



Ripples

CROW WING COUNTY
LAKES AND RIVERS ALLIANCE
P.O. BOX 53, PEQUOT LAKES, MN 56472

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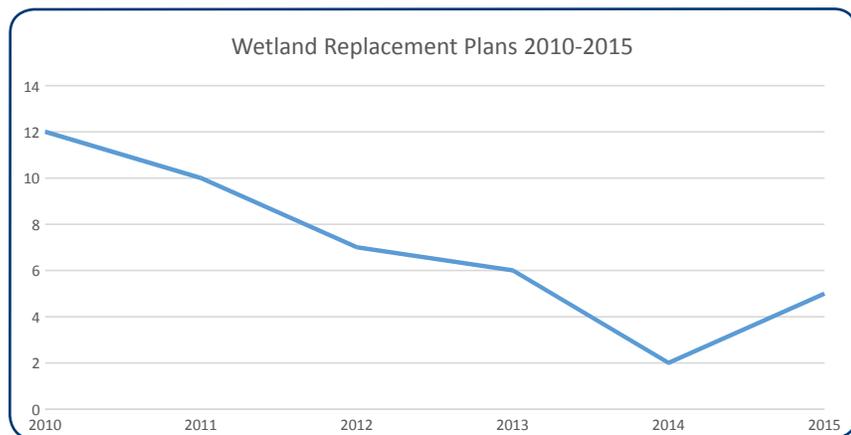
Crow Wing County Sees Decline in Wetland Replacement Plans

*By: Chris Pence,
Land Services Supervisor,
Crow Wing County*

The Crow Wing County Land Service Department reports a significant overall decline in wetland replacement plans over the last six years. As seen on

the chart below, 12 replacement plans were approved in 2010, compared to only five approved in 2015.

Wetlands in Crow Wing County are regulated by the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) according to Minnesota Rules Chapter 8420. When wetlands are proposed to be filled, there are two options: Exemptions or Replacement Plans. Exemptions are wetland activities listed in the rule that are exempt from replacement – these are activities such as forestry management and utility work. A wetland impact must meet a specific enumerated exemption unless an appropriate replacement plan is developed. A wetland replacement plan is required when an activity that impacts wetlands does not qualify under WCA exemptions. This is a process that is highly scrutinized and requires a process called "sequencing". Sequencing means that the applicant must first prove that the wetland impacts cannot be avoided. If the impacts can be avoided, the application is denied. If impacts cannot be avoided the next step



President's Message

By: Phil Hunsicker

A Failure to Plan is to Plan for Failure

I used to spit out that quote when I would talk to communities about the importance of comprehensive planning. I would say, "We plan for our vacations. We don't just show up at the airport and take the first flight out, do we? And if we are smart, we plan for our retirement since we don't want to leave our jobs with just \$12.00 in our savings account. Communities should also plan for their future well-being." Organizations like LARA need to plan for their future, too, so lately, the LARA board of directors has been having important conversations about our purpose, or as the French would say, our *raison-d'être*. We are asking ourselves (in English): What are the three things we should do well as an organization? We're still fine-tuning our ideas, but I thought I would share with you what we've come up with so far.

First, we should use our financial resources, mostly from the collection of membership dues and grant dollars available through the CWEPA Fund, to make a difference when it comes to land and water conservation issues in Crow Wing County, in the larger region, and statewide. We will continue to recognize and reward projects, individuals and organizations that contribute to a healthy natural environment in Crow Wing County.

The second thing we should do well is build better working relationships between LARA, county government, and all lake associations in Crow Wing County. LARA wants lake association opinions to be valued – even solicited – by county government. Honest, respectful, and open communication needs to be improved, so LARA will take the high road

2017 CWEPA Fund Grant

By Ann Beaver

The Crow Wing Environment Protection Advised Fund (CWEPA Fund) will open its 2017 grant application period on May 1. Grant applications for projects that will take place in 2017 are available on the Crow Wing County Lakes and Rivers Alliance (LARA) web site – CrowWingLARA.org. The deadline for submitting an application is September 30, 2016. The amount available in matching funds for 2017 projects will be approximately \$3,000.

Past recipients and their projects are:

2012 – Cullen Lakes Association (\$600), to assist in establishing an aquatic plant identification and management program; Lake Hubert Conservation Association (\$742), to involve, educate, and encourage lakeshore property owners to become more active in monitoring and preventing AIS.

2013 – The City of Nisswa (\$2,500) to replace the trees along the Highway 371 corridor near downtown Nisswa lost when the highway was expanded through the city.

