

LARA Accomplishments over the Past Year

By: Phil Hunsicker

LARA is keenly aware that our members pay dues to us each year, and in return, they expect us to do good things with their hard-earned money. LARA board members are all volunteers with busy lives, but we are passionate about doing what is good for our members and what is good for our county's public waters. Below are some examples of what your money and your support accomplished over the past year.

1. LARA partnered with the Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society, University Extension, The Nature Conservancy, the Minnesota Chapter of the American Fisheries Society, and the MNDNR to support the 15th annual Lake- and River-Friendly Awards. In addition to recognizing 8 worthy projects in Crow Wing and Cass counties, Bruce Carlson, a fishery biologist who has written many articles and books on lakes, spoke about what is happening beneath the surface of our public waters. About 30 people attended the event.
2. LARA attended a meeting of lake associations with county representatives to provide feedback on their 2017 AIS prevention program and to review the county's proposed AIS plan for 2018. LARA continues to advocate for the creation of a Crow Wing County AIS Task Force so that lake association opinions are heard and incorporated into the plan.
3. LARA was represented at the Aquatic Invaders Summit III, which was held for two days in Brooklyn Center on February 28th and March 1st 2018.
4. LARA continues to support a partnership between Central Lakes College and Gallaudet University to train the next generation of lake stewards. Students and professors from both schools do water quality testing in lakes around Crow Wing County, assess overall watershed health, and make recommendations to improve the water quality of the lake.
5. LARA thinks beyond our county borders by supporting critical statewide water issues through our memberships with the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates and MNCOLA
6. LARA continues to administer the CWEPA grant, which makes available approximately \$3,000/year to support natural resources projects happening in our own back yard of Crow Wing County
7. LARA partnered with Leighton Broadcasting, a handful of Minnesota counties, and other lake groups to finance the creation of a series of short, humorous, educational AIS videos that are now available to all at no charge. Links to these videos can be found on LARA's website (www.crowwinglara.org)
8. LARA made a financial contribution to support AIS research at the University of Minnesota's Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center
9. LARA invited the organizers of the proposed National Loon Center in Crosslake, MN to talk with our board about their vision, and their specific goals and objectives. LARA made a financial contribution to support the effort.
10. LARA assisted a member who wished to attend an AIS conference, but needed assistance to cover the registration fee
11. By conducting our board meetings in locally owned establishments like Jackpine Brewery, Roundhouse Brewery, Big Axe Brewery, and Nisswa's Main Street Ale House, we get to show our support for local businesses and enjoy locally made beer while conducting LARA business. Being on the LARA board doesn't sound too bad, does it?
12. LARA remains a financially sound organization. We manage our money wisely, and we spend it in ways we think our members would approve.
13. LARA represents the interests of over thirty dues-paying lake associations in Crow Wing County. Because of the work we do in support of lakes, we also represent the interests of those lake groups that are not members of LARA. We especially try to give a voice to those smaller lake associations with little money and little political power.
14. LARA sends out electronic versions of our quarterly newsletters to member associations and we continue to update our website with information helpful to our members and the general public.