



# CLEAR THINKING

CLEARLAKECONSERVANCY.ORG

SPRING 2026 | ISSUE: 65

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Photo by Rory Kramer

# Spring Harmony

## OUR LETTER

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Spring at the lake brings a season of renewal. Whether you're here in person or reading from afar, its beauty is unmistakable.

Mornings begin with the calls of Northern Cardinals and American Robins. Afternoon walks reveal splashes of color through small violets in the green grass and redbud trees bursting with rosy-pink flowers on bare branches. By evening, the wind-driven waves bring soothing sounds gently rolling onto the shore. For now, the lake rests in a quiet calm, just before the warmer days, rich laughter and sunset gatherings.

These sights and sounds remind us of the natural harmony we strive to protect. From the open waters of Clear Lake, green canopy of local woodlands, rolling hills of agriculture, and unique flora of wetlands, these diverse spaces work together to create this special place in northeast Indiana. As spring unfolds, our community continues to care for and preserve these natural spaces.

Each April, our Neighborhood Cleanup Project brings community members together to clear debris from local roadways. This year, 18 community members collected 15 bags of trash from our roadways with a combined 17 volunteer hours. Thank you for making a difference!

Your generosity also powered our online Earth Day Match campaign. Thanks to a \$12,500 match by Barb Wenger, an anonymous donor, and John and Karen Rademaker, you helped raise a total of \$25,018 to support our conservation and education efforts early in the year. We're grateful for your support!

You may also notice a fresh new look. In the spirit of spring renewal, we are proud to share our redesigned quarterly Clear Thinking newsletter. This larger, seasonal format will keep you informed about our three pillars: land, water, and education. If you are interested in helping with this newsletter or any other areas of our work, contact our office today to get involved!

As spring unfolds, we look ahead to summer and the return of our vibrant community. We look forward to gathering again and preserving this unique space that we all love.



**CAROLINE BARTH**  
Executive Director



**BARB WENGER**  
President



# EVENTS



## On Your Mark, Get Set, Run Day, Fun Day! – July 11, 2026

Join us for one of Clear Lake's annual summer traditions! The Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy is thrilled to again host the annual Run Day, Fun Day - a family-friendly event that celebrates over 46 years of racing, community spirit, and good old-fashioned fun!

- **10K** – The original, scenic loop around Clear Lake. Clear Lake is a perfect 10K!
- **5K** – A shorter challenge with a turnaround at Memorial Woods
- **1M Fun Run/Walk** – A relaxed stroll through beautiful Old Town Hall Park

The fun kicks off at 8:00 AM on Saturday, July 11, at the Clear Lake Lutheran Church Pavilion. Ready to race?

**Register now at [RunSignup.com/CLTLC](https://RunSignup.com/CLTLC)!**



But the fun doesn't stop at the finish line! Enjoy a carnival bounce house, face painting, a DJ and time with your Clear Lake Township neighbors —something for everyone to enjoy!

And this year, let's extend the fun around the lake! Cheer on the runners from your driveway or a public preserve, share encouraging messages with homemade signs and chalk drawings, and keep the energy high for our runners!

Let's lace up, cheer on, and have a blast — Clear Lake style! 🌞

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### VOLUNTEER FRIDAYS

Fridays - 9 to 11 a.m. MAY, JUNE, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER

### SPRING GUIDED HIKE

Saturday, May 2 - 10 a.m. @ Waterfield Preserve

### NATIVE PLANT SALE

Saturday, May 23 - 9 a.m. to noon @ the CL Lutheran Pavilion

### MONTHLY WATER QUALITY TESTING

Contact our office.

### KASOTA ISLAND CLEANUP

Saturday, June 6 - 9 a.m. to noon

### KNEE-HIGH NATURALISTS

Fridays, July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 – 10 to 11:30 a.m.

### RUN DAY FUN DAY

Saturday, July 11 - 8 to 10:30 a.m.

### ANNUAL MEETING

Friday, July 24 - 4:00 p.m.



