the County Commissions' activities and report back to the Association. By improving two-way communication, misunderstandings can be reduced and cooperation increased. As one resident aptly said during a meeting, "If you don't like what is going on – get involved. They need to hear our voices." The Plan embraces that approach: it creates structured opportunities for residents to be involved and for officials to listen and respond, beyond the development of this Plan itself.



IMPLEMENTATION AND NEXT STEPS

Many of the above solutions require coordination across multiple levels of government. A key strategy of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan is to **unite the lake community's voice** so that it can advocate effectively. While an individual homeowner might struggle to get action from a state or county agency, the Lake Poinsett Association and the related boards (Sanitary District, Water Project District) can speak as a unified group on behalf of the community. For example, when approaching the SDDOT about highway safety changes, the lake's stakeholders will do so together with one set of well-documented concerns and suggestions, rather than as scattered complaints. This collective approach has a better chance of yielding results.

This Plan also emphasizes engaging the counties and townships as partners rather than adversaries. Initially, some local governments were hesitant to join the planning team; as noted, they preferred to be kept informed and weigh in on solutions pertaining to their duties. Now that the Plan is being finalized, those entities will be formally presented with these recommendations. Early indications are positive – county and township officials have signaled that they appreciate having a clear list of community-backed requests. **The Plan will thus serve as a roadmap:** it identifies which agency needs to do what, and the lake community will continue to follow up to encourage implementation.

Some recommended actions are long-term – a major road improvement project might take many years and significant funding to realize, especially for the townships. **Forming a road district** would help provide additional funding to target problem areas. This approach would mean that residents in specific regions around the lake agree to additional taxes to help generate funds for these road improvements. However, it is important to understand that the money from a road district is designed to supplement, not replace, township funding. By combining resources from both the road district and the township, it may become feasible to tackle more of the road issues identified in the area surrounding the lake.

Lastly, there will be an ongoing need for monitoring and adjustment. The Plan recommends that the Lake Poinsett community groups hold **annual check-ins** to assess progress on these transportation and safety initiatives. If something is not working (or is not done due to budget constraints), the community can decide on next steps – whether that is seeking grants, raising funds locally, or re-prioritizing actions. This adaptive approach ensures the Plan remains a living document and continues to guide improvements even as conditions change.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Transportation, Safety, and Law Enforcement chapter of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan lays out a clear picture of the current challenges on and around the lake's roads and the practical steps to address them. The chapter reflects substantial public input – from the dusty gravel roads people drive every day to the broader question of feeling safe and heard in their community.

By delineating the roles of the state, counties, and townships, residents can better understand who is responsible for what and direct their concerns accordingly. More importantly, through the proposed solutions, this chapter provides a blueprint for action: slower traffic and safer crossings on Highway 81, better maintained local roads (and possibly newly paved ones in critical locations), a stronger law enforcement presence through law enforcement agency cooperation, and a dialogue with local government that is ongoing and constructive.

The success of these initiatives will rely on continued collaboration: the community working hand-in-hand with township boards, county officials, and state agencies. Early steps, like the joint law enforcement meeting and the county road discussion, show that this collaboration is already in motion. Moving forward, Lake Poinsett's stakeholders are empowered with a shared plan. Everyone – from a cabin owner in Estelline Township to a Highway Patrol trooper on Highway 81 – has a part to play in improving transportation safety and enforcement around Lake Poinsett. The Lake Poinsett Management Plan provides the framework for these efforts, ensuring that as the community grows and evolves, the roads and services will be there to support a safe, accessible, and thriving lake environment for all.

RECREATION & AMENITIES CONCERNS



Lake Poinsett is a popular destination for a wide range of outdoor activities, from boating and fishing in the summer to snowmobiling and bird watching in the winter. The SDGFP manages the Lake Poinsett Recreation Area offering 112 campsites and 4 camping cabins, along with numerous private campgrounds. Ensuring safe, enjoyable public recreation is therefore a key component of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan.

Through an extensive public input process – including the online survey and public meetings – community members identified several recreation-related concerns. In response, the Plan outlines solutions to address these issues, balancing community desires with practical considerations.



June 8, 2024 Open House

Kickoff event to hear public opinions on Lake Poinsett’s needs. Stations collected input on recreation, amenities and other concerns.

September 14, 2024 Public Meeting #1

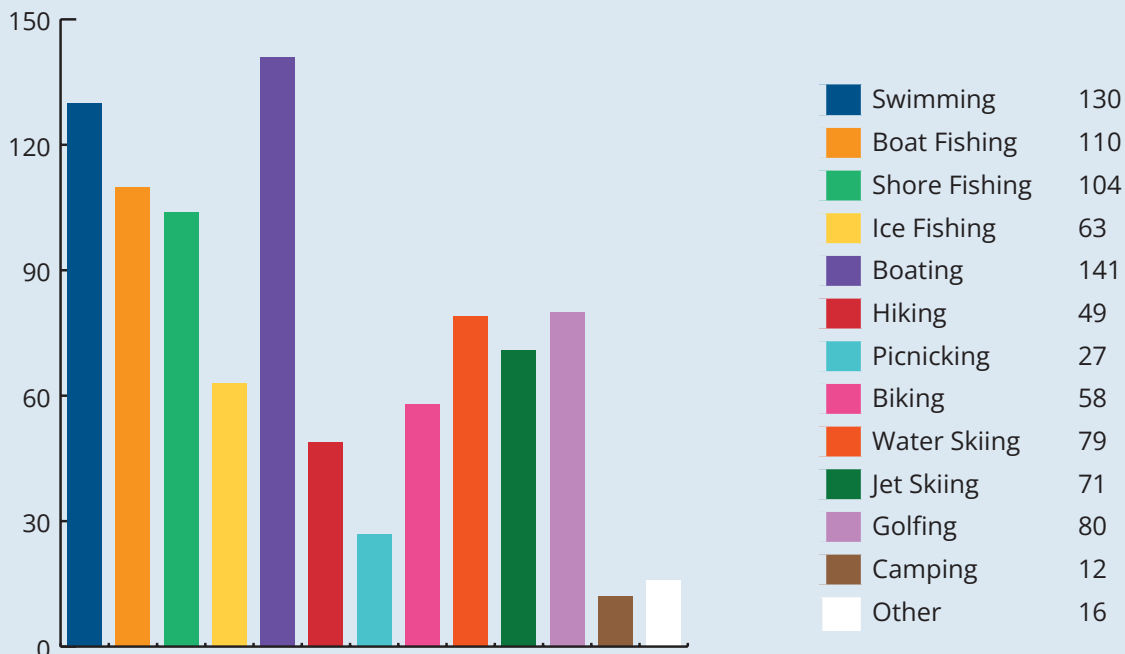
Presented survey results and draft goals. Recreation emerged as a priority area (trails, safety, amenities) based on 340 survey results.

July 19, 2025 Public Meeting #2

Discussed potential solutions and alternatives. Community feedback on recreation solutions (trails plan, enforcement, new facilities) was gathered before finalizing the Plan.

HOW DO PEOPLE USE THE LAKE?

SURVEY RESULTS



BACKGROUND: LAKE POINSETT'S RECREATION CHALLENGES AND COMMUNITY INPUT

Lake Poinsett holds a significant place as a premier destination for recreational activities, attracting visitors from local communities and beyond. The lake offers a wide range of opportunities for outdoor enjoyment, including boating, fishing, swimming, and hiking, making it a central hub for those seeking both relaxation and adventure. Its scenic beauty and accessibility foster a strong sense of community, drawing families and groups who value time spent in nature. This popularity underscores the need for thoughtful planning and continuous improvement to ensure that Lake Poinsett remains a cherished resource for recreation now and in the future.

Lake Poinsett is one of the state's largest natural bodies of water and it maintains a healthy fishery that is popular with anglers year-round. Lake Poinsett is owned and managed as a fishery by the state of South Dakota. The Lake is primarily managed as a walleye and yellow perch fishery, but supports a diverse fish community, including smallmouth bass, northern pike, channel catfish, bigmouth buffalo, common carp, white bass, black bullhead, and black crappie.



In the past, the SDGFP periodically stocked walleye in Lake Poinsett. A 2015 SDGFP study found walleye populations remained strong with or without stocking. Based on the age-range of the fish observed, Lake Poinsett appeared to be a self-sustaining fishery, and 2019 was the last year that the SDGFP has stocked walleye in Lake Poinsett. However, the state continues to monitor the lake regularly with the latest fish survey conducted in 2025. SDGFP's annual survey reports are available online here: <https://apps.sd.gov/GF56FisheriesReports/?Waterbody=Poinsett>.

The 190-acre Lake Poinsett State Recreation Area serves as a cornerstone for recreation and quality of life for both residents and visitors in the region. During 2024, the total visitation was 65,532, with 7,462 camping nights reserved for the available campsites and cabins. The highest use of the Recreation Area is during May through September, with visitation slowing through the winter months.

As a designated public space, it offers well-maintained facilities, safe access points to the water, and a range of amenities that support activities such as swimming, boating, fishing, and hiking. Its trail networks further enhance opportunities for outdoor exploration and exercise, fostering an active and healthy lifestyle for visitors.

Moreover, the State Recreation Area acts as a vital gathering place, hosting community events and providing a scenic environment where families and groups can connect with nature. Its presence not only encourages regular recreation but also contributes to the area's appeal as a destination, supporting local businesses and strengthening community bonds.



The state of South Dakota continues to invest in the Lake Poinsett State Recreation Area, with the following improvements made over the last four years:

- New archery range
- New boat ramp
- Four (4) new camp sites have been added, bringing the total number of available camping sites to 112, along with 4 camping cabins
- 3-acre pollinator plot
- Additional parking on the lower portion of Campground #1
- Completion of 3 major sewer projects to improve the management of wastewater
 - New lift station
 - Another new lift station and septic tank at Comfort Station #1 to correct sanitary sewer overflows during busy times
 - New septic tank for the dump station
- New bridges at locations through the Recreation Area
- Additional trail signs for each trailhead and intersection on the trail system
- Over 350 additional trees have been planted throughout the Recreation Area



Looking ahead, the SDGFP has additional projects on the horizon to further improve visitor usage and enjoyment:

- Modern cabin (Cabin with kitchen, bathroom, living room, and bedrooms)
- Multi-use sport court (including pickleball)
- Renovated double vault toilet at the swimming beach
- New camping cabins
- Renovate the double vault toilet in Campground #1
- A vault toilet in the tent area

A museum at the Recreation Area showcases the Lake's rich history with artifacts ranging from early nomadic lake visitors to homesteaders. The SDGFP is also planning renovations to the Lake Poinsett Museum.

By anchoring recreational opportunities and promoting stewardship of the lake, the State Recreation Area plays a crucial role in maintaining Lake Poinsett's status as a beloved resource for generations to come.

Broad public input revealed a shared vision for improving recreation at Lake Poinsett, as well as highlighting specific requests and concerns:

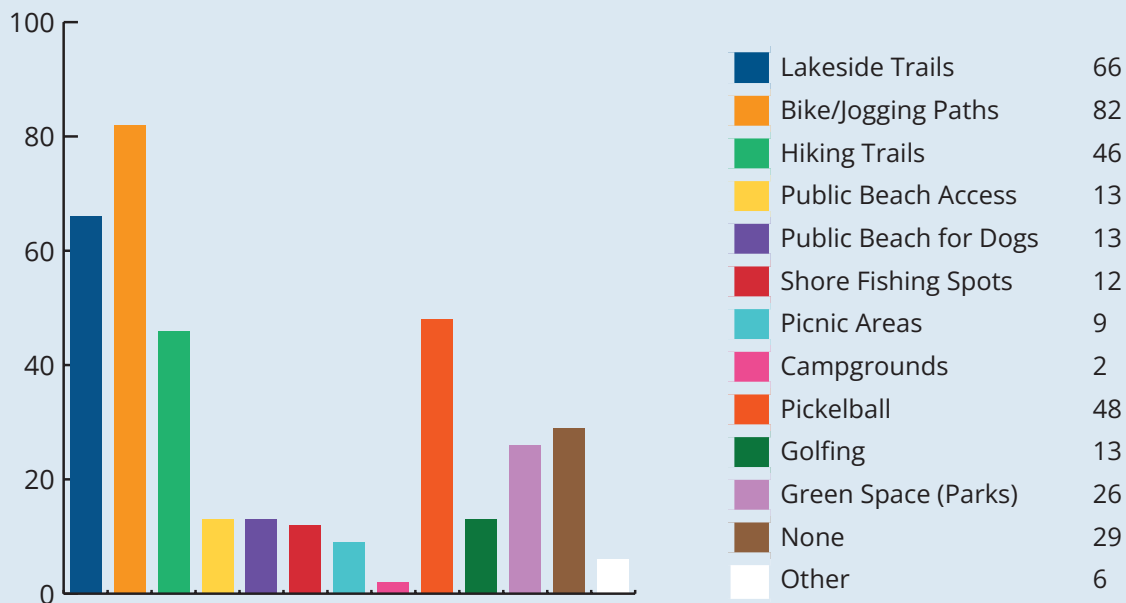
NEED FOR MORE TRAILS AND PATHS

The **lack of walking and biking trails** around the lake was a frequent comment. Over **half of survey respondents (55%)** requested additional trails or pathways for walking, jogging, and biking. Currently, the only developed trails (~3 miles) are within the state recreation area campground, so residents expressed interest in expanding the trail network beyond the park.



DESIRE FOR NEW RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Many participants want expanded facilities for sports and recreation. For example, adding a **pickleball court** was among the top suggestions; it ranked as the **third most common request** in the survey for new recreation facilities. Other ideas included more playgrounds for children and additional courts (e.g. for basketball or tennis) to diversify recreation opportunities.



BOATING SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE ISSUES

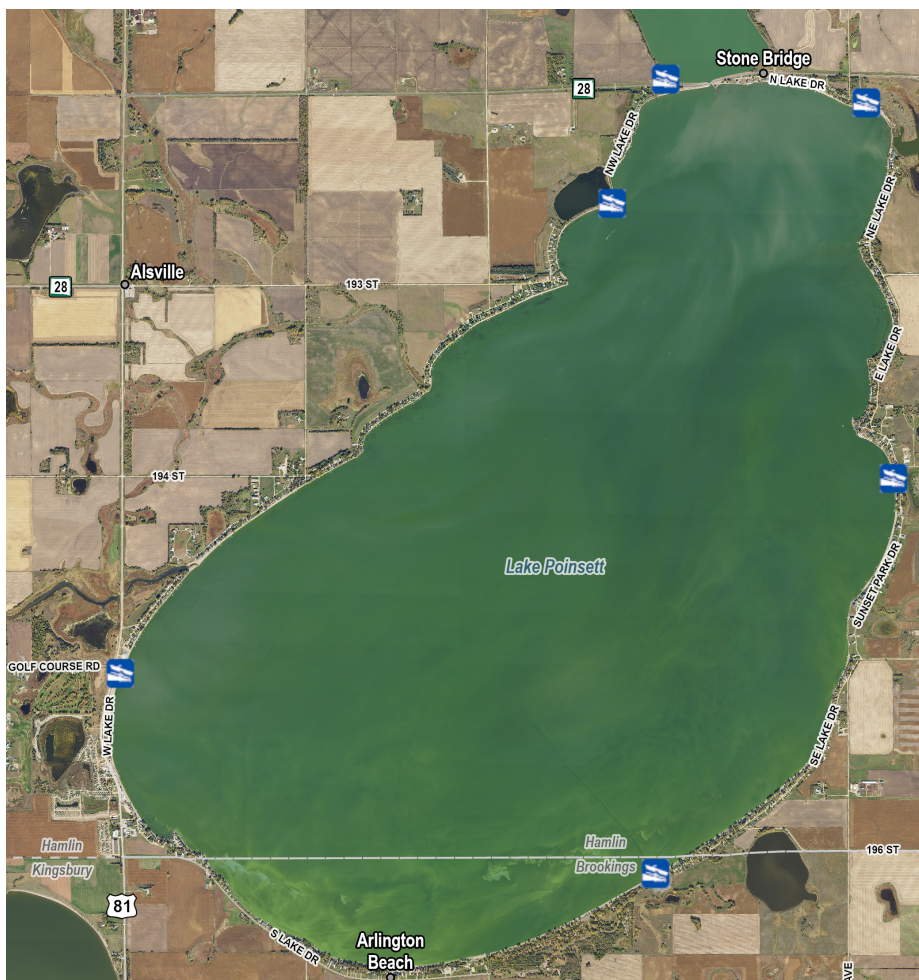
A significant theme in public feedback was **safety on the water**. Residents noted problems with **speeding or careless boating**, especially from personal watercraft. Specific concerns included reports of **underage individuals operating jet skis**, boats creating wakes too close to shore (causing shoreline erosion and hazards to swimmers), and a lack of enforced **“no-wake” zones** near docks and swim areas. Nighttime light pollution was also mentioned – extremely **bright lights after dark** can impair other boaters’ vision and disrupt homeowners. These issues suggest that **better enforcement of boating rules** and communication about etiquette is needed.

LIMITED PUBLIC DOCK ACCESS AND FACILITIES

As recreational use grows, the community sees a need for **improved lake access facilities**. There is growing interest in docks and shoreline infrastructure – for instance, more courtesy docks or fishing piers for public use. Today, the lake has 6 public boat launches and docks, but they can become crowded during peak times. **Fishing tournaments** were cited as an example: events with many anglers put strain on boat ramps, parking, and fish cleaning stations, leading some to worry about overcrowding and resource impacts. The public wants to ensure that **lake facilities keep pace with usage**.

AMENITIES TO SUPPORT RECREATION

Community feedback also touched on amenities that, while not recreation activities themselves, support the recreational experience. For example, many residents noted the convenience of installing a **fueling station on the lake** for boats. In fact, establishing a boat fuel station was listed as a priority by some stakeholders. However, this idea also raised questions about feasibility (as discussed below under solutions). Other amenity-related suggestions included having more **food options or small stores** accessible by boat, to enhance the overall visitor experience. The next page contains a map of the current amenities on Lake Poinsett.



In summary, the community’s recreation concerns centered on **improving access** (trails, docks), **adding opportunities** (new activities/facilities), and ensuring **safety and good behavior** on the busy lake. These concerns were incorporated into the Plan’s goals for recreation: notably, to **“Improve and increase recreational opportunities”** and **“Improve safety around the lake.”** The next step was to formulate solutions addressing each concern in a practical manner.



