

What Is A Lake District?

A public inland lake protection and rehabilitation district is a special unit of government with elected leaders, annual budgets funded from tax or other special fees, and is designed to deal with lake management issues. Chapter 33 of the Wisconsin State Statutes was passed in 1974 to provide for the formation of lake districts, as special units of government. Since then, more than 300 lake districts have been established in the state.

What Is A Lake District's Purpose?

The purpose of a lake district is to protect, rehabilitate and improve public inland lakes. Lake districts were created in Wisconsin to give concerned citizens the legal authority to work on lake management issues, and the ability to levy special taxes or fees to be used toward lake management.

How Is A Lake District Formed?

Lake districts are established by local town, county, city or village boards. These boards typically establish a district based on a formal petition of lake area owners. There are actually several ways a lake district can be formed:

- ✓ By landowner petition to a county or town board
- ✓ By resolution of a city council or village board
- ✓ By conversion of a town sanitary district

At least 51% of the landowners, or the owners of at least 51% of the land in the proposed district, must be included when petitioning the county or town board.

The Lake Puckaway Protection and Rehabilitation District (LPPRD) was established in 1977. The Puckaway Improvement Association, a separate, voluntary group, obtained signatures to petitions from property owners to form the district. Those petitions, which included about 2/3 of landowners in the proposed district, were presented to the Green Lake County Board, which overwhelmingly voted in favor of establishing the district.

Who Is Included In A Lake District?

Those who create a lake district also propose its boundaries. The county, town, city or village board then formally adopts the district boundaries. Lake district boundaries usually include the shoreline property owners, often called riparian owners, but can include off-lake properties that benefit from the lake or affect the lake's watershed. A lake district may include all or part of a lake or more than one lake. A city or village must give its approval to be included in a district.

In short, if you are a resident or property owner within a lake district's boundary, you are legally part of the district, able to participate in its meetings, qualify to serve on its Board of Commissioners, and subject to its decisions.



General Boundary of LPPRD

The boundary of LPPRD includes landowners in the townships of Mecan and Marquette. Although it is the only village located on Lake Puckaway, the Village of Marquette has not joined the district. However, several landowners in the Village of Marquette have voluntarily petitioned the district to attach their property.

How Is A Lake District Financed?

Wisconsin's management law allows lake districts to collect fees from taxpayers to fund its operations and projects in several ways.



All property that's subject to general property taxes, and is within a lake district's boundary, is taxable by the lake district. This tax, called a mill levy, is used to fund most general lake district activities. The mill levy, which appears on property tax bills, may not exceed the rate of 2.5 mills, which is \$2.50 per \$1,000 of property value, and is often much less.

As special units of government under Wisconsin law, lake districts are also able to levy special charges to pay for activities with temporary benefits to individual properties or special assessments for major projects. Examples of these special or major projects include sewer and water service, shoreline aquatic plant harvesting, algae control and garbage pickup. Special fees are collected directly by the lake district commission, not placed on property tax bills.

Who Runs A Lake District?

You do! That is, if you live or own property within a lake district boundary. A lake district, you see, is run like any democracy. Residents and all property owners within the district have a vote in the affairs of the district. By voting, residents and property owners elect commissioners as leaders who identify



management strategies for the district and present them to residents and property owners of the district for authorization to implement. Typically, a board made up of five to seven commissioners carries out a lake district's day-to-day activities.

LPPRD has seven commissioners; one appointed by the Green Lake County Land Conservation Department, another appointee from the Town of Mican, with the remaining commissioners being elected. The residents and property owners of the district elect the commissioners. Commissioners must be either residents or property owners in the district.

The Board of Commissioners is subject to the decisions of the residents and property owners at the annual meeting. The commissioners must meet at least quarterly and follow Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law.

The Board of Commissioners handles the day-to-day business of the district including: managing the district's budget, maintaining working relations and cooperation with government and agency officials, as well as developing plans, goals, and objectives for the protection and rehabilitation of the lake.

What Can A Lake District Do?

Lake districts lead activities enhancing the quality of life for residents and property owners of the district through lake protection and rehabilitation. Lake districts operate a variety of lake management activities including: evaluating lake management issues, developing long range lake management plans, manage dams, monitoring water quality, operating water safety patrols, carry out surveys and studies, manage aquatic plants, accept grants and state aid, purchase or hold property, and help other units of local government develop land use laws and guidelines.

For additional information readers may contact the LPPRD at P.O. Box 6, Marquette, WI 53947, or visit the Wisconsin Association of Lakes website at www.wisconsinlakes.org.