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You are always welcome to join us at our monthly Board of Directors' meetings on the second Wednesday of the month at 8:30 a.m. We usually adjourn around 10 a.m. Due to COVID we are currently conducting our meetings online. Contact Sue Friedrichs at [info@gcola.org](mailto:info@gcola.org) for the login instructions.

# CHAIR'S MESSAGE

Chuck Herrig, GCOLA Chair

As I write this, we are experiencing seventy degree weather in November, a record! Two weeks ago we received ten inches of snow. Minnesota weather can be so unpredictable, especially in the transition seasons of spring and fall. I will enjoy this warmth while it's here!

As we approach the end of the year, the GCOLA Board thought now is a good time to ask for our members' input on GCOLA's legislative priorities for 2021. You can read the results from that survey in this issue.

We recently reformatted our newsletter. We heard feedback that our members would like more emphasis placed on what we do as an organization along with transparency of our annual budget. We now place that information near the front of our newsletter, replacing our mission statement which had been positioned near the back of our past newsletters. We are also attempting to balance the article content in the newsletter to reflect all the areas GCOLA oversees, from environmental projects to fishery to water safety. Thanks to Communications Chair Linda Harrier and Communications Volunteer Kathy Lundberg for steering this effort.

As members of GCOLA, I encourage you to attend our virtual monthly board meetings. Information on scheduled dates, times and how to log in can be found on our website, [www.gcola.org](http://www.gcola.org). Our board meetings are a great way to learn more about what your lake association is working on and to have an influence on the decisions we make.

Exciting news is board member Jane Edwards will be our Gala Chair for 2021. Jane has extensive fund-raising experience, which is invaluable to our organization especially in these challenging times. We are looking for volunteers to brainstorm ideas and organize our event. Ideas currently under consideration are those we don't need to be physically together for, such as a virtual silent auction, trip raffle or possibly host a get together outside if the pandemic allows. More to come and please contact Jane at [jedwards3718@gmail.com](mailto:jedwards3718@gmail.com) with your thoughts or assistance.

Thanks all for your continued support through your membership in GCOLA. Everything we do from buoy installation to AIS prevention efforts is only possible with your support.

*We wish all of you a safe and enjoyable Holiday Season.*



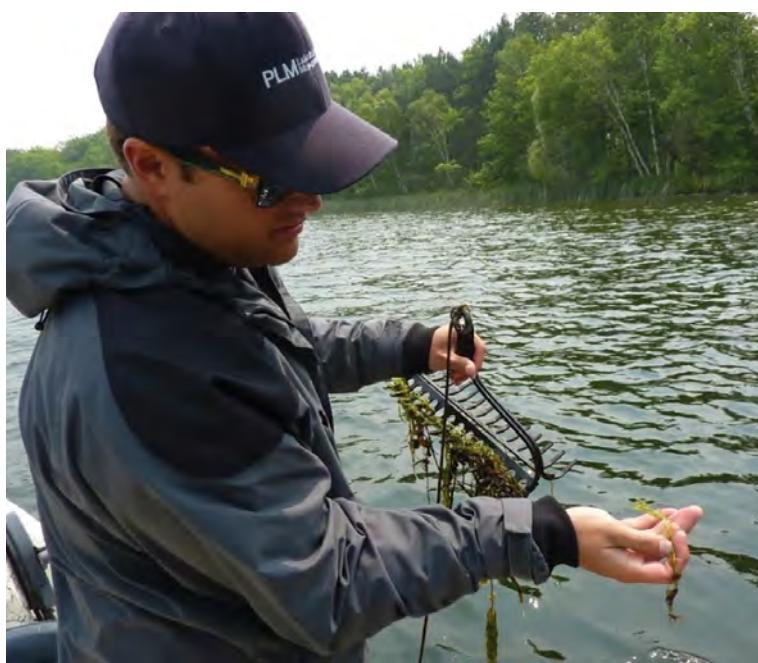
*Photo by Joey Halvorson*

# AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES: UPDATE ON MONITORING PROJECTS

End of the summer is a busy time monitoring the Gull Chain of Lakes for Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Two projects are targeted to provide an early warning of possible infestation of an aquatic AIS species.

## Access Site Survey

The first project is monitoring of areas where the highest likelihood of new AIS infestations would occur on the chain of lakes. These areas include public and private accesses, resorts, marinas, and restaurants. GCOLA contracts with PLM Lake and Land Management to conduct a survey at 23 specific locations from Nisswa Lake to the southern parts of Steamboat and Wilson Bay. The same 23 sites are monitored each time and are located via GPS. The monitoring consists of tossing a rake into the lake and pulling out aquatic vegetation. Every vegetation species is identified and tabulated for quantity at each of the 23 monitoring sites. This summer, 30 different species of aquatic vegetation were identified and inventoried. The good news is that we did not find any Eurasian Milfoil or Starry Stonewort at any of the 23 survey sites. Consistent with previous years monitoring, two separate invasive species were observed on the Gull Chain within the designated search areas. These species include Curly Leaf Pondweed and Purple Loosestrife. Although invasive by definition, these species have historically been in the area and are considered a low priority for management in comparison with other invasive species. Searches over 10 years ago by the MN DNR indicated these species within the Gull Chain. A copy of the final monitoring report is available on the GCOLA website for your review.



## Starry Trek 2020

The second project was GCOLA's participation in Starry Trek 2020, which was held on August 15. Starry Trek is a statewide event focused on searching over 200 lakes for one of Minnesota's newest aquatic invaders, Starry Stonewort. Volunteers meet with local county AIS coordinators to receive training on identification of Starry Stonewort and other aquatic invasive species such Eurasian Water Milfoil. This year Nicole Erickson, Crow Wing County AIS Coordinator, provided training and protocols for collection of suspicious plants.

On the Gull Chain of Lakes, samples were collected at all the public accesses:

- Zorbaz at County Road 77
- Hole-In-The-Day access on Hwy 371
- Nisswa Lake access
- Government Point access

Additionally, samples were collected at Maddens and Craguns Resorts.

From our survey, we found no presence of Starry Stonewort at any of these locations. Across Minnesota, Starry Stonewort was found at Lake Cornelius in Stearns County during this event. In total, there are now 15 lakes in Minnesota that have been identified as being infested with Starry Stonewort:

- Grand, Koronis, Rice, and Cornelius Lakes, Stearns County
- Pleasant and West Sylvia Lakes, Wright County
- Beltrami, Cass, Moose, Turtle, Upper Red and Wolf Lakes, Beltrami County
- Medicine Lake, Hennepin County
- Lake Minnewaska, Pope County
- Lake Winnibigoshish, Cass/Itasca Counties



Photo by Minnesota DNR

Why the high amount of interest in Starry Stonewort? First, it is an AIS species that can be easily transported from lake to lake from small pieces of weed fragments on a trailer or boat. Secondly, there are no known effective treatment programs to eradicate this invasive species.

