
THE CULLEN CURRENTS



Fall, 2024

Starry Stonewort update as of 9/9/24

As you likely know, starry stonewort was discovered in Middle Cullen Lake in early May. This is highly disappointing because this unwanted form of algae has never been successfully eradicated in a U.S. lake or river. Since May, members of the Cullen Lakes Association Aquatic Invasive Species Committee have been in ongoing conversations with Minnesota Department of Natural Resources experts on how best to address this problem.

DNR AIS specialist Camden Droppo attended the Board's September 14 meeting to give an update on the situation. Takeaways from that meeting include:

*The total size of the infestation, located near the boat landing on the north end of the lake, remains about one-half acre. Thankfully, the algae has not grown to a height at which it can be hit by motorboat propellers which would increase the likelihood of it spreading via fragmentation. The tallest growth is still about 10 feet below the surface.

*The DNR will not permit our association to take any containment or eradication action. The DNR's position is that the best course of action, for now, is to monitor the infestation and take a "wait and see" approach. This approach, the DNR says, is supported by research conducted by the University of Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center and certain other noted national scientists who study starry stonewort.

*Based on the observation of DNR divers and other on-site data, the DNR has deemed that the infestation is too large for hand-pulling and isn't a good candidate for another containment strategy, covering the infestation with layers of burlap. The DNR isn't advocating for a chemical treatment either as chemicals have not proven 100% effective. That's because the algae does not have a vascular system to spread the poison beyond the

immediate point of contact. Moreover, trying to kill the algae with poison sometimes has the opposite effect. The algae, sensing it is being attacked, doubles down and becomes even more aggressive.

*If starry stonewort was easy to contain and kill, others would have figured it out by now. Sadly, then Cullen Chain now joins about 30 lakes in Minnesota and lakes in six other states that have been invaded. The algae was first found on North America's east coast in 1978.

*The DNR has not ruled out management action, but if it does occur it won't be until 2025 at the earliest.

*The DNR will not accept the service of volunteer diverse to liability issues.

*As hard as it is to not do anything, there is evidence that when you leave starry stonewort alone it sometimes does not spread.

The Board recognizes this is an unsettling time. Since only the DNR can permit management actions, and for now the DNR isn't permitting any, there's not much the Board can do. Please be vigilant as your docks and boat lifts are put in and taken out of the lake and notify us if you spot what looks like an unusual form of vegetation.

If you have questions, feel free to contact AIS Committee chair Pete Miller or other members of the committee (see list elsewhere in this newsletter).

CLA Facebook page

With the goal of helping to build a feeling of community among Cullen Lakers, your CLA Board is asking you to submit photos, short news items, lost/found/wanted announcements and the like to our Facebook manager, Ryan Kennedy. Our page will only be as good as the items you submit. Please send them to Ryan at kenryan26@gmail.com.

Wild rice and starry stonewort

by John Maguire

Starry stonewort (SSW), an aquatic invasive species that does not play well with native species, is now present in Middle Cullen Lake near the public access. SSW was confirmed on the Ojibwe Leech Lake Reservation near Walker in 2021. It has been shown to negatively impact the abundance and richness of native species.

I recently attended a day long series of seminars at the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center at the U of MN in September. The seminar that hit home was by Steve Smith, a Ph.D. candidate in the Dan Larken Labs, entitled *Starry Stonewort and Wild Rice: Assessment and Response*.



Wild rice is tied to the history and traditions of the Ojibwe and Dakota indigenous peoples and continues to be harvested using traditional methods. Both SSW and wild rice inhabit the same littoral areas of the lake. Wild rice tends to sprout earlier in the spring than SSW, which may give the rice an advantage in growth competition. Smith showed pictures of SSW and wild rice growing side by side.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe use a Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH) system (think aquatic suction) for SSW control. Some lake associations use copper sulfate or a copper herbicide to control SSW, although the jury is still out on using copper for SSW as it remains in the lake water for many years. The Tribe does not allow the use of herbicides for treatment of AIS.

The long-range effects of wild rice, a historical traditional tribal food, growing in close proximity to starry stonewort remain to be seen.

