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# THE CULLEN CURRENTS

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*Summer, 2022*

## **CLA Annual Meeting is August 13**

The 40th Annual Meeting of the Cullen Lakes Association membership will be held **Saturday, August 13** at Lutheran Church of the Cross in Nisswa.

The business meeting will begin at 9 a.m., but come early, anytime after 8:30, to get your name tag and annual meeting booklet, enjoy rolls and coffee, view the exhibits, and chat with Board members and your fellow Cullen Lakers.

During the business meeting CLA members will be asked to approve the 2022-23 fiscal year budget and an amendment to the by-laws officially changing the fiscal year from the calendar year to October 1-September 30. Members will also elect members of the Board of Directors. The annual meeting booklet will contain 2021-2022 financial information and reports from the CLA committees for your information. The two short CLA videos produced last summer will also be shown. As in past years, there will be drawings for CLA glasses and mugs and time for membership questions and discussion.

The business meeting will conclude by 10:00 to allow time for a presentation by Tim Plummer from the National Loon Center in Crosslake.

## **Own your wake!** from the MN DNR website

Almost every motorboat can create a wake, which is why boaters must be aware of the danger wakes present and the damage they can do. While common courtesy dictates boaters should control their wakes, there are consequences beyond how wakes may affect people. So, what do boaters really need to know when it comes to owning their wake?

Under Minnesota law, the damage your wake causes is treated the same as damage caused by an actual collision. Personal watercraft (PWC) must stay at least 150 feet from shore. There is no required distance for

boats, but by staying at least 200 feet from shore or other structures boaters can reduce the likelihood their wakes will cause damage. Boats that create an artificial wake for surfing require more distance to lower the impact.

Be aware of your environment and what's going on around you – this applies to everyone on and around the water. Stay away from shorelines, docks, or other structures. Backing a boat up to a riverbank or lakeshore can damage the area and lead to erosion. Travel slowly in shallow waters and avoid boating in water less than 2½ feet deep. High speeds near shorelines lead to large wakes that cause shoreline erosion.

Respect the rights of others so everyone can enjoy their time on the water – keep the noise down, be courteous to other boaters, and show consideration to all recreationists on and around the water.

Large wakes produced by watercraft can result in a variety of negative environmental consequences, including:

- Shoreline erosion
- Impaired water quality resulting from increased sediment in the water
- Loss of shoreline vegetation, which helps stabilize the shore and provides important habitat for fish and wildlife.



These impacts are greater when water levels are high and shorelines are saturated.

Boaters should be aware that their actions directly impact the environment. They should take steps to reduce their wake when

operating near shore or when water levels are high.

## 2022 Curly leaf pondweed treatment was effective

Clarke Aquatic Services conducted its post treatment surveys on June 21, approximately four weeks after treating the curly leaf pondweed (CLP) polygons with Aquathol K.

In Lower Cullen, 20.3 acres of CLP were treated on May 23. The management sites at the time of the post-



2022 treatment polygons

management survey showed excellent control of CLP in all sites except for the one on the northwest shore where an estimated 50% control was achieved. This site had

noticeable active CLP growth as well as controlled CLP. Many of the CLP plants appeared to be newer growth that may have come up after the applications were made.

During the June 21 mid season assessment survey, Clarke found 64 points with CLP. At these points the CLP growth varied from single plants to heavy stands with surface matting. Some of the areas are at levels that should be considered for treatment in 2023 pending confirmation with the spring survey. During the survey, an abundance of native vegetation was found. Flat stem pondweed and chara were found at most locations. Compared to years past, the survey found less large leaf pondweed and clasp leaf pondweed.

In Middle Cullen, 6.9 acres of CLP were treated on May 23. The treatment sites at the time of the post-management survey looked good, with 4 of 5 sites having only a few single CLP plants being identified.

2022 treatment polygons



One site, on the southeast shore, did not achieve desirable results. It is very small and narrow making it a difficult area to manage. If this site is recommended for treatment in

the future, a different strategy will need to be used.

