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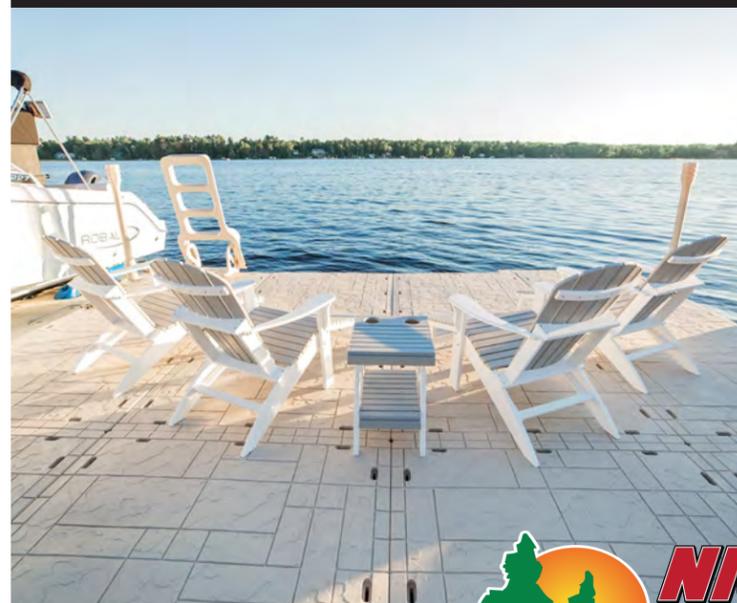


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The month of October has been colder than expected this year even if our first frost arrived later than usual. The long-range forecast calls for a winter similar to last year which means lots of snow. That's okay with me as my snow plow and snowmobiles are ready for it. Bring it on!

I hoped to get out for more fall fishing but I may have to put the boat away as high temperatures in late October are stuck in the 30s. Once again the walleyes on Gull Lake saw little fishing pressure from me due to my lack of success this fall. I spoke with a popular fishing guide recently who said he too has experienced poor walleye fishing success at a time of year when it should be excellent. I felt better knowing I am not alone!

In September Steve Alex and I attended the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center Showcase. We were so impressed with the work these scientists are doing to learn more about AIS and what can be done to prevent the spread or if possible, eliminate invasive species in our waters. I came away from the showcase both encouraged by what we are learning and at the same time very concerned about recently discovered AIS, particularly Starry Stonewort. Be sure to read a recap of the showcase in this issue.

On page 10 in this issue you can also find an update on our Endowment Fund managed by the Initiative Foundation. Thanks to GCOLA members' generosity we have built quite a war chest to fight any new infestations of AIS. In learning what other lake associations spend to control Eurasian Milfoil or Starry Stonewort, we will definitely need every penny saved.

We are currently planning our operating budget for 2020. This includes fund raising plans for our Annual Gala. Now is a great time to get involved as a volunteer for any of many important projects, from gala planning to environmental efforts. If you are interested, you can find a list of volunteer opportunities on our website, www.gcola.org, and then please contact us through our website or call a GCOLA board member.

Thank you for your on-going support to the Gull Chain of Lakes Association and have a safe and enjoyable winter season.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Trent Mostaert • Lazy Brook Townhome Association • Keith Kleven

THE HOME OF THE ONE-LEGGED CHICKADEE:

It all started with a vision. For Marilyn and Laury LePage, it was an image of a spring-fed lake west of Milwaukee, the towering canopy of trees shading a sandy shore where Laury's grandparents bought a home in 1920 and where Laury spent his childhood summers. Over the years in La Crescent, MN, Marilyn, Laury and their son and daughter spent many of life's most memorable moments exploring the wilderness, living in a tent and eating fish they caught, often in the Boundary Waters. When it came time in 1988 for a lake home of their own, Marilyn and Laury's vision of nature drew them to a heavily wooded lot on the south side of Wilson Bay with, yes, a towering canopy of trees over a sandy shore dotted with jewel weed and Canada anemone, just as they had imagined.

For the home, the LePages did not need to look any farther than their own son Dave, of Big Wood Timber Frames Inc. in St Paul, who specializes in the rescue and repurpose of historic timber salvaged from Twin Cities buildings of the

early 1900's. Dave chose antique tools originally used in shipbuilding, including a hand-cranked Millers Falls drill and an assortment of huge chisels, to prepare gigantic reclaimed red and white oak timbers for the guesthouse and Douglas-fir from an armory in St Paul for the main house. Laury sharpened the planes at night for the next day's woodworking and mixed cement for the stone fireplace (behind the LePages in photo) while Marilyn cooked three meals a day for the work crew. Despite all the labor, Marilyn and Laury have spent "plenty of time on the couch": both of them are psychologists! Laury proposed meeting me wearing a reindeer hide and yodeling, and he jokes that he calls Marilyn "Killer", "because of her Nordic heritage and love of lutefisk and lefse." You don't want to get in the way when this lye brine sun-dried fish and wet Tribune-like potato mixture is brought to a table of Norwegians celebrating the conquests of their fearsome forbearers!"



Photos by Dorothy Whitmer

All of their four acres except the footprint of the houses has been left natural, so it is a forest of delights for wildlife that are attracted to the wild strawberries and currants, hazelnuts and dogwood berries. A friendly but injured one-legged chickadee made a home there, as do tiny wood frogs, which thrive in only the most natural environments. Marilyn enjoyed finding as many as 30 different wildflowers in their woods, including

jack-in-the-pulpit, blue flag iris, calla lily and the elusive yellow lady's slipper. And this forest of delights also attracts little ones: six granddaughters and three great grandchildren love to come and explore this abundance of nature.

A LAKE STEWARD TALE

Dorothy Whitmer, Lake Steward Program Coordinator



Photos by Dorothy Whitmer

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STARRY TREK 2019

Steve Alex, AIS Committee Chair



Starry Trek is a statewide event focused on searching for starry stonewort, a very aggressive aquatic invasive species. Starry stonewort is an invasive algae that was first found in Lake Koronis in 2015 near Paynesville, Minnesota and has since spread to 14 additional lakes.

Starry stonewort grows very densely from three to 10 feet thick and interferes with boating, fishing, swimming and virtually any water related recreational activity. With its density, starry stonewort eliminates native plants and recent studies indicate that with unchecked growth, starry stonewort will eliminate native plants within three years.

Starry stonewort grows rapidly, so early detection is very important to control or eradicate an infestation. To help facilitate early detection, two years ago an effort called Starry Trek was started to conduct a statewide search for starry stonewort. It is a collaborative effort between the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC), DNR, county AIS coordinators and local lake associations.

This year Starry Trek was held on Saturday August 17 on over 200 lakes across Minnesota. Hundreds of volunteers participated in this event. All of the volunteers receive training on identification of starry stonewort and other AIS species. Forms are required to document the lake inspected, locations on the specific lake and any potential AIS species are placed into plastic bags and returned to the county AIS coordinators or DNR for identification. The process for gathering vegetation samples is to throw the end of a rake into the lake and slowly retrieve and then carefully look through the weed samples for any potential AIS species.

On Gull Lake, Dorothy Whitmer, Randy Johnson and I participated in this year's Starry Trek. Dorothy is a certified AIS detector, having completed numerous hours of training to receive certification.

