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IMPORTANT NEWS from Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations

E-Newsletter
November 2026

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Lake / Site	Year	Phosphorus Ave	Chlorophyll-a Ave	Secchi Ft	TSI Ave
Eagle 56-0253 0 202	2017	6.4	1.7	22.3	31.8
	2018	5.9	1.8	21.9	31.7
	2019	5.8	0.8	24.8	29.3
	2020	5.8	1.2	19.0	32.0
	2021	3.7	1.4	20.0	29.6
	2022	3.8	1.5	26.0	27.4
	2023	4.2	1.7	24.8	28.8
	2024	5.4	1.9	25.4	31.0
	2025	6.2	2.4	21.6	33.4
	2026	5.3	1.3	34.0	29.3
Eagle 56-0253 0 202 Total		**5.3**	**1.6**	**23.7**	**30.5**

Water Quality Analysis Reports Published

The collection of water samples for OTC COLA's water monitoring program have been completed for 2026. The analysis of the samples have been done by RMB Laboratories. The resulting data has been compiled by OTC COLA producing Water Quality Analysis Reports for 63 lakes covering 72 individual sites. The 2026 Water Quality Analysis Reports have been posted in the **WQA 2026 Library**.

The design layout of each Report includes

- 10-Year Trend Analysis Tables
- Brief explanation of the data
- Recognition of the program sponsor and volunteers
- Direct link access to the DNR Lake Report
- Direct link access to the MPCA Lake Dashboard
- Direct link access to the DNR Health Assessment
- Direct link access to the UMN Lake Browser
- Ecoregion Comparison
- Lake Organizations and Resources

Water Quality Analysis Reports
The Case for Water Quality Monitoring
Understanding Water Quality Analysis Reports
What Is The Trophic State Index?

John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant



2026 Thank You Lake Samplers!

Thank you samplers and couriers for your time, diligence and dedication! The OTC COLA Water Quality Monitoring Program has been active since 1992 and has evolved to incorporate the efforts of volunteers from Member Lake Associations who do the sampling, with RMB Laboratories in Detroit Lakes MN for doing the analysis of samples at a discounted rate, with OTC COLA who compiles the data and generates annual 10-year trend analysis reports. Also, a shout-out goes to couriers who provide distribution hubs to expedite delivery of the coolers from samplers to RMB Laboratories. The reports are used by Lake Associations to monitor water quality trends for their lakes and to help steer efforts to preserve lake quality. The data is also shared with the MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) to assist in evaluating State management decisions.

John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant



What Lake Testing Tells You

Every summer, OTC COLA volunteers across Otter Tail County measure water clarity and collect samples for the lab. Here is what phosphorus, chlorophyll-a and Secchi depth tell you about your lake.

The three measures.

- **Total phosphorus (TP)** is the nutrient that feeds algae and aquatic plants. It is reported in micrograms per liter (µg/L). Minnesota's Department of Agriculture says excess phosphorus in surface water leads to "an overabundance of algae and other aquatic plants."

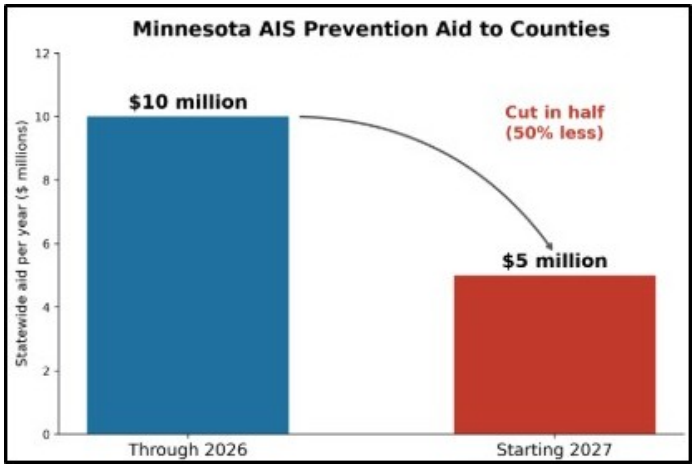
- **Chlorophyll-a** is the algae pigment measured in the lab. North American Lake Management Society (NALMS) calls it the most accurate of the three at estimating how much algae is in the water.

- **Secchi depth** measures water clarity with a disk lowered on a calibrated rope. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) notes that in lakes, low clarity reflects excess algae.

How they fit together. OTC COLA's lake reports describe an inverse relationship: if phosphorus and chlorophyll-a trend up, clarity trends down.

