

# L A K E O R O N O NAVIGATOR

A publication of the Lake Orono Water Quality Committee and the Lake Orono Improvement Association, Inc.

2006



*Welcome* to the City of Elk River. In its midst is Lake Orono, a 281-acre recreational lake. The public park on its southwest shore has a boat launch, two fishing piers, beach, volleyball court, softball fields, playground, walking trails and park shelters. It's the location of Elk River's extremely popular 4th of July celebration. City Hall is also located on its shores.

## About Lake Orono

### History

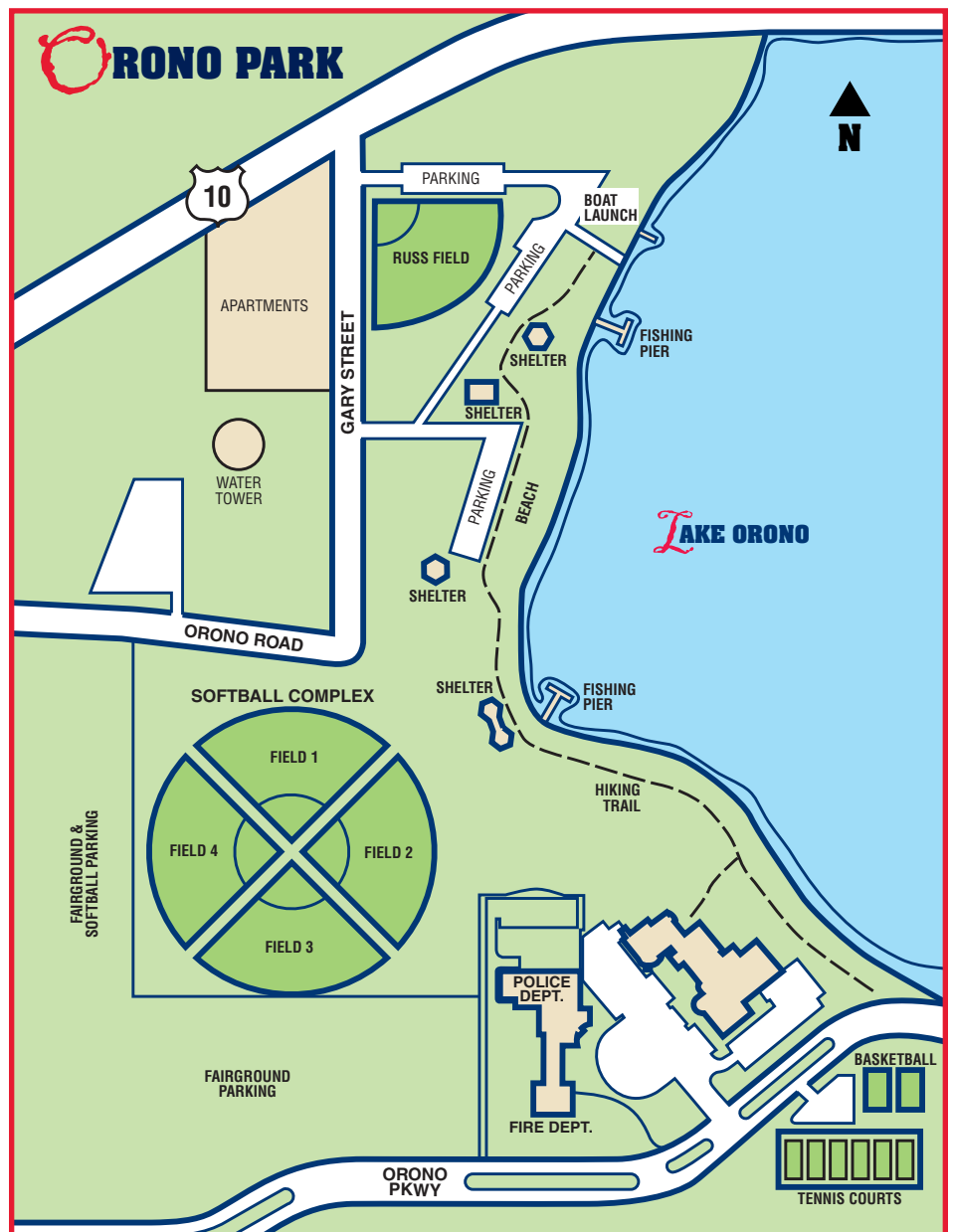
**O**riginally Lake Orono was a millpond, formed by damming the Elk River as it flowed through farmland. The first dam was built in 1851 by Ard Godfrey, prominent in the lumber and milling industry in St. Anthony, and John C. Jamieson to provide power for a sawmill and a feedmill. A small town grew near this site and was named Orono after Jamieson's hometown in Maine.

