

IMPORTANT NEWS from Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations

E-Newsletter October 2026



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Spencer McGrew, Otter Tail County AIS Specialist

Pelican Rapids Press

McGrew Addresses OTC COLA Annual Meeting

Spencer McGrew, Otter Tail County's Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist, is in his 10th year on the job and had good news while addressing members of the Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations Thursday evening, Aug. 20. He spoke during COLA's annual meeting at the city of Ottertail Community Center.

"You as lakeshore property owners have joined in the effort to stop the spread of invasive species," McGrew said, "and this evening I can say emphatically that we are seeing AIS containment more than ever before."

McGrew announced at the COLA gathering that more AIS rinse stations are being installed throughout Otter Tail County, similar to the one installed at Paul Miller Park north of Perham near Little Pine Lake. These stations provide ways to wash boats, trailers, and gear to stop the spread of aquatic invasive species.

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DNR Stocking Walleye Fingerlings Into 19 Otter Tail County Lakes

Approximately 8,000 pounds of fingerlings headed to area waters

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) fisheries crews have started harvesting and stocking walleye fingerlings into lakes across the state. In Otter Tail County, Fergus Falls DNR Fisheries staff will be harvesting and stocking walleye fingerlings into 19 area lakes. These lakes include: West Battle, Adley, Big McDonald, Wall, Pebble, Paul, Clitherall, Sybil, Eagle, South Lida, East Silent, Silver, Pleasant, Rose, Pickerel, Norway, Jewett, Long by Vergas, and Long by Jewett Lake. Approximately 8,000 pounds of walleye fingerlings will be stocked into these lakes this fall.

[MORE](#)

How Much Fish Do You Eat?

Minnesota reels in data on resident fish diets for safety

In efforts to better protect human health, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is gathering information about how much fish and shellfish people consume in Minnesota through a statewide, anonymous questionnaire

Some contaminants in the environment may accumulate in fish and the people who eat them. The MPCA plays the important role of controlling the amount of contaminants entering our lakes and rivers. They do this by determining the levels of contaminants that protect human health. The levels are calculated for the fish you eat based on the known toxicity of contaminants, how those contaminants accumulate in fish, and how much fish people typically eat (fish consumption rate). These levels are enforced by limiting the amount of contaminants that are allowed to be discharged to waterbodies in Minnesota. The MPCA also works to restore waters where the levels are exceeded.

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A Minnesota 'Lake Killer'

A MN Lake Killer surfaced 11 years ago. There's still no long-term fix.

Kirsti Marohn, MPR news, reported on the [challenge of living with a starry stonewort infestation](#). Found first in Minnesota on Lake Koronis in 2015, starry stonewort has already spread to 40 lakes.

Kevin Farnum, MN COLA Board member, is spotlighted in this news report. The article provides perspectives on the challenges of living with starry stonewort. Like most of the other aquatic invasive species, there is no silver bullet to eradicate it, at least not in the near future.

You can read the article or listen to it. The article has several useful photos and illustrations. The audio recording is just over 7 minutes and well worth your time.

This is the latest addition to MPR's ongoing series [Trouble by the water: Minnesota's lakes under threat](#) series.

Pass it on to your neighbors and association members!

We hope you find this information interesting and useful.

Joe Shneider
President, MN COLA

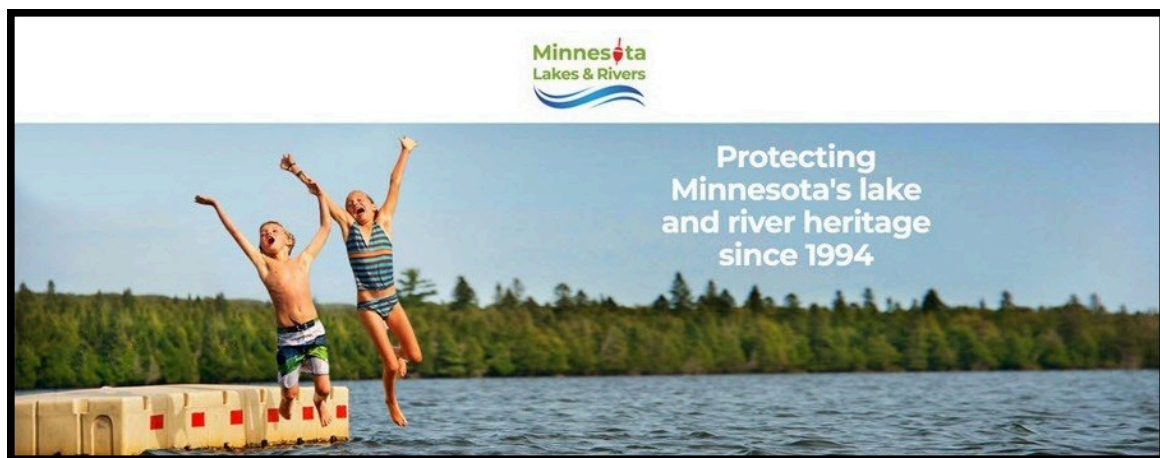
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Go [HERE](#) for a review of the benefits of joining MN COLA