Starry Stonewort is an algae that does not have a vascular system like Curly Leaf Pondweed or Eurasian Water Milfoil. Without a vascular system, herbicides that would normally eradicate Curly Leaf Pondweed or Eurasian Milfoil have little effect on Starry Stonewort. If found early before substantial spreading, hand pulling has shown to be somewhat effective. Hand pulling must be performed carefully. If broken fragments of the algae float away, they will then re-establish in another location.



Photo by Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center

If left to grow unchecked, Starry Stonewort may form a dense carpet of algae 2-6 feet thick. It can interfere with boating and other recreational activities. Dense growth may also displace native plants and could potentially have impacts on fish and other animals. From the picture, you can see how dense the growth is with this AIS species.

The Minnesota AIS Research Center is collaborating with the MN DNR and scientists worldwide to find a treatment program for this invasive species. They are conducting research on a variety of treatment programs such as combining mechanical harvesting with copper-based algaecides to control growth and plant density.

If you are aware of any friends or family that are planning to bring a boat or watercraft from one of the lakes infected with Starry Stonewort to the Gull Chain of Lakes, it is recommended that this watercraft be taken to the Government Point public access for decontamination prior to launching. It only takes a few minutes to decontaminate a watercraft and could prevent an infestation that will cause our Gull Chain of Lakes problems for decades.

*Photos by MAISRC to the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center and MNDNR is the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources*

# GCOLA MEMBERS - KEEP YOUR EMAIL UPDATED!

## WE'D LIKE EVERYONE TO HAVE A SAY!

We occasionally ask for member input to help develop priorities for our committees and notify you of upcoming legislation and other current events impacting the Gull Lake Chain.

Just send us an email at [info@gcola.org](mailto:info@gcola.org) saying you would like to participate. Be sure to add this email to your contact list so that emails don't go to your Junk File. GCOLA does not sell, trade, swap or in any other way use your data except for official GCOLA use.



# FOREST BATHING

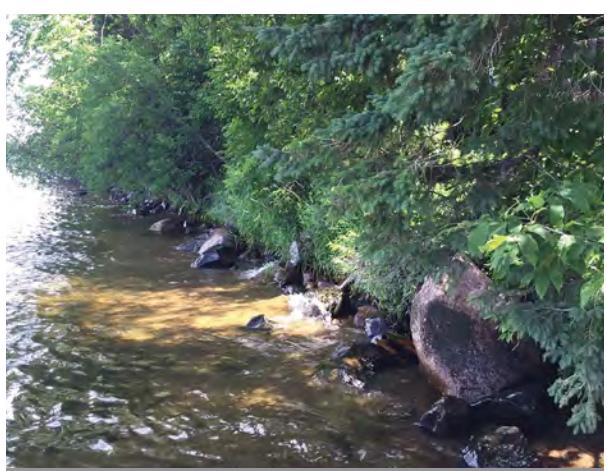
Dorothy Whitmer, Lake Steward Coordinator

## A TRIBUTE TO OUR 2020 LAKE STEWARDS DON BOTTEMILLER AND JEANNE AND TOM LEFEVERE



Congratulations Lake Stewards!  
Tom, Jeanne, and Don

The trees shaded and overhung on the slow drive up the winding dirt driveway, the first time Don and Jeanne Bottemiller's parents laid eyes on what was to be their lake home in 1973. After walking the forest, their father said, "I'm not taking a chance on losing this!". The property changed hands the next day. Now almost 50 years later, the tall canopy of lovingly preserved trees, the quiet and the atmosphere are palpable on stepping onto their land. Approaching the water through a limited area of shaded lawn gives a feeling of mystery, as one senses the open water that is not quite visible through the forest on the lakeshore. An open deck at the edge of the Lefeveres' 20-foot elevation provides lovely views that are framed by gentle branches. Wooden steps lead down to the water, but there is only a narrow footpath among the trees to walk along the water's edge. Tom Lefevere mentions an ethic to describe the stillness and peace offered by this natural lakeshore: "forest bathing", or *shinrin-yoku*. The term is not related to water, but rather refers to the rejuvenation of being enveloped in nature and was popularized by the Japanese in the 1980s. The forest here has long been ethereal: only a few feet away was a corn-drying trench and fire pit from the St. Columba Mission, the first Native American (Ojibwe) Christian mission in the US west of the Mississippi River, although no relics remain. It is perhaps a fair question for the rest of us: when have you ever felt such stillness on the shore of the Gull Chain, and do you miss it?



The play of light on the leaves and on the water

Jeanne and Tom's only watercraft are two kayaks and a canoe for gliding along the shore noiselessly. To avoid boats and docks, they rent a cabin on the Gunflint Trail each summer to canoe in the peacefulness. Don is an accomplished sailor, avoiding the internal combustion engine in order to enjoy the quiet feel of the water and wind, and sometimes the mystical approach of loons, who are often unafraid of silent watercraft.

Don, Jeanne and Tom are Lake Stewards at heart, but when they saw a Lake Steward sign prominently displayed at the end of the dock at Barbara (Zapffe) Vielma's house on Barrow's Point, they decided to complete the quiz on GCOLA's website <https://www.gcola.org/lake-stewards-program>. One visit later and all three are Lake Stewards of GCOLA. Every lakeshore lover has a unique story. Please tell us yours!

Photos by Dorothy Whitmer

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# THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

In the last newsletter we focused our thanks on the many volunteers that participate in the various Environmental Committee projects. This month we will focus on the remaining projects from the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS), Government Relations, Safety and Recreation, and Communications Committees.

## AIS Committee

Steve Allex, committee chair, thanks Dorothy Whitmer. She not only assisted with the "Starry Trek" program looking for Starry Stonewort at the public accesses but Dorothy is also a driver for the Lake Steward program. She is one of our certified AIS detectors and just completed additional AIS training through Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC).

## Government Relations Committee

Uldis Birznieks, committee chair, thanks Dave Hoelmer, Jon Mendel, and Doug Johnston. Dave, Jon, Doug along with committee and board member Steve Frawley, solicited input from GCOLA members regarding potential legislative priorities, helped set those priorities, met with our local State Representatives and State Senators both locally and in Saint Paul, met with leading state legislative leaders in Saint Paul, met with Minnesota Lakes & Rivers Advocates (MLR) leadership regarding lake related legislative priorities, met with lobbyists regarding lake-related legislative priorities, attended Minnesota House of Representatives and Minnesota Senate committee hearings regarding legislation for lake-related issues, and attended GCOLA Board of Director and Government Relations Committee meetings on legislative issues.

## Safety and Recreation Committee

For many years GCOLA has provided maps of the chain which include safety regulations at the boat landings. Although Rosemary Goff is no longer on the Board, she keeps on giving by keeping the boxes filled at both the Zorbaz and Hole In the Day landings.

Sometimes the volunteer efforts go beyond specific individuals. We would like to thank the many people who notify us of buoys that have blown out of place or have washed ashore.

## Communications Committee

One of the major communication vehicles GCOLA uses to reach our membership audience is this newsletter. Starting the last half of this year, Kathy Lundberg has joined the team as a volunteer and has had a major responsibility in the production for the Fall and this Winter issues.