In 1916, a new dam was built slightly north of the original, and increased the reservoir significantly. Sixty-two years later, the Dept. of Natural Resources ordered the lake lowered because of the dam's poor condition. In 1980, this dam was rebuilt.

More recently, the lake had been filling in with sediment where the Elk enters on the northwest end, making that section unnavigable. With volunteer time from citizens, research, and cooperation between agencies, the lake was dredged in 1998.

### Public access

The public access is located off of Gary Street south of Highway 10. Please be aware that there are no lifeguards at the beach. Local ordinances that directly govern the lake



include: watercraft (posted at the access), hunting, shoreland, and snowmobile.

Please note that, with the exception of the park and City property, the islands and the land surrounding the lake are not public.

### For more information

City of Elk River, 763/635-1000  
Lake Orono Improvement Association, Ed Bury, president, 763/241-8887; website, <http://www.lakeoron.org>



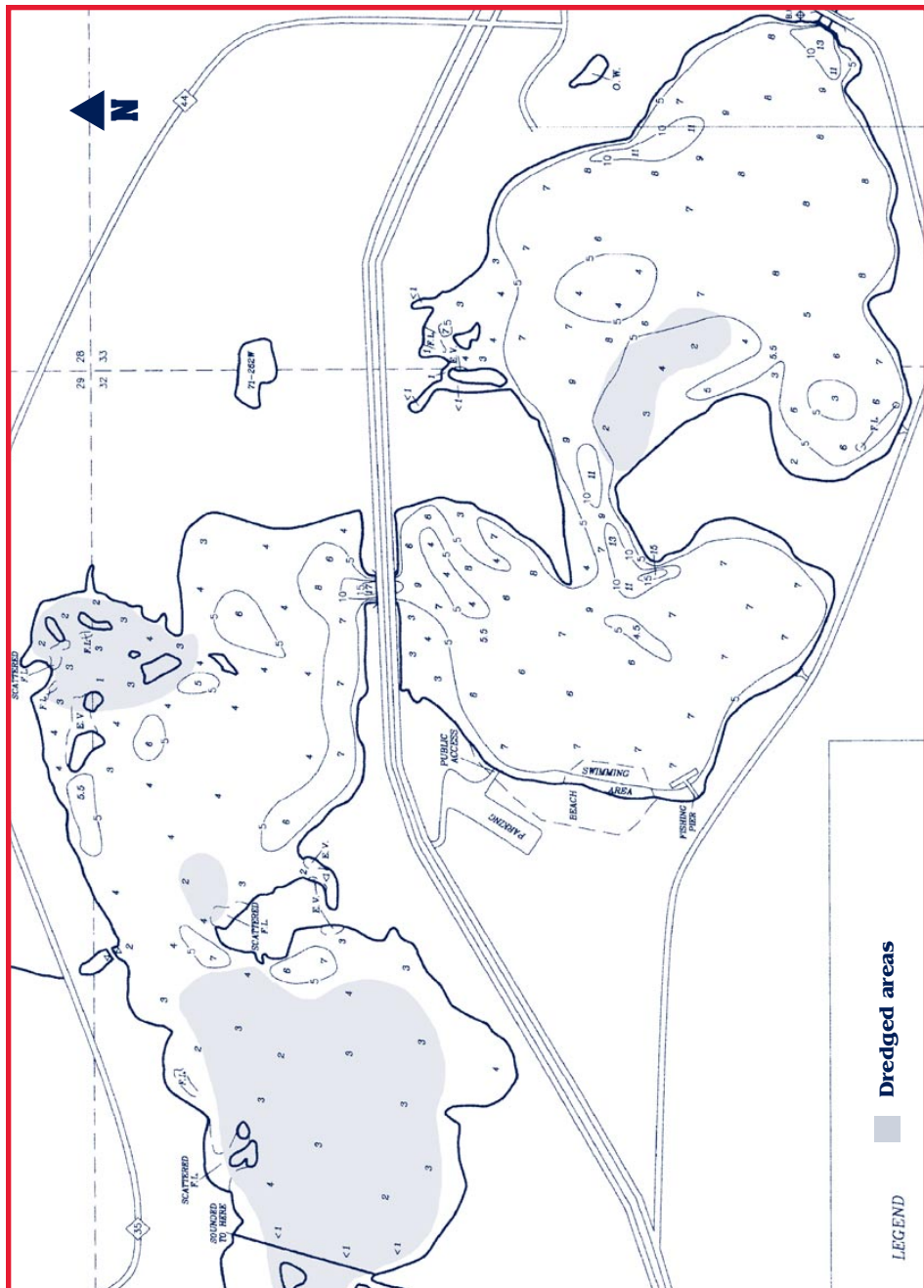
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## Fishing

