

IMPORTANT NEWS from Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations

E-Newsletter July 2025



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Ezri Farnum

Starry Stonewort - Meeting Topic

OTC COLA July 17 Lake Property Owner Meeting

The featured speaker at the OTC COLA lake property owner meeting on July 17, 2025 will be Ezri Farnum. Ezri is the President of the Koronis Lake Association. Lake Koronis is located near Paynesville Minnesota. The lake has been combating the infestation of starry stonewort since 2015.

Starry Stonewort is a noxious, matting algae posing a clear and present danger to lake property values and the quality of lake experience across Minnesota.

The challenge of dealing with Starry Stonewort at Lake Koronis has proved formidable from the outset. Little was known about the Starry Stonewort when it was first detected in Lake Koronis in 2015. Stakeholders for the lake continue to pursue information and advice to formulate a consensus of how to battle the harmful aquatic invasive plant. Over the years a knowledge base has been compiled from local experts as well as from those outside of Minnesota. Lake Koronis is the largest Starry Stonewort management project in Minnesota.

Otter Tail Coalition of Lake Associations has sponsored two bus tours to Lake Koronis. The first was in September 2017 and other in July of 2022. Participants of the tours have indicated they were enlightened to the threat of Starry Stonewort.

Ezri will relate how starry stonewort has impacted Lake Koronis and describe what the Lake Association continues to do to combat it.

All Minnesota lake property owners are welcome to attend OTC COLA meetings on the third Thursdays of July and August 2025 at the Ottertail Community Center, 93 Lake Avenue South, in Ottertail, Minnesota 56571. Meetings begin at

No Cut In MN AIS Prevention Aid !

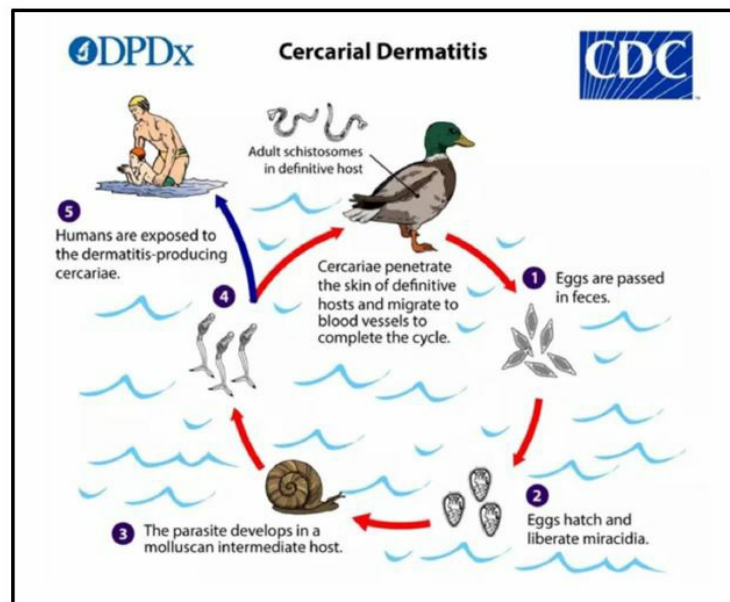
In January 2025 Minnesota Governor Walz released his proposed budget recommendations for 2026-2027. In the proposal was a reduction of the County AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) Prevention Aid formula by 50%.

The AIS Prevention Aid (established 10 years ago) is crucial to prevent the spread of AIS. Minnesota counties share \$10 million annually and most of that money funds AIS inspections for watercraft moving into and out of our public waters. Reduction in the funding would result in fewer boat inspections and would translate into greater risk of spreading AIS into the lakes and rivers.

When news of the proposed budget cut was published, Minnesota lake advocate organizations began campaigns to inform legislators of the importance of not reducing the funding. Organizations including Minnesota Lakes and River Advocates, Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations and Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations implored their memberships to send letters to Governor Walz and Minnesota legislators to omit the 50% AIS Prevention funding cut from the budget.

In early June 2025 it was learned that a special session of the Minnesota State legislature was convened to submit a budget to Governor Walz, that maintains AIS County Prevention Aid at current levels through the upcoming biennium. We believe this was substantially in response to the massive outpouring of letters received from lake stakeholders from across Minnesota!

Special thanks go to all who participated in campaigns to influence preservation of the AIS prevention funding efforts!



