

# CHAIN OF LAKES PROVIDE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORTH DAKOTA

By **Kimberly Cook**

Most adults can fondly remember the warm summer days of their youth spent swimming, fishing, and basking in the sun. It is possible to relive those memories and create new ones with time spent at the Chain of Lakes Recreation Area along the McClusky Canal in central North Dakota. Four in-line lakes along the canal – East Park Lake, West Park Lake, Heckers Lake, and New Johns Lake – are commonly referred to as the Chain of Lakes and boast an abundance of recreational opportunities.

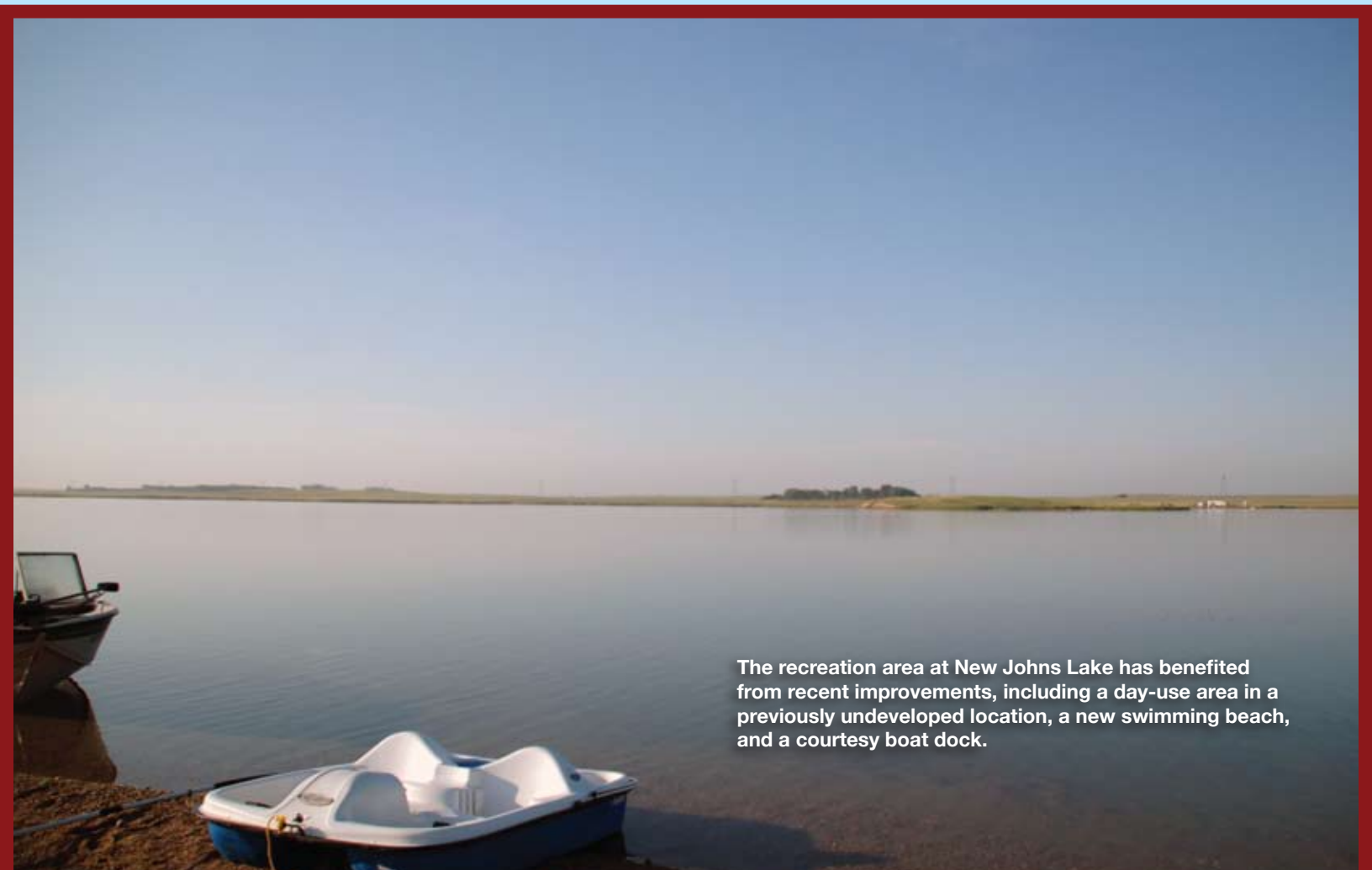
The Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion), in conjunction with the Bureau of Reclamation, has worked diligently to develop and enhance the recreational facilities in the Chain of Lakes area in order to provide recreational opportunities for North Dakotans to enjoy. Much of the work has been completed by Garrison Diversion's Operations and Maintenance staff, which is