Inspection Results:

On Gull Lake all of the public accesses, plus additional locations such as marinas, were inspected. Good news is that no AIS species such as starry stonewort or Eurasian milfoil were found on Gull Lake. Across Minnesota no starry



stonewort was detected, but Eurasian milfoil was found in one lake in Crow Wing County.

Starry stonewort is likely spread through human movement of fragments from lake to lake. Many of the known infestations in Minnesota occurred near boat accesses, so we will continue to conduct inspections for starry stonewort and other AIS species at public, even private, accesses around the Gull Chain of Lakes during the open water season.



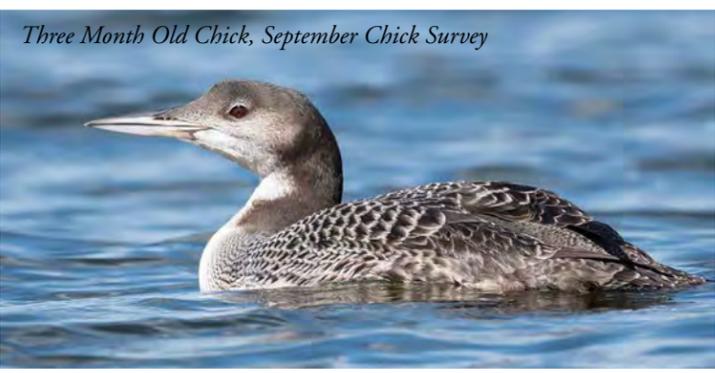
Photos by Dorothy Whitmer and MAISRC

2019 LOON REPORT

Sheila Johnston, Environmental Committee Chair



July Chick and Adult Loon Survey



Three Month Old Chick, September Chick Survey

Thanks to a dedicated crew of GCOLA volunteers a spring loon nest count was completed in June, a chick and adult survey was done in July, and a chick survey was done in September. The September chick survey was added to determine the number of chicks that survived the season.

The total number of nests counted was 14, which was three more than in 2018. An additional natural nest was identified on Upper Gull after the nest count for a total of 15.

There was a total of 109 adult loons counted on the chain. This is an increase of 39 loons from 2018. The number of adult loons on Gull Lake increased significantly, from 49 to 73. The number of adult loons on Roy Lake increased from four to 10 loons. There were two loons on Love Lake. This is the first time that adult loons have been identified during the survey on Love Lake since 2014.

The total number of chicks counted during the July survey was 15. Seven chicks were counted on Gull Lake in July, and

six survived into September. On Upper Gull there were five pairs of loons with chicks in 2018. In 2019, four of the five pairs did not successfully raise chicks. One pair had a nest washout, one pair did not have any chicks, and two pairs had chicks that did not survive until the July chick survey. The pair that nests in the channel near Lost Lake Resort had twins that both survived into September. The Bass Lake pair did not have chicks this year. On Lake Margaret chicks were identified on the north end and in the middle section of the lake, but the pair from the south end did not have chicks. One of the Lake Margaret chicks survived into September. Two chicks were counted on Spider Lake but did not survive into September. There were three chicks counted on Roy Lake, including one pair of twins. One of the twins did not survive. There was one chick on Nisswa Lake, and it survived into September.

The total number of chicks counted in July was six fewer than in 2018, which had the highest number of chicks since 2014. However, considering the threats that chicks face from predators and watercraft, the survival rate of the chicks from the July count was good. Of the 15 chicks counted in July, 12 chicks survived into September.

In September, many of the adult loons leave their chicks and they gather on Gull Lake before they migrate. The newly independent chicks may range from the summer chick rearing areas and sometimes leave the area to gather with other juveniles. This makes it difficult to do an accurate chick count in September, so we will be changing our procedures for next year.

Lake	Counts	Year 2014	Year 2015	Year 2016	Year 2017	Year 2018	Year 2019
Nisswa							
Spring	Nests	2	2	1	2	1	1
Summer	Chicks	0	0	0	0	2	1
	Adults	2	2	1	1	2	2
September	Chicks						1
Roy							
Spring	Nests	0	2	0	0	0	0
Summer	Chicks	1	3	2	2	2	3
	Adults	7	6	4	9	4	10
September	Chicks						2
Bass/Spider							
Spring	Nests	2	2	2	3	1	0
Summer	Chicks	1	1	2	0	2	0
	Adults	4	3	4	2	4	7
September	Chicks						0
Upper Gull							
Spring	Nests	2	3	2	3	3	4
Summer	Chicks	1	6	2	2	5	2
	Adults	6	9	8	9	8	9
September	Chicks						2
Margaret							
Spring	Nests	1	2	1	2	2	1
Summer	Chicks	0	0	0	2	1	2
	Adults	4	2	2	4	3	6
September	Chicks						1
Gull							
Spring	Nests	7	6	5	4	3	8
Summer	Chicks	6	8	11	7	9	7
	Adults	29	54	49	81	49	73
September	Chicks						6
Love							
Spring	Nests	0	0	0	0	1	0
Summer	Chicks	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Adults	6	0	0	0	0	2
September	Chicks						0
Green							
Spring	Nests				1	0	0
Summer	Chicks				N/M	0	N/M
	Adults				N/M	0	N/M
September	Chicks						0
Totals							
	Nests	14	17	11	15	11	14
	Chicks	9	18	17	13	21	15
	Adults in July	58	76	68	106	70	109
	Chicks/Nest	0.6	1.0	1.5	0.9	1.9	1.1
September	Chicks						12



Chicks, Upper Gull, October 20, 2019

The question remains, how can we increase the survival rate of chicks and adult loons on the Gull Chain of Lakes? First, preserve natural shorelines and loon nesting habitat. Always use caution near nesting sites. Keep your wake low to prevent nest washouts. If you put out a nesting platform, make sure it is in good condition. Clean it and put fresh nesting material on the platform in the spring before loons return to the nest. Stay away from nesting loons. Loons that are threatened will abandon the nest. Use caution and keep your speed down near loon families that are on the water.

If you are a fisherperson, please do not leave cut or broken line in the water. This year an increased number of adult and juvenile loons in Minnesota were entangled in cut or broken fishing line and embedded with hooks and lures. If you see cut line in the water or on the shoreline, please pick it up. Please "get the lead out" and do not use lead fishing tackle. Over 40 percent of loon deaths are caused by lead fishing tackle. Loons pick up pebbles from the lake bottom to aid digestion. Lead sinkers can drop to the lake bottom and remain there among the pebbles. Just one small lead sinker inadvertently ingested by a loon picking up pebbles, or an ingested lead jig can cause fatal lead poisoning. Information on lead alternatives can be found on the Lead Out page at www.pca.state.mn.us.

If you see loons being harassed, please record the boat registration number and call Cass County Sheriff, 218 547-1424, or Crow Wing Sheriff, 218 829-4749. If you see an injured or sick loon call, Lori Nauman, DNR Nongame Wildlife Representative, 651-259-5148 or Wild and Free Wildlife Rehabilitation, 320 692-4180. Wild and Free is a DNR and USFWS licensed wildlife rehabilitator located at the Garrison Animal Hospital.

