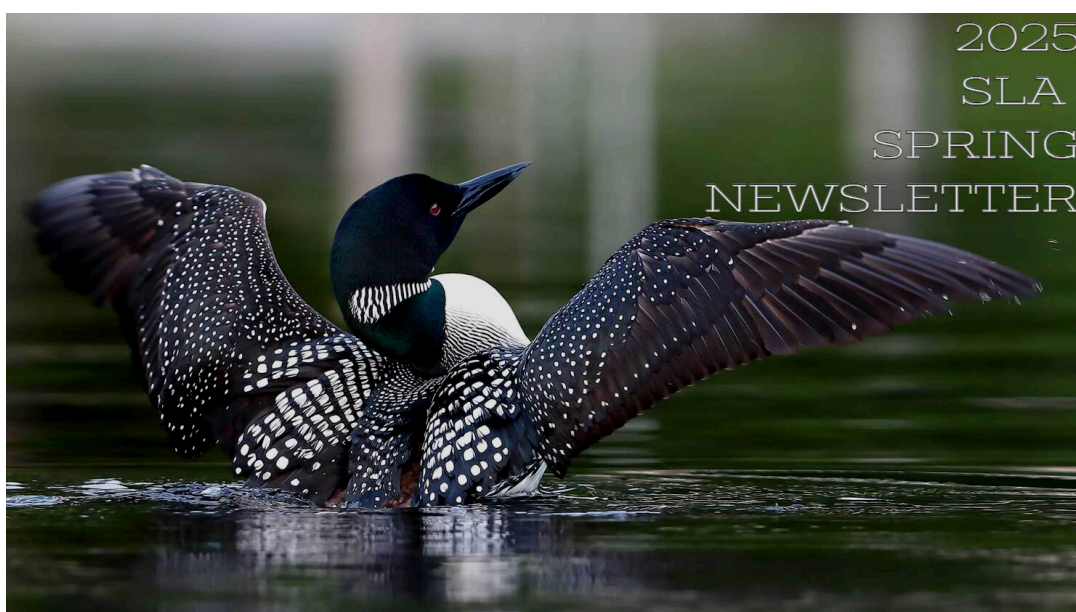




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Enjoy, and share with anyone you think might like this!

A Letter from SLA President, Tom Huettner



Happy early spring everyone! As we look forward to the 2025 lake season, I want to reflect on the major efforts/accomplishments of the SLA board and its members in 2024, including:

1. **Membership Drive:** 2024 Membership participation levels climbed to 68%. You should have received a membership renewal reminder postcard and email (see article below)! Thank you Paula Huettnner and Joan Schulz for leading the drive.
2. **AIS Fund Raising:** With support of two lead donors, SLA raised \$20.1k in 2024. Those same donors quietly contributed another \$10k this year. As of this writing, the AIS fund stands at \$62.6k! Thanks to all who contributed to our AIS fund.
3. **2024 initiatives:** It was a successful year for two new initiatives, Rusty Crayfish Trapping and Loon Preservation Program. See update articles below. Thank you to the leaders (Bruce Erickson and Betsy Martin, Karen Lucachick and Mary Freeman) running those programs.
4. **SLA Events:** SLA hosted an event each month from April to Sept including happy hours and both the Spring and Fall meetings. Meeting were well attended and fun.

In Memoriam: Our community lost several members over the last year that played a huge role in SLA's success, including Don Osell and Frank Herendeen, but none bigger than John Otis. **A memorial celebrating John's love for Sugar Lake raised \$1,375 for the SLA.** The family will hold a celebration of John's life will be held at the Lodge this August. Details to come later. Thank you to all who donated!

Lake Levels: After little snow in the 23/24 winter, followed by heavy spring rains, we experienced another severe drought in 2024 causing lake levels to fall significantly after the July 4th weekend. Changes in weather patterns from global warming are likely impacting elevations, but we are also in contact with the county to see if there is any solution that will consistently raise water levels throughout the boating season by adjusting the weir level.

New SLA Initiative:

We are looking for volunteers for the Lake Steward Program that will be run in conjunction with the county (article below with more information). We ask that interested parties let us know by April 1 to ensure coordination with the county before the busy season starts. Contact the SLA at <https://www.siseebakwet.com/contact>, Austin Steere at Itasca county at austin.steere@itascaswcd.org or me directly at huettnner9569@yahoo.com. There is no cost to the program.

