

29-August-2018

Justin Hall, Chairman of the Town Board, Town of Bass Lake
Bass Lake Town Hall
14412 West County Highway K
Hayward, Wisconsin 54843

Subject: Proposal for a No Feeding Waterfowl Ordinance

Dear Mr Chairman:

I wish to propose an ordinance prohibiting the feeding of geese and other waterfowl in our township.

Some background: I live in Stukey Bay on LCO. The resident geese and their droppings are a nuisance here and seems to be getting worse. We believe part of the problem is that some people feed them, I have witnessed that feeding. The nearby neighbors are widely upset about the geese problem. I believe not feeding them will help manage the problem. I believe not feeding them is natural, good for the waterfowl and good for humans and the environment.

A local "no-feeding" ordinance is needed here in Bass Lake Township and would likely work greatly in eliminating the problem. In a 1998 article (<https://dnr.wi.gov/wmr/mag/html/stories/1998/dec98/geese.htm>) in the DNR magazine talked about a task force addressing the problem and many solutions. One quote: "*The task force judged 'no feeding ordinances' as a good first step to dissuade goose flocks from an area.*". Another quote from the USDA wildlife services: (https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/wildlife_damage/content/printable_version/fs_waterfowl.pdf) "*...some of the management techniques we may use or recommend: Discontinue feeding. Wild birds can find their own food and will survive without handouts. Once people stop feeding them, waterfowl will revert to better quality natural foods. In many cases, the birds will leave*".

Feeding the geese and waterfowl is unnatural, unhealthy for the birds and bad for the environment. In another DNR article (<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/documents/managegoose.pdf>), it states: "*Feeding waterfowl is a popular activity for many people, but it is a significant cause of high urban bird populations. Consider implementing a "No waterfowl feeding" ordinance or policy. Congregating wildlife by hand feeding can be unhealthy nutritionally for geese and more easily spread disease through waterfowl populations. Feeding also disrupts natural patterns and concentrates waterfowl which can have a decoy effect, attracting more birds to the location.*" Later it adds: "*As the population increases, so do the incidents of human conflict. High concentrations of resident Canada geese can lead to landscape damage, decreased water quality, disruption of recreational activities and decreased aesthetics from abundant droppings*". The landscape and erosion damage is real from where I see the problem. Neighbors have seen the bird seed in the water. A goose defecates 1.5 pounds a day. This should be troubling to others as LCO is already "an impaired water". We need to "save our lakes" as the local COLA board is always eager to remind us of our duty.

Basically I conclude it is legal to feed them. I have studied on the internet and talked to the agencies about the problem from a current legal viewpoint. I called DNR and they said it is basically not illegal at the state or federal level. One DNR publication states: (<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/documents/regs/waterfowlbait.pdf>) "*Feeding waterfowl - It is illegal to feed waterfowl, coots or doves for recreational viewing purposes unless the feed is contained within an*

elevated bird feeding device or structure that prevents access by deer. Feeders must be located within 50 feet of a dwelling devoted to human occupancy or a business open to the public. Feeding waterfowl by hand, including scattering or tossing food to waterfowl, is allowed, provided feed is not placed more than 30 feet away from the person doing the feeding, and the person makes all reasonable attempts to clean up the unconsumed feed before moving a distance greater than 30 feet from the deposited feed." I think this wording does not take care of the problem. The geese can be fed legally and they remain in the area. Additionally, from emails/calls to Erica at Bass Lake, Paulsen/Olson at Sawyer County, and the local DNR: I am not aware of any current local ordinance on feeding.

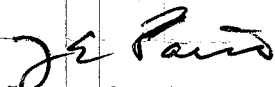
I read an article that says Madison has a no feeding ordinance. Their geese problem became so severe that they started culling, among a whole host of other measures.

Other/Issues/Exceptions: With the proposed ordinance to ban waterfowl feeding, I see little issues. It is a good measure for the waterfowl and good for the humans. I suppose there should be an exception if there is some domestic raising of geese or other waterfowl for consumption or back yard pets. This ban would not affect hunters, as they currently are not allowed to bait waterfowl (see <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/hunt/documents/regs/waterfowlbait.pdf>). I suppose the visiting 5 year old kid will be disappointed that he/she can not feed the bread to the ducks. Instead, we must teach our youth that its not healthy for the ducks. I suppose people that currently feed the waterfowl would object to the ordinance, so maybe education of the problem needs to be attempted in addition to the ordinance. Maybe COLA and the newspaper could be used to educate. I see no other issues.

I feel the first violation should have a light penalty. Subsequent violations should increase in penalty. I assume the sheriff and game warden would enforce the ordinance.

So, in conclusion: Feeding the waterfowl unnaturally attracts extra waterfowl, particularly geese. It is bad for the waterfowl. They create a nuisance to the landowners. It is bad for the lakes and the environment. I urge you to pass an ordinance banning the feeding of waterfowl. I will offer my assistance if that can be helpful. I unfortunately have a unchangeable commitment for your next board meeting on September 10, but I urge you to proceed.

Sincerely,



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cc: Erica Warshawsky, Town of Bass Lake Clerk
attachment: Neighbors in approval.