RECREATION & LEISURE

1. Lake Region Golf Course
2. Public Beach Access
3. Blacks Pheasant Fields
4. Lake Poinsett State Recreational Area

Activities

- Biking (on park roads)
- Birdwatching
- Boating
- Canoeing
- Cross-country Skiing
- Disc Golf
- Fishing
- Geocaching
- Hiking
- Horseshoe Checkout
- Horseshoes
- Kayaking
- Lawn Game Checkout
- Life Jacket Checkout
- Museum/Visitor Center
- Paddleboarding
- Picnicking
- Snowmobiling
- Snowshoeing
- Swimming
- Volleyball
- Walking (on park roads)

Amenities

- ADA/Accessible Features
- Boat Ramps
- Campgrounds
- Camping Cabins
- Drinking Water
- Dump Station
- Electrical Campsites
- Fish Cleaning Stations
- Flush Toilets
- Group Picnic Shelters
- Hiking Trails
- Picnic Tables
- Playgrounds
- Self-serve Entrance Kiosks
- Shore Fishing Access
- Showers
- Swim Beaches
- Tent-only Campsites
- TRACK Trails
- Vault Toilets (open year-round)
- Visitor Centers

LAKE ACCESS

1. Lake Poinsett State Recreational Area Boat Ramp
2. Lake Poinsett Public Access SW
3. Lake Poinsett Public Access NW
4. Lake Poinsett Public Access NE

RV PARK & LODGING

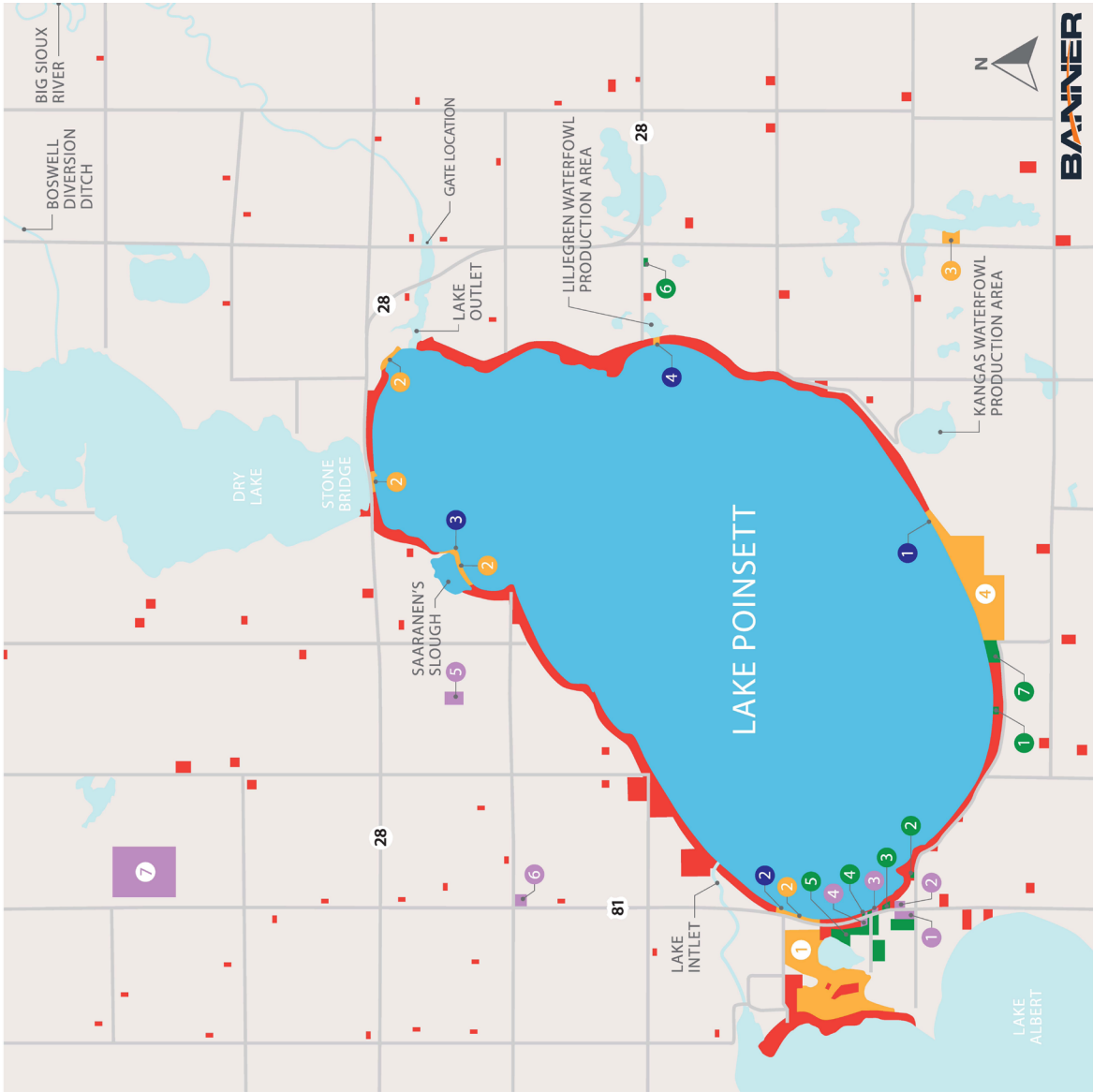
1. Arlington Beach Cabins
2. South Point Dr
3. The Lodge
4. Pier 81 Motel
5. Lake Poinsett Estates
6. Dakota Ring Neck Lodge
7. Lake Poinsett Camp

BUSINESSES

1. Dollar General Store
2. Weiland Marine Boat Dealer
3. Pier 81 Restaurant & Bar
4. Siouxland Bar & Grill
4. Hurley's Motorboat Beach Bar
4. Lemme Insurance Agency
4. Siouxland Grocery & Casino
5. Kaiser Well Drilling
6. Sinclair Gas / Alsville Crossing
7. Drumgoon Dairy

RESIDENTIAL

AGRICULTURAL



RECREATION & AMENITIES SOLUTIONS

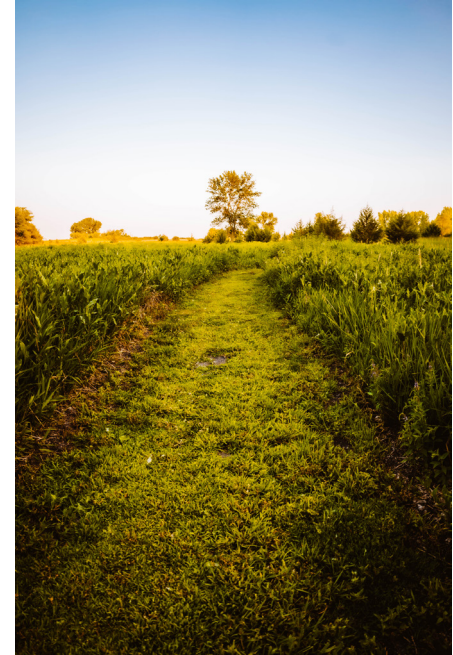
The Lake Poinsett Management Plan responds to the above concerns with a set of recommended solutions. These action items were developed through discussions with stakeholders and were presented for public feedback in July 2025. These recommendations seek to balance regulations and investments with community education and cooperation. Key proposed solutions include:

EXPANDING THE TRAIL SYSTEM

To address the demand for walking and biking paths, **the Plan proposes expanding the trail network** around Lake Poinsett. This could involve connecting the existing 3 miles of trails in the State Recreation Area to new pathways along the lakeshore or road rights-of-way where feasible. Developing a **loop or interconnected trail system** would allow residents and visitors to safely walk, run, or cycle around portions of the Lake. Potential actions include working with Hamlin and Brookings County highway departments and local townships to incorporate roadside trails or widened shoulders.

Funding is available for trail development from the following programs:

- Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which have helped fund similar projects in South Dakota.
- The South Dakota Department of Transportation's Transportation Alternatives Program (SDDOT TAP) provides grant funding that could help support trail expansion and related recreational infrastructure projects.
- By pursuing grants and collaborating with SDGFP (which manages recreation on state land), the community can create new trails in phases. This solution not only meets the recreation need identified by 55% of survey respondents, but also promotes healthy lifestyles and tourism.

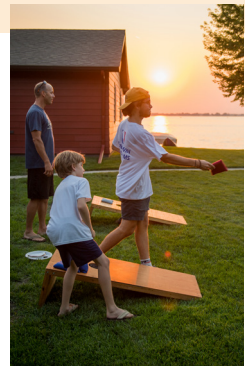


RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES

SDGFP, Hamlin & Brookings Counties, Local Townships, Lake Poinsett Association

NEW RECREATION FACILITIES (PICKLEBALL, PLAYGROUNDS, ETC.)

In response to calls for more recreation options, the Plan supports **adding and upgrading facilities**. One immediate action item is to **partner with SDGFP to install a pickleball court** at the Lake Poinsett Recreation Area. SDGFP officials indicated they are considering adding a pickleball court within the state campground day-use area. This addition would address a popular request without requiring new land acquisition as it could be built on existing park property. Similarly, the Plan encourages **expanding playgrounds and picnic areas**, especially in public access points around the lake that currently lack them.



Local governments (county parks boards or townships) and the Lake Poinsett Association could collaborate to fund and maintain small playgrounds or picnic shelters at community gathering spots. These family-friendly amenities align with the Plan's goal of "enhancing the enjoyment of Lake Poinsett for all ages." By creating more spaces for children to play and communities to gather, Lake Poinsett can better serve both residents and visitors.

RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES

SDGFP, County & City Parks Departments, Lake Poinsett Association

ENHANCED BOATING AND WATERCRAFT SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT

To tackle the on-water safety issues, the Plan places strong emphasis on **improving enforcement and boater education**. One of the recreation priorities identified is “improved enforcement of water use” – in practical terms, this means working with law enforcement to uphold existing rules (such as age restrictions for personal water craft (PWC) operation and no-wake regulations). The Hamlin and Brookings County sheriffs, together with SDGFP conservation officers, would be responsible to **coordinate patrols on the lake**, especially during busy summer weekends.



One requested step is to establish marked **No-Wake Zones** in sensitive areas, for example, within a certain distance of the shoreline or in congested bays with lots of swimmers and docks. Posting buoys and signage can help boaters understand where low speeds are required. However, only the State of South Dakota can establish no-wake zones. Therefore, coordination and communication with SDGFP is critical. **Private citizens cannot establish no-wake zones.**

Additionally, the Plan suggests a public awareness campaign about **boating etiquette and safety**, potentially led by the Lake Poinsett Association in partnership with SDGFP. Educational signage at boat ramps could remind users of rules (e.g. **“No operation of PWC by under-age drivers”** and **“Idle speed within 200 feet of shore”**). By raising awareness and stepping up enforcement presence, the community seeks to **reduce hazardous behavior on the water**. Residents at the meetings voiced that they want to see consequences for reckless boating, which indicates support for a tougher enforcement stance. SDGFP has limited officers, so collaboration with both state and county authorities (who have jurisdiction for safety) is key. The Plan’s formal recommendation is to request increased lake patrols and safety monitoring, and for community members to promptly report violations. Better enforcement will directly improve public safety and protect the user’s enjoyment of the lake.

RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES

SDGFP Conservation Officers, with support from County Sheriff Offices, Lake Poinsett Association

IMPROVEMENTS TO LAKE ACCESS AND DOCKS

In order to accommodate growing use, the Plan calls for strategic investments in lake access infrastructure. One proposal is to add or extend public docks at popular points. For instance, the existing boat ramps managed by SDGFP could be enhanced with additional courtesy docks where boats can tie up temporarily. This would help during fishing tournaments or busy launch days, reducing congestion at ramps. The Lake Poinsett Association could also explore creating a public fishing pier or improving the swimming beach area with a dock/platform, giving non-boat owners more ways to enjoy the water.

Shoreline zoning is another aspect – the Plan supports local regulations to ensure private dock expansions or new marina developments are done in an orderly way that does not overcrowd the lake. In discussion, stakeholders agreed that maintaining a balance is important, more docks are helpful, but they must be safe and not impede navigation. For large events like fishing tournaments, the Plan suggests coordination with SDGFP’s tournament permit system (already in place) to manage scheduling and require proper facilities (e.g. organizers must provide extra boat launch helpers or temporary docks if needed). By proactively planning for capacity, Lake Poinsett can host events without harming the everyday user’s experience. These solutions are relatively low-cost but require cooperation between state, county, and local entities. The responsible parties for implementation would include marina and recreation-based business for dock expansion, in coordination with the SDGFP. Counties would be responsible for zoning changes and enforcement.

RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES

SDGFP, Marinas & Recreation Businesses, Tournament Organizers, Counties

EVALUATING ON-LAKE FUELING OPTIONS

The idea of installing a fuel station on the lake was discussed as a potential recreational amenity, since many boaters currently have to bring their boats or fuel containers to town to refuel. While a marina fuel dock would be convenient, public meetings highlighted both strong community interest and significant challenges, including high regulatory requirements, environmental safety, staffing, and insurance.

On-water fuel is often much more expensive than land-based options due to specialized equipment and lower sales volumes. For example one marina sold on-water fuel for \$7.44/gallon, vs \$2.89/gallon at a nearby gas station. Because of these factors, the Plan tempers expectations, noting that a fuel dock may not be economically feasible in the near term. Alternative solutions, like extended hours at local bait shops or portable fuel tank services, could be considered. Ultimately, while the Plan does not recommend an on-water fuel station at this time, it encourages ongoing discussions with local businesses to improve boater access to fuel and supplies, ensuring the Plan stays realistic and responsive to public input.



RESPONSIBLE ENTITIES

Private Sector, State Fire Marshal/Environmental Regulators, Lake Poinsett Association

CONCLUSION

The Lake Poinsett Management Plan emphasizes that collaboration is crucial for these recreation-driven initiatives. For example, expanding trails will require cooperation between state and local jurisdictions, and improving boating safety will involve both enforcement agencies and the lake community. In all cases, the stakeholders identified above must work together to secure funding, implement the actions, and maintain the improvements over time.

Overall, the recommended solutions are designed to be practical and community-driven. They reflect the input gathered from the public while also considering feasibility. The result is a set of actions that have broad support: “practical solutions that reflect both expert analysis and community input.” By investing in recreation infrastructure (trails, courts, docks) and enforcing sensible rules on the water, Lake Poinsett’s stakeholders aim to enhance recreational opportunities for everyone in a sustainable way. With the implementation of these measures, Lake Poinsett can continue to be a safe, enjoyable place for recreation for years to come, aligning with the community’s shared vision for the Lake’s future.



LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT CONCERNS



The patterns and policies that shape land use and development around Lake Poinsett play a central role in the community's future. Decisions regarding zoning, growth, and resource management have significant impacts on environmental health, property values, and the overall quality of life for residents and visitors alike. This section provides an overview of the major issues and priorities driving land use and development discussions in the area.

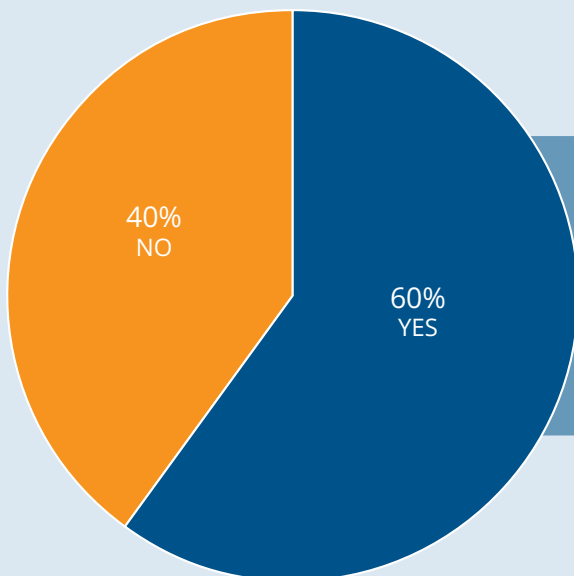
Key Development Concerns:

- Shoreline development and erosion
- Land use and zoning
- Economic development and tourism
- Affordable housing
- Short-term rental management
- Increase in camping sites
- Stakeholder engagement and education

"It isn't about the type of development...it's about highest and best use of any given parcel or location. Lake protection should be No. 1. Don't allow filling of sloughs and private roads that will make flooding worse for all. No 2, protect existing residents. Don't allow someone to build too close or in front of an existing home ruining their view or access. Don't impinge on property rights of residents. We are all going to lose what we love about the lake when there is unrestricted development for financial gain of a few."

- Lake Poinsett Resident

DO YOU HAVE CONCERNS OR COMMENTS ABOUT TOURISM AND ABOUT DEVELOPMENT AROUND LAKE POINSETT?



PROTECT THE LAKE THROUGH SMART DEVELOPMENT

REGULATE BUILDING TO PREVENT FLOODING AND PRESERVE VIEWS.

BALANCE GROWTH WITH COMMUNITY NEEDS

DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE WELL-PLANNED, MAINTAINED, AND BALANCED TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY NEEDS—NOT JUST FINANCIAL GAIN.

SURVEY RESULTS

BACKGROUND: LAKE POINSETT'S LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Stakeholder feedback reflected a diverse range of perspectives, including property values, representation, and sustainable development. The voices of permanent and seasonal residents, business owners, and recreational users highlight both immediate concerns and long-term priorities. Key recurring concerns include:

SHORELINE DEVELOPMENT AND EROSION

Ongoing development along the shoreline, especially construction, can accelerate erosion, damaging private property and infrastructure. In addition to human activities, natural processes like wind and wave action further contribute to the problem.

LAND USE AND ZONING

Both Hamlin and Brookings Counties have established zoning ordinances to manage land use. Commercial activities, including camping, are allowed in the counties. However, based on public feedback, the Counties have now issued a moratorium on the construction of any additional campgrounds near the Lake. The counties each have an ordinance that limits the number of unrelated people that can occupy a residence. Violations of this ordinance are handled on a complaint basis.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

The appeal of Lake Poinsett for both tourism and real estate investment is evident in rapidly rising property values and tax assessments. In Hamlin County, approximately 45% of the building permits the County issued were for construction near the Lake. Residents expressed concerns about unplanned growth straining the wastewater systems around the lake.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

As property values rise, the tax burden for existing homeowners grows.

Existing residents expressed the following concerns:

- Higher property taxes risk pricing out local families.
- Rising demand for rentals and affordable housing.
- Absentee owners complicate enforcement and community standards.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

The Lake Poinsett Association is actively working to keep homeowners educated and engaged on the issues facing development around the Lake. Through the development of the Plan, it was evident this needs to be a constant and ongoing effort. Properties are being handed down to younger family members and new families are moving in. Targeted strategies are needed to bridge generational divides to engage and educate new residents for ongoing stewardship.

ZONING

Lake Poinsett is located in both Brookings and Hamlin Counties and the surrounding land is, therefore, subject to the zoning requirements of each county. Zoning decisions for the Lake Poinsett area are the exclusive responsibility of the county governments. No other organizations or entities are authorized to enact or enforce zoning regulations.



The **First District Association of Local Governments** plays a vital role in assisting county governments with zoning and administrative functions, particularly in areas like Lake Poinsett that span more than one county. By providing guidance on land use planning, technical support, and facilitating inter-county coordination, First District helps ensure that zoning regulations are applied consistently and effectively. Their involvement supports local officials in making informed decisions that balance development pressures with the preservation of community standards and natural resources.

HAMLIN COUNTY

The Lake Poinsett shore in Hamlin County is classified as “Lake Park 1” (LP1) zone. The Hamlin County Zoning Ordinance defines and regulates development within this district. According to Hamlin County Ordinance #2022-03, some of the permitted uses within the LP1 zoning district include:

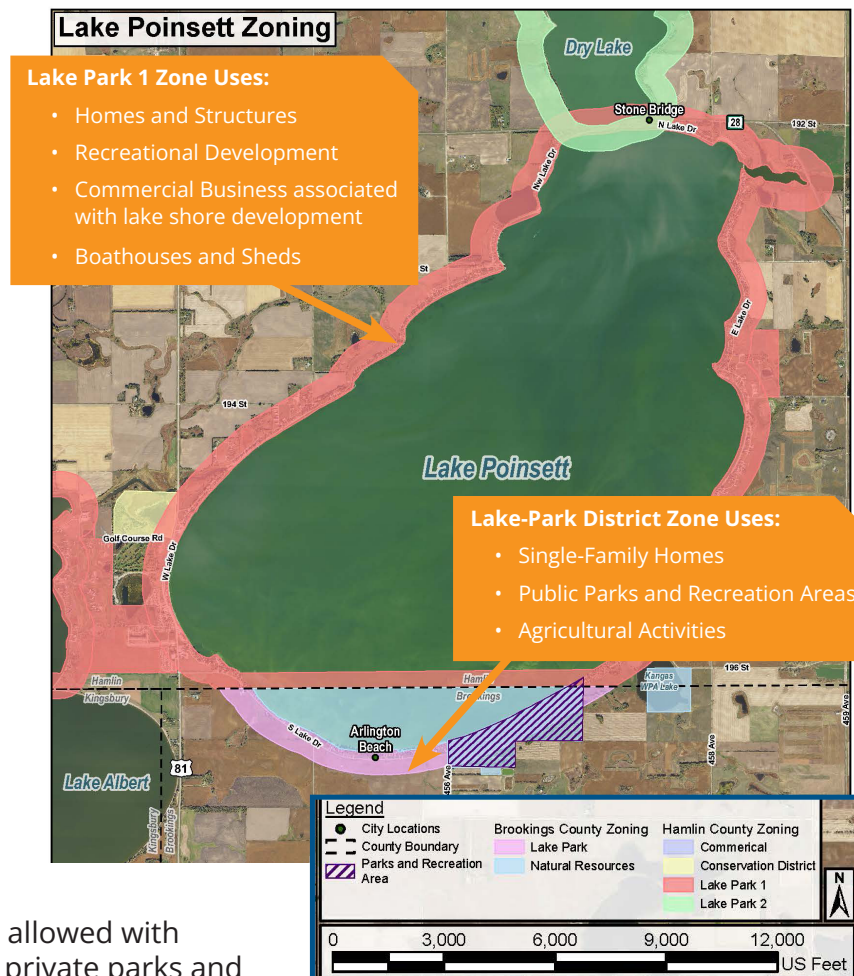
- **RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT:** Single-family residences. Permitted accessory structures include attached and unattached private garages, limited to a maximum size of 36 feet by 42 feet. This includes piers and docks.
- **RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** The purpose of the district includes supporting recreational development.
- **PUBLIC FACILITIES:** Certain public facilities are allowed.
- **COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS:** Allowed if associated with lake shore development.
- **BOATHOUSES AND SHEDS:** These are permitted if they are more than 50 feet from the high-water mark or a point determined by the Board of Adjustment.

BROOKINGS COUNTY

The area along the Lake Poinsett shore in Brookings County is classified as Lake-Park District zone. The Brookings County Zoning Ordinances are similar to Hamlin County, with the following permitted uses in the Lake-Park district:

- **HOMES:** Single-family residences manufactured or modular homes. Connection to the wastewater treatment system is required unless the lot is less than 20,000 square feet.
- **RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** The purpose of the district includes supporting recreational development.
- **AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL ACTIVITIES:** Allowed, with the exception of concentrated animal feeding operations.
- **ACCESSORY BUILDINGS:** Boathouses and sheds. These are permitted if they are more than 50 feet from the high-water mark or a point determined by the Board of Adjustment.

The County also has conditional uses, which are allowed with specific approval from the County. Twin homes, private parks and campgrounds, resorts, restaurants, bed and breakfasts, and vacation rentals by owner (VRBO) are allowed with a conditional approval from the county.



LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS

ENGAGE IN LOCAL DECISIONS

South Dakota values local control and governance, giving counties and municipalities significant authority to manage land use, zoning, and development within their jurisdictions. County Commissions and Boards of Adjustment play a key role in determining specific ordinances and granting conditional uses, reflecting a preference for community-based decision-making tailored to local needs and conditions. This approach ensures that policies can be adapted to fit the unique characteristics of each area while maintaining state-level standards.

This form of governance is only effective if stakeholders engage with their elected officials. Brookings County posts its agenda for all meetings on its website in advance of the meeting. Copies of the minutes of the meetings, along with a video recording of the meeting are posted following the meeting. This information is available on the County's website here: www.brookingscountysd.gov/AgendaCenter.

