

Ordinary High Water Mark 101



Wendy Henniges
DNR Water Management Specialist

Ordinary High-Water Mark

“By **ordinary high-water mark** is meant the point on the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of the water is so continuous as to leave a distinct mark either by erosion, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, or other easily recognized characteristic.

Diana Shooting Club v. Husting (1914)



Complex Sites

... And where the bank or shore at any particular place is of such a character that it is impossible or difficult to ascertain where the point of ordinary high-water mark is, recourse may be had to other places on the bank or shore of the same stream or lake to determine whether a given stage of water is above or below the ordinary high-water mark.”

Research in advance of field work...

- **MAPS etc.**
 - Aerials
 - Topo
 - Lake survey map

- **Past Field Records**
 - DNR or Internal

- Other Lake Info
- Precipitation data
- Etc...



Identifying the OHWM

Biological & Physical Indicators

- multiple trunks on woody vegetation
- long-lived trees with roots avoiding standing water, pancake roots, elbows
- changes in vegetation
- erosion from wave action
- water stains on rocks/culverts/seawalls



Destruction of Terrestrial Vegetation



Water stains on large stationary features/objects




Pancake/lateral Roots





2008 Aerial

OHWM




2010 Aerial

OHWM

Site in 2013



11.20.2013



**Guess
where the
OHWM is?**



OHWM

This is what it
looked like out over
the lakebed...below
the OHWM...



The “cut” edge of the channel



Near the waters edge...



Out to the field!

