

## ITASCA COALITION OF LAKE ASSOCIATIONS

Wednesday, February 19, 2014  
7:00 p.m. -- Itasca County ITV Room

### Attendance:

Stephanie Kessler, ICOLA Vice-President/Johnson Lake  
Jan Sandberg, ICOLA Secretary/ Greater Pokegama Lake Association

Dick Sandberg, Greater Pokegama Lake Association  
Sue Swanson, Johnson Lake  
Helen Ahlbrecht, King Lake  
Bill Grantges, Siseebakwet Lake  
Tom and Barb Ryan, Suomi Area Lakes Association  
Don Simons, Soil and Water Conservation District Board  
Marn Flicker, Jesse Lake  
Julie Miedtke, University of Minnesota  
Eric Ahlstrom, ICC Lab, Deer Lake  
Tyler Kasper & Pat Hopkins, ICC Lab students

**CALL TO ORDER:** Stephanie Kessler called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm at the Courthouse. Representatives from six Itasca County lakes and associations were in attendance.

**1. INTRODUCTIONS:** Stephanie led a round of introductions.

### **2. ADDITIONS TO AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

A draft agenda was distributed at the meeting and was also distributed electronically before the meeting.

*Motion to approve the agenda. Marn Flicker, Bill Grantges. M/S/U*

### **3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

*Motion to approve the minutes of October 16, 2013, as submitted. Tom Ryan, Sue Swanson . M/S/U*

### **4. TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Michelle forwarded her report to be read in her absence.

The association's beginning balance on October 16, 2013 was \$3,386.81. There were no expenditures since that date. Revenues received were dues of \$663.00 from 13 lake associations (Hale, King, Pokegama, Turtle, Deer Lake Watershed, Prairie, Shallow/Sand, Wilson (formerly Big Balsam), Deer, Horseshoe & Mike, Island, Suomi Area, Eagle Lake). The ending balance on February 19 was \$4,049.81.

Michelle noted that she has received dues notices from 25 lake associations for the current year. A member last year but not paid to date is Splithand Lake. King Lake is new and Prairie Lake renewed after not being a member for several years. Bass, Long Lake 59-24, Spider and Swan have not submitted dues for 2011-2013.

*Motion to accept the Treasurer's report. Sue Swanson, Marn Flicker. M/S/U*

### **5. OLD BUSINESS**

#### **A. Itasca County Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) report--Julie Miedtke**

Julie reported that the group spent last year working on statement of cooperation with a wide variety of partners. They have drafted a strategic plan. They held a meeting a few weeks ago to select the priority aquatic and terrestrial species for the focus of their efforts. On March 27, they will pull cooperators together to firm up the strategic plan and develop an annual work plan. This will hopefully help them put things on the ground rather quickly. The group received a grant from

BWSR for \$15,000 to jump start activities—web site, database, training for volunteers and other educational activities. They are looking for lake association partners to help with detection and rapid response. Their efforts will include activities at active, high risk lakes. They want to share information with ICOLA including a re-visit in April.

Julie noted that there will be an opportunity for co-promoting a presentation on transferring cabin ownership within the family featuring Allison Eklund.

**B. MN COLA report--Tom Nelson**

“MN COLA is holding its own meeting this same day at the State Office Building, next to the capitol in St Paul. We will have two educational presentations on the sulfide mining proposals from PolyMet. This has been big in the news lately, and we hope to arrive at a resolution favoring greater protection for the water and lakes in the mining vicinity. The PolyMet proposal, together with its accompanying Environmental Impact analyses, will set the stage for many further sulfide mines in northern Minnesota, including Itasca County. It is recommended that individuals in ICOLA become educated on this issue and send comment letters to the DNR, lead agency for mining permits.

Attached (Attachment 1) is a series of “Whereas” clauses that aim at a resolution that should be of help to ICOLA for understanding the problems with sulfide mining. The deadline for submitting comments on PolyMet to the DNR is March 13.