Ongoing SLA Initiatives:

1. Rusty Crayfish: (see article below)
2. Loon Preservation (see article below)

AirBnB/VRBO County Legislation: Proposed legislation with the county has been on hold following the August 2024 public hearing. AirBnB/VRBO operations can pose a heightened AIS risk to the lake if owner/operators are not diligent in their rules and regulations. The increasing trend of AirBnB/VRBO options on Sugar Lake has reversed itself after two of the five Sugar Lake AirBNB/VRBO offerings were removed this year due to sales. We believe both were to owner occupiers.

Click below to see the YouTube video discussion on how Otter Tail County created and is enforcing the same ordinance.

[Click to Watch: Otter Tail County Vacation Rental Ordinance](#)

Finally, I want to take the time to welcome any new lake-owners and SLA members. For those new to the lake, please reach out to us with any questions. We'd love to share your family's profile and invite you to participate in SLA activities as well.

Please have a safe 2025 lake season and be considerate of both your neighbors, fellow lake users, our lake environment and of course the animals that share the lake with us.

At the end of the day, we are here to build, protect and preserve our lake community for future generations. If we are to be successful, we have to do it together. Please participate!

Thank you to all who contributed to SLA's mission last year. Enjoy the lake!

Tom Huettner, SLA President

ICE OUT CONTEST 2025



It's that time of year again...

Submit your guesses for the ICE OUT 2025 contest at the link below. ONE guess per person; winner to be announced at the Spring Meeting.

The official "ice out" date was April 10, 2024 last year...what will it be this year?

ICE OUT CONTEST SUBMISSION

Lake Steward Program

The county would like to roll this program out in the late spring/early summer of 2025 with SLA as their lead host. Most of all the behind-the-scenes work can/will be completed by Austin Steere (austin.steere@itascaswcd.org) of Itasca County, but he will need some help from lake association volunteers with getting signs to landowners/hanging signs. **TO VOLUNTEER FOR THIS PROGRAM, CLICK ANY OF THE LINKS BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SIGN UP:**

[2024 Lake Steward Webinar – Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Advocates](#)

[LAKE STEWARD PROGRAM INFORMATION](#)

Last summer was been a remarkable period of growth for the MN [Lake Steward](#) program, with participation from lake associations doubling. Increased public awareness, driven in part

by MPR's impactful "[Trouble by the Water](#)" series, has emphasized the critical importance of protecting Minnesota's shorelines and preserving water quality.

The "[Are You a Lake Steward?](#)" [quiz](#) engaged more than **200 lakefront property owners this summer**, helping them evaluate their shoreline practices.

We also distributed thousands of copies of the [Lakeshore Guide to Lake Stewardship](#), a valuable resource that teaches practical methods for absorbing up to 90% of stormwater runoff.

In tandem with the efforts of our dedicated evaluators, lake steward property owners, and member lake associations, the program has conducted numerous site visits. Our newly developed evaluation tool has streamlined these visits, allowing us to deliver tailored recommendations more effectively to property owners.

LAKE STEWARD INFORMATION & SIGN UP

Lake Resiliency

Lake resiliency is one of the most concerning issues facing our Minnesota lakes and rivers. Climate change is happening, but what should we be expecting here in Minnesota? Jim Kutzner from MN COLA provided an overview of the climate change impacts on lake resiliency. This brief overview covers recent predictions and details of the expected effects of climate change in the upper Midwest. Check out the attached website and video presentations to help increase your knowledge on this critically important topic.

LAKE RESILIENCY INFORMATION

DID YOU KNOW?

Daily average minimum temperatures during winter (Dec-Feb) have increased 7.3 degrees from 1895-2021 in northern Minnesota, 6 degrees in central Minnesota and 4.9 degrees in southern Minnesota. Minnesota lakes have lost an average of 10 to 14 days of ice cover in

the past 50 years, affecting lake and fish health, outdoor recreation opportunities, local governments, and business owners.

