



The COLA Update



Publication of Hubbard County Coalition Of Lake Associations

HC 06 • Box 66 • Park Rapids, Minnesota 56470

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“Shoreland” and “Alteration” Defined by Environmental Services Office

by Vern Massie, Administrator, Environmental Services

TO: COLA Members
FROM: Environmental Services Office, Hubbard County Court House
Park Rapids, MN

“Shoreland” means land located within 1,000 feet from the ordinary high water mark of a lake and 500 feet from a river or stream. We, as the County, have had many problems over the years with the previous mentioned definition with conjunction of the term “alteration.”

“Shoreland alterations” are the grading, filling, excavation of the natural topography and the alteration of the natural vegetation.

The excavation, grading, filling and vegetation alteration under a validly-issued permit for the construction of structures and onsite sewage treatment systems are the only alterations allowed, without Board of Adjustment action. The reason for this is to prevent erosion into public waters, fix nutrients, preserve shoreland aesthetics, preserve historic values, prevent bank slumping, and protect fish and wildlife.

Removal of vegetation is limited to clearing of trees and shrubs, cutting, pruning, and trimming to accommodate the placement of stairways and landings, access areas, as well as to provide a view to the water from the principal dwelling site. Sufficient vegetation must remain to screen structures and vehicles as viewed from the water with leaf-on conditions. The removal of trees, limbs, or branches of dead, diseased trees or those posing safety hazards are exempt. Any excavation, grading or filling must have a permit. This office, presently, can grant a permit of up to 50 cubic yards of fill being hauled in. Any other alteration work must be approved by the Board of Adjustment.

Ice ridge removal has long been an often asked question. Studies have found that ice ridges provide a safety buffer for lake protection. They prevent erosion and sedimentation from runoff getting into the public water. They are very important natural topography and must be protected. The current ordinance allows the removal of a new ice ridge, if reported to this office. This means, should an ice push occur this spring on a lot that presently does not have a ridge, the owner must report that ridge and can then haul it away or flatten it out; however, they must stay above the normal high water mark and work completed in six months. This office is discouraging the complete removal, based on studies on ice ridges. Some counties actually require ice ridge construction to help protect the public waters.

Before you dig – before you cut – please check with this office. The clear-cutting or bulldozing of a lot is one of the most damaging violations we deal with. Once altered it takes many, many years to restore that damage. We appreciate any assistance you can give this office in preventing future alteration problems. Again, contact this office prior to any construction, alteration, remodeling or removal. ★

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OUR FIRST ISSUE:

We’d like to hear from you!

by Renee Bexell, Editor

Every newsletter has to start somewhere — so here’s our first effort. Let us know what you would like to see in *The COLA Update*. Tentative plans are for publication twice a year, but with input from more Lake Associations and COLA members, we could possibly go quarterly.

If you have news items that would be of interest to other Hubbard County Lake Association members, please submit it to Mary Larsen, HC 06 Box 66, Park Rapids, MN 56470, or to the Lake Association Representative for your lake (listed on the back page of this issue). ★

Aquatic Vegetation: Valuable and Necessary

Submitted by the Local DNR Fisheries

There are about 150 kinds of plants in Minnesota that grow in water, along shores or on water-saturated soils. Nearly all our aquatic plants are native wild plants. They are the natural vegetation of our waters and not weeds in the same sense that many imported upland plants are weeds. They are the natural plant growth of waters, just as grass is in the meadows, or trees in forests. Fish, waterfowl and other aquatic life depend on them for food and shelter.

Aquatic plants have many values to man, fish and wildlife even though their growth sometimes results in nuisance conditions. **All aquatic life is dependent, directly or indirectly, on aquatic plants.** They are the primary producers in the aquatic food chain and convert basic chemical nutrients in the water and bottom soils into food for other kinds of life. Other values of aquatic plants are:

Fish Food: Much more food for all types of fish is produced in weedy areas than where there is no aquatic vegetation. Insect larvae live on the plants; freshwater shrimp thrive in plant beds. Sunfish, our most common game fish, eat some plant material.

