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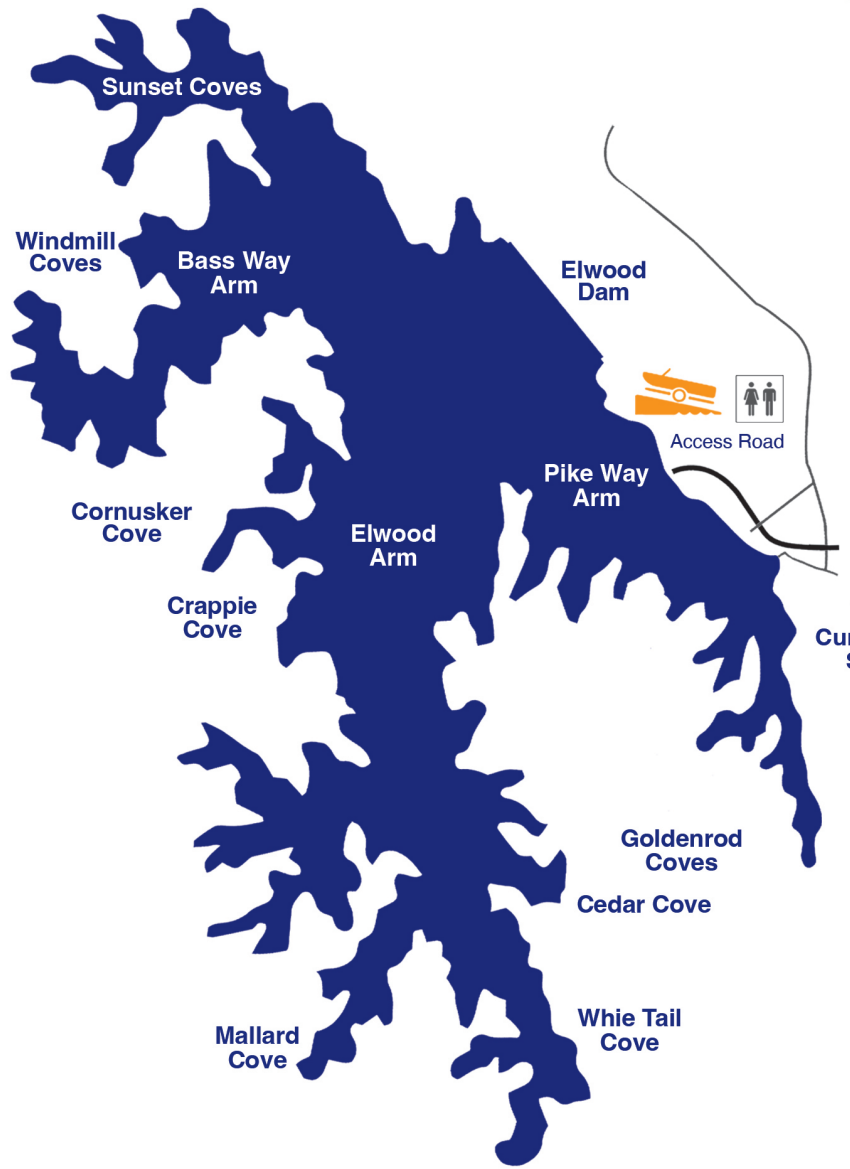
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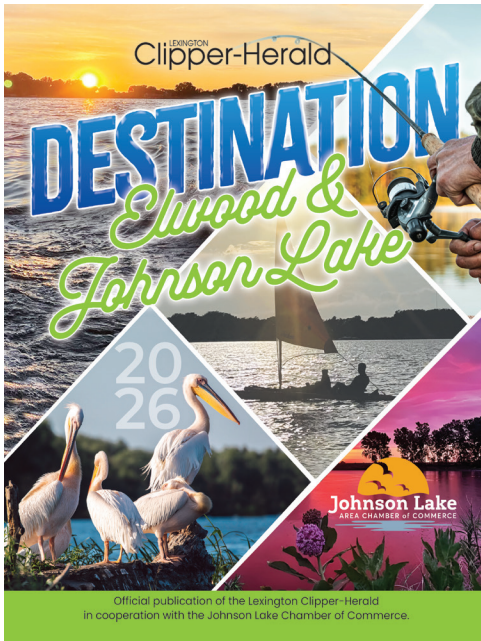


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THE HISTORY OF *Elwood* NEBRASKA

The town of Elwood, the Gosper County seat and home to Johnson Lake and the Elwood Reservoir, is surrounded by lush pastures filled with cattle and table-like irrigated fields full of grain. It is hard to imagine how the area appeared in May 1885 when the railroad and land company decided to start a town at this location.

