

# Oconto County Lakes Project

## SHADOW LAKE STUDY

### SUMMARY REPORT

2024

#### Oconto County Lakes Project Reports:

**State of the  
Oconto County  
Lakes**

**Lake Study  
Summary  
Reports**

**Operational Strategy and  
Plan for Surface Water  
Management and  
Protection**

**Lake  
Management  
Plans**



Center for Watershed Science and Education  
College of Natural Resources  
**University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point**



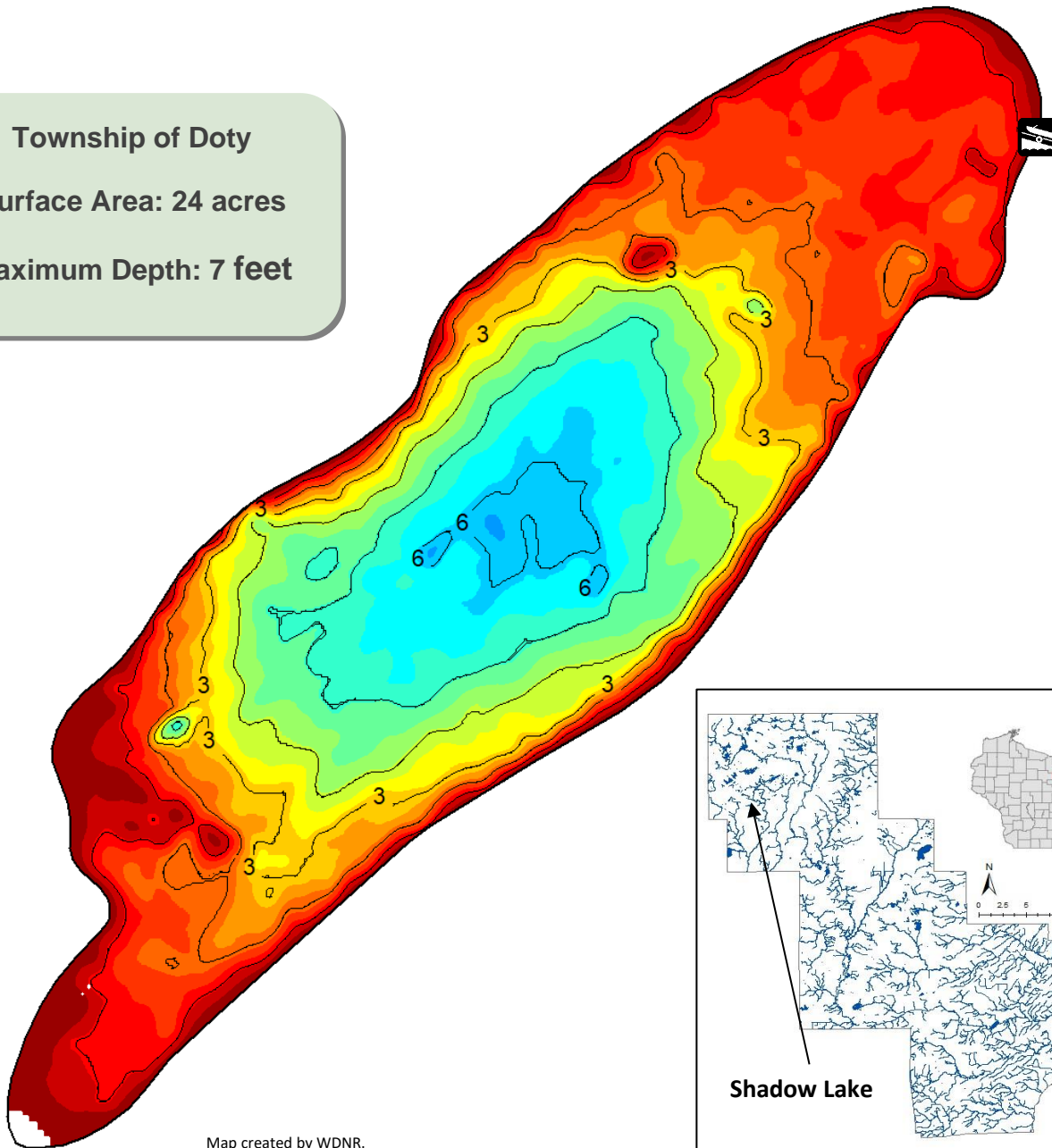
# Background

- Shadow Lake is a 24-acre spring (drained) lake in northwest Oconto County with a maximum depth of 7 feet.
- Most water enters Shadow Lake through groundwater and surface water runoff and leaves via Shadow Creek on the east side leading to the Second South Branch Oconto River. Direct precipitation also contributes water.
- Visitors have access to the lake from one public boat launch located on the lake's northeast side.
- This report summarizes data collected during the 2022-2023 lake study.

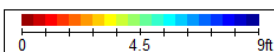
**Township of Doty**

**Surface Area: 24 acres**

**Maximum Depth: 7 feet**



Map created by WDNR.