Are you interested in helping to protect our loons or volunteering for the loon survey? To learn more about GCOLA's loon programs, please visit www.gcola.org. If you have questions, email sheila@johnston.me.com or jedwards3718@gmail.com.

GCOLA END-OF-DOCK PROGRAM

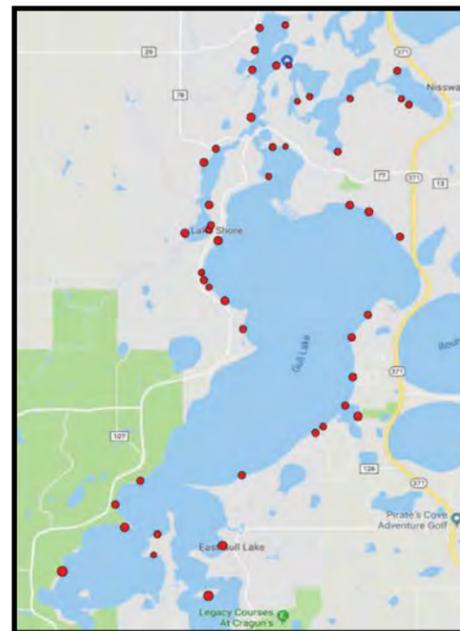
Robert Eliason, Environmental Committee, End-of-Dock Program Coordinator

When the Board of Directors approved the End-of-Dock program to measure Total Phosphorous (TP), it was for a five-year period. This was the fifth year. Over forty members participated this year. The accompanying map shows all the sites where sampling has occurred over the years. Not all the sites have been sampled each year for a variety of reasons – the primary one being that the member moved away. For each lake, I averaged the data obtained in all five years for the

June and August sampling periods, and then I averaged all of the data. These averages are given in the table. The column labeled “Mid-lake Avg.” comes from previous studies where samples were collected from a boat from the middle of the lake. Neither Bass, Spider nor Love lakes have been studied previously; so, they have no mid-lake values. The only lake showing a definite increase in TP from June to August is Margaret.

Lake	Mid-lake Avg. TP (ppb)	June Avg. TP (ppb)	Aug. Avg. TP (ppb)	Avg. all data TP (ppb)
Nisswa	20	16	17	17
Roy	18	14	13	13
Spider (2017 only)	N/M	15	10	13
Bass	N/M	18	14	16
Upper Gull	22	24	28	26
Margaret	57	36	51	44
Gull	18	15	19	17
Love	N/M	16	20	18

TP = Total Phosphate ppb = parts per billion N/M = Not Measured



The Gull Chain of Lakes is in the Northern Lakes and Forest ecological region. Lakes in this region are classified as mesotrophic and have TP readings in a range of 14-27 ppb. Except for Margaret, our TP results fall in this range and can be considered to be normal. Gull Lake has been said to be phosphorous limited, which means that algae and aquatic plant growth is dependent on the amount of phosphorous nutrient available. This should apply to the other lakes in the chain since they share the same watershed. Thus, algae blooms are a natural part of our lake's ecosystem and can be considered normal. In recent years however, members have observed severe algae blooms in various parts of the chain. Unfortunately, these severe algae blooms cannot be readily explained by our phosphate concentrations in those same areas because the concentrations are not out of the ordinary.

There are many factors that affect algae growth besides phosphate. Algae need sunlight, carbon dioxide, and the nutrient nitrogen, all of which are generally in abundance in the water. Their growth is also affected by the temperature and acidity of the water. I assume that there was just the right

combination of all factors that resulted in optimizing algae growth in those areas that had a severe bloom.

While there are no specific actions to give individuals to prevent a severe algae bloom along their shore, there are actions that we can take to preserve and/or improve water quality. One of them is to make sure that rain water does not flow directly into the lake. Shoreline buffers are designed for this purpose, and we all should have one. (In this regard, GCOLA has started the Lake Steward Program. Contact Dorothy Whitmer at lakesteward@gcola.org for more information.) Trees can take up a lot of water and absorb dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus compounds. We should either plant trees along the shore or allow volunteer trees to grow up. Consider planting white pines because they were the original forest cover around our lakes. (GCOLA provides a white pine seedling for members each year. Contact Sheila Johnston at sheilafjohnston@me.com for more information.) The most beneficial thing that we can do for our lakes would be to return the area around our cabins/houses as close as possible to its original undeveloped condition.

MEMBERSHIP 2020

Jane Edwards, Membership Committee Chair

Please share this newsletter with your neighbors, family and friends and encourage them to become GCOLA members in 2020.

If you use the Gull Lake Chain for any activity or just appreciate its natural beauty, consider joining or renewing your membership for 2020 today. Join us as we work to preserve, protect and defend these beautiful lakes and the wonderful memories we have around them. Thank you!

Why join or renew your membership?

GCOLA members care deeply about the quality of the waters of the Gull Chain of Lakes and the quality of life enjoyed around them. Sand-bottom, spring-fed chain lakes that are gems of the central Minnesota landscape. The lakes you enjoy are truly a gift. They need to be used and cared for in a manner that allows them to sustain themselves. Whether you enjoy fishing, boating, swimming, eating lakeside at a local restaurant, wake boarding, or just sitting and watching a sunrise or sunset, it can't be enjoyed to its fullest if the lakes become unhealthy. Help us protect this valuable resource by renewing your membership for 2020 and encouraging others to join, too. Membership is only \$50 for the year and is open to everyone.

I invite you to read the article, “What We Do” on page 31 to learn about the numerous activities GCOLA does to help maintain the quality of the lakes now and for the future. I encourage all who know about, spend time on, and enjoy the lake chain, to support our mission and our efforts by being a member in 2020.

Who are GCOLA members?

Many of your neighbors and friends, as well as local businesses that you know and trust, belong to GCOLA. More than 2,000 families and businesses occupy the shorelines, 50% of whom are members and supporters of GCOLA. This attests to the dedication of our neighbors to protect the beauty and quality of these lakes. But, there are many non-members we need to reach and encourage to join. If you are one who has drifted from GCOLA, or if you are new to the Brainerd lakes area, please renew or become a new member today.

Anyone can join GCOLA. No need to be a property owner. GCOLA's membership includes fishermen and women, visiting paddle boarders and kayakers, resort guests, lakeside dining foodies, summer water sport enthusiasts, and winter snow sports fans. Individuals, families and businesses who care about the lake chain and want to protect it.

Why be a member?

GCOLA's lake saving programs are funded in large part through annual membership dues. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, are invited to stay in the know through our website and Facebook page, are invited to our annual GCOLA Gala and annual meeting each summer, are always welcome to attend board meetings, and are encouraged to volunteer on our many committees.

Membership Information

Annual membership extends from January 1 to December 31. All members are encouraged to renew their membership NOW for 2020. Please renew and encourage a friend, family member or neighbor to join with you. Annual membership fees are only \$50 for the year. This is a tremendous value considering the many projects and efforts GCOLA is leading for the betterment of the beautiful Gull lake chain.

How to Renew or Join

It's easy! Visit us on-line at www.gcola.org and click “Join/Donate.” From there you can download, and then complete and mail in a membership form. Or, you can choose to renew your membership on-line. Also, you may use the membership form located in this newsletter on page 30.

