

IMPORTANT NEWS from Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations

E-Newsletter December 2019

[OTC COLA WEBSITE](#)

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From The President

Not only is the Christmas rush upon us, but the new year is coming at us, too. It certainly is true that time goes faster the older we get, or at least the perception that it does. Remember when you were a child and it seemed like your birthday or Christmas would never get here again? Now it's more like it can't be here already!

OTC Coalition of Lake Associations is wrapping up a progressive and successful year. More lakes have formed Associations and joined COLA; water testing has seen another year of results; new Board members have come onto the Board; member meetings and monthly newsletters have offered information and opportunities to connect; cooperation with the OTC Commission led to a successful survey of over 1,000 property owners on regulations.

One commenter from the survey thinks COLA has enforcement capabilities in

the county. We work with state and county agencies and advocate for Lake Associations, but be sure we have no enforcement authority. That's for the proper authorities.

The COLA Board will continue to meet until member meetings begin again in May. We look forward to another great year in 2020. No doubt there will be a White Christmas this year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Sylvia Soeth, OTC COLA President



New Events Planned For 2020 Gov's Fishing Opener

The local planning committee for the 2020 Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener is adding new ways for folks to celebrate the Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener in 2020. This year will be the 73rd Annual event and while the main goal is to continue the storied tradition, there will be a few differences from years past.

Many times, the Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener focuses on one lake, however, one of the goals of the 2020 event will be to highlight the diversity of fisheries in Otter Tail County.

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From the Director's Desk

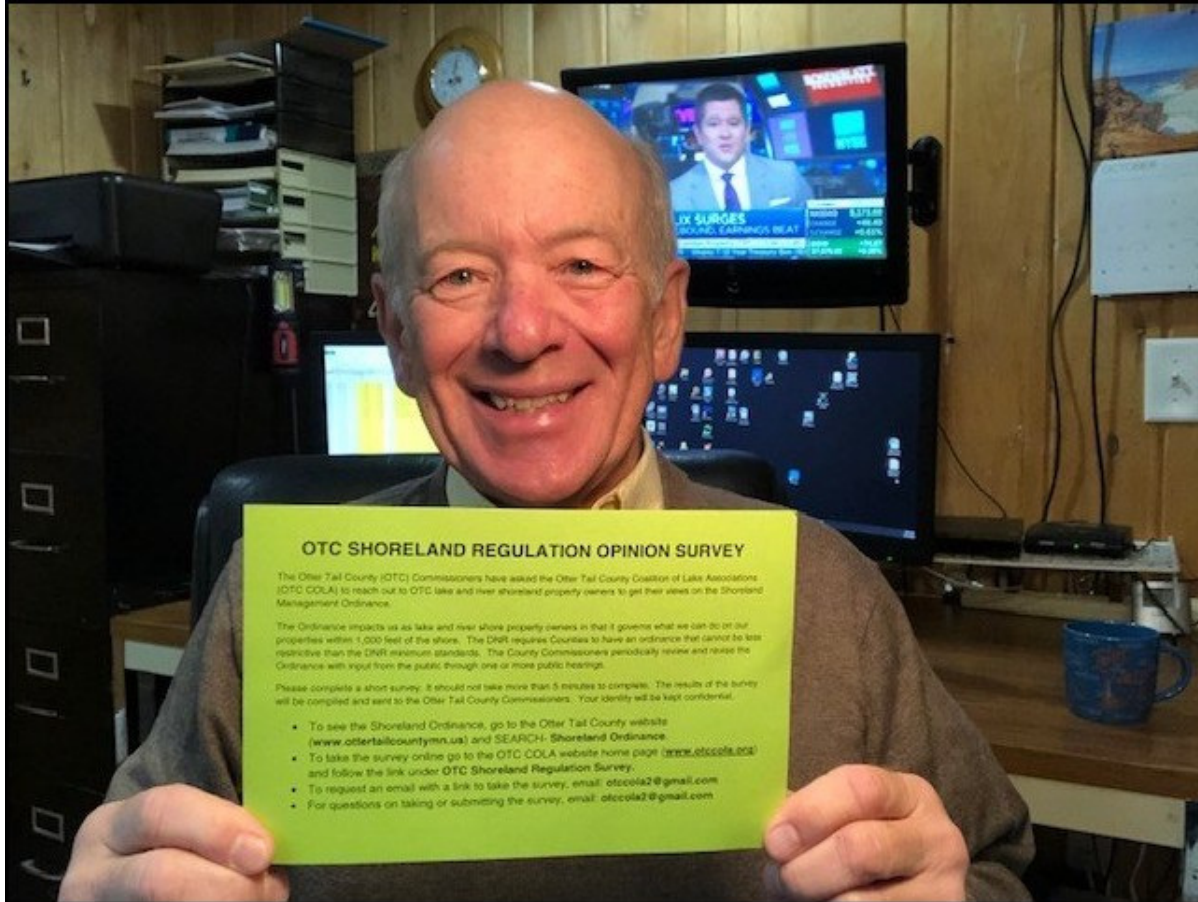
With winter upon us, there are many exciting things we think about. Ice fishing, holiday gatherings and all of the good food and merriment that comes along with holiday get togethers. I would bet the last thing on just about everyone's mind as winter is upon us is proper septic system management in the wintertime. Should you pump your septic tank in the wintertime? A recent article in the Onsite Installer by Dr. Sara Heger with the University of Minnesota discusses Winter Septic Tank Pumping:

