

“Fish Sticking: 2016, or “Guys on Ice III”

(This story is dedicated to the volunteers who gave their time and sweat equity to install thirty 40’-50’ trees {red pine, Norway spruce, and a couple of cedars which were ‘in the way’}: **Tom Schneider**, project coordinator, **Tom Anschutz**, **Dan Barnowsky** (of Harbor Construction who harvested our trees), **Dave Hoffman**, **Adam Johnson**, **Mark Huber**, **Steve Cooney**, **George Bezold**, **Gaetano Auricchio**, **Mike Schneider**, and **Tim Meindl**.)



Over the past 12 months, we developed a plan for 30 trees to be placed on Kangaroo Lakes shoreline in the winter of 2016. Trees needed to be harvested later than October and had to be on the ice by end of February per the regulations of the WDNR. Then, “El Niño” came. Our lake wasn’t iced over until January, 2016. We had temporarily planned on Saturday, Feb. 20th. It wasn’t until Feb. 14th that Tom Anschutz gave me his judgment that with the latest cold snap, he thought the ice would be good enough for his truck and our workers. So, it was all ahead Go!!!! Plans needed to be worked out with Dan Barnowsky of Harbor Lumber who would harvest the trees from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) land adjacent to Kangaroo Lake and put them on the ice for us to move. Our volunteers had to be contacted and confirmed and media outlets contacted for coverage. The entrance gate had to be unlocked by TNC. Then, on Friday night, Feb. 19th as I was driving to Door County with my wife Jane, Tom Anschutz sent me a text: “I’m not sure about the ice with the warming this week and the water standing on the ice. We’ll have to check in the morning. You know, insurance doesn’t cover vehicles on the ice.”

So, I knew we had 30 trees that I thought were already off of the boat launch and on the ice like last year. A long sleepless night...terrible fantasies about what to do with the trees if we couldn't move them to their 15 locations all over the lake. Last year, the temp was 2 degrees with a -25 degree wind chill and we placed 14 trees. Could 4 wheelers or snowmobiles move the trees? No!! We needed a heavy duty, 4 wheel drive pick-up truck. Will we somehow return the 30 trees that were 40-50 feet long to TNC. How would we turn these long trees around if we decided to use them in 2017? Oh, we couldn't use them because they need to be freshly cut. What if the ice gave way and they were floating on the lake? What about wasting all of our great volunteers' time and money spent making themselves available the next day. Would Dan Barnowsky even partner with us again? We were meeting at the boat launch at 8:00. We can't risk Tom's truck going into the lake. And so the night lingered on in our rented winter cottage....

At 7:45, I arrived with my son and son-in-law who came up from Milwaukee to help. Guys started arriving. Tom Anschutz arrived and told us than Barnowsky had decided not to put the trees on the ice except for about 7 because he wasn't sure the ice would support his very heavy equipment. He placed the other 23 along the road approaching the boat launch. The guys all came together. It was about 35 degrees and partly sunny. An absolutely beautiful day for our project! We discussed it and with Tom's guidance, we made the decision to go for it! Great!....but, that didn't remove our anxiety totally. There was some relief...if this worked well! So, I explained the various rolls of each guy including Dave Hoffman who with his son-in-law, was going to follow the installation of trees with securing them with 3/8's inch galvanized cable to the shoreline and to each other.

We hauled the first two trees to the Kangaroo Lake Resort (Horvath's). Then we hauled 5 trees to the west side near Beach Road (Schneider, Cooney, & Aurrichio's). I was to meet with media folks at 8:30 on the lake. Then three more trees 300 yards south to Whitacre's. How can we move these guys all over this lake without bringing more vehicles on to the ice increasing risk? We moved our vehicles all around the lake on land and down plowed driveways near our installations. How long would it take with over twice as many trees as last year (14)? It takes some time to haul 2-5 trees at a crack (pun intended referring to the ice) behind the truck the length of the lake moving slowly. We actually place twice as many trees in the same amount of time as last year because we had learned a thing or two.

Then it was off to the south end. We need to haul 15 trees down near the dam (Haig/Huber (3), Meyer(6), Bezold(5), and Schoof's{1}). Nari Haig and Mark Huber were hosting our lunch at 12:30. We were very well organized. We had to get the guys securing trees down to the south end before we left it. The heavy lifting crew were working in some lousy conditions. Sometimes we had to haul trees by hand through 6 inches of water and 9" of slush...getting the branches bogged down in the slush made it almost impossible to drag. Some of the larger trees took 8 guys to move them. We even saw some pockets of open water where springs prevented ice-over...had to be careful!

So, we were making great time. We headed up to Hoffman's (Liz and Dave), then to Hoffmann's (Sue and Leon), and then to the Leach's, always needing to move guys to get to where the trees were going to be installed. There was lots of water and slush standing on various parts of the lake. We kept the truck moving and hauling and finished installing the trees around noon. We could finally get Tom Anschutz and his truck off the ice—Oh, what a relief it was!!!!

So we gathered the guys at the Haig's/Huber's place near the dam and had a fantastic lunch and celebration of our accomplishments. After thanking some of the guys who could now take off and head home, six of us returned to securing trees around the lake. Securing involved using a power cutter to cut the large cable, drilling holes through some of the trees, threading cable through and around trees, and then using a coupler with two nuts, we tightened with a power impact driver. We drudged through lots of slush, water, and some slippery ice as well as climbing up high banks to get to the shoreline trees that our Fish Sticks needed to be cabled to so that when ice-out occurred, those trees would not move other than to drop into the water. Finally, the work day ended about 3:15. With a deep sense of gratification with a job well done, we could get home and get our wet work clothes and boots off! Some guys' feet were soaked in ice water for many hours and they couldn't even feel them.

Some guys took off their boots and dumped out freezing cold water. Most of our socks were soaked. It felt so good to feel warm, dry, and tell stories to our loved ones about what "Guys on Ice III" accomplished this winter day of February 20th. And better yet, we reflected on how we were helping Kangaroo Lake become healthier for years to come for us and our families. Our risks were rewarded. And a good night sleep for our aching bodies followed. Our Kangaroo Lake Association members thank those who gave some blood, sweat, hard work, anxiety, but no tears to help the eco-system of our lake.

Now, we can begin watching the "magic" around our fish sticks and begin telling stories, and recruiting other lake property owners to take advantage of the upcoming last year of our grant by offering to 'host' a three-tree fish stick complex in front of part of their property in 2017. We are the only ones in Door County doing this now (Clark Lake is showing some strong interest) and we are considered leaders in the state because of our efforts. You can read more on our website about the advantages of "Fish Sticks" and view pictures as well.

<http://www.kangaroolake.org/fish-fowl-management/>

As reported and experienced by Tom Schneider, President, Kangaroo Lake Association