HISTORY OF LITTLE SAND LAKE FROM 1883 TO MODERN DAY

Watershed Description

Little Sand Lake is part of the Mantrap Valley Watershed (which is part of the Crow Wing River Watershed). The watershed of Little Sand is approximately 12,128 acres (19 square miles), of which the area lakes comprise about 47% of the surface area. The ratio of the total watershed to lake surface is approximately 30:1. Land use within the watershed is dominated by forested and water land uses, which is typical of the region.

Precipitation

In 1989 the MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) conducted a formal “Lake Assessment Program” (LAP) study of Little Sand Lake and noted that average annual precipitation ranges between 26-28 inches and evaporation ranges between 30-32 inches. This same study noted that springtime ice-out has usually occurred by April 20th.

Soils

According to the 1989 MPCA Lake Assessment Report on Little Sand, the lake was formed in the pitted to hilly moraine deposits of the Wadena lobe of the Late Wisconsin glaciation. Soils of this area are classified as Menahga-Marquette. The area is heavily forested with Jack Pine, Aspen and Birch.

Pat Alberg, former owner of what was Northern Star Resort and a County Commissioner, assembled the history and chronology of the Little Sand Lake area for the 1989 MPCLA LAP report.

* 1883: First significant land purchase from the U.S. Government by August Welge. A log cabin was built (year unknown). This is the site that was Chateau Paulette for many years and is now Zorbaz. It is believed Indians had lived on this land.
* 1884: Charles Kellner homesteaded and became the first permanent resident on Little Sand Lake on what became Norway Cove Estates on the Northeastern end of the lake. The bay was still known as “Kellner’s Bay” in 1989. Charles married Emma Hensel in 1899 and all 7 of their children were born on the homestead. Charles was a logger and farmer.
* 1890: Sometime after the purchase of the land by Welge, the log cabin became a trading post run by Buckskin Pearson. It became a place where loggers and trappers purchased their dry goods and gathered to spin tall tales.
* 1900’s: Early in the new century, the trading post became a cookhouse for a logging camp and mill that was located on Lake Ida. The logs were boomed from the Kellner homestead, the entire length of Little Sand Lake to Lake Ida to the sawmill.
* 1909-1940: Charles Kellner started the 1st resort, and it was named Shady Knoll. Over the next few years, they built cabins (all log) and added on to their original log cabin to accommodate a dining room, large kitchen plus living quarters. They would pick up their guests by horse and buggy from the Great Northern Railroad station in Dorset which was affectionately referred to as the “Blueberry Special”. The log home and 4 cabins were still there in 1989.
* 1911: By this time no more logging was done on Little Sand Lake.
* 1915-1922: They were very dry years, and a dam was built on Little Sand Lake River between Little Sand Lake and Round Lake to help. There was for the first (and only) time no water flow between Big Sand and Lake Ida. Lake Belle Taine residents were upset about this dam and secretly hired someone to blow it up. The dam was replaced, only to be blown up again. The dam was never replaced, and remnants can still be seen today. The dam was first built in the early 1920’s and it was said to be very easy to build because the water was so low. As early as the early 1920’s this chain of lakes was referred to as the Mantrap Valley. Little Sand is about in the center of this chain and Belle Taine at the end (excluding the Crow Wing Lakes).
* 1916: “Angler’s Woods,” the first plat on Little Sand Lake was platted by S.D. and Marina Whyte.
* 1917: Converted from horse and buggy for transportation to automobile.
* 1918: Second plat “Sabin Park” was platted by John & Emily Sabin. Sometime in the 1920’s this became the 3rd resort on the lake. It is believed that they had a fire and lost most of their cabins and they were not rebuilt. It was not used as a resort for many years until much later when part of the plat was purchased to build “Little Sand Lake Resort”. (see 1969).
* 1918: In the early 1900’s the 2nd resident, Alexander Lindberg came to Little Sand Lake and started a dairy farm. In 1918 he built the 2nd resort on the lake that he named Shoreham Shores Resort. It had 4 rental cabins and owner’s home. Katherine Lindberg was born and grew up there. She married Wallace Vokes. Together they ran the resort till its closing in 1987. The cabins were moved, and several are still being occupied on Little Sand Lake. The owners home Alexander Lindberg built is still being lived in today (2024) and the “boat house” has recently been rebuilt.
* 1923: Muskieland platted: the first homes on this plat were not developed until the 1950’s.
* 1920-1960: The 4th resort on the lake was called “Erv’s Resort”. When illness prevented the operation to continue it sat vacant until the 1970’s when it was purchased by the Jacobsen family and the 6 cabins were restored and used for seasonal contract rentals.
