DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Towner Lake (26-0218-00)

MANAGEMENT PLAN SUMMARY

November 2026

- Towner Lake is a 162-acre shallow basin located within the Mustinka River watershed approximately four miles southeast of Herman in Grant County, Minnesota.
- The DNR Section of Wildlife owns a 120-acre tract known as the Towner Wildlife Management Area on the south and west side of the lake that includes 5,700 feet of accessible shoreline. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service owns approximately 1,550 feet of accessible shoreline on the east of the basin as part of the DeLong Waterfowl Production Area. The city of Herman owns approximately 8,250 feet of shoreline on the north and northeast side of the lake as part of Niemackl Park.
- Maximum depth is 4.8 feet, and average depth is 3.5 feet at run out elevation of 1068.8 (NGVD 29).
- Towner Lake is one of 18 shallow lakes within the Niemackl watershed which was historically known for migratory and breeding waterfowl habitat as well as waterfowl hunting.
- High water levels, poor water clarity, and undesirable fish communities were common throughout the 1990's and 2000's on Towner Lake. Shallow lake surveys documented Secchi disk measurements less than 1.0 feet and aquatic vegetation was only present in the shallow northeast bay of the lake.
- Towner Lake was designated for wildlife management in 2003. A Lake Management Plan was developed with the main objectives being to conduct temporary drawdowns to re-establish hardstem bulrush across one-third of the basin and reduce fish abundance. A permanent pump and lift station were installed near the outlet in 2004 to conduct temporary drawdowns.
- A restriction on the use of motorized watercraft was also added to the Lake Management Plan in 2006 following a public information meeting and formal comment period.
- Temporary drawdowns on Towner Lake have been effective in improving water clarity and re-establishing aquatic vegetation.
- Emergent vegetation that developed during the drawdown phase on exposed mudflats included a mixture of cattail, sedges, softstem bulrush and other transitional wetland species. Cattail became dominant after reflooding and covered 70 to 85 percent of the lake following full drawdowns. Submerged vegetation was dense in open water areas.
- Habitat improvements following drawdowns were generally short-lived. High water events are common in the watershed and can extend for long periods which greatly reduce emergent vegetation. High water conditions also allow undesirable fish to migrate into the lake from downstream sources and overwinter.
- Water level management has proven to be difficult on Towner Lake. Drawdowns can only be conducted when water levels are low to normal on the Niemackl Chain of Lakes and flows in Grant County Ditch #8 are not causing erosion or overflowing into adjacent property.

- The management goal for Towner 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 emergent vegetation over 30% of the surface area of the lake.
    - Enhancing and maintaining water clarity and quality.
    - Maintaining an abundant and diverse submerged plant community.
- 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.
    - 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.