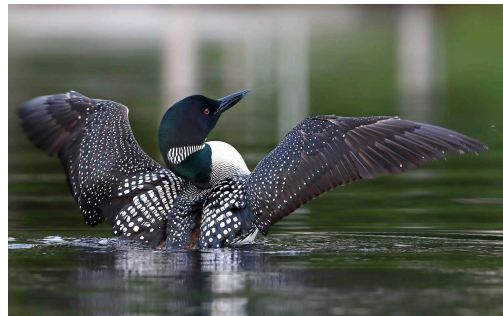


Call for Membership!

You should have received your MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL letter in the mail (and email!) recently. Are you renewed?!

Becoming a member does not mean you have to commit time. It means you care by adding another voice and contributing funds to help preserve the quality of our lake and your investment!

You pay thousands of dollars each year to the county and state that goes elsewhere. Conversely, what you could contribute to the Sugar Lake Association stays here and



Give Them Space

Loon Spring Nesting Reminder - Give nesting loons space! We are fortunate to have several loon nesting areas on the lake. Nesting areas are usually built by both the male and female beside bodies of water in shallow water, near islands, in a quiet bay, on a nesting platform, or in one of the lake channels. The female will then sit on the eggs for 27 to 30 days before they hatch. Hatchlings are covered in dark downy feathers and have white bellies, according to the Loon Preservation Committee. Chicks sometime ride on their parent's backs, usually for the first seven to ten days. They can, however, swim and

benefits what you cherish...our beautiful, high quality gem of a lake(s)!

Isn't it compelling that membership contributes to the preservation of your property investment and enjoyment? The SLA works for you. So, please join your neighbors - lake quality relies on our collective effort. Become a member by clicking the link below!

shallow dive after just two to three days, and by 12 weeks they are able to fly on their own. There are many predators for the eggs & chicks - raccoons, gulls, eagles, large fish and snapping turtles. Shoreline & recreational activities can be a threat if they occur too close to active nests, chick rearing sites, and loons on open water.

New Member Form

READ MORE HERE

Fishing Opener Dates

YEAR	WALLEYE, PIKE, BASS	MUSKIE	STREAM TROUT (STREAMS ONLY)
2025	May 10	June 7	April 12
2026	May 9	June 6	April 11
2027	May 15	June 5	April 10

Click the link below to visit the official MN DNR Website for all fishing license, dates, and seasonal information. The PDF linked is a great resource of information and updated regulations regarding MN Fishing seasons!

MN DNR Fishing Seasons & Information



Boater Education

Regulation

Reaching regulatory consensus remains a challenge—boat owners feel unfairly targeted, the industry warns of potential economic repercussions from restrictions, and enforcement difficulties complicate matters where fines are often too minor to deter high-end boat operators. Meanwhile, advocates raise concerns about the impact of enhanced wakes on shorelines, aquatic invasive species (AIS) spread, and public safety, underscoring the need for solutions that address all concerns.

While states like South Carolina, Vermont, and Maine have enacted distance-from-shore regulations, no Midwestern state has successfully done so. In Wisconsin, [a debate unfolded between two opposing bills](#)—one proposing a 200-foot distance and another a 500-foot distance from shore. Both bills were ultimately rejected, leaving Wisconsin in limbo with 31 local ordinances that have fueled heated discussions and confusion in lakeshore communities.

Vermont's "home lake" strategy requires wake boats to operate on a single lake for the season, reducing the risk of AIS spread through large ballast systems. This approach encourages boaters to understand and adapt to the unique conditions of their chosen lake. Such a strategy could be highly effective in Minnesota's diverse landscape of over 11,000 lakes, helping boaters recognize where and when to operate.

Local adaptations are being implemented, for instance, the Lake Minnetonka Conservation District adopted an ordinance establishing a 5-mph limit and a 300-foot no-wake zone from shore to protect sensitive areas. [Caribou Lake in the northern region has seen the county board and the DNR approve a lake-wide ban](#), recognizing that it is impossible to operate a

wake boat 500 feet from shore on this shallow 760-acre lake. Meanwhile, Lake Associations at Big Fish Lake and Christmas Lake distribute maps, promoting awareness and responsible use among boaters by indicating safe areas for wake boating.