Brookings County's website allows interested parties to receive email and/or text notifications of issues they are interested in. Residents can subscribe to these notifications online here: www.brookingscountysd.gov/list.aspx#agendaCenter.

The Hamlin County Commission meets at the County Courthouse in Hayti – 300 4th Street – typically on the first and third Tuesday of each month. Hamlin County posts its agendas and minutes online here: hamlinco.us/documents.

GET INVOLVED

Checking county meeting agendas is essential for staying informed about land use and development decisions around Lake Poinsett, allowing residents to voice concerns and influence outcomes before policies are finalized.

DEVELOP A WEBSITE

To streamline the process of engaging the public and making them aware of issues at the county level that impact Lake Poinsett, the Plan recommends the boards develop a unified website and email list to share information and educate the public on upcoming issues.

YOUR PARTICIPATION MATTERS!

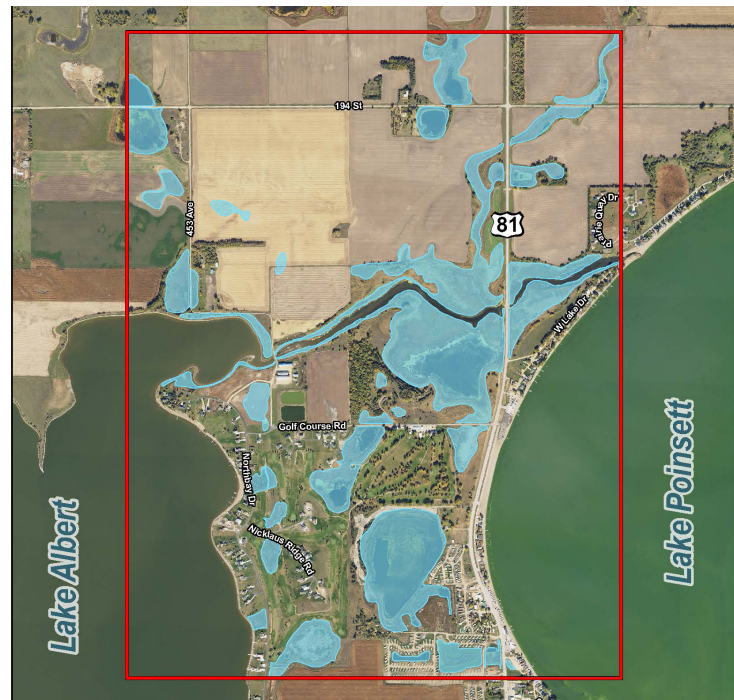
By staying informed, connecting with officials, and sharing your perspective, you help shape the future of the Lake Poinsett community.



PROTECT UNDEVELOPED AREAS

Sensitive areas around the Lake need to be protected from further development through zoning restrictions. These areas often contain sensitive ecosystems that play a vital role in maintaining water quality, supporting wildlife habitats, and providing natural flood protection. When development encroaches on these regions, it can lead to increased runoff, pollution, and habitat destruction.

The key areas identified during the formulation of the Plan were the wetlands around the Lake, especially those between Lake Albert and Lake Poinsett. These wetland areas function as essential flood buffers, provide valuable wildlife habitat, and help remove pollutants flowing from Lake Albert. The Plan recommends the boards collaborate with the Hamlin County Board of Adjustment to pursue zoning modifications that would restrict residential, recreational, and commercial development within this area.



SPECIAL DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT

In South Dakota, special districts are local governmental entities created to perform specific functions or provide particular services within a defined geographic area. These districts operate independently from city or county governments and are typically established to address needs that are not being met by other local authorities. Common examples include water and sewer districts, fire protection districts, road improvement districts, and conservation districts. Special districts are governed by boards that may be elected or appointed, and they often have the authority to levy taxes, assess fees, or issue bonds to fund their operations. Their creation and operation are governed by state law, and they play a vital role in delivering essential services to residents in areas where traditional local government structures may not be able to efficiently provide them.

Special districts are developed through a public vote. The following are examples of special districts and how they have been used around Lake Poinsett:

ROAD DISTRICT

Established to construct, maintain, and improve roads within a specific geographic area. These districts are typically funded by assessments levied on residents within the district and are managed by an elected or appointed board responsible for overseeing road-related projects and ensuring safe transportation routes for the community.

These districts function independently from township authorities but do not take over their responsibilities. Any taxes imposed by a road district are added on top of those collected by the township. Townships remain accountable for road maintenance, while road district funds can be used to supplement the township's resources. If a road district is established, it should work closely with townships to make the best use of shared resources and authority.

One road district has been developed around Lake Poinsett – the Sunset Park Addition Road District was formed in 2023. Expanding the development and implementation of road districts could provide additional funding to address specific identified needs with the roads around Lake Poinsett.

SANITARY DISTRICT

Established to manage and provide wastewater collection, treatment, and disposal services within a designated area. The primary purpose of a sanitary district is to protect public health and the environment by ensuring proper sanitation and preventing the contamination of water resources through the effective management of sewage and wastewater infrastructure. These districts have the authority to construct and maintain sewer systems, levy assessments or fees, and adopt regulations to ensure that sanitation standards are met for the benefit of the community. The Lake Poinsett Sanitary District was established in 1976.

WATER DISTRICT

Established to develop, maintain, and manage water resources and infrastructure within a defined geographic area. These districts are responsible for projects such as water supply, irrigation, drainage, water quality, and flood control, and are empowered to levy taxes or assessments to fund their activities. Governed by a board, water project districts help ensure reliable access to water for residents, agriculture, and local industries, playing a crucial role in supporting both community needs and environmental stewardship. The Lake Poinsett Water Project District was formed in 1989. The East Dakota Water Development District was established in 1984 by the South Dakota Legislature.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Established to provide emergency medical and/or fire protection services. During the public input phase, there were comments raised about the adequacy of emergency services around Lake Poinsett.

FORM A MUNICIPALITY

Forming a municipality around Lake Poinsett would provide local residents and stakeholders with a greater degree of control over key issues such as development, tourism management, and the provision of essential services. By establishing a municipal government, the community could enact ordinances tailored to its unique needs, set zoning regulations to guide responsible growth, and directly oversee infrastructure improvements. This local governance structure would also enable more responsive decision-making regarding public safety, emergency services, and environmental protection, ensuring that policies reflect the priorities and concerns of those who live, work, and recreate in the area. Ultimately, municipal status empowers the community to proactively address challenges and opportunities, enhancing both the quality of life for residents and the appeal of Lake Poinsett as a recreation destination.



CONCLUSION

In conclusion, many of the residents' current concerns require decisions from local authorities. Therefore, increased local control is essential for effectively addressing land use and development issues around Lake Poinsett. If the County Commission is unwilling or unable to address these concerns, the residents could consider forming additional special districts or even form a municipality. By forming a municipality, residents could implement zoning ordinances that protect the area's natural resources and guide responsible growth. A municipality would be able to establish design standards for new developments, set limits on short-term rentals, and create policies to preserve public access to the lake and recreational areas. Additionally, local control would enable residents to prioritize infrastructure improvements, manage tourism impacts, and respond swiftly to public safety concerns. Through these efforts, the community can ensure that decisions reflect local priorities and promote sustainable, balanced development for the benefit of all.

ZEBRA MUSSELS CONCERNS & SOLUTIONS



Zebra mussels are small, invasive bivalve mollusks that have become a significant concern in freshwater lakes across North America. Zebra mussels originally came from lakes in Russia and Ukraine and first appeared in the Great Lakes during the 1980s, brought by ships from overseas. Over the past few decades, zebra mussels have rapidly expanded their range into numerous bodies of water, including Lake Poinsett in Hamlin County, South Dakota.



WHY SHOULD WE CARE:

ECOSYSTEM DAMAGE

Zebra mussels crowd out native species and change the lake's natural balance.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROBLEMS

They clog water pipes, damage boats, and make maintenance more expensive.

RECREATION RISKS

Their sharp shells can hurt swimmers and litter beaches, making the lake less enjoyable.

KEY SOLUTIONS



CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY

KEY ACTION | Always clean, drain, and dry boats, trailers, and gear before entering or leaving the lake.



INSPECTION STATIONS

KEY ACTION | Support and use boat inspection stations when available.



HOT WATER WASHES

KEY ACTION | Rinsing equipment with hot water (at least 140°F) kills zebra mussels and their larvae.

IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!

Report zebra mussels to SD Game, Fish & Parks or through the online citizen monitoring site: <https://sdleastwanted.sd.gov/citizen-monitoring.aspx>

BACKGROUND: ZEBRA MUSSEL BIOLOGY AND INVASION HISTORY

Zebra mussels are small (usually less than two inches long), with a distinctive 'zebra' striped pattern on their shells. They are prolific breeders: a single female can produce up to one million eggs per year. Zebra mussels attach to hard surfaces using strong threads, forming dense colonies that can smother native species, clog water intake pipes, and damage boats and docks.



Their rapid spread across North America is due to several factors:

- High reproductive capacity and a microscopic larval stage (called "veligers") that disperse easily with water currents.
- Ability to attach to and be transported by boats, trailers, and equipment.
- Resistance to a wide range of environmental conditions.

In South Dakota, zebra mussels were first detected in Lewis and Clark Lake in 2015. Since then, they have been found in multiple lakes and rivers, including Lake Poinsett. Zebra mussels have become a focal point for research, monitoring, and management efforts.

As of 2025, there have been 3 positive test results for zebra mussels in Lake Poinsett. The samples were about a mile apart from each other. The lake is not (yet) classified as infested.

ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS

The spread of zebra mussels poses significant challenges, threatening the health and stability of aquatic ecosystems. These invasive mussels upset the balance of the lake by taking food from native aquatic species and causing changes to the water quality and the places where plants and animals live.

As zebra mussels filter the water, they improve clarity. However, as a water body becomes clearer that can promote an excessive growth of invasive plants and harmful algal blooms, disrupting the natural ecological balance.

Dense zebra mussel colonies attach to native mussels, fish, and other fauna, often causing killing native species and reducing the variety of aquatic life.

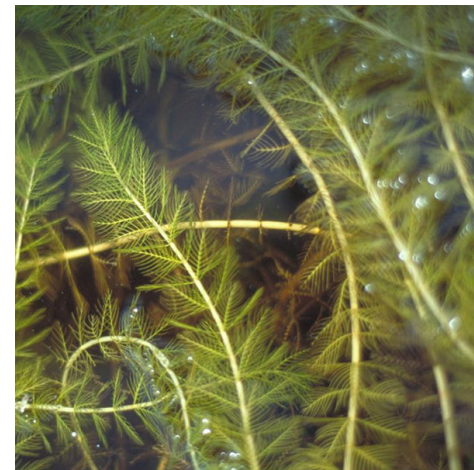
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

The spread of zebra mussels in Lake Poinsett could also create economic and social impacts. These factors collectively threaten Lake Poinsett as both a recreational destination and a regional economic driver.

Zebra mussels clog water intakes, irrigation pipes, and boat motors, leading to increased maintenance costs for public utilities and private owners.

Their sharp shells can litter beaches, harming swimmers and reducing the appeal of recreational sites.

Costly maintenance and ecosystem degradation can lower property values around infested lakes.



CURRENT MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL STRATEGIES

Zebra mussels are very hard to get rid of once they take hold. Still, a few methods can help limit their impact and stop them from spreading further:

MANUAL REMOVAL

Divers and volunteers can remove mussels from docks and other structures. This is labor-intensive, but it can help slow the spread in a waterbody.

FILTRATION AND BARRIERS

Zebra mussel veligers are microscopic. Installing very fine mesh screens or filters on water intake pipes can prevent mussels entering water systems.

COPPER SCREENS AND COATINGS

Copper coating on pipes and boat docks can prevent zebra mussels from attaching and forming colonies.

CHEMICAL TREATMENT

Adding chemicals like potassium chloride and copper sulfate can kill zebra mussels. However, these treatments can harm other aquatic organisms.

In 2023, Idaho state officials treated the Snake River with over 40,000 pounds of copper in an effort to eradicate quagga mussels, a similar invasive mussel. However, two years later, 90% of all aquatic species in the river had been destroyed by the treatment and over 7,000 pounds of copper had settled in the river.

The University of Minnesota's Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) is researching options like low-level dosing of copper or antifreeze to control or eradicate zebra mussels. They believe a complete treatment of an infested water body may be possible in the next 5 to 6 years.

Research is ongoing to find better ways to control zebra mussels without harming other wildlife. Early detection and rapid containment efforts are critical. This includes immediate closure of boat ramps, targeted chemical treatments, and intensive monitoring when new infestations are discovered.

SOLUTIONS | STOPPING THE SPREAD OF ZEBRA MUSSELS

Currently, complete eradication of zebra mussels from a large, open system like Lake Poinsett is extremely challenging. Therefore, preventing the spread is the most cost-effective and environmentally sound strategy.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Informing the public—especially boaters, anglers, and waterfront property owners—about the risks and responsibilities of zebra mussel management is paramount. Education campaigns can include:

- Clear signage at boat ramps and marinas.
- Distribution of brochures and online materials.
- Public workshops and presentations in local communities and schools.



DECONTAMINATION AND INSPECTION PROGRAMS

Require all watercraft and equipment to be thoroughly cleaned, drained of water, and completely dried before entering or leaving.

INSPECTION STATIONS

Set up volunteer inspection points at key access sites to check for and remove zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species.

Establishing monitoring stations at Lake Poinsett's primary boat ramps, staffed by dedicated volunteer citizens, would create an active front line in the fight against zebra mussel spread.

These volunteers would receive training to identify signs of zebra mussel presence, collect water samples, and educate lake users about proper prevention procedures.

These efforts would foster community engagement and stewardship, helping to minimize the spread of zebra mussels and helping boaters understand their role in protecting the lake.

HOT WATER WASHES

Use high-temperature, high-pressure water to decontaminate boats and trailers.

Hot water, ideally heated to at least 140°F (60°C)—can kill zebra mussels and their larvae, minimizing the transport from one body of water to another.

Decontamination stations equipped with high-pressure, hot water systems can be set up at key lake access points, where boaters are required or encouraged to rinse all surfaces, including live wells, bilges, and trailer components.

By adding hot water washes into routine cleaning protocols, lake users add an essential layer of protection, significantly reducing the risk of further spread and supporting the ongoing health of the lake.

Will You Protect Our Waters?

DRAIN YOUR BAIT BUCKETS
BEFORE LEAVING THE
WATER TO PREVENT THE
SPREAD OF AQUATIC
INVASIVE SPECIES.



SLOW THE SPREAD CLEAN. DRAIN. DRY.

LONG-TERM MONITORING

Ongoing monitoring of zebra mussel populations is necessary for early detection and management efforts. Methods include:

CITIZEN MONITORING

Samplers to identify veliger larvae and adult mussels, such as those shown in these figures. Place monitors on private docks and near rentals. Inspect boats, docks, and lifts when removing from the lake.

GENETIC ANALYSIS

To confirm species identification and track movement patterns, genetic analysis is important. Contact the University of Minnesota for information on their genetic tracking program and send zebra mussels to the University of Minnesota for DNA testing. Identifying where zebra mussels came from can help target public education efforts and eradication strategies.

REPORT FINDINGS

Collaboration with regional and federal agencies to share data and coordinate responses. Report findings to SDGFP's Monitoring Site: <https://sdleastwanted.sd.gov/citizen-monitoring.aspx>.

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and the University of Minnesota have citizen monitoring equipment available for free. Dock owners can place these monitoring devices at the end of their dock to help identify the location and spread of any zebra mussels.



CONCLUSION

Zebra mussels present a significant threat to Lake Poinsett and all waterbodies in South Dakota. While complete eradication is currently unrealistic for large lakes, coordinated management efforts can minimize their impacts and slow their spread. The combination of public education, rigorous inspection and decontamination protocols, and ongoing research into innovative control methods will be critical for safeguarding Lake Poinsett's ecosystem and community.

Preventing the spread of zebra mussels is ultimately the most effective strategy. The continued collaboration of local communities, state agencies, and individual lake users will determine the long-term success of these efforts—and the future health of Lake Poinsett.



APPENDIX A

SURVEY RESULTS

Responses Overview Active

Responses

340



Average Time

27:46



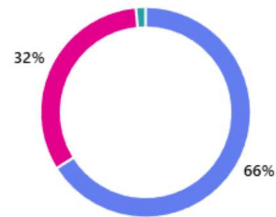
Duration

608 Days



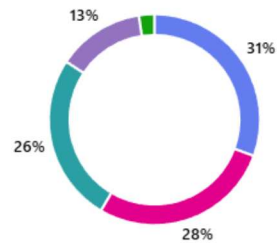
1. Which best describes your property at Lake Poinsett?

● Single-family lake home	222
● Seasonal cabin	109
● Other	5



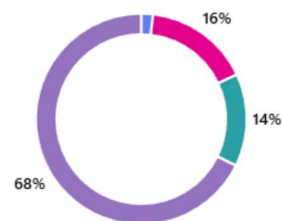
2. Which best describes how you use your property at Lake Poinsett?

● Full time year-round residence	103
● Part time year-round residence	94
● Seasonal residence in the warm months	87
● Weekends and Holidays	45
● Other	8



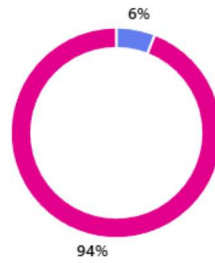
3. How many years have you been at Lake Poinsett?

● Less than 1 year	6
● 1-5 years	55
● 6-10 years	48
● More than 10 years	229



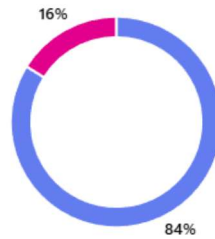
4. Do you rent out your home/cabin?

● Yes	20
● No	317



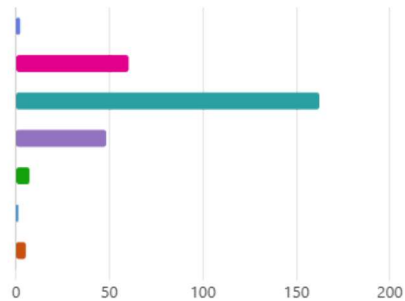
5. Do you have concerns or comments about improving and protecting the water quality at Lake Poinsett?

● Yes	285
● No	55



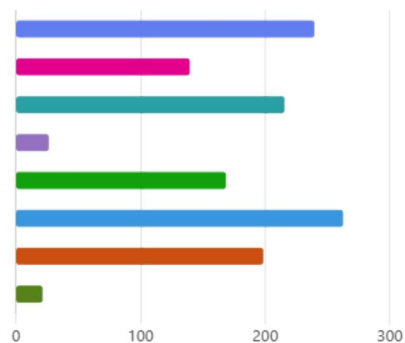
6. How would you rate the overall water quality of Lake Poinsett?

● Excellent	2
● Good	60
● Average	162
● Poor	48
● Very poor	7
● Not sure	1
● Other	5



7. Which factors do you consider when evaluating the water quality? Choose all that apply.

● Clarity	239
● Presence of debris	139
● Odor	215
● Temperature	26
● Color	168
● Presence of algae	262
● Presence of weeds	198
● Other	21



8. How much does water quality affect your use of the lake and engagement in activities in and around Lake Poinsett?



9. What use of the lake or activity is most significantly impacted by water quality? If none, write "None".

278
Responses

Latest Responses
 "Water sports (swimming, skiing)"
 "Going into water"
 ...

104 respondents (37%) answered Swimming for this question.

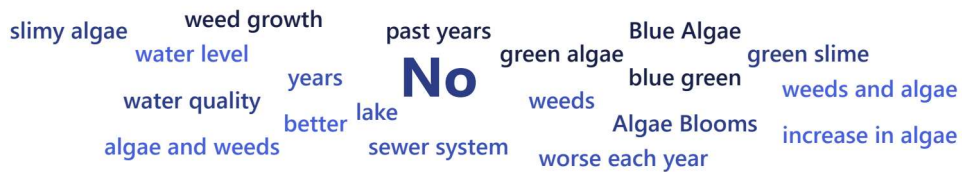


10. Have you observed any changes (positive or negative) in the lake's water quality over the past few years? If no, write "No". If yes, please explain.

273
Responses

Latest Responses
 "Increased weeds"
 "Yes when your county controls farm tiling what can you expect but more of it. W..."
 ...

95 respondents (35%) answered No for this question.

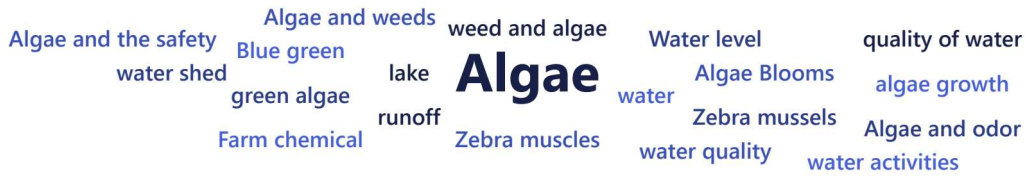


11. What is your primary concern about Lake Poinsett's water quality? If none, write "None".

272
Responses

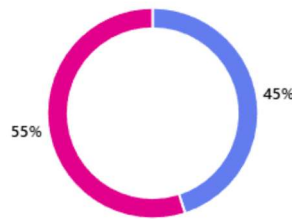
Latest Responses
"Increased weeds"
"Tiling"
...

86 respondents (32%) answered Algae for this question.



