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# THE CULLEN CURRENTS

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*Spring, 2023*

## **CLA receives DNR grants for CLP treatment in all three Cullen Lakes**

Early this year, AIS Committee co-chair Carol Lindahl applied for the DNR aquatic invasive species grants on behalf of the three Cullen Lakes. The DNR had made up to \$400,000 available to all local entities such as lake associations, watershed districts, cities and counties to receive state funding for the control of curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, flowering rush or starry stonewort.

Funding is for reimbursement of expenses incurred while conducting local AIS control projects under Invasive Aquatic Plant Management (IAPM) Permits. AIS control projects consist of a pre-treatment delineation survey conducted by a third party and a treatment. Only one application per waterbody (as defined by its unique Lake ID number) was accepted. Applications were selected by a random order until funds were spent, and grant award amounts were determined by proposed and DNR-reviewed project acreage.

The DNR's goal for invasive aquatic plant management is to minimize harmful effects caused by invasive plants while also protecting the natural resources and their use in the State. IAPM permitted treatments are selective for target invasive plants and minimize potential negative impacts to aquatic habitat, including water quality and native plants.

The grants received by CLA are: Upper Cullen \$1,950; Middle Cullen \$1,500; and Lower Cullen \$3,000. Our regular treatment contractor will do its delineation surveys, followed by the required verification surveys by a third party (we are again using Central Minnesota Aquatics, a local company). Then our treatment contractor will conduct the CLP treatments of areas approved by the DNR during the prescribed time frame. The cost of these verification surveys is \$1,000 per lake. This greatly reduces the grant funds available for the actual treatment of CLP, but the remaining grant funds are still greatly appreciated.

## **CLA expanded services: Lakeshore restoration seminar**

As committed during the August Cullen Lakes Association (CLA) yearly membership meeting, the Education Committee is pleased to facilitate a lakeshore restoration presentation on Saturday morning, June 17<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 – 12:00. Locally renowned horticulturist Bonnie Hiniker, owner and operator of Sunshine Gardens and Nursery Landscaping in Pine River, will present options for addressing lakeshore restoration and creative landscaping concepts via an on-site presentation at three adjoining Middle Cullen properties reflecting distinct alternatives.

Bonnie will provide a PowerPoint presentation for the first hour highlighting planting techniques for successful ecological stewardship of the surrounding lake properties. Following the interactive presentation, Bonnie will then conduct a visit to the three adjoining lake shore properties to explain the various completed alternatives while addressing questions.



As a means to build further community involvement while focusing on our precious lake resources, the CLA Board is excited to expand our services with residents' involvement. The lake restoration kickoff presentation will allow those lake home residents to hear and see alternatives for their initiatives while posturing them for CLA lake restoration grants.

With parking being the limiting factor, we would like to curtail the crowd size to 40. Please respond to Randy Steenholdt at: [steen@nisswa.net](mailto:steen@nisswa.net) to reserve your attendance. The presentation will occur on the south side of Middle Cullen Lake at Randy and Carol Steenholdt's home, 6184 Inland Trails Rd.

## Ice ridges: a springtime spectacle

Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

When you live in the land of the cold, the lake you live on may experience some drastic changes. Shoreline ice ridges are one of the things you may notice. Ice ridges are pushed up material of rocks and sediment along the water's edge. Years with little snow, drastic changes in temperatures, and windy days during ice off tend to be the worst for ice ridge formation.

Although property owners may be unhappy about this natural process, it is not something we can prevent. In fact, these natural ridges can be beneficial to the lake by collecting nutrients and sediments on the shoreward side of the ridge, preventing them from reaching the lake and harming water quality. In natural situations, plants thrive in these fertile ice ridge areas, helping stabilize the shoreline and creating habitat for birds and wildlife.



The easiest approach to avoiding ice ridge problems is to minimize disturbance of the natural vegetation along your shoreline and to keep your personal property out of harm's way. This is one reason why shoreland regulations include "setbacks" restricting development near the shore. Crow Wing County setbacks range from 75ft to 180 ft back depending on the classification of the lake. (*Editor's note: Lower and Middle Cullen setback is 75 feet; Upper Cullen setback is 100 feet.*) If you are unsure of what to do regarding your ice ridge, a great place to start would be to request an onsite visit by the Crow Wing SWCD. We can make recommendations on what to do. Contact us at

<https://www.cwswcd.org/requestanonsitevisit>

However, the cheapest, and most effective solution is to accept ice ridges as part of a natural shoreline, retain or plant native vegetation, and enjoy those amazing winter nights of cracking ice.