Boater Education

Education is essential for safe and sustainable boating. U.S. Coast Guard statistics show that 75% of boating fatalities occur on vessels operated by individuals without safety training, while this figure drops to just 12% for those with safety certificates. Education not only saves lives, it plays a crucial role in enhancing the economic and cultural vitality of our lakeside communities.

Recognizing this, MLR worked with the boating industry to pass a law in 2022 to create a boaters education and certification program - a boating license. Currently MLR is actively participating in developing the curriculum that will be taught to boaters in Minnesota, emphasizing best practices for responsible watercraft operation and incorporating the latest scientific data regarding wake-enhanced boating and the recommended 800-foot distance from shore.

Promoting safe practices, raising awareness of environmental impacts, and advocating for thoughtful regulations will help us enjoy our lakes while protecting their integrity. The wake boating issue presents both challenges and opportunities for Minnesotans to address. As wake sports grow in popularity, it's vital to safeguard our lakes for future generations while keeping them accessible for recreation. MLR is dedicated to fostering a future where recreation and conservation can coexist.

We encourage wake boat drivers to follow these guidelines:

Operating Depth and Distance: Use water deeper than 20 feet and maintain a distance of 800 feet from shore.

Turning Practices: Avoid sudden turns; maintain a straight line at low speeds. Power down to turn and return along the same path to reduce erratic waves.

Assisting Surfers: If a surfer falls, power down and slowly turn back to assist. Always have a spotter on board who can monitor the surfer while the driver focuses on navigating safely.

Respecting Others: Be mindful of other boaters by giving space (800 feet) and ensure your waves won't disrupt smaller boats or casual users.

Reduce Noise Levels: Keep music at low volume and avoid revving engines to maintain a peaceful environment for all water users.

Wildlife Awareness: Watch for loons and other wildlife nesting along shorelines, as waves can disrupt their nests and habitats.

Want to learn more about MLR's efforts to address this issue? Check out these blog posts:

[Minnesota Lakes and Rivers 2024 Legislative Update](#)

[MLR Pursues Long Term Strategy to Address Wake Surfing Impacts](#)

[Focus On Citizen Scientists – Critical Partner](#)

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE?

Tell us what it is YOU would do if you were on the SLA Board of Directors.

What's important to you? What do you want to see happen? What activities can we have to make coming to the lake even more fun? Here's your chance to tell us! Send us an email by clicking the link below.

We Want to Hear From You!

Adopt-A-Road



BY BILL HAGENBUCK

Every year Hagenbuck's coordinate SLA's spring and fall road cleanups. Usually on the 4th Saturday morning of April and September. The road signs announcing our seven mile "territory" are visible as you drive toward the lake on the north and south sides. The Adopt-A-Road program is dedicated to Betty Olson. This year we thought it would be worth sharing some historical background, because nearly 20 years have passed since Betty left us, July 23, 2005 and many newer lake shore residents have not heard the story—including Hagenbucks, so please forgive any research inaccuracies in this summary.

A review of the recently scanned SLA board and annual meeting minutes from the 1990's and 2000's tells us that the road cleanup program was initiated in 1993 and initially led by Betty Olson, a SLA board member at the time. Betty led this program for a number of years with support from her husband Don who was also a SLA board member. As the initial driving force of the program, it has been dedicated to Betty.

Initial participation was around 15-20 people, meeting as we do now in the Sugar Lake Town Hall to divide the territory and launch the mornings activities. The oddest findings, from car parts, checks, cash and the most popular beer brands (the cheapest) have been reported with each cleanup—and they were much more interesting in the 2000's than they seem to be now. There was a discussion at a board meeting around 2010 about asking folks to pick up on their own when the weather was bad on clean up day—now a standing practice.

The road signs appear to have been approved and funded in 2003-2004 and then refunded by the state soon after. Leadership of the cleanup migrated through several people in the mid-2000's until it landed on Bill Grantges and Marge Corner in 2007. Bill and Deb started helping when they became year-round residents in 2012 and took over in 2013 to lighten Bill G's leadership responsibilities.

So when we ask for volunteers, provide coffee and a baked treat twice a year, we are continuing a 30+ year tradition, honoring SLA board members who came before us. Please join us on April 26, 2025 and September 27, 2025 to carry on the tradition of keeping our neighboring roads pristine. And any day is a good day to pick up trash, so please continue walking with a plastic bag (Walmart, Target, SuperOne, ...) of your choice and picking up every day.



