

NORTHERN INDIANA LAKES FESTIVAL • SATURDAY, JUNE 9 - WARSAW • SUNDAY, JUNE 10 - WINONA LAKE



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## Lakes Festival Messabout

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# Lakes Festival Messabout

## **Introduction:**

The lakes in Kosciusko county are one of the biggest draws to this area. Our lakes provide a beautiful setting in which to live and work, but they also entice tourists - many of them coming back year after year to use our lakes and streams - from Fort Wayne, Indianapolis, South Bend, and even Chicago. The purpose of the Northern Indiana Lakes Festival is to celebrate these lakes as life-long residents, as repeat tourists, as one-time visitors passing through. This celebration has a two-pronged approach of education and water fun. Age-appropriate games, hands-on activities, and entertainment draw families with children of all ages to participate in this one-day event that is held at Center Lake in Warsaw, Indiana.

If we don't continue to create connections with our lakes, if we don't continue to give people a reason to visit Kosciusko County, and if we don't continue to improve on the opportunities to enjoy our lakes, we will lose a precious resource. We cannot maintain the status quo; if we are not moving forward and improving, we are sliding backward into decline. The consequence of not educating the next generation about our lakes, the consequence of not caring for the recreational waters, the consequence of not creating strong connections between community members and our lakes will be not only lost revenue from visitors, lost enjoyment for the community, but also lost health of our lakes for future generations.

Our desire is to help the Lakes Festival move forward, expand the scope beyond one lake and one day, and create connections to our lakes that have ties to the glory days of Winona Lake when people enjoyed the water without motors. Through three water-related activities, we will encourage paddling and sailing, help connect people to the lake who don't live on the lake, create ties to our natural resources for people growing up here, and help lake users understand that our behavior impacts the health of our lakes. We are including a children's activity along with adult/family activities because we know that if we can connect children to the lakes at an early age, we will have an adult community in the future that is more sensitive to the well-being and upkeep of our lakes.

## **Background and history of the event:**

This will be the fourth year for the Lakes Festival held as a Saturday event on the shores of Center Lake. Kosciusko Lakes and Streams, which started in 2007, received a seed grant from the Kosciusko Community Foundation through a donor directed fund. The grant was to enable the organization to start an annual festival that celebrated the local and regional lakes area, that raised awareness of the need to take care of these valuable natural resources, and that helped educate people about the choices that impact the health and long-term quality of our lakes and streams. The festival started in 2009. Through celebration of the local lakes, the Lakes Festival is creating a culture of not only enjoying the lakes but also preserving them for future generations.

The first three years of the festival focused on events held at Center Lake including educational booths and activities, a kids' fun run, and activities on the water. The focus was on children and families with activities that include games, hands-on educational programming, musical entertainment, and a ski show. Highlights from last year's Lakes Festival included more than 1300 children and adult visitors, 29 booths, 70 children participating in the Water Waddle, 45 sponsors and supporters, and increased interest in and knowledge of our lakes.

Surveys conducted the past three years indicate increasing participation in the event each year. Participants left the festivals with increased understanding of our lakes and streams and an increased awareness of the need to care for them so they will be healthy and thriving in the future. Attendees enjoyed the entertaining activities and events that went along with the festival including the food vendors, musical entertainment, and ski and boat shows. Surveys also showed that the festival mainly attracts local residences or those in surrounding areas who come to Warsaw for a day trip.

Last year, a KLA group completed a white paper on the Lakes Festival Expansion and proposed additional activities (still confined to the one-day event) along with increased funding, support, and promotion. As part of last year's team's white paper, sponsor levels were created and sponsors have been secured for this year's festival. In addition, a comprehensive marketing plan was formulated and programming and community coordination was enhanced.

### **Goal of the white paper proposal:**

With expansion to a second day, we hope to add another layer of revenue for the Kosciusko County area as we encourage families to make the Lakes Festival a weekend event, stay overnight in a local hotel, eat supper at a local restaurant, shop in the Village, and enjoy water activities across two days.

Surveys of the 2011 Lakes Festival showed that 80% of the attendees were local families and 20% came from out of town. If the festival attendance increases to the anticipated number of 2,000 this year, and half of the out-of-town families eat supper at a local restaurant and stay in a hotel, that would bring extra revenue to the community. Add to that locals who attend both days, eat at a local restaurant while they are out, and shop at the Village, and the expansion of the extra day could bring in an extra \$75,000 to the local economy. By adding boating vendors from across the county to showcase rental boats, canoes, pontoons, kayaks, etc., the long-term effect will be increased awareness of water recreation related businesses and increased rental and sales for these businesses across the summer.