Elwood became a terminal for the railroad when a roundhouse was built on the west edge of the town. People flocked to the area and began to build homes and businesses. Soon, a clamor rose to move the Gosper County seat away from the “current” community of Homerville, an inland town that had been by-passed by the railroad, to the up-and-coming village of Elwood. Ultimately, Elwood was selected as the Gosper County seat. The buildings and homes in Homerville were then moved nine miles north, across the hills to Elwood.

The population steadily rose, and then

took a jump in 1940 when the town was filled with construction workers building Johnson Lake and the irrigation canal system that is now Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District. Irrigation brought with it the ability to weather droughts. Agriculture income remains the primary base of the community.

Downtown Elwood was and still is the hub of the community. From the cooperative grocery store, banks, and gas stations, to the medical clinic and insurance businesses, Elwood boasts many businesses, including a convenience store and motel, a senior center that provides lunches for all ages, several retail businesses, and a caring and well-staffed care center/assisted living center. This small town with humble beginnings is still a close-knit and proud community.

We take pride in the appearance of our community, in our public school, and we proudly support our local businesses.

ELWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Home of the Pirates



Elwood Public School is located in central Nebraska 15 miles south of Lexington, NE. The Elwood School is a PreK-12 facility serving approximately 205 students. The mission of Elwood Public Schools is to provide a safe environment that fosters continuous learning and prepares students for an evolving global society.

The elementary contains approximately 110 students and the 7-12 population is around 95. Class sizes range from a low of 10 to a high of 20.

Students can participate in athletic

activities which include cross country, football, volleyball, basketball, wrestling, golf and track. These activities are in cooperation with Eustis-Farnam. This co-op is referred to as the Hi-Line Bulls. Other activities students are involved in are Speech, One Act, journalism, FCCLA, FFA, choir, band, student council, quiz bowl, Future Problem Solvers, Math Counts, National Honor Society, county government day, conference music contest, district music contest, honor band and choir clinics, state FCCLA convention, livestock judging

competitions, and science fair.

A PreK program was added in 2016-2017. This program serves mostly four-year-old students. It consistently averages 12-18 students.

The list of school employees includes the Superintendent, Principal, 25 certified staff members and 20 noncertified employees.

The district completed an addition to the east side of the school to include restrooms, a concession area, custodial storage and food service storage. This addition opened in August of 2020.

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An Abridged History of Johnson Lake by Jeff Buettner, Government & Public Relations Manager, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District

The area now covered by Johnson Lake was once a low-lying basin surrounded by gently sloping hills. The land, used mostly for pasturing livestock, was dotted with a few structures, including a rural school house (known as the Antelope School) and a couple farmsteads.

The construction of The Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's huge irrigation and hydroelectric project -- anchored by Kingsley Dam and

Lake McConaughy and spanning Nebraska from Keith County to Adams County-- began in 1936 and would change the landscape in the area.

During the surveying process that preceded construction, Central's engineers determined that a site southeast of Lexington was ideally suited for construction of a regulating reservoir and two hydroplants.

Construction of the dam on the south side of the basin began in 1939 and was completed in 1940. Soon after, water from Lake McConaughy was diverted from the Platte River below the city of North Platte into Central's 75.6-milelong Supply Canal

and the process of filling Johnson Lake for the first time began. When full, the lake covered 2,230 surface acres within 13 miles of shoreline and held almost 50,000 acrefeet of water (enough water to cover 50,000 acres with 12 inches of water). In places, the water reached depths of more than 50 feet.

The lake was named for George E. Johnson, Central's chief engineer. Johnson played a vital role in the promotion and design of the project from 1915 until its approval in 1935. He then became chief engineer and general manager of the project during its construction and subsequent operation.

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The lake that bears his name is an important component of Central's project. As a regulating reservoir for the Johnson No. 1 and Johnson No. 2 (J-1 and J-2) Hydroplants, the lake converts the uniform flow in the canal above the reservoir into the variable flow required by the hydroplants. A.C. Tilley, who succeeded Johnson as Central's general manager in 1947, said the lake also serves as a secondary source of water in case of a "calamity" along the Supply Canal that might interrupt the flow of water to the hydroplants as well as a ready source of irrigation water for almost 50,000 acres of farmland along the Phelps Canal when irrigation demand suddenly increases. Tilley added that the lake can also serve as a "catch basin" for flows in the Supply Canal when rain storms temporarily halt demand for irrigation water.

Development of that potential started slowly. The large body of water that gradually appeared in the lake turned the minds of many in neighboring towns to the possibility of recreational development. A number of area sportsmen, including Neil Shreck of Bertrand, Claude Smith and Judge J.S. Fitzsimmons of Elwood (Smith and Fitzsimmons were original members of Central's board of directors) and a Mr. Bracken from Lexington, formed a wildlife preservation committee to make Johnson Lake "a spot to be enjoyed by everyone who desires to use it." Included in the committee's plans were a public boat dock and beautification plans for the shoreline that would include tree and shrub planting.