## Plan ahead for spring burning restrictions

article from the Brainerd Dispatch

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources encourages people in Minnesota who intend to burn vegetative debris — such as brush, grass, leaves and untreated lumber — during spring clean-up to start planning now. The best time to burn vegetative debris is when there is ample snow on the ground, rather than later in the spring when wildfire risk is high due to brown grass and low humidity.

Every spring, burning permit restrictions are put in place after the snow melts. Restrictions remain in place until vegetation begins to "green up" and fire risk declines.

Vegetative debris burn piles are the number one cause of wildfires in Minnesota, according to a DNR statewide wildfire specialist. Chipping and composting are the best options and are encouraged as an alternative to burning whenever possible.

If vegetative debris is burned, all fires must be supervised and put out by drowning with plenty of water or snow, stirring and repeating until out cold.

If a fire does rekindle or escape, the person who set it is liable for any damages and wildfire suppression costs. It is illegal to burn garbage, including chemically treated or painted lumber, tires, and plastics.

Visit the DNR's guide on composting for woodland owners ([mndnr.gov/wildfire/prevention/debris-composting](http://mndnr.gov/wildfire/prevention/debris-composting)) for more information on alternatives to burning vegetative debris.

For more information and daily updates on current fire risk and open burning restrictions, visit the statewide fire danger and burning restrictions page of the DNR website ([mndnr.gov/burnrestriction](http://mndnr.gov/burnrestriction)).

### *Currents on the Cullens*

#### **Deaths**

Bev Johnson — Lower Cullen (L110)

Bill Keisling — former longtime co-owner of L101

#### **Map/Guide correction**

On the list of property owners, please add Jim & Darla Hoppe, M97. They were inadvertently left off the list.

## CLA membership update

As of April 7, 2023 we have 252 paid members and associate members. Membership letters for 2023 were mailed in late November to allow for those wanting to use a donation for 2022 tax purposes to do so. A second dues notice was mailed in March to those who had not yet sent in their 2023 dues. This brought in dues and donations from several more people and checks continue to trickle in. However, there are still 28 past CLA members who have not sent in their dues yet. ***If your name is highlighted on the mailing label, you haven't yet paid your 2023 dues.*** We hope this is merely an oversight on your part. People who have not paid their dues by July 1 will be changed to non-member status.

If you haven't already sent in your \$25 membership dues (and hopefully a contribution towards the treatment of curly leaf pondweed), please take the time now to write your check, make any necessary corrections to your personal data on the membership letter you received, and mail them both to CLA, P.O. Box 466, Nisswa, MN 56468.

For those lake properties that are co-owned, we encourage all owners to have their own membership in CLA. This not only provides additional support for the lake association, it also guarantees all owners will receive important information concerning the lakes.

Please help us keep our membership records current by sending any changes in your mailing address, email address, or a change in ownership of your property to either Ann Beaver, newsletter editor, or to Carol Lindahl, Membership Committee chair. Their contact information is on the last page of this newsletter.

## Curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) management donations update

The CLA Board of Directors would like to thank all who have contributed thus far to the 2023 CLP treatment fund. The very positive response is truly impressive.

Here are some of the statistics as of **April 7**:

\*192 property owners and family members have made a CLP donation. There are 252 paid CLA members so far this year, so that's 76%.

\*80 contributions were the \$250 suggested in the membership mailing. This does not include the co-owned properties whose owners split the donation among themselves. (We don't expect co-owners to each contribute the suggested amount.)

\*33 contributions were more than the suggested \$250.

\*Contributions have ranged from \$10 to \$975.

\*Contributions total \$38,741.

**THANK YOU!**



## Fourth of July boat parades

Each of the three Cullen Lakes will again have a Fourth of July boat parade informally organized by its lakeshore property owners.

Participants are asked to gather at the east end of their lake on July 4 shortly before 2:00 p.m.

**Please plan on making one entire trip around the lake so on-shore observers can view all parade participants.**

For safety reasons, please avoid excessive speed and do not weave in and out of the line-up of boats.

Send photos you take of your parade to the newsletter editor to be included in the summer newsletter.

## DNR EagleCam

The first season of the MN DNR's EagleCam was 2013, so this season marks its tenth anniversary. The EagleCam is live video of wild bald eagles living in nature.

Last year the male disappeared from the nest. The DNR suspects he succumbed to HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza), but it was never confirmed. Over the summer, another male began visiting the territory and the female accepted his presence and eventually accepted him as her new mate.

On February 15, 2023 the female laid her first egg and on February 21 she laid her second egg. The first egg broke during incubation in late February. The second egg hatched on March 26.

