

IMPORTANT NEWS from Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations

E-Newsletter February 2020



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Hunter Eldien, Otter Tail County Level 2 Watercraft Inspector, cleans up after conducting a watercraft decontamination at the Otter Tail Lake Sportsman's Public Water Access, Summer 2019. The decontamination station was staffed 7 days a week from May 24 to September 6, 2019. 158 decontaminations were completed.

OTC AIS Task Force 2019 Summary

2019 marks the 7th year of Otter Tail County's Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Program. Among the achievements: 25 Watercraft Inspectors conducted 13,697 inspections at 98 public water accesses in 2019, a new record for the program. Of the 8,000 entering watercraft 86 were prevented from launching with aquatic plants hanging from them. 78 watercraft were prevented from launching for containing residual water. 11 watercraft were prevented from launching due to attached Zebra Mussels. 96.52% of watercraft arrived with the drain plug removed, an increase from 95.31% in 2018.

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Commissioners Give OK To Watershed Plan

OTC County board members, on Jan. 28, recommended to the Pomme de Terre River Association Joint Powers Board that the Pomme de Terre River Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan be submitted to the Board of Water and Soil Resources for approval.

The plan encompasses the priorities of Otter Tail County within the Pomme de Terre Watershed. The county is committed to following through with the goals and objectives that are listed within the plan.

This watershed includes the Dalton area south central Otter Tail County and sections of Grant, Douglas, Big Stone, Stevens and Swift counties.



DNR Quality Bluegill Initiative

The DNR is in the process of finalizing plans for the Quality Bluegill Initiative, revealed last summer in the hope of going public early this spring. Implementation would happen in 2021. The goal was to greatly increase the number of lakes in the state with reduced limits for bluegills in hopes of growing bigger sunfish.

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GFO To Host County-Wide Fishing Contest

Otter Tail County, home to 1048 lakes, is hosting the 2020 Minnesota Governor's Fishing Opener May 7 -10. One of the goals of the event will be to highlight the lakes in the county, so anglers from all over are encouraged to fish any body of water in Otter Tail County during the event. Media, dignitaries and the public can participate in an online fishing derby as part of the celebration.

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Walleye Are Smaller In Lakes With AIS

A new University of Minnesota study has found that, when lakes were infested with two common aquatic invasive species — zebra mussels and spiny waterflea — young walleye didn't grow as large as quickly, as they did before the invaders arrived.

The [Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center study](#) focused on nine large Minnesota lakes that are destinations for walleye anglers.

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Tri-State Diving workers getting ready to pull a vehicle out of the water at Blue Lake, Nashwauk, Minn. (Submitted photo)

Ice Safety Tips From One Who Knows

While it might seem safe to be out on the ice, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) says that “ice is never 100% safe!”

“I have about five words for ice conditions,” said Gary Thompson, the owner of [Tri-State Diving](#), who recovers everything in the water from a 95,000-pound excavator to wedding rings.

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Health Department Releases Fertilizer Restriction Map

The restrictions are meant to keep nitrate out of groundwater.

Called the Groundwater Protection Rule, the rule will affect agricultural producers in parts of the state whose soil and rock composition is particularly vulnerable to nitrate leaching. A chemical compound found in fertilizer and manure, nitrate can wash away from crop fields in the rain or because of irrigation and has been linked to cancer and other forms of illness.

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New Lake Goals for 2020

Does your lake have a goal to stay high quality? The State of Minnesota has updated the pollution reduction goals for 2863 lakes based on recent water quality samples. If local citizens complete enough projects, their lake should be able to maintain it's best water quality.

Using data from volunteer collected water samples the MN DNR was able to

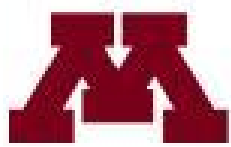
model the annual nutrient load to those 2863 lakes, determine which lakes had the highest sensitivity to additional pollution, and identify a nutrient reduction goal that should maintain the lake at it's best water quality. In Otter Tail County pollution reduction goals range from around 50 pounds for Little McDonald Lake a moderate sized headwaters lake to over 8000 pounds for Otter Tail Lake a large lake fed by two rivers. For easy comparison one raingarden can reduce pollution by about one pound.

Using these pollution reduction goals community members can develop a Clean Water Roadmap for their lake. These roadmaps identify which projects are suitable for your watershed, how many projects it would take to achieve your goal, where projects would be most effective, what those projects might cost, and who could fund them. See the pollution reduction goals and sensitivity ranking for all 2863 lakes online at:

https://mnnaturalresourceatlas.org/gis-tool/?id=lakes_of_phosphorus_sensitivity

For assistance accessing your lake's information or developing a Clean Water Roadmap contact:

Steve Henry, Freshwater Sciences Project Manager
RMB Environmental Laboratories
steve.henry@rmbel.info
320-491-9647 Cell 218-846-1465 Main Office