also responsible for the daily maintenance of the area.

Camping, boating, hiking, and other outdoor activities, such as biking and birding, are possible in the Chain of Lakes area. For the angler, walleye, perch, muskie, pike, and largemouth bass are found throughout the Chain of Lakes. Recreation areas at each of the lakes are equipped with vault toilets and primitive camping sites for the convenience of visitors. East Park Lake, Heckers, and New Johns lakes are also equipped with boat ramps.

In the past few years, significant improvements have been made to several Chain of Lakes recreational facilities. In 2009, enhancements at East Park Lake included the installation of a handicap fishing pier, sidewalk, concrete parking pad, and a handicap accessible fish cleaning station and RV dump site. Parking and access to restrooms were also made handicap accessible.

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benefited from recent improvements, including the creation of a day-use area in a previously undeveloped location. A sandy swimming beach spanning 200 feet was also created at New Johns Lake, as well as a courtesy boat dock, a concrete boat ramp, and an handicap accessible fishing pier. In addition, a camping loop was developed, adding several campsites to New Johns Lake, and a handicap accessible picnic shelter was constructed. A parking lot, sidewalks, and vault toilets have also been added for the convenience of visitors, and 88 trees have been transplanted to the area.

Kathy Duttenhefner of Menoken spends nearly every summer weekend camping with her family at New Johns Lake. “It’s an awesome place to camp,” she says. “We love the large campsites right on the water, sandy beaches, wide open spaces, and the closeness to Bismarck. There is nothing else like it in our area.”

Lake Brekken-Holmes and Hoffer Lake are two additional lakes associated with the McClusky Canal. The recreation areas affiliated with these lakes are both examples of community facilities that have improved the economic and recreational opportunities of the local communities of Turtle Lake and McClusky.

Lake Brekken-Holmes boasts softball diamonds, shelters equipped with electricity and water for camping and picnicking, horseshoe pits, playground equipment, a concession building, restrooms, a dump station, boat ramps with courtesy docks, and a fishing pier at Lightning Lake. The area is managed by the Turtle Lake Park Board.

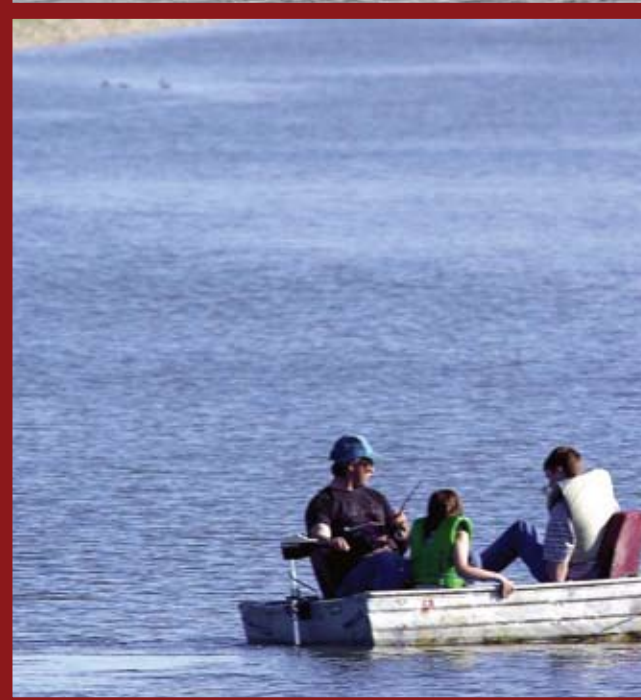
Hoffer Lake is located three miles north of McClusky. There, the recreation area was developed in cooperation with the local park board and is managed by the Sheridan County Park Board. Development includes tree planting, the construction of new boat ramps, and camping and picnic areas with fishing docks. Visitors to Hoffer Lake can partake in activities such as swimming, fishing, and boating. Garrison Diversion assisted in developing the area through the Matching Recreation Grant Program, a cost-share grant program available to eligible entities within its 28-county district.

