
THE CULLEN CURRENTS



Fall, 2020

2020 CLA Annual Meeting ballot results

As you may remember, there was no annual membership meeting this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The necessary business of electing Board members and approving the 2020-2021 budget was conducted by a mail-in ballot sent to CLA members in the summer newsletter. Thirty-one members returned their ballot by the August 6 deadline.

The election resulted in the following people being re-elected to a two-year term:

Ann Beaver — Lower Cullen
C.B. Bylander — Upper Cullen
Carol Lindahl — Lower Cullen
John MacGibbon — Lower Cullen
Denny Opsahl — Upper Cullen

Anne Kostreba decided not to stand for re-election at this time due to other commitments. We thank her for her work and dedication to the lake association during her three years on the Board as well as during the years prior to that when she coordinated CLA's highway pick up efforts.

There were 30 votes to approve and one vote not to approve the 2020-2021 budget.

CLA Board elects its officers

The Board elected the following officers at its August 8 Zoom virtual meeting:

President — Ann Beaver
Vice president — Debi Oliverius
Treasurer — Carol Lindahl

No one stepped forward to serve as secretary, so each board member was assigned a month to serve as secretary.

CLA's Legacy Fund

by Paul Beilfuss, Budget & Finances Committee chair

The Cullen Lakes Association (CLA) Board maintains a separate fund, the Legacy Fund, which receives monies from direct donations, memorials, and estate planning instruments (e.g. wills).

The Legacy Fund is utilized to fulfill the CLA mission "to protect, preserve, and enhance the three Cullen Lakes and their environs in order to assure continued vitality of the lakes, high quality fish and wildlife habitat, safe and healthy family living, and the survival of these natural gifts for future generations." It is the fund's express purpose to improve our lakes by utilizing the Legacy Fund for special projects.

We have been fortunate to have received generous donations from members and families to the Legacy Fund. The CLA Board's Budget and Finances Committee is currently soliciting ideas from members for special projects to improve the quality of our lakes in keeping with our mission.

If you have ideas or suggestions for projects to generally improve our lakes, a single lake, or properties, please submit them to the Board via the CLA P.O. box or contact a Board member.

For example, in the past it was suggested to purchase additional landscape screening for the west end of Lower Cullen along the expanded Highway 371 to create a better noise and visual barrier. You may have ideas that impact water quality, fisheries, or recreational opportunities. Please share them with us.

In addition to the submission of special projects, please consider including the CLA's Legacy Fund in your estate planning. It is gratifying to know that we can improve the quality of future life on our lakes.

No new mussel infestations in

Brainerd lakes area

by C.B. Bylander

Generally speaking, it was a fairly quiet summer on the invasive species front.

That according to Tim Plude, a DNR aquatic invasive species specialist working out of the Brainerd office, and Keri Hull, DNR watercraft inspection program supervisor for much of central and northeast Minnesota.

No new zebra mussel infestations were reported in the Brainerd lakes area. Ditto for starry stonewort. And as of this writing, the DNR had no evidence that zebra mussels from Lower Cullen or elsewhere had entered Middle Cullen or Upper Cullen.

Yes, there were new zebra mussel infestations around the state – Ball Club Lake in Itasca County, Aaron Lake in Douglas County and Farm Island Lake in Aitkin County, for example – but the number of infestations was down from recent years. There is no specific explanation for this but it is worth noting that many Crow Wing lakes are already infested with zebra mussels, including the Gull chain of lakes, Whitefish chain of lakes and Pelican, Hubert, Clark and Edward Lakes. In short, most of the large and popular recreational lakes close to the Cullens are already infested and therefore most new infestations will be found in smaller water bodies.

A few things worth noting:

*DNR watercraft inspectors inspected 732 boats at the Lower Cullen access. They did their first inspections on May 16 and last inspections on September 25. This number does not include inspections by Crow Wing County staff so the total number of inspections on the Cullens is likely higher than stated above.

*The mood was a little testier on public accesses this summer. Chalk it up to COVID-19 fatigue, mask-wearing mandates or whatever, but a common theme among watercraft inspectors was that anglers and boaters were a little less accommodating this year. Please keep this in mind next year as inspectors – there are about 1,000 throughout the state – are just trying to do their job.

*There continues to be some confusion this time of year about regulations for transporting a dock, boatlift, boat, swim raft or the like from infested waters, which is what the Cullen waters are. For some, the confusion involves the cost of decontaminating these items if they are laden, for example, with zebra mussels. The deal is this: if you or a dock service remove your items through a boat launch and travel directly to your property (where you will clean and decontaminate your items yourself) you do not need to pay a lake service provider to have these items decontaminated. However, if these items are removed via a boat launch and transported/stored

somewhere that is not your property, well, then they do need to be decontaminated before they can return to the lake. In these instances, you can expect to be charged for cleaning fees. It is good to have a plan in place with your lake service provider.