Fish Shelter: Submerged plants provide shelter and cover for young and forage fish, and bass and sunfish use vegetated areas for spawning. Northern pike spawn in vegetated marshy areas in early spring. Angling success for many fish species is often best in or on the edge of weed beds.

Water Purification: Aquatic plants absorb phosphate, nitrates and other nutrient elements from water and bottom soils as they grow. They compete for plant nutrients with the tiny algae, which cause water to become green in summer. Frequently, if too many rooted aquatic plants are destroyed, a heavy growth or "bloom" of algae follows. Some kinds of water plants, such as rushes, can even absorb and break down polluting chemicals. Water plants, both the larger rooted type and the tiny algae, give off oxygen and thereby aerate waters. This oxygen is necessary for all fish and other aquatic animal life.

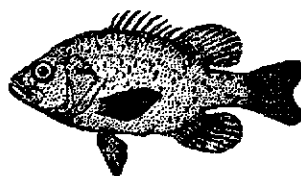
Protection of Shorelines: Aquatic plants, especially kinds such as rushes and reeds, break the force of waves and help prevent erosion of shorelines.

Food and Shelter of Waterfowl: Many of the submerged plants produce seeds and tubers that are eaten by wild ducks. Bulrushes and sago pondweed are especially valuable and are often planted for this purpose. Bulrushes and reeds also provide excellent shelter for broods of ducklings.

Esthetic Values: Several water plants have flowers that many enjoy. The yellow lotus is a protected wild flower. There are six kinds of native waterlilies, all of which have beautiful flowers. Arrowhead and pickerelweed are both as ornamental as many garden plants. The natural look of a lakeshore should include aquatic plants. They are part of the ecology of the lake.

Economic Values: Wild rice produces seeds that are harvested and processed. **This industry is worth at least \$2 million to the economy of Minnesota.** Aquatic plants are the basis of fishing on which more than \$100 million is spent each year in Minnesota.

In recognition of these values, the Minnesota Legislature has made aquatic plants growing in public waters legally the property of the State so they can be protected for the benefit of all the people. ♣



Water Eurasian Milfoil and Purple Loosestrife

Although Water Eurasian Milfoil is not in this area, it is important to learn to identify it to insure that it never gets a foothold in Hubbard County. A tape on this plant was perfected by the Freshwater Foundation. You may borrow a copy to show to your organization from COLA, SWCD, and Environmental Services.

Purple Loosestrife is a currently increasing problem in Hubbard County. The plant

cannot be identified until it is in full bloom in August. This is the time to learn to identify it. If you don't know what it looks like, call your COLA representative for a color brochure or look for one of the many posters we have posted in the area. If you spot the plant near the water, call the DNR Wildlife Office (Rob Naplin) at 732-8452. If you spot the plant away from the water, call the noxious weed officer (Frank McAdams) at 732-3244. **NEVER** try to pull the plant up by the roots. It can only be destroyed with poison and then burning it.

Signs alerting boaters to Water Eurasian Milfoil for the public and private access are now available from the DNR. The State accesses will automatically be posted. Requests should be made for county, township, and private accesses by contacting Dick Kimball in Bemidji at 755-3972. ♣

Two Programs to Improve our Lakes

by Everett W. Miller

Secchi Disc

The Secchi Disc is a lake water transparency measuring device consisting of a white metal disc with a cord marked in feet attached to it. Transparency is measured by simply lowering the disc until it disappears from sight and noting how much cord was used to reach that point. Weekly readings during the summer months are desirable. More instructions come with the disc.

Lake Assessment Program

This program consists of several tests and measurements, including temperature, oxygen content, and zooplankton abundance. It is conducted by DNR and MPCA personnel with a boat and operator furnished by the lake association. Secchi readings for at least one year are required before applying for a Lake Assessment Program.

