

**IMPORTANT NEWS** from Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations

# E-Newsletter January 2020

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## **2020 Water Quality Analysis Reports Are Now Available!**

Water Quality Analysis Reports updated with 2019 data have been posted to a new library ready for viewing or downloading. New for the 2020 reports is the inclusion of many more Non-COLA lakes than last year as well as separate analysis tables for each site tested on each lake. The data was compiled from OTC COLA's water sampling program as well as from available data from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The report library for 2019 held close to 100 reports. The 2020 library contains reports for 66 OTC COLA Member lakes as well as 102 OTC Non-COLA lakes. Most reports for COLA Member lakes contain a full 10-year trend analysis for participating in the COLA program for over 20 years.

### **[2020 Water Quality Analysis Reports](#)**

Also go to [otccola.org](http://otccola.org)

[John Kruse](#), OTC COLA Administrative Assistant

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# A YEAR IN REVIEW

# 2019

## OTC COLA 2019 REVIEW

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### E-Newsletters

The current format of the OTC COLA E-Newsletter has been published continuously every month since May 2016. The Newsletter compliments and is coordinated with the [OTCCOLA.ORG](http://OTCCOLA.ORG) website. Besides articles of current interest to Otter Tail County lake and river property owners the Newsletter has several other features. A standard feature is **Instant Access Links** that provides direct links to common libraries and tables. The Newsletter is also used to point readers directly to pages on the website, specially created for dissemination of regulatory updates and surveys. Since May 2016 circulation of the Newsletter has increased 220%. Since January 2018 direct circulation has increased from 773 to 1,138. Not counted are readers of pdf E-Newsletters posted on OTC COLA or MN COLA websites or those forwarded to Lake Association members by their Secretaries.

Click-throughs are a good indicator of reader interest. To conserve space on Newsletters a paragraph or two introducing the article is shown and the reader can click on MORE to see the entire article. These clicks are counted as Click-throughs. A review of Click-throughs for 2019 shows the recurring Click-

throughs for the Lake Property Owner Directory Library and the Water Quality Analysis Reports Library were the most popular.

Anyone can receive the OTC COLA E-Newsletter. It is not limited to COLA Members. Content is targeted to Otter Tail County (OTC) shoreland property owners but there are many throughout Minnesota that appreciate receiving it as well. For the benefit of all Minnesota lakes please encourage everyone in your lake community to subscribe to this E-Newsletter.

[SUBSCRIBE](#)

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## **Lake Monitoring Program**

All of the OTC COLA Lake Association Members participated in the 2019 Water Quality Analysis program. The program starts with a kick-off in April when sample volunteers pick up sample coolers. Updated trend-analysis reports are published after all the data is compiled.

[See the article in the May 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

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## **General Meetings/Events In 2019**

OTC COLA holds General Meetings for Members and OTC shoreland property owners in May, June, July, August and September. In 2019, in lieu of regular meetings, a special septic system seminar was held in June and COLA hosted the MN COLA meeting in September.

### **May 2019- OTC AIS Task Force- Spencer McGrew**

Spencer McGrew, AIS Specialist, OTC AIS Task Force, was the featured speaker at the May Member meeting of OTC COLA. Highlights of Spencer's presentation included a review of the 2018 Summary of activities of the AIS Task Force. In 2012 the County Board of Commissioners established the Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force, charging them with the mission to

"develop programs and strategies to support and enhance the protection of Otter Tail County Waters." The Task Force "will promote public awareness, education, containment, research, and provide recommendations to the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners."

[See the article in the June 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

### **June 2019- Septic System Seminar- Sara Heger**

A workshop on maintenance of septic systems and well water quality was held at Thumper Pond in Ottertail MN, on June 8, 2019. The event was well attended by lake property owners in Otter Tail County. Dr. Sara Heger, a nationally recognized researcher from the University of Minnesota spoke on how to maintain compliant systems to prevent repairs and water contamination. Jeff Grugel, Hydrologist from the Minnesota Department of Health/Well Management provided information about ground water, ground water flow and drinking water. He emphasized what makes a good well with consideration given to well construction materials, location and water quality testing.