## Environmental Committee

All too often we only think of individuals when it comes to volunteers. We would like to supplement the list of volunteers from the Environmental Committee and thank the businesses who partner with the Loon Protection program to educate boaters on loon safety. These includes the Gull Lake Recreation Area boat registration staff, Grand View Lodge, Madden's Resort, Causeway on Gull Resort Association, Lykins Pinehurst Resort, Boats and Beyond Rentals, Lake Fun Rentals, and Your Boat Club.

# WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Tom & Vicki Shurson • Upper Gull

J. Michael & Shirley Hayes • Gull

Thomas Hauge • Spider





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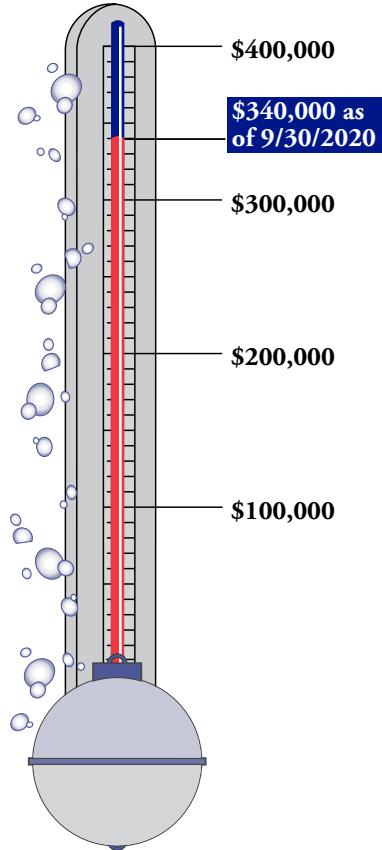
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# FUND UPDATES

## Endowment Fund



In partnership with the Initiative Foundation, GCOLA established a perpetual Gull Chain Preservation Endowment Fund to provide long term funding to preserve and improve the ecosystem of the Gull Lake Chain. To donate, make checks payable to the Initiative Foundation, with Gull Chain Fund in the memo line, and mail to the Initiative Foundation, 405 First St SE, Little Falls, MN 56345.

## AIS Contingency Fund

GCOLA maintains easy access to these funds in case of an AIS emergency on the Gull Lake Chain. To donate to this fund go to <https://www.gcola.org/shop>, download the donation form and mail with a check to GCOLA, PO Box 102, Nisswa, MN 56468.



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# FALL FISHERY UPDATE

*Chuck Herrig, Fisheries Committee Chair*

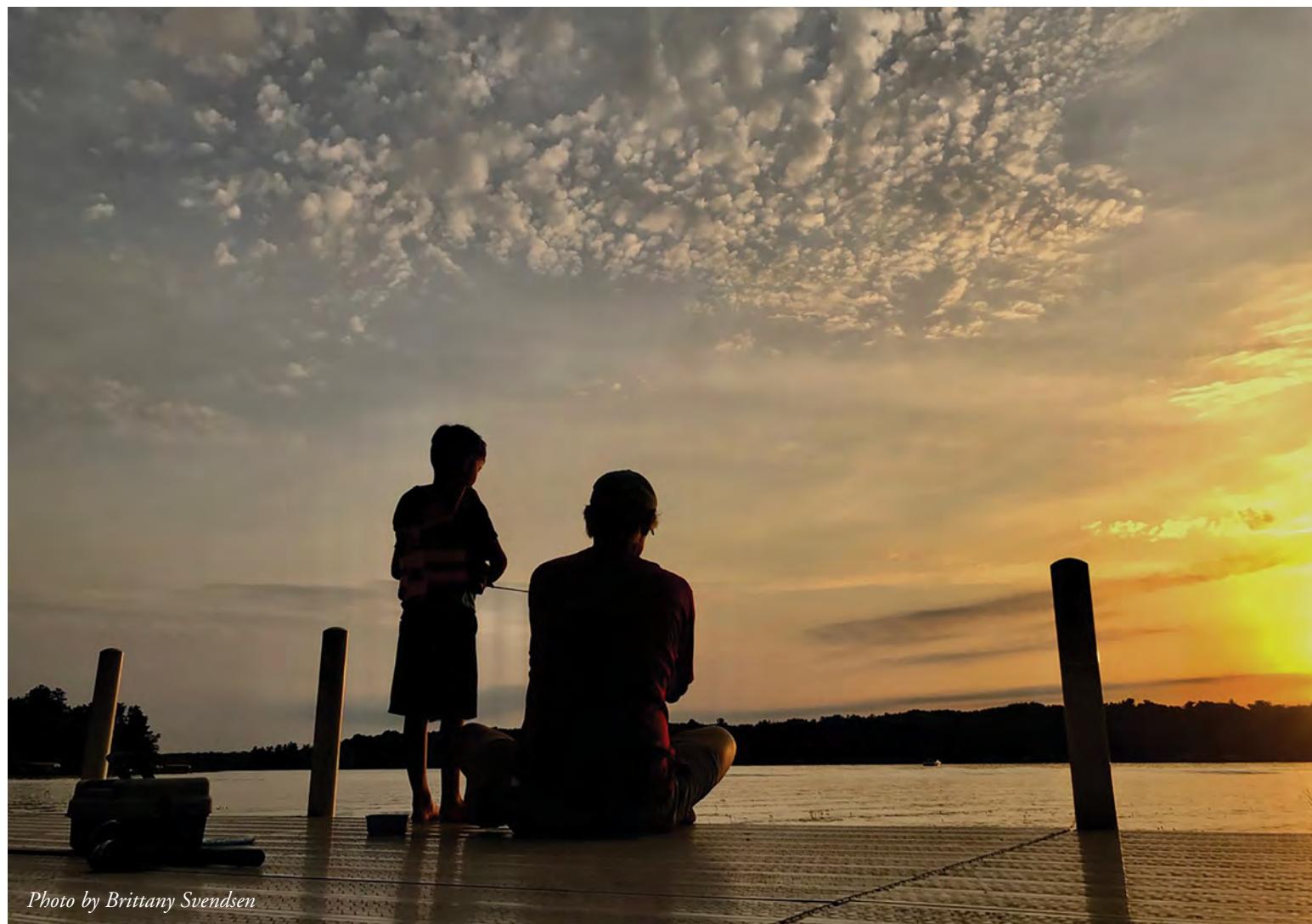
Hi anglers. How was your walleye fishing this fall? I have to say the walleyes were biting for me in October as it was my best fall in three years. I don't keep walleyes over 20" in length as they are the prime size for natural reproduction. This fall it was challenging to find walleyes small enough to keep. A nice problem to have! In speaking with local fishing guides, they were experiencing excellent walleye fishing as well in October. Then the snow came on October 20th and my fall fishing season ended abruptly. My boat is now in storage and wouldn't you know it, we had a streak of 60 and 70 degree days in early November. That's Minnesota weather!

