DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Ash Lake (26-0294-00)

MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

November 2026

- Ash Lake is a 218-acre shallow basin located within the Bois De Sioux River watershed approximately two miles northwest of Wendell in Grant County, Minnesota.
- The DNR Section of Wildlife owns an 86-acre tract known as the Schuck Wildlife Management Area on the north and northeast side of the lake that includes 5,800 feet of accessible shoreline. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns approximately 2,000 feet of accessible shoreline on the south end of the lake as part of the Mud Lake Waterfowl Production Area.
- Maximum depth is 4.0 feet, and average depth is 3.2 feet at run out elevation of 1072.0 (NGVD 29).
- Ash Lake was known as an important resting and staging area for migrating waterfowl, as well as an important brood lake for waterfowl and shorebirds.
- Ash Lake was designated for wildlife management in 1983. Habitat conditions and waterfowl use improved following the construction of a water control structure and drawdown efforts in the mid-1980's.
- High water levels were common throughout the 1990's and 2000's, resulting in the loss of emergent vegetation and poor water clarity. Drawdown efforts in 2007 were unsuccessful because of sedimentation and dense cattail growth in the outlet channel.
- A permanent pump and lift station were installed near the outlet in 2011 to enhance drawdown potential. The Lake Management Plan was updated to reflect the new infrastructure and drawdown capability. A restriction on the use of motorized watercraft was also added to the revised Lake Management Plan.
- A full drawdown with the new pump began in the fall of 2011 and lasted through the 2012 growing season. The drawdown resulted in much improved water clarity and increases in submerged and emergent vegetation which met or exceeded the Desired Outcomes listed in the Lake Management Plan.
- Above average precipitation during the 2014 growing season resulted in water levels well above the run-out elevation. Mid-summer water clarity decreased and was near management thresholds, however submerged and emergent vegetation was still abundant.
- Habitat conditions were variable for several years. Seasonal partial drawdowns were attempted to improve habitat, but wet conditions during the fall and downstream capacity limited the drawdown attempts.
- Below normal precipitation during the growing seasons in 2021-2023 resulted in lake levels dropping below the run-out elevation during July and August of those years. The abundance of submerged aquatic plants and water clarity were much improved. The coverage of emergent vegetation gradually decreased from approximately 30% of the surface area of the lake in 2013 to around 10% in 2024.

- The management goal for Ash Lake is to provide quality shallow lake habitat for migratory and breeding waterfowl, as well as other wetland dependent native fauna by:
    - Enhancing and maintaining an abundant and diverse aquatic plant community.
    - Enhancing and maintaining water clarity and quality.
    - Maintaining hemi-marsh conditions in shallow bays.
- Proposed management actions to achieve the management goal include:
    - Conducting periodic temporary drawdowns, when climatic conditions provide an opportunity, based on existing habitat conditions of the lake.
    - Maintaining the outlet channel to reduce the length of high-water phases during wet periods and allow lake levels to reach run-out elevation or lower during normal to dry conditions.
    - Monitoring water levels, aquatic plant abundance and distribution, and fish community characteristics to determine management activities.
    - Maintaining the motorized watercraft restriction to reduce disturbance for breeding and migratory waterfowl and shorebirds.