[See the article in the July 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

### **July 2019- OTC COLA- What Is It?**

July 2019 was self-designated as OTC COLA MONTH. The July 18, 2019 meeting was held at the Ottertail Community Center. Russ Severson, OTC COLA Environment Director gave a review of Pelican Lake Property Owners Association (PLPOA), the featured Lake Association for this event. Patrick Prunty, OTC COLA Director repeated a presentation he made to the Otter Tail County Commissioners last fall describing the structure and activities of OTC COLA. John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant, gave an overview of reporting and communications projects released in recent months.

[PLPOA slides](#)

[COLA What is it? slides](#)

[COLA Projects slides](#)

[See the article in the August 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

### **August 2019- GFO 2020, ILIDs**

The Annual Member Meeting for OTC COLA was held at the Ottertail Community Center in Ottertail MN on August 15, 2019. Featured speakers for the evening were Erik Osberg and Eric Lindgren. Eric Osberg, OTC Rural Rebound Initiative Coordinator, presented an overview of planning and scheduling of activities associated with hosting the Governor's Fishing Opener (GFO), May 8-10, 2020. Eric Lindgren, Founder of Environmental Sentry Protection, LLC Explained how the company's product, I-LIDS (Internet Landing Installed Device Sensors) contributes to preventing lake cross-contamination of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS).

[GFO slides](#)

[I-LIDS slides](#)

The North Turtle Lake Association (NTLA) was the featured lake association at



the August Meeting. Jim Wilkus, NTLA President, described the make up and activities of the organization as well as the process of becoming an Association in 2018.

### [NTLA slides](#)

### [See the article in the September 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

## **September 2019- COLA Hosts MN COLA**

The regular meeting of the Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations (MN COLA) was hosted by OTC COLA at Thumper Pond, Ottertail, MN on September 17, 2019. Over 30 were in attendance from Lake Associations across the State. The seven hour event included presentations and discussions on matters important to Minnesota lake property owners. Included was a presentation by Rita Champlin on Endridge's proposed replacement Line 3 pipeline. Also discussed were various methods being implemented to encourage compliance with practices to prevent Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) cross-contamination between lakes. Patrick Prunty, OTC COLA Director, also gave a presentation spotlighting the activities and projects of OTC COLA.

## **Hosting COLA Spotlight: Otter Tail County**

Pat Prunty, aided by OTC COLA Administrative Assistant John Kruse provided an overview of their Coalition. Otter Tail County has the most lakes in Minnesota, with 1048, with the OT Coalition serving over 70% of the lake acres in the county. The OTC is perhaps the strongest Coalition in the state, with 50 lake associations, 5 Lake Improvement Districts, and 24 out of 25 of the biggest lakes in the county. They provide an excellent monthly newsletter, do water testing, AIS work, provide informational seminars, bus-tours, school programs, resident directories, surveys, and frequent meetings with agency officials, law enforcement, and county commissioners, including candidate forums. They also have a special program on how to form a lake association. Having an Administrative Assistant has been well worth it! [MN COLA](#)

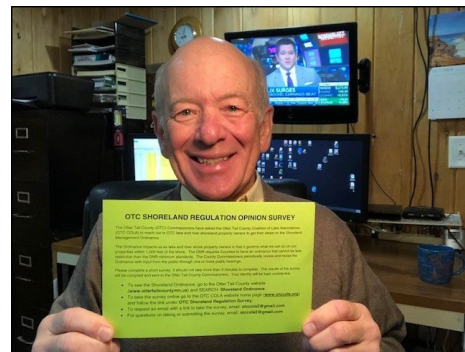
### [See the article in the October 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

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## **Post Card Campaigns**



The WLOL Campaign advised property owners of regulations and best practices. The post card pointed readers to a special [otccola.org/wlol](http://otccola.org/wlol) website page.



