

# WHAT IS A LAKE ASSOCIATION?

*The oldest organizations interested in lake management in Wisconsin are its lake associations.*

*The following are their main features.*

## **WHAT IS A LAKE ASSOCIATION?**

The first association in Wisconsin was organized about 1898. Today, nearly 400 lake associations are in existence. Usually, lake associations are voluntary organizations with members who own land on or near a lake. They can be involved in various levels of lake management activities and vary from well-run lake management groups to loose-knit social groups.

## **WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?**

Lake associations may operate under diverse titles, but the purpose is normally the same. In most, it is to maintain, protect, and improve the quality of a lake, its fisheries, and its watershed.

## **HOW IS IT FORMED?**

A lake association can be formed when any number of individuals concerned with lake issues decides to deal with them in an organized manner. Many associations opt to incorporate under Chapter 181 Wisconsin Statutes (available at your library).

## **WHO IS INCLUDED IN IT?**

Associations can be comprised of all or a few of the people living on a lake and may have members not living on the lake. Membership in associations is rarely mandatory; people may or may not decide to participate. The one exception to this is mandatory lake associations, which are normally formed by developers as part of a deed restriction

## **HOW IS IT RUN?**

Roberts Rules of Order are commonly used when conducting meetings. Many associations have adopted by-laws to guide the direction of their organizations.

## **HOW IS IT FINANCED?**

Associations use various fund-raising activities and voluntary dues to raise capital for their activities. Certain qualified associations are eligible for limited state moneys through specific grant programs.

### **WHO RUNS THE ASSOCIATION?**

Lake associations are normally run by officers elected by the membership. The offices may include president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Many times these offices are combined. Length of terms vary greatly. A lake association's day-to-day activities can be carried out by its officers or by committees assigned to various tasks.

### **WHAT CAN IT DO?**

A lake association's power comes from its numbers. Lake associations can help build a sense of community and create an information network for that group. They may work with state and local government agencies (including lake districts if they exist) to effect ordinances and lake management practices and, with the proper permits, they can implement lake projects. These projects may include aquatic plant management, fish stocking, boating safety, and educational programs. They can also lobby state and local government to act on issues affecting their interests.

### **CAN IT BE DISSOLVED?.**

There is no legal statute requiring a voluntary lake association to continue to exist (mandatory associations may have deed restrictions requiring them to exist). Otherwise, associations may be dissolved by the membership or just fade away from lack of participation. Associations organized under Wisconsin Statutes 181 must comply with the law to dissolve.



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