

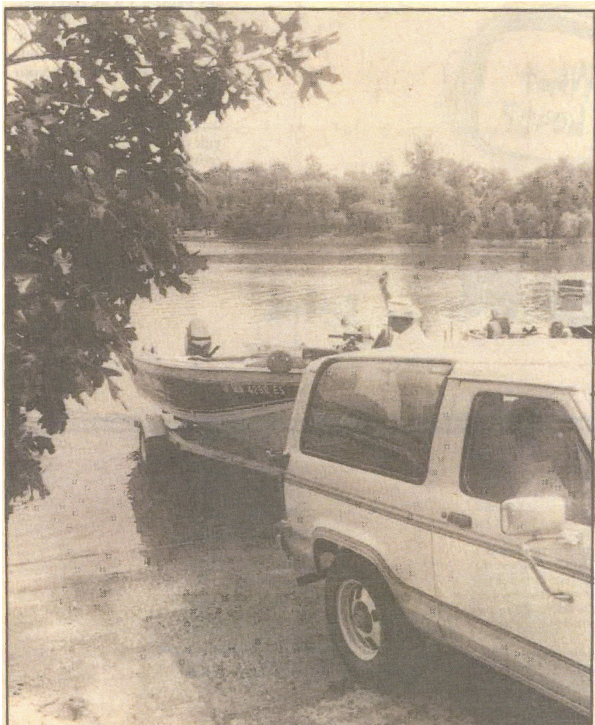
Hubert B. Kohnen Memorial Landing

Most visitors and residents who use the current public access on Lake Sarah in Hennepin County drive right past the sign pictured on the right without giving it much thought – assuming they noticed the sign at all. Many of the public landings in this great State are created and maintained by the Minnesota DNR, for some reason this one is an exception. It stands testament to the things people can create when working together to solve a problem.

Prior to 1987, a public access to Lake Sarah was located on the west end of North Shore Drive in Greenfield, almost directly across the lake from the present boat landing. Additionally, boats could be launched for a fee at the Shady Beach Resort on the south side of the mid lake channel. In early 1987 the North Shore Drive access off Hwy 55, which was located across private property, was closed at the request of the property owner John Lambros.

The only remaining access to the lake for public use was the boat launch at the Shady Beach Resort operated by its new owner Steve Emery. That summer Steve was quoted in the newspaper as having too much business at his ramp creating a problem for parking and for customers staying at his campground. "I'm running a campground not a boat launch", he said. "I haven't turned anyone away and I try to be cordial to everyone, but it gets to be a problem sometimes".

In July of 1987, Martha Reger - MN DNR area manager, wrote in a memo that she had received 30-35 calls regarding the closing of the Highway 55 access since June 15 of that year. She wrote that she felt there was a large and hurried need for an access on Sarah and added that Delos Barber - MN DNR coordinator- Region 6 trails and waterways, had informed her of the DNR's inability to pursue any acquisition or development of a Lake Sarah public access for at least the next year due to lack of funds.



PREPARING TO LAUNCH — Shady Beach Resort does have a well-built launch point for boats. However, being the only public access has created congestion problems for campers and local residents.



An article in the August 31, 1987 edition of the Delano Eagle noted a flurry of activity requesting the DNR to investigate the construction of a public access on the lake. Andy McClay of the Delano Sportsmen's Club submitted a petition signed by nearly 600 area residents. In his letter to Martha Reger, Mr. McClay indicated that he could have obtained many more signatures but he hoped the 587 would be sufficient.

Victor Faith, city administrator for Greenfield, was quoted as saying the city owns roughly 1.25 acres on Lake Sarah and that they are in the process of doing a feasibility study concerning using some of the land for a boat access. Bob Gove, park manager at Hennepin Parks, said public access to Lake Sarah has been placed high in the list of priorities for park development. "The earliest we could do anything would be 1988. We first have to get the funds, and they won't be available until then" Gove said.

The Aug 17, 1987 Rockford Newsleader reported the DNR & Greenfield were working together to develop an access on the south side of the lake. "We're pretty close. It could be in here by fall" said Victor Faith.