In general cleaning of septic tanks for the purpose of maintenance in the winter is not recommended in cold climates during the winter months. The time when winter sets in varies from year to year, but in Minnesota it should be generally avoided from November – April. Here are the most common problems associated with winter pumping.

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[Chris LeClair](#)

OTC Land & Resource Management Director



John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant

It's Not Too Late To Register Your Input! Shoreland Ordinance Survey

The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners asked OTC COLA to reach out to lake and river shore property owners in Otter Tail County to get their views on the Shoreland Management Ordinance.

A large neon-green post card was sent on October 21, 2019 to lake and river property owners in Otter Tail County inviting them to participate in the survey. News posts on the Otter Tail County Facebook and website pages as well as in the OTC COLA E-Newsletter helped drive interest. The response has demonstrated a high degree of interest in property owner's desire to communicate their opinions and suggestions to the Commissioners. Large numbers of responses are still being received every day.

At the appropriate time when it appears that a preponderance of those who desire to submit their survey have done so, the data will be compiled and organized for presentation to the OTC Commissioners.

If you have not done so already, it is not too late to participate in the survey

The Ordinance impacts us as lake and river property owners in that it governs what we can do on our shoreland properties within 1,000 feet of the shore. The DNR requires Counties to have an ordinance that can't be less restrictive than the DNR minimum standards. The County Commissioners periodically review and revise the Ordinance with input from the public through one or more public hearings.

The Ordinance governs minimum lot sizes, setbacks, density, when permits are required, the process of obtaining variances and other requirements and regulations. The full ordinance can be found online at:

<https://ottertailcountymn.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/OTC-Shoreland-Management-Ordinance-SMO-01-15-2017.pdf>

Participating in the survey involves going to the OTC COLA website, www.otccola.org where on the home page there is a link to the survey. Please consider providing your input on shoreland regulations either by following directions on the postcard or going directly to the COLA website from this E-Newsletter. If you experience any problems in doing the survey email otccola2@gmail.com for assistance.

John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant

MPRnews



In Cabin Country, Rental Property Could Get New Tax Treatment

MPR news 12/10/2019

Letters to some Minnesota cabin and vacation property owners arriving this month pose questions that could carry significant tax ramifications, possibly bumping their land into a costlier commercial classification.

It comes down to this: Are the properties being used more as personal retreats or more to pull in extra income by listing them as short-term rentals?

The answers will be used to assign a primary use. And that matters because different classifications of properties carry different tax rates.