Common year-round woodpeckers at the lake

Woodpeckers are among the birds that overwinter in the lakes area. Most common of these are the pileated, downy, hairy, and red-bellied woodpeckers.



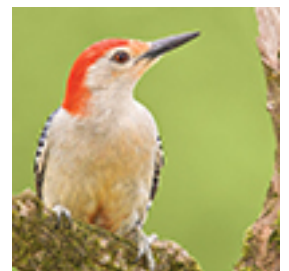
There is no mistaking our largest woodpecker, the pileated, by either sight or sound. Roughly the size of a crow, it has a flaming red crest, dagger-like beak, jet-black body with white racing stripes running up its neck and head, red mustache (black in females), and white wing patches especially visible in flight. Its voice is just as exuberant, characterized by a loud, ringing series of *keek* notes or sometimes singular chicken-like clucks. When the pileated woodpecker drums, the powerful knocks can be heard from quite a distance. It frequently visits suet feeders, dwarfing the feeder itself.

The downy woodpecker is our smallest, reaching a length of under seven inches as an adult. It is a common visitor to bird feeders, especially suet feeders. As it forages in the trees where its natural food source is found, it clings to the trunks and thicker branches, making frequent jabs into the bark with its beak, probing for insects and their larvae. When a meal is discovered, it continues to bore into the bark until it can extract and eat the morsel. Males can be separated from females by the bright red patch at the nape or the back of the head.



The hairy woodpecker is basically a larger version of the downy. Although the size difference is significant, telling these two species apart can sometimes be difficult when they're not near each other. The hairy woodpecker's feeding habits are similar to the downy's.

The red-bellied woodpecker's name doesn't help identify it, as its belly has only a hint of pink, whereas it has a thick red stripe that extends from its beak, over the top of its head, and down its hind neck to where the black and white barring of its back begins. It is also a frequent visitor to bird feeders and suet feeders.



Editor's note: Following are the committee reports that were presented at the 2024 Annual Meeting.

Administration Committee

Debi Oliverius, chair

The Administration Committee organized the 2024 annual meeting for August 10 at the Lutheran Church of the Cross in Nisswa. The committee worked in conjunction with the full board and assistance by the AIS Committee in securing the educational component. Annual meeting notice cards were made and mailed to the membership earlier this year. The focus for this meeting is the invasive species, Starry Stonewort, which has been found in Middle Cullen Lake. Programs were prepared and printed and refreshments were obtained. A.V. equipment and general meeting needs were organized for the meeting.

The committee will be working in 2024-25 on revising/ updating the policies and procedures of the CLA with assistance from each individual committee.

Budget & Finance Committee

Paul Beilfuss, chair

The committee prepared a proposed FY '25 (24-25) operating to present to the membership for approval during the annual meeting on August 10, 2024. The Board's fiscal year runs from October 1 to September 30. Please note that the proposed budget maintains a deficit of \$515. The CLA Board currently has an adequate fund balance to offset the deficit due to membership generosity.

The committee reviewed, clarified, and improved annual financial audit procedures. The committee intends to present improved audit procedures to the Board for its approval. The committee conducted an internal audit of the Association's financial records. Committee members reconciled bank statements and the manual ledger with the treasurer's reports. The committee sampled invoices for proper approvals and agreement of vendor names and amounts. Committee members also pulled deposit receipts and cancelled checks at random from the ledger during the audit. The committee reviewed internal controls to assure proper approvals. The committee is pleased to report that the internal audit did not reveal any irregularities or specific concerns.

The committee's future agenda includes: a review of the Board's current records retention policy to insure financial records are adequately maintained for tax, audit, and historical purposes; the exploration of current investments to verify appropriate earnings; and to review the Board's liability policy to confirm coverage and best premium.

Education Committee

C.B. Bylander, chair

The Education Committee updated the Property Owners Guide, information the association sends to new property owners. The previous guide, a lengthy spiralbound booklet that was largely written 25 years ago, has been replaced with a one-page document that links to updated on-line questions and answers relevant to the Cullen Chain. This new approach reduces mailing and printing costs and makes it easier to update property guide information.