### SUMMER FITNESS HIKE

Saturday, August 8 - 9 a.m. @ Clear Lake Nature Preserve

### LABOR DAY EDUCATIONAL EVENT

Saturday, September 5 - TBD

### STARS IN THE PRAIRIE

Friday, September 11 – 9 to 10:30 p.m. @ Johnston Barn and Silo

# LAND

## NATIVE PLANTING AT SOUTH BRIDGE PRESERVE

In February, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources joined us in planting nearly 20-acres of Indiana native seeds to reestablish a natural prairie ecosystem in South Bridge Preserve. As part of the restoration work, the Conservancy was awarded a **\$12,350 Lake and River Enhancement – Watershed Land Treatment Grant**.

Indiana prairie ecosystems contain diverse wildflowers and grasses for pollinators, birds, and wildlife. Prairies also assist with groundwater filtration and improved soil health. In a process called stratification, these seeds will soon break their dormancy and begin sprouting in the upcoming months. We are excited to bring these benefits to South Bridge Preserve and to the surrounding community.

As we continue monitoring the growth and establishment of this ecosystem, we share our gratitude for the following partners that collaborated to make this restoration project possible: Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District, Blue Heron Ministries, and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife and Grasslands for Gamebirds and Songbirds Initiative.



## PROGRESS AT BORTON WETLAND



Photo by Judy Johnston

Wrapping up the first year of a five-year restoration plan at Borton Wetlands, we are pleased with the progress made. During this past year, we've worked on removing invasive brush and thinning the non-native trees. The newly opened canopy will provide much-needed sunlight for our native wildflower and grass seeds to grow in the understory. Additionally, existing oak trees will have plenty of room to grow stronger and healthier, spreading their limbs further.

The goal of this project is to **restore 8 acres of oak barrens habitat and 4 acres of forested wetland habitat**. This stewardship work will result in a beautiful preserve with towering red oak trees, plentiful prairie and woodland wildflowers in alternating bloom cycles, and numerous birds and butterflies! Stay tuned for stewardship updates, photos from inside the preserve, and stories of the restoration journey.

# WATER

## CLEAR LAKE AWARDED NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE READINESS GRANT

The Clear Lake Township Land Conservancy is proud to announce the award of a **National Water Quality Initiative Readiness Grant** from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

For over 35 years, local volunteers have led water quality testing days to better understand our water quality and how it changes each year. This selfless work has been the foundation of our efforts in water quality protection and preservation. In 2021, scientists at Ecosystems Connections Institute partnered with the Conservancy to analyze the 30 years of volunteer data, craft a Watershed Diagnostic Study for year-round data collection, and provide specific recommendations for improving water quality within Clear Lake's watershed.



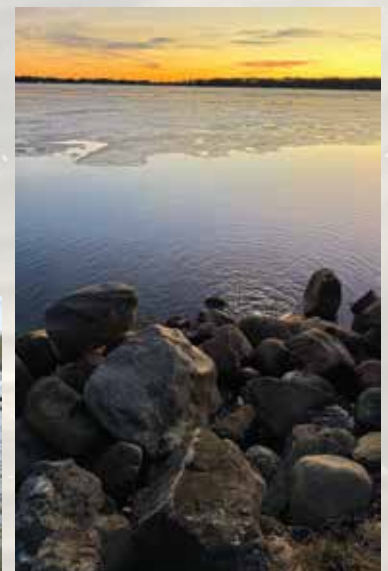
One of these recommendations was to pursue a National Water Quality Initiative Readiness Grant (NWQI Readiness Grant). This grant provides targeted financial and technical assistance to local conservation organizations to produce a full-scale Watershed Management Plan. Through organizing and preparing application materials in 2025, we have been awarded a \$21,450 NWQI Readiness Grant.

Through the creation of a Watershed Management Plan, land-based improvement projects and local partnership opportunities will be crafted to match our specific environmental needs. We share our gratitude for our volunteers and partners for making this accomplishment possible.

## SEASONAL RAINS REFRESH THE LAKES

Last fall, we experienced drought conditions with below average rainfall and increased evaporation leading to low water levels in Clear and Round Lakes. Our November 2025 Clear Thinking newsletter shared data from our Watershed Diagnostic Study, tracking a drop of more than 14 inches in water level.

By March 2026, the winter snowmelt and spring rains had replenished the lakes, returning the water levels to average conditions. We will continue monitoring water flow rates, lake level, and precipitation data through the year.



# EDUCATION

## CONSERVATION CHECKLIST

Springing into another lake season, many of us are going through the annual checklist of property cleanup. To help keep our land and water healthy, we've made a quick checklist of conservation practices you can start using this year. Remember, conservation practices on land are key in preserving the quality of our water.

