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**Civic Governance as a Best Management Practice (BMP)**

*By MN Lakes & Rivers Advocates staff*

With over \$15 million of public money and unknown millions in private funding being spent annually on AIS prevention and control in Minnesota, funding is not the primary barrier to success. The science is also pretty clear - there are areas and models that have significantly reduced the rate of spread. There is much to learn about control and management, but the vectors of infestations are clear - overland transport of watercraft and water related equipment is spreading

AIS from one waterbody to the next. So, while there are still unknowns, our science is pretty good and getting better.

After almost a decade spent working this issue, we believe that one of the significant barriers to success is a systems failure within our organizations and institutions and their ability to communicate and coordinate efforts across a diverse base of stakeholders.

Put another way, current "civic engagement" efforts target stakeholders. Stakeholders tend to translate into single species special interest groups. But lake ecology is dynamic with multiple ecological systems interacting with each other. And a significant part of these systems is the social dynamic. We believe that instead of "engaging stakeholders" we should focus on partnering and building the capacity of communities.

It is clear that providing the necessary framework in which communities can navigate competing agendas and balance the higher public good against the rights of the individual in a way that is transparent, accountable and functional is a Best Management Practice for managing AIS.

For the last few years Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates has been working to reorganize their existing resources: time, knowledge and money within our organizations, and testing this new approach. In 2018 MLR began to pilot this framework in two jurisdictions, Cass and Ramsey Counties, with funding provided by the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council and administered by the Initiative Foundation in Little Falls. The Pilots will run until July, 2019.

Said Jeff Forester, Executive Director of MLR, "This pilot will strive to create a new approach to policy making at the local level. This isn't about passing laws

**President's Message**

*By Phil Hunsicker*

Forgive me, but my day job is doing AIS work with the DNR so I have a hard time not talking about AIS. First, a big congratulations to the State of Minnesota for doing more watercraft inspections in 2017 than any other state. 453,587 inspections - almost a half a million - were done by over a thousand paid DNR and inspectors representing local units of government. Another tidbit is that 97% of the people showing up at public accesses with an inspector on duty are doing exactly what they need to do to keep AIS from spreading. Their drain plugs are pulled. There are no aquatic plants or invasive animals attached to their boat, trailer or engine. And there is no standing water in the boat. That 97% statistic is better than the statistic for people who wear seat belts, which is estimated to be about 85%. I don't know what's more amazing - that more people are abiding by the drain plug law than the seat belt law, or that 15% of the people in vehicles still aren't buckling up. How many stories about people getting ejected from vehicles and not surviving does it take?

I digress. My point is that we are doing a lot of great things when it comes to preventing the spread of AIS. But we can always do better. Before you drop your boat into the warming waters, don't forget about aquatic invasive species (AIS) and the things we all need to do to stop the spread.

According to AIS laws in Minnesota, you must:

1. **Clean** all visible aquatic plants, zebra mussels, and other prohibited invasive species from watercraft, trailers, and water-related equipment before leaving any water access or shoreland.
2. **Drain** water-related equipment (boat, ballast tanks, portable bait containers, motor, etc.) and

# BMP

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or ordinances, but working to change the way citizens organize both themselves and existing resources, and partner with governmental units (which might also reorganize existing resources) towards the common public good of protecting water resources from AIS."

At the 2015 Aquatic Invaders Summit over 400 attendees from 64 Minnesota counties participated in writing and approving the Local AIS Action Framework, LAAF. The LAAF lists the strategic goal of, "Build the Capacity of Civic Infrastructure - Preventing AIS spread requires participation by and engagement of a broad grassroots base. Building the capacity of local groups to work in concert with each other, with state agencies, and with local resource managers to write and execute a local AIS plan is critical to success."

The current pilot project proposal is a response to this goal.

Davenport and Seekamp (2013) highlight important differences between community capital and community capacity: "While community capital encompasses a variety of foundational resources or assets (e.g., physical,

financial, technological) upon which a community can draw in times of need, community capacity is the interaction, mobilization and activation of these assets toward social or institutional change. Stated differently, a community may possess a broad range of capitals needed to cope with problems ... but lack the capacity to establish common goals, make decisions based on mutual learning, and act collectively." Additionally, recent research points to the important role of legitimacy and fairness as an interlinking and overarching concept in sustainable watershed management.