As always, follow guidelines for moving docks and equipment from infested waters for cleaning and storage purposes. You can download a one-way transportation permit at https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/invasives/ais-auth-form-lift.pdf Similarly, the link for a one-way boat transportation permit is at https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/natural_resources/invasives/ais-auth-form-boats.pdf



Wanted: Lake photos!

Did you take any photos at the lake this year that you really like? Are they photos that others might enjoy, too? Please consider sharing them on CLA's web site and/or Facebook page:

www.cullenlakesassoc.org and www.facebook.com/cullenlakesassociation.

Caring for Land and Waters

This is the place for the naturally curious to discover so many ways to take care of the place you treasure. Explore ways to love your lake, learn more about water quality, and find contacts to help. It's all available at www.loveyourlake.info.

The site currently includes 36 short articles, each a one to three minute read. "As a blog, the site is never really done," said Jodi Eberhardt, the creator of the site and board member of the Pine River Watershed Association and the Land and Waters Trust. "We just add to it as we have things to share." Some of the articles on the site are: Preserve or Restore Native Shoreline Vegetation; Leave a Legacy with a Conservation Easement; How to Plant a Rain Garden; What Does Phosphorus Do to a Lake?; Protect Your Septic System from Freezing; What Causes a Septic System to Fail?; Protect Drinking Water; When It Rains It Pollutes; and Practice Low-Impact Boating.

Editor's note: Following are the committee reports that would have been presented at the 2020 Annual Meeting.

Administration Committee

Anne Kostreba, chair

Early in the summer I checked with several area lake associations to learn how they were going to handle their annual meetings. All those I contacted were not planning to hold an in-person meeting due to the Covid-19 situation. Our Board agreed it would be wise to cancel the CLA Annual Meeting and handle any necessary business via the summer newsletter.

Budget and Finances Committee

Paul Beilfuss, chair

The proposed operational budget for the 2021 fiscal year was approved by the Board on July 11, 2020, and it was submitted to the membership for approval. The FY 2020 budget is well-balanced regarding income and expenditures according to monthly treasurer's reports.

The committee will prepare reports for the fall newsletter with respect to the Legacy Fund policy and procedures for utilization. The committee is currently exploring investment opportunities to grow the Legacy Fund through vehicles provided by area philanthropic organizations (e.g. non-profits and foundations).

The greatest portion of budget expenditures is the annual cost of CLP control. The remainder of the annual operational expense budget is relatively modest and regularly scrutinized through the treasurer's monthly report. The committee will once again seek CLA members' considerable generosity in the 2021 membership mailing to support the budget for CLP treatment next spring.

Education Committee

C.B. Bylander, chair

The Education Committee has nothing grand to report. Still, the committee provides helpful information to you through four sources. They are:

***Cullen Currents**, the quarterly newsletter that Lower Cullen's Ann Beaver edits.

***Cullen Lakes Association website**, which Middle Cullen's Dan Meixner maintains.

***Cullen Lakes Association Facebook page**, which Lower Cullen's Alli Isaacson of Eagle's Nest Resort maintains.

***Annual meeting**, at which committee members provide relevant brochures, displays, and other information

The committee's usual work for the annual meeting did not occur this past year due to COVID- 19. That may change in the coming year if social distancing protocols are relaxed.

The newsletter continues to be the most consistent and popular source of timely information, thanks to the dedicated efforts of Ann Beaver. During the upcoming year the committee intends to support Ann by providing content that aligns with issues, concerns and interests that were identified in the 2020 lake property owners survey. Survey results indicate newsletter readers want to see more articles on water quality, vegetation, boating laws, courteous boating behavior, fishing, wildlife, cultural history and more.

The committee reminds association members that everyone can share helpful or timely information by utilizing our association's website and Facebook pages.

Anyone with photos or other information they would like to post on our website can contact Dan Meixner directly at dmeixner@tds.net. Similarly, those who have photos they would like to share on Facebook can send them directly to Alli Isaacson at info@eaglesnestnisswa.com. Both Dan and Alli will gladly post your offerings in a relatively short time. Consistent and interesting content is what drives people to our Facebook and website. So, the more we collectively share what we have the more we can build our Cullen Lakes social media community.

Environmental Issues Committee

Anne Kostreba, chair

There's not a lot to report this year due to the pandemic situation. The loons on all three lakes successfully raised fewer chicks than in past years. Some of this is due to area eagles and some of it may still be due to the loons' physical problems caused by the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico a few years ago.