Questions?

Contact Jane Edwards via email at jedwards3718@gmail.com or by phone at 832-541-5766.

It is time to renew for the 2020 membership year. Renew today! Let's make it our best year yet!

The charter for the Government Relations Committee is that it “shall be the primary interface for GCOLA with our state and local legislators, local units of government and the executive branch of state government.” The charter for the committee extends beyond the legislature and legislative lake-related issues and includes issues and concerns that we would work with local units of government (county, city and township). Membership in the committee includes two GCOLA Board members (Uldis Birznies and Steve Frawley) and three GCOLA members (Dave Hoelmer, Doug Johnston, and Jon Mendel).

In October, the Government Relations Committee met to formulate a proposed set of 2020 GCOLA government relations priorities after receiving input from our members. That proposed set of priorities was discussed and approved by the GCOLA Board at the October 2019 Board meeting. The list includes three legislatively oriented items and one GCOLA-related item. They were selected from a list of 19 potential items. In priority order, the 2020 GCOLA Government Relations priorities are the following:

1. Consider regulations (distance from shore, depth, etc.) for watercraft creating large wakes that are a safety issue, cause shore line erosion and sub-surface ecological damage.

This is an increasing problem in our lake chain and nation-wide. The evermore popular wake/surf boats and higher horsepower motors create enhanced wakes that can cause shoreline erosion, sub-surface ecological damage and can be a safety issue, especially on smaller/narrower bodies of water. At the local level, we have sent out a survey to property owners on Lake Margaret to get feedback on this issue on Lake Margaret. Depending on results of the survey, we may work with local government/law enforcement to implement regulations for confined water areas. We also are working with local boat dealers on the education effort with new and current boat owners. At the state level, we are making legislators aware of this problem and working with Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates (MLR) on an incremental legislative approach. This issue is also a priority item for MNCOLA, the umbrella organization for all Minnesota lake associations.

2. Establish watercraft operator license program to make lakes safer for everyone.

It is time that Minnesota boat operator permitting catch

up with what is happening with the boating industry. Boats are getting bigger, faster and much more complex. Boating should be like driving a car – driving a car requires a license – so should driving a boat. Currently, in Minnesota, there are no restrictions or permitting on anyone 18 years or older to drive a boat. A child as young as 12 years can operate any horsepower boat if they have a permit or have an adult on board – imagine a 12-year old with a permit operating a 300 HP pontoon or 25 foot wake boat with no one else on board. In Wisconsin, anyone born after Jan. 1, 1989 is required to complete a boat safety course. In Michigan, the permitting date is for those born after July 1, 1996. This issue is also a priority item for MNCOLA.

3. Develop an AIS prevention and eradication strategy for the Gull Chain of Lakes.

GCOLA has many of the AIS strategy pieces in place, such as a rapid response plan, public boat access inspectors, lake AIS plant surveys, providing funding for the MN AIS Research Center, etc. But we do not have an overall AIS strategy for our beautiful chain of lakes. We want to include a zebra mussel eradication study and strategy. We also need better communication of our AIS strategy and elements of that strategy to all of our members and the local community. And we need to be prepared and communicate the potential impacts of new AIS on property values and lake use. This is a local issue we will work within GCOLA.

4. Increase boater AIS compliance with fines for AIS violations that are at parity with Minnesota game and fish fines including authority to impound.

This is not an increased “tax”, but rather seeks equality in the violation/fine system. One example, keeping a 53” muskie in Minnesota results in a fine up to \$1300. Transporting AIS to a lake has a maximum fine of \$500. Is keeping one muskie a bigger risk to the environment than spreading AIS? We also are proposing a “third strike” rule for repeat violators. That is, on the third gross AIS violation, a person’s watercraft will be impounded. Also, the MN Fishing Regulations and Boating Guide should clearly state the MN AIS fines; currently there is no mention of the fines. This issue is also a priority item for MNCOLA.

5. No more stocking of muskies in the Gull Chain of Lakes.

Muskie preference by fisherman, per 2015 DNR sponsored study dropped from 6th place to 13th place. There are 61 actively managed muskie lakes within 80-mile radius of Brainerd and over 35% of MN surface waters have native/stocked muskies that provide significant opportunities for muskie fisherman. This is an economic issue - DNR Fisheries is spending a lot of money on this elite, small group of fisherman and could concentrate on the top priority, our walleye fishery. This also is a sociological issue that extends well beyond fishermen and input is needed from all lake users. Why should the DNR spend money to manage the risk of impacts from muskie stocking when they have stated “the agency cannot ensure that no negative impacts will occur for the Gull Lake Chain fishery in the future.” This issue is also a priority item for MNCOLA.

The 2020 Minnesota legislative session will be a short session starting on Feb. 11 and adjourning on May 18. It will be a policy legislative session, not a funding session, which is why we do not have any funding issues/priorities on our GCOLA list.

The Government Relations Committee will be meeting with our four local legislators in the November to January timeframe. Meetings have been set up with Senator Paul Gazelka and Representative John Poston for November to discuss our GCOLA priorities and get their feedback. We also will be meeting with Senator Carrie Ruud and Representative Josh Heintzeman in the December/January timeframe. In January, the Committee will travel to the State Capitol and meet with MLR Executive Director Jeff Forester, MLR lobbyist Henry Erdman and key legislative committee leaders. We are actively participating in the legislative activities for MNCOLA and Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates (MLR). As the 2020 legislative session progresses, we will keep you informed on the progress of our 2020 priorities. Be active and let your legislators and our Committee know how you feel.

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COMMITTEE UPDATE

Sheila Johnston, Environmental Committee Chair

This was a big year for the Environmental Committee! We launched several new initiatives.

Loon Program

We expanded the Loon Program to include efforts to protect our loons. In addition to the Loon Surveys, the Loon Program includes the Loon-Safe Boating and the Loon Chicks Caution Sign initiatives. Thanks to our partners at the US Army Corps of Engineers Government Point Landing, Boats and Beyond, Lake Fun Rentals, Your Boat Club, Causeway on Gull, Grand View, Madden's and Pinehurst Resort, we distributed approximately 1000 Loon-Safe Boating tip cards to people launching and renting boats throughout the summer. Our partners at Grand View and Your Boat Club also took time to educate boaters on loon-safe boating before they went on the water. Several new Loon Caution Signs were installed on the chain. The Loon Survey was expanded to include a September chick count so we could determine how many chicks survived the season.

Lake Steward Program

We launched the Lake Steward Program in May. The Lake Steward Program is dedicated to the naturalization of shoreland and continued preservation of the highest water quality and environmental standards. In order to become a Lake Steward, the first step is to score your shore. We created a Score Your Shore Mini Assessment that was based on the Minnesota DNR's Score Your Shore Quick Guide, and we condensed it to four simple questions. The Score Your Shore Mini Assessment was accessible through the GCOLA website, and we also invited attendees at the GCOLA Gala to complete paper copies while there. During our first season, 23 Gull Chain of Lakes property owners have demonstrated lakeshore property practices consistent with our mission and have qualified as Lake Stewards. We now have Lake Stewards on Gull Lake, Lake Margaret, Upper Gull Lake, and Bass Lake. Our goal is to have all GCOLA members complete the Score Your Shore Mini Assessment, and eventually all will become Lake Stewards! We will have the Score Your Shore Mini Assessment on line again in May.

