The following are reasons why a Hubbard County-based Lake Association may consider joining the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations (HC COLA) in Q&A format – version 7-7-17:

**HC COLA Mission:** HC COLA’s mission is to protect and enhance the quality of our lakes and rivers, preserve the economic, recreational and natural environmental values of our shorelands and promote the responsible use of our waters and related habitats. HC COLA’s mission enhances, promotes and protects the interests of lakeshore property owners, lake associations, local government, the general public and future generations.

**Values:**
- Collaboration among our members
- Open and honest communications
- Leadership, as an organization and as individuals toward increased citizen awareness and education
- Active, engaged volunteers

**a. What were the major motivations you considered in forming a COLA?**

  i. **Information about the formation of Hubbard County COLA (HC COLA)**

    1. **HC COLA was formed in 1988 to give lakes in Hubbard County a stronger voice for lake protection rather than individual lakes acting alone.**
    
    2. **Common motivations for the formation of lake associations / COLA’s are often based on potential threats that are happening on your lake(s).**
       - Several such developments were instrumental in the formation of HC COLA with proposed developments on area lakes including Little Sand, Potato and Fishhook Lakes.
       - **Water Quality Monitoring was an early focus of HC COLA with 20 years completed through the 2016 season—celebrating the achievement by several lakes in 2017!**
       - **More recently the issues of AIS introductions and broader watershed issues have become more important as well as the need to collect data to inform discussions (e.g. AIS watercraft inspections, aquatic vegetation surveys, zebra mussel monitoring, etc., by volunteers when no one else can / will collect it).**
    
    3. **Early HC COLA was also very active in the development of the Shoreland Management Ordinance in Hubbard County.**

    4. **In more recent years, HC COLA has also been active with State initiatives working on shoreland standards updates and HC COLA was instrumental in state aid for county AIS funding through Senator Rod Skoe and Representative Roger Erickson, plus past president serves on the DNR AIS Task Force.**

**b. What has sold lake associations to join the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations (HC COLA)?**

  i. **Reasons / benefits that encouraged lakes to join HC COLA included:**

    1. Stronger, unified voice.
    
    2. **Citizen involvement in the development of the Shoreland Management Ordinance / regulations.**
3. Area lake residents felt strongly about protecting Hubbard County lakes.
4. Water quality / monitoring were key factors in engaging lakes to join HC COLA.
5. Even way back when in the early HC COLA days.....lakes were involved in lake management planning.

c. Are there additional advantages you’ve identified from joining HC COLA?
   i. Of course today....the threat of AIS looms largely and HC COLA has been very active in AIS prevention and early detection. HC COLA established and implemented a county-wide protection plan 2012 which has now evolved through partnership first with Hubbard County SWCD. In 2015-16 the program transitioned to Hubbard County Environmental Services with the help of HC COLA as state funds helped provide county-wide support. The program is managed currently by the Hubbard County AIS Program Coordinator and we work closely together.
   ii. HC COLA is a member of Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Advocates which works at the legislative level. Information is provided on to our members too for input and action.
   iii. HC COLA is a member of Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations (MN COLA) at the state level and one of our members is the current Vice President of MN COLA.
   iv. HC COLA is also a member of Conservation Minnesota which helps host the every-other-year Water Summit along with other sponsors.
   v. HC COLA also stays on top of the actions / efforts of the Minnesota AIS Research Center and is promoting the Sat 8/5/17 Starry Trek program, for example in partnership with MAISRC, UM Extension and Hubbard County Environmental Services for Hubbard County.
   vi. At the local level, HC COLA is a member of the Park Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Business Association. We work with these organizations to promote AIS prevention techniques in messaging / maps, etc. For the 2013 Governors Fishing Opener, the HC COLA volunteers were heavily involved in the planning stages for Children’s MinnAqua program in school year and for the Kids Fishing event plus the downtown activities for the community picnic. If this type of event were to occur again, HC COLA would be involved. We have participated in the Chili Contest for the Food Shelf’s benefit the past several years too.
   vii. HC COLA is a 501 c 3
   viii. Healthy lakes & rivers partnership - lake management planning
   ix. Continued to pursue a stronger voice in lake protection issues
   x. Shared opportunities for educational programs with Hubbard County UM Extension Service, DNR, MPCA, Hubbard County SWCD, plus variety of speakers and topic areas at HC COLA meetings and local speaking engagements too:
      1. AIS Early Detection Training for 36 in June, 2017 as an example
      2. 2 Rotary presentations – water quality and AIS
      3. Headwaters Center for Lifelong Learning presentation on water quality
      4. HC COLA provides $1200 to Hubbard County SWCD for Freshwater Festival annually which is an educational program for area 6th graders. A number of HC COLA members volunteer.
      5. The Restore the Shore program through the partnership with the HC SWCD allows HC COLA members to purchase smaller amounts of trees / plants in Autumn for May delivery. HC COLA volunteers help HC SWCD package the Hubbard orders in turn.
6. HC COLA meetings have educational topics shared monthly. In June, we discussed / demonstrated how to use the new Hubbard County website to see the Board of Adjustments meeting agendas and items before the board including all attachments, discussed commenting on Dept of Agriculture Nitrogen Fertilizer and public meeting opportunity, discussed commenting on Line 3 Pipeline Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