The reevaluation, triggered in part by a May memo from the Department of Revenue, has stirred up concern in lake country and already led to calls for state lawmakers to get involved.

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MLR Is Advocate for Tax Fairness at MN Capital

Twenty five years ago the tax rate on Seasonal Property was over twice as high as the rate on a Homestead property. A group of cabin owners on Lake Vermilion formed Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, MLR in response.

MLR hired a lobbyist to work for more fairness in the property tax system, and began to build a statewide organization.

As a result, in the last 25 years:

- The tax rate on a cabin or hunting shack is the same as on a Homestead, 1% down from 2.25%,
- From 1994 until 2009, during the peak of the real estate bubble, property tax assessments were capped at about 9% increase annually by the Limited Market Value law,
- Seasonal properties were removed from excess school operating levies, a \$23 million statewide savings last year,
- Improvements in Truth in Taxation laws have required greater transparency on your tax statements

Last year MLR successfully advocated for a 6% reduction in the State General Property Tax on Seasonal Property.

Excessive tax pressure on Minnesota's fragile shorelines drive the sale and subdivision of lakeshore, pose undue burden on retired folks living on a fixed income, and make ownership of the family cabin unaffordable for the next generation.

MLR is the only group representing Minnesota lake property owner interests at the State Capital. Go [HERE](#) to align with MLR and help support this effort.



MPCA To Discuss New 2020 Impaired Waters List

The 2020 list will include over 700 newly listed impairments statewide. Many of the new impairments are found in watersheds that were assessed by MPCA in 2018 and 2019, including the Otter Tail River Watershed. Additionally, 171 additional impairments will be listed in watersheds outside of those assessed in 2018 and 2019, including the Buffalo, Thief, and more.

You can attend the meetings at home or in your office via webex, or in person at one of the MPCA regional offices.

Additional information is available on the MPCA's impaired waters list webpage found here: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/minnesotas-impaired-waters-list>

[Scott Schroeder](#), MPCA Environmental Specialist
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Balancing Road Safety And Road Salt

Minnesota is blessed with abundant water resources. The state also experiences icy and snowy winters. This combination makes it tough for road authorities to balance the need to make roads safe for drivers with the need to

protect lakes and streams from road salt runoff.

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and Department of Transportation (MnDOT) addressed that balance at the 19th Annual Road Salt Symposium on Thursday, October 24 in Vadnais Heights. Katrina Kessler, assistant MPCA commissioner for water, and Sue Mulvihill, MnDOT deputy commissioner and chief engineer, provided opening comments for the event.

