

Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations is 30 years young

I recently had an inspiring phone conversation with our first president of the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA), Patricia Alberg.

I wanted to learn about the early “formation” years of our 30-year-young coalition. Pat and I visited about what motivated her and others to go the extra mile in creating the nonprofit organization in 1988.

Pat explained that she and her husband became owners of the Northern Star Resort on Little Sand Lake in 1979. She was environmentally aware, recognized the need to improve the conditions of our area lakes that were the draw for the important tourism industry here, plus the importance of enforcement of the existing Hubbard County shoreland ordinances.

She read the book “How to Build and Start an Effective Lake Association” by the North American Lake Management Society (NALMS), which was published in 1985. Pat researched lake associations and coalitions in other states. The Little Sand Lake Association was formed by Pat and others on the lake. She also coached others on area lakes on how to form lake associations.

Pat of the Little Sand Lake Association and Everett Miller of the Spider Lake Association, plus other area lake associations, helped get the Hubbard County Coalition of Lake Associations formed

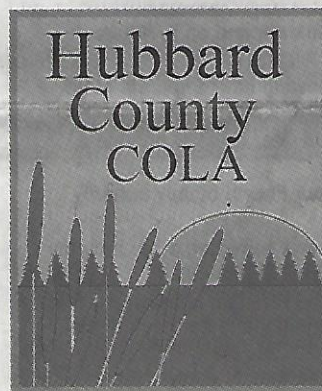


SHARON NATZEL
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Coalition
of Lake
Associations

in 1988. When applying to the IRS for recognition as a nonprofit 501(c)(3), Pat recalls receiving an additional letter back asking for further clarification as to what a lake association and a coalition was. It was a new concept back then. COLA did then receive the 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status for federal income tax.

COLA was formed to give lakes in Hubbard County a stronger voice for lake protection rather than individual lakes acting alone. By the spring of 1990, the first newsletter, called “The COLA Update,” lists nine lake associations and their representatives who were part of the coalition. Today, COLA has grown from nine to 30 lake associations, which represent 2,200 members on 40 area lakes.

The spring 1990 newsletter mentions that homeowners are being encouraged to test their septic systems using purple dye tablets to determine whether the dye shows up in their lake water. Pat explained to me that back then some old cabins on the area lakes still had pipes that ran from the septic to the lakes. The purple dye helped the cabin owner understand the problem. There was an emphasis



on septic management by Hubbard County on area lakes. Many of the lake associations began water quality monitoring for phosphorus, chlorophyll-a, and clarity, completing 20 years in 2017.

It was fun for me to spot Charlie Kellner's name as one of the representatives on the list in the 1990 newsletter. Charlie is still helping COLA today by his continued support in hosting the monthly water quality monitoring cooler drop-off site during the summer season at Charlie's Boats & Marine. Coolers are then shuttled for analysis to RMB Environmental Services Laboratories in Detroit Lakes by COLA volunteers.

An educational focus in 1990 was awareness of Eurasian watermilfoil and how to identify it. It was not in this area then. Today, Hubbard County is surrounded by lakes with this aquatic invasive species (AIS). Eurasian watermilfoil has tiptoed into our county in one lake discovered in 2017.

We each individually can prevent the spread of AIS from lake to lake. Just “think” and “act” on

Smokey Bear's message — “Only You Can Prevent The Spread Of AIS.” We can each use the “clean, drain, dry” techniques on boats and water-related equipment. We can properly dispose of unwanted aquarium pets and fishing bait.

The first lake management class sponsored by COLA was in August 1990 at Chateau Paulette with 50 participants. Today, 17 of the HC COLA lake associations each have different and unique lake management plans. These were guided through joint efforts with the Initiative Foundation and Northwest Minnesota Foundation through the Healthy Lakes and Rivers Program. These dynamic documents help identify lake protection efforts through goals and action items.

We look forward to continuing to build on this 30-year legacy as we work with our stakeholder partners. We reach out to engage you, too, in our mission 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.

If you have ideas on partnering with us, questions, suggestions or want to start a lake association or a lake management plan, email hccolamn@gmail.com.

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