

E-Newsletter February 2017



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From the OTC COLA President- David Majkrzak

While winter sees many of our lake property owners becoming "snow birds", there is still much going on that keeps the "drift jumpers" busy.

The Minnesota Legislative session has started, with all AIS, and particularly starry stonewort receiving attention. The MNDNR has proposed significant increases (14% to 20 %) to fishing and hunting license fees. These fees are the primary (about 80 %) source of the funds that are available for fish stocking and management statewide.

Several of the OTCCOLA board members attended the Governor's Water Summit in Morris MN, and also plan to attend the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR) annual meeting on Feb 11th.

And the discussion about buffer strips has gained considerable attention at

both the state and county level. As many of you know, in Otter Tail county an effort to start voluntary buffer work has gone on for several years, with the county Soil and Water Conservation folks working directly with farmers. The state effort attempts to accelerate and put more teeth in the buffer requirements. See discussion below.

As always we look to our members for input and guidance. Thanks for your help and support.

David Majkrzak

DNR Issues Ice Warning for Aerated Lakes



The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources warns ice anglers, snowmobilers, skiers and other outdoor enthusiasts to use caution when going onto any lake covered or partially covered with ice, especially those that feature aeration systems.

“Open water areas created by aeration systems can shift or change shapes depending on weather conditions,” said Marilyn Danks, DNR aquatic biologist. “Leaks may develop in air lines, creating other areas of weak ice or open water.”

Aeration systems are generally operated from the time lakes freeze until ice break-up in the spring. They help prevent winterkill of fish, but they also create areas of open water and thin ice, which are significant hazards.

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Clean Up After Fish Houses

We all value water. We all value our lakes. We're less appreciative of debris left on our lakes after fish houses have been removed. Perhaps it would be good to give a reminder to those on our lakes with fish houses in an association memo/email to be sure to clean up after fishhouse removal? As one example, on West Battle Lake, after fish houses are removed we find,

fecal material, plastic bags, beer cans, food, propane cylinders...you name it! It's simply sad to see our lakes treated in this fashion. The West Battle Lakeshore Association donates \$500 to a school group, under the guidance of a responsible adult, to clean up after fish houses have left. The activity takes from two to three hours to clean up the lake. I'm sure they're better ideas out there on how to remove debris after fish houses leave our lakes and if you have them, let's share them? We all value clean lakes.

Jerry Horgen President, West Battle Lakeshore Association

Gov. Dayton Wants Public Input On Water Quality Plan

ST. PAUL — Gov. Mark Dayton is making another push to clean up Minnesota's waters — and says he's learned lessons from his contentious battle two years ago to implement buffer strips along the state's waterways.

In a speech to the Minnesota Environmental Congress, the DFL governor said he'll propose improving Minnesota's water quality 25 percent by the year 2025.

But he's not proposing specific tools to accomplish that reduction just yet. Instead, he says he'll solicit citizen input around the state this summer and make proposals based on that input in 2018.

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Monitoring Water Quality Program for 2017

OTC COLA has participated with RMB Labs in the water monitoring program over the past twenty years. RMB has worked in conjunction with the lake monitoring volunteers. RMB has been a valuable partner with OTC COLA working together to protect Otter Tail County lakes. Over the past 20 years the Lakes Monitoring Program has quickly become one of the top two citizen lake monitoring programs in the state, second only to the MPCA's Citizen Lake-Monitoring Program (CLMP). Over 500 lakes statewide find our program an economical and user-friendly means to characterize nutrient levels and productivity within their lake.

One of the strengths of this program is that RMB reports all OTC COLA data to the MPCA's statewide database (EQUIS) at the end of every season. This way, the data that the volunteers collect is used in statewide assessments, county water plans, and local city and lake association planning instead of just sitting in a drawer. Because of Otter Tail COLA and volunteers' efforts, these organizations have 20 years of lake data to draw from! Last year, the MPCA changed their data formatting requirements, and we have been developing new data reporting options as a part of that change.

RMB prices to OTC COLA have held steady for the last four years. For 2017 they will increase \$10 from \$210 to \$220 per monitoring site. The increase will be passed on to the lake associations and will be included with the spring Member billing in April.