"One of Minnesota's most important resources is the communities that work to protect our public waters. By leveraging their energy, promoting capacity, and building partnerships, we will build a powerful engine to achieve our shared water quality goals," said Forester. "During the pilot and testing phase, we will discover gaps, and work to close those gaps. We intend to take the refined model to other jurisdictions as the model is refined." 🐾

## AIS Education Update

By Susan Koering, AIS Detector, Pelican Lake Association

The Aquatic Invaders Summit III, hosted by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates in late February, was and is just one of many educational opportunities for anyone concerned about preventing the spread of AIS in our Minnesota lakes and rivers. All attendees were there to gain knowledge. Thanks to a generous contribution by LARA to help cover my registration fee, I was able to attend. As a trained AIS Detector with my home on Pelican Lake, I seek ways on how all of us can work together to actively take some action steps to stop the progression of invasive species.

Beyond learning what our state is doing about AIS, I learned from these sessions about four additional threats to Minnesota.

They include warmer waters, floods and droughts, changes in fish and fishing, and nutrient loading of phosphorus and nitrogen in our lakes and rivers.

Keynote speaker Don Shelby, former WCCO anchor, facilitated a panel on the changes and effects in our natural environment. The outcome shared is that we need to work from the bottom up to get our state legislators to see the need to take action. We need to become more knowledgeable, get involved, and create model legislation. Our kids will be our best hope to keep this going.

Another session of interest was the initiation of a research project in schools. Students learn by asking questions,

## Care of our loons

By Anne Kostreba

Minnesota has roughly 12,000 loons, more than any other state except Alaska. Threats to loons include human disturbance, pollutants such as lead and mercury and oil spills. In the fall, Minnesota's loons travel to their winter home along the Atlantic coast from North Carolina south to Florida or on the Gulf of Mexico. Since the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on April 20, 2010 in the Gulf, the Minnesota DNR has been tracking and studying our loons to see what the short and long term effects of the oil spill has had on them. They gathered their data from dead loons (that lake dwellers alerted them to) and also by collecting loon eggs that did not hatch after the nest had been abandoned.

Three years ago the DNR collected 29 eggs that did not hatch from around the state. One of those was from a platform on Lower Cullen Lake. It turned out to be 1 of 4 (of the 29) that showed high levels of PAH, a petroleum contaminant that can cause cancer, mutations, and disturbances to embryo development. Due to the cost (\$300 per egg) and the fact that they now have sufficient information to connect our loons to the oil spill, they will no longer be collecting abandoned loon eggs. However, they are still interested in collecting dead loons. Please contact Kevin Woizeschke at the DNR – 218-203-4371 if you find a dead loon.

The good news – with the information they have gathered it appears that Minnesota will receive nearly \$7,000,000 over 3 years from the wildlife damage remediation fund to protect and help our loons. 🐾

developing models, plan investigations, analyze, interpret, use mathematical thinking and design solutions. One such project was using weevils (beetles) to control Eurasian watermilfoil by making holes in the milfoil stem so the milfoil will collapse.

As it was shared by lake association leadership attending these sessions, they feel they have no authority over what happens to our lakes. By working together and networking we can set some actions, get the attention of our champion legislators and push until we get results.



# Reminder - It's Time to Renew Your LARA Membership!

It's that time of year again! Be sure to submit your membership application and dues for 2018-2019. Forms can be found on the LARA website: <http://crowinglara.org/members/>

Current members (as of 5/28/2018)

Bass Lake Assn.  
Bay Lake Improvement Assn.  
Crow Wing Lake Assn.  
Cullen Lakes Assn.  
Fifty Lakes POA  
Friends of Lower Hay Lake, Inc.  
Gilbert Lake Assn.  
Gull Chain of Lakes Assn.  
Horseshoe Lake Assn.  
Lake Edward Conservation Club  
Lougee Lake Assn.