d. How is the HC COLA funded?
   i. Membership dues (see the by-laws http://www.Hubbardcolamn.org/bylaws.html )
      1. Dues for HC COLA were determined by lake association membership.
         a. Initial dues payable to HC COLA from lake associations were based on $2 per lake association member.
         b. More recently dues were increased to $4 per lake association member.
         c. Dues structure also includes a maximum dues payment of $600 for larger lakes with greater than 150 members.
      2. As part of HC COLA’s strategic plan.....strategic action #8 was identified to “address multiple revenue streams” which included strategies such as:
         a. Identify various funding raising efforts
         b. Development of an endowment / charitable fund with the Northwest Minnesota Foundation (http://www.nwmf.org/)

e. Membership:
   i. How many lake associations are part of your HC COLA? (Both as a number as well as a percentage of available lake associations).
      1. HC COLA currently has 29 lake associations with 37 lakes & approximately 2100 individual members.
      2. We probably have 2 other lake associations that are not HC COLA members. We have one lake in the northern part of the county that is part of BCLARA (Beltrami County) (http://bclara.angelfire.com/index.html )
      3. Our percentage ratio of eligible lake association is very high so overall, we are doing quite well regarding membership.
      4. Of course, we have a number of lakes that do not have a lake association that could be prospective lake associations.
         a. To grow our lake membership is a “to do” initiative
   ii. Does membership impact the ability for a lake association to act autonomously?
      1. No.....we have many lakes with strong associations, engaged leaders and active members that are good stewards for their lakes. Numerous lakes have been involved in the Healthy Lakes & Rivers Partnership and have Lake Management Plans (17 lakes with LMP’s). Many of these lakes are great role models for our less active lakes.
      2. Through some of our excellent lake associations, HC COLA is fortunate to have some very passionate, dedicated lake leaders that step up to volunteer for HC COLA.
3. Of course, we have some lakes that are less active and they are very challenging to engage.

f. How often do you meet? Are there other ways you connect besides meeting in person?
   i. HC COLA meets 9 months a year; February – October; the meetings are available via conference call
   ii. Our executive committee generally meets monthly.
   iii. As determined in our bylaws:
       1. Our executive committee can hold electronic conference meetings if needed.
       2. We can take action without meeting.

h. What is your organizational structure? How much time do they dedicate to the HC COLA?
   i. Leadership/ Executive Committee (as noted above and on our strategy map) and as noted in bylaws
   ii. Officers (see above) and in bylaws.
   iii. Volunteer time – Our leaders are very active and do what’s necessary to accomplish our goals.

i. How does the HC COLA make decisions? If by vote, who has a vote?
   i. Each lake association has one vote. If lake association is made up of multiple lakes, they can have a representative for each lake. However, they still only have one vote – per bylaws.
      http://www.hubbardcolamn.org/bylaws.html
   ii. The member votes are made by the HC COLA Rep / Alternate Rep or the Lake Association President in absence of the Rep. A roll call vote is taken for contentious issues.
   iii. Leadership / Executive committee may act on behalf of the HC COLA Board. Refer to bylaws for specifics.

j. How does the HC COLA resolve disputes and reach consensus?
   i. The HC COLA Board can close meetings to public for contentious issues.
   ii. Announce plan to close meeting to public in advance.
iii. Closed meetings only for HC COLA Reps, leadership / executive members.
iv. Contentious votes are taken by roll call.
v. We have very few disputes / or contentious issues but they do happen.

