



MLR *Update*

Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates

Our Mission: To protect Minnesota's lake and river heritage for current and future generations by forging powerful links among lakes, lake advocates and policy makers.

2019 Legislative Update

There was a significant shift in Minnesota politics in 2018, and there are some serious implications for Minnesota's lakes.

On the Tax Front the new House Tax Committee Chair, Rep. Paul Marquart is from Dilworth. I have seen him at many lake and lake association events. He understands the relationship between healthy waters and healthy tax base, or should.

Senator Roger Chamberlain, Lino Lakes, is the Chair of the Senate Tax Committee, has a large number of lake home and cabin owners living in his district.

Gov. Tim Walz, a former teacher, has said that he believes that the State's reliance on local tax levies to fund schools is inefficient and inadequate. During the red ink from 2003 through 2011 much of the burden for education was shifted from the state to local jurisdictions, causing a significant spike in property tax bills. Gov. Walz's new budget increases state funding for education, which should depress property tax pressure, particularly in counties with very little commercial and industrial property.

On the water quality front there has been a significant shift in the MN House Environment Committees. Rep. Rick Hansen, South Saint Paul, Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Finance Division and Rep. John Persell, Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Policy Division both have a strong interest in water quality issues, including aquatic invasive species.

In the Senate, Sen. Bill Ingebrigtsen, Alexandria, Chair of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Finance Committee and Senator Carrie Rudd, Chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Policy and Legacy Division live on lakes and are active in Lake Associations. Both have been strong and effective lake and river advocates.

Given the opportunities provided by the change in the Minnesota House and Executive branches, MLR will work to:

- Protect property tax gains,
- Create an incentive for shoreline protection or restoration, the Sustainable Shoreline Incentive Act,
- Remove the sales taxes lake associations pay on AIS treatments,
- Restore grants to Lake Associations,
- Secure reliable, ongoing funding for Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center,
- Increase fines for AIS violations,
- And more....

MLR 25th Anniversary Celebration and 2019 Annual Meeting Save the Date: June 17-18, 2019

Celebrate the 25 years of advocating for Minnesota's iconic lakes and rivers and the organization we have built together to protect our shared lake heritage. **Join us and our partners June 17-18 in Cass County.**

Planning is underway.

Please check this link often for updates:
<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/mlr-2019-annual-meeting>

Membership in MLR

Membership in MLR is proved protection of our core values. Join or renew online. Visit our website to print out a form and mail your contribution or make a credit card or bank transaction online.

<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/join-renew>

2019 is the 25th Anniversary of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates. I, like many of you, have been with the organization since its inception. I wanted to take a moment to reflect back, recognize where we have been together, and where we are headed.

Our Early Years - Challenges and Accomplishments

We worked to drive down the tax rate on cabins from the 2.25% it was to the 1% it is today. We were able to cap market driven value increases at about 8% from 1995 until 2009, from before the market ballooned in the early 2000s until after it burst in 2007. This saved our members many thousands of dollars each.

In 2005 we and others pushed the Sustainable Forestry Incentive Act which provides either a reduced tax rate or incentive check to practice forestry on private lands.

We also worked to protect the potential for property tax relief for conservation easements assigned to riparian lands, thereby helping to protect water quality.

Changing Challenges, Changing Membership

For many years I have signed my correspondence, “please keep in touch,” and gladly many of you do. In 2009, 2010 and 2011 I corresponded with many of you. I traveled up to many of your lake places, met the members of your lake associations, got to know your issues.

Lake associations were struggling with Aquatic Invasive Species. Here’s the sad reality. Once an invasive species is found, the MN DNR confirms the infestation, lists the lake as infested, puts out a press release, and is done.

The costs of managing AIS fall on the local community, particularly lake associations. On some lakes costs run over a hundred thousand annually. Lake associations are also contending with nutrient loading, changing hydrology, fishery issues, poor development of lakeshore, and changing lake chemistry and weed growth due to warmer, longer summers and shorter winters.

Updated Mission Statement and Name Change

In the Fall of 2012 the all volunteer MSRPO Board held a two day retreat. We began with values. What value drove us to commit the time and energy we did to this organization?

We discovered that we were doing this work to try to protect a simple value we all shared, time spent at the lake with family and friends. That value became the “What” aspect of our mission statement, We **“work to protect Minnesota’s lake and river heritage for current and future generations,”** with the key word being heritage, ie., families in a place over time. Escalating property taxes were not only forcing the sale and subdivision of lakeshore and degrading water, but making these heirloom properties unaffordable for future generations.

Then came the “how” question. How did we intend to

protect this heritage? The MSRPO membership has always been our primary strength. Lake home and cabin owners are dispersed throughout Minnesota in every legislative district, even those without a lake in them. There was also the strength of Lake Associations, which in many areas are the largest civic organization in their community.

The next question was role. What role could MSRPO play? The answer we found was that MSRPO could organize a broad cross-sector base of individuals and lake associations to build a grassroots constituency that was not only doing actual work to protect lake heritage at the lake itself, but would be a powerful advocacy force in efforts to advance pro-lake policies at the Minnesota Legislature and County Board meetings.

This realization gave rise to the second portion of our mission statement, the “How.” We work to protect Minnesota’s lake and river heritage for current and future generations by, **“forging powerful links between lakes, lake advocates and policy makers.”**

This board changed our name to Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, MLR, moved the Executive Director position from part time to full time, maintained property tax issues as a core policy area, and added larger water quality issues, beginning with aquatic invasive species, as a focus.

