

COLA celebrating 35 years of accomplishments

In 1988, the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA) was formed by representatives of nine area lake associations.

Today, 35 years later, the nonprofit group represents 43 lakes and 31 lake associations, supported by 2,776 members.

The all-volunteer organization is a leader in protecting Hubbard County lakes and rivers through action and education.

Tracking water quality

In 2022, COLA achieved a major milestone of 25 years of continuous lake water-quality monitoring (WQM) from May through September, 37 lakes now participating. The WQM analysis includes chlorophyll-a (measurement of algae) and total phosphorus (nutrient) and is completed by RMB Environmental Laboratories in Detroit Lakes.

As part of this program, lake volunteers also record water clarity depth using a secchi disk. The data is shared with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

Our WQM data is helping to ground-truth satellite imagery for lake health factors for the University of Minnesota Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis Lab, available through the online Minnesota Department of Natural Resources LakeFinder (www.dnr.state.mn.us/lakefind/index.html).



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In 2020, COLA completed WQM trend analysis reports for dozens of individual lakes within the 10 recent years. These are available on our website: www.hubbardcola.mn.org.

We can all help our lakes remain healthy and clean by preventing lawn runoff. It only takes one pound of phosphorus to create 500 pounds of algae in a lake.

Loon-friendly lakes

Loon liaisons for 23 lake associations each worked in partnership with the MN DNR Loon Restoration Project team on their lakes' Loon-Friendly Lake Management Plan in 2022. The goal is to reduce mortality and increase the number of young loons produced in Minnesota. We learned that 25% of loon deaths are caused by lead poisoning.

Getting the lead out

We also worked with the MPCA's "Get the Lead Out" fishing tackle program. At the Hubbard County Fair, COLA representatives provided 242 lead-free fishing tackle samples and offered a tackle exchange which brought in four pounds of lead for disposal at the household hazardous waste site at the Hubbard County south transfer station. Individuals can bring



Enterprise file photo

A Secchi disk is an 8 inch, white disk lowered into the water until it can no longer be seen by the observer. This depth of disappearance, called the Secchi depth, is a measure of water clarity.

lead to that hazardous waste site year-round. Lead-free tackle, like tungsten, is available locally.

AIS prevention

Our COLA aquatic invasive species prevention program began 18 years ago, starting with watercraft inspection education. The program is a collaborative effort with many partners. The focus is "Clean. Drain. Dry. Dispose."

Below is the 2009-22 summary of Hubbard County aquatic invasive

species (AIS) watercraft inspection funding related to the 216,507 watercraft inspected since the program began:

- ▶ State/DNR - \$1,324,825
- ▶ Lake associations contribute supplemental funding: \$950,626
- ▶ Townships/cities contribute supplemental funding: \$399,279
- ▶ Hubbard County (2013-22) helped to fund AIS coordinator - \$283,462

The scope of AIS in Hubbard County includes 15 lakes listed as "infested" on the DNR's

infested waters list, with no new lakes added in 2022.

There are 184 Hubbard County lakes listed in the DNR LakeFinder to protect and preserve.

The lake associations' supplemental funding of watercraft inspection/education will top \$1 million in 2023.

You can take the DNR pledge to protect Minnesota waters here: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/data/ais-pledge>.

Members of the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations write a monthly column in the Enterprise addressing water issues in the region.