By 1950, boats were common on the lake, but almost all were small wooden or aluminum fishing boats powered by five and ten-horsepower motors. By the early '60's, larger crafts constructed of fiberglass with 50- and 60-hp motors were seen

much more frequently on the lake. The experience of owning a cabin at the lake was simply not complete without a boat, and the number of boats swelled rapidly during the 1960's. As evidence, a group of cabin owners from Grand Island cooperated on construction of a boat dock that extended two blocks out into the lake and could accommodate as many as 32 boats.

During the first several years of the lake's existence, Central permitted only one "concession stand" at the lake, an establishment operated by a Mr. Remmenga from Elwood. The business

was located on the east side of the lake on the site of what is now known as Medo's Resort. Butch and Ellen Stevens later acquired the lease and operated Stevens Cabins until selling it to Allen and Naomi Hudson in 1957. The Hudsons operated the business as Johnson Lake Resort until 1963 when Harry and Reba Collins acquired and operated the facility as Collins Resort. The Collins in turn sold the resort to Clinton and Roesetha Mutchie in 1968. Ownership then passed to Elmer Bergman (Bergman's Resort),





Greg Medo, and then Shannon and Stafford Thompson, before returning to Medo in 2002.

The Nebraska State Game, Forestation and Parks Commission (now known as the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission) first stocked the lake with game fish in 1941, although fishing was prohibited for the first year to allow the fish to grow and reproduce. Fishing became instantly popular when it was first permitted on July 1, 1942. The first true “cabin” on the lake was reportedly constructed by S.E. Salisbury in 1942. It was described as a one-room, wood-frame building on Sandy Point. Cliff Hurliss and Dr. G.V. Reynolds of Overton claimed in a 1965 newspaper article to have placed the second permanent structure at the lake in the early 1940’s. The home was moved from Overton to a site adjacent to what is now Crappie Corner.

“A mighty deserted-looking area then,” according to Dr. Reynolds. “No trees, no water, no plumbing, just a simple cabin on a sandy knoll.”

More cabins soon followed, their owners coming from longer distances despite the difficulties posed by gasoline rationing. After the war ended and resources again became available, the pace of development increased. The boom in cabin-building was said to have started in about 1950 and a cabin sprung up on almost every available and suitable lot. By 1964 there were 548 cabins on the lake’s shore, ranging from one-room structures to more elaborate homes costing as much as \$15,000. The number of cabins surpassed 600 by 1966 and another 36 lots in the North Cove, North Shore and Perch Bay areas were ready for development in 1969. Interest was unabated as more than 400 applications were entered into a lottery for the three dozen lots.

By 1971 the number of cabins exceeded 700 and many cabin-owners had taken up year-round residence at the lake. Today homes and cabins entirely encircle the lake and number above 900. Development of the cabin areas was overseen by the Johnson Lake Development, Inc., which was formed in 1941. Central -- its agenda dominated by the task of operating its fledgling power and irrigation project, facing an exploding demand for irrigation water and electricity, and hampered by a shortage of manpower and recreational expertise -- leased Johnson, Plum Creek and Gallagher Canyon lakes for development of recreational assets. The aim of the group was to appoint directors from every city in the area that might be interested in the water recreation available at the lakes. Johnson Lake soon became the destination of many fishermen, campers,

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boaters, swimmers and picnickers seeking relief from their cares. In 1945, Central leased 50 acres of land to the Nebraska Game, Forestations and Parks Commission for what would become the Johnson Lake State Recreation Area. The treeless landscape became the site of one of the state agency's first endeavors into tree-planting and the construction of its first recreation access road. A second camping area was added on the west side of the lake in the 1950's.

Water sports, particularly water skiing, began to become popular in the late 1950s and continued through the next three decades. Lake residents reported that it seemed like everyone at the lake was learning to ski in the 1960's. A project to create additional lakefront property began in 1970 with a dredging operation in the northwest corner of the lake. The result was the Lakeview Acres subdivision surrounding Mahaffie Bay.

Developers led by Virgil Eihusen of Grand Island created 169 residential and six commercial lots in the area. Subsequently, George and Delores Harder of Grand Island opened the Lakeview Marina in 1971, offering groceries, bait and tackle, as well as a cafe, laundromat, boat slips and boat rental.

During the same time period, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission was also improving its facilities. The NGPC added three modern restrooms, six shelter houses and two change rooms to its campground on the east side of the lake in 1969 at a cost of \$25,000. Also that



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year, the lake was completely encircled with a paved road for the first time when 4.3 miles of asphalt was laid. Several other stretches of road around the lake had previously been paved, mostly by cabin owners who agreed to fund construction through paving assessments.