2) History

a. What consistently has worked for your HC COLA?
   i. What’s worked
      1. Meeting logistics
         a. Agenda format, written committee reports – placed on website
         b. Nifty nine lake hosts for refreshments & coffee for social time before meeting
         c. Programs / speakers
         d. Seating arrangement – outside parameter of room so you can see each other.
         e. Name tags / sign in (track lake association attendance)
      2. Water quality engagement
         a. Economics & water quality / connection between property value and water quality
            i. Study on water-influenced property values / revenue in Hubbard County.
         b. Lake assessment / water monitoring.
      3. AIS – very effective program
      5. Development of Hubbard COLA’s story
         a. Worked with Action Media (Michael Goldberg) to enhance our communication network and public image.
            i. Messaging / personalize HC COLA
         b. Protect the value of our property by protecting lakes / water quality.
         c. Protecting lakes is a shared interest because lakes belong to everyone.
         d. HC COLA is pursuing the public interest in protecting our lakes.
         e. Big picture / HC COLA’s mission (our mission aligns with Hubbard County Shoreland Management Ordinance….purpose)
            f. Shoreland management ordinance reform / updates.
      6. Volunteers / membership
         a. Success & challenge
      7. Leadership – effective but challenging
      8. Relationship with county leadership / decision makers (success and challenge)
         a. Effective relationship with townships

Lake Emma Township (a model for other townships)

The Lake Emma Township Healthy Lakes Partnership Grant Program has served as an impetus for other townships to provide financial assistance for AIS prevention on Hubbard County lakes.
Http://www.lakeemmatwp.com/information.htm

9. Engaged committees
10. Work with shoreland management ordinance
11. Partnership with hubbard county water plan
12. HC COLA participation in Hubbard County Food Shelf Chili Challenge for a few years.
13. HC COLA sports sale for a few years.

ii. What has been challenging?
1. Public image
2. Stainable funding for AIS
3. Developing HC COLA new leaders
4. Lake management planning updates - the capstone found that the original LMP’s were gathering dust in many cases and weren’t being utilized by many LA’s – so we re-initiated the LMP conversation with training on the value of LMP and how to update in 2016
5. Recruiting additional Lake Associations to join in our HC COLA.
6. Communication with lake residents

b. What are your HC COLA successes?
   i. Success
      1. Our people (passion, dedication, commitment)
         a. Our leaders are champions for our lakes in Hubbard County. They are willing to “give” what it takes to get things done. To emphasize our vision…..“HC COLA is the leader in protecting Hubbard County lakes and rivers”.
      2. AIS – Hubbard County is mostly AIS free with the exception of CLP & faucet snails. Recently have some zebra mussel infestation on the borders to the east and northeast.
      3. Water quality engagement
         a. Water quality monitoring
         b. Lake protection
         c. Habitat / shoreline protection
      4. Partnership with Indiana University Capstone Studies:
         a. Increasing lake association sustainability – a key finding was a better focus on engaging a broader range of people at both the cola and la level. Methods to accomplish included more emphasis on the hc cola website, engagement of more people through social media, etc. Also, streamlining the organizational structure to focus on the most important things to be accomplished, cannot be all things to all people.
         b. Enhancing HC COLA lake monitoring program – Capstone found that HC COLA’s program was definitely a top-tier program in MN! Improved focus on consistency across all LA’s was 2016 HC COLA theme. Clearly define the minimum expectation from each LA. Communications via surveys of what everyone is doing and sharing the results is important. Strengthen relationships with cooperating state agencies and private labs.
      5. Government liaison – helps impact political action (local & state level) within the 501c3 guidelines
HC COLA instrumental in state aid for county AIS funding through Senator Rod Skoe and Representative Roger Erickson

6. Shoreland management ordinance reform / updates

7. Healthy Lakes and Rivers Partnerships
   a. Lake management planning - has helped with major accomplishments over the years. Requires focused volunteer energy.