From the beginning of this festival, the desire was to include more than just Center Lake. The name of the event itself, Northern Indiana Lakes Festival, expresses the desire to extend to the surrounding towns, communities and regions. *The objective of this Whitepaper is to extend the Lakes Festival into a second day by including a boat related event on Winona Lake.* Our

proposal is to provide those who do not own a boat various options for enjoying the water for an afternoon, and to encourage those who do own human, sail and low powered craft with an annual activity known as a messabout. The small boat messabout will be combined with Nautical Bingo on the lake and a Pond Yacht building area for children on the shore.

### *Small Boat Messabout*

The main event proposed for the second day expansion on Winona Lake is the small boat messabout. A “messabout” is a group of boaters coming together to sail, row, paddle, discuss their boats and just generally messabout on or around the lake with other likeminded folk. Attendees also sail, row and paddle other people’s boats and look at others’ boats and methods to learn, to share, and to have fun. The idea is somewhat like a car cruise in for the lake.

The goal is to draw people to the lake to enjoy the water for the afternoon. We are targeting people who already have small boats, people who would like to try out or learn about small boats, and businesses that can provide use of small watercraft for others to try out and experience. The launch at the fair grounds will be available for larger boats such as sail boats that require a trailer. Camping is also available at the fairgrounds for a reasonable rate. The beach at Winona Lake will be used to launch smaller craft such as canoes, kayaks, paddle boards, etc.

We will solicit businesses that rent small water craft to bring some of those to the festival and offer free trials of the water craft, free tips and lessons, and free educational talks to festival attendees. Currently, we have the Lake House from the Village, Tippecanoe Boat Company, and Winona Lake Parks committed to offering canoes, kayaks, paddle boats, and paddle boards for use during the afternoon. These businesses will gain valuable marketing for their rentals, increased awareness and interest for sales of these water craft, and future economic gain throughout the summer from this exposure. Attendees will have a new opportunity to showcase their own small boats, learn about businesses in the area that rent and sell boats, learn how to paddle a canoe or a kayak, or learn how to maneuver a paddle board. The benefit for the area lakes will be increased awareness of water fun without the pollutants that many water sports can bring. The focus of the messabout will be on wind and human powered vessels that add to the enjoyment of the local lakes without adding to the long-term demise of them.

The small boat messabout will be promoted in local and regional publications such as the Winona Lake homeowner’s association news letter and the Small Craft Advisor. It will also be listed on the Lakes Festival roster of events on their website and marketing materials.

### *Nautical Bingo*

A second addition to the festival is Nautical Bingo. This event will be held during a set time period and have a goal of promoting fun and healthy activity on the water. The idea of Nautical Bingo is to follow a “Bingo” card where each square of the card identifies an item that may be found on the lake or something that could be seen from the lake. Using wind or human powered

water crafts, participants would move around the lake in search of the items on their cards. Each time an item is found, the participants will take a picture of the item with a cell phone or digital camera. When the bingo players have pictures of the entire row of items (vertically, horizontally, or diagonally - just like regular bingo), they will come back to the starting point (Winona Lake Beach) to show their pictures corresponding with their Bingo cards. Small prizes such as water bottles and t-shirts will be awarded to all participants in the event who complete the Nautical Bingo.

### *Pond Yachts*

The third addition to the festival will be a Pond Yacht area where children will be able to build and then sail a small “yacht.” A small pond area will be constructed on shore and volunteers will help children put together small “yachts” from materials provided. The materials will be precut and need only minor assembling. This is the only proposed activity that will carry an added cost which is estimated at \$200. For this cost, we will purchase 100 kits for boats and materials to make a “kid-sized” pond to sail the boats. A sponsor will be sought to cover the cost of the materials for this, and the pond, constructed of lumber and heavy-duty plastic, will be taken down after use and stored for the next year. The pond itself should last through several years of use.

After construction of the Pond Yacht, which will be a 20-30 minute activity, the children will use the pond to test their yachts. The Pond Yachts will resemble a trimaran and be able to “sail” with a bit of help. We will also solicit sponsorship from Kelainey’s Ice Cream shop in the Village and ask them for free ice cream passes for all the children who participate in the pond yacht activity. In addition to a fun activity, the purpose of this is to build connections to our lakes and lake activities.

