

Bad Medicine Lake Ice

May 2025

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I know of several lists of ice-up and ice-out dates for Bad Medicine Lake. The list that I have was kept by my mother, Alice Hagen, when she lived on the lake. I have assumed that she acquired the list from her parents, Rev. and Mrs. E.G. Larson, who for many years had a cabin on the peninsula across from Don Tschudi's Bad Medicine Resort. There is also a list on the Minnesota DNR webpage for Bad Medicine Lake. The data in this list is not "clean" in that there are multiple dates for some years and the dates are missing for other years. Finally, there is the list on the BMLAA webpage that has been maintained by the Strohmeier and Lindow families.

Each of these lists give us about 50 years of data. The dates for each of these lists vary by a day or two. I think the reason is that the ice on Bad Medicine Lake tends to form on the south end and move north at the start of winter. Likewise, the ice tends to come off the lake on the south end first. So, Alice sometimes chose a different date than the Strohmeiers. These differences turn out to not be statistically significant.

The length of time that the lake is ice-covered varies quite a bit from year to year. In a 100-year interval, the ice-in date will vary by ± 22 days (a range of 6 weeks). The spring ice-out date varies even more, ± 26 days (7.5 weeks). However, if we examine the statistics of the recorded dates, a trend emerges. On average, the ice-in date now comes 8.9 days later than in 1970 and the ice-out date comes 2.3 days earlier than 1970. This means that there are 11.2 fewer days of ice on Bad Medicine Lake than 50 years ago. Does this mean that a Θ me will come when Bad Medicine fails to freeze-over? Yes; but fear not. At the current rate, that year is 2459. (434 years from now.)

In the two charts below, the recorded date for ice-up is compared (subtracted) from December 1st. The date for ice-out is compared to May 1st. A straight line is then fit to the data.

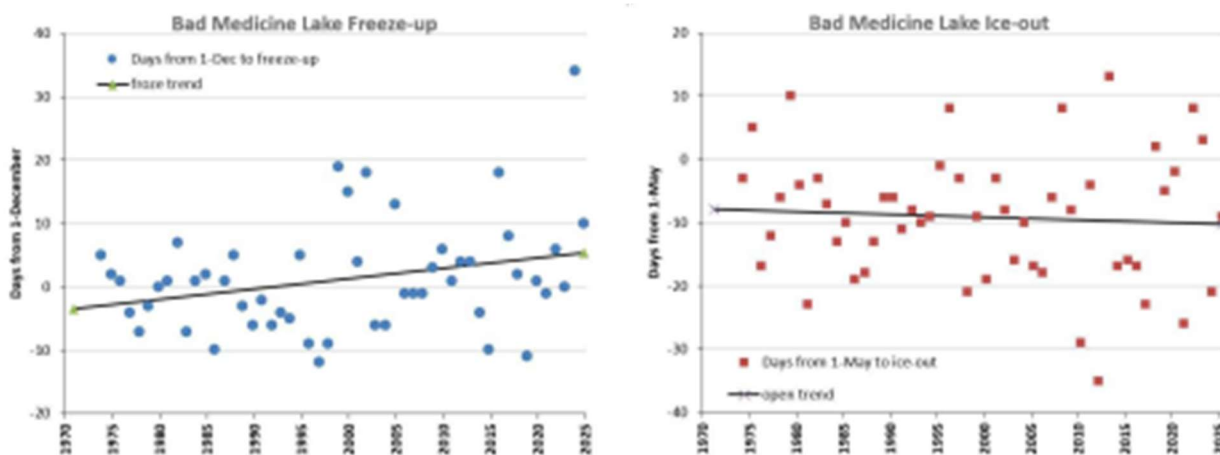


Figure 1 Ice in/out trends