During the June 21 mid season assessment survey, Clarke found 104 points with CLP. At these points the CLP growth varied from single plants to heavy stands with surface matting. Some of the sites identified should be considered for treatment in 2023 pending confirmation with the spring survey. During the survey, many native plants were found. The survey noted coontail and flat stem pondweed at many sites. Compared to other years, less clasping leaf pondweed was found.

In Upper Cullen, 12.7 acres of CLP were treated on May 26. The treatment sites at the time of the post-treatment



2022 treatment polygons

management survey looked excellent, with only a few CLP plants found within the sites. Overall control on Upper Cullen Lake is estimated at 95% or greater.

During the June 21 mid season assessment survey, Clarke found 85 locations where CLP was found, varying in density from single plants to heavy stands with surface matting. Some of the sites identified should be considered for management in 2023, pending confirmation with the spring survey. During the survey native vegetation was abundant. Clasp leaf pondweed and coontail were found at many sites.

## Burning permit Q and A

**Q: When do I need a burning permit?**

**A:** You need an open burning permit when:

- \*the fire is more than 3 feet high and 3 feet in diameter.
- \*the ground is not completely covered by at least 3 inches of snow.
- \*the fire is not contained in either an approved burner or in a cooking or heating device such as a charcoal grill or camp stove.
- \*county or local jurisdiction requires a burning permit year round or for all sizes of fires.

**Q: Why do I need a burning permit?**

**A:** When a burning permit is activated, it shows on a map. The map is viewed by local dispatch offices, law enforcement and fire departments. To provide a clear map for these emergency managers, the map is reset every day at 8:00 a.m. so they know who is actively burning and where the burning is taking place that day.

**Q: Where can I get a burning permit?**

**A:** Most hardware stores offer this service for free or for a nominal charge.

## The story behind a donation

*The following letter accompanied a recent donation to the Cullen Lakes Association.*

Dear Lake Association,

Enclosed is a donation to the Cullen Lakes Association in memory of our aunt, Gene Johnson, and dear friend, Rick Hall, both of whom passed away late last year.

My grandfather purchased our property on Lower Cullen Lake when he retired in 1953. At that time I was only a youngster, as were my cousins. The neighbors to the north two cabins also had youngsters. So when we were there at the cabin all of the kids played together. Now we are the “old” generation and our youngsters now play together, as we have the same neighbors as in 1953.

When Grandma passed away in the early 80s the cabin was passed down to my father, Marvin, and his two brothers, Harold and Wilbert. All of the brothers have now passed away as has Marvin’s wife. Aunt Gene is the wife of my Uncle Harold. Wilbert’s wife is still living and is in her 90s.

Rick Hall is one of the youngsters that played together with us in the 50s and 60s. He passed away due to complications of COVID 19.

It’s not often that a property is in the same family for so many years. It is not common either that one has the same neighbors for so many years. We feel fortunate to have had this relationship with our neighbors all these years.

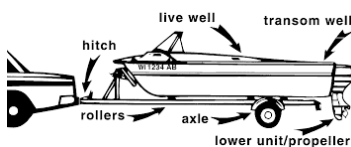
Both of these dear people had a love for Lower Cullen Lake. We feel this would be a fitting memorial to them, as we know it will be put to good use for the betterment of the lake and those that use it.

Sincerely,

Christine Johnson, on behalf of the Johnson Heirs

## Public access watercraft inspections

Due to Lower Cullen’s designation as a zebra mussel infested lake, Crow Wing County has allotted 288 hours of watercraft inspection time at its public access this summer. If you or your friends and family are putting in or taking out watercraft at the public access and there is a watercraft inspector present, please be courteous and cooperate with the inspector. He or she is performing a valuable service for the lakes.