At 7:53 a.m. on April 2, the EagleCam nest fell. The chick did not survive the fall. The DNR doesn't know why the nest fell, but after seeing the site they have a few theories. The most likely scenario is that the heavy snow that fell during the April 1st blizzard finally became too much weight for the branch to support. The branch was dead and the nest was over 20 years old and weighed over 2,000 pounds. In the area and neighborhood near the nest were many fallen trees and branches from the heavy, wet snow.

The adults were seen flying around the area. The DNR doesn't know if they will rebuild in the same area, but it is likely. Eagles are loyal to their territory. However, it is highly unlikely that the female will lay another egg this year, even if they do have an alternate nest. Minnesota's nesting season is simply too short for her to incubate another egg. The EagleCam on the DNR web site has been replaced with the FalconCam for now.

## Shoreline erosion? Here's a solution.

by C.B. Bylander, Education Committee chair

It is easier to work with nature than to fight it.

I came to that conclusion again after watching a video on how to protect shoreline from waves that nibble here, bite there and sometimes even gobble.

If you want to watch the video – and I recommend you do – it's at [www.https://wapoa.org/shoreland-restoration](http://www.wapoa.org/shoreland-restoration). Click on the Shelley Larsen presentation. It is just 25 minutes yet chock-full of insight, including insight on how to reduce ice heave damage.

The video encourages “soft armoring” to thwart shoreline erosion. This protection technique is the opposite of “hard armoring,” which is ordering a truckload of boulders and rock to keep waves and ice from invading your property. Soft-armoring is the opposite of hard-armoring because it rebuffs waves but also welcomes them. In fact, it kind of tricks waves into building additional shoreline.

Soft armoring has two main components.

One is the making, placing and staking of willow branch bundles parallel to the water's edge. For those of you from the hippie generation, picture a bundle looking like the collection of scraggly sticks on the back of the bent-over geezer who graced the cover of the Led Zeppelin Four album. For those of you who had more refined musical tastes or are from another generation, simply imagine a half dozen diamond willow walking sticks bundled together with smaller sticks. Typically, a bundle is about the diameter of what appears when you put your arms out in front of you and grasp your hands to create a circle.

The beauty of brush bundles - often referred to as willow wattles - is their ability to impede smaller waves while



also providing a benefit if big waves crash over them. The latter benefit occurs as big waves, which normally would

drag part of your lawn or shoreline back into the lake, deposit the eroding soil into bundle crevices. Over time, enough soil gets stuck in the sticks to create a bed for deep-rooted native terrestrial plants – hence more shoreline and more shoreline protection.

The other key component of soft armoring is slope. Typically, effective soft armoring means having a sloped shoreline that allows waves and ice to ride up on it rather than push against it. This may seem counterintuitive, but the reality is this: the problem with many vertical shoreline protection efforts is that when push comes to shove, nature wins the pushing contest. This is especially so in winter. That's because ice sheets hundreds of acres in size are up to the challenge of pushing dozens of feet of rocks around, often bull-dozing them further inland and thereby creating unwanted heaves and ridges. If you doubt this, watch the video. You'll see examples of how nature prevailed in the game of rock, ice, lawn.

The video makes several other points worth noting.

- **CASH SAVINGS:** Soft armoring is a whole lot cheaper than buying landscape rock and paying for the labor and equipment to have it installed. You can make brush bundles yourself from various species of young trees.
- **ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS:** Rock at the water's edge is not good habitat. Indeed, it is the opposite. It doesn't provide nesting habitat for water birds. It doesn't make good nursery habitat for fish. It heats up, which heats up the adjacent water and promotes localized algae growth and poorer water quality. Rocks do not filter nutrient-carrying runoff that makes lakes green. Moreover, people with rocky shorelines tend to want to keep their rocks looking pretty and weed free. So, some people spray chemicals at the water's edge.
- **AESTHETICS:** Natural shorelines look good. Natural shorelines are what many people want to see in lake country. Brush bundles are a way to continue that aesthetic.

As previously noted, do watch the soft armoring video if you have shoreline erosion issues. Then, if the video resonates with you, reach out to the Crow Wing County Soil and Water Conservation Service and tap their staff for additional helpful information. These folks know their stuff. There's a chance that between their knowledge and our lake association's new shoreline grants program that you'll be on your way to a winning erosion-reducing effort.