A couple of other noteworthy events in the early 1960's included the opening of a nine-hole golf course -- then known as the Lexington Golf Club -- below the dam in 1963. The owners of the Lexington golf course sold the land on which the course was situated because of construction of Interstate 80. With the money from the sale, they purchased land at Johnson Lake and built a new course. Nine more holes were added to the course in 1990.

Over the years, cabin-owners and thousands upon thousands of campers and daily visitors have enjoyed their leisure time at Johnson Lake. From the earliest days, newspapers ran photos of fishermen with their stringers straining under the weight of the day's catch. The stories that accompanied the photos either told of the fight to land the huge catch, or recounted the inevitable story of "the big one that got away." Other photos showed sailboat regattas, water skiers, campers, picnickers, swimmers and sunbathers, all brought together by the lure of the water.

Johnson Lake continues to be one of the most popular destinations for recreation in Nebraska and a key component in the operation of Central's hydro-irrigation project. Its construction and development are a testament not only to the men who designed and built the project, but to those who realized and cultivated its potential for recreation.

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Ramping Up Access

Construction Improvements Completed near Medo's Resort

The Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (Central) completed a series of major construction improvements at Johnson Lake near Medo's Resort designed to enhance public access.

Work on the installation of two new jetties began in December 2024 and was completed by February 2025. The structures were built using lakebed material, layered with filter fabric, and finished with a heavy riprap coating to provide long term erosion protection. The top of the dike was covered with crushed concrete, creating a durable walking surface for public use. The two jetties were installed to shield a protected marina area for boat docks, and to protect the new public boat ramp from prevailing winds.

In September 2025, Central replaced the old boat ramp near Medo's with a new and improved public boat ramp. The ramp was widened, lengthened, and built deeper, allowing it to remain fully functional even when lake levels are lower. Beyond improving access and safety, these upgrades also offer



ecological advantages, including added fish habitat created by the shoreline structures.

Central is pleased to deliver these long term investments, which will benefit recreation, shoreline stability, and the Johnson Lake community for years to come.



Johnson Lake Trails

Where the Path Meets the Water

The Johnson Lake Trail project was first talked about in the early 2000's and the dream took shape in the years that followed. The first segment was built in 2005 and additional trail added as funding and easements were acquired. Today the trail has over 8 miles of off-road concrete pathway. The 10.3 mile circle around the lake includes segments of shared roadway on the dam and near the inlet to the lake.

The trail is designed to allow users to experience some of the various environs around the lake. There are segments that pass through shady tree stands, follow the edge of farm fields, follow canals, or pass through nature areas. The ultimate goal is to complete the trail forming a safe



and assessable circle for non-motorized recreation and transportation.

The Johnson Lake Trail is much more than just a concrete pathway. Spaced

along the trail are gazebos, pergolas, and rest areas for users to enjoy. There are three Little Free Libraries and two bike repair stations along the trail. Trees, shrubs, a Nebraska-shaped pollinator garden, and flowers have been added to provide shade and color to the trail corridor. In 2020 the trail was recognized for the diversity of trees and shrubs as an affiliate to the Nebraska State Arboretum. Trailhead signs and parking areas provide access and directions for visitors to the lake. In 2023 two new playgrounds were added with access directly from the trail.

The trail is open to walkers, runners, and cyclists of all ages. Pets on leashes are welcome and bags are provided for cleaning up after your pet. Motorized wheelchairs and electric assist bikes are welcome. All other forms of motorized vehicles are not allowed. The trail provides an opportunity for residents and visitors to enjoy the beauty of Johnson Lake.

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Chapel of the Lake

The Chapel of the Lake is an interdenominational ministry at Johnson Lake. In the summer of 1962, the idea of a church to service the people who come to the lake to enjoy its many recreational activities was discussed among several cabin owners.

Fourteen persons gathered at a cabin on Sandy Point one Sunday morning for an informal service with a Methodist minister preaching from a rocking chair. As others heard of the services the interest and enthusiasm grew. For the remainder of that summer, services were held in the former Camp Fire Girls cabin on Mallard Beach with between 80 and 85 attending. Realizing the need for a permanent meeting place, a committee was formed. They purchased the original chapel building from the Latter Day Saints in Eustis. It was moved to the present location in 1963. The bell, pews and reed organ were also added that year.

The first service in the little chapel at its present location was on June 2, 1963 and was attended by 83 persons. Since that day, services have been held every summer beginning Memorial Day weekend and continuing through the Labor Day weekend. To date, the total attendance for 63 years has reached 143,919 worshipers representing many denominations.

Worshipers come from all over Nebraska, numerous states and

occasionally from countries outside the United States. Visitors are asked to register once each season and share where they reside.