### GRASS MANAGEMENT

- **BUFFER** – Leave a buffer of grass between the lawn and the water's edge or seawall.
- **CLIPPINGS** – Keep grass clippings and yard waste out of the water.
- **MOW HIGH** – Grass that is too short can impede water filtration in the soil.

### FERTILIZER

- **INVESTIGATE** – Always test your soil first. Fertilizer may be unnecessary. If necessary, use minimal amounts.
- **PHOSPHORUS FREE** – Use fertilizers that are phosphorus free.

### PET & WATERFOWL DROPPINGS

- **REMOVE** – Dispose of droppings in the trash.
- **REDUCE** – Pick up droppings promptly.

### NATIVE PLANT LANDSCAPING

- **NATURE'S FILTER** – Plant deep rooted native plants to filter water.
- **PROTECT** – Plant barriers discourage geese from grazing in yards.
- **ATTRACT** – Watch and welcome the pollinators and birds!

## JOIN US FOR KNEE-HIGH NATURALISTS IN JULY

With five Fridays in July, there is even more opportunity to head over to a Knee-High Naturalists program this year! This public educational program features interactive nature lessons and activities for youth and families. All programs are from 10 – 11:30 AM with no RSVP required.

### JULY 3RD

Dumpster Drummers @ Memorial Woods – Rock Out and Recycle!



### JULY 10TH

John Brittenham @ Clear Lake Nature Preserve – Butterfly Hike



### JULY 17TH

Heidi Stark @ Memorial Woods – Yoga in Nature



### JULY 24TH

Steuben Arts Scene @ Memorial Woods – Nature Craft



### JULY 31ST

Reena Ramos of ACRES Land Trust @ Memorial Woods – Nature Activity



# THANK YOU FOR SUPPORT!

## GENERAL DONATIONS

Jeff & Cyndi Carpenter  
Penny & Jack Hallock  
Lindsay & Craig Huntermark  
Amanda & Matt Johnson  
Larry & Cindy Landmeier  
George & Beth McCracken  
Bill & Kim Pepple  
Debbie Wymer  
Maria Zeman



## HONORARIUMS

### For Patricia Holland

The Kramer Family at Willow Hollow

### For Josie Kramer

The Mark S. Kramer Family

## MEMORIALS

### For Josie Dowler

Debra Hench  
Chris Slee Family

### For Sally Eckrich

Mary Ann Barth  
Susie Compo  
Alex & Susan Connett  
Katy Hoehn  
Jack & Karen Horrell  
Susan Kramer  
Pam & Tom Reith  
Chris Slee Family  
Julie Waterfield  
John Wilhelm  
Barb Wenger

### For Bonnie Ferguson

Bill & Chris Geiger  
Jack & Karen Horrell  
Allie Ledet  
Matt Shellenberger & Christina Scott  
Chris Slee Family

### For Daniel Thomas Kramer

The Kramer Family at Willow Hollow

### For Janet L. Swartz

Gretchen & Franz Leppla

## TRIBUTE GARDEN AT MEMORIAL WOODS

### For Sally Eckrich

John Wilhelm



## CONSERVANCY SUSTAINERS *(monthly donors)*

Alex & Susan Connett  
Susanne Cusick with employer match from AbbVie  
Zach Dean  
Jack & Karen Horrell  
The Kramer Family at Willow Hollow  
Kathy Latz  
Tim & LuAnn McArdle  
Doug Mulvaney & Jennifer Nielsen  
Terry & Koggy Newcomb  
Tom & Jenny Parker  
Bill & Kim Pepple  
Elijah & Jolene Stewart  
Nancy & Bob Webster

## GRANT SUPPORT

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Thrivent Choice on behalf of Jack & Karen Horrell  
Land Trust Alliance

## WISH LIST

Matt and Claire Timmer

## IN-KIND

Essentially Clean & More

List reflects contributions received between January 1, 2026 and March 31, 2026.  
Contact us if you see a mistake.



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## SIGHTS OF THE SEASON



Photo by Bill Culbertson



Photo by Don Luepke

See the lake through the lens of our talented residents. To submit a photo for "Sights of the Season", please email our office at [info@clearlakeconservancy.org](mailto:info@clearlakeconservancy.org).