Mission Lakes Assn.  
Pelican Lakes Assn.  
Pelican Lakes Conservation Club, Inc.  
RALALA  
Red Sand Lake Assn.  
Ross Stark Twin Lake Assn.  
Upper South Long Lake Improvement Assn.  
WAPOA  
White Sand Lake Assn.



## No Plot to Shut Down Lake Access

By Jeff Forester, Executive Director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates

We have all seen in the press and on social media the myth that lake associations are working to "privatize" or limit access to the public waters. At the DNR Roundtable this myth emerged as a theme.

So, to set the record straight, not only do lake associations have no hidden agenda to privatize or reduce access of the public waters, they are perhaps one of the most effective institutions working to protect and enhance local resource dependent economies.

Every lake association in Minnesota, and there are over 500 of them, works to protect the lake resource for the benefit of all. According to a Concordia College study last summer of lake associations, lake associations spend about \$6.2 million of their own dollars for lake improvements and protection, including almost \$400,000 spent on fish stocking. They commit 1.25 million hours of volunteer time taking workshops on lake ecology, MAISRC's Starry Trek, and AIS Detector program. Some of the best and largest lake ecology datasets are due to lake associations, many of whom have been doing Secci disc, waterfowl counts and water chemistry

analysis for decades.

Lake associations fund storm warning systems for the lake, put out navigational buoys to keep visitors safe, support lake-based curriculum in local schools, volunteer at boat ramps to educate boaters about Aquatic Invasive Species BMPs. They buy conservation easements to help protect water quality. Some have put in campsite/shore lunch sites with fire rings, privy and picnic tables for visitors. They pick up garbage after ice fishing season (there are knuckleheads in every crowd), and work with local resort owners and chambers of commerce to promote tourism on the lake. They partner with watershed district staff to promote shoreline restoration and septic system compliance. Many lake association leaders were deeply engaged in efforts to update the minimum shoreland standards under Gov. Pawlenty. They bring in speakers to their annual meetings to talk about the importance of aquatic plants, shoreline buffers, woody debris and storm water runoff control in an effort to educate those members that don't fully

## President's Message

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drain bilge, live-well and baitwell by removing drain plugs before leaving a water access or shoreline property. *Keep drain plugs out* and water draining devices open while transporting watercraft.

3. **Dispose** of unwanted bait, including minnows, leeches, and worms in the trash. It is illegal to release bait into a waterbody or release aquatic animals from one waterbody to another. If you want to keep your bait, you must refill the bait container with bottled or tap water.

Drying your equipment and gear whenever possible is a great recommendation. AIS needs water to survive, so if you can deprive them of water and moisture, they will dry and die.

Additionally, if you buy or sell a dock, a boat lift, or a swim raft, and that piece of equipment is going from one waterbody into another, **the law says water-related equipment like that must stay out of the water for at least 21 days.**

Many people don't know about this law, which makes the buying and selling of docks and lifts via sites like Craig's List problematic. If you want to buy or sell a dock or boat lift, and you want to make certain it won't move AIS to another lake, make sure it stays out of the water for 21 days on your end. For example, sell it in the spring after it has sat outside during a Minnesota winter. Or pull the dock out of your lake, wait 21 days, and then advertise to sell it. If you purchase a used dock or boat lift, and the previous owner is unsure how long it has been out of the water, you can be the responsible one – some might say "hero" – and make sure it stays out of your lake for a full 21 days. 

appreciate that what they do on the land impacts the water.

There is a spirit of altruism behind much of their work, but it is an altruism based in self interest. These people love the lake. They have invested both financially and emotionally in it. Most have been at any given lake place an average of 37 years, and it is where the core memories of their families are based. They are not, by and large, wealthy, with an average household income of \$58,000 a year. Many forego vacations to distant places and go to the lake "up north" instead. Eighty six percent do not plan to sell their lake places and want to leave them for the next

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# No Plot to Shut Down Lake Access

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generation to enjoy.

They are anglers. According to a phone survey conducted in 2016 for Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates by Striezeck Research, about 62% of lake home and cabin owners buy a fishing license each year. In addition, they sell an average of four fishing licenses per property to friends and family that come up to the lake on vacation. With about 220,000 lake homes and cabins in Minnesota that means this group of people is responsible for about half the licenses sold in Minnesota each year.