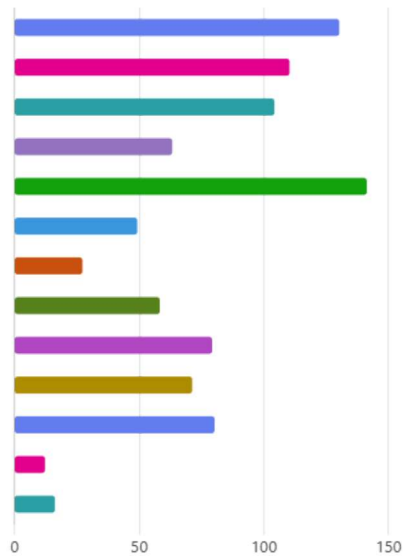
12. Do you have comments or concerns related to recreation activities at Lake Poinsett?

● Yes 153
● No 187

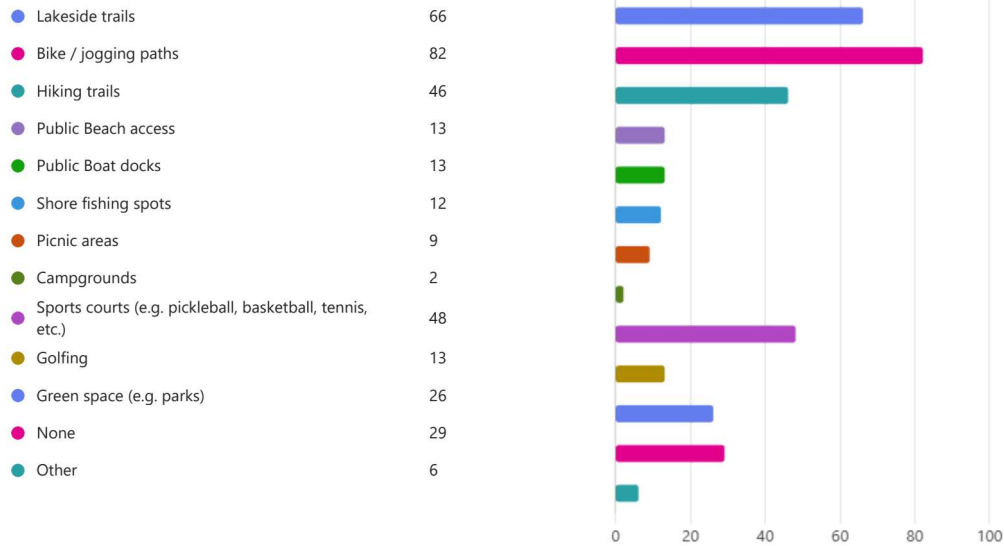


13. Which recreational activities do you engage in? Check as many as you like.

- Swimming 130
- Boat Fishing 110
- Shore Fishing 104
- Ice Fishing 63
- Boating 141
- Hiking 49
- Picnicking 27
- Biking 58
- Water skiing 79
- Jet skiing 71
- Golfing 80
- Camping 12
- Other 16



14. What additional recreational facilities would you like to see or see more of at Lake Poinsett? Check as many as you like.



15. Do you feel there should be limits placed on the type and/or quantity of boats on the water? If yes, please elaborate. If no, write "No".

144
Responses

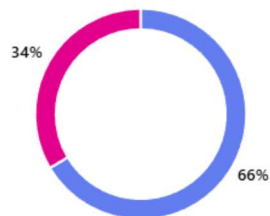
Latest Responses
"Every year they're bigger"
...

27 respondents (19%) answered boats for this question.



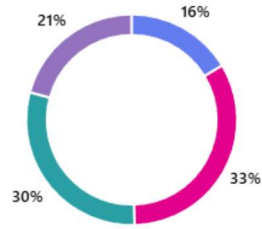
16. Do you have concerns or comments about water quantity and levels at Lake Poinsett?

● Yes 226
● No 114



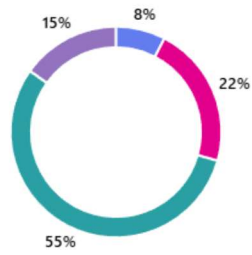
17. How concerned are you about the current water levels in Lake Poinsett?

● Very concerned	37
● Concerned	75
● Somewhat concerned	67
● Not concerned	47



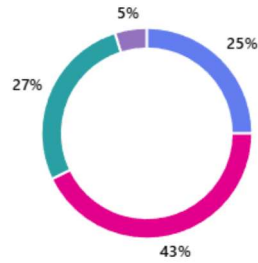
18. Generally speaking, how would you describe the water levels?

● Too high	16
● Too low	46
● Too much fluctuation	117
● Other	32



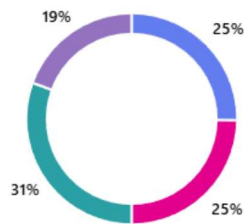
19. How much of an impact do the water levels have on your activities on and around Lake Poinsett (e.g. boating, fishing, swimming)?

● Significant	56
● Moderate	96
● Slight	61
● No impact	11



20. How concerned are you about the potential for flooding from high water levels?

● Very concerned	57
● Concerned	56
● Somewhat concerned	69
● Not concerned	44



21. How concerned are you about low water levels impacting your use and enjoyment of Lake Poinsett?

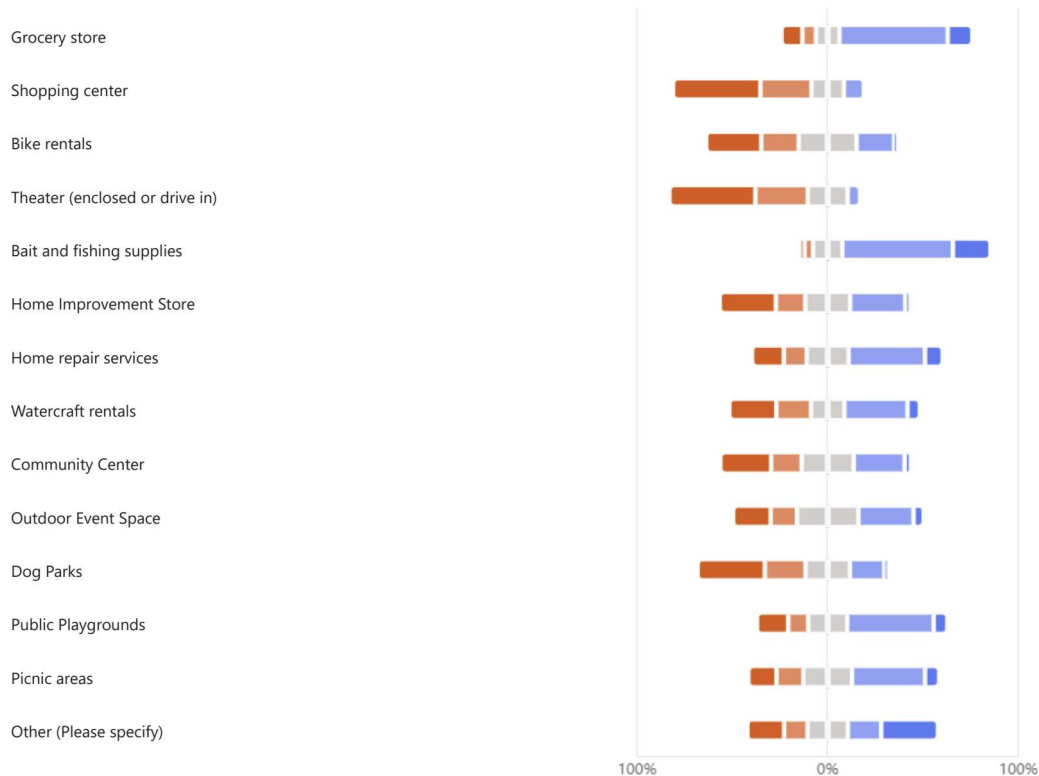


22. Do you have comments or concerns about amenities available around Lake Poinsett?



23. The following amenities and services are available in areas like Lake Poinsett. How important do you feel it is to add these?

● Not needed ● Not important ● Neutral ● Nice to have ● Must add



24. Are there other amenities that are not listed above that you feel are needed? Please describe.

92
Responses

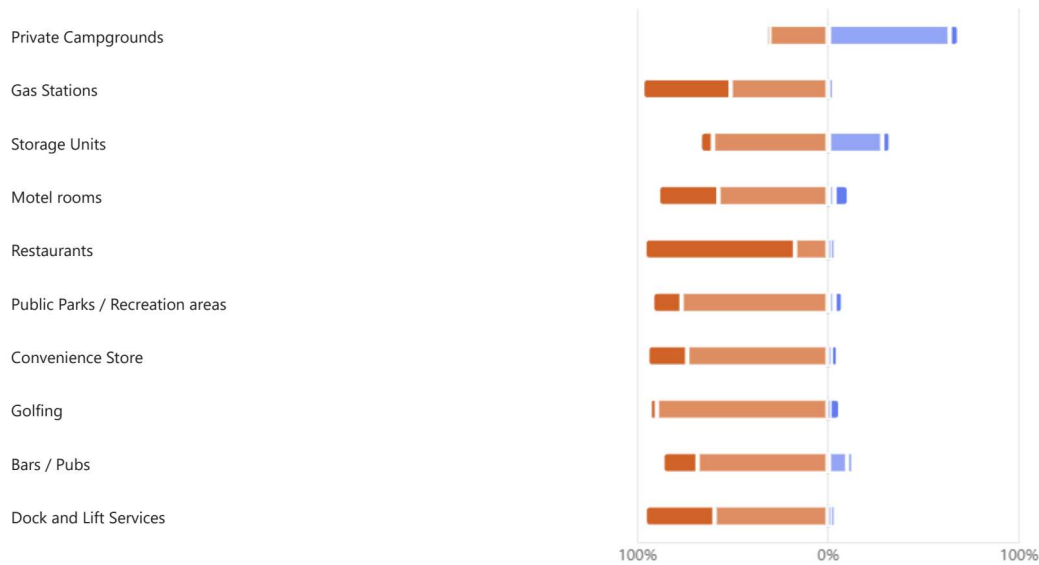
Latest Responses
"Gas on the lake"
...

20 respondents (22%) answered restaurants for this question.



25. The following amenities are currently available at Lake Poinsett. For each, do you feel we need more, have enough, or have too many?

● Need more ● Neutral / Just fine ● Too many ● No opinion



26. Do you have comments on other amenities not listed above? Please indicate them here.

46
Responses

Latest Responses
...

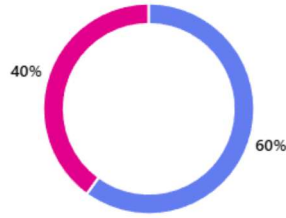
14 respondents (30%) answered lake for this question.



27. Do you have concerns or comments about tour

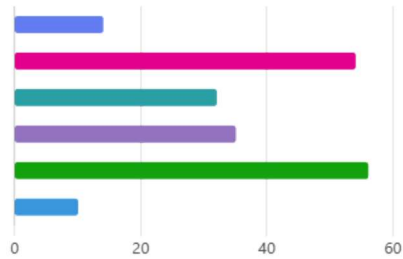
e Poinsett?

- Yes 204
- No 136



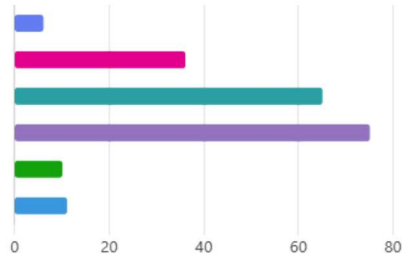
28. What impact does tourism (i.e. visitors who fish, boat, picnic, swim, enjoy the beach, camp, etc.) have on Lake Poinsett?

- Negative 14
- Slightly negative 54
- Neutral / No impact 32
- Slightly positive 35
- Positive 56
- Not sure 10



29. How would you describe the current state of tourism at Lake Poinsett?

- Poor 6
- Fair 36
- Neutral 65
- Good 75
- Excellent 10
- Not sure 11



30. What specific aspects of tourism do you think should be promoted and developed further? If none, write "None".

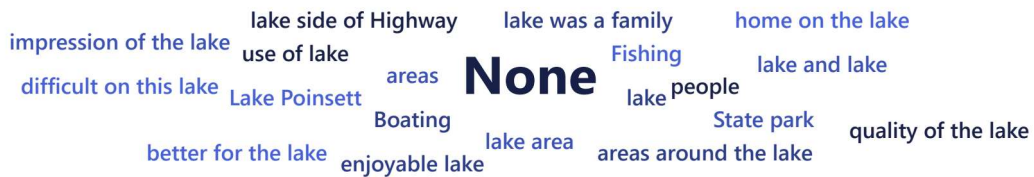
186

Responses

Latest Responses

- "None"
- "None"
- ...

108 respondents (58%) answered None for this question.



31. What specific aspects of tourism do you dislike? Should these aspects be limited/not developed further? If none, write "None".

181

Responses

Latest Responses

"Short term rentals."

"Unsafe boating/jet skiing, pollution/garbage from tourists"

...

54 respondents (30%) answered none for this question.

lake roads, resident of the lake, lake home, Rentals around the lake, West side of the lake, camper campgrounds, Lake Poinsett, lake area, campers, Private Campgrounds, highway and the lakes, development around the lake, Lake and Okoboji, boats on the lake, beach and the lake, state park, people around the lake, campgrounds around the lake, none, lake

32. What types of development (e.g. residential, retail, service, and commercial) in your opinion contribute positively to the Lake Poinsett community and should be encouraged? List as many you like. If none, write "None".

180

Responses

Latest Responses

"None"

"None"

...

42 respondents (23%) answered None for this question.

lake community, restaurant or bar, Family Restaurants, lake shore, Retail and services, Residential, retail, dollar store, Nice, Services, development, Gas on lake, Commercial lake, Lake, None, restaurants, service for the lake, store, store/restaurant, roads around the lake

33. What types of development (e.g. residential, retail, service and commercial) have a negative impact on the Lake Poinsett community and should be limited/restricted? List as many as you like. If none, write "None".

184

Responses

Latest Responses

"Short term rentals and multi family."

"Campground/campers with permanent spots"

...

26 respondents (14%) answered lake for this question.

impact on the lake, Private Campgrounds, campgrounds and people, Private Camp, Campgrounds along highway, Residential Developments, trailer parks, rentals, camper campgrounds, Camp Grounds, lake side of road, west side of the lake, lake, Bar large, No more campground, Multi family, campgrounds and storage, campgrounds areas, Residential and campgrounds

34. Do you feel you have the opportunity to voice your concerns? If no, please explain.

...at decisions around Lake Poinsett? If yes, write "Yes"

178

Responses

Latest Responses

"Yes"

...

26 respondents (15%) answered County for this question.



35. What specific types of future development would you like to see in the Lake Poinsett community? List as many as you like. If none, write "None".

176

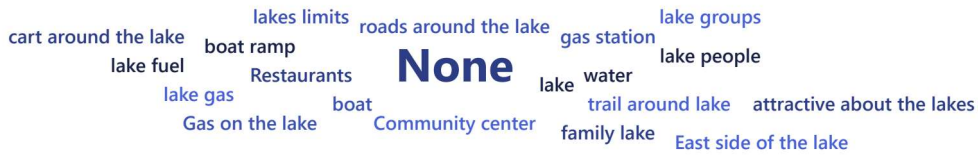
Responses

Latest Responses

"None"

...

67 respondents (38%) answered None for this question.

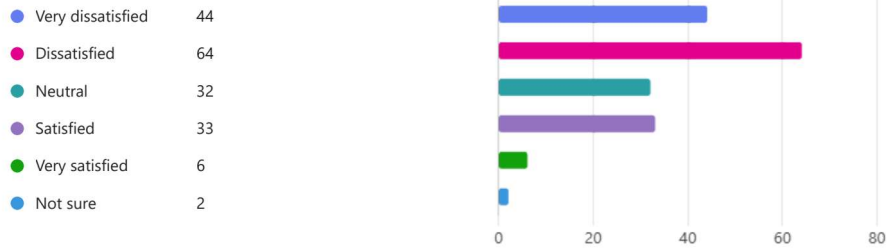


36. Do you have concerns or comments about infrastructure and public services?

- Yes 182
- No 158



37. Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the roads, intersections, and traffic controls in the area?



38. What are some of the biggest issues with the roads, intersections, and traffic controls?

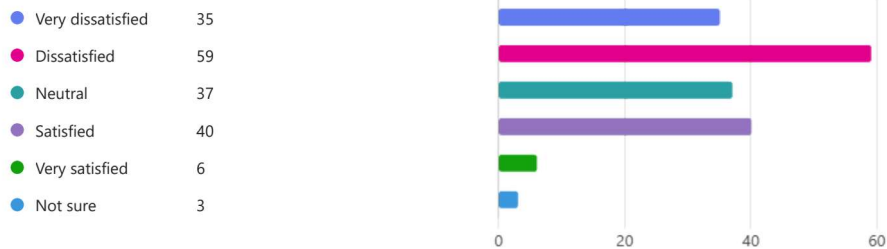
104
Responses

Latest Responses
 "NW lake drive needs road improvements to accommodate public ramp traffic."
 "195 the ave is a township disgrace"
 ...

63 respondents (61%) answered roads for this question.



39. Generally speaking, how satisfied are you with the maintenance and current physical conditions of the roads?



40. What are some of the biggest issues with the maintenance and current physical conditions of the roads?

85
Responses

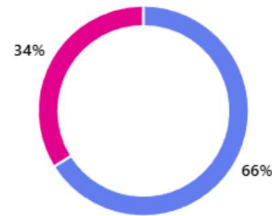
Latest Responses
"We get nothing for our taxes"
...

13 respondents (15%) answered gravel roads for this question.



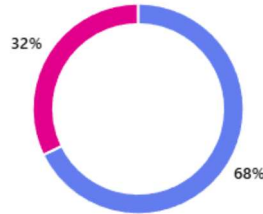
41. What type of sewer system do you have?

● Lake Poinsett Sanitary District sewer service	119
● Private on-site septic system	61
● Not sure	0



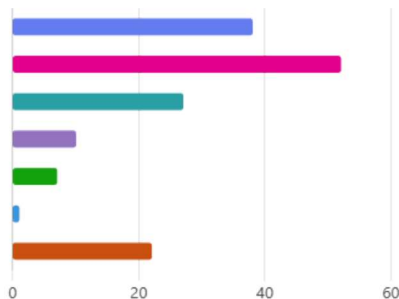
42. If you are not on the Lake Poinsett Sanitary District sewer system, would you like to be?

● Yes	40
● No	19



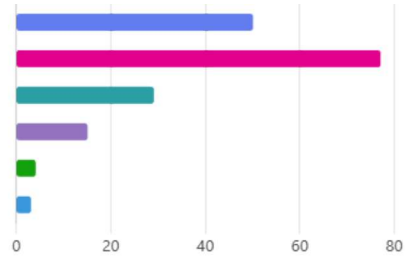
43. How satisfied are you with Lake Poinsett Sanitary District sewer system?

● Very satisfied	38
● Satisfied	52
● Neutral	27
● Dissatisfied	10
● Very dissatisfied	7
● Not sure	1
● Not on the system	22



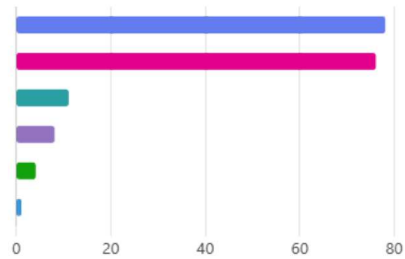
44. How satisfied are you with the quality of tap water at your residence?

Very satisfied	50
Satisfied	77
Neutral	29
Dissatisfied	15
Very dissatisfied	4
Not sure	3



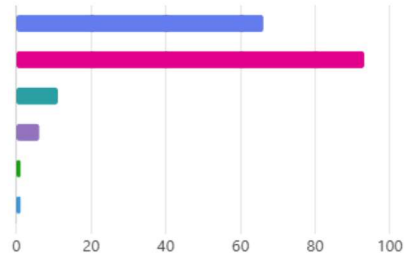
45. How satisfied are you with garbage collection service?

Very satisfied	78
Satisfied	76
Neutral	11
Dissatisfied	8
Very dissatisfied	4
Not sure	1



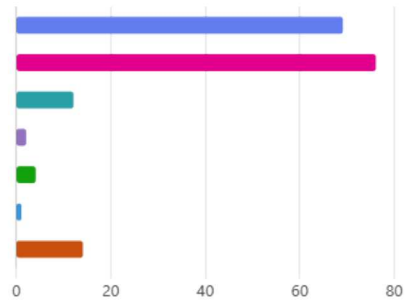
46. How satisfied are you with your electrical service?

Very satisfied	66
Satisfied	93
Neutral	11
Dissatisfied	6
Very dissatisfied	1
Not sure	1



47. How satisfied are you with your internet service?

Very satisfied	69
Satisfied	76
Neutral	12
Dissatisfied	2
Very dissatisfied	4
Not sure	1
Do not have internet service	14



48. What road, water, sewer, garbage collection, internet, and / or electrical service(s) would you like improved? List as many as you like. If n one, write "None".

