

# SPEAKERS



Spencer McGrew

**Spencer McGrew** is the **Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist** for Otter Tail County. He has led the county's AIS Prevention Program since 2016. He studied history and geosciences at Minnesota State University Moorhead and received his M.A in Geography at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks. His master's thesis explored the economic impact of zebra mussels on lakeshore property values. In 2025 he was elected Chair of the Statewide AIS Advisory Committee.

[smcgrew@ottertailcounty.gov](mailto:smcgrew@ottertailcounty.gov) 218-998-8113



Chris LeClair

**Chris LeClair** is the **Director of the Land & Resource Management Department for Otter Tail County**. Chris began his career in 1993 as a regulator in the environmental health field at Anoka County while finishing his B.S. in Natural Resources & Environmental Studies at the University of Minnesota. In 1996, Chris was the Environmental Health Specialist at Washington County where he remained for 22 years. In 2002, Chris was assigned to the septic system regulation program at Washington County. In 2018 Chris came to Otter Tail County taking the position of Department Director for management of regulating septic systems, wetland conservation and shoreland development. In 2024 Chris began supervising the County's environmental health specialists.

[cleclair@ottertailcounty.gov](mailto:cleclair@ottertailcounty.gov) 218-517-9326



Nick Phelps

**Nick Phelps** is a **Professor and Interim Head in the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology and the Director of the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center at the University of Minnesota**. His research focuses on emerging threats to aquatic systems at both the macro and microbial scales in the fields of fish health and aquatic invasive species (AIS). His work has led to many interdisciplinary collaborations in Minnesota and around the world on topics related to fish health, aquaculture, risk assessment, aquatic invasive species, diagnostic development and pathogen discovery, ecotoxicology, ecosystem health, food safety, and more!

[phelpo83@umn.edu](mailto:phelpo83@umn.edu) 612-624-7450



Pete Guck

**Pete Guck** is the **Riparian Conservation Specialist at the EOT SWCD (East Otter Tail Soil & Water Conservation District)**. He specializes in riparian conservation partnering with Otter Tail County lake property owners providing technical, financial, and educational opportunities to restore shorelines. This all by incorporating methods and expertise that benefit water quality throughout our regional watersheds.

The EOT SWCD has published the finalized version of their updated Lake Stewardship Booklet.

[pete.guck@eot.mnswcd.org](mailto:pete.guck@eot.mnswcd.org) 218-228-2377



Madeline Hayden

**Madeline Hayden** serves as the **Research Outreach Specialist** at the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC),

Anecdotal reports of swimmer's itch across the state seem to be increasing, with many lake associations putting considerable effort into understanding the affliction. MAISRC researchers believe that, among other things, aquatic invasive species (zebra mussels, mystery snails) may be playing a key role in making our lakes a better place for the swimmer's itch-causing parasite. Researchers have collected existing information and begun new projects aimed at understanding swimmer's itch within the state, and the ways that aquatic invasive species may be increasing exposure.

[mhayden@umn.edu](mailto:mhayden@umn.edu) 612-624-7006



Jeff Forester

**Jeff Forester** has been the Executive Director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers (MLR) for over two decades. MLR seeks to protect Minnesota's lake and river heritage for current and future generations by forging powerful links between lakes, lake advocates and policymakers. Jeff was Hubert Humphrey Public Policy Fellow and and Shannon Leadership Fellow. His book, Forest for the Trees, How Humans Shaped the Northwoods (Minnesota Historical Society Press) examines fire and forestry in northern Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. He was associate producer of TRANSPLANT, A GIFT FOR LIFE, which won an Emmy. MLR has been working to stop the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species in Minnesota since 2009.

[jeff@mnlakesandrivers.org](mailto:jeff@mnlakesandrivers.org) 952-854-1317



Sylvia Soeth

**Sylvia Soeth** is the **President of the Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations (OTC COLA)**. OTC COLA was formed in 1992. OTC COLA works with lake property owners for prevention of aquatic invasive species and promotes best practices of lake stewardship in the county. The organization sponsors a water quality Analysis program, has regular seasonal lake property owner meetings and has hosted numerous events of bus tours and other educational opportunities.

[otccola2@gmail.com](mailto:otccola2@gmail.com) 701-219-0465