

Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative

A not-for-profit organization and land trust

Working across state boundaries to enhance Wolf Lake



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Discarded Tire Cleanup Halted, But Resumes

Contact: Michael Boos, 219 933-7149 or 312 220-0120

Immediate Release

Cleaning up messes made by others at the Wolf Lake watershed has been a decade-long pursuit of Joseph Kruczek of Hammond.

Now, he may be fined \$1,000 for doing so.

Kruczek and his nephew Joe Wright hauled more than 600 tires from Wolf Lake from 2016 to 2021. They left them in piles and the city of Hammond removed them.

In 2021, Hammond officials informed Kruczek that the city had reached its tire quota. He had to look elsewhere.

The I-90 Toll Road bisects the lake, so the two-man cleanup crew began hauling tires to the toll road for road crews to pick up. Kruczek negotiated with them, with the support of the Lake County Health officials concerned about discarded tires becoming breeding havens for mosquitos.

The two hauled more than 150 tires up the embankment for road crews to pick up last year. But weeks ago Kruczek discovered his 2021 agreement with toll road officials was no longer in effect.

He had not been informed of the change and was startled by the threat of a fine.

“They are sending the wrong message,” Kruczek said. “Fining for volunteer clean-ups?”

Kruczek explained that the illegal dumping occurred 30 to 50 years ago,.

“We are just trying to correct for that,” he added.

He is checking with city, county and state officials for a solution.

Kruczek, a retired oil process operator at BP, and Wright are members of the Association for the Wolf Lake Initiative (AWLI). They are avid fishermen and were well-acquainted with the lake even before their clean up efforts.

Some of the tires recovered still have rims. Most are in water but some can be found in mounds of waste.

Some are found on property deserted long ago. The defunct G & G Trucking is a good example of that. Others are found on property whose owners agree to haul them away, like NIPSCO, Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad, and Kelly Construction.

Kruczek estimates that he and his nephew have removed 1,800 tires over the years. But they do more. During droughts, they can be found watering newly planted trees and bushes.

Inspiration for the clean-ups dates back to January 2014 at AWLI’s Winter Wonderland at Wolf Lake festival. A discussion ensued about the need to clean up hundreds of wooden and metal stakes, wire and netting mesh left from the shoreline restoration work in 2005-2007.

Kruszek cleaned up that mess before turning attention to the tires. In 2015-16 he also assisted researchers as a volunteer in a multi-year study of mudpuppy salamanders along the Wolf Lake shoreline in Chicago.

Kruczek is one of the invited speakers for the Wolf Lake Watershed Advisory Committee meeting on November 4 at Calumet College of St. Joseph. AWLI, who organizes the event, is

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a bi-state not-for-profit organization and land trust seeking to protect and enhance the Wolf Lake watershed.

The November 4 event is co-sponsored by Calumet College and the city of Hammond

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