153

Responses

Latest Responses

"Further expansion of the sanitary sewer"

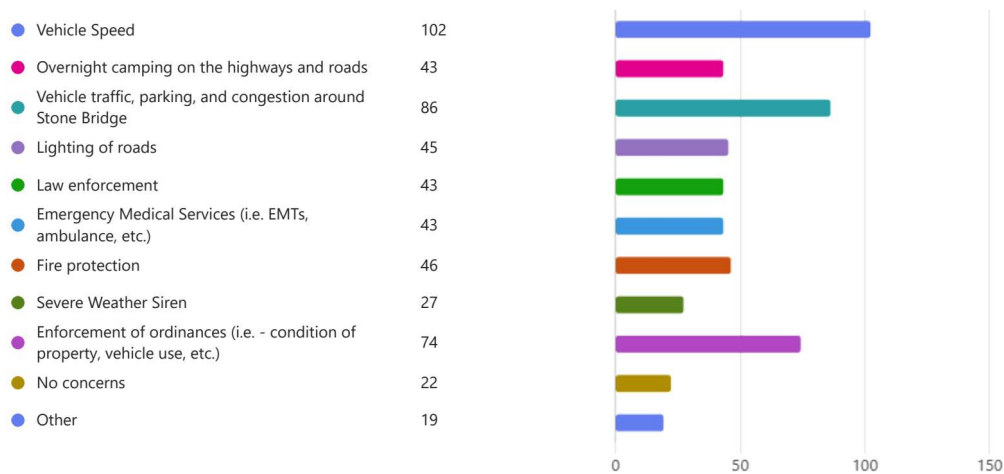
"Oil the township road 195 the ave"

...

55 respondents (36%) answered roads for this question.



49. Do you have concerns about any of the following at Lake Poinsett? Check all that apply.



50. Please provide any additional information about the concerns you raised above.

78

Responses

Latest Responses

...

29 respondents (37%) answered road for this question.



51. In your view, what is the law enforcement, public safety, and/or emergency service most in need of improvement at Lake Poinsett? List as many as you like. If none, write "None".

135

Responses

Latest Responses

"None"

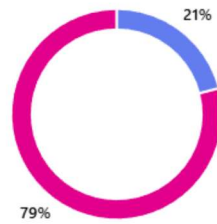
...

58 respondents (43%) answered None for this question.



52. Do you view excessive noise at the lake to be a problem?

- Yes 37
- No 139



53. Please describe your concerns with noise around Lake Poinsett. If none, write "None".

35

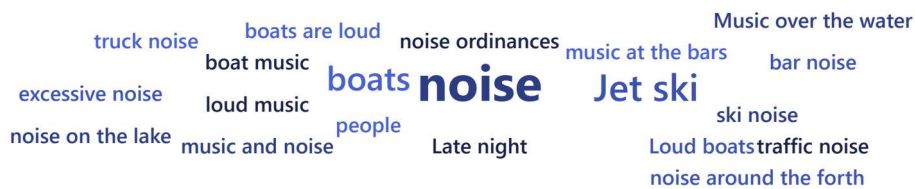
Responses

Latest Responses

"After 10 pm"

...

12 respondents (34%) answered noise for this question.



54. Do you have any other comments or concerns you would like to discuss? If none, write "None".

127
Responses

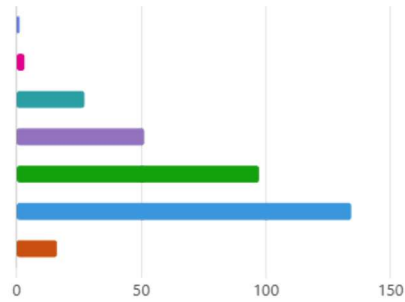
Latest Responses
"I appreciate the severe weather warning system!"
...

70 respondents (55%) answered None for this question.



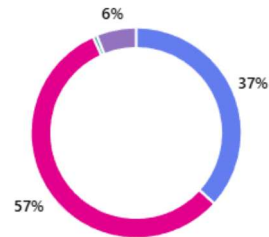
55. What is your age?

18-24	1
25-34	3
35-44	27
45-54	51
55-64	97
65+	134
Prefer not to say	16



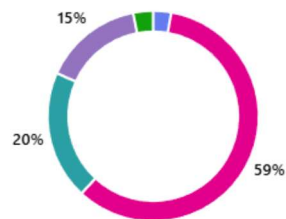
56. What gender do you identify as?

Female	120
Male	185
Other	2
Prefer not to say	20



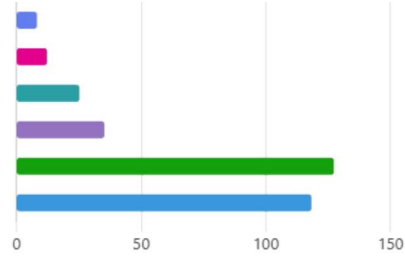
57. What is the size of your household?

1 Person	9
2 Person	194
3-4 People	65
5 or more	50
Prefer not to say	10



58. What is your annual household income?

● Less than \$50,000	8
● \$50,000-\$74,999	12
● \$75,000-\$99,999	25
● \$100,000-\$149,999	35
● \$150,000 or more	127
● Prefer not to say	118



59. The Lake Poinsett Management Plan has its pros and cons, and opinions may vary based on individual perspectives. What aspects of the Lake Poinsett Management Plan do you support? What concerns do you have about the Lake Poinsett Management Plan?

159
Responses

Latest Responses
 "Water quality, safety/security"
 "Quit trying to make the country into the city"
 ...

48 respondents (30%) answered lake for this question.



60. Do you have any additional comments, ideas, suggestions, or concerns? Let us hear from you.

116
Responses

Latest Responses
 ...

28 respondents (24%) answered lake for this question.



APPENDIX B

DISCUSSION OF PAST WATER QUALITY STUDIES

REVIEW OF PAST WATER QUALITY REPORTS FOR LAKE POINSETT, SOUTH DAKOTA

INTRODUCTION

Lake Poinsett, located in Hamlin and Brookings counties in eastern South Dakota, is one of the largest natural lakes in the state. As a prominent freshwater lake in northeastern South Dakota, Lake Poinsett has drawn considerable attention for its recreational value, ecological diversity, and economic importance to the surrounding communities. Therefore, the lake's health is integral to both the environment and economic development of the area.

Lake Poinsett has been the focus of numerous water quality studies over the years, reflecting growing concerns about environmental health, recreational safety, and ecological sustainability. Understanding the history and trends in water quality is essential for developing effective management strategies.

This chapter provides a summary of past water quality reports on Lake Poinsett, highlighting key findings, trends, and recommendations that inform future management actions.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Lake Poinsett faces threats from natural and human-induced water quality challenges. Routine water quality monitoring in Lake Poinsett began in the late 20th century, prompted by increasing concerns over nutrient enrichment, algal blooms, sedimentation, and the impacts of land use changes in the watershed.

Agencies such as the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (SDDANR, formerly the SD Department of Water and Natural Resources and the SD Department of Environment and Natural Resources (SDDENR)), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the East Dakota Water Development District, and county conservation districts have all contributed to a growing body of data and analysis. In addition, the residents around Lake Poinsett have developed a robust citizen monitoring program, which is recognized as one of the best in the state. The primary objectives of these monitoring efforts have included tracking long-term trends, identifying sources of pollution, evaluating the effectiveness of management practices, and ensuring the lake remains fit for its designated uses such as recreation and warmwater marginal fish life propagation.

MAJOR WATER QUALITY PARAMETERS MONITORED

Past reports have typically focused on a suite of core parameters, including:

- Total phosphorus and total nitrogen concentrations, collectively referred to as “nutrients.”
- Chlorophyll-*a* as an indicator of algal biomass. Chlorophyll-*a* is the predominant type of chlorophyll used by algae and cyanobacteria. It can, therefore, be used to estimate the quantity of these organisms in a lake.
- Dissolved oxygen (DO) levels.
- Secchi disk transparency to evaluate water clarity.
- Water temperature and pH.
- Fecal coliform and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacterial counts.
- Turbidity and suspended solids.
- Pesticide and heavy metal residues (in limited studies).

These parameters provide a holistic view of the Lake's trophic status, pollution sources, and suitability for aquatic life and human use.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM KEY REPORTS

The following timeline summarizes major water quality investigations conducted on Lake Poinsett:

YEAR	AUTHOR / AGENCY	STUDY/REPORT	KEY FOCUS
1967	Max Eugene Van Den Berg / South Dakota State University Theses	An Investigation of the Hydrologic Factors the Affect Water Levels in Lake Poinsett	Hydrologic factors affecting lake levels, evaporation vs. precipitation.
1985	SD Department of Water and Natural Resources / Water Quality Management Section	Lake Poinsett / Oakwood Lakes Water Quality Study Area Report	Emphasized the need for soil conservation practices and proper sewage treatment.
1996	Richard H. Smith / Hamlin County Conservation District	Phase I Diagnostic Feasibility Study Final Report	Phosphorus identified as limiting nutrient; proper operation of the Boswell Diversion and Lake Poinsett outlet gates needed.
2007	SDDENR	Lake Poinsett Watershed Project Segment 1 Final Report	Summary of watershed activities implemented and estimated loading reductions.
2009	SDDENR / Water Resources Assistance, Watershed Protection, and Water Rights Programs	Lake Poinsett Water Quality Investigative Report	Assess phosphorus sources in watershed and Big Sioux River; identified Big Sioux River's phosphorus levels higher than Lake Poinsett's.
2014	Richard H. Smith / Hamlin County Conservation District	Lake Poinsett Watershed Project Segment 2 Final Report	Project aimed to restore and maintain the designated uses by implementing BMPs, engaging stakeholders, and reducing phosphorus load by 40%

A review of the past studies and monitoring reports reveals several recurring themes and notable findings:

NUTRIENT ENRICHMENT AND EUTROPHICATION

Many past reports identify Lake Poinsett as a eutrophic waterbody. A eutrophic water body is characterized by elevated concentrations of nutrients—primarily phosphorus and nitrogen—which fuel excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants. This condition arises when lakes or reservoirs receive substantial inputs of nutrient-rich runoff, commonly from agricultural activities, lakeside development, or wastewater sources. In addition, natural sources of nutrients in the rocks and soils can contribute to eutrophication.

While nutrients are essential for sustaining aquatic life, their overabundance disrupts ecological balance, often leading to visible algal blooms and dense plant mats.



*Figure A-1:
Lake Poinsett Algae Bloom*

In eutrophic systems, the increase of algae is not merely an aesthetic concern. As algal cells die and settle, their decomposition consumes dissolved oxygen, particularly in deeper waters. This can lead to hypoxic (low-oxygen) or even anoxic (no oxygen) zones, stressing or threatening fish and other aquatic organisms. In addition, certain bacteria, such as cyanobacteria or “blue-green algae,” produce toxins that are harmful to wildlife, pets, and humans, further compounding the risks associated with eutrophication.

Eutrophic conditions diminish water clarity, reduce recreational appeal, and accelerate the accumulation of organic matter and sediments in the lakebed. These interconnected problems pose ongoing management challenges, as interventions must address both immediate symptoms and the underlying sources of nutrient enrichment.

Phosphorus

In South Dakota, the target concentration for total phosphorus in lakes such as Lake Poinsett is generally 0.03 mg/L or lower to support designated beneficial uses and minimize nuisance algal blooms. In the 1960’s, phosphorus levels as high as 0.85 mg/L were recorded in the Lake Poinsett. From 1989 through 2006, phosphorus levels in the lake declined, improving water clarity and reducing algae biomass (see Figure A-2).

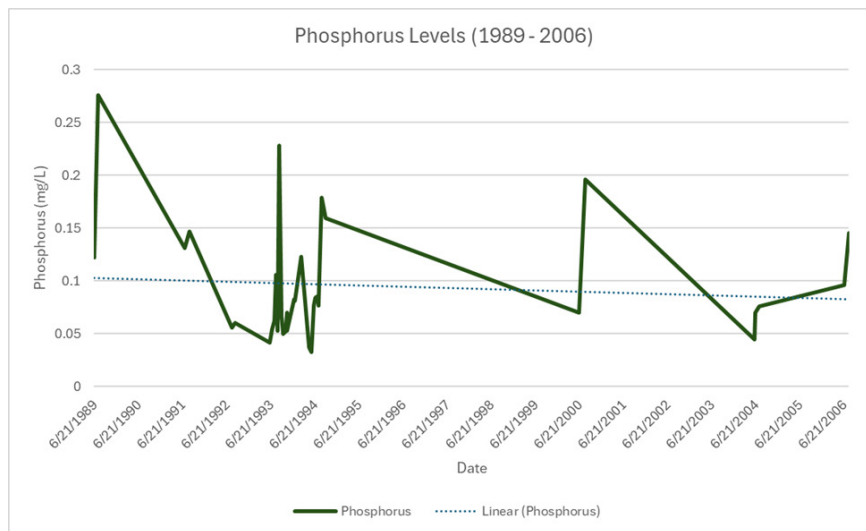


Figure A-2: Past Phosphorus Levels in Lake Poinsett (1989 - 2006)

These declining phosphorus levels show that implementing projects such as the centralized wastewater treatment facilities and the shoreline stabilization have been effective.

However, total phosphorus in Lake Poinsett has consistently been higher than the state’s target level, typically measuring 0.050–0.35 mg/L with a 10-year median of 0.19 mg/L. The data over the last 10 years also shows an increasing trend in the phosphorus levels, indicating more work remains and continued vigilance is necessary. Figure A-3 shows the total phosphorus levels in Lake Poinsett over the last 10 years.

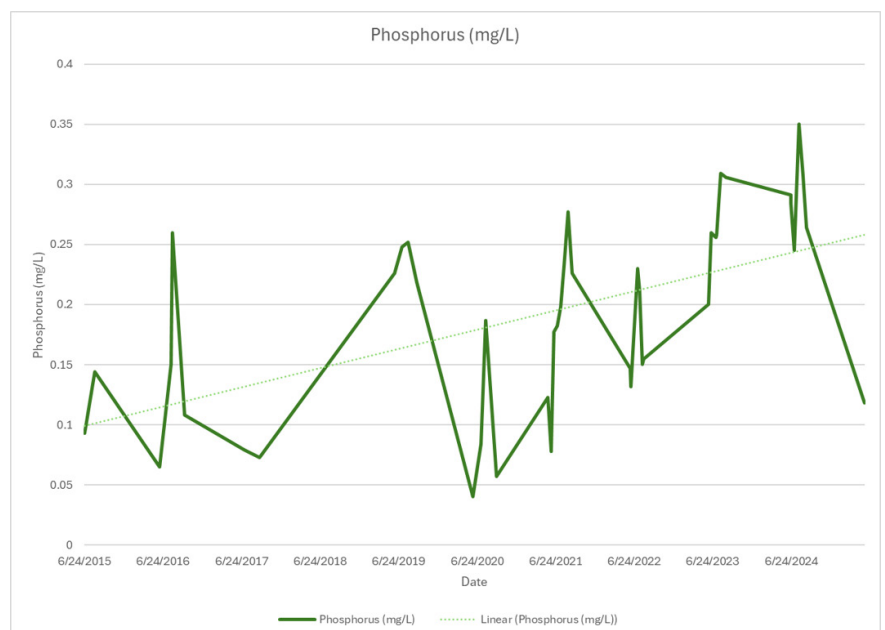


Figure A-3: Total Phosphorus Levels in Lake Poinsett (2014-2025)

Nitrogen

The US EPA recommends keeping nitrogen levels below 0.1 mg/L to prevent lake eutrophication. Nitrogen levels in the range of 0.75 to 3.5 mg/L have been documented in Lake Poinsett, mirroring the problematic concentrations of phosphorus within the lake. These high nutrient loads are primarily due to nonpoint source pollution from agricultural runoff, such as animal feeding operations and fertilizer and manure applications to row-crop fields throughout the watershed. See Figure A-4.

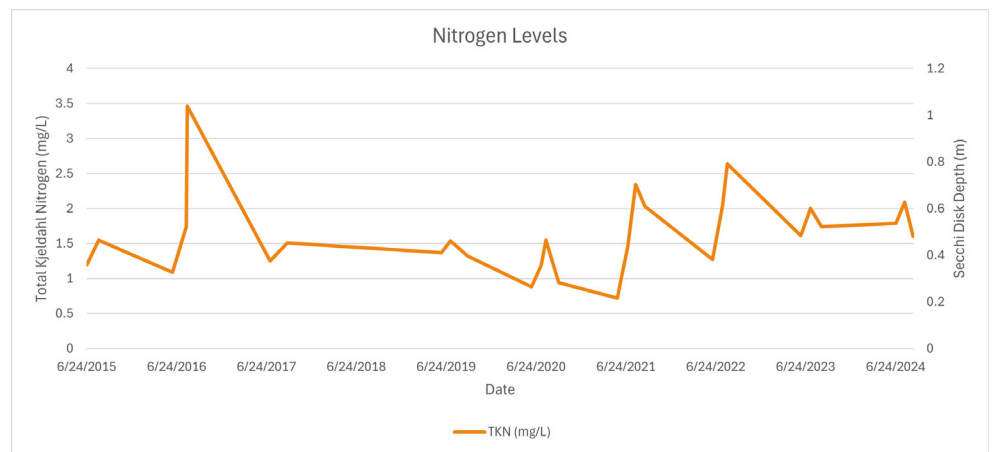


Figure A-4: Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen Levels in Lake Poinsett (2014 - 2025)

Past water quality studies have consistently highlighted the influential role of nitrogen in shaping the ecological dynamics of Lake Poinsett. Much like phosphorus, nitrogen is a key nutrient fueling the proliferation of algae and cyanobacteria during the warmer months.

Research indicates that excessive nitrogen loading intensifies the frequency and magnitude of algal and cyanobacteria blooms, especially when phosphorus levels are also high.

Further, sustained high nitrogen inputs can disrupt the lake's natural nutrient balance, altering aquatic life structure and accelerating the eutrophication process. Sediment core analyses and long-term monitoring have linked historical spikes in nitrogen to increased accumulation of organic matter and a deepening cycle of oxygen depletion in bottom waters, particularly in late summer and early autumn. This hypoxic environment can harm fish and other aquatic life, further complicating ecosystem recovery efforts.

Reducing Nutrients

Collectively, these findings underscore the necessity of integrated nutrient management strategies—ones that address both phosphorus and nitrogen reductions—to restore and maintain the ecological health and recreational value of Lake Poinsett.

However, limiting the input of a single nutrient, phosphorus, can serve as an effective approach to improve the health of freshwater lakes, as demonstrated by research and ongoing efforts at Lake Poinsett. Phosphorus, though essential for aquatic plant and algal growth, often acts as the limiting nutrient in freshwater systems. By targeting phosphorus reduction, management strategies can directly influence the rate and magnitude of algal blooms. Centralized wastewater treatment facilities and shoreline stabilization projects, for instance, have been shown to reduce phosphorus loading to Lake Poinsett from human and nonpoint sources. As phosphorus inputs decrease, lakes typically experience a decline in the frequency and intensity of nuisance algal blooms. This improvement leads to enhanced water clarity, as less suspended algal biomass allows sunlight to penetrate deeper into the water column.

It is important to recognize, however, that while focusing on phosphorus provides substantial gains, sustained progress may require a broader, integrated nutrient management approach. Even so, the success achieved by limiting phosphorus highlights its pivotal role in ecosystem restoration. As seen in Lake Poinsett and countless other freshwater bodies, curbing phosphorus can set in motion a cascade of positive changes—restoring water quality, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring the long-term recreational and ecological value of our lakes.

WATER CLARITY AND TEMPERATURE

Secchi disk transparency measurements are a standard proxy for water clarity. The Secchi disk is a black and white, circular disk 20 centimeters (8 inches) in diameter used to measure water transparency or turbidity in bodies of water. The disk is mounted on a pole or line and lowered slowly down in the water. The depth at which the disk is no longer visible is taken as a measure of the transparency of the water.

Secchi disk measurements have typically been collected on Lake Poinsett from June through September. The results of this testing have ranged from 0.5 meters (1 foot, 7.7 inches) to over 4 meters (13 feet), with the best water clarity typically observed during the month of June. See Figure A-5.

Temperature plays a pivotal role in shaping water clarity through its direct influence on algal growth rates and seasonal blooms in Lake Poinsett. As water temperatures rise, conditions become increasingly favorable for the rapid growth of algae, particularly cyanobacteria. Higher temperatures increase the metabolic rates of algae and enhance their ability to use nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen. This relationship between elevated temperature and nutrient levels often drives intense algal blooms. The impact on water clarity is both immediate and pronounced.