Shoreline Restoration Program

This program provides matching funds for approved shoreline restoration projects. This year four shoreline restoration projects were completed. Two of the projects were on Gull Lake, and the others were on Lake Margaret and Upper Gull Lake. These projects are naturalizing the shoreline, and they contain native plants with deep root systems that will help filter unwanted chemicals and prevent shoreline erosion. The plantings beautify the shoreline while providing food and habitat for pollinators and wildlife.

End of the Dock Program

End of the Dock water samples were taken and analyzed in June and August from a variety of locations on the chain. Please see the article in this newsletter for details.

If you have questions or would like to participate in any of these programs, please contact sheilafjohnston@me.com.

Photo by Dorothy Whitmer



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A BEAUTIFUL MENACE

Sheila Johnston, Environmental Committee Chair



Who doesn't love flowers? What could be better than masses of purple flowers blooming along the shoreline? If you took a boat ride through the chain this past summer, you were sure to see stands of them in the channels on the north end of the chain and along the shoreline of Upper Gull Lake and Bass Lakes. But these flowers are not harmless beauties. They are a menace to native plant species and wildlife.

Purple loosestrife is an invasive plant. It was introduced to the US by the nursery industry for its ornamental and medicinal purposes. One flower spike can produce thousands of seeds which allow it to invade landscapes on lakes, rivers, and wetlands. Each plant can produce up to 2.5 million seeds per year! The tiny seeds are easily dispersed by wind, rain, snow, animals, and humans. The seeds spread quickly and create large monocultures of purple loosestrife. This decreases the biological diversity of native plants and wildlife populations. The thick stands of purple loosestrife crowd out native plants and reduce food, shelter, and nesting sites for wildlife, birds, turtles, and frogs. Areas in which wild rice grows and fish spawn are degraded.

What You Can Do

Learn to identify purple loosestrife and how to distinguish it from look-alike species such as fireweed, swamp loosestrife, winged loosestrife and blue vervain. Information and photos can be found at www.seagrant.umn.edu and www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov.



Photos by Kris Driessen

Report infestations on the Gull Chain of Lakes to sheilafjohnston@me.com. Please include photos of the site and identify the location.

Control Methods

Purple loosestrife can be controlled through digging and hand-pulling, cutting, and biological controls.

Digging and pulling is easiest when plants are young (up to two years) or when growing in sand. Remove as much of the root as possible, as broken roots will grow new plants.

Cutting flowering spikes will prevent this year's seed from producing more plants in future years. Cutting is best done in June, July, or August when it is in flower and easily recognizable, but before the flower goes to seed. If the flower has gone to seed, control efforts can be done, but must be given greater care so seeds are not shaken from the plant. If the plant has gone to seed, remove all the flowering spikes first by bending them into a plastic bag and cutting them off into the bag. Further cutting of stems or pulling can then take place without fear of spreading the seeds. Thoroughly brush off your clothes, equipment, and shoes before leaving the site so as not to spread the seeds.

Proper disposal of the plants is essential. Composting is NOT advised. Bags may be disposed of at a sanitary landfill if the site does not require the bags to be broken open. Incineration is an effective way to dispose of plant material.

Biological controls can be used to control large stands of purple loosestrife. The purpose of biological controls is to reunite a plant with its natural enemies. The Minnesota DNR may be able to assist GCOLA in the use of approved beetles for this purpose.

Let's work together to control purple loosestrife and protect our lake environment and wildlife!

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW LAKE STEWARDS!



Linda and Bruce Harrier
Bass Lake



Marilyn and Laury LePage
Gull Lake, Wilson Bay



Carla and Walter Levesque
Upper Gull Lake



Shelley McDonald
Schaefer's Point, Gull Lake



Bob Toborg and Rosemary Goff
Lake Margaret



Terri Whitman and family
Three of generations of Lake Stewards on
Rocky Point, Gull Lake

2019 MINNESOTA AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES RESEARCH CENTER SHOWCASE

Chuck Herring, GCOLA Chair

Each September, the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Research Center (MAISRC) holds a full day showcase event at the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus. GCOLA provides funding support to MAISRC so Steve Alex and I attended the event to see where our members' dollars are going in the fight to manage to our ever growing threat of AIS. The Research Center has 52 research projects currently underway. At the showcase event, 18 breakout sessions were held on different topics. Here is a brief summary on some of the topics which were covered:

The role of baitfish in the spread of AIS

The sale of minnows is a \$2.4 million industry in Minnesota. The illegal release of baitfish into waters has been verified as a pathway for introducing AIS to new waters. MAISRC examined golden shiner minnows at bait shops and found bacteria, disease and parasites present in those minnows. Surveys conducted by the Research Center found 20% of fishermen release minnows into the water when done fishing. This is a violation of state law. At our public accesses are trash containers near the boat ramps specifically for discarding live bait. A big opportunity is increasing awareness and marketing communication on the proper disposal of bait. The current DNR marketing campaign, Clean Drain Dry does not speak to bait disposal and probably needs to be looked at.

Starry Stonewort in Minnesota Lakes

This is a timely topic as starry stonewort has only recently been discovered in Minnesota Lakes (2015). Starry stonewort is spreading rapidly and is now found in 14 lakes in Minnesota. Unfortunately, little is known about this plant

or how to control its spread. MAISRC conducted a study to examine starry stonewort's impact on native vegetation and how fast starry stonewort spreads once it invades a lake. Three lakes were included in the study: Koronis, Moose and Winnibigosh. While research is still underway, findings so far indicate starry stonewort spreads incredibly fast and crowds out all native vegetation. Early detection is critical in order to control starry stonewort from widespread coverage. This invasive species warrants high priority for research to further determine options to best control or better yet eliminate this invasive plant. Fortunately, starry stonewort is not yet in the Gull Lake chain but has been found in lakes south, west and north of us.

Impact of Zebra Mussels and Spiny Water Fleas on Walleye Survival

Zebra mussels and spiny water fleas both eat zoo plankton, which is also what newly hatched fish fry require as a food source. We do not have spiny water fleas in the Gull Chain but zebra mussels have been present in our lake chain since 2011. This research project is still underway and findings so far have been inconclusive. The questions the researchers want to answer are:

- Are first year walleye and perch survival rates impacted by reduced zoo plankton where these invasive species are present?
- Do these invasive species influence the location and food sources of sport fish?
- Is there reduced growth of sport fish when these invasive species are present?

The research thus far has been conducted in the top nine walleye lakes in Minnesota. Findings in these lakes indicate growth of first year walleyes are impacted when zebra mussels or spiny water fleas are present. However, there may be factors other than reduced zoo plankton effecting sportfish growth rates.

Next steps include expanding the study to additional second tier walleye lakes, including the Gull Lake chain. The research team will also look into other factors which might impact survival and growth rates, such as recent findings in the Great Lakes suggesting increased mercury levels where zebra mussels are present. Stay tuned and we will share more information in this newsletter when the findings are available.