Why Swimmer's Itch Is Getting Worse In OTC Lakes

In the fall of 2024 Pelican Lakes Property Owners Association (PLPOA) formed a task force to address the problem of swimmer's itch becoming a major issue.

In recent years a new strain of swimmer's itch has emerged on Pelican Lake. In the summer of 2024 and the first half of the summer of 2025 the number and severity of cases have skyrocketed. This issue is becoming the greatest threat to the way of life ever experienced on Pelican Lake. In the fall of 2024, PLPOA formed a task force to address this problem.

PLPOA retained Swimmer's Itch Solutions, LLC, starting last fall, to advise on this topic. Swimmer's Itch Solutions is led by Dr. Curtis Blankespoor, Ecologist and Parasitologist, who is considered the foremost expert in the study of swimmer's itch in North America. Over the last 25 years he has studied this topic and advised lakes across Michigan, Wisconsin and Maine on how to successfully greatly reduce or eradicate their swimmer's itch problems.

[MORE](#)



OTC COLA Upcoming Events 2025

All Minnesota lake property owners are welcome to attend OTC COLA meetings on the third Thursdays of July and August 2025 at the Ottertail Community Center, 93 Lake Avenue South, in Ottertail, Minnesota 56571. Meetings begin at 7:00 p.m. Attendees are encouraged to arrive early for coffee and cookies and a time of socializing and networking.

Thursday July 17, 2025 - OTC COLA Lake Property Owner July Meeting

Thursday August 21, 2025 - OTC COLA Lake Property Owner August Meeting

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

Lake Property Owner Meetings 2025

Speakers for remaining summer meetings held on the 3rd Thursdays of July and August at the Ottertail City Community Center have been announced.

Featured presenters at July and August Ottertail Community Center meetings:

- **July 17 - Ezri Farnum**, Ezri will give an update on Koronis Lake Association's 10-year fight against starry stonewort. She will report on initial and current funding opportunities, stakeholder/shoreowner investment and current research conclusions.
- **August 21 - Darren Newville**, East Otter Tail Soil & Water Conservation District, District Manager. Darren will present an update on the [One Watershed, One Plan](#) program. The East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) was named SWCD of the Year for 2024.

OTC COLA summer meetings are excellent to get handouts of information to bring back to Lake Associations. It is also a great opportunity to network with other lake property owners.

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



Jeff Vansteenburgh

Vansteenburgh Speaker At June Lake Property Owner Meeting

The featured speaker at the June 2025 OTC COLA lake property owner meeting was Jeff Vansteenburgh, OTC COLA Environmental Director. Jeff spoke on the history of the OTC COLA water monitoring program as well as the distribution and uses of the data by lake associations, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MN DNR).

Jeff serves as the environmental director for the OTC COLA. He received his BS degree from Minnesota State University Mankato in Biology and Community Health and MS degree from University of Wisconsin LaCrosse in Biology and Aquatic Sciences. Jeff worked 36 years for the State of Iowa serving three years as a limnologist at the State Hygienic Laboratory - University of Iowa and thirty three years in the field services bureau, environmental services division of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. He has experience in a variety of

environmental areas including surface and groundwater quality, wastewater treatment and drinking water quality.

Jeff Vansteenburgh

2025 Lake Sampling Dates

The lake sampling dates for the 2025 Season are:

- May 19
- June 16
- July 21
- August 18
- September 22

A reminder:

If you have been using the courier drop off site on Lake Marion that location is no longer in use. The new location is 43620 Round Lake Rd. Ottertail MN. There is a small garage on the opposite side of the address where the samples coolers will be collected.

If you have used the Battle Lake site or taken the samples directly to the lab in Detroit Lakes, that has not changed.

Jeff Vansteenburgh, OTC COLA Environmental Director 641-420-0928

Dates Still Open For OTC COLA Speakers

The OTC COLA Speaker Team is still scheduling dates for lake association meetings in 2025. Multiple topic requests range from individual water quality analysis to aquatic invasive species prevention to overviews of OTC COLA's history and programs.

The Team is currently responding to Lake Association requests to schedule speaking dates. There is no cost. Early submissions are the best way to help secure a desired place on the schedule.

To request an OTC COLA speaker at your meeting email John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant, at otccola2@gmail.com.