[MNCOLA.ORG](#)

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



MN AIS Prevention Aid At Risk

For the last ten years, Minnesota has led the nation in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS), supported through a state funding mechanism called County AIS Prevention Aid. Established in 2014 with the support of Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Advocates, this program allocates \$10 million annually for local governments to implement targeted, science-based solutions to protect our lakes and rivers.

However, in 2025, Governor Tim Walz's budget recommendation proposed reducing this vital program by 50% and phasing it out entirely by 2029. Such cuts could significantly weaken our ability to prevent new AIS introductions, leading to increased long-term management costs for lake associations, property owners, and local governments.

[MLR AIS Prevention Aid Flyer](#)



Many Minnesotans don't value aquatic plants. The state's lakes are paying a price.

Trouble By The Water

[Minnesota Lakes and Rivers](#)

"It is clear more education and awareness about aquatic plants is necessary, and that concerns about treating to remove lake plants will continue to increase."

MPR reporter Kirsti Mahron is continuing her "[Trouble by the Water](#)" series with a deep dive into aquatic plants in lakes and rivers.

Native aquatic plants play a critical role in lake health, fishery and waterfowl populations, nutrient management, and ecosystem services.

But invasive species can also make boat navigation hard or impossible, drive excess phosphorus and resulting algae blooms, reduce fish spawning areas, crowd out native plants like wild rice. They also, according to my daughter, feel "ishy" while swimming.

As more lake shore is developed with homes and cabins, and as aggressive aquatic invasive plants crowd out natives, aquatic plant populations are declining. As lake shore owners, we are the primary stewards of Minnesota's lakes and rivers.

[See full article](#)



We Need Your Perspective!

We are a research team at the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Research Center at University of Minnesota and St. Olaf College. We are currently conducting research to understand more about how people think and make decisions about managing aquatic invasive species. As a part of this research, we have used feedback from natural resource managers to develop an educational tool, AIS CASCADE, that is meant to help people think through the potential outcomes of different lake management strategies.

As someone who is involved in aquatic invasive species management, we would like to invite you to participate in a hands-on workshop about aquatic invasive species management. During the workshop, you will have a chance to work with other people who make decisions about aquatic invasive species to come up with management strategies for several hypothetical situations, then observe the impact of those strategies using AIS CASCADE.

This is part of a study on decision making about aquatic invasive species in Minnesota. It is being conducted by researchers at the University of Minnesota and St. Olaf College.

Participating in this research is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to attend an educational workshop (about 7 hours). After the workshop, we will ask participants to take a questionnaire about their perspectives on aquatic invasive species management (about 15 minutes).

If you'd like to attend, choose ONE of the following workshops:

- **Thursday, October 1, 2026, 10am - 5pm - Chanhassen**
- **Friday, October 16, 2026, 9 am - 4pm - Brainerd**
- **Thursday, October 22, 2026, 9 am - 4pm - Bemidji**

If you would like to attend, please RSVP [using this form](#), and our study coordinator will follow up with you shortly.

Note: Since we can only accommodate 20 participants per workshop, please send your RSVP as soon as possible. If there is sufficient interest, we may host an additional workshop in early November.

If you'd like more information about the study, or if you have any questions, please email Dr. Rob Weiner, the study coordinator, at weiner5@stolaf.edu or call 507-786-3581.