Aquatic Invasive Species Perceptions and Willingness for Water Users to Pay

This is a survey being conducted by MAISRC with lakeshore property owners, recreational lake users (at public access) and general population. The goal of this survey is to determine public values and attitudes, awareness and risk perception, perceptions on AIS management, and willingness to pay (fee based public access, such as we have at the US Army Corp of Engineers Government Point landing). Every year lake associations across Minnesota designate significant funding to manage and monitor AIS, so this survey can provide valuable insights on the public's point of view and support for what we do.

Lake user surveys were conducted this summer at public accesses on the Gull Lake chain, Minnewashka, Koronis and Pokegama. 1000 recreational users took the survey, including 274 users on the Gull Lake chain. The survey took about 10 minutes to complete. Findings from those surveyed recreational users:

1. AIS presence is not a factor when deciding which lake to go to.
2. The survey results from all four lakes were surprisingly similar.
3. 54% of users surveyed would be willing to pay a user fee at the public access for AIS management.
4. Those recreational users willing to pay a fee were generally higher income and more likely female. Those surveyed users less likely to pay a fee were fishermen, lived in close proximity to the public access, or were frequent visitors.
5. Those not willing to pay a user fee gave the following reasons:
 - a. Already pay enough taxes.
 - b. Would never support making lake access fee-based, regardless of the reason.

Next steps are to analyze the survey results from lake shore property owners and general population. Those results should be ready by January and we will share overall findings in an upcoming newsletter issue.

WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK

Did you know you can find information about GCOLA activities and topics that impact the Gull Lake chain in our website and Facebook?

- In our website we've added sections about the Lake Stewards and Loon programs, along with providing links to nearby lake associations. Go to www.gcola.org to learn more.
- We post regularly in Facebook about GCOLA and related articles. Like us on Facebook @GullLakeChain to stay informed.



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GCOLA PROFILE

ROSEMARY GOFF

Chuck Herrig, GCOLA Chair



Rosemary served for nearly 15 years as Secretary Treasurer for GCOLA. She is a trusted advisor and volunteer for all topics reflected to our lake association, the Gull Lake Chain and our overall community.

Outside of GCOLA, Rosemary is a tireless volunteer, serving on the Crisis Line Board and answering help line phone calls, sitting on the Board for the Fishing Has No Boundaries event at Camp Confidence, housing musicians for Lakes Area Music Festival and participating in the Nisswa Women's Club.

As Chair for GCOLA, I have looked to Rosemary every month for guidance on decision making and historical perspective for how decisions were made years prior. She provided much needed on-the-job training for myself and many past and current GCOLA board members. Rosemary isn't afraid to express an unbiased point of view which I have found valuable and necessary. When I accepted the Chair position, a common question I heard many times is "What will we do when Rosemary steps down as Secretary Treasurer?" Rosemary is THE behind the scenes person for all events GCOLA participates in or organizes, including our Annual Gala.

On a personal level, here is one example of Rosemary's willingness to help others. One snowy Winter, my wife and I were on vacation and left our vehicle at the outside parking lot at the Brainerd Airport. While we were gone, our car was buried under several inches of snow. Rosemary asked if she could drive to the airport and brush the snow off our car!

Fortunately, Rosemary continues to serve on the GCOLA board of directors but I continue to ask "What will we do when Rosemary finally steps down?"

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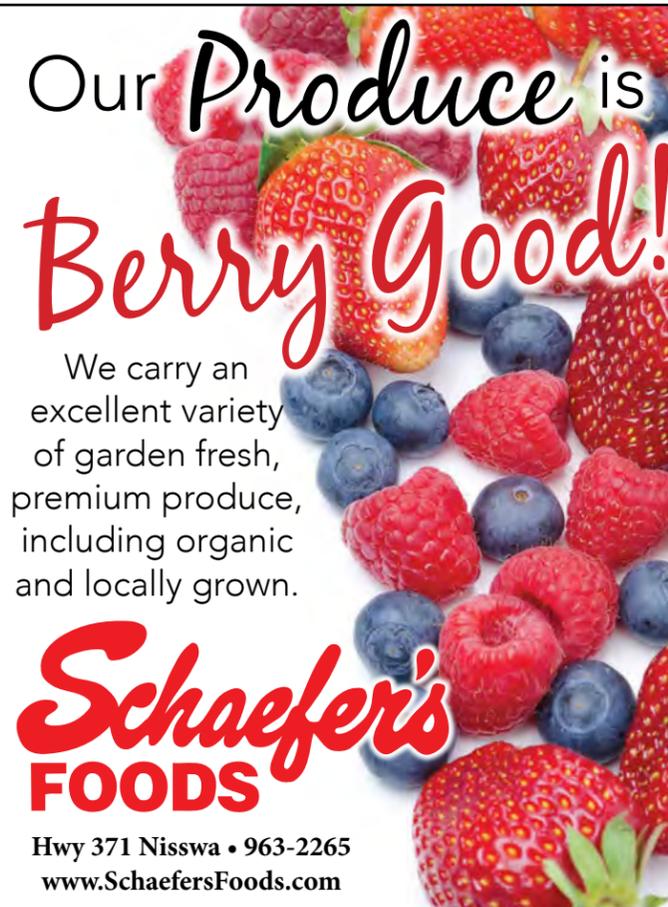
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SEPTIC SYSTEM DO'S AND DON'TS

Courtesy of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

A quick reference guide to extend the life of your septic system. A properly constructed and maintained system can last a long time if you follow some common septic system DO's and DON'Ts:

- ✓ DO conserve water and fix leaks quickly. Installing high efficiency appliances, such as washers and low-flow toilets, can extend the life of your system while leaky faucets can limit your system's capacity. If you have periods of high water use, talk to a septic professional about helping your system manage the spikes.
- ✓ DO have your septic tank routinely serviced as specified by a licensed professional.
- ✓ DO regularly check the condition of your septic system and any access covers. Unsecured or unsafe lids can be dangerous to children or pets; falling into a septic tank can be fatal.
- ✓ DO keep your septic tank cover accessible for inspections and pumping. You may wish to install septic tank risers to avoid having to disturb your lawn for every maintenance event.
- ✓ DO keep records of repairs, pumping, inspections, permits issued, and other SSTs maintenance activities.
- ✓ DO identify the location of your septic tank and drainfield. A sketch or map allows easier navigation to septic system components.
- ✓ DO divert water sources such as roof drains, house footing drains, and sump pumps away from the septic system—they shouldn't flow into the system or onto the ground over your system. Excessive water can cause back-ups and premature system failure.
- ✓ DO call a licensed professional if you experience problems with your system, or if there are any signs of system failure.

- ✗ DON'T flush the following items:
 - Lint or clothing fibers
 - Diapers
 - Cigarette butts
 - Facial tissue
 - Condoms
 - Feminine hygiene products
 - Unused medications
 - Paint or solvents
 - Flammable material
 - Coffee grounds
 - Cat litter
 - Cooking oils and grease
 - "Flushable" wipes or paper towels

These items will shorten the life of your system and may cause component failures or sewage backups. ONLY human waste and toilet paper should ever be flushed. Minimize use of harsh cleaners, bleach, and antibacterial soaps.