8. Ken Grob – MN Waters Volunteer of the Year & also serves on the Governor’s AIS Task Force

9. Annual initiatives:
   a. Children’s freshwater festival for 6th graders
   b. restore-the-shore program through the SWCD

ii. Challenges?

1. Leadership succession plan (struggle at times)
2. Broader funding sources for AIS
3. Challenges with youth programs/engagement – Fishing and lake protection can go hand in hand.
4. Stronger engagement with AIS coordinators / AIS monitoring teams for each lake.
5. Communication with lake residents

3) Purpose and Work

a. How do you leverage your combined power (purchasing/political/influence/etc.)?
   i. Positive relationship with local government including townships, county commission, board of adjustment / planning commission, soil and water conservation district, local / state agencies such as dnr, mPCA, etc.
   ii. We have developed a much closer relationship with the County leaders (County Board and Environmental Services) and this has led to much stronger support by the County on lake protection issues.
   iii. Strong local partnerships with state agencies. (dnr)
   iv. Active participation with environmental / conservation groups like Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Advocates, MN COLA, etc.
   v. Active participation with local organizations such as Park Rapids Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, Progress Park Rapids, etc.
   vi. Good relationship with local media, for example a monthly HC COLA column in Park Rapids Enterprise was implemented in April, 2017.
   vii. HC COLA water samples are process by RMB Labs on one weekend per month May – Sept and cooler shuttle service to lab is provided by HC COLA volunteers. These volunteers deliver the samples for area Hubbard County lakes regardless of if the sampler has a lake association to belong to or not or if the sampling lake association is a member of HC COLA. Some of the fees for water monitoring are reduced by the lab depending on number of participating lakes – volume discount...

b. Do you have a HC COLA management plan or action plan? How is it structured? How did you create it? How often do you update it? What are your success measurements?
i. We have our strategic management plan


2. HC COLA committees along with strategy statements and strategic actions. [http://www.hubbardcolamn.org/committees.html](http://www.hubbardcolamn.org/committees.html)

3. We created our strategic plan in 2010 with volunteers (approx. 50+ participants) from our area lakes, local organizations, agencies, etc. Attending a full day work session. We were assisted by a professional strategic planner that lived on one of our area lakes. His work was pro-bono.


5. How do we measure success: we generally try to identify our accomplishments on an annual basis. HC COLA has been a highly successful organization with numerous accomplishments over the years.

c. What are the projects you are working on?

i. We think of our activities as Programs. These programs include: water quality monitoring which we are celebrating 20 years now, Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) watercraft inspections / education, Communication, and more [http://www.hubbardcolamn.org/organization-chart.html](http://www.hubbardcolamn.org/organization-chart.html)

ii. The Governor’s Year of Water Action is the focus area for 2017 with speakers / activities which are in the planning stages now and may include the following:
   1. education on meandering surveys of aquatic vegetation
   2. vegetation and critter identification
   3. septic system maintenance for lake protection
   4. reducing runoff through buffers, composting and rain scaping, with prevention of pollution to lake from salt, pet waste and fertilizer
   5. increase interest in fishing by kids
   6. understand varieties of plants / trees that can help restore the shore in climate change
   7. look for partnership with others in lake-shed / watershed areas

iii. Ongoing care and feeding of organizational documentation includes website updates, historical documentation with e-file cabinet concept, social media - Facebook with specific organizational “likes” for messaging consistent with HC COLA viewpoint

iv. We continue to work as partners with the Hubbard County Environmental Service Dept and the AIS Program Coordinator for a continuously improving watercraft inspection / education program and increasing the utilization of the watercraft decontamination station(s) at the free county unit(s).
d. What goals do you have and how do you prioritize them?
   i. Our strategic action plan as addressed earlier.
   ii. Specific initiatives / programs regarding water quality, AIS, etc.
   iii. Updating the website reference materials