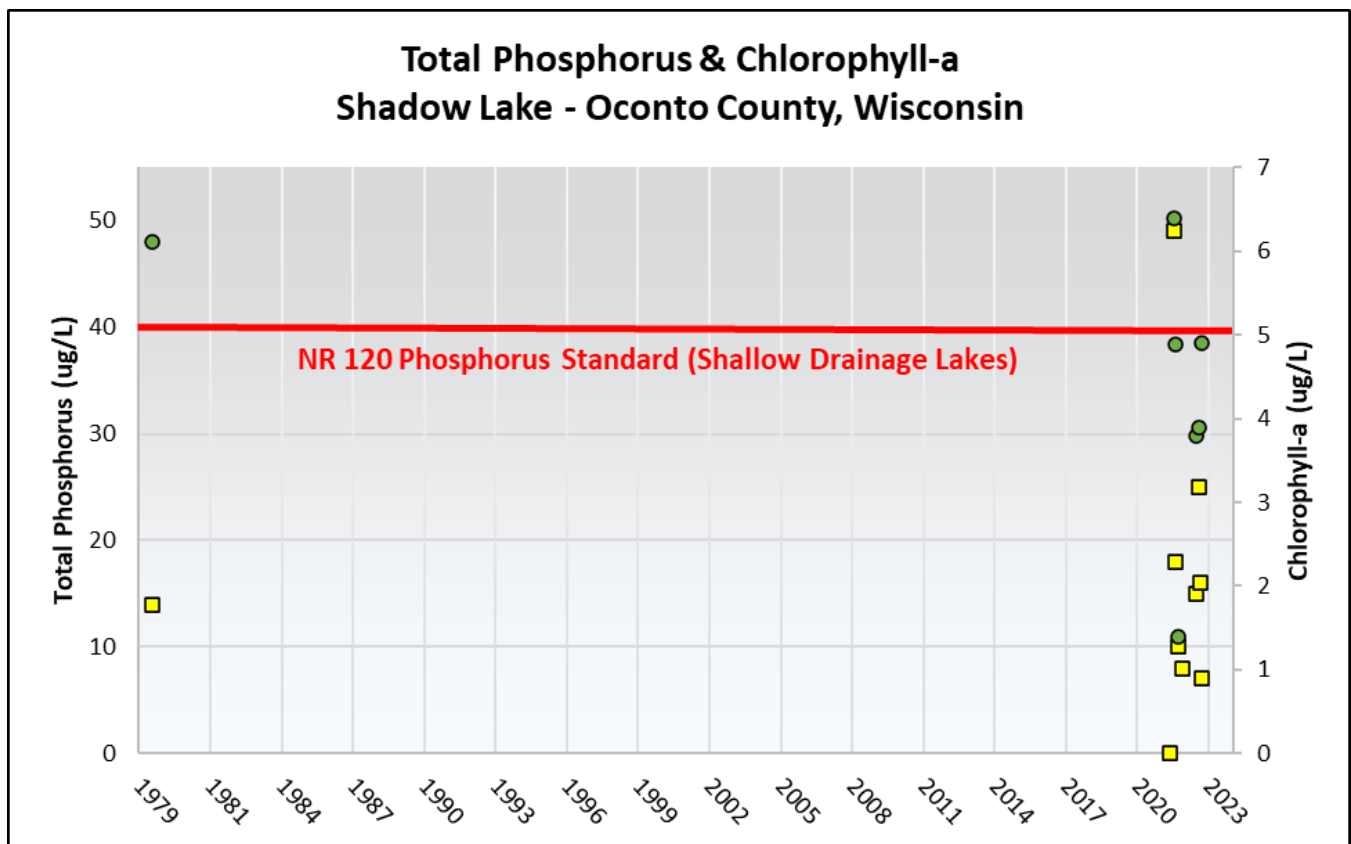


Shadow Lake  
Mapping by AutoChart

# Water Quality

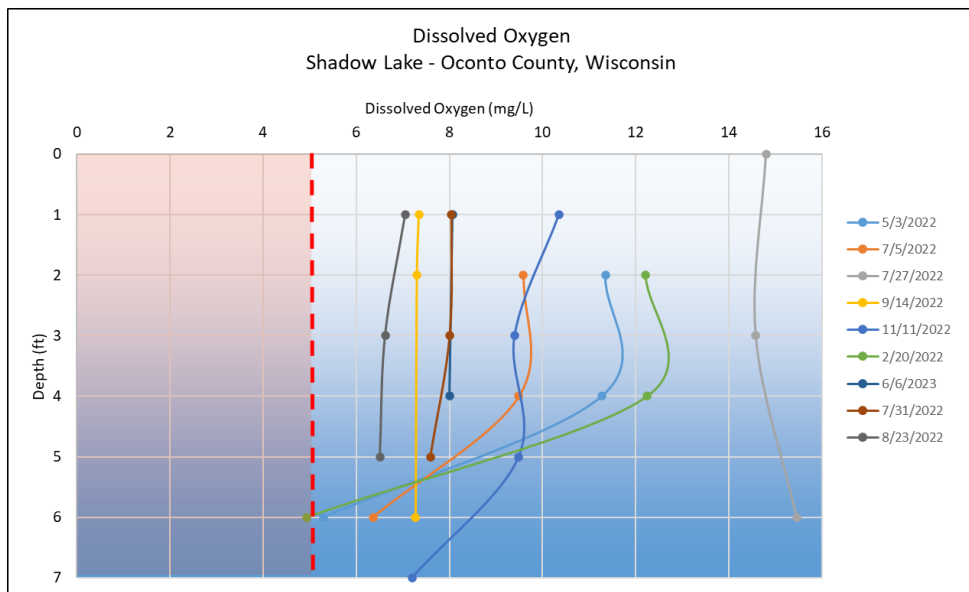
**Nutrients** such as phosphorus and nitrogen are what feed aquatic plants and algae in a lake. Excessive amounts of nutrients delivered to a lake will result in abundant plant and algae growth. Disturbance within a watershed combined with the landscape's inability to infiltrate and filter runoff is what primarily delivers nutrients to a lake.