Walkers who enjoy the trails on County and DNR land between Middle and Upper Cullen Lakes were surprised to find the west entrance area much changed due to recent logging. However, the trails still provide a good way to be outside, socially distanced, getting some exercise.

Fisheries Committee

C.B. Bylander, chair

The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic extend even to fish. That's because COVID-19 has disrupted a lot of Minnesota Department of Natural Resources field work, including fish population assessments. The Cullen lakes were scheduled for an assessment this year or next year but the timing of that assessment is much less certain these days due to field work restrictions, according to DNR Area Fisheries Supervisor Marc Bacagalupi.

The last Cullen lakes fish population assessment was conducted in 2015. Typically, the DNR tries to survey each of the state's 4,500 fishing lakes once every six years. The committee will keep members posted on when the DNR's next assessment is scheduled and then print results of that assessment in the newsletter.

The committee used the 2020 association membership survey to find out what members know about the relatively new northern pike fishing regulations for this part of the state. As you may recall, since the spring of 2018 anglers on the Cullen Lakes can keep 10 northern pike but not more than two pike longer than 26 inches and all from 22 to 26 inches must be immediately released. The previous limit was three. According to the survey, 83 respondents knew about the regulation change and 55 did not. It is possible that roughly 40 percent of the respondents didn't know about the regulation change because they do not fish. That makes a certain amount of sense because only 27 percent or so of Minnesotans age 16 or older buy a fishing license. On the other hand, if many anglers who fish for northern pike on the Cullen Chain don't know about the regulation change, that suggests the regulation is less likely to achieve its intended purpose – a greater number of quality-sized fish – due to noncompliance with the regulation.

The committee also wanted to know about people's perceptions on bow fishing, which typically occurs at night with archers aboard brightly-lit boats. Fifty-four respondents said they have witnessed an increase in bow fishing activity over the past five years. Eighty-two respondents said they have not seen an increase.

The quality of fishing on the Cullen lakes over the past five years has remained largely the same or declined, according to the 2020 association survey. Though results vary by lake, when viewed as a whole the survey indicates: five respondents believe the quality of fishing has improved, 74 respondents believe the quality of fishing is about the same, 58 respondents believe the quality of fishing has declined and 145 respondents don't know if fishing is better, the same or worse.

The Cullen lakes were not selected by the DNR as potential candidate lakes for tighter bluegill and crappie limits. However, several nearby Crow Wing and Cass County lakes are included in a new initiative to maintain or increase the size of bluegills and crappies. Lakes the DNR selected have the biological potential to provide quality fishing if anglers abide by bag limit regulations that would allow just five bluegills and five crappies per angler. If there is adequate public support for these reduced bag

limits (public input will be taken this fall), Crow Wing County lakes that could have new bluegill and crappie limits next year include: Borden, East Twin, Edward, Gladstone, Mississippi River, North Long, Perch, Upper Mission and the Whitefish chain. Seven Cass County lakes are also being proposed for reduced crappie and bluegill limits, including Leech. Statewide, the numbers of bluegills and crappies in lakes has increased over the past 50 years but the average size of each fish has declined due to anglers selectively keeping the biggest fish. Today, bluegill spawn at a younger age and smaller size than they once did. In some lakes bluegills are so abundant that even old bluegills never reach keeper size.

Invasive Species Committee

Ann Beaver, co-chair

Due to Lower Cullen's zebra mussel infestation, Crow Wing County allotted 300 hours of boat/trailer inspection time to the lake's public access – basically 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on weekends throughout the summer (16 hours each weekend).

I have received reports from several people around Lower Cullen Lake that the zebra mussels are more abundant than ever, attaching themselves to anything remotely solid. So far this fall, as people in Middle and Upper Cullen Lakes removed docks, boat lifts, water pumps, etc. from the lake no zebra mussels were found in those lakes.

In their post treatment surveys, Clarke Aquatic Services found the treatment of curly leaf pondweed was quite effective this season. They did not find other areas of CLP large enough to merit treatment in 2021, thus they expect to propose treatment polygons similar to this year's, assuming enough CLP is found in their spring pre treatment surveys and other large areas are not found. They compared the results of polygons treated with liquid Aquathol K (what has been used in the past) with the polygon we asked them to treat with granular Aquathol K (which we thought might prove more effective); they found both types of treatments produced comparable results. Thus, we will continue to have them use just the liquid Aquathol K because it is much less expensive.

