

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

## E-Newsletter March 2026



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Logo photo courtesy [whittenaerials@gmail.com](mailto:whittenaerials@gmail.com) [www.vernwhittenphotography.com](http://www.vernwhittenphotography.com)

## **Registrations Now Open Lake Stewardship Symposium May 16, 2026**

The Otter Tail County Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force and the Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations (OTC COLA, [www.otccola.org](http://www.otccola.org)), are sponsoring the second annual Lake Stewardship Symposium on May 16, 2026.

The 2026 Symposium is in response to enthusiastic requests received from attendees of the first Lake Property Owner Stewardship Symposium held on May 31 in 2025.

There are many issues confronting lake property owners in Otter Tail and other regional counties. These include aquatic invasive species, water quality, traffic congestion on lakes, and Minnesota State legislative activities. Speakers are being scheduled to address these and other hot topics. The event will start with a free hot breakfast at 8:00 for all attendees. Presentations are scheduled to wind up around noon.

Invitations have been extended to organizations to host table displays for dissemination of relevant lake property owner information. To reserve a table at the event please email [John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant](mailto:John.Kruse@otccola.org).

The one-half day event will be held at Thumper Pond Resort in Ottertail City from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on May 16, 2026. There is no cost for the event including the free hot breakfast.

Registrations for the event are greatly appreciated to assist in capacity planning. For more information and to register, watch for registration invitations in future articles of the [OTC COLA E-Newsletter](http://www.otccola.org), postings on the [otccola.org](http://www.otccola.org) website or news releases to be published in regional newspaper publications. You can also register by calling [John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant](tel:701-219-0465), 701-219-0465.

[Symposium Flyer](#)

[Register HERE](#)

[John Kruse, Administrative Assistant OTC COLA](mailto:John.Kruse@otccola.org)

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# Water Quality Analysis Report 2025

## Big Pine 56-0130-00



## 10-Year Trend Analysis

Lake / Site	Year	Phosphorus Ave	Chlorophyll a Ave	Secchi Ft	TSI Ave
Big Pine 56-0130-00 207	2016	50.8	19.6	8.0	53.2
	2017	37.8	24.8	8.1	53.6
	2018	36.2	16.2	7.6	52.8
	2019	39.6	16.5	9.8	52.6
	2020	29.4	12.3	10.1	49.4
	2021	24.8	5.2	10.3	46.6
	2022	40.6	20.1	8.8	53.4
	2023	25.1	5.8	11.2	45.6
	2024	22.0	4.6	14.0	42.4
	2025	25.2	6.1	15.7	44.4
Big Pine 56-0130-00 207 Total		33.1	13.1	10.4	49.4

## Water Quality Analysis Reports Are Now Published

The Otter Tail Coalition of Lake Associations (OTC COLA) Water Quality Analysis Program has been completed for the 2025 season. The data came from fifty-eight lakes and sixty-eight sample sites.

OTC COLA was formed in 1992 by a group of Otter Tail County lake associations for the benefit of all Otter Tail County lakes. Over its 34-year history it has evolved as an advocate for the protection and preservation of lakes by providing information, education and networking opportunities for lake property owners. OTC COLA's hallmark activity has been sponsoring of the Water Quality Analysis program.

[Water Quality Analysis Reports Library 2025](#)

[Water Quality Analysis Program](#) (from [otccola.org](http://otccola.org) website)



## Upcoming Events

- May 6, 2026: AIS Detectors webinar: [Genetic options for controlling invasive carp species](#), presented by: Michael Smanski
- July 8, 2026: AIS Detectors webinar: [Genomic surveillance of zebra mussel populations using genotyping by sequencing](#), presented by Daryl Gohl"

