



# The Advocate

*Spring, 2021*

## **President's Message**

by Phil Hunsicker

It's that time of year when we all sit around just waiting for ice-out so we can get back on the water. Fortunately for you, the LARA board has taken a break from the waiting game to work on your behalf. We recently sent letters to our elected officials in St. Paul asking them to support legislation requiring the phasing out of small lead jigs and sinkers, which have been connected with loon deaths in Minnesota. The State of New York passed similar legislation 17 years ago. Why are we so far behind? Almost anything can sink a fishing line. Why does it have to be poisonous?

We also asked our state legislators to not support a bill before them that allows wake boats to operate within 200 feet of the shoreline. Personal watercraft (jet-skis) are required to stay 150 feet offshore. Is another 50 feet sufficient for wake boats? We suspect not, but we'd like to see some definitive data before making recommendations. There just so happens to be an ongoing study in Minnesota that was funded by many lake associations to look at the real impacts of large waves created by wake boats and what happens when they crash into the shoreline. The study is also investigating the impacts of prop wash on lake bottoms. We encouraged our state legislators to wait until the research is completed later this year before making any decisions. Let's hope science and data are making a comeback, and no longer ignored or viewed with cynicism if they don't fit your opinion. As former U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan once said, "You are entitled to your own opinion. You are not entitled to your own facts."

LARA continues to follow and comment on the county's aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention work. The county is using a support decision tool created by the University of Minnesota AIS Research Center (MAISRC) to determine where watercraft inspectors should be placed based on risk from known boater movements. Anyone can view the tool at [www.aisexplorer.umn.edu](http://www.aisexplorer.umn.edu). It is free to use and no log in or password is required. Try it out. Don't worry, you can't wreck it. You can even check out the data on boater movement to and from your own lake. It's pretty eye-opening to see how many other lakes to which your lake is "connected."

LARA's CWEPA Fund recently contributed some much needed funding to the Northland Arboretum to restore a native prairie on five acres of Arboretum land. The seed mix will include plants that attract pollinators. LARA isn't just concerned about water. Those of us who have a good relationship with our water understand that what happens on the land affects what happens in the water.

If you'd like join LARA's board of directors, contact me at [philiphunsicker44@gmail.com](mailto:philiphunsicker44@gmail.com) and we can talk. We're just a bunch of folks who care about our lakes, and we're always happy to set another chair at the table. We've been meeting via Zoom during the COVID pandemic, and when we're given the "all clear" signal, we'll be back to meeting in-person at one of our local craft breweries. It's about our lakes, but it's so much more.



## Crow Wing County AIS prevention funding

by Tony Coffey

Earlier this month, at the suggestion of Commissioner Brekken, several of us from the WAPOA Board of Directors met with Crow Wing County commissioners Bill Brekken and Steve Barrows to discuss the 2021 CWC AIS Inspections Plan. Also attending the meeting from the county were Jake Frie, Nicole Erickson, Jessica Shea the county business manager, and Land Services Director Gary Griffin. We discussed several issues specific to inspections on the Whitefish Chain. Next, we expressed concerns that for the past three years there has been a sizable amount of the previous year's county AIS Plan budget carried over to the following year. Jessica explained that there are generally budgeted expense items that are not realized or savings that cause overall expenditures to be less than expected. Commissioner Barrows suggested that the county do a mid-year review and adjust the Plan to provide the optimal number of hours for inspections.

