**ITASCA COALITION OF LAKE ASSOCIATIONS**

**OCTOBER 18, 2023 MEETING MINUTES**

Stephanie Kessler ICOLA President/Johnson Lake Assn

Bill Hagenbuck ICOLA Vice-President/Siseebakwet Lake Assn

Deb Hagenbuck Siseebakwet Lake Assn

Bill Grantges SWCD/AIS Coordinator

Tom Nelson SWCD Board/Deer Lake Assn.

Steve Melin WCOLA

Jessica & Nate Loes Deer Lake Assn

Paul Ryan Suomi Area Lakes Assn

Gail Blackmer Deer Lake (Effie) Assn

Helen Albrecht King Lake Assn

Jan Bilden Shallow/Sand Lake Assn

***CALL TO ORDER:*** President Stephanie Kessler called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. A quorum was present with 8 lake associations being represented. We did introductions.

***APPROVAL OF AGENDA***

***APPROVAL OF MINUTES:*** Minutes of July 19, 2023 were approved.

***TREASURER’S REPORT:*** Checking account is $8,019.94 as of today’s date. That includes dues paid from 10 lake assns and expenses of $27.96 paid for the annual meeting food. There is $5,000 that is a pass through grant for Kodiak Creek Restoration project. Treasurer’s report was accepted without the Treasurer present.

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Katelyn Bergstrom explained the MN Loon Restoration Project and wants lake associations to become part of the loon restoration project by creating a Loon Friendly Lake Management Plan. The DNR has a template, and once a lake agrees, they have a liaison work with the DNR to create a plan. There is no cost to an association. The DNR creates the plan with your input. So far there are 80 lakes in the program, with 20 in Itasca County. This is a separate program from the DNR’s Loon Monitoring Program that is done once a year the end of June/early July. Contact her at 218-328-8793 or katelyn.bergstrom@state.mn.us. Visit the restoration website.

**Member Reports (Around the Horn)**

***Stephanie Kessler – Johnson Lake***

They had their annual meeting in August and voted to reduce the water sampling to 3 times instead of 5x/year. It rained on July 4 so the parade was cancelled but a few boats still did the route.

***Gail Blackmer – Deer Lake Watershed***

They held their annual meeting in August. A couple new board members. Roadside clean up done. They do an ice out contest for a fundraiser. The public access needs a porta potty (this created a bit of discussion with how other lakes deal with that issue).

***Tom Nelson – Deer Lake***

New President is Jeff Johnson. Their decon station will be named after John Davis. They are part of the loon restoration project. Still using and sharing the Lake Challenge worksheet. Austin from SWCD will come do an advisory consult or there is a the Shoreland Advisor Program which does basically the same thing but with a neighbor. The Lake Stewardship Award will be presented at the County Board meeting next week: Loon and Turtle lake residents will be recognized for their good shoreland stewardship.

***Jan Bilden – Shallow/Sand***

Had their annual meeting in August and did a history review which was really enjoyable. They got a CAP grant to put a porta potty at their landing, but the potty will be filled with AIS educational materials inside. It’s a new concept.

***Steve Melin – Wabana Chain of Lakes***

They set the 2024 events and budget. Dues will stay the same. Their goal is to move the decon unit to the NW landing. Annual meeting was in August. Steve is stepping down as President and no one stepped up. They have until December to find his replacement. They have a new loon liaison for their lake.

***Bill and Deb Hagenbuck - Sissebakwet Lake***

Labor Day meeting was held. Have some new board members. Their public access road is in bad shape.

***Paul Ryan - Suomi Area Lakes***

Road clean up on Co Rd 48 was done. They hold their annual winter fishing tournament in March.

***Helen Albrecht – King Lake***

Things have been quiet. The lake levels are high, so their weir is going to be checked by SWCD.

***Jessica Loes – Itasca Waters***

She will become a board member in November. She mentioned the Water Wisdom series on Oct 31 and Nov 2 at noon. The Youth Water Summit is looking for volunteers. IW was present at the Indigenous People’s Day and had willow waddles onsite.

**MEETING TIMES FOR 2024**

We talked about our meeting times and dates for 2024. It was decided to try the time of 6-8pm and keep the third Wednesday of the 5 months. We will attempt to hold hybrid meetings if we can get the technology to work. Our dates for 2024 are: Feb 21, Apr 17, Jun 19, July 17, Oct 16. All at the courthouse at 6:00pm except for the July meeting because that is our annual meeting and we go offsite.

**AIS Update**

AIS Coordinator Bill Grantges thanked ICOLA for the $250 donation for the fair expenses. The DNR is doing lake landing improvements so reach out to Kacie Stanek if you are interested. He announced that zebra mussels have been found in Jesse Lake. They were found on equipment removed this fall, and they were small so look closely when you inspect equipment/gear. Early detection is the best way to slow its spread…so look for it! He urged everyone to share the info they get from ICOLA to their association members. He suggested considering a fundraiser to buy an advanced sensor to determine functioning septics.

***AIS REPORTS*** are available online including CAP grant application form, list of current infested waters and other valuable AIS prevention info. <https://www.ItascaAIS.Info> or Coordinator@ItascaAIS.Info

**If you suspect AIS, REPORT ASAP to RICH REZANKA 218-328-8821 or BILL GRANTGES 218-256-4243**

**MN COLA & MLR Update**

Tom Nelson reported that MNCOLA has a new website and newsletter format/design. They need more lake associations in general because they don’t have the same power or clout with so few associations as members. Next MNCOLA meeting is Dec 5.

Stephanie mentioned that the Firewise Program is being shuttered in Itasca County. No more chipper days.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm. Next meeting: Wed, Feb 21 at 6:00pm at the courthouse.

Stephanie Kessler, in the absence of our Secretary