- Total Phosphorus was above the Wisconsin state standard of 40 ug/L for shallow drainage lakes in one sample during the two-year study. The limited dataset does not yet establish a trend.
- Inorganic nitrogen (1 mg/L) was above the threshold of 0.3 mg/L when algal blooms increase.
- Chlorophyll-a, an indirect measure of algae, was above the threshold of 6 ug/L in one sample the study.



# Water Quality

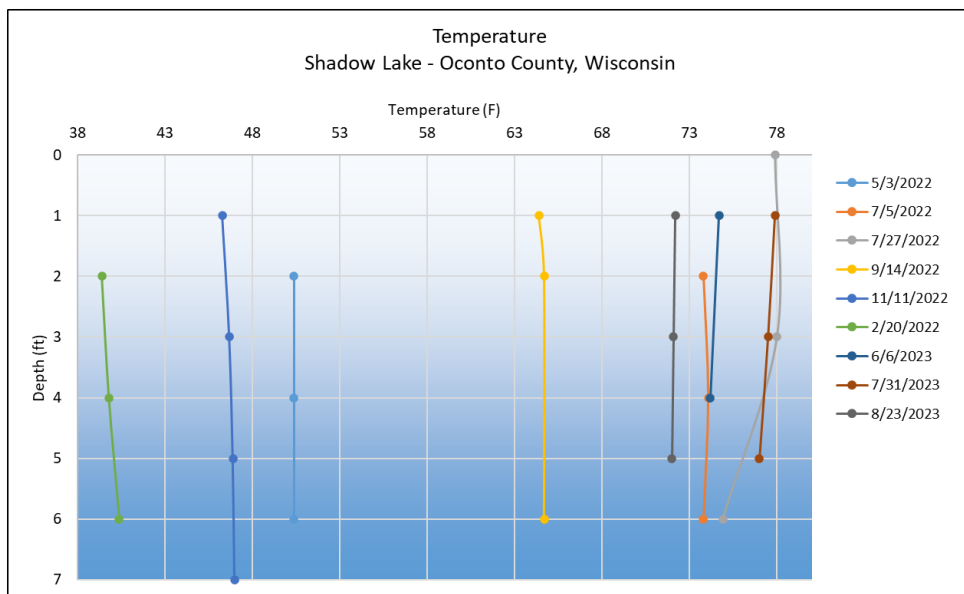
Sufficient **dissolved oxygen** in lake water is essential to the survival of aquatic organisms. The amount of dissolved oxygen present within a lake varies by season and depth. It is determined by the biological activity that consumes or produces oxygen, by water mixing through wind, changes in temperature, and inputs of surface and groundwater. Generally, at least 5 mg/L oxygen is required for fish.



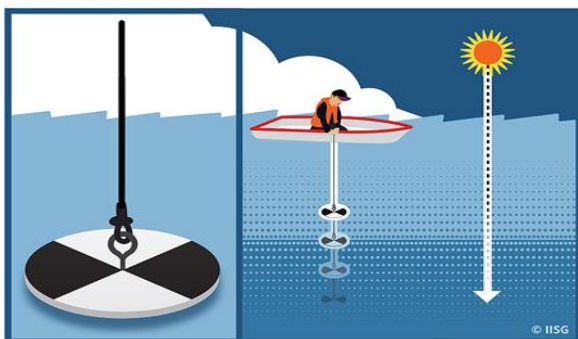
- Sufficient oxygen is available in the water column of Shadow Lake throughout the year. Generally, the entire water column remains mixed and maintains enough oxygen to support most fish species.

Lake water **temperature** has a significant impact on water chemistry, spatial distribution of fish, microbial growth and oxygen content.

- Temperature profiles in Shadow Lake show similar temperature with depth at each sampling, typical of a shallow, mixed lake.

