

Apple River Protection and Rehabilitation District (ARPRD)

Newsletter, Summer 2026

Welcome to everyone in the Apple River Protection and Rehabilitation District. You are a member if you own property that touches any part of the 640-acre Apple River flowage, aka “the lake”. This newsletter is to inform you of 2026 news and developments, activities and how we are using the special district tax dollars.

Weed harvesting this year is about average, in line with many previous years. The increase in fuel costs has caused us some concerns but we are handling the situation well, thanks to our excellent Harvesting Operations leader Dave Schluesner. We always get hit with the growth of the invasive Curly-Leaf Pondweed (CLP) early in the season. Water levels in the flowage have been lower than normal this year, which caused CLP to mature a bit more quickly. Harvesting began on the south end (highway 46 bridge to Amery) on May 16 and the north end (highway 46 bridge north to the wild rice bed) on May 18. So far, the harvesting crew is keeping pace with the weed growth as navigation has not been too difficult this year.

The 640-acre flowage we manage receives inflow/runoff from the 111,000-acre Upper Apple River Watershed. This watershed is one of the largest in Polk County. The Apple River begins north of Turtle Lake, flows through White Ash Lake, woodlands, farmland and residential areas before reaching us. Our harvesting crew works hard to keep the flowage navigable throughout the summer months. We clear the main channel and feeder channels to docks as permitted by the DNR for Coontail and other weeds after July 1. Curly-Leaf Pondweed may be harvested wherever it grows, so from the May start until about July the crew can harvest all across the flowage.

AN ALERT

The reason for the lower water levels is because the dam in Amery, which creates the lake, is in bad shape and needs some major reconstruction. We have not been officially informed, but word on the street is that in September 2028 major repairs will be undertaken. The water level will need to be dropped, so the flowage will likely become a stream. We will all need to take boats, pontoons or any watercraft out or they will likely be resting in mud for a long fall and winter until repairs are completed. Please note you have been given an *unofficial* alert. Again, we want to inform you not all information is available, and plans are still in development.

ARPRD MEETINGS

1. We held our Spring Board of Commissioners meeting on April 18, 2026. The agenda addressed our upcoming summer work such as harvesting, payroll, and Clean Boats Clean Waters (CBCW) inspections. Agendas and meeting minutes are available at our website, arprd.org under the Meetings tab.

2. We held our Summer Board of Commissioners meeting on Saturday July 18, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Room of the Amery City Hall. It included presentation of a proposed budget for 2027, status reports and nomination of Secretary for 2027-29.
3. The ARPRD Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday August 22, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the Council Room of the Amery City Hall. All ARPRD district residents are urged to attend so you can vote on the issues presented. We will approve the 2027 budget, elect a secretary and give reports on all our activities.

WHAT ARE THE ARPRD ACTIVITIES?

The ARPRD has been in existence since 1975 (51 years). Lake Districts were formed to give local communities legal and financial power to protect, maintain and restore public lakes and watersheds. The Wisconsin Legislature enabled the creation in Chapter 33 of the Wisconsin Statutes in 1974 to address complex water quality and management issues that a standard voluntary organization could not handle. We are thankful for all the many local Amery leaders who have guided and served this district over many decades.

Over those years we have dealt with many issues. The flowage is not a deep body of water, which is a contributing factor to the aquatic weed growth that has plagued us. For many years chemical spraying was used, but it was not very effective and the District was threatened with a lawsuit by residents downstream from us. The Wisconsin DNR refused to approve any further spraying. That action caused the Board of Commissioners to develop an Aquatic Plant Management Plan (APM) which had a goal of controlling weed growth by using mechanical harvesting. That plan was approved in 2011 by the DNR, and harvesting began in August of 2012.

The Wisconsin DNR requires an updated APM every five years. As a result, we developed an updated plan in 2017 and another in 2023. The plans are costly and time-consuming to create but if we do not have an approved plan we will not qualify for harvesting permits or any possible grants, such as the one we have done for years for Clean Boats Clean Waters boat inspections.