The Trophic State Index. In 1977, Robert Carlson created a Trophic State Index (TSI) that converts each measure to a common scale of roughly 0 to 100. Each 10-point rise means Secchi depth has been cut in half; a Secchi reading of 1 meter equals a TSI of 60, and 2 meters equals 50.

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AIS Prevention Aid Is Being Cut in Half

Since 2014, Minnesota has invested $10 million a year in County Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention Aid. The money goes to counties, which use it to slow the introduction and spread of invasive species such as zebra mussels, starry stonewort, and Eurasian watermilfoil. Under current law, that aid is scheduled to be cut by 50 percent beginning in 2027. According to **Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates**, (MLR) there is still time to reverse the cut.

MORE

John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant



Echo Bay Park: A New County Park

Most of the shoreline on Fish Lake is built up, but one 165-acre stretch on its south side is being kept natural and opened to the public. Echo Bay Park is Otter Tail County's newest

park, and state funding is in place for its first phase of construction.

The Minnesota DNR has designated Fish Lake as a water body with "high" biodiversity significance. The county calls Phase 1 particularly important for habitat protection, because designated roads and trails will replace open foot access across the property. The master plan also calls for restoring prairie and wetlands and checking wetlands for invasive species, which it says will enhance local water quality. On a lake whose shoreline is mostly developed, Echo Bay keeps nearly 1.5 miles of natural shoreline open to everyone.

MORE

Go **HERE** for a review of the benefits of joining MN COLA

MNCOLA.ORG

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David Helgerson, OTC COLA Director Liaison with MN COLA

2027 invasive aquatic plant management grant applications open until Dec. 9

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has up to $1,060,000 available to local entities such as lake associations, watershed districts, cities, counties, and Tribal governments for the management of curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush and starry stonewort.

Funding comes from Minnesota’s invasive species account, which is largely funded by the invasive species surcharge on watercraft registrations and nonresident fishing licenses.

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WATER CONNECTS US ALL
NEWSLETTER

Water Connects Us All Newsletter



ENRTF Community Grant Program

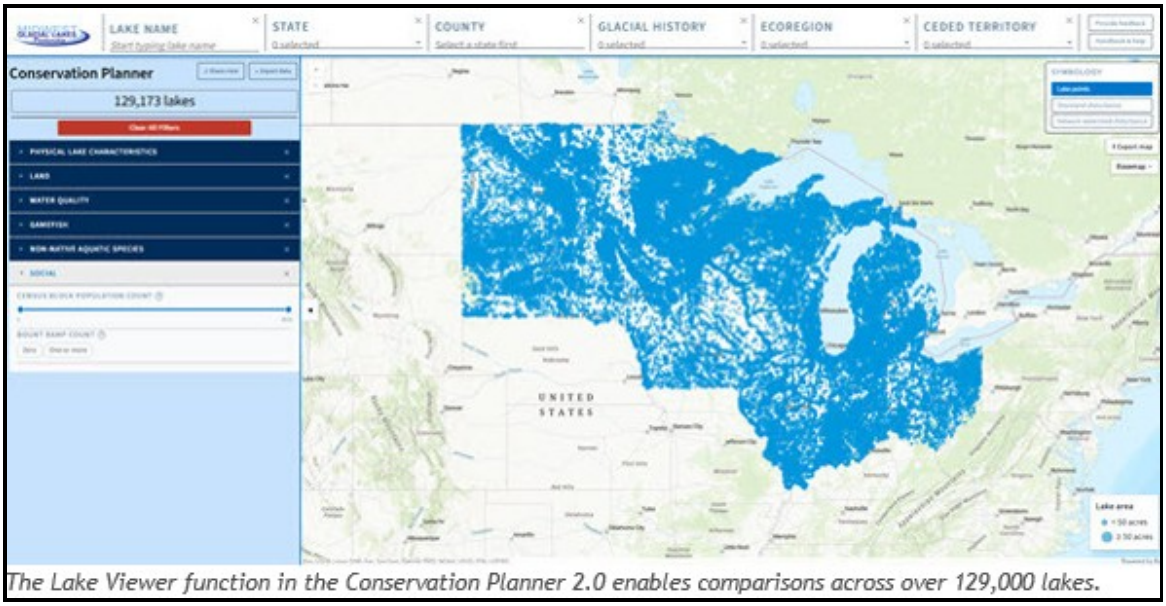
During the 2024 election, Minnesota's voters approved the reauthorization of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, ENRTF. The ENRTF uses a part of proceeds from the Minnesota State Lottery to fund conservation work in MInnesota.

As part of this reauthorization, voters approved a new category of the ENRTF, the Community Grants Program. This funding is intended to support smaller, more community based needs. Smaller nonprofits struggled to meet the requirements for the typical ENRTF grant process.