2014 – Pelican Lakes Association (\$2,800), to help fund its well testing for water quality project.



2015 – Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation District (\$2,500), to help fund

the creation of a vegetated catch basin for stormwater control between the west end of Round Lake and Highway 371.

CWEPA Fund grants are available to all non-profit or local government organizations wishing to complete an environmental project in Crow Wing County. Proposals must align with the mission of protecting or restoring the natural resources of Crow Wing County. Grant funds received must be matched by the recipient. If your organization is interested in applying for the grant but is not a registered non-profit organization, LARA does provide fiscal services, at a nominal charge, for its member organizations.

Anyone interested in learning more about the CWEPA Fund or making a tax-deductible donation to the fund should contact Phil Hunsicker at 218-824-5095 or by email at phunsicker@q.com.



From the Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations (MNCOLA)

For us to get traction on our 2016 Legislative Agenda, we need your help!!!

We need to have as many people as possible get in contact with, and have dialog about our Legislative Agenda with their MN State Legislators: their State Senators and Representatives. Use this link to contact YOUR representative: <http://www.gis.leg.mn/OpenLayers/districts/>

Local government leaders need to hear these messages as well, because more and more money is being spent at the local level to protect and improve our public waters, and also because the local governments are routinely in contact with their State Legislators. The local government leaders include County Commissioners, City Mayors, City Councilmembers, Watershed District leaders, etc.

Decontamination into and out of Minnetonka, Mille Lacs and Koronis

We selected each of these lakes for a specific reason. We can't afford to let Minnetonka get any additional AIS. It is one of the busiest and most popular lakes in the state, with over \$4 billion in property value. We can't afford to have Lake Minnetonka become the next Mille Lacs. And we must stop Minnetonka from being the largest exporter of AIS to the western states. Can we do this at Minnetonka? Of course! We just need the determination and leadership to solve the problems and make it happen.

Mille Lacs is the first major lake in the state with both zebra mussels and spiny waterfleas. DNR's own data illustrates how this dynamic duo of AIS is destroying the fish food chain. Mille Lacs can't afford to let yet another new AIS into the mix. And we must stop outbound boats infested with AIS from Mille Lacs from entering any other lake in the state. Can we do this at Mille Lacs? Of course! We just need the determination and leadership to solve the problems and make it happen.

Lake Koronis. With the only known infestation of starry

stonewort in the state, an invasive species that the DNR does not yet know how to control, we must contain this situation until control remedies are established. Can we do this at Koronis? Of course, and it's an easier challenge than at Minnetonka and at Mille Lacs! We just need the determination and leadership to solve the problems and make it happen.

Move AIS from DNR to MN Pollution Control Agency

There are a few key reasons for moving AIS from the DNR. DNR has a dual mission of promoting access and protecting the resource. They consistently make access more important than protection of our public waters. PCA does not have that dual mission.

DNR does not develop policies based on science. There is no peer-reviewed science behind the DNR's 21 day quarantine for moving docks and lifts, nor is there peer-reviewed science behind the DNR assertion that muskies do not affect the native fisheries. PCA is a science-based organization.

AIS prevention and management requires regulation of local governmental units, businesses, and individuals to achieve the desired result of stopping the spread of AIS. That is not the DNR's strong suit, but it is PCA's.

Increase fines for AIS violations

There is a larger fine for taking a deer out of season than for being the potential cause of an AIS infestation. Education has helped make most boaters aware of AIS, but it hasn't changed their behaviors. We need behavior change to stop the spread of AIS, and much higher fines will change behavior. Each new AIS changes that lake forever. If we are serious about retaining the great fishing and pristine waters that remain, we must stop the spread of AIS. 

Wetlands

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is to minimize the amount of impact. The final step is to replace the impacts with other wetlands that have been created or restored and are part of the BWSR Wetland Banking program. The wetland credits are purchased in what is referred to as a "Bank Service Area" which are set according to major watershed lines. Credits are not always utilized in the same county where the impact occurred. The overall purpose of WCA is to achieve a no-net loss of wetlands in Minnesota.

An interagency group called the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP) reviews all wetland replacement applications and makes a recommendation to approve or deny the request to the County. TEP is made up of staff from the County, BWSR, SWCD and DNR (if in the Shoreland District). The TEP review process is a rigorous and thorough examining of all the facts and issues related to the proposed wetland impact. After TEP has reviewed all the facts and made findings based on those facts, a recommendation is submitted to the Land Services Department. By rule, the Department must follow the TEP recommendation unless it is determined that the TEP recommendation is arbitrary and capricious.