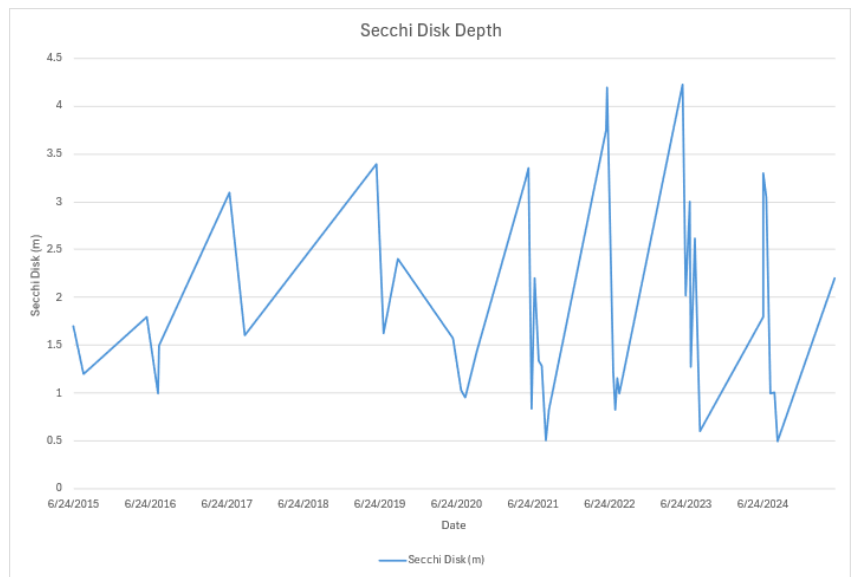
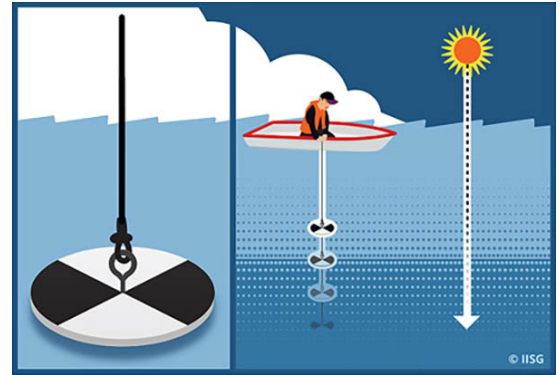
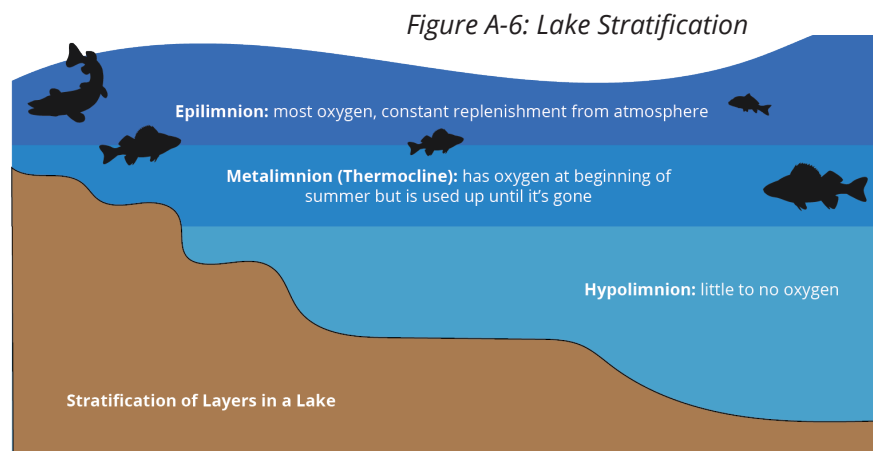


Figure A-5: Lake Poinsett Secchi Disk (in meters) 2015-2024

During peak summer months, when temperatures are highest, the surface waters of Lake Poinsett can become turbid with suspended algae. The reduction in water clarity is measured by declining Secchi disk transparency measurements, sometimes falling as low as 0.5 meter (1 foot, 7.7 inches). Cooler periods tend to improve the water clarity by slowing algal growth and reducing blooms.

Temperature also governs stratification patterns in the lake, creating distinct thermal layers that can trap nutrients and organic matter near the surface. This further increases algal production, leading to declines in water clarity. The cumulative effect is a cycle: warm weather fuels algal blooms, which in turn diminish water clarity and contribute to sedimentation as dead cells settle to the lakebed.

Therefore, temperature acts as a critical driver in the seasonal variability of Lake Poinsett's water clarity. Its interaction with nutrient loads means that even modest increases in average summer temperatures, whether due to climate variability or long-term warming, can exacerbate the frequency and severity of algal blooms, reinforcing the lake's eutrophic tendencies and presenting ongoing challenges for water quality management.



SEDIMENTATION

The persistent challenge of erosion and sedimentation has been a focal point in past water quality reports for Lake Poinsett. Decades of watershed modification—ranging from agricultural practices to shoreline development—have contributed to increased delivery of fine silt and organic matter into the lake. Sediment cores extracted from the lakebed reveal layers of accumulated material, chronicling episodes of elevated runoff and disturbance that have left a lasting imprint on the basin’s ecology.

Historical monitoring efforts frequently note that substantial precipitation events, snowmelt, and fluctuating water levels drive pulses of suspended sediment into the lake. These inflows reduce water clarity, as documented by abrupt declines in Secchi disk transparency following major storm events. Moreover, shoreline erosion—exacerbated by wave action, loss of natural vegetation, and boat traffic—has further accelerated the input of particulate matter and nutrients.

The impact of sedimentation extends beyond surface turbidity. Settling particles carry with them phosphorus and nitrogen, which become available for algal growth, fueling the algal blooms throughout the warmer months. Additionally, the accumulation of organic-rich sediments creates conditions conducive to oxygen depletion near the lake bottom, particularly during stratified summer periods and under winter ice cover. The interplay between sedimentation, nutrient loading, and biological processes not only affects water clarity but also poses ongoing management challenges related to dissolved oxygen, habitat quality, and recreational use.

These findings underscore the need for continued erosion control in the watershed and shoreline stabilization projects, as both are essential for safeguarding the ecological integrity of Lake Poinsett. Preventing further sediment influx will help maintain water transparency, reduce nutrient-driven algal blooms, and support a healthier aquatic ecosystem for years to come.

DISSOLVED OXYGEN DYNAMICS

Dissolved oxygen levels in Lake Poinsett generally remain above SDDANR’s critical thresholds for fish and other aquatic life of 5.0 mg/L during most of the year (see Figure A-7). However, past reports have observed periodic hypoxic, or low oxygen, conditions near the bottom of the lake, especially during late summer and under ice cover in winter. These episodes are linked to increased decomposition of organic matter due to algal blooms and sedimentation, as well as limited mixing in the deeper areas. Although no fish kills have been reported since the 1980’s, the threat of oxygen depletion remains a management concern.

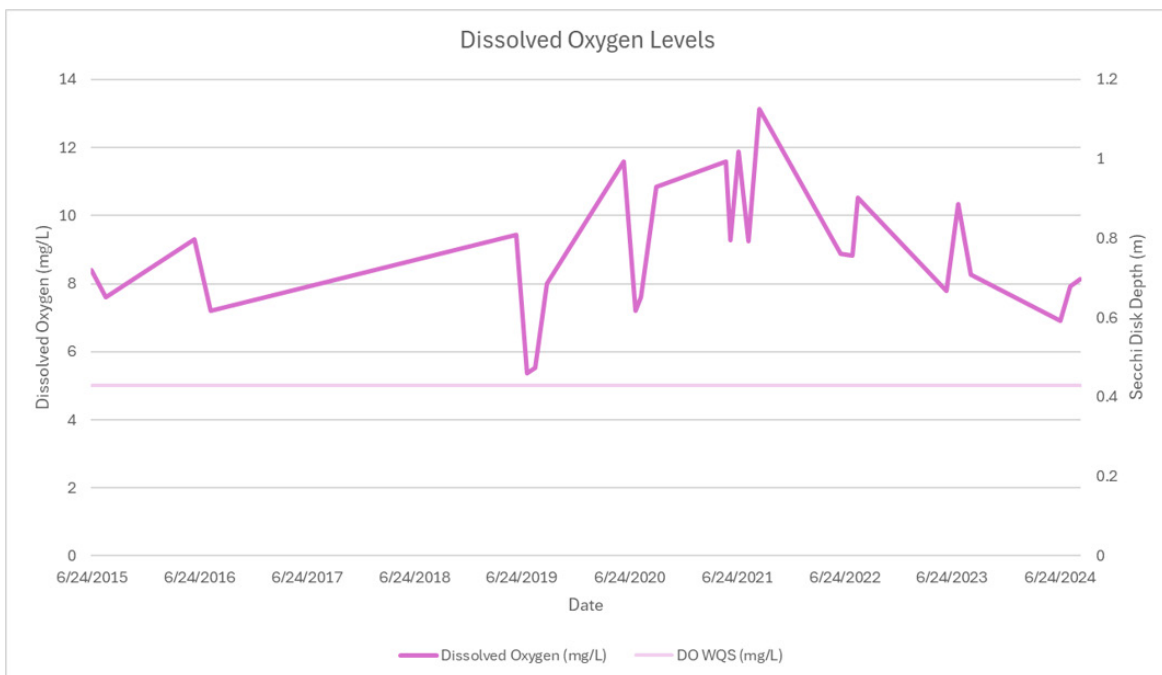


Figure A-7: Dissolved Oxygen in Lake Poinsett (mg/L) 2015-2024

BACTERIAL CONTAMINATION

Past reports have identified runoff from animal feeding operations and failing septic tanks as possible sources of bacterial contamination within the Lake Poinsett watershed. Testing for fecal coliform and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria has been a routine part of water quality monitoring, especially at public swimming beaches and near campgrounds. Currently, the SDDANR favors *E. coli* testing over traditional fecal coliform methods and no longer conducts fecal coliform testing as part of its routine water quality monitoring efforts. *E. coli* provides a more specific indicator of recent fecal contamination and the potential presence of harmful pathogens in recreational waters. This shift allows for more accurate public health assessments, since *E. coli* is directly associated with waste from mammals, such as humans or animals, and better reflects the risk of illness for swimmers and other lake users.

Most reports indicate that bacterial counts are typically within acceptable limits for recreational use. However, isolated incidents of elevated bacteria levels have occurred following heavy rains, likely due to runoff from pastures, septic systems, or wildlife concentrations.

Elevated water temperatures not only promote algal growth but also create favorable conditions for bacterial growth, especially *E. coli*, by accelerating metabolic rates and reducing die-off of the bacteria. This means that during the hottest periods, episodes of elevated bacteria counts may coincide with algal blooms, compounding risks for recreational users and public health.

PESTICIDES AND OTHER CONTAMINANTS

Some targeted studies have analyzed pesticides, herbicides, and heavy metals in the lake's water and sediments. Generally, these contaminants have been found at low or undetectable concentrations, reflecting both dilution in the large waterbody and best management practices in the watershed. However, continued vigilance is recommended as land use evolves and new chemicals are introduced.

TRENDS AND LONG-TERM CHANGES

Collectively, past water quality reports indicate a pattern of moderate to severe eutrophication in Lake Poinsett, with nutrient and algal levels fluctuating in response to annual precipitation, watershed management, and climatic variability. While some years have seen improvements—often linked to conservation efforts, buffer strip installation, or drought conditions—other years have brought setbacks due to intense storms or changes in land use.

Secchi transparency and chlorophyll-*a* levels show a similar pattern, with some improvement noted after the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) such as animal waste management systems and reduced tillage. Nonetheless, the lake remains sensitive to weather extremes and legacy phosphorus in sediments, which can fuel internal nutrient recycling.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PAST REPORTS

- Continued and expanded monitoring of nutrients, algae, and bacteria to track progress and detect emerging issues.
- Continued expansion of the centralized sanitary sewer system around the lake.
- Enhanced implementation of agricultural BMPs, including cover crops, residue management, animal waste management systems, nutrient management planning, and riparian buffer zones.
- Restoration of wetlands, natural shorelines, and riparian areas to reduce sediment and nutrient inflows.
- Installation of buffers around wetlands to filter runoff and reduce nutrient loading.
- Construction of sediment control structures on intermittent tributaries to reduce sediment inputs to Lake Poinsett.
- Education and outreach to landowners and lake users to promote stewardship and pollution prevention.
- Coordination among local, state, and federal agencies for funding, technical support, and enforcement of water quality standards.
- Consideration of in-lake management options, such as aeration or alum treatment, to address internal nutrient loading if watershed measures prove insufficient.

CONCLUSION

Decades of monitoring and scientific study have provided a robust foundation for understanding the water quality dynamics of Lake Poinsett. While the lake faces ongoing challenges from nutrient enrichment, sedimentation, and changing watershed practices, past reports reveal that targeted management actions can yield measurable improvements. The lessons learned from past efforts—both successes and setbacks—are invaluable in guiding adaptive, science-based stewardship to ensure that Lake Poinsett remains vibrant and healthy for generations to come.

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF LAKE POINSETT WATER RIGHTS

SUMMARY OF WATER RIGHTS

BACKGROUND OF SOUTH DAKOTA WATER RIGHTS PERMITTING PROCESS

Under South Dakota Codified Law, a permit is required to use a large amount of water from rivers, lakes, or groundwater sources for things like farming, city water supply, businesses, or recreation. This permitting program is managed by the SDDANR.

South Dakota uses a “first in time, first in right” system. Under this approach, the person or entity who secured permission to use water first—called the senior water right holder—receives priority over those junior rights that were granted later. If the available water is not enough for everyone, the senior holders are entitled to their full allocation before any junior rights are fulfilled. This system creates a clear order of precedence, rewarding those who established their water use first and providing predictability during times of scarcity.

To obtain water rights, a permittee must detail how the water will be used, where it will come from, and how it might affect other people or the environment. Whenever someone applies for a water right, the public is notified so that anyone who might be affected can comment or object. This allows stakeholders—such as neighboring property owners, municipalities, wildlife agencies, and recreational users—to review the proposal and raise any concerns or objections at a public hearing. The hearings are held before the South Dakota Water Management Board.

A water right permit details how much water can be used, when it can be used, and how it can be used. The water must be put to a beneficial use, or the permit holder could lose the rights to the water. Water cannot be wasted, and it cannot be stored or withheld indefinitely without a plan to use it. After SDDANR’s Water Rights staff confirms construction is complete, a Water License is issued.

Flood control is another critical aspect of water management in South Dakota, especially in dynamic systems like Lake Poinsett, where water levels can fluctuate widely. SDDANR’s Water Rights Program plays a central role in regulating and managing flood control, by issuing permits that detail the terms and conditions under which the water can be managed.

Flood control permits are designed to ensure that flood prevention or mitigation is done in a way that balances the needs of public safety, property protection, ecological health, and the rights of other water users. The permits are particularly important in areas where engineered control structures—such as diversion structures and outlet gates—are used to stabilize or manipulate natural water flows.

The state performs regular checks to ensure that permit holders are following prescribed procedures, not wasting water, and not causing unanticipated harm to the environment or other users. Failure to comply can result in modification, suspension, or revocation of the permit.

Table B-1 shows the water rights permits that have been issued to regulate the level of water in Lake Poinsett.

Table B-1: Summary of Lake Poinsett Water Rights

PERMIT NO.	PERMIT HOLDER	PRIORITY DATE	WATER RIGHT
28-3	SDGFP	4/12/1941	500 cfs
119-3A	SDGFP	4/12/1941	1,500 cfs
1576-3	SDGFP	1/1/1889	23,604 AF
FC5-3	Lake Poinsett Water Project District	8/22/1986	N/A

Each of these permits are discussed briefly below.

WATER RIGHT 28-3

On April 12, 1941, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP) submitted a request for a water right permit to transfer 2,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water from the Big Sioux River into Lake Poinsett and Dry Lake. The permit was issued, allowing the transfer of flood waters from the Big Sioux River to restore and maintain water levels in Lake Poinsett and Dry Lake through the Boswell Diversion Canal.

The gates on the Boswell Diversion structure were large enough to allow 2,500 cfs of water to flow through them. However, the canal itself only had the capacity to transfer 500 cfs. Therefore, in 1952, following an inspection of the structure and canal, the Water License was amended to allow 500 cfs of water to flow through the Boswell Diversion structure and canal into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett.

BOSWELL DIVERSION STRUCTURE

The Boswell diversion structure was constructed in 1928-1929 to regulate the inflow of water from the Big Sioux River into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett. The original goal was to not only manage periods of high runoff, but also to augment lake levels during dry spells.

Water quality studies have found that the quality of the Big Sioux River is lower than Lake Poinsett and flows from the Big Sioux River contribute to high nutrient levels. In 2002, the Boswell gates were immobilized to prevent further intentional diversions of water into Dry Lake.



Figure B-1: Boswell Diversion Structure

WATER RIGHT 119-3A

By 1955, the SDGFP was able to enlarge the canal, allowing a higher volume of flow to be diverted from the Big Sioux River. SDGFP submitted an application to increase its water right, allowing another 1,000 cfs of flood waters to be diverted into Dry Lake and Lake Poinsett from the Big Sioux River. Water License 119-3A was issued on November 17, 1955, authorizing an additional 1,000 cfs, for a total of 1,500 cfs, to be diverted into Lake Poinsett during flooding events.

WATER RIGHT 1576-3

The water rights issued under 28-3 and 119-3A authorized SDGFP to divert water from the Big Sioux River. However, a separate water right was also needed for SDGFP to store water in Lake Poinsett for recreational uses. With Water Right 1576-3, the SDGFP received a “vested water right” to store water in Lake Poinsett. 1576-3 also established the “ordinary high water mark” for Lake Poinsett. These concepts are explained in more detail below.

VESTED WATER RIGHTS

As noted above, South Dakota has adopted the “first in time, first in right” doctrine of water appropriation. The state’s water rights permitting system was established in March 1955. In South Dakota, a “vested water right” refers to a legal right to use water that predates the establishment of the state’s water rights permitting system. These rights are considered “vested” because they are acknowledged by the state as having been validly established under prior law or historic usage. Vested water rights do not require a new permit, although they are still subject to state’s administrative processes. By issuing permits for these vested water rights, the state establishes a priority date for the use of these historic water rights. Vested rights, therefore, play a crucial role in determining priority of water use, especially when supplies are limited, and form an important legal foundation for water management in South Dakota.

ORDINARY HIGH WATER MARK

The ordinary high water mark (OHWM) refers to the point on a bank or shore where the presence and movement of water is so continuous and long-standing that it creates a clear and natural distinction between the upland and the water-influenced area. The OHWM is not based on rare flood events or temporary increases in water level, but rather on the usual and recurring water levels that shape the landscape over time. It is typically identified through signs such as erosion, the presence of water stains, accumulation of debris, and changes in plant communities.

In South Dakota, the location of the OHWM plays a crucial role in delineating property boundaries between privately owned upland and public waters. Land below the OHWM falls under public trust and is subject to state regulations, while land above the mark is generally considered private property. The OHWM is especially important in determining access rights for recreation, wildlife, and water management.

Water License 1576-3 established the following for Lake Poinsett:

- SDGFP was granted a vested water right to store 23,604 acre-feet of water annually (AF) in Lake Poinsett. The priority date for this water right was established as January 1, 1889.
- An OHWM of 1651.5 feet was established for Lake Poinsett.
- An outlet elevation of 1650.5 feet was established for Lake Poinsett for the purpose of managing the amount of water held in and released from Lake Poinsett.

FLOOD CONTROL PERMIT FC5-3

The topography between Lake Poinsett and the Big Sioux River is quite flat. Under normal flow conditions, water flows out of Lake Poinsett into a tributary of the Big Sioux River. However, when the Big Sioux River is flooding, water will back up through the tributary and overflow into Lake Poinsett. In the spring of 1986, the Lake Poinsett area experienced significant flooding (see Figure B-3). Spring snowmelt and above average precipitation raised Lake Poinsett's water levels more than 6 feet above normal. The high-water levels submerged roads and flooded hundreds of homes around the lake (NOAA 1986).



Figure B-2: Shoreline Along Lake Poinsett

To prevent future flooding, the Lake Poinsett Area Development Association obtained a flood control permit to manage the flows near the outlet of Lake Poinsett. Flood Control Permit FC5-3 authorized the construction and operation of a structure to manage the flows at the outlet of the lake.

In 1989, a concrete-framed control structure with three 8-foot by 20-foot gates with lifting gears was installed on the tributary near the Lake Poinsett outlet (see Figure B-4). These outlet gates serve as the primary means of maintaining lake elevations and preventing flooding.



Figure B-3: 1986 Flooding on Lake Poinsett



Figure B-4: Lake Poinsett Outlet Gates

Flood Control Permit FC5-3 authorizes the use of the outlet gate structure under the following qualifications and requirements:

- The gate structure may only be closed during times when water is backed up from the Big Sioux River and could flow into the lake over the outlet.
- The gates may not be used to raise the water level in Lake Poinsett. The gates must remain open when the water level elevation of the lake is higher than the water level downstream of the outlet.
- The OHWM elevation of 1651.5 feet may not be affected by the Flood Control permit and the Water Management Board may review the permit if it appears the high-water mark is being affected or a new high-water mark is being formed above or below the established OHWM.
- The gates must be capable of being locked in position so unauthorized persons cannot operate or tamper with the gates.

In 1992, the permit was transferred to the Lake Poinsett Water Project District.

The Lake Poinsett Water Project District now holds the responsibility for overseeing the management of the lake's outlet structure. The Lake Poinsett Water Project District is a special purpose district, which is a separate governmental entity. The District is governed by an elected board consisting of seven (7) members. The jurisdiction of the District is within 1,000 feet of OHMW on Lake Poinsett.

Tasked with ensuring compliance with Flood Control Permit FC5-3, the District must balance flood prevention with the protection of lake ecosystems and the interests of local residents. Their duties include monitoring water levels, operating and maintaining the outlet and gated control structure, and making timely decisions regarding gate positions according to fluctuating inflow and outflow conditions. This involves careful consideration of the topography between Lake Poinsett and the Big Sioux River, especially during periods of high water when the risk of flooding and backflow increases.

Beyond operational oversight, the District must also safeguard the integrity of the outlet gates, ensuring they remain secure from unauthorized use and are capable of being locked in place. The District works closely with regulatory entities, such as the Water Management Board and SDDANR's Water Rights Program, to ensure the established OHWM is maintained, and to address concerns if water levels threaten to exceed regulatory thresholds. Continuous communication with the community and other stakeholders is essential, as the District's actions directly affect property, recreation, and habitat around the lake. The District maintains a website that regularly communicates the gate status with interested parties (<https://www.lakepoinsettwaterdistrict.org/gate-status>).