BORROW & RETURN

Life Jacket Program by Bill & Deb Hagenbuck

2024 marked the year that SLA began sponsoring “Borrow and Return” Life Jackets to lake area residents and visitors. While Hagenbuck’s were participating in the 2023 Starry Trek—checking for starry stone wort at Itasca County public water accesses, they ran across the life jacket stands in Harris Township on Pokegama Lake. The information to contact the national sponsor, Sea Tow Foundation, was available on the signage and Hagenbuck’s reached out to Sea Tow. With SLA board’s approval, they reached out to Sea Tow and applied for a grant to provide loaner life jackets. Over the winter the grant was approved, with Sea Tow providing a stand and 24 life jackets at no cost to SLA. With Itasca County Land Department’s approval, the location for the stand at the public access was determined and the stand was set up within days of walleye opener 2024. Many thanks go to Sara Laska and Mary Freeman who live near the access and supported the weekly



RUSTY CRAYFISH

Rusty Crayfish Project Update by Bruce Erickson

A rusty cray fish trapping project was started in June of 2024 after the spring SLA meeting with 12 volunteers. Frabill minnow traps were altered to accommodate a 1 ½ inch opening. The traps were set attached to docks of the volunteers in different shoreline structures basically on the south side of the lake.

We started trapping in the middle of June with 9 trappers, 12 trappers in July and 16 trappers beginning in August. We now have 21 trapper volunteers after the fall meeting to start this June of 2025.

Last year we trapped 23,400 rusty crayfish with our volunteers with approximately 95% caught from the middle of June to the 1st week of August. In September the Nordic Crayfish Company test trapped and mapped our lake and trapped an additional 5000 crayfish. The conclusion from the test trapping adjusting for structure and bottom features other than sand that our lake has an extreme infestation, the worst they have seen. Note: The cost of the traps and the test trapping was paid by a 50/50 matching

maintenance/inventory of the life jackets. Hagenbuck's gathered weekly metrics from Sara and Mary and created monthly reports to Sea Tow Foundation to fulfill a requirement of the grant.

Happily, the program was a success with an average of 8-10 life jackets used each month. Not only were they used by boaters, but also by children swimming at the access. One of our volunteers was thanked by an adult visitor who confided that he was not a confident swimmer and the availability of a life jacket allowed him to swim comfortably with friends. It should be noted that while small groups of life jackets went missing for a couple weeks each, in the end they were all returned, and we actually ended the year up one jacket that was "donated" to the stand. The program will return in 2025 because its pilot year was a great success.

grant with the Itasca AIS program and the SLA, Thank You

Lessons learned in 2025

- Lake Siseebakwet has an extreme infestation of Rusty Crayfish
- The type of shoreline determines the population of the infestation.
- Shoreline with small pebbles, rocks and weed growth are better than sand structure. Dry cat food seems to work better than dog food, more fishy smelling
- The months of June and July are most productive. (This time frame is consistent with the Sparkling Lake Rusty Crayfish Study by Dr. Gretchen Hansen. Dr Hansen was extremely impressed with our trapping results that was shared with her)
- Trapping juvenile crayfish is as important as trapping adult crayfish.

2025 RUSTY CRAYFISH PLAN

We need to expand the volunteer trapping to encompass the entire lake. The fall SLA meeting added an additional 6 volunteers. Traps will be purchased this spring for all new volunteers along with training. In addition to trapping from volunteer docks, SLA with support from Itasca AIS coordinator purchased 10 deep water traps. Deep water trapping will start in May prior to the fishing opening and then again in August/September to avoid issues with fishing. This expansion in trapping both from shoreline docks and additional deep-water sets will provide additional data to help decide next steps. Ideally, I would like to see a commercial trapper in the fall of 2025 with a 50/50 match to remove around 100k rusty crayfish.

We are seeking additional volunteers. Non lakeshore owners can partner to help with setting of traps in the deeper water.

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION



SAY HELLO TO THE KELLY FAMILY

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT!

Name:

Chad & Shelly Kelly

Lake Location:

NW Corner of Sugar Lake

Full time- resident or seasonal?