In 2025 MLR successfully lobbied the MN Legislature to include Aquatic Invasive Species work as one of five focus areas for this new grant program. Today, the MN DNR, which administers the new Community Grants Program has released the first Request for Proposals, RFP.

View In Browser





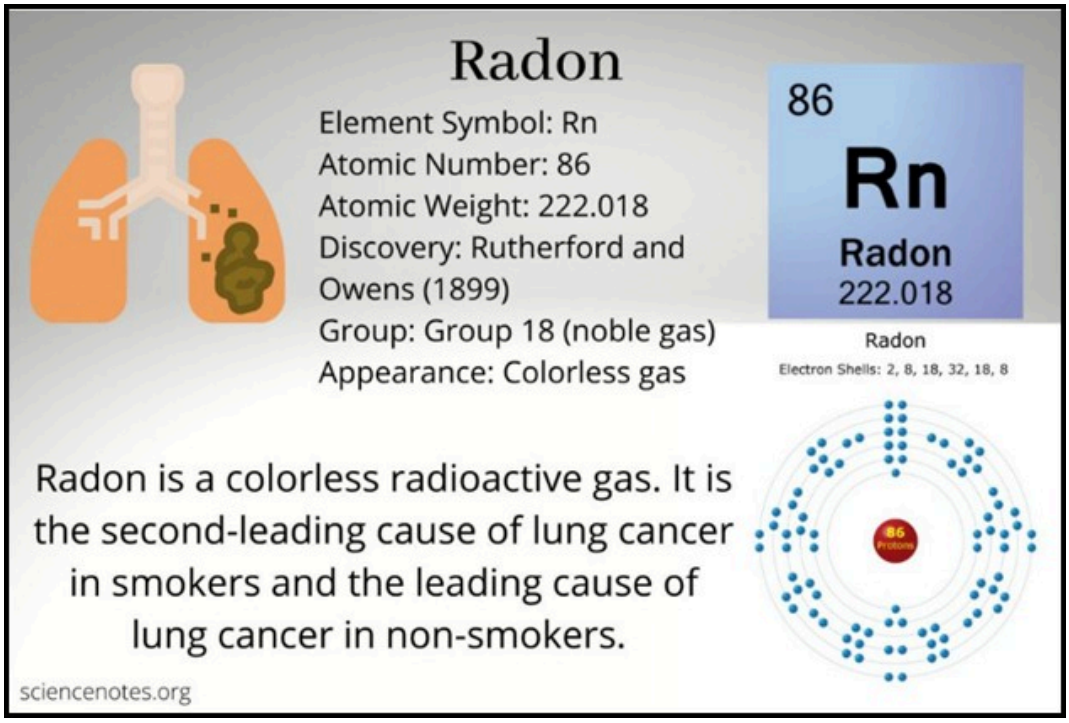
The Lake Viewer function in the Conservation Planner 2.0 enables comparisons across over 129,000 lakes.

MGLP Conservation Planner 2.0

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



Radon: The Hidden Health Risk

You can't see, smell or taste radon, but it may be in your lake home or cabin right now. People often call the danger "radon poisoning," but that term is misleading. Radon doesn't make you sick right away. The real risk is lung cancer that can develop after years of breathing it. The good news is that radon is easy to test for and can be fixed.

Radon is the number one cause of lung cancer among non-smokers and the second leading cause among smokers, according to the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH). About 21,000 people in the United States die each year from lung cancer caused by radon. Smoking and radon together raise the risk much more. MDH estimates that if 1,000 people breathed radon at 4 pCi/L over a lifetime, about 7 who never smoked and about 62 who smoke would die of lung cancer caused by radon.

MORE

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 Vansteenburg- First Silver Lake Association, Environmental Director
- David Helgerson- 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.

