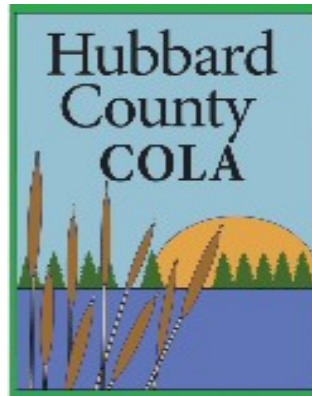


Get Involved

The COLA Call

by Steve Hall



Get Involved!

I love to sit outside in the evening and enjoy the peace and serenity of living near the lake. There is nothing quite like sitting around a camp fire and listening to the call of the loon at dusk. As I sat by the campfire the other night, I worried about our lakes and the challenges that lay ahead of us in keeping them clean and healthy. I thought to myself "We have some serious work to do if we hope to pass on to future generations what is important to us now". Lakeshore development, even if done correctly, has an impact on our water quality. Septic systems that are out of compliance or have not been pumped on a consistent basis can pollute our ground and surface waters. Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), like Zebra Mussels, Curly Leaf Pondweed and Eurasian Water Milfoil are looming everywhere, it seems. Also the new threat, Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (a viral disease that kills both salt and fresh water fish) is moving in on the Great Lakes and is soon to be at a lake near you.

So how do we resolve the many lake issues that confront us? Our Minnesota DNR is doing much to educate us and they continue to combat the AIS threat, but they

cannot do everything. If there is a difference to be made it will be because everyone who uses or enjoys what our lakes have to offer will lend a hand. Here in Hubbard County we have a pretty good start as many of our lakes have formed associations. These lake associations are the front line of defense and we should all be thankful that they are working hard on issues like preventing the spread of AIS.

As I put another log on the fire, I felt a little better, but then I asked myself "Do we have enough help"? The answer of course is "No we don't". A sampling of 17 Hubbard County lake associations revealed that there are approximately 2,587 residents (full time and seasonal) around those lakes. Of those 2,587 residents approximately 1,523, or 59%, were members of their lake associations. I thought to myself "What is holding the other 41% back from joining the effort that is so critical to all of us"? I questioned "Was it the annual dues"? No I reasoned, the average annual dues for these 17 lakes associations is just under \$ 21.00 per household and two people can't even go out to dinner for \$ 21.00. I questioned again "Was it that they didn't care"? No, I reasoned, I think everyone cares about their lake, if for no other reason than that property values decrease if the lake has an AIS or if water quality is declining. Nothing gets our attention faster than getting hit in the pocketbook. I questioned a third time "Maybe it's that some folks just don't want to make the time to get involved". Whatever the reason we all have a responsibility to pull together on this effort to help save our lakes. We do hope that those that have chosen not to join their lake association up to this point will change their minds and join soon. We hope that you will get involved and make a difference. Who knows you may even get more back than you put into it!