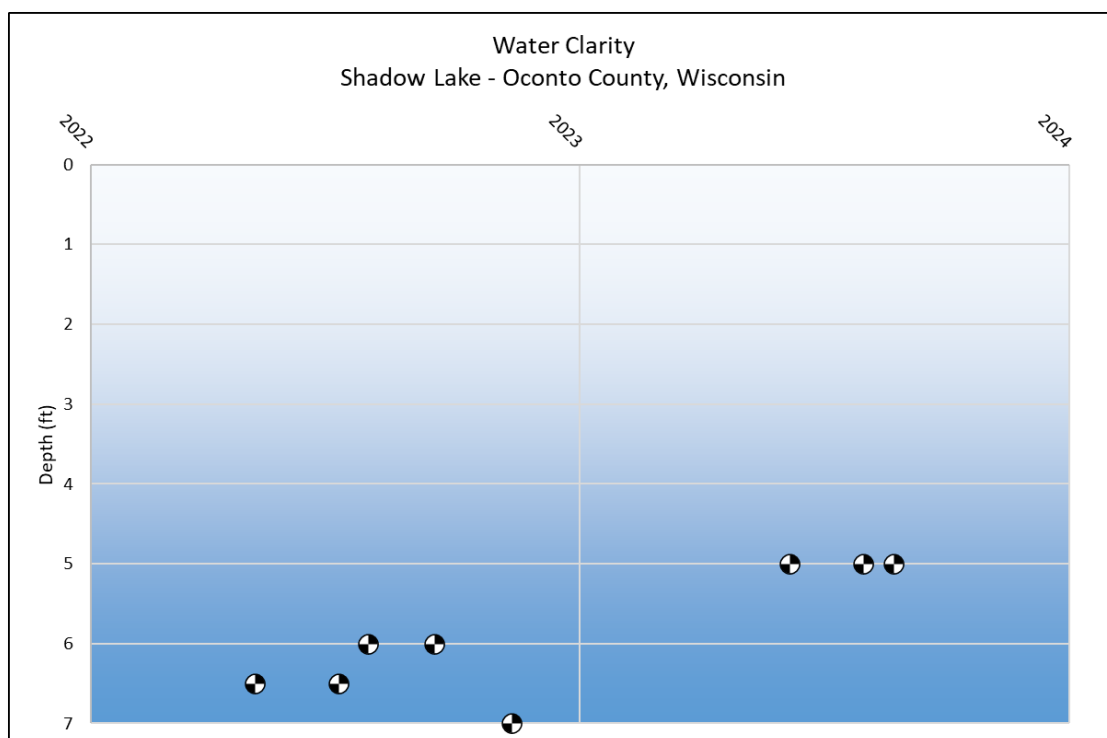
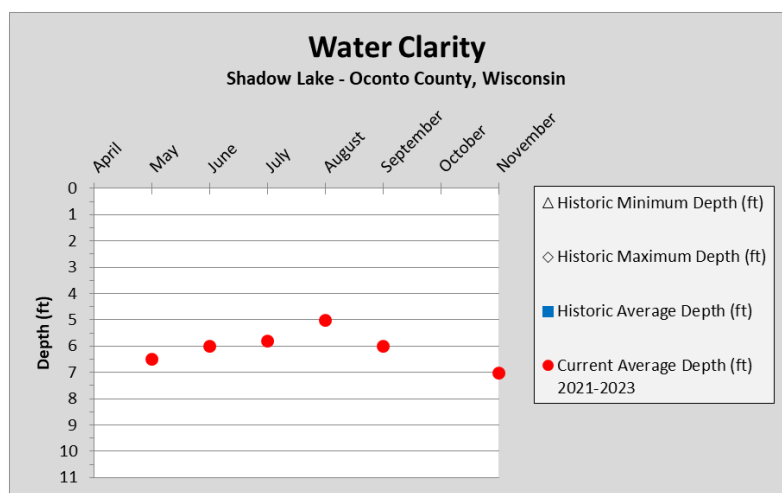


# Water Quality



**Water clarity** is a measure of how deep light can penetrate (Secchi depth). Clarity is affected by water color, turbidity (suspended sediment), and algae. Water clarity helps determine where rooted aquatic plants can grow. It is typical for water clarity to vary throughout the year.

- The graphs below show water clarity measurements taken between May and November.
- During 2022-23, water clarity remained similar throughout the season. Very limited data does not establish a trend.