- ✗ DON'T drive over or park anything above the septic tank or drainfield. This can limit system life and cause damage.
- ✗ DON'T plant deep rooted plants over or near the drainfield. Roots from trees or shrubs may clog and damage drain lines. Plant grass or flowers instead (no vegetables), but don't fertilize, water, or burn them.
- ✗ DON'T dig in or build anything on top of your drainfield, particularly playgrounds.
- ✗ DON'T make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required local permits and professional assistance.
- ✗ DON'T enter your septic tank. Working in and around a septic tank is dangerous, and gases generated in the tank



Photo by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

CROW WING COUNTY RECEIVES GRANT TO PROTECT GROUNDWATER THROUGH WELL SEALING

Crow Wing County was recently approved grant funds totaling \$31,000 from the Clean Water Fund to help landowners seal unused wells.

A well that is not in use or abandoned can be a source of groundwater contamination by providing a potential direct path for surface water runoff, contaminated water, or improperly disposed of waste to reach an uncontaminated groundwater source. Unused larger-diameter wells can also be a safety hazard for children and animals. "Sealing unused wells is one of the most important practices that can be done to protect groundwater resources in Crow Wing County" stated Environmental Services Supervisor, Jake Frie.

The program will pay for 50 percent of the cost to properly seal the well, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per-well. A state-licensed well contractor must conduct the work. All landowners with unused wells are encouraged to apply.

Sealing involves clearing the well of debris and filling the well with grout. Citizens are encouraged to contact a licensed well driller to begin the application process.

Groundwater protection is identified as a priority in the Crow Wing County Water Plan, and most of Crow Wing County's residents rely on groundwater for their source of drinking water. A total of 186 wells have been sealed in Crow Wing County between 2012 and 2018 with previous grants the County has received. 150 of those wells were located in surficial sand aquifers with 103 of them located in the highly vulnerable Pine River Watershed. And, 80% of the sealed wells were within 500 feet of a lake.

If you are interested in learning more about this grant opportunity, or if you would like to receive a paper application, please contact the Crow Wing County Land Services department at 218-824- 1010 or via email at land.services@crowwing.us.

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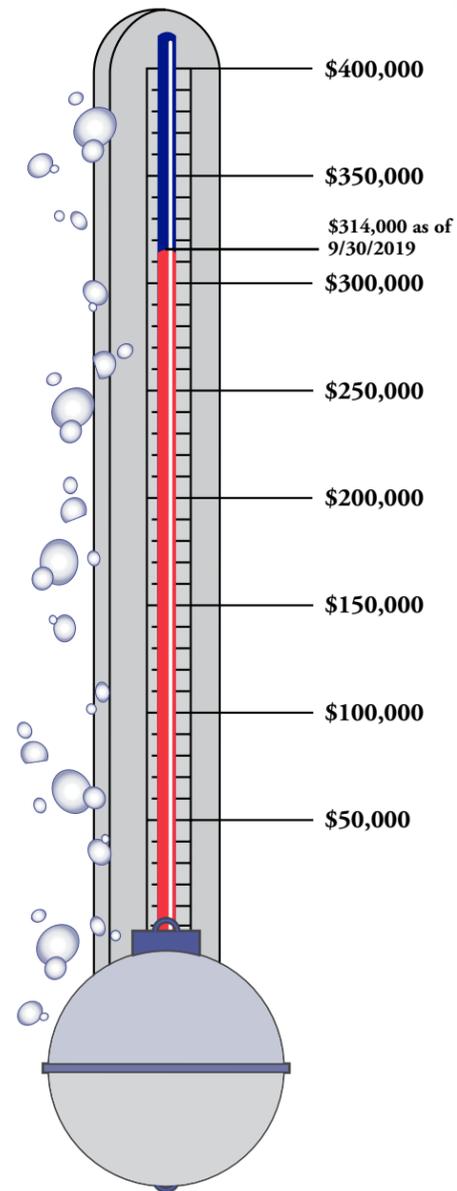
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FUND UPDATES 26

Endowment Fund



Thank You!

The Board wants to thank all the many members and friends of GCOLA for the generous support of our Endowment Fund and AIS Contingency Fund. With both funds we have over \$465,000 available, if needed, for any new aquatic invasive species that might get introduced into our beloved Gull Chain of Lakes.

In partnership with the Initiative Foundation, GCOLA established a perpetual Endowment Fund which included a \$50,000 matching grant from the Initiative Foundation. The fund is intended to provide long term funding to support the stewardship activities of GCOLA to preserve and improve the ecosystem of the Gull Chain off Lakes. It's also a wonderful opportunity to leave a legacy for those who will enjoy this area for years to come.

AIS Contingency Fund



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ASSOCIATION OF CASS COUNTY LAKES NEEDS YOUR HELP!



IT'S ILLEGAL TO...

TRANSPORT aquatic plants, water, or prohibited invasive species (e.g., zebra mussels, Eurasian water milfoil).

DUMP live bait into state waters, on the shore, or on the ground.

LAUNCH or attempt to place, watercraft or trailers with aquatic plants, zebra mussels, or prohibited invasive species into any waters of the state.

IT'S THE LAW!

CLEAN visible aquatic plants, zebra mussels, and other prohibited species off of watercraft, trailers, and equipment before transporting from any water access.

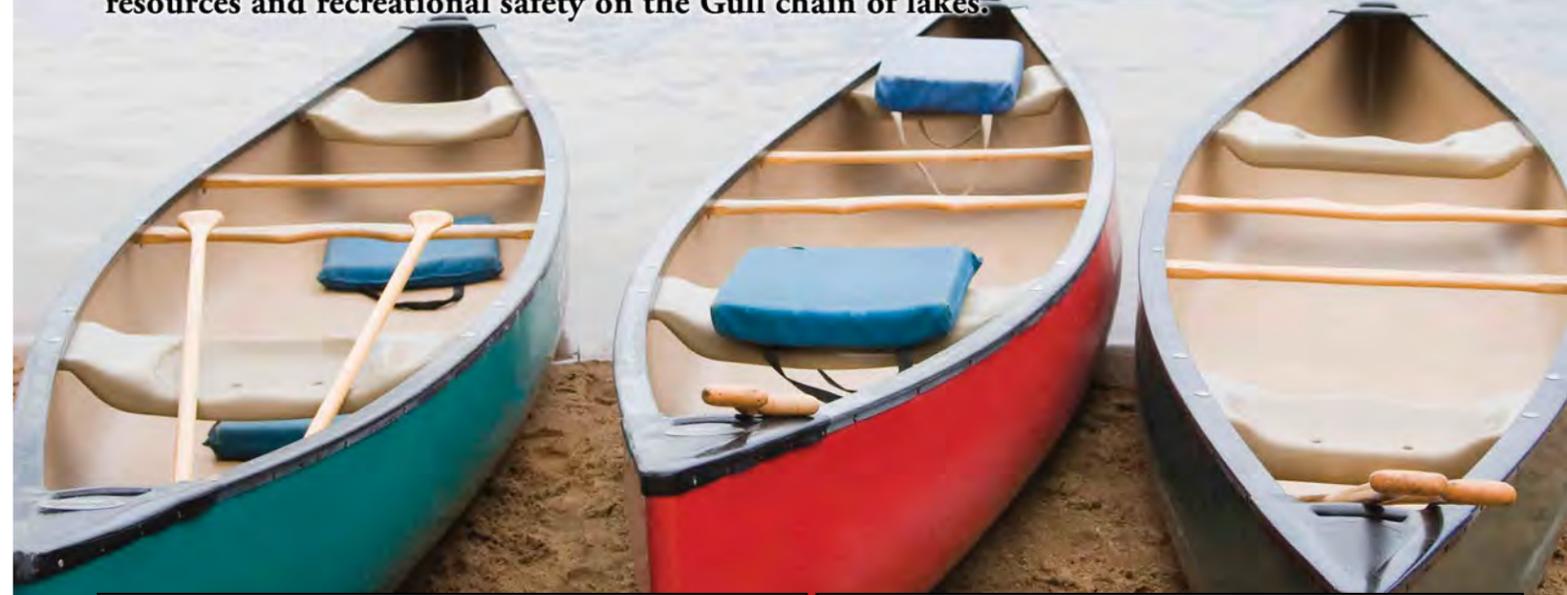
DRAIN water from the boat's bilge, livewell, motor, ballast tanks, and portable bait containers before transport from water access site or shoreline property.