Services begin at 8:30 a.m. Sunday with a guest minister bringing the message each week. In addition to the regular Sunday morning services, the Chapel is used for weddings and funerals plus numerous lake related meetings from mid-May through mid-September.

The Chapel of the Lake is supervised by the Chapel Committee whose members have included volunteers from both permanent and summer residents of the lake. Anyone wishing to use the Chapel can contact the present chairman at 308-785- 2287 to discuss any rent fees and availability of the chapel.

The Chapel is self-supporting through generous weekly collections, donations and memorials.

The Chapel Committee wishes to thank all persons who have given of their gifts, time and talents to this ministry through the years. A special thanks goes to the ushers, the presiding laymen, the organists and those providing special music each Sunday.

Come to a service and return again to worship and enjoy the fellowship at the beautiful lake setting. After attending you will leave with a prayer in your heart thanking God for the many blessings he has bestowed upon us.

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Carp Removal Program thriving at Johnson Lake

A group of fishermen were concerned with the number of carp in Johnson Lake because they disturb the habitat of crappie, walleye, bass and other desirable fish. Twenty-six years ago they began a carp removal program which operates on public donations to cover expenses.

Carp stir up the lake bottom making the water muddier and this pushes silt into the gills of the small fry. They are also omnivorous and eat plants, which provide cover for the small fry as well as oxygen. They will also eat small fish.

Big Head Buffalo carp are desirable meat in New York City. These weigh about 30-50 pounds each. They are rounded up into a big netted area and carefully loaded into large oxygenated tanks. These tanks head immediately to NYC for consumption, as they must be alive upon delivery. Two years ago 18,000 lbs. were sent east. The total amount of carp removed was 51,000 lbs. in 2023. The remaining Asian carp removed were disposed of.

Hook, Line & Winner

Gear Up for Johnson Lake's Annual Carp Tournament

Bowfishers of Nebraska (BON) will again host their annual carp tournament at Johnson Lake and the surrounding canals on June 13, 2026. The weekend kicks off Friday night, June 12, with a Calcutta at Nautical Rose at 7 p.m., (location to be determined), with blowfishing action beginning at 9 p.m. Anyone is welcome to join and encouraged to bid on teams. Free food will be provided courtesy of Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District (CNPPID). Tournament registration will be available Friday night and remain open until 6:30 a.m. Saturday morning.

A shotgun start will launch from Nautical Rose promptly at 7 a.m. on Saturday, June 13. We invite everyone to attend the weigh-in, location to be announced, starting at 4 p.m. to see the final results and celebrate the event. For additional details, please contact Ryan Reynolds at (308) 325-0605 or visit the Events page on the Bowfishers of Nebraska (BON) Facebook page. Thank you to CNPPID, and Six Street Self storage for the generous donations to make the tournament possible.



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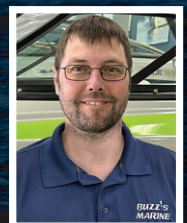
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Where the Fun Flows



A Guide to Elwood and Johnson Lake Local Treasures & Experiences

Johnson Lake has been referred to as Nebraska's best-kept secret partly due to the pure enjoyment of lakeside living, but also due to the number of attractions, activities and outright outdoor fun!

The Lake offers a wide variety of on-the-water fun including boating, sailing, water skiing, Jet Skiing® and wakeboarding. Johnson Lake is known across the region for excellent fishing (boasting some of the best walleye fishing the country), hunting and wildlife viewing.

The fun isn't all about being near or on the water. The area offers a local 18-hole golf course including 11 courses within a 50-mile radius. The hike and bike project provides residents and visitors with 7.6 miles of off-road trails at the lake.

Other attractions include two public beaches, two state campgrounds, shopping, and annual events such as the Memorial Day Community Garage Sale, local county fairs, Elwood Carnival, Fourth of July Fireworks Show, fishing tournaments, sailing regattas, Antique Shows (Lexington). Come see for yourself. We guarantee you'll have a great time!

Year-round attractions and events in Gosper County:

The Annual Elwood Spring Gala, hosted by the Elwood Area Foundation, takes place in late March every year. This elegant affair is a community fundraiser disguised as a fantastic night out. Each year, a sold-out crowd is treated to an incredible dinner, complimentary beverages, and live entertainment.

Proceeds from the Gala auction are used for youth grants and grants for community projects. The House on the Hill Bed & Breakfast & Catering holds classes ranging from crafting to cooking to gardening.

In July, Gosper County increases in size as alumni, family members, and folks from neighboring communities come to Elwood to celebrate the world-famous Gosper County Fair and Rodeo. Our hometown operated, family-friendly carnival is open Thursday-Friday-Saturday from 7 p.m. to midnight, and the Rodeo is held on Thursday and Friday evenings. The carnival is full of rides and games for all ages, and includes a full concession stand. Other fair-time events include a golf scramble, sand volleyball tournament, horseshoe tournament, 4-H events and displays, free entertainment at the Civic Center bandstand, and a parade every other year on "odd" years.