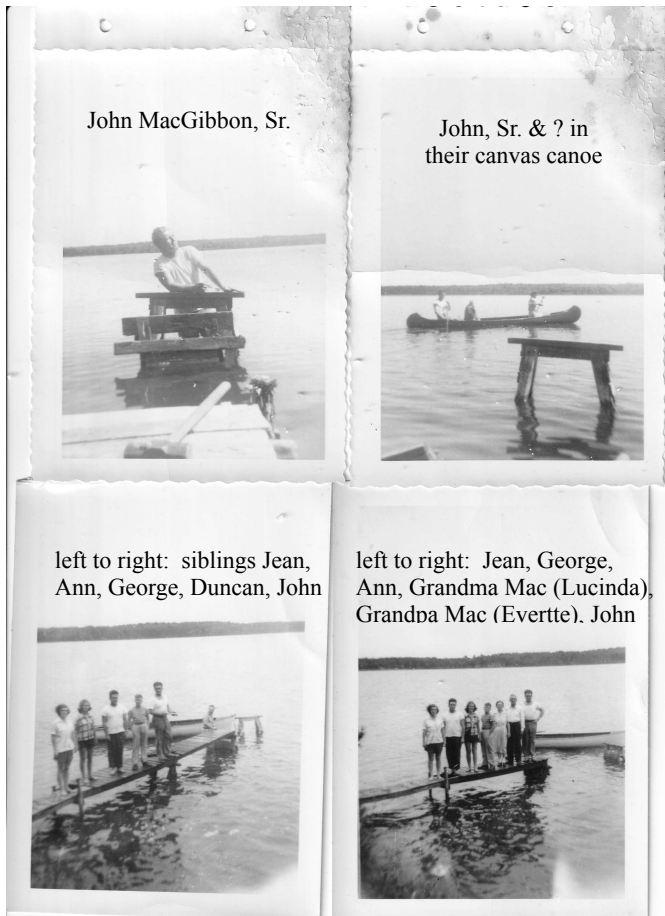
## MacGibbon family history

by Jim MacGibbon

The old MacGibbon cabin, built in the early 1930s, was constructed by a local builder whose last name was King. It is hidden from the road by foliage, as my grandfather, Everette Ellsworth MacGibbon, wanted it that way. He purchased the property from the Quinn family, the former owners of Good Ol Days Resort.

As Mary Ann Ryan indicated in her history piece, written in 2013, my grandma Lucinda would stay the week with the kids while my grandfather worked at his dental practice and professorship at the dental school at the University of Minnesota. My father, John, was the oldest of the kids, followed by Jean, George, Ann and finally Duncan. It was a tight knit family that enjoyed sailing and canoeing, and they had a rowboat for fishing. My grandmother was alone with the kids with no car during the week, which wasn't unusual in those times.

My grandfather's brother, Jim, was quite creative. He constructed the outdoor fireplace in the backyard and also built their first sailboat. There is a small model replica in the old cabin to this day. As the children became older, the family grew with grandkids and it became a busy place on weekends. The kids in my family are John, me, Tom, and Stu.



Jean and Bill Conroy's kids are Cindy, Bill, and Trisha. Chuck and Ann Bailey's children are Mary Ellen, Peter, Kathy, and Caroline. George had their family cabin in Alexandria and Duncan was on call as a doctor in Minneapolis. George and Duncan's families rarely came up to the MacGibbon cabin on Lower Cullen Lake.

In the early 1960s, Dad and his brothers acquired an E Scow sailboat from the White Bear Lake Boat Works. That became the main boat that we had access to. It required a crew to sail. We had a lot of interesting adventures on that boat, turning it turtle at times, and my Uncle Bill getting caught in the ropes led to some intense times. It was fun to get that boat going fast, and it seemed in those moments you were always coming about. Later, Chuck Bailey acquired a speed boat behind which we all got to learn to ski. As Mary Ann Ryan indicated, we may hold a record as a family -- Chuck pulling 13 of us along with some of the Ryan clan. Dad loved to sail and would often call on Ed Judd from down the shore to join him when we needed more crew members. I also remember Ken Hirschey selling Flying Junior sailboats and he had them anchored off his shore.

Another person on the lake that I enjoyed fishing with was Bill Hursh. He was an anchor newscaster in Iowa at one point. Bill and I would go trolling for Northerns on hot summer afternoons and we caught some huge lunkers. Bill knew the lake for fishing and we always came away with something. He also invited me over for some to-die-for homemade chili, as well as some other cooked meals. I'll never forget that man because he always included me.

Lots of great memories from our times at that old cabin! It has maintained its same character throughout the years and I still enjoy the time I spend there. My brothers Stu and John have their own cabins on the lake as well.

***Save the date!***  
***CLA Annual Meeting***  
***Saturday, August 12***

The morning's special program has not yet been decided. If you have any suggestions for a program topic, please share them with any Board member.

**CULLEN LAKES ASSOCIATION**  
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To protect, preserve, and enhance the three Cullen Lakes and their environs in order to ensure the continued vitality of the lakes, high quality fish and wildlife habitat, safe and healthful family living, and the survival of these natural gifts for future generations.

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