MN COLA has also invited all the legislators who have constituents in MNCOLA’s COLAs to come for a pizza lunch and discussion of our legislative agenda, which focuses on AIS. We are advocating a much more comprehensive approach to the **AIS problem** than the simplistic “personal responsibility” now recommended by the DNR Commissioner. We want to see tightened and enhanced protocols, long term funding, more research, border checks, and sufficient number of decontamination units available to the public.”

**C. MLR report--Tom Nelson**

“Minnesota Lands and Rivers Advocates (MLR) is one of the best partners we have on the state level to advocate for clean water and protections for lake residents regarding many issues. I attended their annual meeting at the Cabin Show last week and was very impressed. Featured presentation was by Speaker of the House Paul Theissen. MLR has a lobbying credential and is very active during the legislative session.”

Bill Grantges suggested that we research putting a link to the MLR newsletter on the ICOLA website.

**D. IWLP Water summits: Youth and Adult—Jan Sandberg**

The Itasca Water Legacy Partnership is once again hosting the Youth Water Summit at the Itasca County Fairgrounds on May 22, 2014. Last year there were around 350 fifth grade students who participated. The IWLP Education Committee would welcome any volunteers interested in lending a hand at this awesome event. Please contact Kathleen Loucks, IWLP Education Chair at 218-326-0017 or by email at [Kathy.loucks@itascaswcd.org](mailto:Kathy.loucks@itascaswcd.org) if you are interested.

After some preliminary discussions about holding another adult summit this year, the Executive Committee decided that there was not enough time nor volunteers to put the event together for this year. Instead, IWLP will focus on education surrounding the release of the economic study of the impact of water in Itasca County.

**E. AIS inspection report--Bill Grantges**

Bill is now on the IWLP Board and believes this will be a great summer for education on AIS. They have applied for a DNR grant for additional Tier 1 inspectors (at that level they have the right to refuse access to the lake) at several landings on the busiest lakes. The grant specified non-infested lakes, specific landings and likely timing--DNR will make the final decision. To pay for IWLP’s share, they applied for ETF grant that was successful. They will be hiring and training their own

inspectors (5-10 pairs), paid \$10/hour through Personnel Dynamics. Inspectors will be assigned more often on holidays and weekends, probably 4-8 hours per week (fishing opener to labor day), with some extra hours going to partner lakes (where the lake association is contributing additional funds and IWLP is seeking additional lake association partners). The basic training will be free and open to everyone--those hired will get some additional training. Anyone who is interested in working as an inspector educator should contact Bill Grantges, bill@grantges.net. Similarly, any lake associations who wish to contribute funds to obtain additional inspection hours should contact Bill. Finally Bill is looking for contributors to a column in the Herald Review about water.

Question about whether there was any discussion about posting someone on Sand Lake (infested) to check the boats when they leave? Bill said that was discussed, including that this is the first year that Sand Lake will not get additional hours from DNR. He noted that the inspectors discussed above will not have any enforcement authority.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS**

### ***A. Information on Gypsy Moth—Julie Miedke***

Julie had a selection of handouts on forest tent caterpillars, which are going to be prevalent this year. The proposed quarantine for gypsy moths would be issued by the federal government which would be monitored by the state. It is proposed for Lake and Cook counties-- a surprise to Julie who anticipated it further south. There may be regulations that limit the ability to take materials out from the quarantined counties—firewood, trees, wreaths, household goods, and similar. Julie stressed the danger posed by the gypsy moth. See Minnesota Department of Agriculture for information. While the severe cold weather this year may knock the bugs back a bit, the danger is still high.

Forest tent caterpillar is native and the forest can deal with it. But gypsy moth is not native. Spraying the house will help kill caterpillars but also other bugs in the food chain. Suggestion that any remaining AIS table tents could be distributed at inspection points. Bill said that there is money for some additional education materials.

### ***B. Request of funds for Envirothon--Kathy Loucks***

Envirothon is North America's largest high school environmental education competition. For many years regional high school teams have competed in the Envirothon. SWCD's from Itasca, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Crow Wing, Hubbard, Koochiching, Lake of the Woods, and Wadena counties work together to put on our area's Envirothon each year.