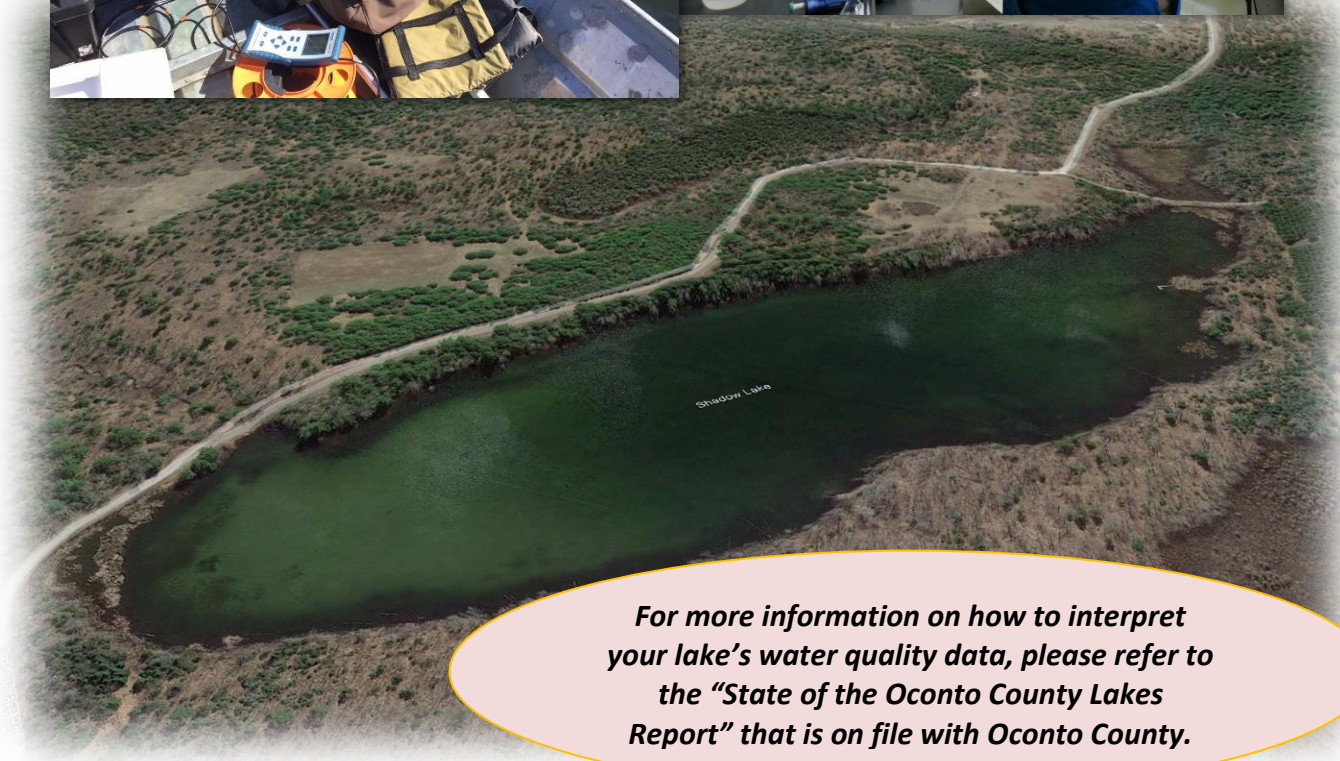
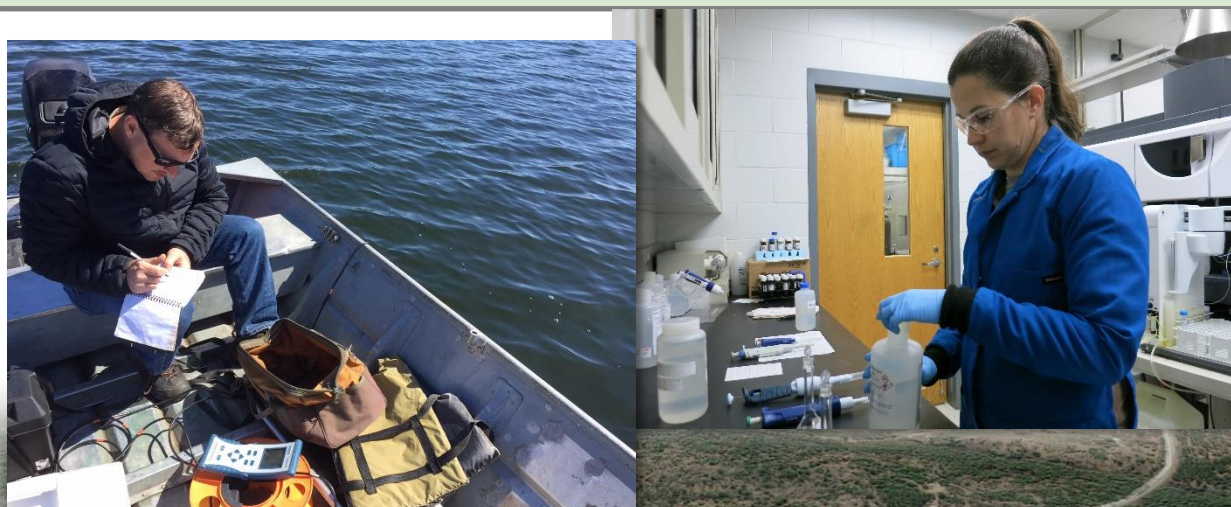




# Water Quality

**Other chemistry** data was collected from lake water samples, such as basic cations, pollutants and acid rain input, and physical parameters. Results of such analyses can provide insights into a variety of other potential impacts to the lake. While concentrations of these compounds in lake water is usually low, higher concentrations can be indicators of other potential issues.

- Concentrations of potassium (1.1 mg/L), chloride (11.95 mg/L) and sodium (2 mg/L) were all elevated. With few natural sources for these compounds, this suggests impacts from human activity such as septic systems, road salt, animal waste and/or fertilizers.
- DACT, a screening tool to determine if your lake is being impacted by pesticides, was not detected.
- Water in Shadow Lake is hard (150 mg/L  $\text{CaCO}_3$ ), having an elevated level of dissolved minerals. These minerals tend to bind with phosphorus making it unavailable to algae blooms.