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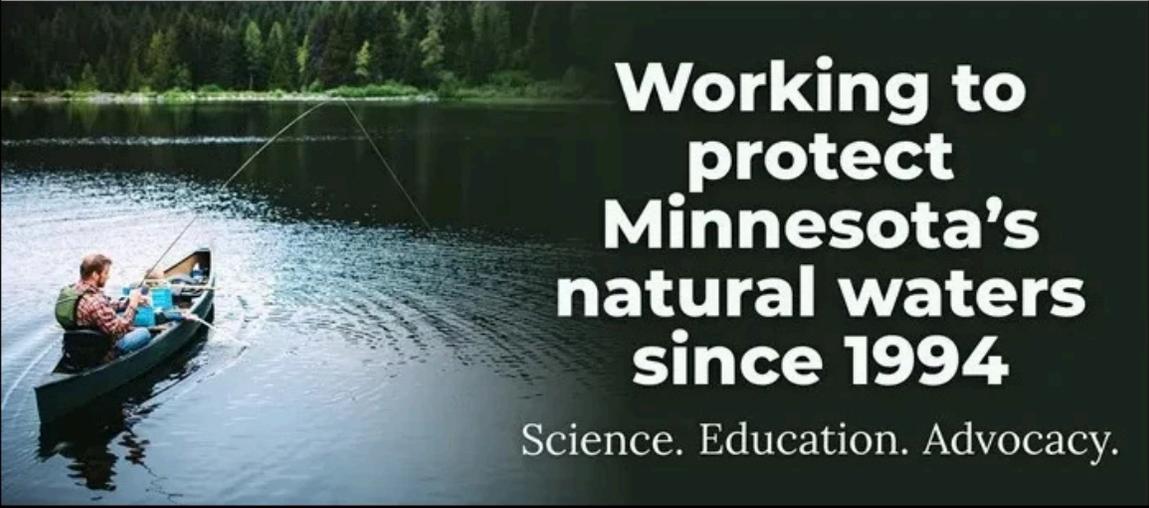
### Your Gift Helps Power The Science That Protects Our Waters

**Time is everything** when it comes to stopping aquatic invasive species (AIS) in Minnesota's lakes and rivers. For many years, the search for AIS has meant relying on finding the individual organisms themselves; zebra mussels **clinging to docks**, starry stonewort bulbils **hidden in sediment**, or spiny water fleas **tangled on fishing lines**. But now, a breakthrough in environmental DNA (eDNA) technology is transforming how we detect and respond to AIS.

eDNA is genetic material that organisms shed into their environment, like a biological footprint left behind in the water. By collecting and analyzing water samples from lakes and rivers, scientists can identify the presence of AIS **even when populations are small** and the organisms are difficult to find.

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**Working to  
protect  
Minnesota's  
natural waters  
since 1994**

Science. Education. Advocacy.

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Water Connects Us All  
[February 2026 Newsletter](#)

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

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

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### **Wrap Recycle Right Give Your Boat Wrap a Second Life**

In 2025, Minnesota made history.

Our state became the first in the nation to launch a Boat Wrap Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) program—taking the first steps toward a free, convenient, statewide recycling system for used boat shrink wrap.

As we recap this milestone year, our organization is helping redefine the way Minnesotans do right by the environment and their communities.

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## **DNR Proposes Lowering Walleye Limit to Four Statewide**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is proposing to lower the statewide inland water walleye limit from six fish to four. The new rule would mark the first change to the walleye limit since 1956.

DNR officials say the change aims to protect walleye populations for future generations. They point to changes in climate, the spread of invasive species, and new fish-finding technology as reasons why the old limit may no longer be sustainable.

If approved, the new limit would take effect March 1, 2027. The current rule allowing only one walleye over 20 inches in possession would stay the same.

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## **DNR Public Input Requested on Fisheries Management Plans for 197 Lakes**

March is the month to connect with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' fisheries offices across the state. The agency is updating fisheries management plans for 197 lakes in 52 counties in 2026, and is inviting Minnesotans to reach out and share their input.

The DNR encourages people with thoughts on the future management of a lake with a scheduled plan update to call or email the area fisheries office for that water body before March 31. Area fisheries teams will consider the public's observations and comments as they develop updates for each management plan.

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## **DNR Adds New Catch-and-Release Bass Season Anglers can now fish for bass before the May fishing opener**

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' fishing regulations for 2026 include a new catch-and-release season that makes fishing for largemouth and smallmouth bass open all year on inland waters. These changes for bass fishing and a variety of other new regulations are listed on pages 13-14 of the regulations book.