The Envirothon is an outdoor learning experience. Participants attend sessions on aquatics, wildlife, forestry, soils, and current events. Natural resource professionals use the outdoor environment to present hands-on problems and questions to the competitors. Students take quizzes and earn points at each station. High school teams also deliver a prepared presentation based on a specific conservation challenge.

*Motion to donate \$200 in support of the Envirothon. Sue Swanson, Marn Flicker. M/S/U*

### ***D. School Trust land exchange--Tom Nelson***

“This is a new controversy by which the DNR is considering making “best use” of the school trust lands. There are two sections of each township placed years ago in public ownership for the school trust. To make best use of these assets for the schools, many of these sections are possibly being sold, some to mining companies. The Isaac Walton League has provided a forum and guidance on this issue, some of which has been sent out to ICOLA as an email. For an excellent summary of this issue, be sure to read the attachment called “Notes on School Trust Program” by Shirley Loegering in your email already. For background, google: “MN DNR School trust” “

### ***E. Presentation on ICC Water Lab--Eric Ahlstrom***

Pat Hopkins and Tyler Kasper (students at ICC lab) led the presentation, explaining that the mission of the lab is to educate the community about water quality. The presentation reviewed the personnel associated with the lab. The need is to collect data to confirm the basis of current water quality. They reviewed current projects: erosion analysis, SWAG 1 & 2 projects to collect data on 170 undeveloped lakes (including total nitrogen and phosphorus); and the Deer-Pokegama diagnostic study. The certified lab offers an opportunity for students to learn in the lab with professionals rather than just in a classroom—working on data that means something and has consequences. They described equipment used to profile pH, dissolved oxygen, temp, depth, take samples at specific depth and similar. Eric described calibration protocols. There is a long list of analyses that can be performed—they described some of these (phosphorus, nitrogen, chlorophyll, total suspended solids, chloride, e-coli, pH) in more detail. The lab can test private wells—MN Department of Health recommends testing every year for e coli and every 1-2 years for nitrates. The cost is \$45 for both tests. Kits are available at the Itasca SWCD and county environmental services in the courthouse. The test samples can be mailed or dropped off at the lab. The lab is funded through grants and its work with lake associations such as doing baseline testing.

Eric and the students are happy to attend lake associations to present information about the lab and testing. Interested associations should contact Eric Ahlstrom at [eric.ahlstrom@itascacc.edu](mailto:eric.ahlstrom@itascacc.edu).

### ***C. PolyMet report—Tom Nelson***

This was covered in the MN COLA report. Tom had forwarded a copy of a resolution with many whereas statements that members could use in communicating with DNR (Attachment 1).

## **7. MEMBER ASSOCIATION REPORTS/ICOLA UPDATES**

### ***A. Lake Association updates***

#### **Greater Pokegama Lake Association**

GPLA had two meetings since the last ICOLA meeting. In October we began discussion with the ICC Lab and SWCD to devise a possible plans for ongoing testing of water quality on Pokegama. This is an outgrowth of the Deer-Pokegama study. There are concerns about the impact of backflow from the Mississippi which is a discussion to have with the Corps of Engineers. The scholarship fund will be continued. A discussion about float planes determined that there is not much we can do given state law other than call FAA with the tail number and a complaint. The task force is continuing to build support for the restoration/completion of the Aitkin bypass on the Mississippi River to alleviate flooding in the Upper Mississippi River basin, and some progress is being made. There was a long discussion about houseboats and the need for a pump out location on the lake. Also non-compliant septic systems that can continue with certain types of sales. In January, we continued discussion about a possible testing program, with or without volunteers, and will try to find out what other lake associations are doing. GPLA donated funds to IWLP. We will hold off on treating curly leaf pondweed near the power plant for a year per DNR recommendation. We continued discussion of the houseboat situation and toilets on Nisbett Island.

#### **Jesse Lake**

They have received some monies from SWCD for restoration. In November Marn acquired seed for the bank at the Tillys Creek project. They had a fishing contest recently for the first time in a few years that was a great success.

#### **Johnson Lake**

Not much happening over winter. They will send out a newsletter around fishing opener. They are not sure if the two islands were purchased by DNR.