John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant, shows the post card inviting participation in the survey on the OTC Shoreland Ordinance

Otter Tail County is unique in Minnesota to have created databases identifying lake and river property owners. The County and OTC COLA have partnered together to use this data to reach all shoreland property owners including those not aligned with COLA, with post cards. COLA took raw data files from OTC and filtered and formatted the data to create mailing lists for the post card campaigns. COLA designed the cards and processed the mailings. The post cards pointed the reader to the [OTCCOLA.ORG](http://OTCCOLA.ORG) website where links were followed to take the next steps in the processes.

### **We Love Our Lakes (WLOL)**

In August 2019 OTC COLA sent post cards to all Otter Tail County lake property and river property owners to promote compliance with County and State regulations and encourage best practices. The postcards contained reminder bullet points that owners may not be fully aware of and links to get detailed information.

[See the WLOL page on the website](#)

[See the article in the September 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

### **Shoreland / Septic Ordinance Survey**

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.

[Link to the Shoreland Ordinance Survey](#)

[See the article in the November 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

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### **New Lake Associations / COLA Members in 2019**

OTC COLA is growing! COLA has been active in recruiting lakes in Otter Tail County to join COLA. In many instances lakes have not organized to form Associations. COLA has been instrumental in helping lake property owners to reach their friends and neighbors around their lakes and to organize them into Lake Associations. The innovative process was pioneered by North Turtle Lake Association (NTLA) in 2018 and implemented for Spitzer Lake and Bass Lake Underwood Lake in 2019. South Turtle Lake Improvement District joined COLA and participated in the Lake Monitoring Program in 2019.

#### **Spitzer Lake Property Owners Association (SLPOA)**

[See the article in the June 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

#### **Bass Lake Underwood Association (BLUA)**

[See the article in the August 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

#### **South Turtle Lake Improvement District (STLID)**

[See the article in the September 2019 E-Newsletter](#)

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### **New COLA Board Members in 2019**

**Jeff Vansteenburgh**, Silver Lake Association

**David Helgerson**, West McDonald Lake Association

**Ron Christensen**, Spitzer Lake property Owners Association

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### **Pre-Inspection Pumping Required**

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is in its final stages with a few minor changes to the statewide rules that regulate septic systems. Most of the changes are for larger systems that will not affect the average homeowner in Otter Tail County, with one exception. The proposed rules will require the septic tank to be pumped prior to an inspection of an existing system. What that means for the average homeowner in Otter Tail County is, since the County requires an existing system to get inspected prior to the home being sold, the septic tank for that system will have to be pumped by a licensed maintainer immediately prior to the licensed inspector inspecting the tank to determine if the tank is watertight. This will ensure that the inspector conducts a thorough visual inspection of the inside of the tank, checking for cracks or other evidence of leaking.

[Chris LeClair](#), Land & Resource Management Director

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**MPRnews**





Tim Haeg, a professional septic system designer and installer, works to replace a malfunctioning switch in a septic system in St. Joseph, Minn., on Monday. Kirsti Marohn | MPR News

## Teaching homeowners septic 'secrets' to protect water

A [program from the University of Minnesota](#) aims to teach homeowners about the myths and misconceptions of septic systems, knowledge that could save them money and help protect the environment.

The technology behind a septic system is fairly basic: Pipes carry wastewater away from the house and into a tank that collects solids. The water then goes to a drain field, where it's absorbed into the soil and is recycled back into the groundwater.

But for many homeowners, out of sight means out of mind. As long as the water disappears when they flush the toilet or turn off the faucet, they probably don't think a whole lot about their septic system.

[MORE](#)

## 'More stuff in our wastewater'

"There's more stuff in our wastewater these days than ever before," Haeg said. "And it's not just household products either. It's medications. We're trying to keep folks in their homes a lot longer. There's a lot of chemo and heart meds that can definitely affect how a system performs."

