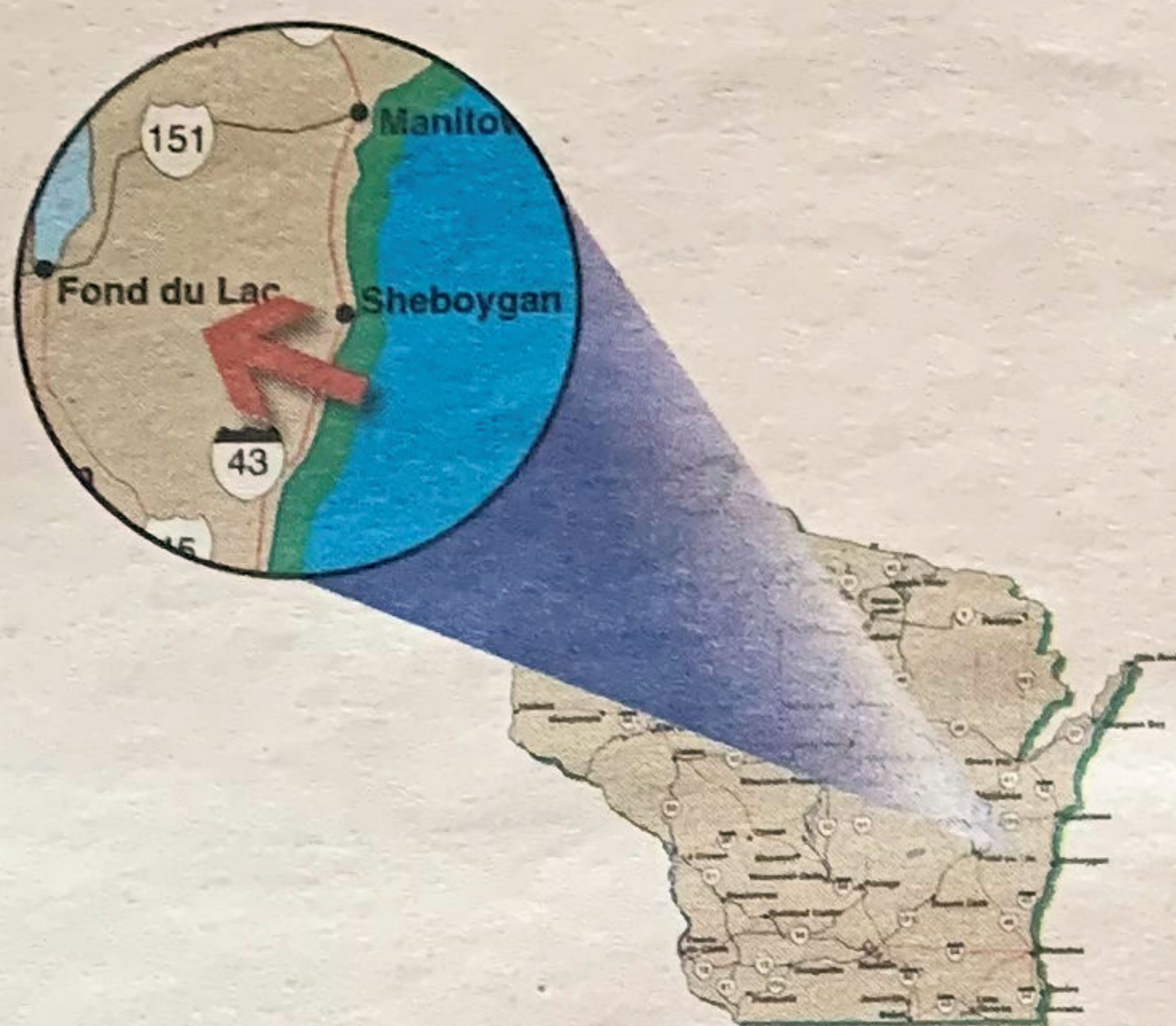


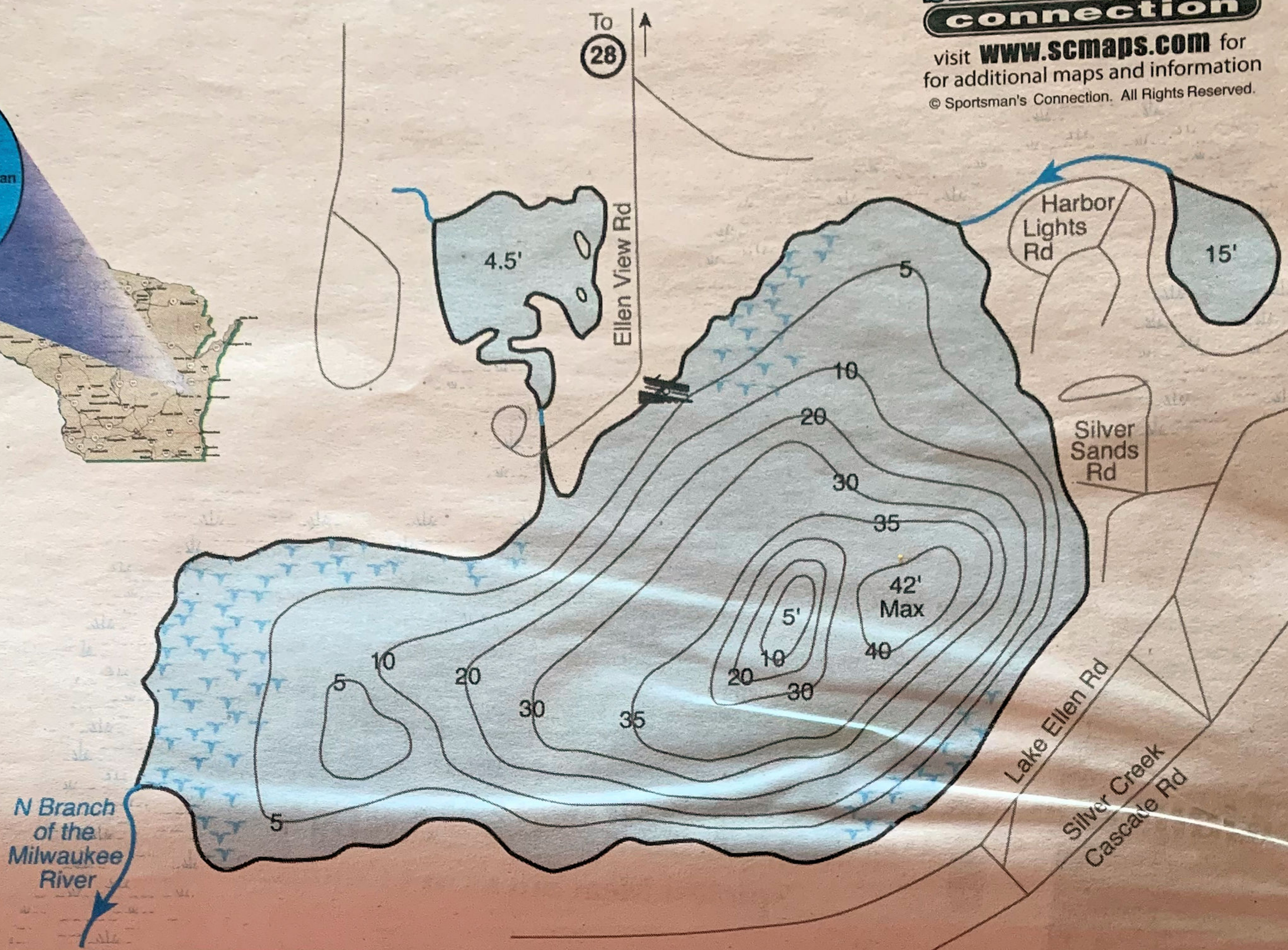
Lake Profile

LAKE ELLEN — SHEBOYGAN COUNTY

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Lake Ellen



DNR, residents working to restore Lake Ellen's fishery

By Dean Bortz
 Editor

The local DNR fisheries crew and lake association members have worked hard for about 20 years to try to help Lake Ellen in Sheboygan County become a walleye lake, but those efforts just haven't paid off. Now, lake association members and the DNR are working to improve panfish, bass and northern pike populations in Lake Ellen.