Since bass spawning peaks in late May, which is later in the year than some other species, there is no biological evidence that catch-and-release bass fishing poses a conservation issue for the fish

[MORE](#)





Chris LeClaire, Otter Tail County Land & Resource Director

## **Otter Tail County Offers Financial Help For Septic System Upgrades**

The state of Minnesota, in coordination with Otter Tail County and the other 86 counties in the state, recognizes that the uncontrolled use of land could adversely affect the health, safety, and general well-being of the public.

State legislators and county commissioners have imposed laws and ordinances such as shoreland management ordinances and septic system regulations in an attempt to ensure a viable environment for county residents and visitors.

“We work to provide for the wise subdivision, use and orderly development of shorelands of public waters,” says Otter Tail County Land and Resource Director Chris LeClair.

[MORE](#)

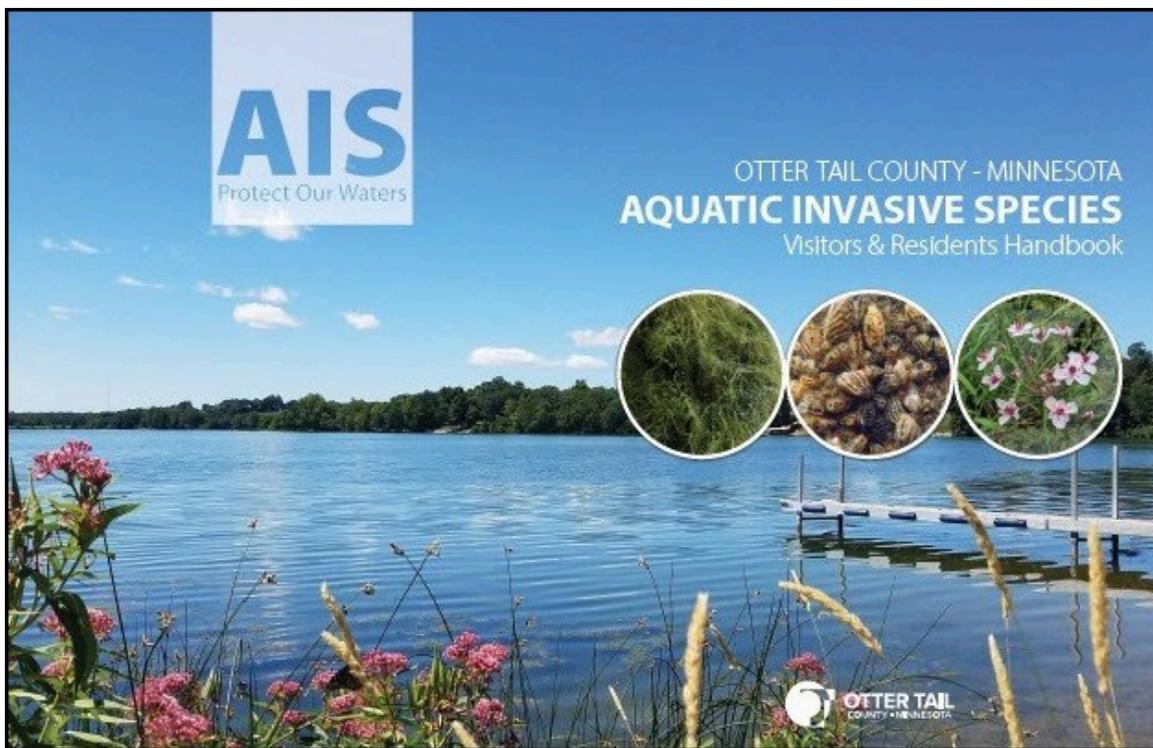
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## **AIS Prevention Aid Program Snapshot 2025**

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 2025 has been created and submitted to the state of Minnesota.

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

[\*\*AIS Prevention Aid Program Snapshot 2025\*\*](#)



## **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\*\*](#)

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## **OTC Board Of Commissioner Minutes**

- [\*\*January 6, 2026\*\*](#)
- [\*\*January 13, 2026\*\*](#)
- [\*\*January 27, 2026\*\*](#)
- [\*\*February 10, 2026\*\*](#)



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

OTCCOLA | 4302 13th Ave S, Ste 4-333 | Fargo, MN 58103 US

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