

# Frequently Asked Questions about LWIA

**What is LWIA?** LWIA stands for the Lake Wandawega Improvement Association. LWIA is a voluntary organization whose purpose is to preserve and protect Lake Wandawega and its surroundings while enhancing the water quality, fishery, boating safety, and aesthetic values of Lake Wandawega as a public recreational facility for today and future generations.

Property owners from around the lake who were concerned about the condition and sustainability of Lake Wandawega formed LWIA in June of 2004 and incorporated as a non-stock corporation under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes in April of 2005. In June of 2006, the Internal Revenue Service recognized Lake Wandawega Improvement Association as a qualified non-profit organization under 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

In July of 2006, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) recognized LWIA as a “qualified lake association”, making us eligible for funding through the Wisconsin Lake Management Grant program administered by the WDNR. Grants for eligible projects fund up to 75% of project costs with the remaining funding coming from LWIA membership dues and contributions.

**Who can join?** Membership in the LWIA is open to any individual, family, business, or organization, that (a) subscribes to the purposes of the association and (b) owns or leases property within one mile of the lake for which the association was incorporated; or (c) resides on or within one mile of the lake at least one month each year. Households, businesses and organizations may hold two voting memberships.

**Do I have to join the LWIA?** No. Membership is strictly voluntary and no one can be forced to join if they do not wish to.

**Are there any dues or membership fees?** There is a membership fee of \$20.00, payable on a calendar year basis. The membership period runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. Each household, business, or organization may have up to two paid memberships.

**Why does LWIA require membership fees?** To be considered a “qualified lake association”, Wisconsin State Law requires the association to charge a membership fee of no more than \$50 annually. The collection of membership fees then allows the qualified lake association to apply for matching fund grants from the state or other sources.

**I thought you said this was a voluntary lake association?** It is. “Qualified lake association” is a designation used by the State for an organization meeting certain conditions. To be eligible for state lake planning, protection and recreational boating facilities grants, a lake association must meet certain standards set out in Section 281.68 of the Wisconsin Statutes. A couple of the requirements are that the association must be incorporated under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes for at least one year and charge a membership fee of no more than \$50 a year.

**So, what is the difference?** By being a “qualified lake association”, we are eligible for State planning and protection grants. The grants can assist us in a lake plans, aquatic plant management plan, and other studies that may be required by state or local governments. Once plans have been completed, grant money is also available to help offset the cost of performing any improvements that are recommended by these plans.

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**So, what are the membership fees being used for?** Typically, grants cover 50% - 75% of the total cost of a project. LWIA membership fees and contributions are used to cover the balance of the cost. They are also used for mailings, newsletter, posting of meeting dates and times in the local papers, and membership promotion.

**Do the officers of LWIA receive a salary?** No, serving on the board of LWIA is a volunteer effort and none of the board members receive any type of compensation.

**Is my membership fee or contribution tax-deductible?** Yes! We are a recognized non-profit under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3). Both your membership fee and contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law. If you wish to deduct your fees or contributions, maintain proper tax records by retaining your welcome letter to LWIA or a copy of your check or money order showing your fees or contributions. In cases of very large contributions, you may require a formal letter from LWIA. For a definitive answer, you should always consult a tax professional.

**Besides my membership dues, what else is required of members?** It's completely up to you, but we most definitely like to hear your ideas, thoughts, and concerns. From time to time we may be looking for people to volunteer a small amount of their time to help out with different projects. It might be on a newsletter, a mailing, organizing a social event/fundraiser, or even assisting in a lake project by supervising and collecting data.

**What happens to the existing property owners' associations and their beaches?** The property owner groups remain as they are and continue operating just the way they have been. The beaches & property belonging to these property owners' associations are still their responsibility.

**Will these beaches be open to all LWIA members?** Since the beaches remain the responsibility of the individual property owner groups, they will not be open to all LWIA members.

**Why do we need another association?** First and foremost, our intent and hope is that Lake Wandawega Improvement Association will join all of the Wandawega community together to protect and support the one lake that we have in common.

- There are two active and one inactive property owners' associations on Lake Wandawega. Although they cooperate on weed harvesting, these groups occasionally go their separate ways on how the lake is maintained. The LWIA cannot control or overrule the existing property owner groups, but it can get them working together in efforts for the 'one' lake we share, Lake Wandawega.
- Unlike the property owners' associations, LWIA is the only grant eligible organization representing Lake Wandawega. The grants cover studies that the Department of Natural Resources requires and similar studies that could benefit Lake Wandawega. Examples are shoreline and hillside erosion mitigation, weed growth and controls, fishery enhancement, conservation efforts, and education of members and property owners on how their actions affect the well being of the lake. We are not directly affiliated with any of the property owner associations on Lake Wandawega, nor do we receive any funding from them. Funding for lake studies and projects are made possible through grants and LWIA membership dues and contributions.
- There is strength in numbers and Lake Wandawega Improvement Association will give us a larger voice when dealing with state and local government bodies including the WDNR.

**I still have some other questions. Who can I contact?** You can email your question to [LWIA@lakewandawega.org](mailto:LWIA@lakewandawega.org) or via postal mail to LWIA, P.O. Box 902, Elkhorn, WI 53121