For Secchi Disc order forms and L.A.P. applications, contact Everett W. Miller, RR 1 Box 208, Nevis, MN 56467. Phone (218) 652-4119. ♣



Local Lake Association News

Fish Hook Association

by Maurice Spangler, President

Fish Hook Lake and River are among the most populated waterways in Hubbard County. Development along the shoreland is nearly complete and home building in the next tier is proceeding. Our Association goals are aimed at environmental protection of our water bodies. We are proud to be members of COLA and express our thanks for all the support other COLA members have given us.

For the last three years, most of our efforts have been directed toward ensuring that a mobile home park being built on the east side of the lake is developed in accordance with sound environmental principles. Our County Board of Adjustment, the Environmental Service Officer and our County Board gave approval to a 95-unit park with hardly any investigation of the quality of the septic system. The drain field had been put in during the early 1970s and there were no records found as to how it was built. The Boards accepted the developers' statements that, since they were in the plumbing business, it would be a good system.

No study was given to the effects of putting what would be like a small town in an area of previously-filled wetlands. An Environmental Assessment Worksheet was not required, but should have been for a development of more than 50 units.

The proposed mobile home park was the impetus for our formation. We were not trying to eliminate it entirely, but expected to be able to reduce the size after a proper EAW was done. Our first attempt to obtain an EAW failed because our lawsuit was not filed on time. Since then, our legal staff helped us get the attention of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Department of Health, and the Corps of

Engineers. The developers, who were supposed to wait until these agencies finished their investigations, tried last summer to proceed without agency approval. The court granted us a restraining order to stop them.

The MPCA ruled last fall that if the park's sewage output was over 10,000 gal. per day a special variance would have to be obtained from them which would involve public hearings. They expressed concern that the system could contaminate nearby wells. The developers back down to 52 units (under 10,000 gal. per day) to "circumvent MPCA regulations." Now the MPCA has no jurisdiction over monitoring the site and can't officially comment as to whether it will contaminate nearby wells.

There is no guarantee the park will not expand in the future and we consider that a problem. A site plan, required by the shoreland ordinance for developments of this size, has not appeared.

The Corps of Engineers was instrumental in protecting the rest of the wetlands adjacent to the park. It is hard to believe that when so much is written about the importance of wetlands in keeping water clean that some people still view these places as swamps good only for landfill and development.

The frustrating part of all this is that a lower limit of units should have been reached by the normal course of local government processes, not by our Association having to spend lots of time, effort and money to achieve it. We have a new lawsuit pending to argue all our concerns.

There are other important issues to work on. Our lake water quality is being monitored in accordance with MPCA guidelines. Our homeowners were encouraged to test their septic systems using purple dye tablets and to correct ones that need it. We helped to sponsor the Fish Hook Tour of Boats on the Fourth of July and hope such events continue. We are working with the DNR toward a better policy to regulate our lake

level and how to protect the eagles that nest nearby.

I wish to thank all our members for the help and money they have contributed. We will continue striving for a healthier lake and river. ★

Potato Lake Association

by Ted Godfrey

As most of you are probably aware, the Potato Lake Association filed a civil case against the North Beach Camping Preserve, Incorporated, County of Hubbard, and Charles Hagen in 1987-1988.

As the result of this action, Hubbard County reinstated an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW).

The Hubbard County Commissioners conducted a public hearing on the EAW on May 3, 1989. The Commissioners then ruled that the North Beach Camping Preserve, Inc., did not have any potential for significant effects on the environment and ruled that no Environmental Impact Statement be required. The Hubbard County Commissioners then referred the proposal to the Planning Commission for their consideration.