Balancing outflow to avoid downstream flooding, while maintaining sufficient lake levels for recreation and habitat, requires continuous monitoring and sometimes difficult trade-offs. The District also maintains the outlet system to prevent blockages and equipment failures, which could exacerbate water level issues.

INFLOWS TO LAKE POINSETT

Surface waters enter Lake Poinsett through a series of lakes that flow into Lake Albert, located west of Lake Poinsett, and finally into Lake Poinsett. These lakes act as a sink for pollutants in the watershed, reducing the pollutant loading that could otherwise enter Lake Poinsett. Flows also enter from the north through Dry Lake.

The Lake Poinsett watershed encompasses a diverse array of sources contributing to lake inflow, including precipitation, surface runoff, and connections to upstream water bodies. Rainfall directly over the lake and the surrounding watershed is the primary source of water, while additional inflows arrive via tributary streams and seasonal runoff. A weather station in DeSmet, SD, approximately 25 miles southwest of Lake Poinsett, has recorded precipitation data for the region since 1900. A review of the DeSmet data shows that the average precipitation from 1900 to 1970 is 20.3 inches. However, a review of the full record of precipitation data shows an upward trend in the average rainfall. Figure 5 charts the annual rainfall from 1900 to 2025. Using this data, a 30-year average was calculated and added to the graph. The 30-year average in 1929 was 19.5 inches of precipitation per year; the most recent 30-year average was 25.4 inches, indicating a clear upward trend in annual precipitation.

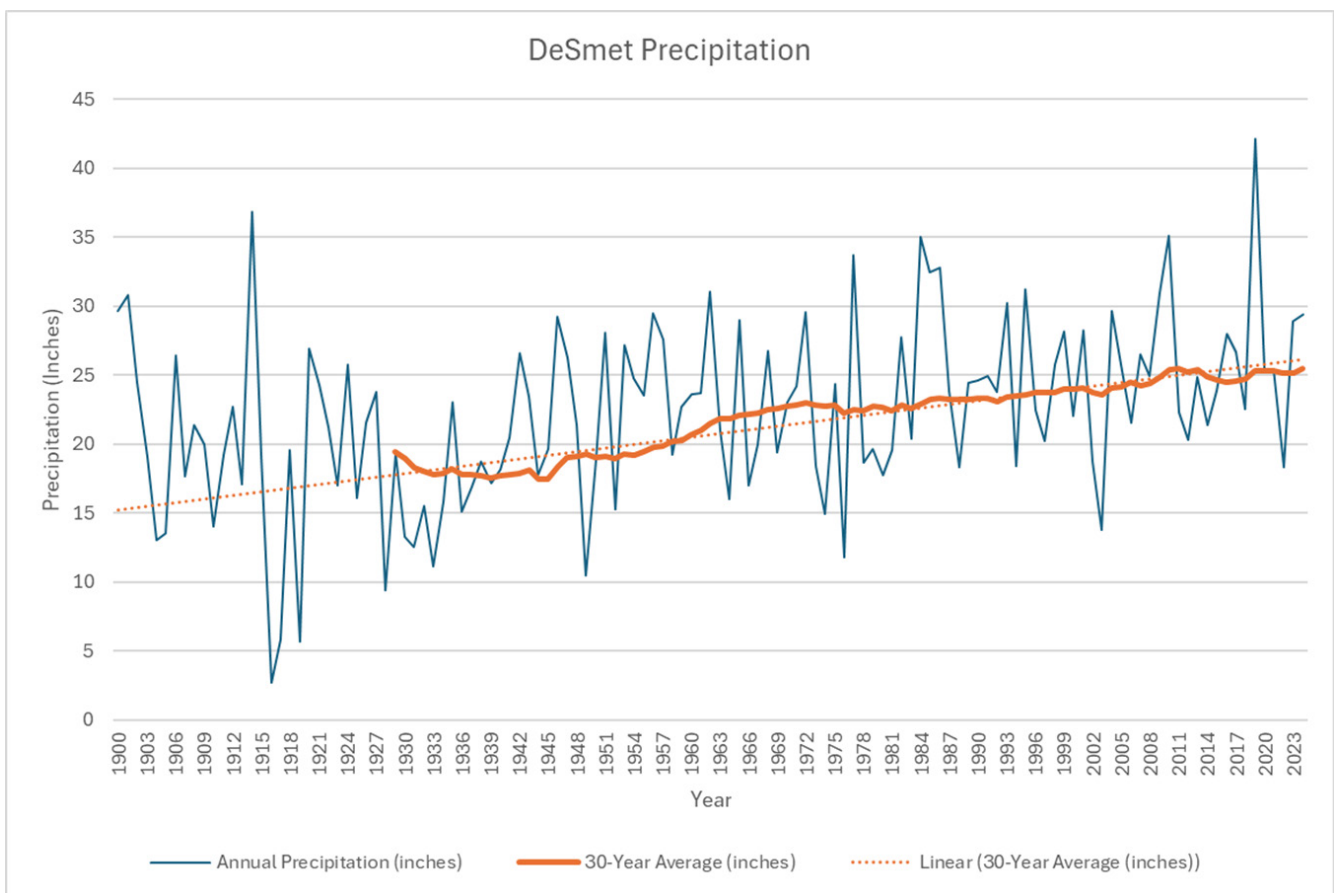


Figure B-5: 30-Year Average Precipitation Trends near Lake Poinsett

OUTFLOW FROM LAKE POINSETT

Water exits Lake Poinsett through a combination of natural processes and an engineered structure. The most significant forms of outflow are evaporation and controlled flow from the outlet gates. Evaporation accounts for approximately 3 feet of water lost each year, depending on climatic conditions.

The outlet gates for Lake Poinsett are installed on the tributary to the Big Sioux River so water managers can adjust lake levels based on seasonal changes, rainfall, and management conditions of the flood control permit (FC5-3).

The outlet gates were installed to prevent the Big Sioux River from backflowing into Lake Poinsett during flood events.



Figure B-6: Lake Poinsett Outlet Gates



Figure B-7: Outlet of Lake Poinsett

The management of the outlet is also compounded by the accumulation of sediment near the outlet. The Lake Poinsett Water Project District removes sediment from the outlet to maintain water flow and comply with flood control permit requirements.

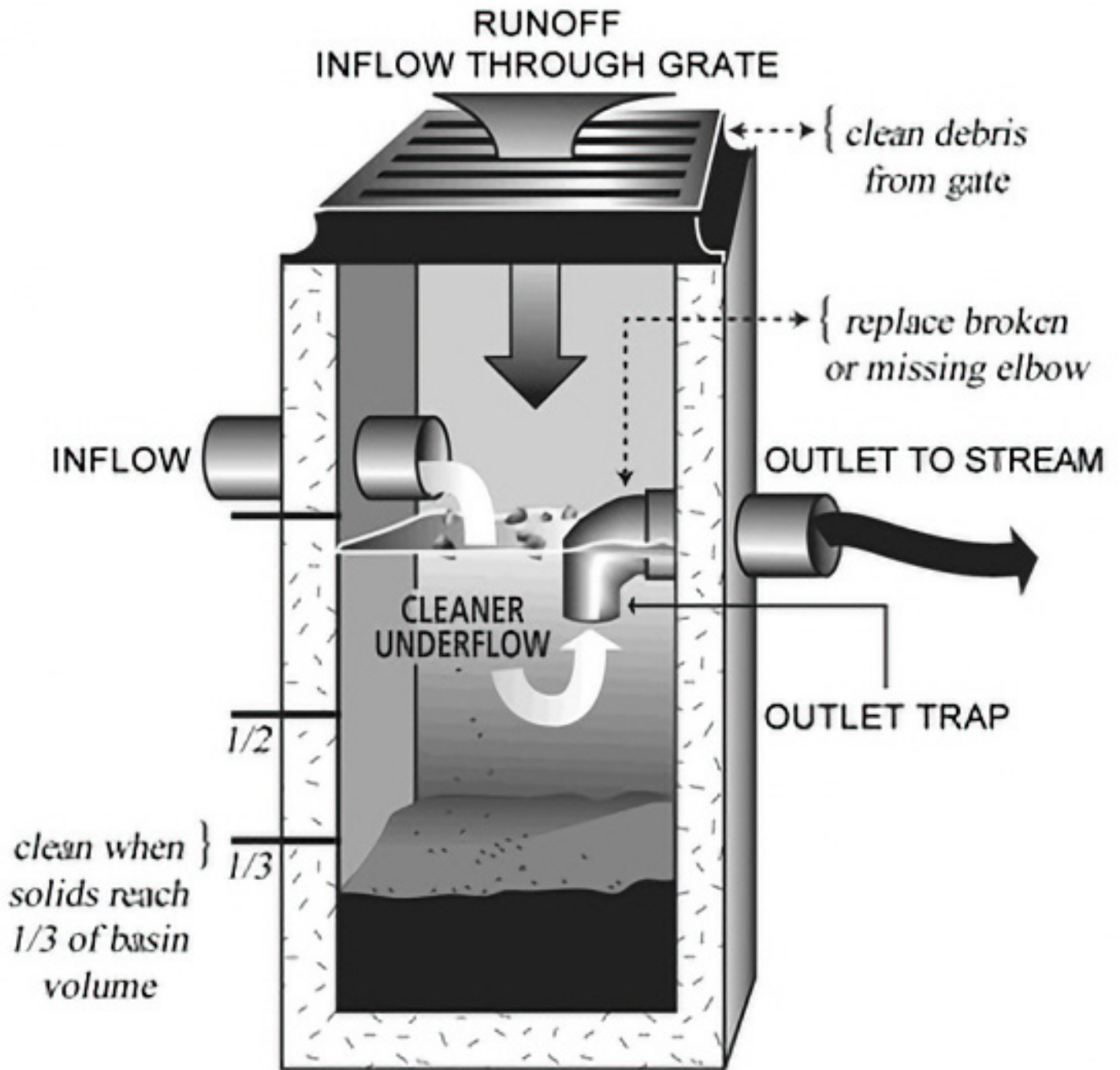


Figure B-8: Sediment Removal Project at Lake Poinsett Outlet

APPENDIX D

CATCH BASIN DIAGRAM

CATCH BASIN DIAGRAM



APPENDIX E
**SHORELINE INCENTIVE
APPLICATION**

Shoreline Stabilization Application – Lake Poinsett Water Project District

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION WILL BE USED TO CALCULATE QUALIFYING INCENTIVE PAYMENT AND TO WHOM THE PAYMENT IS TO BE MADE. PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY

Name(s): _____

Lake site address: _____

Preferred Mailing Address (if different from above): _____

Contact telephone number(s): _____

Email address: _____

Length of shoreline stabilized: _____

Complete the following to the best of your knowledge:

- **Y / N** Was rock added without completely reconstructing rip rap?
 - **Y / N** Was the entire rip rap or wall built with new fabric or footings?
 - **Y / N** Was Recyclax “root mat” installed 1-2 inches below the dirt surface?
 - If yes, how many feet have Recyclax installed? _____ ft
 - **Y / N** Was a native grass seeding used for stabilization?
 - If yes, how many feet? _____ ft
 - **Y / N** Were shrubs or shrubs with trees planted to form a barrier?
 - If yes, how many feet? _____ ft
-

Additional Information:

Potted shrubs can be planted throughout the non-winter months if available. When choosing a shoreline shrub or tree, use the Hardiness Zones of 3 or 4 as a guide. Choose Zone 3 if the shrub will be fully exposed to north or west winds. \$5/ft incentive.

Qualifying shrubs must be planted close enough together for the species to form a solid root base when mature. A minimum of 75% coverage (i.e., 75 ft of a 100 ft lot) is required for the shrub stabilization incentive. The shrub incentive will be based on the actual length of the shrub row planted, NOT lot width.

Because the incentive payment is limited by either 33% of the total cost of hard practice or a fixed rate per foot of \$30-55 for those specified practices (whichever is less), **INCLUDE ANY INVOICES, sales receipts, or labor bills.** In-kind ‘do it yourself’ labor is also a qualifying expense to consider.

Invoices and sales receipts are only used to verify purchase.

Return this page to: LPWaterDistrict@gmail.com with **LPWPD INCENTIVE REQUEST** in the subject line.

Because of the extreme fluctuations in water level of Lake Poinsett, stabilization work requires that historic level (1655.5 ft msl) of water and at least 3 ft additional wave protection height is necessary to be considered stable. Even this height does not guarantee that in extreme cases damage will not occur, but it has proven to minimize even the worst conditions when constructed properly. When a project is completed to this height (1658.5 ft) it may qualify for payment.

Projects where finished hard practice (rock or concrete) are at or above 1659.5 ft are not required to have any additional protection to lawn areas above, but are encouraged to use some of the options available for additional incentive payments.

Projects where finished hard practice (rock or concrete) are at 1658.5, are required to have at least one additional practice utilized in the vegetative area to provide stabilization. Practices which are acceptable are:

1. [Recyclax TRM](#) “root mat” installed under turf grass
2. Native grass
3. Row of shrubs or shrubs with trees

The incentive payment for rock or wall work is based on the type and extent of the work done, total cost, completed elevation and a maximum incentive schedule. Please answer all questions on page 1. Prior to beginning your project and submit to schedule a prework site visit to establish a minimum elevation for proposed work.

More info:

“Recyclax TRM” with hold down pins is available in 8”x90’ rolls from [Millborn Seeds](#), Brookings SD 888-498-7333

Some local contractors are also carrying Recyclax and will sell partial rolls. Eligible \$4ft / one 8’ pass.

A native grass mix for Lake Poinsett has been packaged to cover 1000 sq ft at [Millborn Seeds](#). In addition, a slow-release fertilizer to establish new grass is available along with the “Curlex” shredded aspen blanket that is used to prevent seed from being washed out by rain during establishment. Our project recommends all these products as being helpful in getting a grassed area started. \$5/ft

Turf grasses do not qualify for incentive payment, but we do recommend if using turf grasses to include Tall Fescue as a major component to any seed mix being used for mowed lawns. Tall Fescue has a deeper root system than many of the other turf grasses. No incentive.

Optional considerations for shoreline stabilization:

1. 2011 peak elevation so far was 1657.5, nearly everything below 1658.5 was flooded at some time. Areas with 10:1 slopes above the full level of 1650.5 to 1658.5 prior to the peak level had no loss of shoreline to actually gaining material along shoreline. Areas without established protection to the 1658.5 level suffered soil erosion or had man-made structures (decks, stair, landscape block walls, patio pavers, terraces) torn apart. Areas previously protected to the standard 1657.5 had damage that ranged from very minor if the protection held to quite extensive if the protection measure failed. Given these results, it would seem prudent that if stabilization structures are to be installed that the minimum top height be 1658.5 to minimize erosion, but that 1660.5 be a desired level if erosion cannot be tolerated by the lot owner.

2. The majority of field rock rip rap structures held and are still in place. Those that failed had at least one of the following deficiencies (listed in order of importance):

- a. fabric was not used under rock
- b. fabric was placed in vertical position rather than horizontal position

- c. fabric was not overlapped the minimum 3 ft or had been torn from other activity
- d. rock was sloped less than the minimum 3:1 – or more preferred 4:1 slope
- e. the base or first rock layer used was less than the 14 inch minimum diameter or approximate 50#

The only difference or advantage with fractured, quartzite or granite rock is that the minimum slope could be 2:1 slope as all other requirements are exactly the same. Some sites survived having the deficiencies (labeled a-d above) by overkill with rock in excess of 4 ft thick, but unless the rock still has the minimum weight, they still fall apart.

A good rip rap job that doesn't cut corners is still a good solid design but needs to accommodate the highest elevations of water.

3. Vertical walls as stabilization (poured concrete, steel or concrete block) must be built with sufficient footings and are only good if at least one of the following is also included:

- a. The down splash area is stabilized by rock (not sand) with fabric, poured concrete or cement joined block
- b. The down splash area is grassed with sufficient built in surface inlet drains
- c. Sloped rock are placed in front of the wall to break the forces of the waves.

4. Monster concrete block is currently being used but are only acting as wave breakers and not stabilization components. There are some designs and installations where blocks are erected by offsetting and creating something like a 28% back slope or 6" back for every 18-24" up, but while making the wall slightly more stable it will result in great water splashing up and over and require the protected down splash area. These may be advantageous in high bank areas near deep water but would not be the solution where homes are close to the water to begin with although they may be promoted just for those sites.

NOTE: Down splash area is the area in front or behind a vertical wall.

Information for Vegetation Practices

Root mats: This refers to a product made of non-biodegradable material that is covered completely with 1-2 inches of soil and seeded. The purpose of the product is to allow the individual grass plants and roots to grow through and become one large, connected unit of deeply anchored protection.

A trade name product "Recyclax TRM" is an example. Recyclax is made from shredded plastic pop bottles sewn into a plastic grid. For more information on 'Recyclax', click on the following link:

<https://americanexcelsior.com/erosion-control/>

Native South Dakota grasses: Grasses which have survived here for 1000s of years without care of man. Acclimated to our temperatures and moisture conditions. Basically all common native prairie grasses have roots 5 ft or more deep regardless of leaf height versus the 2-3 inch roots of turf type grasses.

Short native grasses: Buffalo Grass, Blue Grama – these grasses only reach 4-6 inches leaf height but have 5 ft or deeper roots. Blue Grama establishes the easier of the two from seed, but the Buffalo Grass will fill in and mat the fastest after started. Buffalo Grass plugs are often used because of this. A combination planting of these two species is acceptable. Once established, extremely low maintenance.

Medium height native grasses: Side Oats Grama, Little Bluestem, Green Needle Grass – reach a height of 8-15 inches leaf height. These SD natives are commonly easy to establish. Side Oats' unique seed head produces subtle color of miniature flowers in June, while Little Bluestem turns red for winter color. Green Needle Grass is a

cool season grass and will bring green earlier than most native grasses. All three grasses are favorites of seed eating small birds.

Tall height native grasses: Big Bluestem, Indian Grass, Switch Grass – These three grasses were the anchor grasses of the Tallgrass Prairie which surrounded Lake Poinsett. With a leaf height of 3 feet and roots of 8-10 feet deep, these grasses prevented the prairie from erosion of any kind. Soft leaves turn from light green to reds and tans followed by sturdy seed stems and intricate seed heads at eye level in September and October.

Shrubs: Shrubs capable of Zone 3-4 winter hardiness are acceptable for shoreline stabilization. Trees can also be included within shrub rows. Lot owners should decide the qualities they would prefer when selecting shrubs. Mature height, color and texture of foliage, flowering or fruiting habits, deciduous or coniferous, suckering or non-spreading all need to be understood before purchasing. Conservation Districts carry several dozen varieties as bare root plantings, but normally these are only available for April or May planting, then Districts shut down their operations. Ordering these shrubs takes place in the fall for the following year planting. Retail nurseries generally have potted shrubs available for late Spring, Summer and early Fall planting. Quality nurseries specialize in fewer varieties of improved cultivars at high prices. Make certain of the winter hardiness from either retail or online sources of improved varieties. A good reference for hardy shrubs and trees for this area can be found at: <https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/trees/handbook/ndhand-1.htm>

Guidelines and Incentive Rates for Shoreline Stabilization and Restoration (per Linear Foot of Shoreline)

Definition of Shoreline Repairs Performed

- **Stabilization:** Reshaping and minor dirt work performed to achieve an elevation of 1658.5 ft or more. May require additional anti-erosion fabric and rock "Rip Rap" or other hard stabilization practices to reach an elevation of 1658.5 ft or greater.
- **Restoration/Rebuild:** Work performed to repair major shoreline erosion requiring significant additional material to establish a shoreline elevation of 1658.5 ft or greater. Will require additional anti-erosion fabric and rock "Rip Rap" or other hard stabilization practices to an elevation of 1658.5 ft or more.

Notes

- **Qualification for Incentives:** Requires the use of erosion control fabric underlayment and rock "Rip Rap" or other hard stabilization practices below 1658.5 ft of elevation, and Recyclax or similar root mat material in conjunction with a suitable deep-rooted grass for a minimum of 8 ft width beyond finished hard stabilization practice (above 1658.5 ft of elevation).
- **Buffer Zone:** For lots without adequate elevations above 1658.5 ft for a buffer zone, it is recommended to use shrubs to create a shrub row buffer at the edge of the hard practice to buffer wave action during periods of high water.
- **Omission of Recyclax and Grass:** The use of Recyclax root mat material and deep-rooted grass may be omitted if anti-erosion fabric and rock "Rip Rap" or other hard stabilization practices are to an elevation of 1661.5 ft or greater.
- **Reimbursement:** Shall not exceed 33% of the total cost of combined per linear foot rate from the chart below.
- **Permits:** May be required from SDGFP for shoreline work. For more information, contact the Watertown Regional office at 605-882-5200 or 400 West Kemp, Watertown, SD 57201. Current contact name is Rhett Russell.
- **Wooden Structures:** Any and all wooden structures or materials must be removed from 1658.5 ft elevation and below to qualify for reimbursement. This includes buildings, railroad ties, landscape timbers, etc.
- **Rock "Rip Rap" Installation:** Must be graded to a slope of 3:1 or greater to minimize future damage during "Ice Out."
- **2011 Maximum Static Flood Level:** 1657.5 ft.