KEEP drain plug and water draining devices open while transporting watercraft.

THANK YOU....CASS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

MISSION STATEMENT

The Gull Chain of Lakes Association is an alliance of individuals, families and business owners in the Gull Chain of Lakes in Cass and Crow Wing Counties. The Association is devoted to the restoration and continued preservation of the highest water quality and environmental standards achievable, promotion of the responsible use of land and water resources and recreational safety on the Gull chain of lakes.





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Steve Alex Uldis Birznicks Jay Chaney Jane Edwards Robert Eliason Steve Frawley Sue Friedrichs



Rosemary Goff Linda Harrier Chuck Herrig John Ingleman Sheila Johnson Marv Meyer Bob Toborg

You are all welcome to join us at our monthly Board of Directors' meetings. We meet at Grand View Lodge on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 8:30 a.m. Upcoming meeting dates are December 11, January 8, February 12 and March 11. We usually adjourn around 10:00 a.m.

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GULL CHAIN OF LAKES ASSOCIATION 2019 MEMBERSHIP DUES STATEMENT ³⁰

Dues for the lake association are \$50 per year. They are payable anytime from January 1 – December 31. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation which means that money donated by you is tax deductible. Contributions above the \$50 dues are greatly appreciated.

Please use this form and mail your dues to GCOLA, PO Box 102, Nisswa, MN 56468 -or- log in to our website at <https://www.gcola.org/shop> to pay with your credit or debit card.

If you are unsure as to whether you are current with your dues, call Sue at 612-751-6156 or send an email to info@gcola.org.

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Please contact me via email regarding the following volunteer opportunities: AIS Communications Gala
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Thank you for being a member!

The Gull Chain of Lakes Association does not sell, trade, swap or in any other way use your data except for official GCOLA use. Gull Chain of Lakes is a 501(c)(3) corporation, Federal Tax ID #41-1272492.



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- Purchases, installs and maintains one of the premier navigational buoy systems (90 buoys) in the State of Minnesota. *This system is NOT provided by local law enforcement.* We also install the no wake enforcement buoys for the sheriff's department.
- Provides free maps with boating rules and regulation at three public landings.
- In partnership with Cass and Crow Wing county sheriffs, provides free boat safety training for approximately 50 youth per year. The lake association also gives each participant a life jacket.
- Entered an agreement with the City of Lake Shore Police Department to provide water craft inspections for invasive species at the County 77 boat landing.
- Monitors lakes and streams running into the Chain for water quality. The samples are being taken by GCOLA member volunteers, with testing completed by licensed environmental labs. With the testing completed we have established a data base which will help us identify problems now and in the future and provide guidance for action plans.
- Conducts inspections twice in the summer at 24 locations to look for invasive species.
- Takes weekly secchi disk readings during the summer to test the water clarity.
- Promotes lakeshore restoration projects. We are currently providing matching grants for restoration projects through grants received from the DNR and the Initiative Foundation. Property owners with high scores on the Score Your Shore Mini Assessment may be awarded a Lake Steward sign to post on their dock or shoreline.
- Since 2010 donated over 1200 white pine seedlings to members.
- Works with county sheriffs on safety and enforcement issues. We have donated to the sheriff's department night vision equipment, a range finder, and life jackets.
- Donated \$35,000 to the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research project to be specifically used for zebra mussel research.
- Conducts a yearly loon count in the spring and late summer and established a loon-safe boating program.
- Issues four newsletters per year to keep members informed about association programs and important issues affecting lake quality and property owners.
- Maintains a web site (gcola.org), a member group e-mail service and a Facebook page.
- Through the Initiative Foundation, established a perpetual Endowment Fund for ongoing support. With a \$50,000 Initiative Foundation matching grant, the fund is now well over \$314,000.
- Holds an annual meeting and gala in July.
- Entered a partnership with the Corps of Engineers to establish a boat power wash station at the corps' Gull Lake Recreation Area public access ramp.
- In order to keep apprised of lake issues and programs, maintains memberships with the Crow Wing Lakes and Rivers Alliance, the Association of Cass County Lakes, Minnesota Conservation and Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Association.

LAKES PRINTING CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Lakes Printing in Brainerd is the only business that is allowed access to our Association member list and only for the purpose of mailing our newsletter. They have issued the following confidentiality policy.

We have a strict policy of confidentiality. We will not sell, trade, swap or in any other way use your list for anything except mailing your newsletter. We understand fully that you are the owner of the list and we simply have an electronic copy on our system for your use. This policy is not just for the Gull Chain of Lakes Association, it is applied to all customers.



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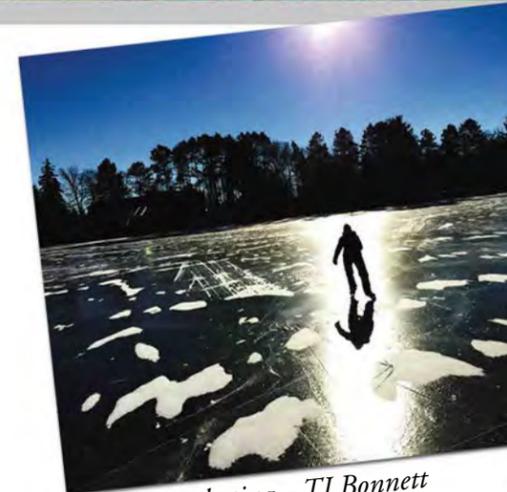
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PHOTOS WANTED



Ice skating – TJ Bonnett



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Sledding – Jay Fifield

Do you have photos you've taken around the Gull Lake chain you'd like to share with other members? We need pictures to be used in the GCOLA newsletter, website and Facebook. We have a shortage of fishing and boating snapshots so those are especially appreciated. You will be given credit for any photographs printed in the newsletter. Putting a caption with the picture is also helpful. Your snapshots can be sent at full size to Sue Friedrichs at info@gcola.org.

All photos should be supplied at the highest resolution/largest size possible, thank you.

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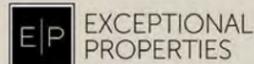
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