The Planning Commission, after some postponements, approved by a 4-3 vote (with the chairperson casting the deciding vote to break a 3-3 tie vote) a conditional use permit for 110 campsites and 38 cabins with a few conditions. ★

Little Sand Lake Area Association

by Pat Alberg

The Little Sand Association is currently writing a history of Little Sand and Gilmore Lakes. Residents of the lakes, as well as others who know the history, are encouraged to write or call Marian Kohlmeyer, Rt. 3 Box 437, Park Rapids, MN 56470; Telephone: 732-3073. ★

Message from Pat Alberg, President of COLA

The Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA) was formed in 1988 and now has nine area lake associations participating. The COLA board, which is comprised of one delegate from each member lake association, has worked well together and with the encouragement and support of various local agencies. Several of our board members were involved with the Surface Water Committee helping to write the Local Water Management Plan which was adopted by the County Commissioners in 1989. Now we are helping to implement the plan. Board members have attended various seminars, meetings and workshops around the state to assure we are well informed on water quality and environmental issues. Our efforts to help Fish Hook and Potato Lakes taught us a lot. Education has been our main focus and we expect to include not only ourselves, but our policymakers and the general public as well.

It has been a very productive year for our COLA group and next year looks even more promising. Big Sand had an infra-red aerial survey done last year that helped pinpoint areas of concern which were corrected. Little Sand cooperated with the MPCA through a Lake Assessment Program there. Hopefully, another area lake will receive LAP attention this summer. We are working with Sheriff Larry Johnson on the Volunteer Water Patrol System. The Headwaters Regional Development Commission recently provided us copies of their report, called the Lake Protection Project, that includes a study of the lake vulnerability of 34 lakes in our county. The criteria in the DNR publication, "Lake Development: How Much is Too Much?" was used to develop this. Four of the five lakes selected as candidates for more detailed study are members of COLA. We hope HRDC will also help rewrite our county ordinances. COLA has been asked to participate in the process and to host public meetings for the purpose. It is vitally important that more lake residents become involved in this process. The Mississippi Headwaters Board provided us assistance toward arranging an environmental seminar in Park Rapids this summer . . . and the list goes on.

Copies of the Lake Protection Project and the Local Water Management Plan were supplied to each COLA board member. Have your representative share this information with you.

I would like to thank those who have helped establish COLA and made it the interesting and effective organization it is. Their active participation in local government processes was very helpful in gaining recognition of lakeshore residents' concerns. We have some new, more environmentally aware, members on the Planning Commission — including me. Our secretary, Mary Larsen, has been a tireless supporter of all our efforts. Art Bradley provided us with "high class" stationery printed with our logo. Renee Bexell has donated her expertise as editor of our *COLA Update*. It has been a pleasure to work with people who care enough to donate their time and talents in such diverse ways.

This first issue of the *Update* is being widely distributed in the hope it will encourage lake residents without an association to try to form one. Call us for the booklet, "How to Build and Start an Effective Lake Association," by the North American Lake Management Society. COLA provides it free, plus assistance at your first meeting, if you wish. We hope more lake associations will join us in working to save our growing lake community from the adverse effects of such growth as much as it is possible. Individuals, groups, and agencies should work together toward that goal and the broader the base of participation we have, the more effective we will be. 🌲

— INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF OUR AREA LAKES —
JOIN COLA!

Thank You For Your Support!

Last October, COLA launched a fund drive for a copy machine to provide educational articles and a newsletter. Our sincere thanks to all for their donations and support of our tree sale. We did not raise enough funds for a duplex copy machine and are delaying making a decision on what to get until other offers of help are determined.

Your lake association will contact you when the tree seedlings are available. 🌲

Equipment Available to Associations

The County Extension Office offers free of charge the use of the following equipment: Portable PA system (no electricity needed — works great for large groups or outdoor meetings), slide and movie projectors, viewing screens, and VCR with TV. Only the VCR and TV cannot be used at your location — they can only be used in the downstairs meeting room of the Court House. To reserve the equipment, call the Extension office at 732-3391. 🌲



The COLA Update

A publication of Hubbard County
Coalition Of Lake Associations

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