Lake Management Planning Committee

Ann Beaver, chair

The 2020 survey results were used by the committee to update the Lake Management Plan (LMP). The Board approved the 2021 LMP at its June 13, 2020 meeting and it was shared with CLA members in the summer newsletter. The Plan will continue to be used to guide the Board in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Land Development Committee

Ann Beaver, chair

No land use applications have been brought to the attention of the committee by any of the three jurisdictions (Crow Wing County, Nisswa, Pequot Lakes) that govern the Cullen Lakes.

At its June 9 meeting the Crow Wing County Commissioners approved a vacation rental ordinance by a 3-2 vote. The commissioner representing the district the Cullen Lakes are in, Bill Brekken, voted in favor of it. The ordinance, which will take effect beginning January 1, 2021, outlines the responsibilities of operators to abide by rules concerning septic systems and solid waste, occupancy, noise, parking, and conformity with existing county and state requirements. It also establishes penalties for not resolving complaints, as well as fines for those falsely reporting violations at short-term rental properties. *Short-term rentals will be allowed to operate only with an annual license.* The ordinance will apply to all short-term vacation rentals in the county, including those located within cities.

Membership Committee

Carol Lindahl, chair

We have a total of 254 paid members (241 property owners and 13 family members/former owners) as well as 7 complimentary owners (new property owners). We have ended the year strong!

Water Quality

Ann Beaver, chair

The results of our water sampling since the last annual meeting continue to show the water quality of the lakes falls within the normal range for lakes in our ecoregion. Monthly results vary some from year to year due to weather conditions, but the overall condition of our lakes remains fairly consistent. A more detailed report will be included in the winter, 2020 newsletter.

I want to thank our water testers for their monthly sampling efforts:

Denny Opsahl, Upper Cullen

Debi Oliverius, Middle Cullen

Denise and Eric Whitson, Lower Cullen

Currents on the Cullens

New Owners:

John & Celeste Eide, Lower Cullen (L82)

Ryan & Meg Mitchell, Lower Cullen (L108)

Deaths:

John Hild, former owner & former Board member,
Middle Cullen

Advice from a loon

Spend time at the lake. Enjoy a good swim. Call your friends. A little color goes a long way. Surround yourself with beauty. Enjoy time alone. Dive into life!



Year end report (fiscal year ended 9/30/20)

by Carol Lindahl, treasurer

Income

CLP Donations	\$38,555.00
Membership Dues	6,375.00
General Support Donations	1,250.00
Interest	813.68
Merchandise Sales	60.00
Grants	3,853.00
Legacy Fund Donations	750.00
Total Income	\$51,656.68

Expenses

Administration Committee

Annual Meeting/Supplies	\$ 67.73
LARA Membership	75.00
Soteroplos Scholarship	250.00
Sub Total	\$392.73

CLP Treatment

\$39,984.27

Water Quality Monitoring

\$656.80

Education

Guide/Map Update	\$170.78
Newsletter Postage	475.31
Newsletter Printing	887.18
Web Site Management	302.20
Sub Total	\$1,835.47

Membership (includes property owners' survey)

\$936.10

Other

Board Liability Insurance	\$873.00
Misc.: Postage, PO Box	127.92
Sub Total	\$1,000.92

Total Expenses

\$44,806.29

Current Assets

Checking Account	\$ 3,759.14
Business MM — Legacy Fund	49,302.31
Business MM — General Fund	139,631.76
Total	\$192,693.21

2021 Operating budget

Paul Beilfuss, Budget & Finances Committee chair

The following budget was approved by the membership via special ballot in the summer newsletter.

Income

Membership Dues	\$ 6,000
Donations (Curly-leaf Pondweed)	38,000
Interest income	500
Total Income	\$44,500

Expenditures

Administration Committee	
Annual Meeting:	
Supplies, Postage, Printing	\$250
Food	75
Board Meeting Room Donation	250
LARA Membership	75
Soteroplos Scholarship	<u>250</u>
	\$900
Water Quality Committee	
Water Quality Monitoring	\$700
Education Committee	
Map/Guide Update	\$175
Newsletter Postage	500
Newsletter Printing	900
Web Site Management	<u>325</u>
	\$1,900
Aquatic Invasive Species Committee	
AIS Annual Control (Clarke)	\$40,000
Membership Committee	
Supplies and Printing	\$250
Postage	300
New Owner Packets	<u>60</u>
	\$610
Other	
Board Liability Insurance	\$900
Miscellaneous	<u>225</u>
	\$1,125
Total Expenditures	\$45,235
2021 Budget (Deficiency)	(\$735)
(Estimated income less estimated expenditures)	