The MN DNR Brainerd Fisheries were able to purchase and stock walleye fingerlings in Gull Lake once again this fall. The fingerling stocking is supplemental to two million walleye fry stocked every spring in the Gull Chain. As I have mentioned in past newsletters, walleye fry survival has been less than ideal in recent years. The addition of larger fingerlings this year will hopefully provide a healthier walleye fishery in the years

ahead. Walleye fingerling stocking is much more expensive than fry stocking as those fingerlings must be purchased through private parties with fish rearing ponds.

I will have more detail to share from the DNR on the state of the walleye fishery in the Gull Chain in a future newsletter.

One last topic that does not impact the Gull Chain. The DNR recently sought input from the public on a proposal to lower bag limits for panfish on select lakes in Crow Wing County. The goal would be to increase the size of bluegills and crappies in those test lakes. If the proposal moves forward and the test is successful, it is possible we could see lower bag limits added to additional lakes in the years ahead. Currently, DNR Fisheries believes the panfish population in the Gull Chain is healthy, both in panfish size and quantity. If I learn more about the lower bag limit proposal, I will share an update in a future newsletter.



*Photo by Brittany Svendsen*



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# 2021 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY SURVEY RESULTS

Back in November 2016, the GCOLA Board of Directors established the Government Relations Committee. The charter of the committee is that it shall be the primary interface for GCOLA with our state and local legislators, local units of government and the executive branch of state government. One of the key responsibilities of the Government Relations Committee is to annually develop a list of legislative priorities on lake-related issues and concerns. It is that set of legislative priorities that we work with our local legislators (State Senators and State Representatives), lake-oriented organizations such as MN COLA and Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates (MLR), and state-level legislative leaders to potentially get turned into legislative bills that are presented to the Minnesota State Legislature.

For 2021, the GCOLA Government Relations Committee members are Steve Katka, Jon Mendel, Steve Frawley and Uldis Birznieks. We welcome Steve Katka as a new member of the committee. Thank you for joining our team, Steve!

Each year, the Government Relations Committee has informally canvassed GCOLA members to get their input on lake-related issues that could be addressed by the Minnesota State Legislature or local governmental units (counties, cities, townships). This year, we decided to canvas all GCOLA members to provide their input on what GCOLA's legislative priorities should be. We developed a survey containing eight (8) potential legislative lake-related issues and in October sent the survey to all active GCOLA members for whom we have email addresses to get their input. The input from the GCOLA members on this survey will remain anonymous and confidential.

Of the 970 GCOLA active members, we sent the survey to the 614 for whom we have email addresses. I will put in a plug for anyone who has not provided us your email address, please send it in to Sue Friedrichs, our Secretary/Treasurer at [info@gcola.org](mailto:info@gcola.org). See page 4 for more information.

The following were the eight potential legislative issues which we asked you, as GCOLA members, to prioritize with your top 4 issues:

- a. Consider regulations (distance from shore, depth, etc.) for watercraft creating enhanced wakes that are a safety issue, cause shore line erosion and sub-surface ecological damage.

- b. Establish watercraft operator license program to make lakes safer for everyone. (Permitting required if operator is born after 1989 and boat length is longer than 18 feet).
- c. Increase boater AIS compliance with fines for AIS violations that are at parity with Minnesota game and fish fines including authority to impound.
- d. No more stocking of muskies in the Gull Chain of Lakes – 5 year moratorium on muskie stocking in Gull Chain and ask for independent study on sociological and economic impact of muskie stocking.
- e. Increase Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) funding specific for finding solution(s) to eradicate zebra mussels.
- f. Increase funding to counties to prevent the spread of new or existing aquatic invasive species (AIS).
- g. Address overuse of lakes with effective shore land rules (establish max limits for watercraft on lakes – once the daily limit is reached, no additional watercraft are allowed on the lake). Similar to all spaces in a parking lot being filled.
- h. Implement mandatory regional inspection of all watercraft at high traffic locations. Example – all watercraft being towed on MN 371 will be inspected at the Brainerd Lakes Welcome Center.

The survey also had a section for any other suggestions for legislative priorities and asked which lake you reside on.

We received 170 responses to the survey, which is 28% of the 614 requests, which is slightly above the average for response rate on surveys. The chart below shows the results of the survey including the number of responses for each item as a Priority #1, Priority #2, Priority #3 and Priority #4. The total points were calculated on a weighted point system of 8 points for a priority #1, 6 points for priority #2, 4 points for priority #3, and 2 points for priority #4.

Far and away, the top priority that you identified was Item a – Consider enhanced wake regulations. Almost half of you identified it as the #1 priority and 79% of you had it in the top 4 priorities. Last year, MN COLA and MLR both identified this as a top level issue. GCOLA helped fund the University of Minnesota (UMN) – Hydrology Laboratory study this fall that was collecting data to determine the impact and energy of enhanced wakes on shoreline and lake bottoms. It is data from this and subsequent studies that will help our legislators determine if and what sort of regulations might be needed to

mitigate the issue of enhanced wakes on our environment and lake users. Please read Steve Frawley's update on the UMN enhanced wake study in this newsletter issue.

Your priorities #2 and #3 were both associated with increased funding to battle aquatic invasive species. A very clear priority #2 was Item e – Increase MAISRC funding specific for finding solution(s) to eradicate zebra mussels. Zebra mussels are here in the Gull Chain and it is obvious that our membership wants the MAISRC to concentrate on getting solutions to mitigate this invasive species. The MAISRC has had a number of projects over the last several years that are showing good progress on finding solutions to eradicate or decrease the impact of zebra mussels. You are asking to have the MAISRC to continue and increase the effort in this area. Your priority #3 was to increase the funding to counties for AIS. Currently, the state-wide funding to counties to battle AIS is \$10M. Last year, MN COLA pushed for an increase in that funding to \$20M while MLR recommended an increase to \$15M. We will work with those two organizations on a recommended level of increased AIS funding for counties in 2021. One hurdle that we will face for this increase in funding is that for the first time in several years, the state has a deficit in revenue due to COVID and it may be difficult to get increases in funding in any area. One thing is clear, that both MLR and MN COLA continue to emphasize to our legislators that funding at the county level is the most effective and efficient way to work the AIS issue.

Your priority #4 was Item d- No more muskie stocking on Gull Chain. This item had almost as many votes as priority #3. The muskie stocking issue has been a legislative priority for GCOLA since the decision by the DNR to stock muskies in the Gull Chain was made back in 2015, in spite of the opposition by GCOLA and 78% of our members (per the 2015 GCOLA survey). Here, over 5 years later, this is still

identified as a high priority issue. Last year and again this year, we will address this with our legislators for localized legislation as opposed to any state-wide action.

The other issue that received significant support was priority #5 - Item c – Increase AIS fines. This was one of GCOLA's four priority legislative issues in 2020 and we were getting bi-partisan support in the legislature when COVID brought all legislative activity to a screeching halt. MLR had this as a high priority legislative issue in 2020 and recommended increasing AIS fines to \$1,000. We will be checking with both MN COLA and MLR to see if this might get some traction in 2021 and if so, we might include it on our priority list as our 4th state-level priority.