Addie Dutton, Sheboygan County DNR fish biologist, has been working with Lake Ellen Association, Inc., members on panfish and pike stocking.

According to DNR records, the agency tried walleye stocking from the late 1990s until 2012, but with little success.

"We tried walleye stocking in there with small fingerlings and it didn't take," she said.

The DNR ran a fall electrofishing survey out there in 2012 to look for walleye survivors. The crew collected largemouths, northern pike and walleyes. The survey showed bass at only 19.8 fish per mile of shoreline and a maximum size of 14 inches. The average size was 9.7 inches.

That survey turned up three walleyes, all were 18 to 19.5 inches. The survey didn't target pike, but three were caught that ran from 14.5 to 20 inches.

"The lake association is very active. Last year I worked with the lake association to see what we can do out there. We have had some local reports of poor panfish success so last year we started

northern pike stocking quota on the lake. We hope to get a top level predator to stick – not only to get game fish to stick, but to perhaps improve the panfish population," said Dutton.

The DNR began stocking large fingerling pike in 2018 at about 9 inches at two per acre (224 fish) every year. This fall will be the second year of northern pike stocking.

"We plan is to stock pike for five years and then probably in year four do an evaluation," said Dutton, adding that it will be a spring ice-out survey.

Lake Ellen has the southern Wisconsin pike regulation – a two pike daily bag limit with a 26-inch size limit.

"We will stay that way for now; 5-year-old pike won't make that size limit. We will wait and see if the population takes before we talk about altering the regulation."

Bobbi Laine is the Lake Ellen Association, Inc., president. Laine said the group took on the job of buying and stocking panfish to augment the DNR's pike efforts. In 2018 the group bought and stocked 814 4- to 6-inch crappies.

"We're planning on doing some more stocking in the spring. We haven't decided on a specie yet," said Laine. "We are setting aside money now. We're committed to doing more stocking."

Association members also built and placed three fish cribs in deeper water over winter. Members plan on building and placing three to five more fish cribs this winter. Laine said cribs first went

Lake Profile

Lake Ellen

Nearest town. Cascade
 Surface area. 112 acres
 Max. depth 42 feet
 Water clarity 12 to 18 feet

Fish species present:

Black crappies, bluegills, pumpkin-seeds, rock bass, yellow perch, white suckers, carp, largemouth bass, northern pike and walleyes.

For information:

DNR regional fisheries office (920) 892-8756, the DNR web site <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/fish>, or call Terry's Bait Bucket at (920) 838-0850.

into Lake Ellen when a resident Eagle Scout candidate built cribs several years ago.

Dutton suggested the crib project to offset the lake's lack of cover. The added cover should help out the panfish being stocked by the residents.

"There are almost no weeds and there is no woody structure in the lake. It is clear, deep, and has an expansive sand bottom," said Dutton.

Laine said volunteers used pallets to build cribs, filled them with branches, cabled them together and sunk them with cement blocks. The association also does secchi disk readings, dissolved oxygen testing, and water testing to track water quality.

Bluegills are the most common panfish. Dutton has heard from local anglers that Ellen has a history of offering good bluegill fishing.

"I think there are still some opportunities for that, but the lack of top level predators hinders size of panfish," she said.

A 2005 DNR survey sampled largemouths and turned up one fish at 17 inches and one more of legal size. The rest (at a rate of 42 largemouths per mile of shoreline) were all under the size limit.

"Recruitment is happening, but either the growth rate is very slow or there is a lot of harvest after they've reached legal size. It could be a coupling of both factors. There is reproduction occurring or we wouldn't see these smaller fish," said Dutton.

Bluegills outnumber perch and crappies.

"If you have no luck there, or want to try for walleyes, go to Random Lake. For panfish, try Long Lake in Fond du Lac County. It's not far away," said Dutton.

Laine said the association will continue to monitor the fish population. An attendant is at the landing 16 hours a week to talk to visitors about clean boats, clean water and interview willing anglers on their catch – kept or released. The association asks anglers to help track fish catches through its web page. Those interested in fishing Lake Ellen can also use the web site to see what's going on as the group monitors the fish population.

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