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Moriya Rufer, RMB Laboratories

Statewide Fisheries Advisory Group Discusses Walleye Limits, Fishing License Fees, Northern Pike Limits



GRAND RAPIDS, Minn. — A statewide fisheries advisory group again has brought up the idea of reducing Minnesota's statewide walleye limit from six fish to four, said Chris Kavanaugh, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources regional fisheries supervisor at Grand Rapids.

The topic was one of several fisheries issues discussed at the DNR's annual Roundtable meeting Jan. 6 in a Minneapolis suburb. Other topics included the possibility of a fishing license fee increase and establishing new limits for northern pike, Kavanaugh said.

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INFORUM **Sam Cook** Jan 15, 2017

Farmers Remain Furious Over MN Buffer Laws

ST. PAUL — Nearly two years into a Minnesota law requiring plant buffers

between cropland and water, some farmers remain furious.

They say the 2015 buffer law violates the U.S. Constitution provision saying no “private property (can) be taken for public use without just compensation,” that buffers take too much land out of crops and lower its value, that discussion about options to planting 50-foot buffers is starting too late and that farmers know what is best for their own land.

In other words, arguments made against the law two years ago remain alive.

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Don't Release Aquarium or Water Garden Plants

The recent discovery of a non-native aquatic plant in Minnesota is a reminder that people should always dispose of aquarium or water garden plants or animals appropriately – not by releasing them into the environment.

Invasive species staff with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources identified java water dropwort in an isolated small pond in Le Sueur County. The wetland plant is native to Southeast Asia and is sometimes sold for ornamental purposes. DNR staff said the plant was likely released into the wild by someone who didn't understand the harm non-native plants can cause.

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Federal Surplus Property Program

The President of Norway Lake had a problem - they needed a truck with which to haul the weed harvester they use, and the tons of milfoil removed by the machine.

The solution was the Federal Surplus Property Program through the Minnesota Department of Administration, which makes surplus equipment available to non-profits across Minnesota. Norway Lake is now awaiting delivery of a 1969 GMC 5500 4-Wheel drive truck with just 28,000 miles that was used as a fire truck in California.

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[Jeff Forester MLR](#)

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Citizens Action Network (CAN) is your Lake Association's tool for lake and river advocacy. You CAN check up on important bill status, write your legislators, send letters to the editors of media in your area, track the work of legislative committees, see how your legislator voted on a specific bill and more. With CAN, you CAN and will make a difference. No one else is going to protect your lakes for you. It is up to each of us.

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AIS Grants by MN DNR - CLOSED

If you are interested in applying for AIS control grants from the MN DNR, you have got to be quick!

On January 20, 2017 a notice was sent out from Phillip Hunsiker (DNR) inviting applications for AIS grants. It was stipulated that the grants would be awarded for control of curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil and flowering rush. It was also stated that grants would be written on a first-come first-served basis. (Go [HERE](#) for January 20 email)

On January 23, 2017 Wendy Crowell of the DNR sent out an email announcing that grant applications had already exceeded the funds available. (Go [HERE](#) for the January 23 email).

Joe Schneider Secretary, MN COLA advised MN COLA Members on January 24.:

"If you weren't fast enough, the DNR's 2017 AIS grant program for Plant Management is now closed. This was a VERY short window of time. I received an email from the DNR announcing the 2017 program last Friday, January 20.

As you will read the requests are being handled on a first-come, first-served basis.

Looking forward, this suggests that you need to have your 2018 grant request thought through by the end of the 2017 so that you can complete a grant request as soon as the window opens for 2018."

Lake Association Issue Updates

OTC COLA will be advocates for lake associations on issues and provide information and education to COLA members without necessarily endorsing the positions of individual lake associations on specific issues. If your lake association is currently involved in an issue or project, OTC COLA would like to help by including it here. Send items to [John Kruse](#)

Star Lake- Casino- NEW! Update on Status of Proposed Star Lake Resort and Casino Development. [HERE](#)

Go to the [SLCCG](#) website for information and to sign up for future updates.

[Ty Dayton](#)

[John Kruse](#) OTC COLA Administrative Assistant

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