

Letter Sent to Michael Mahn, Natural Resource Biologist, Black Hawk District Office in Lake View, Iowa on June 5, 2009

Hi Mike - I called Lannie (Miller) yesterday and talked to him quite a while about South Twin Lake. Some people who live at South Lake got together last night to discuss the lake. Although we did discuss Lannie's comment that nothing is on the burner for South Lake, there is no hidden agenda, South Lake would be exceedingly hard to keep carp out of because of North Twin Lake, and that there would be opportunities for public input, people still have concerns. Rather than call you, I decided I would email a list questions that came up last night concerning North and South Twin Lakes:

1. What is the status of the diagnostic/feasibility study for South Twin? Is it published somewhere on the DNR website so that we could read it?
2. Can we see the map that Jim Sholly made?
3. Dale Garner said in a letter to Randy Gray dated 5/11/09 that there would be a public information meeting this summer. Do you know when and where that will be?
4. Is there a yearly budget for what is spent on either North or South Twin Lake? If so, what is it and how is it used?
5. Are there any plans to fix the boat ramp at South Twin?
6. Are there any boat regulations on South Twin?
 - a. Where would the water go the lake were drained?
 - b. How would this effect farmers in the area?
 - c. How would this affect the residents of North Twin?
8. Is there a plan to make South Lake into a marsh area?
9. Could part of the lake be dredged by creating islands like those at Storm Lake?
10. Using the Shallow Lakes Initiative Plan, would South Lake be drained every few years?
11. What happens to all the dead/dying fish when a lake is drained? Are they left to rot in the lakebed?
12. Who is monitoring the algae and birds at South Twin? When do they do this?
13. Some members of Ducks Unlimited have told homeowners on South Twin that they have seen a map with plans to make South Twin only 18 inches deep. Is there anything to this?

Response from Michael Man on June 11, 2009

What Lannie told you over the phone was all correct. South Twin Lake is only at the beginning stage of being looked at for ways to improve its water quality. I will attempt to answer each of your questions that you have listed.

1. At the earliest, the diagnostic/feasibility study for South Twin won't get started until July of 2010.
2. The bottom contour map that Jim Sholly was working on is complete and I have included it as an attachment to this email. If you have any problems opening it, let me know.
3. We are hoping to put together a public informational meeting and are tentatively planning it for late July, 2009.
4. We have no specific annual budget for South Twin Lake. The Black Hawk Wildlife Management Unit is responsible for the maintenance and care of wildlife areas in a six county area. We have an annual general budget that is used to care for the needs of all the wildlife areas within this six county area (Ia, Sac, Calhoun, Buena Vista, Cherokee, Pocahontas).
5. Each year we check and assess the condition and needs of our boat ramps. The rock ramp on the south side of South Twin has been maintained for 30+ years to provided access for small hunting/fishing boats on this area. Usually the addition of some rock and/or leveling is all that is needed to shape up these primitive types of boat ramps. If attention is needed on this ramp we will typically accomplish this activity mid to late summer.
6. Yes. The same general boating regulations and requirements apply to all public water bodies. Since South Twin is managed as a wildlife area, the north half has been established as an inviolate wildlife refuge for fall migrating waterfowl. Boats are prohibited from entering that part of the area from September 1 thru Jan. 31 each year. It is unlawful to enter that portion of South Twin in any manner during that time frame.

7. a. If the water level of South Twin were temporally drained, the water being removed would go out the current natural outlet stream.
- b. Agricultural land would not be impacted. The outflow rate would be limited and any outflow would be totally contained within the outlet channel. Much of the dewatering would be accomplished after fall harvest and throughout winter.
- c. Activities on South Twin will not have any impact on North Twin. North Twin has its own outlet structure and its water levels are independent of South Twin.
8. Our goal for South Twin is to return it back to a more natural and healthy condition with improved water quality. The removal of rough fish and a temporary water level drawdown would be part of the process to accomplish this goal. With clearer and cleaner water, some aquatic plants would be able to live and re-establish thus creating a much healthier aquatic ecosystem. I would expect that cattails/bulrushes would be able to re-establish around the edges in water less than 3' deep and submergent aquatic plants would be scattered in some of the deeper parts of South Twin.
9. Dredging is not a likely alternative. There are many issues that need to be addressed with a dredging project, not to mention extremely high costs. Dredging by itself will usually not resolve water quality problems.
10. It may be necessary to periodically drain or at least partially drain South Twin. Whenever water quality and plant distribution/health indicate the system is degrading, a temporary water level drawdown may be necessary. Since South Twin is directly connected to North Twin, carp may regain a foothold back into South Twin. With a quality fish stocking of northern pike and yellow perch in South Twin, these predatory fish will consume lots of small carp and at least help suppress their population for a while. However, nothing ever stays the same and over a period of time, South Twin will likely revert back to a degraded system. With proactive and proper management it can again be restored back to a healthy system. Our best guess would be every 7-10 years for a total (winter & summer) drawdown, or a partial winter drawdown at a 4 or 5 year interval. This is only a guess because of many variable factors. The water quality, vegetation, and fish populations (both the good and bad fish) will need to be monitored, and then the appropriate management actions can be taken.
11. Yes. The DNR Fisheries personnel have renovated many lakes in Iowa and in the majority of cases the fish are left and the nutrients returned to the lake. It's extremely labor intensive to pick up dead fish and may be next to impossible in a shallow lake mud bottom situation. To minimize smell, fish can be killed just before freeze up. The late fall timing of a fish kill will greatly minimize odor.
12. Vince Evelsizer (DNR, Wetlands Monitoring) has monitored South Twin since 2006 roughly once each month from May – September. He has sampled phyto and zooplankton, invertebrates, water chemistry parameters, turbidity and other water quality factors. Shane Patterson (Ames, Volunteer) has been surveying birds on South Twin. Shane primarily surveys during the peak migration period approximately once per week but also tries to do some surveying throughout the summer months. Here is a link to an interesting article on the Iowa Ornithologist's Union website about the birds on South Twin that Shane has been observing, http://www.iowabirds.org/places/south_twin_lake.asp.
13. I'm not aware of any map or plan to make South Twin only 18 inches deep. Under a shallow lakes management plan, I expect that the same crest elevation will be used as it is today at the outlet. Based on the recent contour map (attached), the mean depth of South Twin is 3.6 feet.

If you have any further questions please contact me.

Thanks,

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