**O**rono is fairly shallow but does have a couple of spots over 15 feet deep. The Elk River runs through it, therefore many of the fish are transient.

Pan fish and game fish that are normally found in the lake include crappies, smallmouth bass, northerns, and occasionally a walleye or two.

In 2005, the Lake Orono Improvement Association and the City paid a private contractor to stock 3,000 sunnies. In 2004 the DNR stocked the lake with 309 bluegill sunnies.



MAP © 1998 MN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES. DREGGING DATA FROM THE CITY OF ELK RIVER.

## About water quality

**L**ake Orono is at the tail end of the Elk River watershed—an area that drains 613 square miles of Minnesota farmland, wetlands, and forests in Benton and Sherburne Counties. Therefore, activities up the Elk influence the lake's water quality and clarity. For that reason, the City of Elk River monitors water quality frequently to assure it is safe for swimming and other recreational activities.

Water clarity is another issue. Since it is essentially a wide spot in the Elk, water clarity is about the same as it is for any river in central Minnesota—silt flowing through obscures visibility to about 2 to 3 feet on most summer days. This flow, however, has an advantage. The current of the Elk is great enough to completely exchange the water in an average of 4 days, so it rarely gets exceedingly green like some land-locked lakes, but it still doesn't get very clear, either.

**Note:** The lake was dredged in 1998, increasing the depth slightly on the northwestern-most lobe to approx. 4 feet throughout, with spot dredging in other parts of the lake.

With your help, water quality and clarity can be improved by eliminating use of lawn fertilizer containing phosphorus, and by keeping leaves and grass clippings from entering the lake. In 2001, the City of Elk River passed an ordinance that bans the use of lawn fertilizers containing phosphorus. The only exceptions are in establishing new turf or if test results reveal that your lawn is lacking P. Since our soils are already high in P, it's unlikely tests would indicate a need for more. Call Sherburne County Extension, 763/241-2720 for a test kit (there is a small fee for the kit & analysis).

### Why ban the use of phosphorus?

Phosphorus increases the growth of plants. Any fertilizer or yard waste that runs off onto driveways and streets eventually ends up in the lake. The phosphorus encourages growth of algae, which in high

concentrations can turn the lake green. Unpleasant to swim in, algae is not usually harmful, but it's certainly not desirable.

### How do I know if fertilizer contains phosphorus?

**Buy only lawn fertilizer with a "0" middle number on the bag!** Before you use a lawn service, ask them if they are licensed with the City and use no-phosphorus fertilizer. There is also a large amount of phosphorus in leaves and grass clippings. Please make sure to sweep all yard waste off driveways and streets, and **do not dump any waste** into ditches, streets, gutters, storm drains, etc.