The McClusky Canal is important to the recreation areas at the Chain of Lakes and its associated lakes because water is pumped from the canal as needed in order to maintain optimal water levels for recreation. This process is completed by Garrison Diversion’s operations and maintenance crew, which also performs maintenance on the canal and at the Chain of Lakes.

In the future, Garrison Diversion, in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation, hopes to further develop the Chain of Lakes with additional tree plantings and the installation of new boat ramps and other facilities.

The many amenities available make the Chain of Lakes and its affiliated lakes the perfect summer destination to enjoy the great outdoors. Garrison Diversion hopes visitors will come for a day or a weekend and create memories that will last a lifetime!

**Recreational opportunities abound on New Johns Lake (pictured at top) and the McClusky Canal (center). Contractors (Industrial Builders, Inc.) preparing the wet-well for cement (bottom) at the Mile Marker 7.5 Irrigation Project.**





## Mile Marker 7.5 Irrigation Project Update

In the fall of 2010, Garrison Diversion began construction on Phase I of the Mile Marker 7.5 (MM 7.5) Irrigation Project, the first part of an irrigation project set to irrigate 7,000 acres from McClusky Canal. This project is bringing renewed life to the canal and will provide benefits to farm operations and extensive economic benefits to North Dakota.

Upon completion of Phase I of this three phase project, approximately 3,500 acres will be irrigated from the McClusky Canal from 26 irrigation pivots. The project's target operation start date was the end of May.

Over the past few months, extensive progress has been made in project construction. SJ Louis, a contracting company from Minnesota, began the pipeline construction in mid-November and worked until winter conditions prevented further progress in early January. At that time, about 70 percent of its tasks were complete. SJ Louis returned to the pipeline in mid-April, ready to finish its contracted responsibilities. The project requires approximately 80,000 feet (or 15 miles) of total pipeline. At the time of this deadline in early May, about 5,000 feet of pipeline remain to be installed, as well as seven manifold assemblies required.

Over the winter, designs were finalized for the wet-well, intake structures, and the pumping plant needed for the project. Industrial Builders, Inc. won the bid for the wet-well and intake structures and began construction on these elements at the end of April. The foundation for the concrete wet-well is in place and the 20-foot walls have been poured.

Element Solutions, an irrigation company in Bismarck, will be installing the pumping plant and booster station. Element Solutions is also responsible for installing the necessary controls to operate the irrigation project.

Garrison Diversion's operations and maintenance crew also assisted with the MM 7.5 Irrigation Project by excavating the clay liner in the McClusky Canal and preparing the wet-well site. It is also responsible for placing the clay liner back upon completion and backfilling the wet-well site. Garrison Diversion's operation and maintenance staff will operate and maintain the irrigation system once it is up and running.

At the time of this deadline, according to Garrison Diversion's District Engineer Kip Kovar, the project remains on schedule and the pipeline will be filled at the beginning of June. "Despite the wet spring, I am pleased with the progress that has been made on the project. Delivering irrigation water out of the McClusky Canal will provide a tremendous benefit for the participating farmers."