But their self interest goes beyond preserving a Minnesota heritage of time at "the lake."

First and foremost the benefits of lakes are financial. Water related tourism provides over \$12.5 billion in revenue. Many of the members of the lake associations are business owners, realtors, teachers, workers and others that live in the community adjacent to the lake in question. The lake economy extends to the faith community - congregant numbers and contributions swell during open water. For many of the small towns across the lakes districts in Minnesota, lake-based recreation is the primary economic driver. The average cabin owner spends about \$5,000 annually in the neighboring community.

Lake association members also pay property taxes. A lot of property taxes. A recent Star Tribune article by John Reinan noted, "In 10 of Minnesota's 87 counties, they (cabin owners) shoulder more than 40 percent of the residential property tax burden, according to data from the state Department of Revenue. And in several counties, they pay more than 50 percent." In some lake rich but industry poor counties, cabins make up nearly 60% of the tax capacity. When we drill down to the smaller local taxing districts, cabin owners account for more than 50% of the tax capacity in almost 200 taxing jurisdictions.

If the utility of the lakes in these areas drops, if the fishing crashes, or runoff supported algae blooms or aquatic invasive species take over, or water levels rise or fall too much, the geese laying golden eggs die. Tax base and business suffers. Schools

and other public services collapse. It is equally true that if access to the lakes is shut down the local economies would take a significant hit.

Lake associations, made up largely of local civic leaders, do not want to "privatize" or close access to the lakes for the simple reason that closing lakes does not serve their self interest.

Public policy is always about working in that space between enlightened self-interest and the public good. Here is the dilemma for the lake association. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) are an existential threat to local lake-based economies and way of life. AIS are spread by humans. (I can hear the barstool biologists claiming that ducks, turtles and other critters spread it. So far there is no scientific evidence that they have. But even more to the point, if AIS were spread via natural means, we would be measuring the spread in terms of centuries, not summers. In 2012 there were 30 lakes designated as zebra mussel infested. Today there are well over 200. Of the 181 lakes with DNR carry in access only, none of them are designated as zebra mussel infested. Four have Eurasian milfoil. Many of these lakes are near infested lakes with waterfowl moving freely between them.)

Here is the real question, how to provide access in such a way that it protects the recreational values of access, prevents the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species AND is sustainable financially.

At the DNR back porch session one attendee made a call for meeting on AIS between lake associations and angling groups. Jeff Forester, at Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates invited a number of prominent angling groups to the Aquatic Invaders Summit III, held on Feb. 28/March 1 at the Earle Brown Heritage Center in the Twin Cities. Mr Forester has also met with angling leaders at Wildlife Forever, Conservation federation and Anglers for Habitat to encourage them to begin a meaningful, transparent and accountable partnership with lake associations to protect and enhance fishery resources in the state.

Thus at the Aquatic Invaders Summit, hosted by Minnesota Lakes and Rivers

Advocates, the Minneapolis Chapter of Muskies Inc. presented on the protocol they have developed with Cass County to provide AIS protection at the Frank Schneider Muskie Tournament. There were sessions on the impacts of various AIS to specific fish communities, how changes to plant communities impact fisheries and strategies to protect them. There are new eDNA tools that could help tremendously with not only early detection of AIS, but tracking the densities and distribution of fish populations within a lake. There were presentations on the many creative programs that have emerged to prevent AIS spread and protect access, including a presentation on the Wright County pilot.

Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates has a simple message for all the anglers in Minnesota - work with a lake association. Meet others in the state who are working to protect lakes and our lake based economy. Be part of the solution. But be prepared to change. Be prepared to find areas where you can work with others to protect a resource that benefits all. Preventing the spread of AIS will require behavior change from everyone. It will require everyone's good ideas and effort and contribution. And because there are always a few boneheads, we may have to put up with more regulations or inconvenience. Most anglers practice catch and release to some degree. They put back the big female walleyes, release the prime bass, take only the fish they may eat that day. But because of a few that act only in their self interest with no regard for the larger public good of protecting the resource, we must have catch limits, slot limits, seasons.

