

Beaver Lake Shine

By Kyle Cavaness LC/DBM Editor

Though Nebraska calls to mind the rolling expanse of the Great Plains, the Cornhusker State is home to two sizable metropolitan areas, Lincoln and Omaha. The latter is the base of operations for McKay Landscape Lighting, Inc., which creates nightscapes for urban dwellers and rural residences alike, as the captivating installations in the next two stories bring to light.

A spectacular vacation home on Beaver Lake, Neb., needed an overhaul to turn the backyard into a proper getaway destination for the homeowners. McKay Landscape Lighting, Inc., which had renovated the client's home lighting system (not the same client in the following story) worked alongside the landscape designer, architect and home remodeler to transform this countryside retreat.

McKay was asked to craft a lighting plan to complement the landscape designer's vision for the property. The renovation required the removal of two white vinyl docks, which were replaced by two new docks with ipe wood decking, one for swimming and entertaining and another for boats. A white vinyl sea wall was also removed and replaced with a natural stone retaining wall more than 200 feet long,

comprised of large limestone slabs 4-5 feet long, 2-3 feet deep, 12-14 inches thick and four slabs tall. The outdoor lighting covered all of the home's new exteriors, from the outside of the residence to the boathouse, seawall, outdoor firepit, docks, trees and vegetation.

Getting It Wired

After the natural stone sea wall was installed in the fall of 2012, installation of the landscape lighting took a three-man crew about 60 days to complete. The bulk of the construction was scheduled in two phases; in the winter of 2013, McKay installed the sea wall lights when the water level of the lake was low and frozen. The area and dock lights were installed in the spring of 2013, after the docks were



Above, Left: The backyard of this vacation house on Beaver Lake, Neb., needed an extensive makeover to become the vacation destination the homeowners envisioned. The addition of a boat dock, swimming dock, seating area and 200 feet of limestone retaining walls was enhanced by an extensive lighting plan that illuminated the walkways, dock areas, walls and landscape features with 137 separate fixtures.

Above, Right: The seating area and fire pit were installed between the house and the docks for an optimal view of Beaver Lake. McKay Landscape Lighting used round brass LED fixtures (Aurora) for consistency in design and safety on the stone pathways. More brass LEDs were added as down-lights to illuminate the plantings that surround the patio.

Right: A three-man crew installed the same brass LED fixtures (Aurora) along the lake wall in the early winter months of 2013, when the lake was frozen and the water level was low. The client requested lighting that would make the wall visible to boats on the lake, but not so bright that water-borne passersby would be distracted.





Above, Left: Brass LED fixtures placed on the underside of the dock illuminate the water and the interior of the boat ramps so the homeowners or visitors can swim or guide boats into the ramp at night.

Above, Right & Top: Two-inch stainless steel dock lights (Hunza) in the corners make the ipe wood docks visible, and copper uprights on select trees complement the path lighting and add depth to the foliage. Transformers and outdoor speakers were hidden in the wood columns on the docks.

completed, to coincide with the rest of the landscape installation. The homeowners typically use the residence from May through September.

The varying heights of the natural limestone slabs and the water level was another challenge, as the design team wanted to make sure that the fixtures were at the same visual height from a distance. The original wall design was rectangular, but revisions bent it into a soft, natural curve. Laser levels were no help in the installation of the brass LED fixtures, as the height of the stone relative to the water level varied over the wall's 200-foot length. The construction team had to confirm the placement of each light visually, meticulously working their way across the lake wall to keep each of the 41 fixtures lev-

el. Choosing the right fixture for the lake wall was also important to the client and the team, as the homeowners wanted the limestone to be visible from on the lake, but not so bright that passersby would be distracted by the light. The construction team had to use a hammer drill to penetrate the limestone slabs, drilling holes as deep as three feet so wires could be threaded through to connections in the back of the wall. An angle grinder was used to create a flat surface for mounting the fixtures.

The homeowners also wanted a new fire pit area for their family to sit around, and a small seating area for the adults to watch the kids swim in the lake. The landscape lighting design supplemented these new features by installing

Fixture	Mfr./Lamp Type*	Wattage	Quantity
Dock Directional Lights	Hunza/MR-11	20	5
Down Lights	Lumiere/MR-16	20	13
Lake Wall Lights	Aurora/LED	1.25	41
Microfloods	Kim/G6.35 Bi-pin	20	10
Path Lights	Aurora/G4 Bi-pin	20	28
Seat Wall Lights	Hadco/T3 Wedge base	10	9
Spots/Up Lights	Aurora/MR-16	20, 35	31
		Total:	137
Transformers	Vista	300	3
		900	1
*All lamps manufactured by USHIO		1200	1




Above, Right: The lighting team used an angle grinder to create a flat surface for mounting the wall fixtures. A hammer drill penetrated the limestone slabs, creating holes as deep as three feet so wires could be threaded through to connections in the back of the wall.

round brass LED fixtures (Aurora) every 12 feet along the natural stone wall, illuminating the wall for aesthetics and providing a safe path for the client to walk to and from the docks at night. The fixtures project down the wall and out into the water for lake visibility. The trees were uplit with copper spots, and select locations on the walks, patio areas and landscaping were highlighted with down-lights to make the features of the landscape visible.

Adding More Sparkle

The other area of focus was the illumination of both docks. McKay's team added the same brass LED fixtures under the dock on the inside, illuminating the water and the interior of the boat ramps so the homeowners or visitors can guide their boats into the ramp at night. Two-inch stainless steel dock lights (Hunza) in the corners of the dock define the wood surfaces. The crew placed path lights in the landscape to identify walkways to and from the house, around natural stone steps and flagstone pathways.

The transformers were concealed in ipe wood columns on the docks, which double as a location for speakers. The same round brass fixtures were installed under column caps to illuminate the columns, and McKay added copper seat wall lights (Hadco) under the dock steps that lead up to the natural stone pathways. All 137 landscape and area lights are tied together and are controlled by photocells and timers. Switches can also control the dock and lake wall fixtures, and one master switch at the house turns them on or off.

"The owners had never used the property much at night, but now they do and love it," said Toby Paul, the project's lead architect. "The project's ironwood docks hover and the limestone seawalls glow [above] pools of shimmering water." 

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