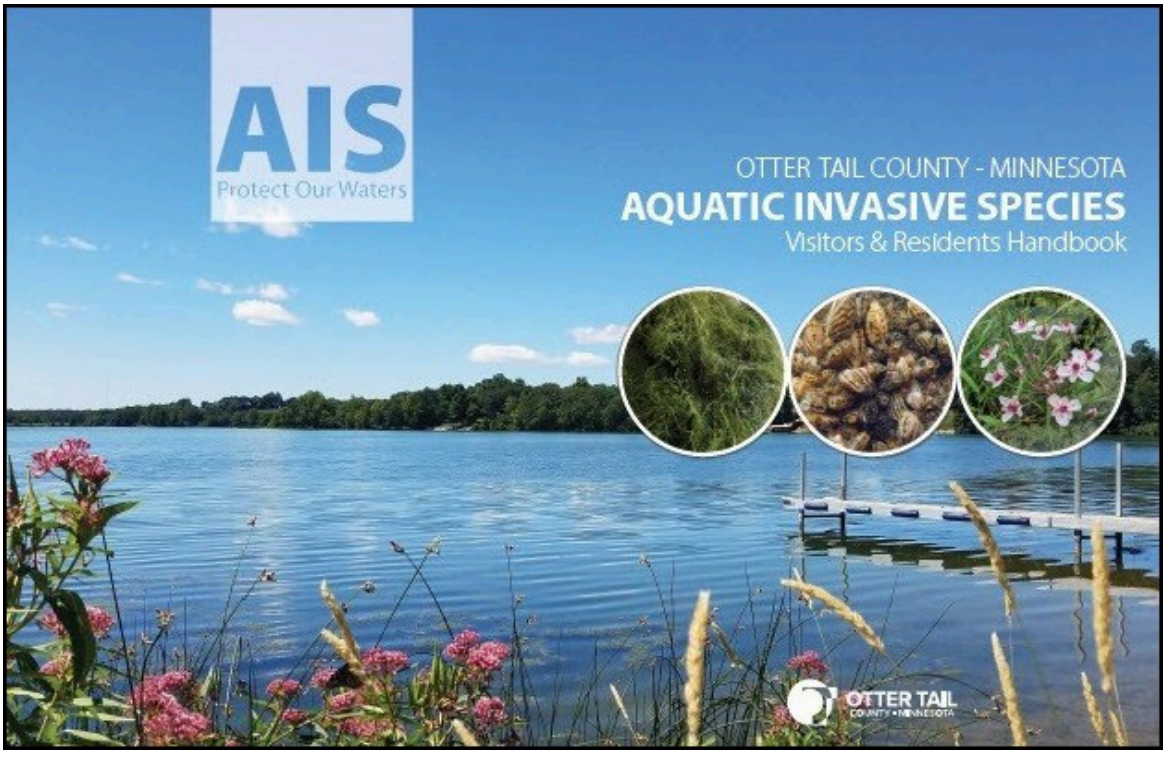
For more information contact **John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant**.

OTTER TAIL
COUNTY - MINNESOTA

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

- **September 29,2026**
- **October 13, 2026**
- **October 27, 2026**



AIS * Water Quality * Administration * Regulation

November 2026 Featured Posts

- **Blockbuster Slide Presentations**
- **Walleye Are Smaller in Lakes W/AIS**
- **Flowering Rush Problem**

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Instant Access Links

- **Newsletter Article Index-** Visually scan article titles from all OTC COLA E-Newsletters from 2018.
- **Water Quality Analysis Reports (2026 samples)**
- **OTC COLA Brochure**- View and/or download the OTC COLA Brochure

- **We want to hear from you!- Go HERE to give OTC COLA your comments and suggestions**

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OTC COLA Board of Directors

David Helgerson · Jeff Stabnow · Jeff Vansteenburg
Roger Neitzke · Ronald Christensen · Scott Gaudette · Sylvia Soeth

OTC COLA Members

Bass Lake Underwood Association · Berger Lake Association · Big McDonald LID · Boedigheimer Lake Association · Buchanan Lake Association · Clitherall Lake Association · Dead Lake Association · Devils Lake Association · Eagle Lake Lakeshore Association · East Battle Lake WS Association · East Spirit Lake Association · Elbow Lake Association · Franklin Lake Association · Hoffman Lake Association · Jewett Lake Association · Lida Lakes Improvement District · Lake Lizzie Lakeshore Association · Lake Seven Association · Lake Six Association · Leaf Lakes Association · Little McDonald Kerbs and Paul Lakes LID · Long Lake at Vergas Association · Loon Lake Association · Marion Lake Association · McDonald Lake Improvement Association · North Long Lake Association · North Turtle Lake Association · Otter Tail Lakes Property Owners Association · Pebble Lake Lakeshore Association · Pelican Lake Property Owners Association · Pickerel Lake Improvement Association · Pine Lakes LID · Prairie Lake Lakeshore Association · Round Lake 56-214 · Rush Lake Association · Silent Lakes Association · Silver Lake Property Owners Association · South Turtle Lake Improvement District · Spitzer Lake Property Owners Association · Stalker Lake Association · Star Lake Property Owners Association · Stuart Lake Association · Swan Lake Association · Sybil Lake Association · Tamarac Lake Association · Ten Mile Preservation Association · Trowbridge-Leek Lake Association · Wall Lake Association · West Battle Lake Association · West McDonald Lake Association · Wymer Lake Association

John Kruse, OTC COLA Administrative Assistant

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