Fall and winter months in Gosper County are full of sporting events, Husker parties and good food. The Great Elwood Chili





Cook-off is a bi-annual event, held on election years. The general public is invited to show off their best chili or soup; or, if you are more into eating than cooking, we invite you to come out and try all the offerings and vote on your favorite.

In December, the Elwood Chamber hosts Old Fashioned Christmas, where businesses and organizations invite the public to attend their open houses in beautiful downtown Elwood.

The Johnson Lake State Recreation Area is another favorite of outdoor lovers. Ten minutes north of Elwood, Johnson Lake SRA offers excellent camping, fishing (including ice fishing) and

water sports. This recreation area packs a lot of outdoor fun in 68 acres and provides three access points to the 2,068-acre lake. It is the heart of a complex of lakes on the Tri-County Canal south of I-80 between Lexington and Cozad. It provides fine outdoor recreation opportunities, especially when joined with the nearby Gallagher Canyon SRA, Elwood Reservoir WMA, Plum Creek and Phillips Canyon.

Johnson Lake attractions that provide entertainment, such as karaoke and live bands include Nautical Rose and Big Johnson Brewery. Nautical Rose offers craft fairs, a farmer's market, and great food and beverages. Whether you're cruising in for a cold

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Lake restaurant and lounge that includes a pool table and dart board for some friendly competition. In addition, Medo's Resort has lakeside cabins for rent, a public boat ramp, dock, and swimming beach.

CraZy Marv's RV & Cabin Retreat offers RV pull throughs with full hook-ups, two remodeled cabins, a spacious three bedroom/two bath house rental, bike rentals for every age, and a rental hall for events. Call CraZy Marv's at 308-325-0760.

Price's Rentals is in the business of renting FUN! They rent out lake houses, boats, jet-skis, paddle boards, kayaks, electric scooters, bicycles, and party buses! They also sell live bait and tackle, water sports equipment, boating and camping supplies, lake-themed apparel, yard games, unique gifts, beverages, and snacks. Price's Rentals is famous for axe throwing and a cool place to hang out while playing games with family or friends. Come join in the FUN by boat or vehicle, located next to Lakeshore Marina. New for 2022 is property management and indoor boat storage.

Another outdoor attraction is Lakeside Golf Club located at the southeast corner of beautiful Johnson Lake. The par 72 course offers a tee for all players with four tee locations on each hole. The course provides an exciting experience with every round of golf for all level of players with some of the best greens statewide that meets the needs of all golfers. Before or after your round you can enjoy a cold beverage and a picturesque view of

the course and surrounding area. Call 308-785-2818 or visit www.playlakeside.com for a tee time at a superior course at the lake.

Bald Eagle and American White Pelican viewing

Johnson Lake is a birder's paradise. Bald Eagles winter at Johnson Lake and surrounding areas and White Pelicans begin to arrive in the early spring when the ice is breaking up into areas of open water.

Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District's Eagle Viewing facilities will be open to the public at Johnson No. 2 Hydroplant the first weekend of January and continue to be open every weekend through the end of February. Hours are 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the J-2 site. You can also view many bald eagles on and around Johnson Lake during the winter months. Each year the bald eagles travel to areas along the Platte River from as far away as Canada, Alaska and the Great Lakes state to look for fish and other food sources. They can be seen in the trees around the lake, as well as standing on the ice near areas of open water. The bald eagles and the white pelicans are a spectacular sight to behold!

Lighthouses at Johnson Lake

Johnson Lake is fortunate to have two Lighthouses: One at the Mallard Beach jetty and one at the Lakeview Acres jetty. The Lakeview Acres Lighthouse was dedicated on July 4, 2021 at a special ribbon-cutting ceremony. A dedication speech was written and delivered by Cinde Wendell, who was instrumental



in organizing and collecting funds for the lighthouse. “Our Lighthouse began by forming a committee at the Lakeview Acres annual meeting in 2019 and grew to be an entire Johnson Lake project. All the planning, fundraising and installation happened during the pandemic.

The Lighthouse design is a replica of the Bodie Island Lighthouse currently standing in the vicinity of Bodie Island on the Outer Banks in North Carolina. Our black and white lighthouse is the second lighthouse at Johnson Lake with the first red and white one on Mallard Beach. The Mallard Beach Lighthouse is a replica of Montauk Lighthouse in New York. The Mallard Bay light house organizers were extremely helpful with blazing a trail for this lighthouse as well as their unending support.