Because of aquatic invasive species, the same is true of accessing our lakes. We must take action to change the way we use our lakes if we hope to protect the public trust, and provide the opportunities and local lake-based economies we have enjoyed into the future.

So no, lake associations have no plot to shut the public off the public waters. They are working to protect a resource that is critically important to them personally, to their communities, to the State, to you. If you want to do more than grouse, throw stones, spread pernicious myth, join Minnesota Lakes and Rivers and contribute to work that will benefit us all.



# The Climate Sure is Changin'

By Phil Hunsicker

Climate change deniers are pretty good at backpedaling. You do something often enough and you get pretty good at it. They started out by claiming that the scientists were wrong and their data was a hoax and part of an elaborate conspiracy – that the Earth's warming is a natural cyclical occurrence and nothing to get your panties in a bundle. They then declared that, well, okay, the Earth is warming more than it has before, but humans have absolutely nothing to do with it. I wondered what their next backpedal and accompanying irrational theory would be. I suspected it would be something like climate change was somehow connected to illegal aliens pouring into the U.S. from Mexico, which has created an imbalance in the Earth's rotation, and if we just built a wall, everything would be fine. I know that sounds crazy, but that is the official language of climate change deniers. What they're saying now is just as preposterous.

I read an article the other day that Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Scott Pruitt, a climate change denier who was appointed to that position by another climate change denier – President Trump – conceded that climate change is a reality, and that humans have contributed "to a certain degree." However, he has now voiced the newest ridiculous proclamation from the deniers: he has cast doubt on the negative long-term implications associated with climate change. He said, "We know that humans have most flourished during times of what? Warming trends. I think there's an assumption made that because climate is warming, that that necessarily is a bad thing. Do we really know what the ideal surface temperature should be in the year 2100? In the year 2018? I mean it's fairly arrogant for us to think that we know exactly what it should be in 2100." And this nonsense is coming out of the mouth of the head official at the ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY!

The current consensus of the scientific community is that humans are the drivers of climate-warming trends, and that it is proceeding at an unprecedented rate. Some of the long-term effects of climate change include a continuing increase in global temperatures, more droughts and heatwaves, stronger and more intense hurricanes, and rising sea levels. Here in Minnesota, the data says that we should expect warmer winters, especially warmer nighttime temperatures, which means less ice cover on our lakes. We've been seeing that trend already. We can also expect more extreme wind and rainfall events like those seen in recent years in the Brainerd Lakes Area.

This latest backpedal from Administrator Pruitt will prove to be another baseless argument that mocks our intelligence and questions his own. Most of us are too smart to buy what the climate change deniers are selling, or we should be.

Minnesota's own – Bob Dylan – wrote a song back in 1964 that was more about social change than climate change, but read the lyrics today, and you'd swear he was writing specifically about climate change. I changed the title from "The Times They are a Changin'" to a more appropriate "The Climate Sure is Changin'." I hope Bob doesn't mind. And I hope Scott takes a listen – not just to Bob, but to the majority of Americans who think climate change deniers are wrong, that unbiased scientists and their data

are to be believed, that climate change is real, that humans are the cause, that the effects of climate change will be damaging to the Earth and its inhabitants, and that we, as a nation, need to do something about it instead of coming up with the next backpedal.

Come gather round people wherever you roam  
And admit that the waters around you have grown  
And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone  
If the time to you is worth savin'  
Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone  
For the climate sure is changin'

Come writers and critics who prophesize with your pens  
And keep your eyes wide, the chance won't come again  
And don't speak too soon for the wheel's still in spin  
And there's no tellin' who that it's namin'  
For the loser now will be later to win  
For the climate sure is changin'

Come senators, congressmen, please heed the call  
Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall  
For he that gets hurt will be he who has stalled  
There's a battle outside and it's ragin'  
It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls  
For the climate sure is changin'

Come mothers and fathers throughout the land  
And don't criticize what you can't understand  
Your sons and your daughters are beyond your command  
Your old road is rapidly agin'  
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend a hand  
For the climate sure is changin'

The line it is drawn, the curse it is cast  
The slow one now will later be fast  
As the present now will later be past  
The order is rapidly fadin'  
And the first one now will later be last  
For the climate sure is changin'. 🐉

# What You Can Do to Protect the Lake You Love

Lake home and cabin owners have an unmatched passion for Minnesota's lakes. Collectively they volunteer 1.2 million hours towards lake protection.