## Is purple loosestrife growing on your shoreline?

By law, you must kill or remove any purple loosestrife (PL) on your property. If the PL is not too plentiful, the best method is to dig or pull it out by the roots. If the infestation is heavy, cut the blossoms off, being careful not to spread the seeds, and bag them up for disposal in the garbage. Then cut the plant off at ground level to inhibit future growth. You can also hand spray the plants with poison. Contact the DNR for more details on spraying and to apply for a permit to do so.

If you need help in identifying purple loosestrife, you will find a photo and diagram of it on the lake association’s web site: [www.cullenlakesassoc.org](http://www.cullenlakesassoc.org) or you can go to the DNR’s website and look under invasive species.

## Caring for your septic system

by Melissa Barrick, Crow Wing County SWCD

According to Aaron Patrick, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Environmental Specialist, “The entire septic system should be maintained and the septic tank pumped out about once every three years, or more often if you have many visitors throughout the summer or larger families. It is important to maintain your system regularly. Pumping the septic tank removes waste solids, fats, and oils that can build up and eventually reach and clog the drain field. That situation can cause waste to back up to the surface or into a home and require expensive repairs or replacement, not to mention posing a threat to human health and the environment.”

### 5 Household Tips

**Think at the sink:** What goes down the drain significantly impacts your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system’s pipes and drain field.

**Don’t overload the commode:** A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, cat litter, etc. can damage a septic system.

**Don’t strain your drain:** Use water efficiently and stagger water-based appliances. Too much water used at once can overload a system that hasn’t been pumped recently and thus prevent solids from settling in the septic tank before wastewater is pumped/flushed to the drain field.

**Shield your field:** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and heavy machinery can damage your septic drain field.





## Fourth of July boat parades

The weather left a lot to be desired this July 4th, but at least it was nice enough by the 2:00 parade start to allow the annual boat parades to take place.

Participation was down from past years as a result of the iffy weather, but boaters taking part in the parades were having fun.

There was no boat parade on Upper Cullen, but a flotilla of watercraft was out on the lake after dark on July 3 to watch Upper Cullen Resort's fireworks.

Middle Cullen was reported to have "20ish" boats in its parade, but unfortunately no photos were made available for this newsletter.

Lower Cullen had 27 boats in its parade. There was quite a variety of watercraft as well as a flag-bearing waterskier being pulled back and forth the length of the lake.



photos by Ann Beaver

## Melanism (noun): an increase in dark pigment in the feathers, skin, or fur of animals

from the DNR's Minnesota Conservation Volunteer

Have you ever seen a squirrel with dark, nearly black fur? It was likely an eastern gray squirrel with melanism, a condition caused by genetic mutations. With squirrels and other animals in which melanism is more frequently observed,



"there's a subset of the population that has more melanin, which is why you more often see individuals with darker colors," says Bob Dunlap, a zoologist at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Melanism can also be seen in foxes, red-tailed hawks, and female eastern tiger swallowtail butterflies, among other animals.

## How to eliminate mosquitoes without toxic pesticides

from a Gull Chain of Lakes newsletter

Mosquitoes need water to reproduce. Removing standing water is your first defense against mosquitoes. Remove standing water in pet dishes, old tires, planters, etc. Change the water in bird baths frequently.

While bug zappers and ultrasonic pest devices are chemical free mosquito control methods, they are ineffective. Plus, the majority of bugs attracted and killed are moths, beetles, and other beneficial insects.

Some pest control companies offer all-natural treatments that are made from essential oils. The treatment is applied in areas where mosquitoes are known to harbor and breed. There is a slight botanical fragrance to the all-natural spray. To a human's sense of smell, the odor dissipates within a few hours of application. However, mosquitoes are more sensitive to smell and the odor keeps them away. Even all-natural treatments can be harmful to beneficial insects, so it is important to check for non-target effects before spraying.

Placing fans around your patio or deck can act as a short term mosquito deterrent. Mosquitoes are not strong flyers so putting a fan or two on your deck during an evening BBQ is a great way to deter them.