***For more information on how to interpret your lake's water quality data, please refer to the "State of the Oconto County Lakes Report" that is on file with Oconto County.***

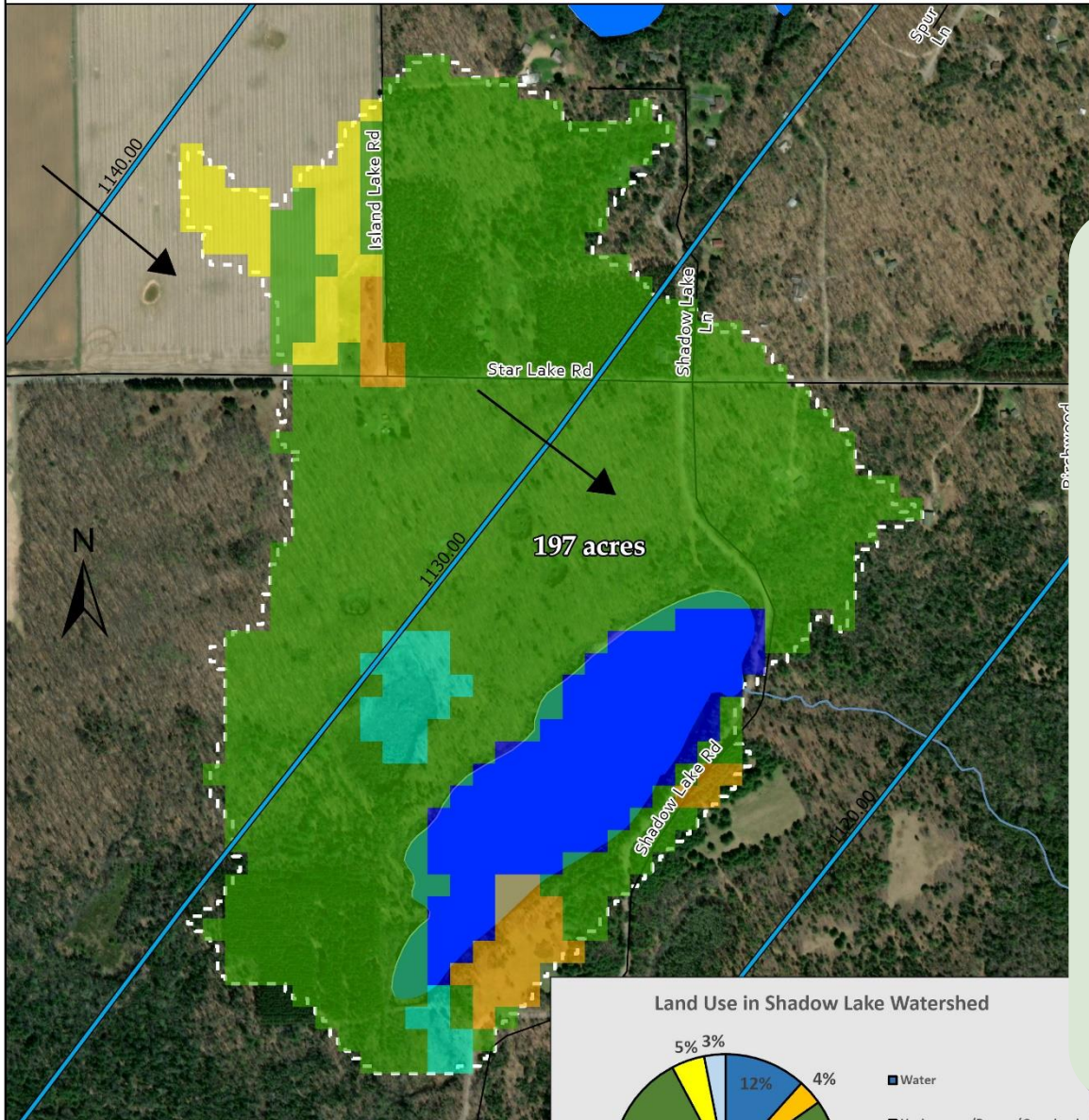


**Groundwater** provides water to lakes in Oconto County throughout the entire year. Hard surfaces on the landscape prevent water from soaking into the ground and becoming groundwater. This results in less water flowing to the lake during snowmelt and rain events. Water that does not infiltrate to groundwater becomes **surface runoff** flowing across the surface of the landscape where it can move sediment and contaminants to the lake from within its watershed.

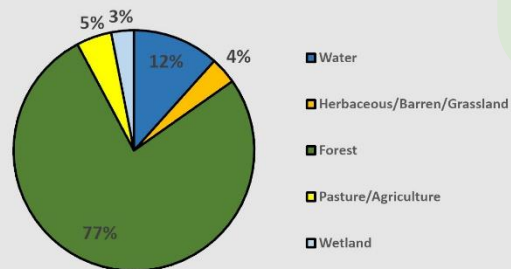
## Shadow Lake Surface Watershed & Groundwater Flow



The quality of lake water reflects what is happening on the land surface. Precipitation falling on forests produces clean groundwater, whereas precipitation falling on land that has chemical use can produce runoff and groundwater that contains these chemicals. Groundwater contamination may include nitrogen, pesticides, herbicides and other soluble chemicals originating from septic systems, crops, barnyards, and road de-icing. Once in the groundwater, these chemicals move slowly towards a lake or river.



Land Use in Shadow Lake Watershed



0 375 750 1125 1500 Feet

Roads  
 Groundwater Contour  
 Surface Watershed Boundary  
 Groundwater Flow Direction

# Shorelands

**Shoreland vegetation** is critical to a healthy lake's ecosystem. It provides habitat for many aquatic and terrestrial animals including birds, frogs, turtles, and many small and large mammals. It also helps to improve the quality and quantity of the runoff that flows across the landscape towards the lake. Healthy shoreland vegetation includes a mix of tall, native grasses/flowers, shrubs and trees.