MLR July 2025 Newsletter

The 2025 state budget session highlighted just how vital MLR's 30-year history of engaged, bipartisan advocacy for lakes and rivers at the Capitol truly is. With a projected \$6 billion deficit expected for the 2028–29 biennium (with funding rolling out in summer 2027), MLR's lobbyists viewed this session as a primer for the next budget battle. In the past, state budget shortfalls led to cuts in local aid and property tax hikes that pushed many longtime lake owners—especially retirees—out of their homes. Natural homesteads were replaced by suburban lawns, harming water quality and weakening community ties.

Today, with 56% of our waterways impaired and pressures from invasive species, development, and increased boating, we face a critical crossroads. Cuts to local programs will limit the ability of communities to protect our waters, at a time when [recent surveys show only 15% of lakefront property owners feel their communities have the financial resources to manage invasive species.](#)

[MLR July 2025 Newsletter](#)



MAISRC Newsletter

Explore the Latest in Aquatic Invasive Species Research

What's inside our latest newsletter?

- Zebra mussels' **impact on walleye**
- MAISRC's new research chair: **Dan Larkin**

- Lab to Lakes updates
- Recent news: **Swimmer's itch**
- **NEW column: Ask the AIS Experts!** [Use this form](#) to ask MAISRC researchers your questions for inclusion in future newsletters

Don't miss out on these stories and other important updates. Click below to read the full newsletter and stay engaged in protecting Minnesota's waters.

[Newsletter](#)



You've probably been seeing and hearing TV, newspaper, and radio announcements about the new Watercraft Operator's permit. [Here is one](#) done by the Cross Lake/Snake River Association of Pine County that we think is informative and creative.

It provides details from the MN DNR about the new program, but it also asks their members to encourage adherence of the new regulations by their family and guests. And the Association has a challenge for those 18 years and under to take the required education course and get their Watercraft Operator's permit.

Perhaps your lake or river association can also do something creative like this to incentivize our youngest boat drivers to act.

Safety on the water is what drove Minnesota to enact this legislation in 2023. MN COLA was proud to be a part of the team of organizations who helped get this into law.

The law goes into effect on July 1 for ages 12 to 21. Older adults will be required to get their Watercraft Operator's permit over the next three years. Adults born before June 30, 1987 are grandfathered, and do not required to act.

Thanks for your attention to this important matter.

Joe Shneider
President, MN COLA
president@mncola.org

Want to get MN COLA information directly? Sign up using the button below. It's free, but we'd love to have you join as a dues paying member.

Go [HERE](#) for a review of the benefits of joining MN COLA

MNCOLA.ORG

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[David Helgersen](#), OTC COLA Director Liaison with MN COLA



DNR Seeks Input On Proposed Special Fishing Regulations

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is asking for input on several special fishing regulation proposals.

Each year, the Minnesota DNR reviews all existing fishing regulations, proposes new special regulations that apply to individual waters and asks the public for input about the proposals. All new special regulations are reviewed on a regular basis to evaluate effectiveness.

The DNR is proposing either new regulations or changes to existing experimental and special fishing regulations for the 2026 fishing season that address the following topics:

- Sand Lake walleye (Itasca County)
- Rainy Lake walleye (St. Louis and Koochiching counties)
- Platte Lake sunfish (Crow Wing County)
- Sullivan Lake sunfish (Morrison County)
- Green Prairie Fish Lake sunfish (Morrison County)

- Long (Higgins) Lake sunfish (Todd County)
- Moose Lake sunfish (Todd County)
- Maple Lake sunfish (Todd County)
- Jewett Lake sunfish (Otter Tail County)
- North and South Ten Mile Lakes sunfish (Otter Tail County)
- German Lake sunfish (Otter Tail County)
- Rush Lake sunfish (Otter Tail County)
- Rabideau Lake sunfish (Beltrami County)

[MORE](#)

DNR Seeks Public Input On Reducing Statewide Walleye Limit From Six to Four

Changes in lake habitat, ecology and conditions coupled with technological advances in fishing gear and methods are prompting the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to seek public input on a possible reduction in the statewide walleye possession limit from six to four fish.

If enacted via a rulemaking process, the change would not become effective until May 2027.