For the best protection, homeowners can use plant-based deterrents to reduce the mosquito population on their property without resorting to toxic chemicals. Using the least toxic controls helps keep nature in balance and will establish a natural balance in your yard.

# Cullen Lakes DNR fish survey results

by C.B. Bylander, Fisheries Committee chair

How is fishing on the Cullens?

Pretty good, according to the most recent fish population survey by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

DNR staff surveyed all three lakes during the summer of 2021. What follows is information gleaned from that work, which involves setting nets and electrofishing at night to collect data on the size and structure of the fish population.

## Lower Cullen

The largemouth bass population was good. Average size was 10.9 inches and 40 percent of the largemouth were 12 inches or larger. The largest largemouth was 16.9 inches. Smallmouth bass were also present. The average smallmouth was 10 inches. Smallmouth up to 14.4 inches were caught.



The northern pike population was normal for a lake this size in the Brainerd area, meaning pike are present in good numbers but are not overly large. The average northern pike was 24.5 inches. Forty-five percent of the pike were within the 22-to 26-inch protected harvest slot (these fish must be immediately released if caught). Thirty percent measured more than 26 inches.

The black crappie population was on par with other Brainerd area lakes of this size. Eighty percent of the crappies were 8 inches or longer. Bluegill numbers were average though their size was small. The average bluegill was just 4.4 inches. No bluegills longer than 7 inches showed up in the survey.

Lower Cullen is not a walleye lake. This species does not produce naturally nor are they stocked. So, it is not surprising that few walleye turned up in the survey. Those that did likely entered via channels from Middle Cullen or Gull Lake, which are stocked with walleye. If you do catch a walleye it is likely to be a nice one. The average walleye was an impressive 23.1 inches. All walleye captured during the survey

## Middle Cullen



The walleye picture was much brighter on Middle Cullen, which is stocked every three years with 127 pounds of walleye fingerlings. Walleye were caught in average numbers and their size was good.

The average walleye was 20.2 inches. Ninety-three percent of the fish were 12 inches or longer

The northern pike picture was mixed. The northern population was high for this type of lake but size was not great. Average length was 21.6 inches. Thirteen percent measured larger than 26 inches. Only 3 percent were 30 inches or longer.

Similarly, the largemouth bass population was high but size wasn't impressive. The average largemouth was 9.6 inches. Twenty-seven percent of the largemouth were 12 inches or larger. The largest largemouth was 17.3 inches. Two smallmouth bass were captured while night electrofishing. They measured 10.9 inches and 13.2 inches.

If you are looking for panfish, black crappie will be your best bet. They were caught in average numbers with 65 percent being 8 inches or longer. Bluegill numbers were the lowest to date. Average length was only 4.8 inches. Nine percent of bluegills measured at least 7 inches.

Those interested in fishing for something different may want to try tullibee, also called cisco. Though tullibee catches have been higher in the past, the 2021 survey indicated good numbers of fish from 7.6 to 17.9 inches. The average was 12.1 inches.

## Upper Cullen

Like Lower and Middle Cullen, fish populations in Upper Cullen are a mixed bag.

Northern pike numbers were above average for this type of lake. The average length was 20.9 inches. Fish up to 34.7 inches were measured. Sixty-one percent of the fish were below the 22- to 26-inch protected harvest slot, meaning the lake holds plenty of fish for those who want to keep small northern pike.

Black crappie were caught in above average numbers, too. Average length was 8.2 inches and 57 percent of the fish were 8 inches or larger. Fish up to 14.1 inches were sampled. Bluegill numbers and size were not impressive. Survey nets captured the lowest number to date and only 7 percent were 7 inches or larger.

The walleye is a bonus fish in Upper Cullen as it does not naturally reproduce in this lake nor is it stocked. Still, some exist. Of the few caught, the average size was 20 inches. All were more than 16 inches. All walleye, when aged, corresponded with fingerling stocking of Middle Cullen.

To see additional detail, go to LakeFinder on the DNR website and click on the lake of your choice.