In the survey we also asked if there were any other suggestion or comments that you had. We received over 30 comments and the areas that were mentioned the most were on noise regulation for boats (loud music), additional no wake zones for Gull lake with more water patrols and issues with lakeshore, environmental and weed control.

In the next several weeks, our Government Relations Committee will be developing our GCOLA legislative priority list based on your input from the survey. These legislative priorities will be included in an article in our next GCOLA newsletter. The Government Relations Committee will be planning to meet with our local state legislators in the December/January timeframe and again later in March/April 2021 when the legislative bills will be in process. We also will be involved in the process for legislative issue prioritization for MN COLA and will be meeting with the MLR leadership in January. In February-March 2021, we will meet with state level leaders and committee leads in both the MN House and Senate for any of our issues that get to the legislative bill level.

Legislative Item	Priority #1	Priority #2	Priority #3	Priority #4	Total Points	Priority
a. Consider Enhanced Wake Regulations	78	16	24	16	848	1
b. Watercraft Operators License Program	2	15	10	20	186	
c. Increase AIS Fines	13	21	22	17	352	5
d. No more muskie stocking on Gull Chain	12	35	23	21	440	4
e. Increase MAISRC funding for zebra mussels	37	37	26	19	660	2
f. Increase funding to counties for AIS	15	26	33	24	456	3
g. Address lake overuse	3	7	10	14	134	
h. Mandatory regional inspection of boats	6	4	10	10	132	

# HARD WATER SAFETY AND THE GULL LAKE SNOWMOBILE TRAIL

As the winter season begins to tighten its grip on Minnesota, it's important to remember that safety on our lakes this time of year is just as important as safety during the open water season.

I, like many Minnesotans, enjoy outdoor winter recreation. Ice fishing and snowmobiling are a couple of my favorites and skating, hiking, and cross country skiing are popular outdoor escapes for many. Most of these activities have one very important thing in common...they all involve a frozen lake. And while it's always tempting to begin our activities ASAP, there is no rushing mother nature's "ice making" ability. A lake's ice thickness relies on many variables including air temperature and wind but also geographic location of the lake, water depth and water current intensity. So it stands to reason that Gull Lake will freeze more quickly than Lake Minnetonka but not as quickly as Lake of the Woods for example. There are many variables and just because the lake had good ice one year does not necessarily mean that subsequent years will be the same. As the Minnesota DNR will remind you each season, ice is never 100% safe!

So, what does the DNR recommend for some of our favorite activities? Four inches of ice is recommended for activities such as ice fishing, walking and cross country skiing. Five to seven inches is recommended for snowmobiles and ATVs, while eight to twelve inches is recommended for small cars.

Larger vehicles require 12+ inches. It's important to remember that in general, lakes freeze from the perimeter to the center because water is shallower at the edges and therefore cooler earlier in these areas.

Even when taking precautions, we must remember that ice is unpredictable. On one part of the lake you may have 12+ inches while just a few yards away it can be much thinner. So, what if the worst were to happen and you fall through the ice? First of all, stay calm and try not to let the shock of falling into ice cold water take over. Let your winter clothing act as a buoy and always remember to turn back in the direction you came from and use the solid ice to pull yourself from the water. This is when carrying ice picks becomes especially important. Once back up on the surface, try to remain horizontal while moving to thicker ice and warm up as quickly and carefully as possible!

The use of common sense also plays a huge role in safe ice travel. As much as I anticipate these winter activities, I've never wanted to be one of the first on the ice. It also makes sense to travel in areas where you've witnessed other vehicles safely traveling. It's imperative to check ice thickness frequently. For example, if I am planning to place a 2,500 pound fish house on the lake, I'll first check ice on my ATV, auguring holes every 50 yards or so on the way to my desired destination.

*Photo by Eric Utter*



Photo by Jill Kinsley



As for lake travel by snowmobile, we are fortunate to have something very unique on Gull Lake. The Gull Lake Lighted Snowmobile Trail runs from the public access across from Zorbaz into Booming Out Bay, south past Grassy Point, past Sandy Point and all the way to the south end of Gull. There are also two lighted finger trails leaving east towards Grand View Lodge and Hole in the Day Bay. The trail greatly enhances safety for lake travel by snowmobile and is heavily used by locals, as well as first-timers to our trail system. Gull Lake is a large body of water and the lighted trail, especially at night, makes for more confident lake travel. The buoy map, which can be found at boat landings and also on the [GCOLA.org](http://GCOLA.org) website (under Lake Info, Buoys), shows the trail marked in red.

Installing, maintaining and removing the trail is no small feat. And despite what many believe, the DNR, GCOLA, and the local snowmobile clubs aren't the organizers or the ones who fund the lake trail. A small contingency of local businesses made up of Gull Lake resorts, restaurants and snowmobile rental agencies make it work. It was started in the 1950's by Bob Daniels and originally wasn't lit. In the 70's, Bruce Anderson took over responsibility and shortly thereafter, John Taylor began to assist. After a few years, John took over full responsibility and continues to organize its installation and removal. In addition, he solicits funds for the trail on an annual basis, often falling short, contributing funds of his own in order to maintain the trail. If you are interested in contributing to the Gull Lake Lighted Snowmobile Trail, feel free to reach out to me at [Jay@boatsandbeyondrentals.com](mailto:Jay@boatsandbeyondrentals.com).

So, if summer on the Gull Chain of Lakes is your thing, maybe this has piqued your interest in winter activities. If however, you enjoy our lakes in the winter, always remember that safety on the ice is every bit as important as safety on open water. Enjoy the season and I look forward to updating you in the spring!

We appreciate your support  
and extend warmest wishes for hope,  
peace and joy this holiday season  
and in the coming year!  
Gull Chain of Lakes Association

# BLACK FLIES IMPACT ON AREA LOONS



Day Old Chick on Dad's Back - Photo by Sheila Farrell Johnston

As soon as the ice goes out in the spring, breeding pairs of loons return to their nesting territories. Although ice out varies from year to year, loons are often on the nest around May 1 and chicks hatch around June 1. 2020 was not a typical year. Black flies were the problem. They are relentless blood suckers that can cause loons to abandon their nests. According to Dr. Walter Piper, National Loon Center scientist and director of the Loon Project, an ongoing scientific investigation of population dynamics of common loons in Wisconsin, black flies were worse in 2020 than in any year in the 28-year study period – worse than in 2014 when 80 % of Wisconsin and Minnesota loons abandoned their nests. The black flies were so bad this year that Dr. Piper feared there could be nest abandonment of 100 percent. On Upper Gull there are six pairs of breeding loons. All but one pair abandoned their nests during the third week of incubation in May.