- Shorelands around Shadow Lake were surveyed in July 2022. All shoreland areas were undisturbed.

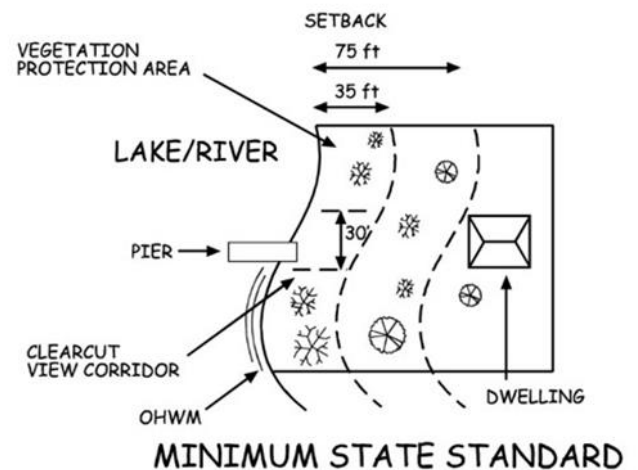
Total lakefront footage	No. Riparian lots	Measured shoreland disturbance (feet)	Measured shoreland disturbance (%)
1,623	7	0	0%



## State Shoreland Zoning Ordinance NR 115 Wisc. Adm. Code for Unincorporated Municipalities

No vegetation within 35 feet of the lake's edge shall be removed except for:

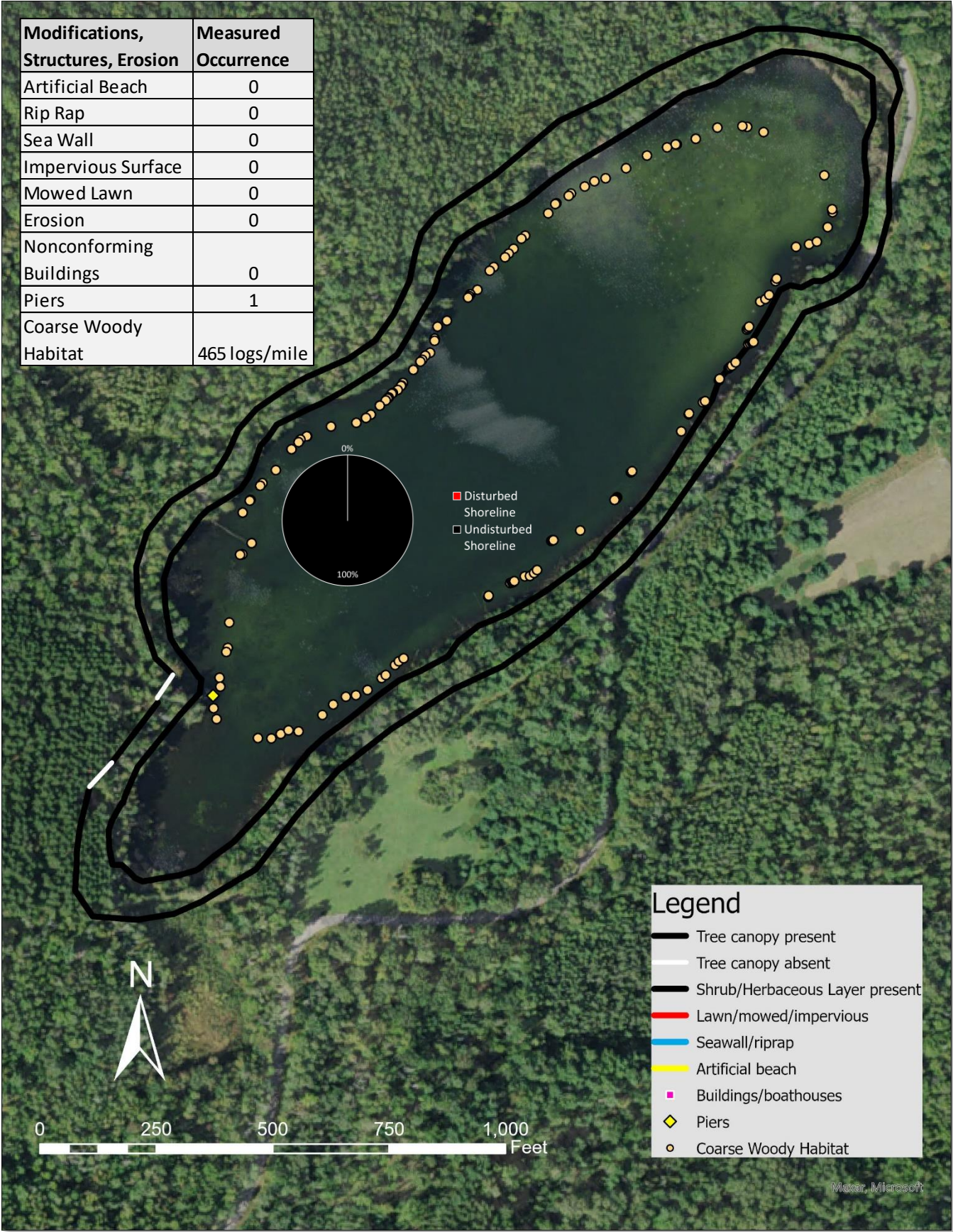
- Up to 30% of shoreline may be removed of shrubs and trees for a view corridor
- A mowed or constructed pedestrian path up to 5 feet wide to access lake