* 1925 -1967: 5th resort on the lake was named “Camp Briggs” and later re-named Mirimichi. The resort also had one other name that we were unable to find. It is uncertain how many cabins there were on this resort but it is believed to be less than what was there in 1989. In 1989 there were 12 individually owned seasonal cabins.
* 1928: The former trading post and cookhouse for the sawmill was purchased by Leo and Anna Paulette and became Chateau Paulette. It became an eating and drinking establishment – cabins were added later. There was also a gas station, but it was gone in 1989. The eating and drinking establishment is still there in 1989 but only 2 cabins remain and are used for storage. The Chateau has been added on to several times, but the log cabin is part of this Little Sand Lake landmark and legend.
* 1936: the last of the severe drought years.
* 1945: Mindianna platted – this plat contained 23 backlots that as of 1989 have not been developed but all lakeshore lots are developed.
* 1946: Edmund Peterson purchased part of Anglers Woods and built an 8-cabin resort that was “Anglers Woods Resort”. It remained a resort till 1975 when Mr. Peterson donated it to the Lutheran Church for a camp. The church sold the property in 1980 and became privately owned by 2 families. All cabins are still used seasonally in 1989.
* 1949: County Rd 7 was paved. It is located on the west side of the lake and stretches the entire length of Little Sand. It is not known when the road was developed but it was not there in 1894 when Charles Kellner homesteaded in 1894. The 1st home built on the East side of the lake is believed to be in the late 1920’s or early 30’s; the road could have been built about the same time.
* 1955: Northern Star Resort was to become the 7th resort on Little Sand Lake. It was built by Ludwig Johnson. He built 4 cabins and an “owners’ cabin” but he passed away before it was finished. Ludwig’s widow sold it to the Slaughter’s who added 2 more cabins to make 6 before he sold it to Joe Morgan, who added 2 more cabins to make 8. He converted the owner’s cabin to a year-round home. The resort was still in operation in 1989 and was the oldest resort on the lake. It was owned by the Albergs.
* 1957-1959: in the late 50’s the 8th resort was built and named Greendale by a Mr. Jones. It has 6 housekeeping cabins and an owner’s residence. In 1989 it was owned by the Harrod’s and operating in the summer only.
* 1965: Little Sand Lake was sprayed with an ortho-chemical by Joe Morgan who owned Northern Star Resort at the time. We couldn’t find out the name of the chemical, but it was attributed to Mr. Morgan’s death. The entire lake was sprayed for weed control. Little Sand Lake had very few weeds until about 1985 when it was noticed that there had been an increase.
* 1960: Loch Vista Beach was platted mostly into 60 ft lots but all but 2 owners have at least 2 lots and some even more.
* 1960’s: We are not sure of exactly when, but the State of Minnesota leased seventeen 100 ft lots on Little Sand Lake. The public access is in the midst of these lots.
* 1967: Mirimichi was platted by the Fran Miller family. It had been a former resort.
* 1969: The 9th and last resort to be built on Little Sand Lake was started in Sabin’s Park by Harold and Lucille Albee, who have through the years built all but 2 of their 11 cabins and year around residences. The resort was named Albee’s Little Sand Lake Resort”. It was still operating in 1989. It was the only resort that had 3 units available in the winter months.
* 1975: County Rd 40 was paved. It is interesting to note that this road was not originally built where it is presently located until the 1970’s, because where it is now located used to be wetland. County Rd 40 services the north-east end where Norway Cove Estates is located. Mary Baldwin Kellner, who was born by Little Sand Lake in 1900, stated that each drought season left the land less wet than before and after the 1960’s there were no wetlands remaining where the present road is.
* 1978: Wallace and Katherine Vokes, owners of Shoreham Shores Resort (daughter of Alexander Lindberg) plotted out the acreage and began selling lots that became Shoreham Shores.
* 1987: Basswood Estates was platted by Will Bedford. The pink lady slipper can be found on some of these lots in 89’. Mel Luke began collecting Secchi disc readings.
* 1989: The Little Sand Lake Area Association was formed. There are 126 land or property owners on the lake and 100 joined the association. We send out a newsletter twice a year and concentrate on education and stress the responsibility that comes with living in a lake community. Bob Shotwell began doing Secchi disc readings on Little Sand and Chuck Alberg began doing Secchi disc readings on Lake Ida as it flows into Little Sand Lake. Lake Gilmore decided to become a part of Little Sand Lake Association with representation on the board and COLA. Two lots on the Norway Cove Estates exceeded “fill” limits. The Association called in the DNR, Corps of Engineers and County. One lot was issued a “restore” order. (but still exceeded as far as the Association can tell). The 2nd lot could not be restored as they filled bogs.
* The Association sent a representative to the State Convention of Lake Associations at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in October 1989.