Black flies are problematic for loons for about three weeks. All of the Upper Gull loons that abandoned their nests renested in June when the black flies were not as prolific and relentless in their attacks. Two of the pairs chose better protected natural nesting sites for their second nests and two pairs returned to their artificial nesting platforms. Although five pairs nested again, only two pairs hatched chicks. Chicks from the second nesting hatched around the 4th of July. The sixth pair that did not abandon their nest did not have a successful hatch.

Predation of eggs by wildlife is one reason for nest failure. Nests can also be washed out by rainstorms. Waves from boats and jet skis can also wash out nests. This year that was the case on Lake Margaret when jet skis washed out the nest on the south end of the lake. This should never happen! It is essential to keep wakes to a minimum near nesting loons, so eggs are not needlessly lost. Loons will also abandon the nest if boats, jet skis, or paddlers come too close. For the safety of nesting loons, the best way to observe them is at a distance with binoculars.

According to Dr. Piper, the danger period for chicks was formerly the first two weeks of life. However, the mortality of chicks of all ages is now much higher than it was in the 1990s and early 2000s. The danger from watercraft is much higher now as boat traffic has increased tremendously on the Gull

chain, and the week of the 4th of July is the most dangerous of all. This year a five- week old chick was separated from its parents on Upper Gull and somehow ended up on shore on Bass Lake. It is most likely that boat traffic separated the chick from its family. Thanks to an observant and caring family on Bass Lake, this chick was saved. After surveying the loon families on Bass and Upper Gull, it was apparent that one of the Upper Gull pairs was missing a chick. On the advice of wildlife experts, the chick was reunited with the family that was missing a chick. The parent accepted the chick, but its sibling viciously attacked it. Since there was a good chance the alpha chick would kill it, the orphan chick was taken to Wild and Free Wildlife Rehabilitation Clinic in Garrison. The vet determined it was in perfect health, and Plan B was put into action. A Wild and Free volunteer carried the chick in his kayak as he paddled on a quiet lake that was free of boat traffic and home to breeding loons. He found a pair with a chick the same age and introduced it to the family who readily accepted it. As a result, our chick survey is down one loon chick, but this chick had a much better chance of surviving with its adopted family in its new environment.

Due to the efforts of a dedicated team of volunteers, several surveys were conducted: the Spring nest survey, the July adult and chick survey, and a late August survey of surviving chicks. 15 active nests were identified in the Spring nest survey. This data does not include information on second nestings. There were 129 adults and 20 chicks counted in the July survey. 14 of the 20 chicks survived until late August. The ratio of chicks to nests was 1.33, which is significantly better than the ratio during the 2014 breeding season when reproduction was severely impacted by black flies. Since loons are very mobile, accurate surveys of the adults are difficult to achieve. With that caveat in mind, the number of adult loons counted in 2020 is 20 more than the previous year.

## ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO PROTECT OUR LOONS:

- Boat cautiously near nesting loons and loons on the water
- Pick up broken fishing line
- Never cast near loons
- Use lead free tackle
- Keep the lake free of lawn chemicals and pesticides
- Refrain from setting off fireworks over the water where loons are in the area
- Preserve and restore natural shorelines

Let's join together to take these actions so we can always hear the sounds of loon calls echoing across the water under a dark starlit sky.

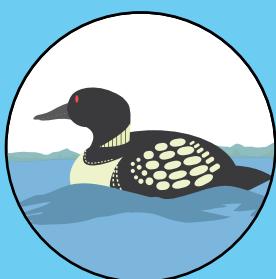
Lake	Counts	Year						
		2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Nisswa</b>								
Spring	Nests	2	2	1	2	1	1	2
Summer	Adults	2	2	1	1	2	2	2
Summer	Chicks	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
Fall	Juveniles						1	0
<b>Roy</b>								
Spring	Nests	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
Summer	Adults	7	6	4	9	4	10	6
Summer	Chicks	1	3	2	2	2	3	4
Fall	Juveniles						0	4
<b>Bass/Spider</b>								
Spring	Nests	2	2	2	3	1	0	0
Summer	Adults	4	3	4	2	4	7	2
Summer	Chicks	1	1	2	0	2	0	1
Fall	Juveniles						0	1
<b>Upper Gull</b>								
Spring	Nests	2	3	2	3	3	4	5
Summer	Adults	6	9	8	9	8	9	6
Summer	Chicks	1	6	2	2	5	2	2
Fall	Juveniles						2	2
<b>Margaret</b>								
Spring	Nests	1	2	1	2	2	1	0
Summer	Adults	4	2	2	4	3	6	3
Summer	Chicks	0	0	0	2	1	2	0
Fall	Juveniles						0	0
<b>Gull</b>								
Spring	Nests	7	6	5	5	3	8	6
Summer	Adults	29	54	49	81	49	73	100
Summer	Chicks	6	8	11	7	9	7	9
Fall	Juveniles						6	7
<b>Love</b>								
Spring	Nests	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Summer	Adults	6	0	0	0	0	2	0
Summer	Chicks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fall	Juveniles						0	0
<b>Totals</b>								
	Nests	14	17	11	15	11	14	14
Summer	Adults	58	76	68	106	70	109	119
Summer	Chicks	9	18	17	13	21	15	16
	Chicks/Nest	0.6	1.0	1.5	0.9	1.9	1.1	1.1
Fall	Juveniles						12	14



# Stewards for the Gull Lake Chain

## Protecting the Future for You, Your Family and Your Business

### OUR ENVIRONMENT



- Lake Stewards preserve lake environment
- Programs to protect our loons
- Shoreline restoration and water testing programs

### YOUR SAFETY & ENJOYMENT



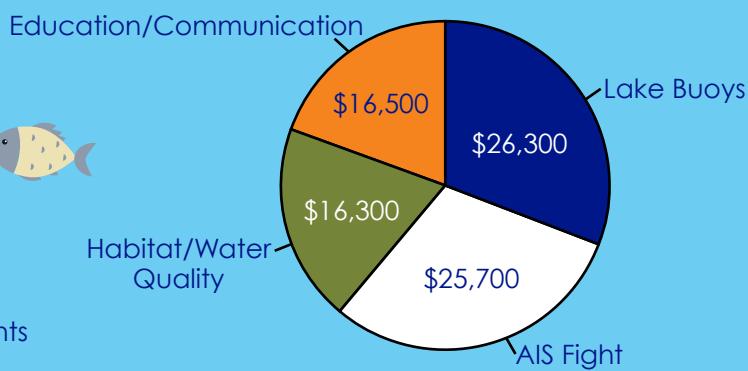
- 110 navigational buoys across the Gull Lake Chain
- Boat Safety classes 75+ kids
- Partner with local sheriff departments

### GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

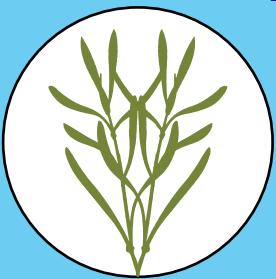


- Advocate for lake issues with state legislators
- Interface with county, city, and township governments
- Share with neighboring lake associations

### WHAT IT COSTS ANNUALLY



### AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES (AIS) FIGHT



- Monitor & treat AIS through lake surveys and spraying
- Augment funding for boat inspections/decontaminations
- Financially support the U of M AIS Research Center

### GET INVOLVED!



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# U OF M ENHANCED WAKE STUDY UPDATE

*Steve Frawley, Government Relations Committee Member*

## Project

The University of Minnesota St. Anthony Falls Hydrology Lab (SAFL) recently completed phase one of the enhanced wake study which conducted the first of its kind, unbiased study focusing on evaluating the impacts of large recreational watercraft (e.g., large ski boats, wake surfing boats) on lake bottoms and shorelines. This project, which was featured in an article in the Fall 2020 Newsletter (page 9), seeks to characterize boat-generated waves created by large recreational watercraft common to Minnesota.