## What Can You Do To Help Shadow Lake?

- ✓ Leave natural shoreland vegetation in place or restore if it has been removed.
- ✓ Learn to identify and look for invasive plants and animals and know who to contact if found.
- ✓ Do not purchase prohibited and restricted species. Purchase native plants when possible.
- ✓ Never transplant water garden or aquarium plants into lakes, streams or wetlands. Properly dispose of them.
- ✓ Remove invasive exotic plants from your landscape and replace them with native plants or non-invasive exotics. Scout regularly for new invasive plants.
- ✓ Avoid using garden plants from other regions whose invasive potential is poorly understood.







# Aquatic Plants

**Aquatic plants** are the forest landscape within a lake. They provide food and habitat for terrestrial and aquatic creatures such as fish, ducks, turtles, invertebrates and other animals. They increase oxygen levels in the water and utilize nutrients that would otherwise be used by algae. A healthy lake typically has a variety of aquatic plant species creating diversity that can help to prevent the establishment of aquatic invasive species.

- The aquatic plant community in Shadow Lake is characterized by below average diversity of plant species when compared to other lakes in the Oconto County Lakes Project, with a total of 9 species in the 2022 survey.
- During the 2022 aquatic plant survey of Shadow Lake, 88% of visited sites had vegetative growth. The maximum depth of vegetation was 7 feet and the Floristic Quality Assessment (FQI) was 16.3.
- The most frequently encountered plant species were slender naiad (80%), chara (13%), white water lily (11%).
- No invasive species were observed.

## Shadow Lake Aquatic Plant Survey 2022: Rake Fullness



0 125 250 500 750 1,000 Feet



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### Rake Fullness

- 1
- 2
- 3



## Shadow Lake Aquatic Plant Survey 2022: Total Number of Species



0 125 250 500 750 1,000 Feet



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### Total Number of Species

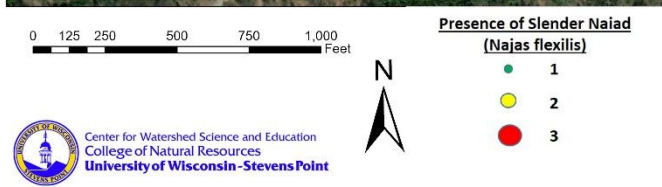
- 1-3
- 4-7
- 8+





# Aquatic Plants

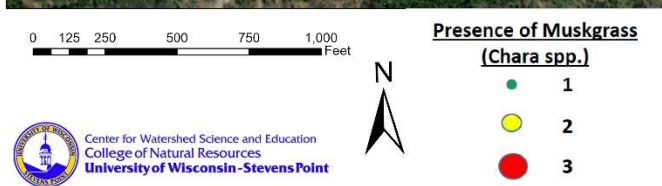
## Shadow Lake Aquatic Plant Survey 2022: Slender naiad (*Najas flexilis*)



**Slender naiad**, also called nodding water-nymph, is a primary food source for waterfowl and provides habitat for many invertebrates.



## Shadow Lake Aquatic Plant Survey 2022: Muskgrass (*Chara* spp.)



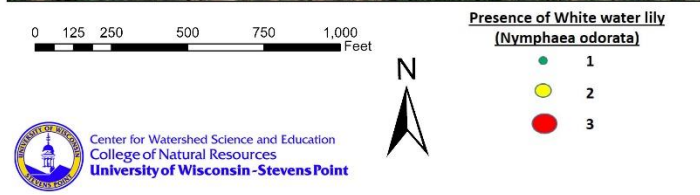
**Chara** is a type of macro algae that grows attached to muddy lake bottoms and has a musky odor. Muskgrass, as it is known, filters the lake water and is helpful in preventing the establishment of invasive species.





# Aquatic Plants

## Shadow Lake Aquatic Plant Survey 2022: White water lily (*Nymphaea odorata*)



**White water lily** has round stalks that grow up from a rhizome in the sediment connecting to large round floating leaves. By mid-summer, white flowers also float at the surface. Lilies are important cover for fish, are food by many species, and help prevent erosion by slowing wave action.



(C) Paul Skawinski, 2009

Aquatic **invasive species** are non-native aquatic plants and animals that are most often unintentionally introduced into lakes by lake users. In some lakes, aquatic invasive plant species can exist as a part of the plant community, while in other lakes populations explode, creating dense beds that can damage boat motors, make areas non-navigable, inhibit activities like swimming and fishing, and disrupt the lakes' ecosystems.

- No invasive species have been documented in Shadow Lake.



## Oconto County Aquatic Invasive Species Strategic Management Plan

2014



Oconto County Land Conservation Division  
July 2014



# Acknowledgments

*This report was prepared as an appendix to the **Oconto County State of the Lakes Report**, which is on file with the Oconto County Land Conservation Department.  
Written and prepared by the Center for Watershed Science and Education at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.*

**Primary Authors**

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