WCA allows for residents to be involved in the process. **Residents who wish to be notified of WCA applications must contact the County in writing of their desire to be notified. WCA applications do not require a public hearing and there is not a notification requirement unless a resident specifically asks in writing to be notified.**

Wetlands are a valuable resource in Crow Wing County. In fact, all 8 types of wetlands are found here. Wetlands provide valuable functions and values including groundwater recharge and discharge, a natural filter, wildlife habitat, and floodwater retention. The Land Services Department will continue to balance the outstanding wetland resources in Crow Wing County with consistent, fair and clear administration of the Wetland Conservation Act. If anyone has any questions about wetlands, please contact Chris Pence at chris.pence@crowwing.us or Jake Frie at jacob.frie@crowwing.us. We can also be reached at 218-824-1125. We look forward to working with you in 2016! 🐾

This article was submitted in response to an article on wetland preservation that LARA wrote and included in our last newsletter, as well as an article that appeared in the [Brainerd Dispatch](#). LARA welcomes the opportunity to open communication channels with the county on hot-button issues like wetland protection, aquatic invasive species, and shoreland development. Talking about differences of opinion is the first step to finding common ground.

An AIS Reminder to All Boaters

By: Phil Hunsicker

Ice-out is just around the corner, so 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.

If we can all follow these simple rules and change a few of our behaviors, we can keep AIS from spreading. It's entirely up to us!

President's Message

Continued from page 1

and initiate more frequent in-person conversations with county government personnel about lake association concerns. We will attempt to build mutual trust and mutual respect while still making sure that the county and other LGUs are adequately protecting valuable water resources. We won't forget that we are a voice for all lake associations in the county, especially the smaller ones that don't have a lot of money or influence, but have plenty of frustrations.

The third thing we should do well is enhance our relevance by being more media-conscious and by keeping our members aware of timely, pertinent information and educational opportunities that will make us all smarter and better prepared to deal with both the expected and the unexpected.

Good community planning gets as many diverse opinions in the room as is possible and then chooses those ideas that give the community the best chance for future success – economically, environmentally and socially. You are our community, so if you have opinions about what LARA should do well, share them with us. Send me an email at phunsicker@q.com and we'll include your ideas in our conversations. 🐾

Required Actions to Prevent the Spread of AIS:

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 drain bilge, livewell 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.

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. 🐾

Get to know your Board Members

Jodi Billy

What prompted you to become a member of the LARA board?

I am a Pelican Lake Association (PLA) board member and I find environmental conservation important. Through PLA I learned of an opportunity to participate on LARA's board. Since both associations work toward improving the environmental health of our lakes and rivers, I felt participating on both boards would be a good way to leverage my knowledge and contribute towards a positive impact.

What lake or river are you most connected to (in Crow Wing County)?

We have had a home on Pelican Lake for many years and plan to stay for many years to come.

What lake or river environmental issue is most important to you, and what are you doing to help the cause?

The quality of the water and a healthy ecosystem. I try to be aware of the impact my "footprint" leaves behind. Water quality of the lake is greatly affected by Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). A short-term solution is to try and reduce the growth of AIS through inspection, treatment and education. Supporting an inspection process of watercraft entering our lake from other communities will help reduce an increased spread of AIS. Long-term, I am hopeful a more "technical" solution to reduce/eliminate AIS can be found. Supporting efforts or institutions that are working on this is important. Both PLA and LARA's efforts are directed toward these issues.

What can others do to help with this cause?

Try to be mindful about how your choices have an impact on the environment. Make choices where the known outcome has no negative, or the least negative, impact on the quality of the environment. If you know there is something you can do to improve the quality of our lake water, such as reduced fertilizer or detergents down the septic systems, please consider it. Ensure your watercraft or your friends' watercraft coming on to our lakes is free of hitchhikers. 🦋



Calendar of Events

April 14-15, 2016:

State of Water Conference, Alexandria, MN. For more information and registration, click [here](#).



September 22, 2016:

MN Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) Showcase, St. Paul, MN. For more information click [here](#).

October 5-6, 2016:

Aquatic Invaders Summit II, Rivers Edge Convention Center St. Cloud, MN. More information will be in our next newsletter.

October 17-19, 2016:

Upper Midwest Aquatic Invasive Species Conference, Lacrosse WI. More information will be in our next newsletter.

October 18-19, 2016:

Minnesota Water Resources Conference, St. Paul, MN. More information will be in our next newsletter.

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