This study is led by Jeffrey Marr and a team of university researchers. Wave height, wave energy, near-bed turbulence and other parameters were studied by placing sensor masts in the nearshore (5-10 ft of depth) capable of measuring water velocity at the lake bottom as well as wave heights. Sensors measured the penetration depth and turbulent energy of the propeller wash. Propeller wash is a general term for the turbulent jet produced by the engine and prop. Working in deeper water (15-25 ft), a sensor platform was temporarily placed on the bottom of the lake. Water quality in the area of the test was also measured. Four boats (both wake boats and non-wake boats) were tested at varying distances from shore under different conditions on Lake Independence in the Twin Cities from September 24th through October 29th. The study ran longer than planned due to the unfavorable weather conditions experienced, however the SAFL team of researchers persisted through these unforeseen challenges and completed the planned testing.

## Funding

This study sought funding through crowdfunding at an estimated cost of \$94,000. A UMN webpage was developed to support the fund-raising campaign. Exceeding the goal, \$137,000 was eventually raised and expenses have yet to be tabulated. Excess contributions will be used to complete other related projects in the future.

## Deliverables/Outcomes

The proposed program is designed as stand-alone research. All data, analysis and results will be peer reviewed and publicly available once the project is complete. It is hoped that the preliminary results will be available in time for the 2021 state legislative session starting in January.

## Next Steps

The SAFL team will be busy in the coming weeks and months processing the significant number of data points collected, embarking on the data analysis and preliminary results. Finally, the preliminary publication draft will be followed by the peer review process where other scientists will review the data and results. Planning will also be initiated for future related experiments in 2021. We will continue to keep you informed of the results from these tests performed in 2020 in subsequent GCOLA newsletters.





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# Dive Guys

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Phone Number • (218) 270-3536  
**BLA Regional Manager • Jake Legato**

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# THANK YOU FOR BEING A MEMBER

*Jane Edwards, Membership Committee Chair*

Despite the challenges of 2020, GCOLA's membership has remained stable and allowed us to continue our important work to protect our lakes. GCOLA's lake saving programs are funded in large part through annual membership dues. Without you we would not be able to do the work to maintain and protect our beautiful lakes.

GCOLA's membership is strong with 948 members, which includes 65 business members. While our membership is healthy, that number represents only about half of the households on the Gull Lake Chain. There are many non-members we need to encourage to join. There are many ways we solicit new members, but the most effective method is you! Please make it a point this coming year to invite others to join. Ask your neighbors, local businesses you frequent, and friends. Word of mouth is powerful. Share this newsletter and encourage them to become members. Thank you!

## How your membership dues are used

Your membership dues contribute to a myriad of items, such as lake water monitoring, loon protection programs, and boat landing AIS inspections. Also, our buoy system is second to none with 120 total buoys. It is not funded or installed by local or state law enforcement, but by GCOLA. Check out our infographic on page 19, "Protecting the Future for You, Your Family, and Your Business" and you will see what our programs cost annually. Your membership dollars are what makes these things happen!

Financially, we need to prepare for what's coming next. For example, in neighboring Stearns County on Lake Koronis they are spending about \$200,000 annually to partially control the infestation of an invasive plant called Starry Stonewort. GCOLA is focused on this, as well as other AIS threats, and we need you to help us continue our work to protect our beautiful waters.

## Who are GCOLA members?

Anyone can join GCOLA. Our members are mid-Minnesota vacationers, seasonal residents, and permanent residents. There is no need to be a property owner to join GCOLA. Membership is open to all who support the mission, ideals, concerns and goals of the Association. GCOLA's membership

includes fishermen and women, visiting paddle boarders and kayakers, resort guests, lakeside dining foodies, summer water sport enthusiasts, and winter snow sports fans, individuals, families and businesses who enjoy using the Gull Lake Chain and want to protect it.

## What are the benefits of membership?

Members receive a quarterly newsletter, are invited to stay in-the-know through our website and Facebook page, are invited to our Gala event and annual meeting each summer, are always welcome to attend or call into our board meetings, and are encouraged to volunteer and become involved with our many committees.

## How to Renew or Join

Keep watch for your annual membership form that will be mailed in January to all GCOLA members and to non-members who are lake property owners. You may also visit us on-line at [www.gcola.org](http://www.gcola.org) and click "Join/Donate." First time members will need to download, complete, and mail in the membership form. Renewing members may renew on-line. You will also find a membership form on page 31 of this newsletter. Please watch your mail for our membership form in January. Better yet, go on-line and join or renew for 2021 today.

## GCOLA Membership Committee 2021

Thank you to our GCOLA members who have volunteered to be on the 2021 GCOLA Membership committee. Your dedication to our lake community is recognized and appreciated. Thank you to Claudia Allene, Linda Harrier, and Marvin Meyer for all you do. The membership committee is seeking additional volunteers for the 2021 year. Please contact Jane Edwards today.

## Questions?

Contact Jane Edwards via email at [jedwards3718@gmail.com](mailto:jedwards3718@gmail.com). Thank you!

To learn more, visit our infographic inside this newsletter, "Protecting the Future for You, Your Family, and Your Business."

*If you use the Gull lake chain for any activity or just appreciate its natural beauty,*

*join GCOLA or renew your membership for 2021 today.*

*Join us as we work to restore and preserve these beautiful lakes, and promote the responsible use of land and water resources so families may continue to build wonderful memories of time spent around them.*

**WE WISH EVERYONE A SAFE, HEALTHY AND HAPPY 2021.**



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# PHOTOS WANTED

Do you have photos taken around the Gull Lake Chain that you'd like to share? We always need pictures for the newsletter, website and Facebook. We especially have a shortage of fishing, boating and other fun activities on the lakes! You will be given credit for any photographs appearing in the newsletter and a description of the picture is helpful. Your snapshots can be sent at full size (minimum 300DPI) to Sue Friedrichs at [info@gcola.org](mailto:info@gcola.org).