Haeg said it's important for homeowners to understand how to care for their septic system — both to protect their investment in their home, and the environment. Most people want to do the right thing, he said.

[MORE](#)

## **Protecting Minnesota's lakes**

The stakes are especially high near a lake or river. When septic systems fail, they can be a major source of phosphorus, which fuels algae blooms that can leave a lake looking like pea soup in the summer.

"Failing septic systems can have a huge impact on water quality, and it doesn't take many of them," said Jeff Forester, executive director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates. He and Heger are working together to offer the class to lake property owners as a webinar in April.

[MORE](#)

## **If you go: Septic and private well homeowner education**

The University of Minnesota is offering its homeowner classes through June in cities around the state, including Austin, Ramsey, Waseca, Elk River, Milaca and Ottertail. Classes are free.

More information can be found on the university's [Onsite Sewage Treatment Program website](#).

OTC COLA's June meeting event featured a workshop on maintenance of septic systems and well water quality held at Thumper Pond in Ottertail MN, on June 8, 2019. Dr. Sara Heger, a nationally recognized researcher from the University of Minnesota spoke on how to maintain compliant systems to prevent repairs and water contamination.

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## **OTC AIS Task Force Minutes**

- [November 18, 2019](#) (Draft)

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## **OTC Board Of Commissioner Minutes**

- [December 17, 2019](#)
- [December 3, 2019](#)

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## **Instant Access Links**

- [Newsletter Article Index](#)- Visually scan article titles from all 2018 and 2019 OTC COLA E-Newsletters. Click to access the entire issue.
- [Water Quality Analysis](#)- Individual reports for 168 OTC Lakes
- [Lake Property Owner Directories](#)- Directories by Street and Name for 100 OTC Lakes
- [Interactive Access to OTC GIS](#)- Find addresses, navigate the OTC County map
- [Lawmaker Hotline](#)- Comprehensive contact information for OTC Board of Commissioners to the MN Governor

- [OTC COLA Brochure](#)- View and/or download the OTC COLA Brochure
- **We want to hear from you!**- Go [HERE](#) to give OTC COLA your comments and suggestions

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#### **OTC COLA Board of Directors**

David Helgersen · Jeff Stabnow · Jeff Vansteenburgh ·  
Patrick Prunty · Roger Neitzke · Ronald Christensen · Sylvia Soeth

#### **OTC COLA Members**

Bass Lake Underwood Association · Berger Lake Association · Big McDonald LID · Boedigheimer Lake Association · Clitherall Lake Association · Dead Lake Association · Devils Lake Association · Eagle Lake Lakeshore Association · East Battle Lake WS Association · Elbow Lake Association · Franklin Lake Association · Hoffman Lake Association · Jewett Lake Association · Lake Lida Property Owners Association · Lake Lizzie Lakeshore Association · Lake Seven Association · Lake Six Association · Leaf Lakes Association · Little McDonald Kerbs and Paul Lakes LID · Long Lake at Vergas Association · Loon Lake Association · Marion Lake Association · McDonald Lake Improvement Association · North Long Lake Association · North Turtle Lake Association · Otter Tail Lakes Property Owners Association · Pelican Lake Property Owners Association · Pickerel Lake Improvement Association · Pine Lakes LID · Prairie Lake Lakeshore Association · Round Lake 56-214 · Rush Lake Association · Silent Lakes Association · Silver Lake Property Owners Association · South Turtle Lake Improvement District · Spitzer Lake Property Owners Association · Stalker Lake Association · Star Lake Property Owners Association · Stuart Lake Association · Swan Lake Association · Sybil Lake Association · Tamarac Lake Association · Ten Mile Preservation Association · Trowbridge-Leek Lake Association · Wall Lake Association · West Battle Lake Association · West McDonald Lake Association

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[John Kruse](#), OTC COLA Administrative Assistant