Seasonal Residents - other homes are in Plymouth, MN and Vero Beach, FL

Family Members:

5 children

Alyenna Kelly 34 (Kamal Mohamed)

Rosalin Kelly 32 (Allen Bediako)

Marika Kelly 30

Austin Kelly 27 (Maedelin)

Nash Kelly 21

Other Family on the lake

Chad's sister - Cresence Torgerson (Stuart) on the North shore

Shelly's parents - Mike and Sandy Harrison on the North shore

What do/did you do for a living?

Chad is retired, he was an Equity Partner and Head of Sales/Marketing for a Financial Technology company that sold to UnitedHealth Group.

Shelly straddled working outside the home and raising children over the years and has retired from working outside the home.

What are your hobbies/interests?

Chad grew up spending his summers on Gull Lake near Brainerd. He loves all lake activities including boating, waterskiing, competitive sailing, fishing and swimming. You may see him paddling around Sugar Lake on a yellow paddleboard!

Shelly grew up spending time at her family cabin in the woods about 1.2 miles from Sugar Lake. She loves boating, fishing, swimming and sunning along with her annual "beer barge" for neighbors and friends.

How and when did you become an owner on Sugar Lake?

Before they were married, Shelly invited Chad to visit her family cabin and introduced Chad to Sugar Lake; it was Chad's second love at first sight! They subsequently married and as their family grew, they stayed at Sugar Lake Lodge several summers before hunting for a cabin of their own. That search proved unsuccessful and the family moved to Missouri for Chad's job at Bass Pro Shops/Tracker Marine. Less than a year later, some friends (the Gesme's) who lived on Sugar Lake called the Kelly's to sell them their place, Chad and Shelly's favorite cabin on the lake. Chad and Shelly jumped at the chance and bought the cabin which foiled their new home construction plans in Missouri. The family had a cabin in northern Minnesota and didn't even own a home for their family of 6 (soon to be 7)! Shelly and the kids spent their summers at Sugar while Chad worked in Missouri and traveled weekends to join the family.

What are your fondest memories on Sugar Lake?

Our favorite memories mostly include our five kids - teaching them how to ski behind the SunTracker pontoon boat, taking them fishing for crappies and catching big northern, singing U2 from the top of our lungs on late night pontoon rides, fires and s'mores by the lake,

sleeping on the end of the dock, fishing at midnight with kids sleeping in the bottom of the boat and star gazing.

We love having wonderful family, neighbors and friends on the lake such as Cressie and Stu Torgerson (Chad's sister), Mike and Sandy Harrison (Shelly's parents), Mike Kellin and Cindy Hilligoss, Rich and Deb Miska, Greg and Sandy Lanzo, Susan Lamont, Paul and Sarah Mullaney and various others we see in boats and kayaks throughout the summer!

We feel fortunate to spend our summers on such a beautiful lake and to have Sugar Lake Lodge as our neighbors! We love to eat at Jack's/Otis's and have a Long Island tea on the deck by the lake.

Do you have any funny/interesting stories that you would like to share about your time on Sugar Lake?

Chad - One morning I was just waking up around 7am and my eyes were still closed, I heard a loud whomp! That completely woke me up. It sounded close but I didn't know what it was. I looked around and saw nothing out of place. I looked outside the bedroom window and saw a large walleye laying there. It took me a second to understand. And just then I heard the loud whoosh - whoosh - whoosh of an adult bald eagle landing just outside my window, by its fish. After he landed, with one talon on the fish he looked around with his fierce gaze before he ripped the fish into pieces and gulped it down in less than three minutes. I've never been so glad to have a thick pane of glass between me and a fierce looking, majestic bald eagle.

EVENTS & HAPPENINGS

View Our
Events
Calendar
HERE



Spring Dinner

June 1, 5:00pm at
Sugar Lake Lodge; Spring
Member Meeting Dinner



Happy Hour

Come Hang Out!
Our Next Happy Hour:
**Fri May 16, 4:30-6:30 at Doug
& Mary Freeman's**



Events Calendar

Check out our [WEBSITE](#) for all
of our Siseebakwet Lake
Association upcoming 2025
events

Siseebakwet Lake Association

PO Box 295, Cohasset MN 55721



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