The committee also formalized its loon monitoring commitment with the DNR. Effective this summer, DNR authorized loon monitors are Eric and Denise Whitson for Lower Cullen, Patty and Lawrence Hicks for Middle Cullen and C.B. and Linda Bylander for Upper Cullen. Loon monitors report population information to the DNR on a monthly basis from spring through fall. In addition, the committee coordinated with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to conduct a Get the Lead Out fishing tackle collection effort at this year's annual meeting. Member attending today's meeting can turn in unwanted lead fishing tackle that will be taken to the Crow Wing County Landfill's household hazardous waste disposal center. The problem with lead fishing tackle is that it's toxic to wildlife. Even in small amounts, it is lethal to loons, swans and eagles that ingest it. Non-toxic alternatives do exist. Lead-free fishing tackle is available for free at today's meeting. It was provided courtesy of the PCA.

Finally, the committee continued to produce the association's quarterly newsletter and manage the website and Facebook page. Thanks to Charlie Boudrye for providing the monthly rain and snowfall totals that appear on the website.

Fisheries Committee

C.B. Bylander, chair

Nothing to report this year. The Department of Natural Resources did not propose any fishing regulation changes for the Cullen Chain. The DNR last surveyed the fish population in 2021. It will be a few years before they do it again. Good luck fishing.

Invasive Species Committee

Carol Lindahl and Ann Beaver, co-chairs

I refer you to the summer newsletter for more detailed reports on AIS in the three Cullen Lakes. As to curly leaf pondweed (CLP), the DNR allowed the entire acreage we requested in Upper Cullen and some of the acreage we requested in Middle and Lower Cullen to be treated. The treatments were done in mid May and were very effective. Mid season surveys were done in mid June to early July to help us plan next year's treatment requests. Regarding the newly discovered starry stonewort (SSW) found in Middle

Cullen, it currently is confined to three areas near the public access totaling just under ½ acre. The DNR is still assessing what they will allow us to do regarding it. Fortunately, it has not been discovered anywhere else in the Cullen chain at this time. Zebra mussels are established now in Lower and Middle Cullen, but there have been no reports of them having made their way into Upper Cullen. Finally, remember that if purple loosestrife is present on your shoreline, it is your responsibility to get rid of it. See the summer newsletter for details.

Lake Management Committee

Ann Beaver, chair

The committee, made up of the CLA president and all committee chairs, will meet this fall to revise the property owners survey conducted every five years. The survey will be sent to all property owners in late January/early February and highlights from the surveys returned will be printed in the spring 2025 newsletter. The survey results will guide the committee in revising the Cullen Lakes Association Lake Management Plan (LMP). The full revised LMP will be printed in the summer 2025 newsletter.

Land Development Committee

Ann Beaver, chair

It has been a very quiet year for this committee, with no land use applications on the Cullen chain that would require a variance or conditional use permit, the only types of applications CLA submits comments on to the relevant jurisdiction, and no possible land use violations reported to us, so no need to ask the relevant jurisdiction to look into anything.

Membership Committee

Carol Lindahl, chair

CLA membership currently stands at 249. This includes 234 property owners, 12 associate members (former owners or family members of current owners), and 3 complimentary membership (new owners). We are grateful for the on-going support and participation of our members.

Water Quality Committee

Ann Beaver, chair

Committee members Denise & Eric Whitson (Lower Cullen), Debi Oliverius (Middle Cullen) and Denny Opsahl (Upper Cullen) have been taking their water samples (analyzed by A.W. Laboratories for chlorophyll *a* and total phosphorus) and Secchi disk readings (water clarity) monthly, May through September. The results show the lakes' water quality is holding steady, with water clarity improving in Lower and Middle Cullen due to the diet of the zebra mussels present. This improved water clarity can result in greater aquatic vegetation growth because the plants get more sunlight.

FY 2025 Operating budget

Paul Beilfuss, Budget & Finances Committee chair

The following budget was approved by the membership at the August 10 Annual Meeting.