Thank you to Johnson Lake Chamber of Commerce, Central Nebraska Irrigation & Public Power District, Lexington Community Foundation, the Mallard Bay Lighthouse Committee, JLDI, Lakeshore Marina & Nautical Rose for allowing access, Lakeview Acres, and all the support from all around the lake with donations, letters and encouragement.

This lighthouse quote seems fitting for today... “Don’t forget that maybe you are the lighthouse in someone’s storm.” – Unknown author

Finally, this project has turned out to be a positive beacon during a dark, pandemic time. May the lighthouse always serve as a shining example of hope for all of us. God Bless America!” Delivered by Cinde Wendell on July 4th, 2021.





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The Great Outdoors

Johnson Lake State Recreation Area, located off of U.S. Highway 283 south of Lexington, offers guests excellent camping, fishing, water sports, and more.

The area has 112 pad camping sites with 20, 30 and 50-amp electrical hookups, modern restrooms, shower houses, and a two lane dump station. All campers must register and reservations are accepted up to 180 days in advance. There are 55 non-pad sites without electricity for basic camping.

Anglers will find a variety of fish, including walleye, white bass, catfish and wipers. Two handicap-accessible fishing piers are available, one on the north side of the inlet and another one on the south side. There are also two fishing cleaning stations, one located at each campground.

A public swim beach provides a place for families to enjoy the water close to grills, shelter and modern restrooms for outdoor gatherings.

Accommodations at the lake include a playground at the Main Campground and a public archery range with 7 targets, which is located at the North Inlet. The archery range is open during daylight hours only and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Family friendly annual events held within the park at the Main Campground are the Johnson Lake Halloween Haunt



that takes place on the second Saturday of October and 1st Day Hikes on January 1st.

Johnson Lake is joined with nearby Gallagher Canyon State Recreation Area, Elwood Reservoir Wildlife Management Area, Plum Creek and Phillips Canyon, which are part of the Central Irrigation District Supply Canal and all link together for greater recreational opportunities.

Gallagher Canyon State Recreation Area is located south of Cozad off of Nebraska Highway 21, is a 400-acre irrigation impoundment with 24 acres of recreation land in a secluded and

beautiful setting. Gallagher Canyon offers good crappie fishing in the coves, as well as channel and flathead catfish, walleye, sauger, and white bass. Gallagher Canyon has water access to more than 10 miles of the canal and is open to all boats but is in a no-wake zone. There is one concrete boat ramp and floating dock available along with a heavily wooded campground offering 25+ mowed, non-pad primitive campsites. A vault toilet and trash service are the only amenities offered. Electricity, potable water, showers, or dump stations are not available.

Elwood Reservoir Wildlife Management Area south of Johnson Lake on U.S. Highway 283 is a hot spot for catching walleye, sauger, wiper, white bass, catfish, and northern pike. It is open year round for fishing and many hunters have great success with waterfowl and deer. There is no camping at Elwood Reservoir. Accommodations include a vault toilet and one concrete boat ramp with a floating dock. The reservoir has a 5 mph, no-wake restriction for boats. Habitat consists of a 1,330-acre reservoir and 724 adjacent acres of grassland with some wooded areas.

Visitors and residents are strongly encouraged to read and follow Nebraska boater and fishing regulations guides, available at outdoornebraska.gov.

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The Buzz of the Town

Nebraska Pollinator Garden takes Shape at Johnson Lake

In the spring of 2023, Mary Bergstrom of Johnson Lake planted a pollinator garden along the hike and bike trail, and it is thriving. The garden, 82 by 74 feet, is located across from Mallard Beach DR 19C at Johnson Lake. It has 27 species of plants and flowers. Shaped like Nebraska and done to scale, a tiny path through it replicates the Platte River.

Pollinator gardens contain specific nectar and pollen-producing plants that attract pollinating insects like bees, moths and butterflies that pollinate crops for food sources. Bergstrom received a grant for \$1,000 from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, which covered about 40% of the cost of the initial plants.



Working with Kennedy Landscaping in Gothenburg, Sarah Buckley with the NSA and members of the Johnson Lake Trails committee, she chose sustainable crops to attract pollinators. Friends and neighbors helped till the soil and do other preparation work, and in May of 2023 they put in 120 plants, 14 varieties, south

of the Platte River section of the trail.

In 2024, with generous donations through the Lexington Community Foundation, Bergstrom put in 144 more plants, or 21 varieties, in the area north of the Platte River. There is a walking path along the mythical Platte River with rock donated by Overton Sand and Gravel.

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The Johnson Lake EMS volunteers are trained and certified to perform medical needs, assistance and triage to prepare the patient for transport to the Lexington Hospital.

Every Memorial weekend we have a walk/run event followed by a helicopter fly-in if they are available. Come and have lunch with us at noon.