The informal proposal from Martha Reger, MN DNR dated August 6, 1987 reported she had visited the south side site and found it to have potential. She suggested that the City of Greenfield and the Department of Natural Resources enter into a cooperative agreement with the following conditions:

1. The City of Greenfield will retain ownership of the land. They will agree to operate and maintain the site as a public access according to MN DNR specifications.
2. The City would agree to provide equipment and labor for the purpose of clearing, grubbing, and blading a rough area for a parking lot and blade the steep entrance road down the hill.
3. The DNR would provide the gravel necessary to cover the lot and access road area, They will furnish, deliver, and spread it.
4. The DNR would also provide the concrete planks and connecting hardware and gravel to put in a ramp. The DNR will furnish some of the labor to install the ramp if the City could provide a front end loader to install the planks as well as equipment to prepare the site.

No other documents or newspaper accounts were found on the subject through fall and winter of 1987.

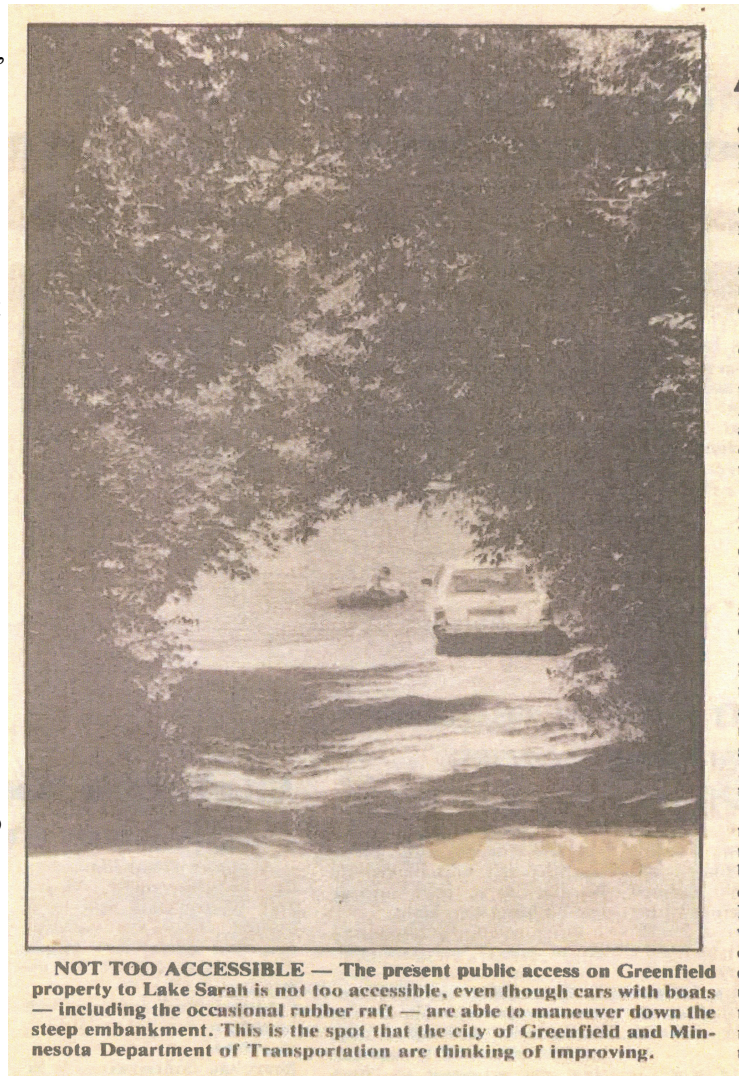
In the June 13, 1988 Rockford Newsleader, Larry Windom reported the City of Greenfield had received a proposal from the DNR whereby the City and the DNR would create a free public access on Lake Sarah. At the recommendation of Peter Bishop, Greenfield's city engineer, a special council meeting was set for Monday June 27, 1988 at 7:30 pm to discuss the proposal with residents since there "is some public concern on what's going in there".

An article in the July 2, 1988 Delano News Leader discussed the options being considered to solve the public access problem.

One of those solutions was to develop the city owned property on the south side of the west bay along S. Lake Sarah Drive. The photo on the right from the 7/2/88 newspaper article shows the site which was nothing more than a steep dirt path to the water. The DNR favored this site as an interim access, to be used until something better comes along and proposed a joint DNR and city of Greenfield access be constructed.

