

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Viewing the blue waters of Benzie County's Crystal Lake from the hills is a beautiful sight. Other ways to appreciate this glacial gift are on the shores, from a boat, from the air, or even from a diver's view under water. R. William (Bill) Decker has observed this Lake since 1951 from all these aspects. A native of Michigan with homes in Grand Rapids and Crystal West Shore, his interest as shared by many others is in maintaining what we have - a beautiful body of water.

When approached by the Benzie County Board of Public Works to chair the Ad-Hoc Committee dedicated to take some action for the preservation of the quality of the Lake, he accepted knowing first hand that education of the land owners and general public was the first and foremost need.

Bill's engineering background and contractor designer profession instinctively told him to investigate all of the studies made during the last 19 years and in so doing found a need to summarize and make meaningful the implication of the previous studies and reports.

After presentation to the Committee of the outline for the text, he has spent months developing a readable volume.

Robert Long

NOTE TO CURRENT READERS

As a prototypical Lake Owners' Manual, *Crystal Lake - Life or Death (CLLD)* is a significant book. It resulted from discussions by local citizens who formed an Ad Hoc Committee to the Benzie County Public Works Department. This Committee raised concerns about two issues: (1) present and future water quality problems of the Crystal Lake Watershed, and (2) absence of an equitable and effective plan for watershed management. At the time of its original printing in 1987, *CLLD* was one of the first Lake Owners' Manuals developed for riparian owners and visitors in Northwest Lower Michigan. It specifically addressed environmental issues facing the Crystal Lake Watershed (Benzie County, MI). *CLLD* has served well as a model for other Lake Owners' Manuals throughout Michigan. Its basic messages remain timely and are shared by many other riparian communities. Written in plain, non-technical language, the original text touched upon many issues: the water quality of Crystal Lake and Cold Creek, the impact of nutrients on the Watershed, the often opposing forces of government and development, the requirements of good septic systems, and the need for continued public education.

Crystal Lake, the 9th largest inland lake in Michigan, appears unchanged to the passing eye of history. Its long-time attraction as a major recreational resource has continued unabated for more than a century. Land and water use and development within the Watershed continues to intensify, however, and the needs for environmental sustainability and watershed management are very relevant. In the intervening 15 years since *CLLD* first appeared, new issues have arisen, such as intensified shoreline and ridgeline developments and invasions by exotic species, such as Eurasian Watermilfoil and the Zebra Mussel. These issues have been addressed in several collaborative monitoring studies conducted by qualified environmental professionals from local environmental organizations, and local and state government agencies.

The original intent of *CLLD* was the education of property owners and visitors. A series of annual "Updates" have been provided to the public, first by the Ad Hoc Committee, then by its immediate successor, the Crystal Lake Clean Water Committee, and now by its current successor, The Crystal Lake Watershed Fund, Inc. (*) with its Science Review Panel^(2*). This tradition of public education has continued to date through fourteen "Updates", which have addressed pertinent environmental issues.

This edition of *Crystal Lake - Life or Death* is for reflection by previous readers, and for discovery and contemplation by new readers. It is reproduced here in its entirety (with minor editing and annotations) ^(3*).

Dr. Stacy L. Daniels, Crystal Lake Watershed Fund, Inc., January 22, 2002

¹(*) The Crystal Lake Watershed Fund, Inc. (CLWF) ([//www.CLWF.org](http://www.CLWF.org)), a nonprofit organization, was formed in July 1994 by merging the Clean Water Committee of Crystal Lake (focus on water quality monitoring) and the Friends of Crystal Lake (focus on land use and zoning). The CLWF supports citizen initiatives for water quality monitoring, septic system control, sustainable development, & land conservancy through education, for watershed management.

²(*) The Science Review Panel (SRP) of the Crystal Lake Watershed Fund, Inc. (CLWF) is active in developing consensus viewpoints by reviewing environmental issues of particular local interest and by providing scientifically sound recommendations where appropriate to the public. This involves review of CLWF sponsored studies, and assessment of studies conducted by other responsible organizations that have demonstrated performance in related areas.

³ (*) Current footnotes in this reproduction are numbered and marked with (*) to distinguish them from original footnotes.