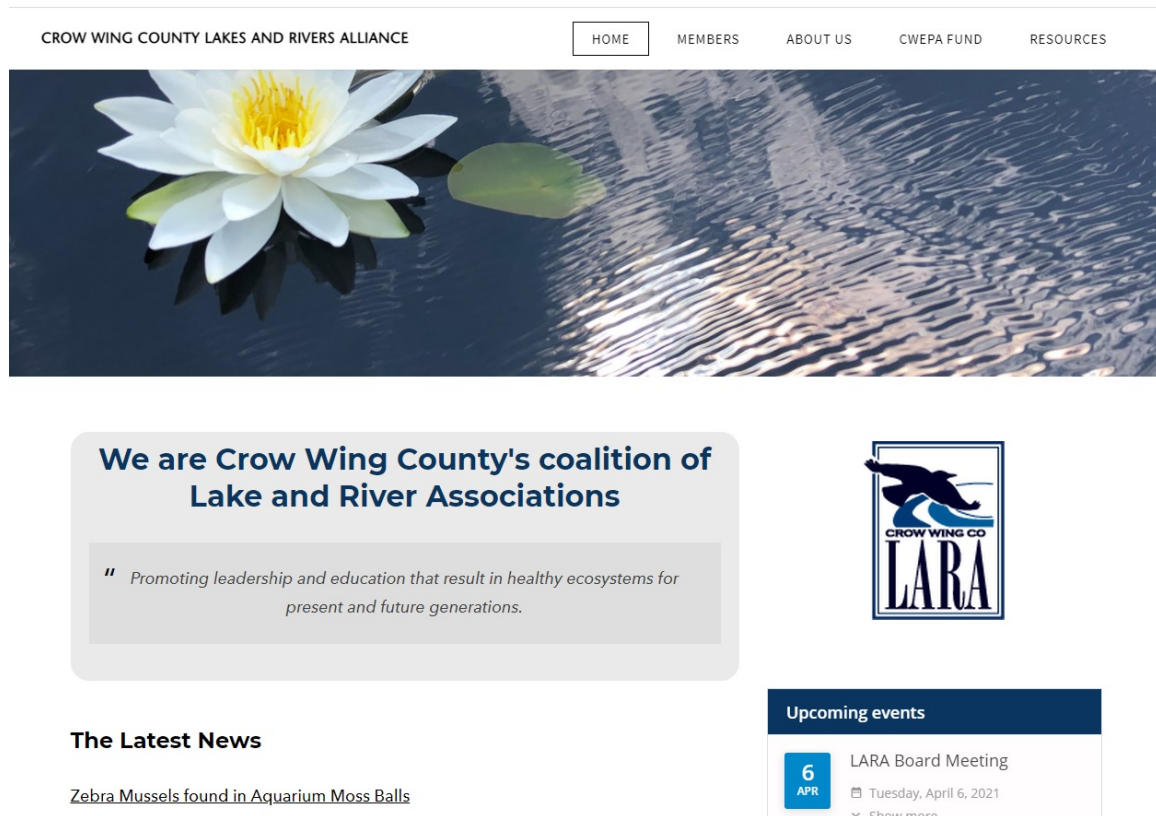
We then broached the topic of potential Crow Wing County general funds being allocated to this or future years' county AIS Plans. Both Commissioners Barrows and Brekken acknowledged the importance of water quality to the economy of Crow Wing County and agreed that the county should look at the possibility of allocating county funds to AIS prevention. While neither commissioner could commit to funding, their acknowledgement of the need and the benefit is a significant shift in thought at that level of county government.

The past several years has brought a significant increase in the cooperation between the county staff and the lake associations in the formation of the county's AIS Plan. Nicole Erickson is a wonderful partner as the full time Environmental Services Specialist. We now can work with Commissioners Barrows and Brekken to broaden the county support to include additional county funding of the AIS Plan. Please let your county commissioners know how important financial support for AIS prevention is to your lake and the water quality of Crow Wing County.

***LARA has a new website!***

[www.crowwinglakesandrivers.org](http://www.crowwinglakesandrivers.org)

Be sure to check out our new website for the latest information from LARA including meeting minutes, current happenings, and other newsworthy information regarding the waters of Crow Wing County. We also have a page with helpful links and resources for your association and members. We would love your feedback on the site! Email [crowwinglakesandrivers@gmail.com](mailto:crowwinglakesandrivers@gmail.com)



CROW WING COUNTY LAKES AND RIVERS ALLIANCE

HOME MEMBERS ABOUT US CWEPA FUND RESOURCES

**We are Crow Wing County's coalition of Lake and River Associations**

*" Promoting leadership and education that result in healthy ecosystems for present and future generations.*

**LARA**

**The Latest News**

[Zebra Mussels found in Aquarium Moss Balls](#)

**Upcoming events**

**6 APR** LARA Board Meeting  
Tuesday, April 6, 2021  
[Show more](#)

## An AIS Reminder to All Boaters

With the warm weather we've had recently, ice-out is probably closer than it looked back in February when we were having highs below zero. Before you drop your boat into the water, don't forget about aquatic invasive species (AIS) and the things we all need to do to stop the spread.

**Required Actions:** You must...

**1.Clean** all visible aquatic plants, zebra mussels, and other prohibited invasive species from watercraft, trailers, and water-related equipment before leaving any water access or shoreland.

**2.Drain** water-related equipment (boat, ballast tanks, portable bait containers, motor, etc.) and drain bilge, livewell and baitwell by removing drain plugs before leaving a water access or shoreline property. **Keep drain plugs out** and water draining devices open while transporting watercraft.

**3.Dispose** of unwanted bait, including minnows, leeches, and worms in the trash. It is illegal to release bait into a waterbody or release aquatic animals from one waterbody to another. If you want to keep your bait, you must refill the bait container with bottled or tap water.

Additionally, if you buy or sell a dock, a boat lift, or a swim raft, and that piece of equipment is going from one waterbody into another, **the law says water-related equipment like that must stay out of the water for at least 21 days.**

If we can all follow these simple rules and change a few of our behaviors, we can keep AIS from spreading. It's entirely up to us

## CWEPA Fund grant

Due to the lack of applications for the CWEPA Fund granting recent years, LARA's CWEPA Fund Advisory Committee consulted with Don Hickman and Kate Bjorge of the Initiative Foundation (I.F.) regarding other options available for the use of the CWEPA Fund's annual investment interest. With the approval of the LARA Board of Directors, the Advisory Committee requested the Fund be reclassified to a Designated Fund. What this means is that an annual grant will be awarded to LARA as long as the organization continues to exist and its mission supports the purpose of the Fund. The 2021 grant was \$3,600.