Residents at the June 27, 1988 Greenfield City Council meeting also heard a proposal from the Hennepin Parks District regarding the possible development of the Lake Sarah Regional Park which would include an access on the west end of the lake, possibly as soon as 1990.

Representatives from the Delano Sportsmen's Club were in attendance and presented the Council with a petition signed by 624 residents in the Delano area who were in favor of a public access. DSC representative Bill Bauman announced that the Sportsmen's Club was willing to donate \$5,000 to the city to go towards the construction of the new access. Greenfield Mayor Doris Conzet announced a decision regarding the DNR-Greenfield proposal would be voted upon at the next Council meeting.



In a letter to Greenfield dated July 5, 1988, Loren Kohnen and the Kohnen family offered to essentially fulfill Greenfield's obligations in development of the access by contributing all of the labor to clear the brush, stumps and trees from the site and agreed to provide the equipment to grade the site and spread the gravel to DNR standards. They also provided the equipment needed to install the concrete timbers for the ramp. In exchange the family requested that the landing become a permanent public access dedicated to Loren's Grandfather, Hubert B. Kohnen, who had long served on the Greenwood Township board before the conversion and renaming of the township to the City of Greenfield.

Loren and Marlin Kohnen (Loren's uncle) with some help from Ervin Kohnen (Loren's father) worked for the better part of a week to clear the brush, stumps and trees from the landing area, hauling the cuttings to Marlin's farm in Burschville, and burning them there.



L to R: Bill Sipe, Agnes Kohnen, Ervin Kohnen, Marlin Kohnen

Andy McClay, Bill Bauman and the Delano Sportsmen's Club donated \$5,000 to the project and with the help of Wally Cates and Cates Construction poured the concrete driveway down the hill to make access safer and to cut down on soil erosion from the steep grade. The forms for the driveway were filled from the bottom of the hill upwards by Delano Sportsmen's Club members who rough floated the concrete mix one load at a time.

The Minnesota DNR contributed the concrete boat ramp planks, the gravel, and the engineering along with a 51' dock to serve the landing. A State of MN agreement signed in 1988 provides for the City of Greenfield to be solely responsible for maintenance of the landing as needed in the future.



Ribbon cutting ceremony September 1988. L to R: C.O. Jim Konrad, Gordy Peterson, Carl Peterson, Mark Bauman, Lawrence Bauman, Kelly Arents (seated), Marlin Kohnen, Loren Kohnen, Agnes Kohnen, Joanne Kohnen, Ervin Kohnen, Andy McClay.

The Hubert B. Kohnen Memorial Landing was officially opened for use on September 22, 1988.



Kohnen Family sign dedication 1988. left to right: Agnes & Marlin Kohnen, Bernice & Elton Kohnen, Genevive "Gen" & Lloyd Kohnen, Lucille & Everett Theies, Harold Kohnen & unidentified lady friend, Hildegard & Ervin Kohnen, Helen & George Applequist.

The Kohnen Memorial Landing was updated somewhat in 1997 by cooperative agreement between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the City of Greenfield in conjunction with the Independence decision to reroute South Lake Sarah Drive further from the south shoreline to accommodate the newly created Tamarack subdivision. The State relayed the concrete plank ramp and replaced the old dock with a new roll in dock. Additional parking was created at the top of the hill above the landing by expanding the newly created circle at the end of Genaker Way.

More recently it was determined that a portable toilet was needed at the landing during the open water months. As a result, for the last several years, a rented portable toilet is installed to serve the public from May to October each year. The cost of this service is shared equally by the Delano Sportsmen's Club and the Lake Sarah Improvement Association.

People working together to share resources, funds, and skills to fulfill a public need for no other reason than it just needed to be done. Now that's "Old School". Thank you to everyone who joined the effort to provide the public with access to lake Sarah!

Article by Brad Spencer written March 2011 with a lot of help from Loren Kohnen, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Delano Sportsmen's Club, John McClay, Kathy McCullum, City of Greenfield and Toni Hirsch, City of Independence.