Incentive Rates

Type of Repair	Applicable Incentive Rates per Foot of Shoreline	Additional Incentive for Recovery of Erosion Material from Adjoining Lakebed to Achieve Required Elevation of 1658.5 ft	Additional Incentive for Raising Elevation of Hardscape to 1659.5 ft	Additional Incentive for Raising Elevation of Hardscape to 1660.5 ft	Additional Incentive for Installation of Shrub Row at the Upper Edge of Anti-Erosion Fabric	Additional Incentive for Installation of Recyclex and Buffalo Grass/Native Grass Mix at the Upper Edge of Anti-Erosion Fabric
Stabilization Repairs	33% of total cost not to exceed \$30/linear foot	N/A	\$10/linear foot	\$15/linear foot	\$5/linear foot	\$5/linear foot
Restoration Repairs	33% of total cost not to exceed \$45/linear foot	\$5/linear foot	\$10/linear foot	\$15/linear foot	\$5/linear foot	\$5/linear foot

Revised: 8/12/2019 - Added incentives for increased elevation and Buffalo grass

03/2025 -

APPENDIX F

DRAFT MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
for
OPERATION/MAINTENANCE
OF
LAKE POINSETT STORM SIRENS**

This Memorandum of Understanding is entered into between the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish & Parks (SDGFP), Hamlin County Emergency Management Office and Lake Poinsett Association. This agreement/MOU sets forth the terms by which the storm siren will be operated/maintained at Lake Poinsett.

DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH & PARKS RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. To provide 3 storm sirens and 4 properties for placement of the sirens, Poinsett Recreation Area, Prestrude's, Saaranen's and Sorenson's.
2. SDGFP Division of Wildlife will provide electricity to the siren located at the Lake Access Areas.
3. SDGFP Division of Parks & Recreation will provide electricity to the siren located Lake Poinsett Recreation Area.

HAMLIN COUNTY RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. To provide 1 storm siren.
2. To be responsible for sounding siren.
3. To be responsible for testing the sirens on a regularly scheduled basis.
(1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from April through September)
4. Policy for sounding sirens will be: "The sirens will use a standard steady sound in the event of any direct impact of the park areas from thunderstorm warnings, tornado warnings or any life threatening event."
5. To provide SDGFP and local authorities of sounding the sirens with any changes to the policy of sounding and testing the sirens.

LAKE POINSETT ASSOCIATION RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. To be responsible for maintenance and repair of the sirens at Lake Poinsett.
2. To provide the replacement of batteries for the sirens according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
3. If the cost for a single maintenance repair exceeds \$2,500, a cost share between SDGFP & LPA can be discussed.

This agreement shall become effective upon the signature of all parties and should be reviewed and resigned every five years.

APPROVAL:

LAKE POINSETT ASSOCIATION

BY: _____ DATE: _____

TITLE: _____

HAMLIN COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE

BY: _____ DATE: _____

TITLE: _____

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH & PARKS

BY: _____ DATE: _____

DIRECTOR, DIVISION OF PARKS & RECREATION

APPENDIX G

LAKE POINSETT LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES MEETING MINUTES

MEETING AGENDA/MINUTES

DATE	November 14, 2024	
PROJECT	Lake Poinsett Management Plan	BAI No. 24117
SUBJECT	Lake Poinsett Law Enforcement Issues	
LOCATION	Microsoft Teams	
ATTENDEES	Sheriff Martin Stanwick (Brookings County)	
	Sheriff Chad Schlotterbeck (Hamlin County)	
	Logan Hammer, Conservation Officer (SD GF&P)	
	Issac Rubendall, Park Manager (SD GF&P)	
	Todd Pantzke (Lake Poinsett Water Project District)	
	Dennis Micko (Lake Poinsett Sanitary District)	
	Kelli Buscher (Banner Associates)	

Following introductions, the following issues were discussed.

LAKE POINSETT LAW ENFORCEMENT ISSUES:

BOAT TRAFFIC

- Is it possible to regulate the number or type of boats on the lake? Concerns have been raised about jet skis, house boats, and air boats in particular.

It is not really feasible or possible to regulate the number or type of boats on the lake. There are several different public access points. In addition, there is no authority under state law to regulate the volume of boats on a public water body.

- Can there be a speed limit on the lake?

The only speed limits are for personal watercraft (jet skis); they must be less than 5 mph if they are within 150 feet of a swimmer or non-motorized boat. SDGFP does not have the equipment to measure boat speed. See attached information for state and local requirements regarding water safety.

Boats (including pontoons) can go as close as they want to docks but jet skis cannot. Any watercraft can be ticketed for careless or reckless operation. Let GF&P know right away if there is a concern. Typically, GF&P only receives a couple of complaints like this each year.

If someone is riding jet skis in circles in the middle of the lake, SDGFP cannot do much to stop it unless they are creating a safety hazard or getting too close to swimmers or non-motorized watercraft. In those cases, SDGFP can cite the operator.

The biggest problem is on weekends and holidays; SDGFP tries to increase their presence.

- No wake zones:

- Is it possible to establish additional no wake zones along Lake Poinsett?

Only the Governor or the Governor's designee (SDGFP Secretary Kevin Robling) can set no wake zones. Typically, these are only established temporarily, such as during a flooding event, and are removed once the zone is no longer needed.

SDGFP can designate swimming beaches. Buoys must be placed no more than 75 feet apart. There can be no fishing, no pets, and no glass containers within a swimming beach. Boats can go within inches of the buoys and can create a wake within the designated swimming area as long as the boat remains outside the buoys. See attached information for state and local requirements regarding water safety.

GF&P Campground #1 and Sorenson Beach (Hamlin County Safety Zone) have no wake zones. There are no others established on Lake Poinsett. Designating additional laws regarding shorelines around homes on the lake would likely take action from the SD Legislature. It would likely take legislative action to create additional no wake zones on Lake Poinsett. The recommended steps would be to petition to SDGFP Commission. If the Commission agreed with the proposal, they would then request the Legislature take action. Isaac Rubendall will research this issue a little further and report back.

A private citizen cannot establish a no wake zone in front of their own property. SDGFP recently fined someone on Lake Kampeska for trying to establish their own no wake zone.

- How are no wake zones enforced?

SDGFP patrols both on shore and on boats. They can cite someone if there is an observable wake. SDGFP noted it would be very difficult to patrol or enforce a no wake zone on the whole lake.

- How are zebra mussels regulated/prevented?

- What is SD GF&P's role?

SDGFP has placed large orange signs at every public access point on the lake, reminding people to pull plugs; painting on the docks/roads. SDGFP has placed a hose reel and parking lot for people to spray off boat and remove larvae in spaces where feasible (there needs to be access to water).

Hammer's Point and ABR does not have signage, but those spots are not developed and are not readily used. There are 4 developed public access areas to Lake Poinsett.

SDGFP feels public education is the best way to minimize the spread of zebra mussels. If they find someone not complying with the requirement to pull plugs, they will issue a ticket with a \$182.50 fine.

- Does SD GF&P regulate the allowable age for driving jet skis?

SDGFP does safety checks of jet ski operators to discuss safety and check equipment. During these safety checks, they will ask the operator's age. Operators must be 14 years or older to drive a jet ski (unless they have someone over 18 with them). SDGFP will cite the parents for violations.

The minimum age for operating a boat is 12 years old.

If a watercraft is pulling others, they need to have a 2nd person spotting, unless the watercraft is equipped with mirrors.

- Is it possible to regulate bright lights on the water at night?

SDGFP does get several complaints about lights per year. There are no clear state statutes regulating lights on the water at night, other than the statute prohibiting disturbance (causing a disturbance on public water). There is probably a need to create a statute for it establishing distance from shore for lights. To initiate legislation or rulemaking, SDGFP recommends starting with a petition to the GF&P Commission.

- Is it possible to regulate traffic on the water after dark?

There are no regulations or statutes that prohibit watercraft at night, as long as they have a red and green light on the front and a 360 light on the back.

Alcohol use / boating under the influence: It is the same as for driving a vehicle; the operator must be under 0.08. Other passengers can be drinking on the boat; there are no open container restrictions on the water.

Fishing – Ran out of time (will follow up with a phone call to SDGFP)

- Fishing tournaments:
 - How does SD GF&P regulate fishing tournaments?
 - Do you limit the number of boats/people that can enter the tournament?
 - Do you limit the number of tournaments on Lake Poinsett? How many tournaments are there annually?
 - Does SD GF&P patrol during tournaments to ensure limit restrictions are met/enforced?
 - How do you handle/regulate/enforce unauthorized fishing tournaments?
- Does SD GF&P track the number and type of fish in Lake Poinsett?
 - How are management decisions made? One person commented that people are “fishing the lake dry.”
 - Does GF&P stock or otherwise manage Lake Poinsett?
- Are fishing guides regulated? If so, how?

- Is shore fishing regulated? People raised concerns about Stone Bridge, the inlet canal from Lake Albert, and SD Highway 81. What if it creates a congestion of vehicles?
- Do you regulate/enforce/patrol Lake Poinsett during ice fishing season?

Noise Concerns

- Is it possible to regulate noise from parties/rental properties. People raised concerns about AirBNB / VRBO properties in particular.

For both counties, people would need to file complaints while the noise/party is occurring for the Sheriff's office to be able to address the issue. They do not have any noise ordinances in either county. It is a judgement call for responding officer but oftentimes just having an officer make contact will help situation. This also allows them to identify underage consumption.

Good neighbors will communicate with their neighbors and ask others to let them if the noise is a problem.

The curfew in all SDGFP Campgrounds begins at 11 PM (parks are closed 11 PM – 6 AM). SDGFP generally deals with noise issues in-house with parks' staff or conservation officers and park rangers. SDGFP can request aid from county law enforcement through Logan Hammer (local CO).

It is important to report these issues to law enforcement while they are occurring. There is not much they can do after the fact if they cannot confirm the situation.

- Is it possible to regulate noise on the water from either people (voices, music, etc.) or watercraft (loud motors, jet skis)?

Same as on land; no specific regulations or statutes beyond disturbance. It is handled on a complaint basis.

- Is it possible to regulate/enforce restrictions on dynamic brakes for semi-trucks? *Followed up with an email*

Speed

- Can speed limits be changed on any of the roads around the lake? If so, what is the process?

All speed limits on state roads go through the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT); County roads through the County Commission. Townships now have the authority to establish and change speed limits. They just need to inform the County of the new limits. But, townships cannot enforce speed limits; that falls on the County.

SDDOT requires a traffic study (number of vehicles, accidents, etc.) before they change a speed limit; both counties require that too.

Talk to Townships about their authority and get a map of which roads they regulate. Register of Deeds has maps of road ownerships; Sheriff Stanwick will see if they can provide info.

Brookings County has placed electronic speed boards on the hard surface road (County Road 2) from the State Park to Highway 81 to show drivers their current speed, as they see increased speeds through there. Brookings County has increased patrols for their area around Lake Poinsett.

Note: The County has no authority on private roads.

- Driving under the influence was raised as an issue.

Brookings County tries to increase patrols during special events. Both counties have a federal alcohol overtime grants that provides funding for an extra deputy to deal with speed and DUI issues.

Most of the area around Lake Poinsett is in Hamlin County, so the majority of the work falls on Hamlin County staff. That is why a Mutual Aid Agreement would help. Brookings County is willing to provide additional assistance, but currently only responds when requested. Sheriff Schlotterbeck said people can call Brookings Co for speeders or other issues.

Hamlin County tries to do what they can but they have 538 square miles and 7 communities to cover in Hamlin County. People around the lake need to raise their concerns with Hamlin County Commissioners as more staff is needed to address issues.

Every summer is getting busier and the population of people at the lake keeps increasing. The perception of some people around the lake is that they do not see a law enforcement presence. Brookings Co would like to increase their presence; again, call when issues are occurring (don't wait until after the fact).

Safety

- Is it possible to create a crosswalk for pedestrians along Highway 81?

State is putting up street lights now

State has to do studies and legislation to establish

No parking zones around the lake; meeting with business to establish/improve parking

ABR gets very congested on weekends, all along ditch and ROW.

- Is parking in the ditch legal?

If in ROW, County is not going to do anything (that is legal).

If a permit was issued for a use, the County zoning board includes a condition saying you cannot use the road for parking.

State road is the biggest issue (Stone Bridge); not much they can do unless emergency vehicle could not get through. Stone Bridge is almost exclusively fishing; people walking along the road; posted as 55 mph.

ABR also sees a lot of congestion.

If you see something, say something

- Public intoxication was raised as an issue.

Case-by-case basis; there are state open container laws. They don't have public intoxication laws (rely on disorderly conduct laws). Complaint based.

General Questions

Please discuss the patrol strategy for SD GF&P and county sheriffs. Are there roads that are not patrolled (such as township roads)?

Counties have a mutual aid agreement between the counties; have discussed cross deputizing. Can already request mutual aid between personnel already. Need to get the State's Attorneys to do a written mutual aid – would need to be approved by the County Commissions. Need to address some of the legal things (like liability and insurance).

- Is it possible to increase law enforcement presence around the lake, at least during high use times (e.g. – summer holidays and weekends).

Try to hit as much as possible. Raise the issue with County Commissioners so they know this is important to people

Hamlin County has initiated a moratorium on no more new campground.

- Is parking around the lake regulated?

- Does the county or GF&P have the authority to ticket/tow improper parking?

No – property owner would have to file complaint. County could if it impedes highway.

Construction companies have blocked roads. What can be done about that? If in the roadway, County can do something. Highway superintendent needs to approve blocking a roadway.

- Is overnight parking around the lake allowed?

No laws against it unless it is a traffic hazard.

Does the county or state regulate if someone pulls over on the side of the road to fish? No (unless "No Fishing From Bridge" – Stone Bridge is not one of those areas)

State, County, or Township can designate.

- The use of golf carts, four-wheelers, ATVs, etc. around the lake.

- Some people felt there were too many golf carts on roads around the lake and more enforcement is needed. Some people felt there was too much regulation of golf cart use. Are the requirements consistent between counties and with the state?

Unlicensed vehicles – SD Legislature passed law saying no one is allowed to operate golf carts on public roadways. Illegal, period. Townships can create a permit to allow –

no Hamlin Co townships have taken that on. If Hamlin County has caught someone – they tow it, cite if no driver’s license, cite parents if underage. Hamlin County is actively enforcing and communicating (Facebook, posted information). Brookings does same. Counties would like to get together and make sure they are enforcing the same.

State Park: Must have driver’s license and be at least 14. The vehicle does not need to be licensed but must have head lights and brake lights and mirrors. Park entrance license is required on vehicle.

They can drive golf carts on private drives (Sunset Park, Prairie Quay, and others).

- Age of people using golf carts. Does the county or GF&P regulate the age of persons using golf carts? Does it vary depending on which roads they are driving?

Have to have a valid driver’s license and have insurance.

- Is there anything more that can be done to improve safety for golf carts/four-wheelers? Separate path?

Lights if at night

Private developer could create paths?

- Does the county regulate/enforce littering or nuisance properties?

Definitely; officers have discretion but will ticket if litter is not picked up

Code enforcement for nuisance properties. Hamlin County does not have a code for this unless it represents a public nuisance. Most counties do not have an ordinance. Most municipalities have developed/adopted National Property Code Standards and contract with a 3rd party to enforce violations (case-by-case).

Junkyard along Hwy 28 has a Conditional Use permit

- For the things that can be regulated (or are currently regulated), what can be done to increase communication about both the requirements and law enforcement’s role?

Public awareness is important

State’s boating handbook has many of the requirements listed (wake zones, etc.)

Traffic violations: 224 citations; 183 calls; 53 crimes around Lake Poinsett. They will provide statistics.

Significant population growth

Both counties have worked with the bar owners on safety



**PREPARED
BY**

Kelli D. Buscher / Project Manager



ATTACHMENT

From: Rubendall, Isaac <Isaac.Rubendall@state.sd.us>
Sent: Saturday, August 17, 2024 10:48 AM
To: Kelli Buscher <kellib@bannerassociates.com>
Subject: Requested Info from Last meeting

Hello Kelli,

I have attached some information that folks requested at the last meeting.

We received only 4 special event permits for fishing tournaments this summer.

41:04:01:07. Buoy placement requirements. No person may place buoys on public waters without authorization from the secretary with the exception of fishing marker buoys which may be utilized by lawful anglers provided they are removed by sunset each day or buoys marking submerged or partially submerged hazards to navigation. Special purpose buoys marking safety zones must be placed as follows:

- (1) Buoys marking "no boating," "no wake," and "no motors" zones must be placed as necessary to define the areas designated;
- (2) Buoys marking "public swimming zones" must be placed no more than 75 feet apart on the perimeter of the zoned area; and
- (3) Buoys marking "ski zones" must be placed no more than 250 feet apart. Buoys used in these areas must be anchored individually.

Brookings County public water safety zones. Brookings County public water safety zones are as follows:

- (1) Lake Poinsett:
 - (a) The waters fronting on that portion of the shoreline beginning approximately 1,800 feet west of the east property line marker located between sections 3 and 4 of the department public access area in the north half of section 4, township 112, range 52 west of the fifth principal meridian and extending approximately 700 feet westerly from this point are a "public swimming zone";
 - (b) The waters fronting on the area north of the main building of the Lake Poinsett Methodist Camp for a distance of 500 feet along the shoreline centering just north of the main building are a "public swimming zone";
 - (c) The waters fronting on that portion of Lake Poinsett State Recreation Area beginning at a point 500 feet west of the west boat ramp and extending 2,150 feet west are a "no wake zone"; and
 - (d) The waters fronting on that portion of Lake Poinsett State Recreation Area beginning at a point 100 feet west of the east property boundary of the state recreation area and extending 500 feet west are a "no wake zone";

Hamlin County public water safety zones. The waters of Lake Poinsett in Hamlin County fronting on that portion of department land known as Sorenson Public Access Area beginning at a point approximately 100 feet north of the south property line in the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of section 36, township 113 north, range 53 west of the fifth principal meridian and extending approximately 500 feet northerly of this point are a "no wake zone."



Waterskiing and surfboarding prohibited during hours of darkness--Violation as misdemeanor.

No person may operate a boat on any waters of this state towing any person on water skis, a surfboard, or other devices, nor may any person engage in waterskiing, surfboarding, or similar activity at any time between the hours from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise. A violation of this section is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Age requirement for driving certain motorboats--Violation as misdemeanor.

No owner of a motorboat which is propelled by a motor of more than six horsepower may allow any person under twelve years of age to operate such a motorboat unless such person is accompanied by a person of at least eighteen years of age. This section does not apply to personal watercraft as defined in § [42-8-2](#). A violation of this section is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Personal watercraft--Rules of operation--Age requirement--Violation as misdemeanor.

No person may operate a personal watercraft:

- (1) Unless each person aboard is wearing a wearable personal flotation device approved by the United States Coast Guard;
 - (2) That is equipped by the manufacturer with a lanyard type engine cutoff without attaching such lanyard to the person, clothing, or personal flotation device as appropriate for the specific watercraft;
 - (3) Between sunset and sunrise unless the personal watercraft is equipped with navigation lights as required by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks by rules promulgated pursuant to chapter [1-26](#);
 - (4) At greater than a slow-no-wake speed within one hundred fifty feet of any dock, swimmer, swimming raft, or nonmotorized boat. Slow-no-wake is the slowest possible speed necessary to maintain steerage, but in no case greater than five miles per hour;
 - (5) In other than a reasonable and prudent manner; and
 - (6) To chase or harass wildlife, or travel through emergent floating vegetation at greater than slow-no-wake speed.
- Except in the case of an emergency, no person under the age of fourteen may operate or be permitted to operate a personal watercraft, regardless of horsepower, unless there is a person eighteen years of age or older on board the craft. No owner of a personal watercraft may permit the personal watercraft to be operated by such underage person. The provisions of this section do not apply to a performer engaged in a professional exhibition or a person preparing to participate or participating in an officially-sanctioned regatta, race, marine parade, tournament, or exhibition. A violation of this section is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

There could be more rules that would help with education, but I figured we would start with these.

1. Had a meeting with Regional Conservation Officer Supervisor Kraig Haase, myself, Deputy Tayt Alexander, and Sheriff Chad Schlotterbeck to discuss this. Stone Bridge is an ideal shore fishing location. One of the very few spots around the lake that provides a good opportunity of catching fish. The county, as well as the GFP believes that Stone Bridge should remain open as a fishing location. Currently there is no reason to turn this area into a "No Fishing" zone. Paved pull-offs were created for fishermen to park their vehicles in order to fish this area.
2. This question was also discussed in the meeting. Very rarely do we see overnight camping in this area. A good majority of the time, it is just a vehicle parked in the paved pull off area.



People will fish at all hours of the night in this area. Occasionally, the fishermen will sleep in their cars in the pull off site. GFP has no statutes to enforce this, as it is not occurring on GFP land that has a curfew. The county did not as well. As long as people are not setting up big campers and structures, this does not appear to be an issue.

3. Stone Bridge gets patrolled regularly by myself, as well as other officers across the district. This is primarily one of our busiest fishing locations in the county, which is why we spend a good majority of our time there, checking licenses, as well as making sure fishermen are abiding to the states fish limits. Throughout the years of consistent patrol in this area, our compliance rates are very high at Stone Bridge. Very rarely do we run into violations here. We run into far more violations from private homeowners around the lake, then we do at Stone Bridge. We will continue to monitor compliance rates at Stone Bridge on a year-to-year basis and will make the necessary changes if we feel we need more law enforcement presence at the location.