#### **King Lake**

They will hold the annual meeting Memorial Day weekend. She will contact Steph about how to coordinate with Firewise for a presentation.

### **Siseebakwet Lake Association**

They had an Ice Out contest and are now planning the July 4<sup>th</sup> nighttime flotilla. They will again sponsor the public landing porta potty and ICC lab testing. The big issue continues with the weir that needs to be rebuilt—there is an application in to DNR. They will need to finance their share—nearly all landowners want to do it.

### **Suomi Area Lakes Association**

They just finished the fishing contest although most did not fish but did eat.

## **B. COUNTY ISSUES**

Don Simon reported that there is the hope that there will be money available for Mississippi shoreline restoration and AIS. The SWCD is not likely to be tolerant of those who claim they did not know that they violated a requirement. They finally got a contractor ticketed by the DNR for violating lakeshore requirements.

### **i. Living Word Bible Camp—Tom Nelson**

“The LWBC was given approvals for its CUP and PUD applications. Although there were many restrictions place on this development stemming from the EAW, most of those restrictions also have glaring loopholes that will allow the “camp” to operate in a manner indistinguishable from a first class, tax-free resort for adults. The Deer Lake people have already challenged the denial of the EIS in court, and will also appeal the CUP and PUD for not adhering to the EAW findings, and procedural lapses. The case that never ends!”

### **ii. Zoning Ordinance Revisions—Tom Nelson**

“Following the Comprehensive Plan review last year, the county is now obliged to update the zoning ordinance to be in compliance. In addition, having served 6 years on the PC/BoA, I have submitted a substantial list of needed revisions of all kinds. This process should be fairly lengthy and detailed once we get started. However, the Environmental Services Department has recently seen several retirements, including that of Don Dewey and several other secretaries and tech people. The county has been slow in hiring replacements, though Dan Swenson has the inside tract for Dewey’s job. But until the ESD is re-staffed they are unable to take on the zoning ordinance revision. So all is on hold for now, maybe getting started in spring or summer.”

Discussion about holding the annual meeting again in Marcell.

*Motion to hold the July meeting in Marcell and authorize Michelle Brauner to contact Marcell and make the appropriate payment. Marn Flicker, Barb Ryan. M/S/U.*

## **8. ADJOURN**

8:50 pm

### **Future meetings:**

April 16, 2014, 7pm, County Courthouse ITV Conference Room

June 18, 2014, 7pm County Courthouse ITV Conference Room

July 16, 2014, Annual Meeting Marcell

October 15, 2014, County Courthouse ITV Conference Room

Respectfully submitted,  
Jan Sandberg, Secretary

**Attachment 1: Resolution Statement from Tom Nelson Concerning Polymet**

**MINNESOTA COALITION OF LAKE ASSOCIATIONS (MN COLA) BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_

**WHEREAS**, sulfide mining has proven to be hazardous to water quality and aquatic life surrounding the mining operations everywhere it has been permitted; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed the mining operation and those that follow are located at the very top of two continental watersheds and within wetland areas crucial to groundwater recharge; and

**WHEREAS**, the proposed land exchanges are neither contiguous nor of similar quality; and

**WHEREAS**, the damage done by sulfide mining is estimated to require 200-500 years of monitoring and treatment; and

**WHEREAS**, the cost of monitoring and treatment for such a long period is nearly impossible to estimate or guarantee fulfillment; and

**WHEREAS**, the concept of "adaptive management" of "actual effects" is far too vague to assure prevention of environmental damage; and

**WHEREAS**, dependance on liners and covers for tailings basins and stockpiles cannot be proven to be adequate to prevent leakage over long term or even the duration of the mining operation; and

**WHEREAS**, critical computer modeling of runoff into nearby waters has been shown to be inaccurate and underestimated; and

**WHEREAS**, other inaccuracies have often occurred in pre-mining assessment that fail to predict long-term outcomes of large scale sulfide mining; and

**WHEREAS**, the owners of the mining operations have not demonstrated the best management practices of the environment elsewhere, escaping responsibility by sale or bankruptcy; and

**WHEREAS**, the PolyMet proposal and SDEIS is only the first of many more similar operations, thus setting a an environmental standard for the subsequent; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the risks of extensive and permanent damage to the environment outweighs the benefits of relatively short-term job creation and limited metal extraction, and

**THEREFORE** urge the DNR to take caution and deny the proposed permits to mine non-ferrous metals in this sensitive region.