CLA Committees — 2020-2021

Administration

Debi Oliverius — chair
Paul Beilfuss
John MacGibbon

Budget & Finances

Paul Beilfuss — chair
Joel Knutson
Carol Lindahl
Debi Oliverius

Education

C.B. Bylander — chair
Ann Beaver
John MacGibbon
Debi Oliverius

Environmental Issues

John Maguire — chair
Patty Hicks
Dan Hurley
Mike Lawrow
Denny Opsahl

Fisheries

C.B. Bylander — chair
Dan Hurley
Joel Knutson

Invasive Species

Ann Beaver — co-chair
Carol Lindahl — co-chair
C.B. Bylander
John Maguire
Debi Oliverius
Denny Opsahl

Lake Management Planning

president — chair
all committee chairs

Land Development

Ann Beaver — chair
Patty Hicks

Membership

Carol Lindahl — chair
Ann Beaver

Water Quality

Ann Beaver — chair
Eric & Denise Whitson
Debi Oliverius
Denny Opsahl

Toilet paper brand loyalty and other septic musings

by C.B. Bylander

While visiting a friend recently at her Pelican Lake home our conversation took an unexpected turn to toilet paper.



My host, a septic system owner, informed the other guests and me that she had recently conducted a series of toilet paper-dissolving tests because a friend had suggested that her toilet paper was too darn good and therefore a menace to her septic system. It was bad,

she was told, because the tissue was so quilted, silky and angel-soft, yet reliably strong, that it did not possess the proper properties for disintegrating.

Our host was a little sketchy on her methodology for comparing four different brands of toilet tissue (it involved soaking sheets in water and monitoring them over time) but she was clear on her conclusion. “Yes, there was a difference, but I am not changing,” she declared. “I would rather call the septic pumper more often than switch.” Now that’s brand loyalty.

I mention this not because I am an advocate for a particular brand of toilet paper. I am not. This is America. Buy what you want. Enjoy. And if you are not enjoying what you’re using, well, you can find all sorts of insightful toilet paper reviews online with a simple Google search, including reviews that mention “septic-friendly” and “rapid-dissolving.”

Instead, I mention my tissue-testing friend because all of us who have septic systems should take seriously our responsibility to make sure these waste systems are doing their duty. This is especially so today. That is because many septic systems are being used more than normal. This is a function of more property owners embracing the vacation rental trend, thereby increasing the occupancy rates of lake homes and cabins that would otherwise be empty. It is also a function of COVID-19, which has resulted in many lake homes and cabins being used more extensively as people isolate “up north” or work from these non-office locations because they can.

As a result, it is quite likely that throughout lake country many septic systems are on the receiving end of more flushes and more laundry and dishwasher loads than in

the past. I am not going to speculate what this means for the future of our lakes because a properly functioning septic system is an amazing piece of low-end technology that uses soil as a natural and effective buffer to filter out many harmful bacteria, viruses, and excessive nutrients.

Still, I will say that today is a good day to check your septic pumping records and make sure you are up to date and that your household use is in sync with the capacity of your system. Systems that are over-loaded, under-pumped or otherwise unkept are not good for you, your neighbors or our waters, the latter aging more quickly (meaning more green and weedy) when they are on the receiving end of human-based nutrients.

What to do?

Consider these suggestions:

- Pump regularly:** The average household septic system should be inspected and pumped at least every three years by a septic service professional.

- Don’t overload:** Reduce water use by using aerators on faucets and flow-reducer nozzles on showers. Don’t run your dishwasher until it is full or try a shorter dishwashing cycle that uses less water. The same is true with washing machines. Use a displacer—even a brick will work—to reduce the amount of water needed to flush the toilet. Better yet, replace the toilet with a modern low-flow version that saves on water.

- Dispose of garbage properly:** A garbage disposal can double the volume of solids added to a septic tank. Do you need a garbage disposal?

- Plan ahead:** Spread washing machine use throughout the week. Doing all your laundry in one day may seem like a time-saver but it can reduce your system’s ability to effectively treat waste.

- Learn more:** Crow Wing County has helpful septic system information on its website. Check out an insightful Q and A at: https://crowwing.us/DocumentCenter/View/576/Septic_FAQ_7_25_11_1?bidId=

My final piece of advice is to generally avoid toilet paper discussions. Seriously, how do you contribute in a meaningful way? Yet if you can turn a conversation toward the importance keeping lakes healthy via good septic system maintenance, well, go for it. It may not be dialogue flush with excitement but it is timely and meaningful.

A friendly reminder

Please help reduce light pollution in the night sky, in your neighborhood, and across the lake by not leaving outdoor lights on all night.