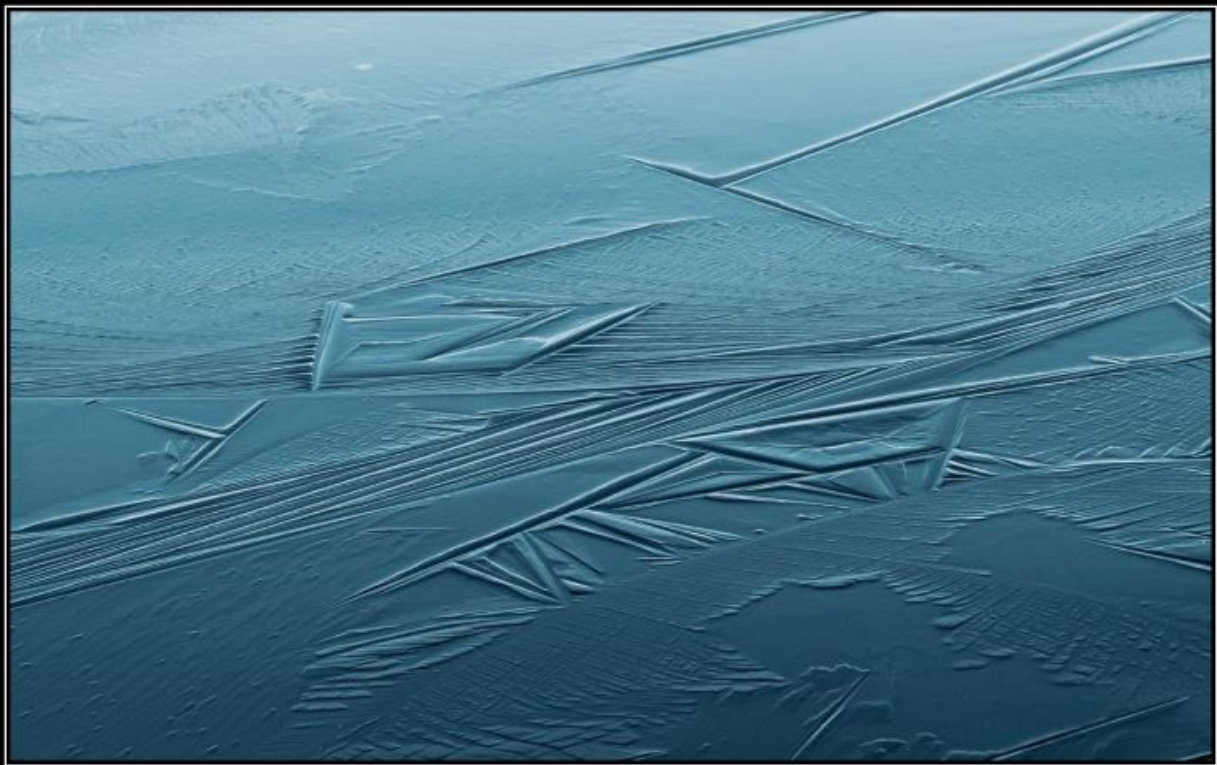
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Life In Peril- Lakes and Rivers Don't Freeze

Melting glaciers and rising sea levels are common examples of the effects of climate change. However, there has been far less research on how a warmer world affects people who need freshwater ice on lakes and rivers. What is known is that ice cover for freshwaters in the Northern Hemisphere has steadily declined for the last 150 years, putting people's cultural and spiritual practices at risk — and potentially their livelihoods.

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Survive Falling Through Ice

Every year, children and even some old enough to know better venture onto thin ice, despite warnings to stay away. And in many northern states, where ponds and lakes freeze over every winter, going onto the inches-thick slabs of ice is a common, if risky, recreational pastime. People fish, skate and drive snowmobiles on thick, clear ice.

So what should you do if you fall through ice?

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Everyone loves a clean-flowing river: New water grants will help improve lakes and rivers across Minnesota. (Nathan Bowe / Tribune)

OTC Conservation Districts Receive \$167,000

In all, the board approved \$13.9 million in 52 Clean Water Fund grants on Jan. 22 to improve water quality in streams, lakes, and groundwater across the state, according to a news release.

The East and West Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation Districts are targeting phosphorus reduction on the lakes of greatest concern, which have high levels of disturbance in their watersheds, high phosphorus sensitivity and frequent nuisance algae blooms.

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2020 AIS Control Grants Now Available

Grants for projects that control invasive aquatic plants are being offered by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources invasive species program.

These grants are available for the first time in two years after the Minnesota Legislature approved a boat license fee increase that will also fund other initiatives.

About \$530,000 is available to lake associations, watershed districts, cities and counties for projects that control curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil and flowering rush using herbicides, mechanical control or a combination of

both.

Applications will be accepted starting at 9 a.m. Friday, Jan. 31. The deadline is 9 a.m. Monday, Feb. 24. Find more details about grant requirements and application materials on the [grant website](#). Grant applications will be reviewed and awarded on a first-come, first-served basis.

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The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is planning to launch a new program focused on encouraging anglers to voluntarily switch to lead-free fishing tackle as a way to help save the common loon. Evan Frost | MPR News

Loons Dying From Lead Poisoning

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency is planning to launch the new program, focused on encouraging anglers to voluntarily switch to lead-free fishing tackle as a way to help save the common loon. Lead poisoning is a leading cause of death for Minnesota loons.

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OTC Board Of Commissioner Minutes

- [January 7, 2020](#)
 - [January 28, 2020](#)
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[John Kruse](#), OTC COLA Administrative Assistant