Duly adopted this 19<sup>th</sup> day of February 2014 at St. Paul, MN. Board of Directors; MN COLA

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Nelson; President

\_\_\_\_\_  
Barb Halbakken Fischburg; Secretary

## Attachment 2: School Trust Land notes from Shirley Loergring

To Fellow IKES;

“The clock is ticking” and “There’s no free lunch”. Two comments that were very pertinent from the School Trust Fund program held at the Grand Rapids Area Library on January 29<sup>th</sup>.

There are approximately 280,000 acres of school trust land in Itasca County. The majority of the 2.5M acres of school trust land are in northeastern Minnesota and about 50% of Minnesota’s state forestland is held by the trust.

Aaron VandeLinde, DNR School Trust Administrator explained clearly that his position as Trustee obligates him by law to make the most money possible for the Trust over the long-term. There are a few exceptions, but for the most part, he cannot consider social or environmental impacts when making his decision. Since School Trust land is owned by a “private” trust (on behalf of all school kids), he is not obligated to take public comments before a decision to sell land is made—only to give 30 days notice of a pending sale. The “clock is ticking” since the legislature has declared that the Trust must be compensated for school trust lands that have a protective designation that prohibits generation of revenue (for example, “old growth forest” or “scientific and natural area”) by 2018. The Trust is looking at alternatives to make money on non-revenue generating land, i.e. wetland banking, carbon sequestration credits, value of eco-system services on state land and, as Mr.VandeLinde stated, most importantly, not to undervalue school trust resources.

Donald Arnosti, Policy Director for Audubon MN, reminded us that Minnesotan’s put a high value on both the outdoors and education. He presented options that would be a win-win for both. Only about \$28/pupil/year is given to the schools from the Trust (far less than 1% of the total school budget). We have to ask ourselves if that is a good trade-off to lose some of our most important public land?

As Mr. Arnosti stated, there is no “free lunch” but we do have options to maintain the most critically important lands in public ownership and under sustainable management. He has been working closely with members of the legislature and the School Trust to develop policies to obtain this goal and here are a few of those options:

- Support Rep. John Persell’s legislation (HF273) whereby bonding money (\$20M) would be designated to purchase certain parcels of non-revenue generating land from the Trust. This would accomplish a two-fold goal: generate revenue for the school trust while at the same time maintaining important land in public ownership.
- Since Minnesota currently has a modest tax surplus, purchasing lands from the school trust for public use would be a perfect kind of expenditure as it would be one-time payment for a long-term gain for the public rather than a commitment to an on-going program.
- There is a possibility of using unclaimed prize money from the lottery. Unclaimed lottery prize money is currently being put into the general fund.
- While not in Itasca County, one proposal in relation to the BWCA land exchange being proposed is to, instead, charge an extra fee for all people entering the BWCA and those funds would go to the School Trust. This could generate a sustainable stream of “lease” money for the Trust and would have the benefit of not fragmenting current public land within the Superior National Forest where most of the exchanged land now lies. Similar fees for use could possibly be used for other parcels.

To get back to “the clock is ticking” and “there is no free lunch”. As stated by someone in the audience, the reason a lot of us like living and/or recreating here in northern Minnesota is the ability to move around freely on public land. If you feel it is important to use our taxpayer dollars to maintain important outdoor lands in Minnesota and to compensate the School Trust, please write your legislators and let them know. They are the only ones who can make a change in the system. Encourage Senator Tom Saxhaug to co-sponsor the companion bill that has been introduced in the Senate (SF517). Senator

Saxhaug sits on the Legislative Permanent School Fund Commission and, therefore, is in a unique position to move this legislation forward.

Senator Tom Saxhaug  
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Notes by: Shirley Loegering