Income

Membership Dues	\$ 6,200
Donations (Curly-leaf Pondweed)	40,000
Interest income	<u>700</u>
Total Estimated Income	\$46,900

Expenditures

Administration Committee	
Annual Meeting:	
Supplies, Postage, Printing	\$300
Food	<u>75</u>
Board Meeting Room Donation	165
LARA Membership	<u>75</u>
Soteroplos Scholarship	250
MN Lakes & Rivers Advocates Membership	200
Guest Speaker	<u>300</u>
	\$1,365
Water Quality Committee	
Water Quality Monitoring	\$1,000
Education Committee	
Map/Guide Update	\$ 275
Newsletter Postage	500
Newsletter Printing	900
Web Site Management	600
Special Sessions/Seminars/Workshops	<u>300</u>
	\$2,575
Aquatic Invasive Species Committee	
AIS Annual Control	\$40,000
Membership Committee	
Supplies and Printing	\$250
Postage	450
New Owner Packets	<u>50</u>
	\$750
Lake Management Planning (once every 5 years expenditure)	\$600
Other	
Board Liability Insurance	\$900
Miscellaneous	<u>225</u>
	\$1,125
Total Expenditures	\$47,415

FY 2025 Budget Balance **(\$515)**
(Estimated income less estimated expenditures)

CLA Committees — 2024-2025

Administration

Debi Oliverius - chair
Paul Beilfuss
Dan Hurley
Joel Knutson
John MacGibbon
Randy Steenholdt

Education

C.B. Bylander - chair
Ann Beaver
Ryan Kennedy
John MacGibbon
Debi Oliverius
Randy Steenholdt

Fisheries

C.B. Bylander - chair
Ryan Kennedy
Joel Knutson

Lake Management Planning

president — chair
all committee chairs

Membership

Lora Graumann - co-chair
John MacGibbon - co-chair
Ann Beaver

CLA officers

President - Ann Beaver
Vice president - Debi Oliverius
Secretary - John Maguire
Treasurer - Carol Lindahl

Webmaster — C.B. Bylander
Facebook page manager — Ryan Kennedy

Budget & Finances

Paul Beilfuss - chair
Lora Graumann
Joel Knutson
Carol Lindahl
Pete Miller

Environmental Issues

John Maguire - chair
Patty Hicks
Dan Hurley
Pete Miller

Invasive Species

Pete Miller - chair
Ann Beaver
C.B. Bylander
Carol Lindahl
John Maguire
Debi Oliverius
Randy Steenholdt

Water Quality

Ann Beaver - chair
Eric & Denise Whitson
Debi Oliverius
Open

Year end report (fiscal year ended 9/30/24)

by Carol Lindahl, treasurer

Income

CLP Donations	\$41,085.00
Membership Dues	6,300.00
General Support Donations	100.00
Interest	735.33
Merchandise Sales	40.00
Grants	350.00
Transfer from Legacy Funds	900.00
Memorial donations	<u>150.00</u>
Total	\$49,660.33

Expenses

Administration Committee

Annual Meeting/Supplies	\$361.95
Annual Meeting Speaker	300.00
Room Use Donation	165.00
MN Lakes & Rivers Membership	200.00
LARA Membership	75.00
Soteroplos Scholarship	<u>250.00</u>
Sub Total	\$1,351.95

CLP Surveys/Treatment

\$30,279.20

Water Quality Monitoring

\$867.00

Education

Guide/Map Update	\$246.02
Newsletter Postage/Labels	499.92
Newsletter Printing	908.87
Special seminars	0.00
Web Site Management	<u>72.32</u>
Sub Total	\$1,727.13

Membership

\$502.70

Other

Board Liability Insurance	\$848.00
Misc.: Postage, PO Box	112.04
Transfer to Legacy Fund	150.00
Buoy for Middle Cullen bay	\$489.67
Shoreland grant program	<u>500.00</u>
Sub Total	\$2,099.71

Total

\$36,827.69

Current Assets

Checking Account	\$ 2,844.41
Business MM — General Fund	<u>123,591.31</u>
	\$126,435.72

Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation

Investment Funds

CLA Legacy Fund (as of 8/31)	\$ 98,696.61
CLA Activities Fund (as of 8/31)	\$130,796.27

Currents on the Cullens

New owners

Jaime & Shana Rowlette, Lower Cullen (L102)

Deaths

Carol Hirsche, Lower Cullen (L12)