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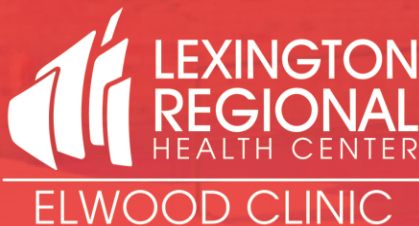
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Calendar of Events



Easter Egg Hunt Palooza

Easter of 2025, Complete Roofing sponsored the first Johnson Lake Easter Egg Hunt. Hundreds of children excitedly waited for the “Go Hunt” command! Thousands of eggs were filled with trinkets, tattoos and candy and distributed around the Blue Playground at Drive 1. There were some golden eggs which were turned in to get big prizes. The Easter Bunny was happy to pose for pictures with the kids. The Saturday afternoon before Easter, there will be another Egg Palooza at the Blue Playground. Check our Event Schedule at johnsonlake.org for more information.

Golf Cart Parade

Cottonwood Realty sponsors a Golf

Cart Parade each June. Check out the Event schedule at johnsonlake.org for information.

Fourth of July

The 4th of July is the highlight of the summer at Johnson Lake and anticipation grows as the holiday approaches. The campgrounds are packed and residences are overflowing with friends and family visiting to enjoy the festivities. The Fireworks Committee has been working for months to raise funds for the fireworks and plan the big display. The Johnson Lake Chamber of Commerce has been busy organizing the Boat Parade.

As darkness falls on the evening of the 3rd of July, people gather from surrounding areas, campgrounds and neighborhoods

and watch as hundreds of boats make their way to the dam area where the fireworks are displayed. The beautiful fireworks and their reflection in the lake is a sight to behold.

Mid-morning on the 4th, the creativity of many boat owners comes to life as the decorated boats gather at the Marina Bay. The parade then makes its way around the lake for all to see as the crowd on shore clap and wave their flags with appreciation. Every year decorated boats are over the top with creative and clever themes. At the conclusion of the parade prizes are awarded by the Johnson Lake Chamber.

As the day continues, you can see many boats anchor in the shallow water by the



island as people enjoy music, wading, swimming and merriment!

The aroma of hamburgers on the grills, sounds of firecrackers, laughter, speeding watercraft and splashing of the wakes on the shoreline combine to make yet another year of 4th of July cherished memories with family and friends. Even Norman Rockwell would be envious of this special celebration at Johnson Lake.

Chalk the Walk at the Lake

BHA Real Estate with Patti Johnson & Jacey Edson sponsors the “Chalk the Walk” event the week of Labor Day. They invite everyone to draw with chalk whatever their heart desires as an end of summer celebration. The drawings are lovingly drawn on the Johnson Lake Hike & Bike Trail going around Johnson Lake. Then people can vote for their favorites to see who the final winners will be. Hikers and bikers enjoy the artwork drawn by children and adults each year. Check the event schedule at johnsonlake.org for more information.

Johnson Lake SRA Halloween Haunt

The second Saturday of October each year has been filled with spooky campsites. Campers go all out to treat kids with creative decorations. Some even combine sites to make a walk-through fun house experience. The State employees provide several games, pumpkin painting, scavenger hunt, a wagon ride tour and geology experiences for the masqueraders.



2026 JOHNSON LAKE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 4 • Easter Egg Hunt at Blue Playground | Dr. 1 | 3 p.m.

May • Memorial Day Weekend | Garage sales around the lake

Saturday EMS Annual Run/Walk | 9 a.m. Registration | Lunch 11 a.m.

June • Farmers Market | Saturdays 8 a.m. at Nautical Rose

June 6 • Chamber Concert ‘The Kyle Saylor Band’ | Cottonwood Realty 7 p.m.

Golf Cart Parade at Cottonwood Realty | 10:30 a.m. Registration

June 12 • Carp Tournament Calcutta | 7 p.m. at Nautical Rose

June 13 • Carp Tournament | 7 a.m. Start at Nautical Rose

July • Farmers Market | Saturdays 8 a.m. at Nautical Rose

July 3 • Light up the Lake Fireworks | 10 p.m. (*Rain date July 5*)

July 4 • Chamber Boat Parade Nautical Rose | 9 a.m. Registration | 10 a.m. Start at Boat Docks

July 18 • Annual Gazebo Bike Hop at Johnson Lake Trails | 8 a.m. Registration at DR. 18 Crazy Marv’s

August 31- Sept. 5 • BHA Real Estate, Jacey Edson & Patti Johnson ‘Chalk the Walk’ event

October 10 • Johnson Lake SRA Halloween event

November 7 • Artisan Market | 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Restless Water Center

Watch for Johnson Lake Chamber updates at

www.johnsonlake.org

and on Facebook at Johnson Lake, NE-Chamber of Commerce

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