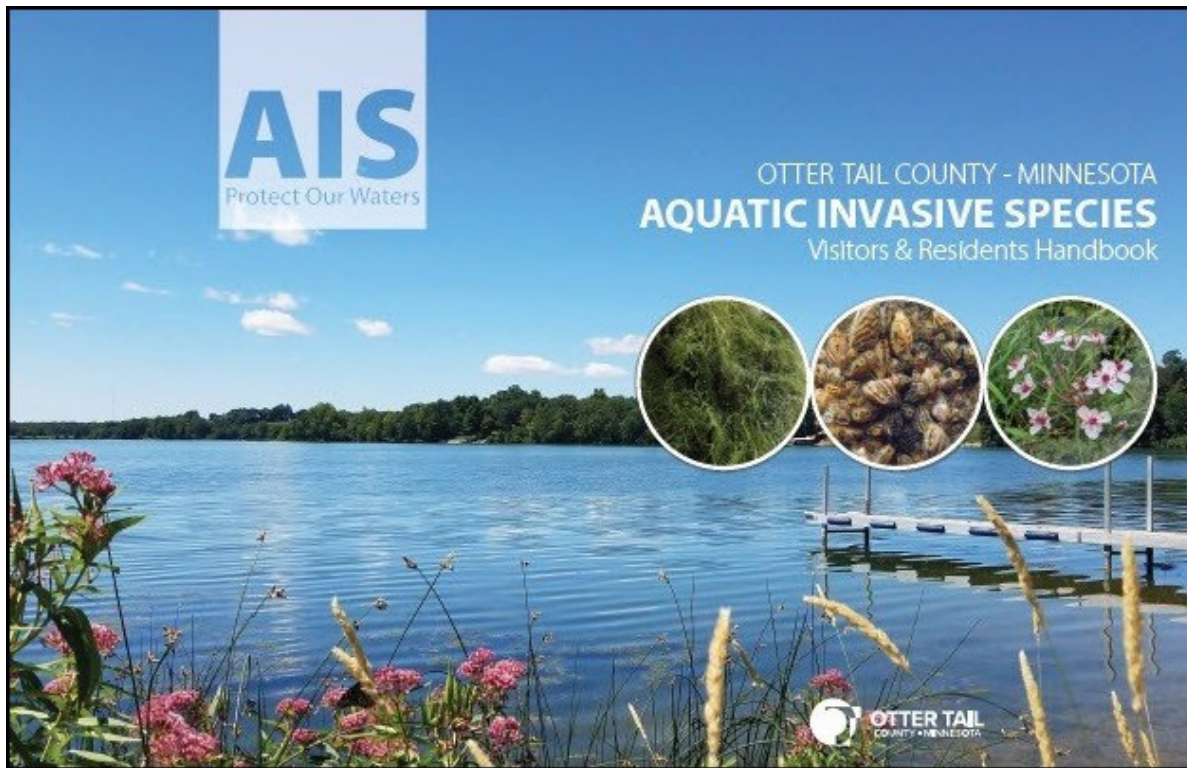
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The AIS Prevention Aid Program Snapshot is prepared annually for submission to the state of Minnesota outlining use of funds provided for control of aquatic invasive species in Minnesota lakes and rivers. The Snapshot for 2024 has been created and submitted to the state of Minnesota. Supporting details for the Snapshot will be published in the Annual AIS Prevention Report currently in the process of being compiled.

[Spencer McGrew](#), Otter Tail County AIS Specialist

[**AIS Prevention Aid Program Snapshot 2024**](#) [**AIS Prevention 2023 Report**](#)



AIS Handbooks Now Available

The enthusiastically acclaimed AIS Handbook sponsored by the Otter Tail County AIS Task Force is now available. The Handbook will be distributed to lake property owners, resort owners, and civic organizations in Otter Tail County. Quantities can be reserved from Otter Tail County Land & Resource 218-998-8095. Besides disseminating AIS prevention best practices in the Handbooks, the AIS prevention information will also be published in area newspapers and included in social media posts.

[**AIS Handbook for Visitors and Residents**](#)

[**AIS Handbook for Visitors and Residents Cover**](#)

[**Spencer McGrew, Otter Tail County AIS Specialist**](#)



[AIS](#) * [Water Quality](#) * [Administration](#) * [Regulation](#)

Featured Posts - July 2025

- [MN Lake Associations -Who they are and what they do](#)
- [Walleye Are Smaller In Lakes With AIS](#)
- [Email Mail Merge](#)

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- [Water Quality Analysis Reports \(2024 samples- Individual reports for 60 OTC COLA Lakes](#)
- [Lake Property Owner Directories \(2019\)](#)- Directories by Street and Name for 100 OTC Lakes
- [OTC COLA Brochure](#)- View and/or download the OTC COLA Brochure
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[John Kruse](#), OTC COLA Administrative Assistant

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