## THANK YOU!



*Photo by Leah Stevens*



*Photo by Brittany Svendsen*



*Photo by Eric Utter*

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE – DOROTHY WHITMER

*Robert Eliason, Environmental Committee Chair*



Dorothy Whitmer has been a very active GCOLA member. When the Loon Survey program was introduced, she was among the first to volunteer and has been active in that program's surveys ever since. Six years ago the End-of-Dock water testing program was started. Dorothy immediately signed up to participate and continues to do so to this day. A couple of years ago, she took a Michigan DNR shoreline evaluation quiz, which measures how well a property protects the health of the lake. She did not do well and eventually had an epiphany. The health of Gull Lake was dependent on her and all the other property owners on the lake. Her neat, tidy, well-fertilized lawn down to the shore was not healthy for the lake. She not only decided to change her management practices, but also to encourage others to do likewise. She created the Lake Steward program and launched it in the spring of 2019. The program has been such a success that she is now trying to export it to other lake associations. Dorothy even gave a webinar on the program on the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Associates website. The GCOLA board applauds Dorothy for all she has done for our association and for the Gull Chain of Lakes.



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# THANK YOU LAKE STEWARDS!

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Watch for the Lake Steward signs on docks and on shore.

**TAKE THE QUIZ:** [gcola.org/Get Involved/Lake Steward](http://gcola.org/Get Involved/Lake Steward)



*Jeff and Suzy Jones' daughter Katie with Mike Rorro on July 24, 2020 Gull Lake. Photo courtesy of Alisha Fenn Photography*



*Lise and Dan Herren  
Upper Gull Lake*



*Kelley, Scott and Liz Olson and Jenny Treadway  
Gull Lake*



*Regina McGrath and Leah  
Upper Gull Lake*



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# WHAT WE DO

## YOUR LAKE ASSOCIATION IS WORKING FOR YOU

### Aquatic Invasive Species Committee (AIS)

- Coordinates with the City of Lake Shore Police Department to provide water craft inspections for invasive species at the County Road 77 boat landing.
- Conducts two inspections at 24 locations to look for AIS.
- Donates annually to the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center (MAISRC) for zebra mussel research.
- Fulfills AIS prevention needs including establishing a boat power wash station at the Gull Lake Recreation Area public access ramp managed by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

### Communications Committee

- Maintains a website ([www.gcola.org](http://www.gcola.org)), a member group email service and a Facebook page (@GullLakeChain) to provide timely communication.
- Issues four newsletters per year to keep members informed about association programs and important issues affecting the Gull Lake Chain.

### Environmental Committee

- Monitors lakes and streams running into the Gull Lake Chain for water quality. The samples are taken by GCOLA volunteers, with testing completed by licensed environmental labs.
- Takes weekly secchi disk readings during the summer to test the water clarity.
- Promotes lake shoreline restoration projects by providing matching grants for approved restoration projects.
- Awards Lake Steward signs to property owners who have eliminated the use of lawn chemicals, have a shoreline buffer zone of native plants, and upland zone with trees, shrubs, and natural ground cover.
- Gives 500 native tree/bush seedlings to members every year.
- Conducts a yearly loon count in the spring and late summer and promotes loon-safe boating.

### Gala Committee

- Plans and executes annual fundraising Gala, including silent auction, trip raffle, and event sponsorship.

### Finance/Audit Committee

- Oversees the Gull Chain Preservation Endowment Fund and AIS Contingency Fund which provides long term funding for stewardship activities.

### Fisheries Committee

- Attends annual Avid Angler discussion led by DNR and local fishing guides and outdoor media.
- Stays informed on fishery-related research from the University of Minnesota AIS Research Center.
- Reports findings in GCOLA newsletter.

### Government Relations Committee

- Works with state legislators the DNR, state agencies and local government units on lake issues and concerns.

### Membership Committee

- Conducts membership development programs to recruit and retain individual, family, and business memberships.

### Safety & Recreation Committee

- Purchases, installs and maintains one of the premier navigational buoy systems (90 buoys) in the State of Minnesota. We also install the no wake enforcement buoys for the sheriff's department.
- Provides free maps, with boating rules and regulation, at three public landings.
- Partners with Cass and Crow Wing county sheriffs to provide free boat safety training for approximately 75 youth per year.
- Works with county sheriffs on safety and enforcement issues including donations for night vision equipment, a range finder, and life jackets.



*Photo by Jill Kinsley*

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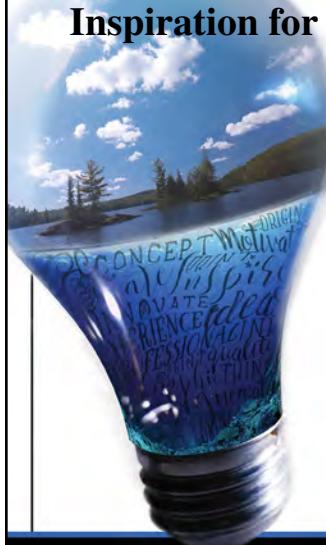
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# 2021 MEMBERSHIP DUES

Dues for the lake association are \$50 per year. They are payable anytime from January 1 – December 31. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation which means that money donated by you is tax deductible. Contributions above the \$50 dues are greatly appreciated.

Please use this form and mail your dues to GCOLA, PO Box 102, Nisswa, MN 56468 -or- log in to our website at <https://www.gcola.org/shop> to pay with your credit or debit card.

If you are unsure if you are current with your dues, call Sue Friedrichs at 612-751-6156 or send an email to [info@gcola.org](mailto:info@gcola.org) to find out.

First Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Second or Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Lake Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Lake Name \_\_\_\_\_ Location on Lake (side, bay, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

**2021 Gull Chain of Lakes Association Dues (January 1 to December 31)** **\$50.00**

**Additional Donations (Optional)**

**\$\_\_\_\_ Aquatic Invasive Species Fund    \$\_\_\_\_ Endowment Fund    \$\_\_\_\_ Buoy Fund    \$\_\_\_\_ Board Discretion**

Please keep my additional donation(s) anonymous

**Total Payment \$\_\_\_\_\_**

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Please contact me via email regarding the following volunteer opportunities:

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> AIS                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Steward Program | <input type="checkbox"/> Gala/Silent Auction/Sponsorship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government Relations |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Loon Programs        | <input type="checkbox"/> Water Testing                   |

## Thank you for being a member!

The Gull Chain of Lakes Association does not sell, trade, swap or in any other way  
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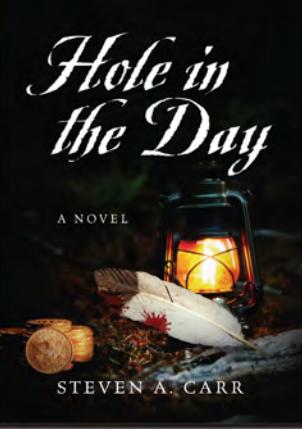
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# MISSION STATEMENT

*Photo by Joey Halvorson*



**The Gull Chain of Lakes Association is an alliance of individuals, families and business owners in the Gull Chain of Lakes in Cass and Crow Wing Counties. The Association is devoted to the restoration and continued preservation of the highest water quality and environmental standards achievable, promotion of the responsible use of land and water resources and recreational safety on the Gull chain of lakes.**