This grant money is kept separate from LARA's other assets and may be used only for things that fit the purpose of the Fund, which is to provide operational support to projects, programs and activities that lead to the protection, restoration, and preservation of natural resources and environmental assets within Crow Wing County.

While the Initiative Foundation continues to manage the Fund, there are no longer any LARA advisors to the Fund. LARA uses the annual grant to support Crow Wing County projects and initiatives that meet the purpose of the Fund. LARA has the ability to retain money not given to qualifying projects any given year and thus increase the amount available for future use. This is something it couldn't do under the former fund designation.

As noted in the president's message, LARA recently awarded a \$3,000 grant to the Northland Arboretum to help fund its prairie restoration project. If you are aware of any projects in Crow Wing County that might qualify for such funding, please notify one of LARA's co-presidents: Phil Hunsicker, [phunsicker@q.com](mailto:phunsicker@q.com) or Mike O'Brien, [mikeobriens@gmail.com](mailto:mikeobriens@gmail.com).

## What's in your well water?

by Sarah Fogderud

As lake lovers and lake property owners we are often concerned with the quality of our lake water. We think a lot about the clarity, phosphorus, algae growth, etc. But when was the last time you thought about the quality of your well water?

Safe drinking water is essential to our health and well-being, yet it is something that we often take for granted. There are several contaminants that can affect the safety of drinking water. Some such as bacteria or parasites can make us sick right away while others such as arsenic cause more chronic health problems over a long period of time. Most contaminants that can cause harm to our health are colorless, odorless, and tasteless. Do not assume your water is safe because it tastes good and looks clear. The only way to know if your water is safe is to test it. Remember that cities and municipalities are required by law to test the water that they provide to the public and meet the safety standards that have been established by the state and federal governments. If you own your own well, it is up to you to ensure that you have safe drinking water for yourself and your family.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) provides recommendations for private well owners regarding what you should test for and how often (see graphic). At a minimum, test for coliform bacteria annually to check for any new contamination. This is especially important if you have a shallow (sand-point) well as they are more prone to contamination. For more information on what to test for and why, you can visit the MDH website on Well Testing and Water Quality: <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/index.html>

Testing should be done by an accredited laboratory which will provide you with sampling containers and instructions on how to properly collect the samples. You can find an accredited laboratory near you by visiting the Minnesota Department of Health's website or by following this link: <https://eldo.web.health.state.mn.us/public/accreditedlabs/labsearch.seam>

Don't take the safety of your well water for granted! Testing your well water is a simple, relatively inexpensive, and important way to protect your health.

## Protect your health!

Test your well water for:



Testing is even more important if young children drink the water.

Recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/index.html>

## **Highlights from LARA lake associations**

In our future newsletters we would like to feature activities, projects, and accomplishments of our member associations, no matter how big or small. We often hear about what the county's larger lake associations are doing, because they are frequently done on a large scale, but rarely do we hear what the rest of our lake associations have been up to. We all can use ideas gleaned from others and tailored to our own association's needs and talents. Let's all help spread the word about the many and varied good things our lake associations do throughout the year. Please send your news to newsletter editor Ann Beaver so she can include it in an upcoming newsletter.

### **2021 LARA members**

As of March 26, the following lake associations have already responded to the 2021 membership mailing by sending in their dues and any updates on their membership letter.

Bass Lake Association  
Bay Lake Improvement Association  
Cullen Lakes Association  
Emily Lakes And Rivers Association  
Friends of Lower Hay Lake, Inc.  
Lake Hubert Conservation Association  
Lougee Lake Association  
Mission Lakes Association  
Pelican Lake Association  
Portage Crooked Lake Improvement Association  
Upper Hay Lake Association  
Upper South Long Lake Improvement Association  
Velvet Lake Association  
Whitefish Area Property Owners Association

### **The LARA Board of Directors**

Phil Hunsicker (co-president of LARA and representing Red Sand Lake Association)  
Mike O'Brien (co-president of LARA and representing Lower South Long Lake Association)  
Sandy Holm (vice-president of LARA and representing Horseshoe Lake Association)  
Ann Beaver (secretary and treasurer of LARA and representing the Cullen Lakes Association)  
Tom Beaver (representing the Cullen Lakes Association)  
Jodi Billy (representing Pelican Lake Association)  
Nick Bernier (representing Mission Lake Association)  
Tony Coffey (representing the Whitefish Area Property Owners Association)  
Sarah Fogderud (ex-officio representing A.W. Laboratories)  
Kent Montgomery (ex-officio representing Central Lakes College)