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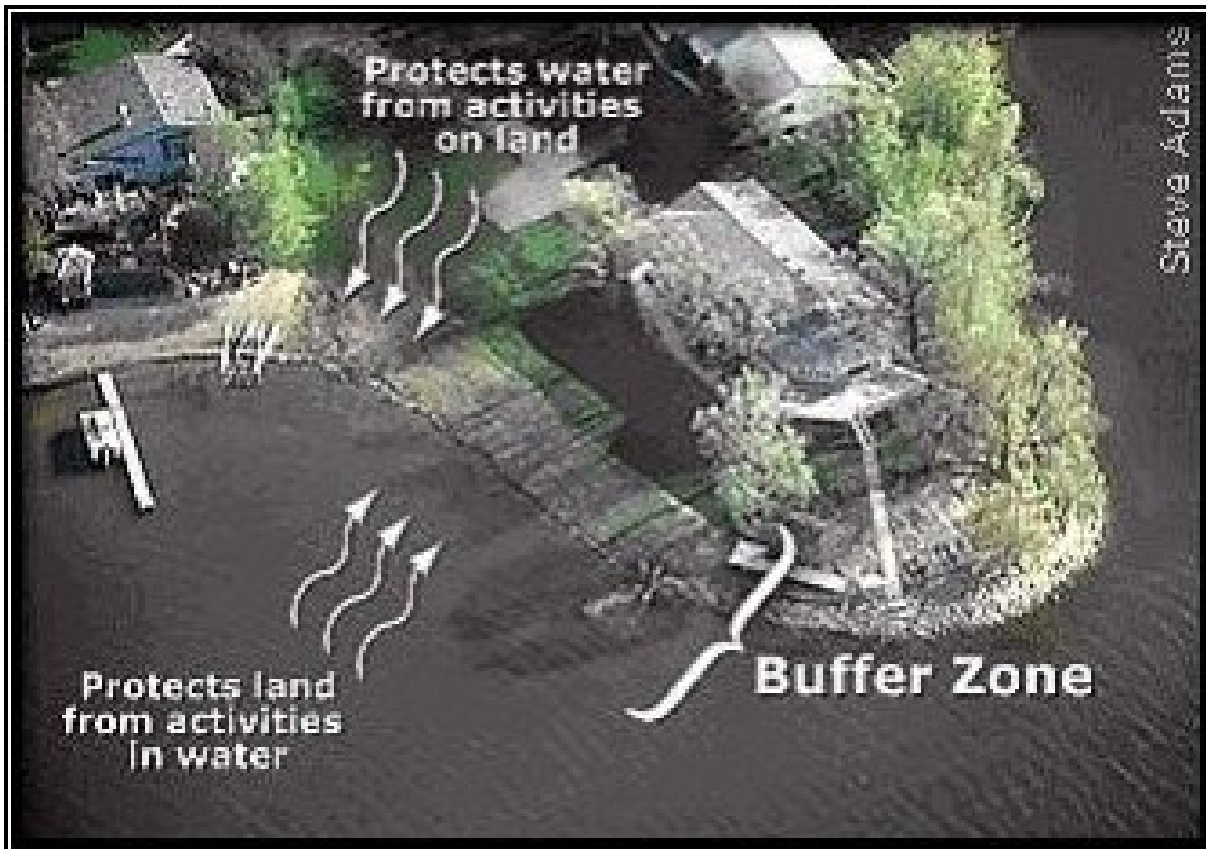


Landscape Resiliency And Climate Change

Climate change affects BWSR's ability to fulfill its mission, which is to improve and protect Minnesota's water and soil resources by working in partnership with local organizations and private landowners. The extreme weather patterns and disrupted natural cycles associated with climate change reduce program effectiveness and threaten the environmental and economic benefits that Minnesota's landscapes provide. At the same time, conservation programs and practices can mitigate the effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, through capture and storage of carbon on the soil and reduction in emission producing activities such as fertilizer use and fossil fuel consumption.

BWSR is focused on this topic to help maintain public investments in projects and overall landscape health and has developed several reports and resources that focus on this topic.

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Lakescaping and shoreland restoration

Shorelands are naturally full of a rich diversity of life: plants, animals, and microorganisms, including humans. As we understand more about the structure and function of shoreland, we also become aware of the importance of our role in keeping these systems healthy. Our efforts can lead to the restoration of a quality outdoor resource, and a community full of life and beauty.

The Problem: Traditional lawns, while not particularly harmful, have few of the benefits of a more natural shoreline. Lawns are shallow rooted, provide little wildlife habitat, need frequent maintenance and are often over-fertilized. These factors can lead to problems on your lake.

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Kids And Thin Ice – A Dangerous Holiday Combo

As excited as they are about the holiday season, many kids are equally curious when it comes to the ice. Talking with children about ice safety now will help them stay safe during this festive time.

“We want families to get out on the ice and have a good time when conditions allow— but we also want parents to make sure kids know ice is never 100 percent safe,” said DNR conservation officer Adam Block. “They should never go on the ice alone, and they should wear a life jacket and bring safety equipment, including ice picks and a cell phone in case of an emergency. Also tell them to never follow a friend or pet onto potentially dangerous ice.”

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OTC Board Of Commissioner Minutes

- [October 26, 2019](#)
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- [**Lawmaker Hotline**](#)- Comprehensive contact information for OTC Board of Commissioners to the MN Governor
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[**John Kruse**](#), OTC COLA Administrative Assistant