We trust our years of harvesting are clearly evident in the flowage. If the weeds were not cut and removed, boating would be difficult if not impossible. Also, the removal keeps the nutrients in the decaying being released back into the flowage. The removal also helps to reduce muck and future weed growth. None of us want to see the flowage completely overgrown with invasive and nuisance aquatic vegetation. We hope this background helps you understand where we are today.

Dave Schleusner leads our harvesting operations. We own 2 machines. The old machine purchased in 2012 has a 7' cutter bar and is used on the north end. The newer machine purchased in 2020 has a 10' cutter bar and is used in the south end of the flowage. We only have four payments left to pay off the newer harvester. The next one is due in August of

this year, then there are two in 2027, and one in 2028. Dave is superb at keeping both machines running.

Dave also manages our two Decontamination Stations. One is at the Lincoln landing and the other is at the Birch Street landing in the City of Amery. It appears boaters are indeed using these stations to clean their boats. Dave needs to continually resupply the materials used to disinfect the boats. So far simply asking boaters to clean before launching and leaving has been working for us.

Derrick Carlson continues to be our Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) leader. He monitors for invasive plants and animals like Zebra Mussels and Eurasian Milfoil which are present in many surrounding lakes but so far not ours. The main problem we have is still the Curly-Leaf Pondweed (CLP) which is an invasive species.

Tom Sheffel leads the water quality testing which we do each summer. Tom takes water samples and sends them to the DNR for analysis, and measures water clarity.

Carlson SV continues to manage our payroll. We currently have six employees. Five are operating the harvesting equipment and one is a CBCW boat inspector.

WHAT LEGAL DOCUMENTS DOES THE DISTRICT HAVE?

We have a set on Bylaws and Constitution which were established in 1975 and have been amended a bit over the years. You can view them on the arprd.org website. Our mission is to represent and protect the quality of the Apple River Flowage for the residents and property owners as well as all who use the flowage for fishing and recreational purposes. We are challenged to keep the flowage as a quality body of water.

The website also includes the 2011, 2017 and 2023 Aquatic Plant Management Plans previously mentioned. These plan updates give you a current view of the flowage in terms of weed populations and our goals as a District.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS FROM HARVESTING SINCE 2012?

Year	Start Date	End Date	Pounds Harvested
2012	Aug. 12	Sept. 14	501,750
2013	May 28	Aug. 29	2,535,680
2014	May 28	Sept. 5	2,302,857
2015	May 3	Sept. 9	2,244,500
2016	May 11	Sept. 9	2,531,796
2017	May 15	Sept. 20	1,656,000
2018	May 11	Sept. 25	1,579,500
2019	May 17	Sept. 21	1,557,000
2020	May 28	Sept. 18	1,746,000

2021	May 6	Sept. 24	6,919,086* Second Harvester began
2022	May 20	Sept. 20	3,792,000
2023	May 20	Sept. 8	3,821,281
2024	May 14	Sept. 10	3,888,980
2025	May 12	Sept. 8	8,983,145
2026	May 16 south	June 30	2,538,000
	May 18 north	June 30	1,122,225

The total so far in 2026 is 3,660,225 pounds. Dave must report these figures to the WI DNR every year. In recent years south loads are dumped at Lincoln Town pit and the north loads are dumped on the Bradley Fougner farm. Just imagine what the flowage would be like if all this poundage was not removed.

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF OUR CBCW BOAT INSPECTIONS?

Year	Number of watercraft inspected	Hours Spent
2013	65	64
2014	62	92
2015	66	144
2016	143	227* DNR grant began
2017	145	204
2018	144	206
2019	167	205
2020	173	214
2021	158	202
2022	137	242
2023	153	205
2024	91(Talked with 311 people)	204
2025	91(Talked with 165 people)	238 (200 paid/38 volunteer)
2026	47(Talked with 76 people)	122 (Aim to end Labor Day)

SUMMARY

We hope you find this newsletter of interest. We are trying to make the flowage a pleasant and useful body of water for fishing and recreational use. If you have concerns or questions, please feel free to contact any of us. Our contact information can be found under the Current Officers tab at arprd.org.

The Board of Commissioners

Roland Peterson Chair

Billie Jo Schleusner Treasurer

Kitty Miller Secretary

Fran Duncanson Polk County Representative

Sharon Marks City of Amery Representative