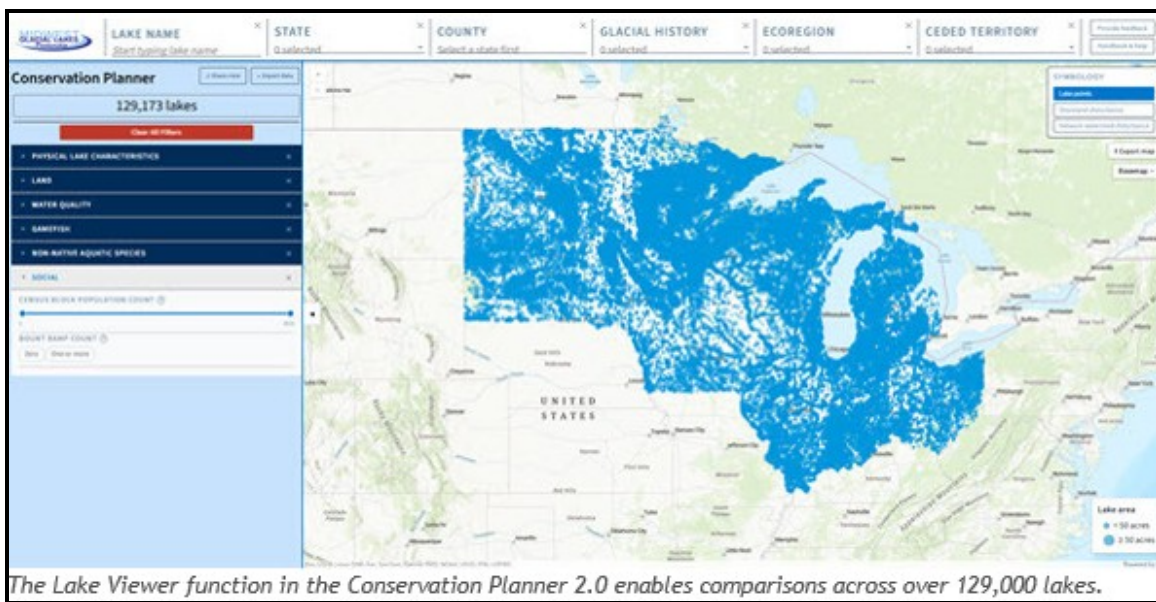
Thank you!
Dr. Ranjan Muthukrishnan



Conservation Planner 2.0

The [Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership](#) (MGLP) is excited to announce the release of its all-new Conservation Planner 2.0. Building on years of database expansion, the planner shares information from over 100 datasets for lakes across the Upper Midwest. With information on gamefish, water quality, land use and land cover, non-native species, physical characteristics, social information, and more, the revised Conservation Planner 2.0 is a powerful tool to inform conservation on lakes near you.

The planner allows you to create custom queries using over 75 different variables to compare lakes in your area. If you want to learn more about a specific lake, the planner can create a customized 30-page report for each lake in the partnership, which synthesizes and explains available data in a format that can be easily shared with partners.



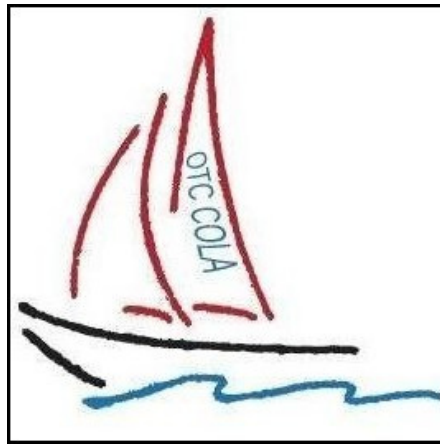
As you know, smart conservation requires learning the specifics about the ecological system that one is protecting or restoring. Understanding the threats facing lakes, the trends in lakes' conditions, and how they compare with similar nearby lakes can guide expectations and conservation strategies. The MGLP Conservation Planner 2.0 expands upon and complements [existing tools](#) using data from state, federal, and tribal resource agencies, academic researchers, private consultants, and volunteer monitors.

[MORE](#)

See Also:

[Tool for MN Lake Health Information](#)

[EPA How's My Waterway](#)



Call for OTC COLA Directors

The Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations (OTC COLA) is seeking candidates to become Members of its Board Of Directors. There are currently 2 vacant Director positions.

Current Board Members:

- Sylvia Soeth- Pine Lakes Lake Improvement District, OTC COLA President
- Scott Gaudette- Round Lake Association, AIS Task Force Liaison
- Jeff Vansteenburgh- First Silver Lake Association, Environmental Director
- David Helgersen- West McDonald Lake Association, MN COLA Liaison
- Ron Christensen-Spitzer Lake Association
- Roger Neitzke- Little McDonald Lake Improvement District
- Jeff Stabnow- Clitherall Lake Association.

The OTC COLA Board meets monthly, same days as meetings of the Otter Tail County AIS Task Force.

Functions of the Board include sponsorship and administration of the Water Quality Monitoring Program, and Lake Property Owner meetings in the summer months. OTC COLA also provides educational and informational opportunities for OTC COLA Members and all lake property owners through its summer meetings, monthly newsletter, bus tours, annual Lake Property Owner Stewardship Symposiums and other events.