This mission inspires our staff, board and members while giving us clear direction as to what we have set out to do, why it matters, and how we intend to get it done.

Stronger & Successful Strategy

MLR built a horizontally and vertically integrated advocacy structure by forging relationships and messaging through MLR and among county coalition of lake associations (COLAs), local lake associations, and individual lake home, cabin and resort owners on lakes and rivers. With lake associations working at the local level, COLAs working at the county level, and MLR working at the state level we have had a profound impact. We have built the largest organization of lake associations, COLAs and individual lake advocates in Minnesota.

Conservation Efforts in Minnesota Are About to Change - And What That Means for the Lake You Love

The MN DNR reports that hunting and fishing license sales, which have traditionally funded conservation work continue to decline. What does the future of conservation look like in Minnesota?

<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/conservation-efforts-in-minnesota-are-about-to-change>

MLR’s strategy includes:

- Full time lobbying at the State Capitol to change laws, secure and protect funding, and push pro-water initiatives,
- A steady drumbeat of lake, river and lake association news stories in press, television and radio to educate citizens and policy makers,
- Support local partnerships that build capacity and give local water advocates a seat at the table,
- Support funding for world class science to identify issues and discover on-the-ground solutions to our water problems and then make this science available through the Aquatic Invaders Summit, the press and direct communications.
- Use Civic Governance to develop civic leadership at the local level, and build civic infrastructure around water in key jurisdictions.

MLR is driving intense grassroots pressure from local governments up to the Capitol on behalf of our members. We have built a broad cross-sector base between local government units, lake associations, Tribes, and state agencies to address lake issues.

MLR enters its 25th year as a stronger, more diverse and more vital organization. MLR members and member organizations are engaging not only in lake efforts, but in reforming local policy institutions by running for (and sometimes winning) seats on local zoning boards, boards of appeal, state legislature and county commissioner boards.

The value that drives this work is family. We work to leave the state better than we found it for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. That is worth all of the effort.

Thank you to the many, many members who have been with MSRPO, now MLR since the beginning. And welcome to those who have discovered MLR and joined recently. You are part of a long history of regular folks working together to preserve time with family and friends out on the dock. Lakes won’t protect themselves, so it is really up to us. I am grateful to all of you. Having met many of you, and having seen your incredible energy and commitment and capacity, I am hopeful for our Minnesota’s lake and river heritage both now, and in the future.

It is my honor and great pleasure to do this work with you.

And please, do keep in touch,



Jeff



Lake Resident Takes Action to Protect Loons

By Sheila Johnston, Gull Chain of Lakes Association, Environmental Committee Chair
When one lake association member saw reckless boaters threatening the local loons, she took action. Learn how you can help protect the loons.

What’s That Sign?

<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/lake-resident-takes-action-to-protect-loons>



2018 Aquatic Invaders Summit largest to date. Next Summit is being planned for 2020.

Largest attendance ever with over 450 people attending in person and an estimated 250 people watching via the livestream broadcast. Session recordings are available for free to MLR members and member organizations.

2018 Aquatic Invaders Summit Recap
<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/2018-aquatic-invaders-summit-recap>



American Boat and Yacht Council (ABYC) Assumes a Role in Preventing the Spread of Aquatic Invasive Species

MLR member Gabriel Jabbour partners with DNR, Brunswick Boats and the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center to push design changes in watercraft to make them less likely to transport Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS.)

<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/american-boat-and-yacht-council-AIS>

MLR Board of Directors

George Crolick	Lake Eshquaguma in St. Louis County
Ron Erhardt	Woman Lake in Cass County
Barbara Halbakken Fischburg	Detroit Lake in Becker County
Susan Henken Thielen	Lake Washburn in Cass County
John P. James	Lake Gervais in Ramsey County
Mary Manns	Caribou Lake in St. Louis County

Staff Members

Jeff Forester Executive Director	jeff@mnlakesandrivers.org
Judy Corrigan Executive Administrator	judy@mnlakesandrivers.org

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Please visit our website,
www.MNLakesAndRivers.org



MN Lakes and Rivers Advocates - MLR @JeffForester1

Lake Lanao: A painful lesson about how quickly invasive species can bring a fishery to extinction

This article from Dr. Peter Sorensen examines a case study on the long term impacts of AIS invasion at Lake Lanao.

<https://savingminnesotawaters.wordpress.com/2018/05/14/lake-lanao-a-painful-lesson-about-how-quickly-invasive-species-can-bring-a-fishery-to-extinction/>



The best plants to protect your shore— A Case Study

A guide to the tried and true workhorse native plants for shoreline restoration and protection. Examples from Big Sandy Lake and Crow Wing county.

<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/plants-to-protect-your-shore>

Jerome and Barbara Scherek Legacy Fund Honors the Memories and a Lifetime Commitment to Clean and Healthy Lakes

One Minnesota family, reflecting on the times they spent together on a Minnesota Lake, decided to establish a legacy fund to honor those memories.

<http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org/jerome-and-barbara-scherek-legacy-fund>



Babbitt Company Develops Process to Remove Sulfates from Lakes and Streams - Wins "Best Start-Up" in Greater Minnesota

Babbitt Start-Up develops system to remove sulphates from water impacted by mining operations. Their system is one tenth the cost of current systems, can operate year round without added cost of heated infrastructure, and uses recycled carpeting as the medium for the bio-reactor.

The Ely Echo: <https://www.elyecho.com/articles/2018/10/29/new-babbitt-company-awarded-10000-%E2%80%9Cbest-startup%E2%80%9D-greater-minnesota>