We will provide flyers for this activity at the Saturday Lakes Festival to remind families of the events the next day. This will also be promoted on the Lakes Festival website and marketing materials.

### *Other Activities*

In addition to these three proposed events during the additional day of the Lakes Festival, several other organizations will be conducting events on or around Winona Lake. The Grace College Bass Club will host a bass fishing tournament during the morning. KCV Cycling Club’s Mountain Bike Time Trials will take place in the afternoon along with the ICDI 5K Run for Orphans. In the evening, the Silveus Insurance Group will sponsor a volleyball tournament on the beach at Winona Lake. During the afternoon, the Village shops will be open as well. All these events will serve to draw people to Winona Lake on Sunday and provide activities for the whole family.

### **Impact of the event:**

The economic impact of this addition to the Lakes Festival will be felt by businesses not just in Winona Lake, but also across Kosciusko County as families stay in hotels, eat at restaurants, buy gas for vehicles and boats, and shop at local retailers. The modest estimated increase of participants for the festival along with the additional day should conservatively bring in about \$75,000 to local business above what would have been spent through the single day event.

The impact of the two-day Lakes Festival goes beyond the economic boon for a second day. Because of the added activities, boating rental and sales businesses will benefit from the advertising to a local and regional audience - people who may not own boats but live near the water and want to enjoy it during the summer. By showcasing the rentals offered, these businesses will gain customers for the summer and for years to come.

Non-monetary impact can be as important as financial gain for a community. The impact of getting families investing in community activities, being outdoors in the summer, and discovering ways to enjoy our natural resources will create bonds that connect people to the community. Outdoor activities promote a healthy lifestyle and healthy families; healthy families make healthy communities.

Finally, the impact on our lakes and streams will be positive. While the first day of the Lakes Festival continues to focus on education and will continue to impact how the community views the lakes and streams and takes care of the water in our community, the second day of the event will also impact people's view of our local water resources. The education of the second day will be focused on introducing people to the possibilities of human or sail powered water craft. The free lessons, instruction, and trials of the small boats and canoes/kayaks will allow participants to discover ways to enjoy the lakes without adding to the pollution of them. The more people we have who are interested in healthy lakes for recreation, the better off the lakes will be as people work together to preserve them for future enjoyment.

### **Feasibility and sustainability of the event:**

Because we are building on and adding to an established event during its fourth year, and because there is a dedicated organization to conduct the event each year, we are confident that the Lakes Festival expanded to a two-day event is sustainable in the long run. Because we have already done much of the planning and groundwork for the second additional day, we believe it is a feasible plan and will be implemented this year. The other events that will take place during the day add a measure of sustainability, and the low cost of our proposed additions combined with their benefits make the plan both feasible and sustainable. Partnerships already established reveal an enthusiasm for the concept, and fresh ideas for activities to be added in 2013 have already emerged. One idea for the future would be conducting cardboard canoe races to be held on the canal. Other races - such as canoe or sailboat or kayak - to the center of the lake and back would be another possible event to add in the future. An indoor activity we would like to

promote for the future is a “Reel Paddling Film Festival” that would be held in Rodeheaver Auditorium. Finally, a family boat building event that would take place across the entire weekend would be a possible added event as well. The vision is that the Lakes Festival will continue to expand and become a month-long festival with activities each weekend of that month on different lakes across the county.

If this project is chosen as the recipient of the Northenor Award, the funds will be used for promoting the Lakes Festival activities and marketing to the surrounding communities to create a greater awareness of the festival and of the additional activities and location for the second day. A portion of the award money will be offered as seed money for expansion for next year’s festival to encourage an additional activity and draw for the festival.

### **Conclusion/Summary:**

In addition to drawing people to our community to enjoy our resources and to spend money in our community, we want to help the people who live here to learn more about the lakes, appreciate our community’s natural resources, and create ties to the lakes. We want to expand the Lakes Festival reach to pull in families that don’t live on the lake but want to take advantage of the fun and enjoyment that lakes offer.

By creating additional activities on a second lake during a second day, we will expand the impact of the Lakes Festival, expand the options to families to enjoy the lakes in an environmentally friendly way, and expand the economic gain for Kosciusko County. The variety of activities proposed in this white paper combined with the other activities planned by partnering organizations will offer variety and activity that will draw a range of community members and visitors and promote health and well-being for people and lakes. Our ultimate goals are to draw people to our community to live and play and to help those people appreciate our lakes in a way that will change for the better how we use and relate to the lakes now and in the future.

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