But there is one action that many have not yet taken and it is critically important. Become an advocate for lakes.

Said Jeff Forester, Executive Director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, "What happens in Saint Paul impacts each of us out on our docks, often to our detriment. There are hundreds of thousands of lake home and cabin owners in Minnesota. They have a commitment to the health of Minnesota's lakes, but their voices were not heard because they were not organized."

Beginning in 2012, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates has been lake associations' members' voice at the State Capitol. Forester and Judy Corrigan, who runs the MLR office, and the volunteer MLR Board, set out to build the largest and most active grassroots conservation group in Minnesota.

Their strategy is to build a grassroots base to impact water related policy in Minnesota, to push media stories about the issues, lobby for legislative changes, and promote, energize and support local efforts. Said Forester, "Water is a totally non-partisan issue. Concern for our lakes and rivers crosses party lines and unites Minnesotans."

Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates provides:

Full time lobbying at the State Capitol to change laws, push pro-water initiatives, and direct funds towards local lake and river projects, including aquatic invasive species,

A steady drumbeat of pro-water news stories in press, television and radio to educate citizens and politicians on water issues,

Support for local partnerships that build lake association capacity and give local water advocates a seat at the table,

Support funding for world class science to identify issues and discover on-the-ground solutions to our water problems.

Lake associations and their members have never been organized in a unified voice before. Already this effort is generating benefits for lakes and support for the people that work to protect them.

One MLR member wrote, "I have been receiving your email updates for awhile now. After reading through your purpose and hearing about the action you are taking, my family has decided to join.... While we only have 90 feet of shoreline, we believe we're doing what we can to keep our lake healthy. As we continue to see reports of area lakes being infested with various AIS, it is more important to us than ever to help reduce this spread. We hope that our donation will help to keep

our lakes and rivers healthy, and perhaps there will be opportunities for us to become more involved as well. I have been learning a lot from the content on your website (thanks for your work with respect to property taxes!)"

Thousands of lake home and cabin owners across the state are building a grassroots constituency to protect lakes from runoff pollution, aquatic invasive species, poor fisheries management, loss of lake habitat. Membership contributions for Minnesota Lakes and Rivers are set by the members. People contribute what they can, with the average being about \$7 a month, slightly more than a fancy coffee drink at Starbucks. This small investment in their lake is having a huge impact.

Said Forester, "No other group of people is better positioned to advocate for water protection and the local economic and lifestyle benefits our waters provide to our communities and state than lake home and cabin owners. By organizing this large grassroots constituency, we will be able to advance legislation and secure funding to ensure we leave a healthy lake legacy for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren."

To learn more, and to join, go to [www.mnlakesandrivers.org](http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org). Consider being a sustaining member to maximise your contribution. Or call 952-854-1317 for more information. 🐾

## LARA Board Of Directors 2017-2018

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218-568-5904  
[beaver@uslink.net](mailto:beaver@uslink.net)

**Nick Bernier**  
[mnarrows@hotmail.com](mailto:mnarrows@hotmail.com)

**Jodi Billy**  
612-875-8084  
[Jodibilly@comcast.net](mailto:Jodibilly@comcast.net)

**Eleanor Burkett** (*ex-officio*)  
218-828-2326  
[burke044@umn.edu](mailto:burke044@umn.edu)

**Sandy Holm**  
218-765-3309  
[rnsholm@brainerd.net](mailto:rnsholm@brainerd.net)

**Phil Hunsicker**  
218-825-9215  
[phunsicker@q.com](mailto:phunsicker@q.com)

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218-764-2666  
[mikeobriens@gmail.com](mailto:mikeobriens@gmail.com)

**Kent Montgomery** (*ex-officio*)  
218-855-8155.  
[kmontgomery@clcmn.edu](mailto:kmontgomery@clcmn.edu)

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