For more information contact [John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant.](#)



Otter Tail County Ambulance Public Hearings

Over 100 people joined Otter Tail County in person and online Monday, Oct. 5, to learn about a plan to keep ambulance service in the Pelican Rapids area following an announcement by Ringdahl Ambulance that it will not renew its current license to serve the area because of financial problems.

Earlier this year, Ringdahl Ambulance told area cities and townships it was having serious financial problems. In June, it told the Minnesota Office of Emergency Medical Services it would not renew its license to serve the Pelican Rapids primary service area.

This state license gives an ambulance provider the right and the duty to provide ambulance service in a set area. Ringdahl's current license ends in March 2027. If nothing is done, people and businesses in the area will not have ambulance service.

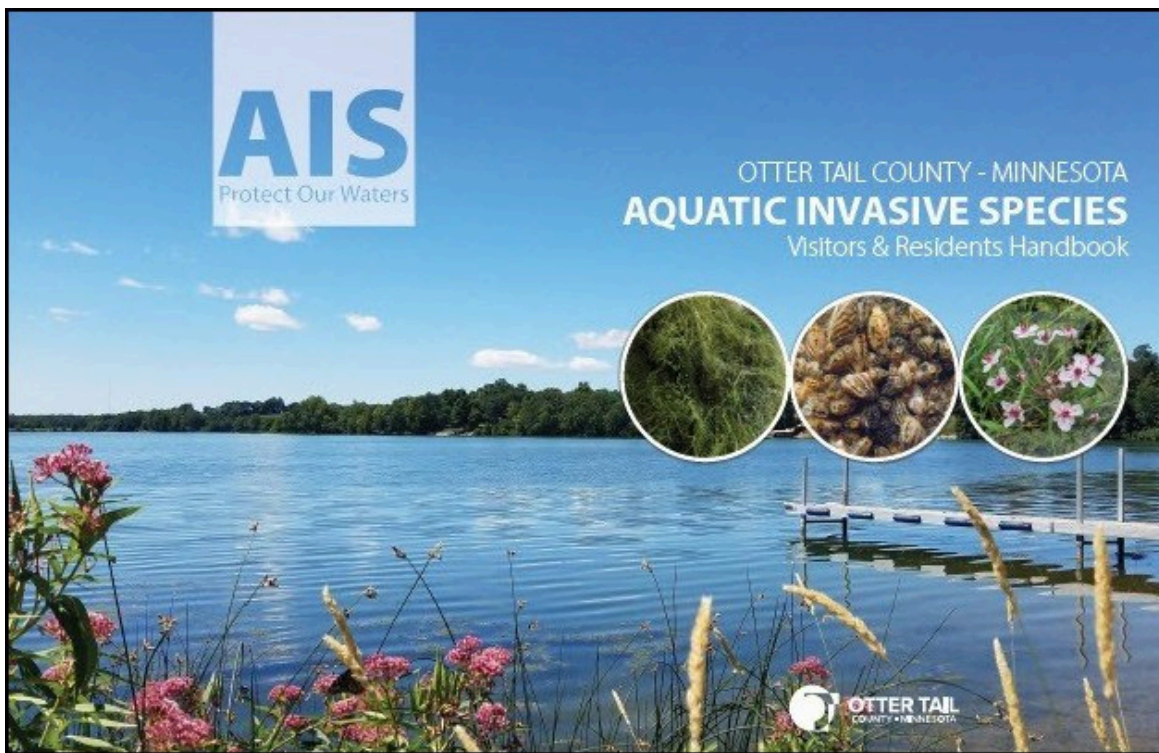
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Board of Commissioners Meetings Now Available on YouTube

Board of Commissioners meetings are available to re-watch on YouTube. To access the videos, visit the [Board of Commissioners page](#) and scroll to “Recent Meetings and Events” or visit our [Public Meetings playlist on YouTube](#). The meeting videos are divided into chapters by agenda item so you can click the video timeline to jump directly to the segment you would like to watch. Videos remain available for three months after each meeting.

Otter Tail County AIS Prevention Aid Program
[A Snapshot of Accomplishments in 2025](#)
[Spencer McGrew](#), OTC AIS Specialist



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**](#)

OTC Board Of Commissioner Minutes

- [**August 25, 2026**](#)
- [**September 8, 2026**](#)



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

October 2026 Featured Posts

- [What Is The Trophic State Index](#)
- [Why Does Our Lake Have More Weeds](#)
- [Infested Waters List](#)

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

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