THE CULLEN CURRENTS

Summer, 2024

CLA Annual Meeting is August 10

The 42nd Annual Meeting of the Cullen Lakes Association membership will be held **Saturday, August 10** 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 members of the Board and your fellow Cullen Lakers.

During the business meeting CLA members will be asked to approve the 2024-25 fiscal year budget and elect members of the Board of Directors. The terms of seven current board members expires as of this meeting. Six of the seven have expressed a desire to stand for reelection to a two year term on the board. They are: Ann Beaver (Lower), C.B. Bylander (Upper), Ryan Kennedy (Lower), Carol Lindahl (Lower), John MacGibbon (Lower), and Pete Miller (Lower).

The annual meeting booklet will contain the proposed 2024-2025 fiscal year budget, the 2023-2024 fiscal year financial information and reports from the CLA committees.

As in past years, there will be drawings for CLA glasses and mugs, so be sure to keep the ticket stub you receive when you check in. There will also be time for membership questions and discussion.

The invasive species starry stonewort, discovered in Middle Cullen Lake in early May, will be the topic of our guest speaker.

Currents on the Cullens

New owners
Brad & Molly Spychalshy (L.C.) — L110
Marcy Macaulay (L.C.) — L112

Deaths
Gina Meixner — U10 until 2024

You are eligible for $100 reimbursement

Cullen Lake Association members can receive $100 toward the $150 cost of a professional shoreline restoration site visit and detailed follow-up report.

Several property owners took advantage of this offer last year. Some are doing it this year too. It is something you may want to consider because it's a great way to get expert information at a bargain price. Moreover, a site visit can potentially pave the way toward government cost-sharing if you move forward with a project.

The $100 reimbursement is part of the association's Shoreline Grants Initiative, which encourages property owners to learn about their shoreline management options and take actions that aim to benefit water quality and native habitat.

To get the reimbursement, simply go to the Crow Wing County Soil and Water and Conservation District website (https://www.cwswcd.org/), click on the "How We Can Help" menu and then click on the "Request an Onsite Visit" tab. That will take you to an easy to fill out on-line form.

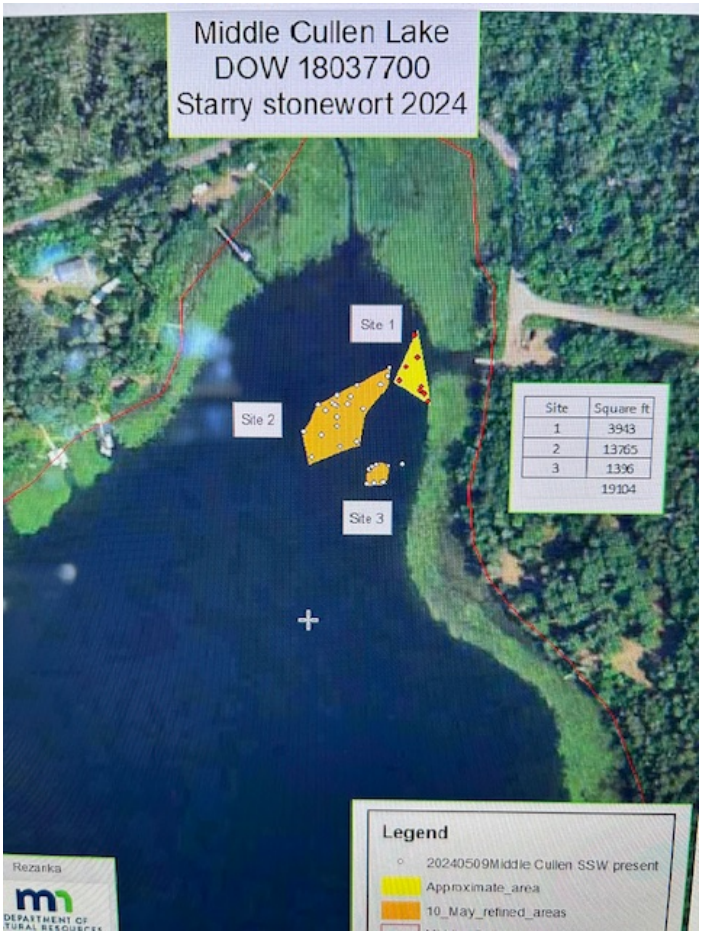
Once you've had your visit and received your report, simply go the Cullen Lakes Association website (https://cullenlakesassoc.org/contact/), provide at least the first page of your report and request your check. Simple as that.

This grants program supports the dreams of former association members who generously bequeathed money from their estates to our association. These people – Lowell and Morraine Norden and Joe and Barbara Hogan – so loved the Cullens that they entrusted the Association to put their money to good use. We believe this program honors that trust.

The invasive species starry stonewort is discovered in Middle Cullen

information excerpted from the May 10, 2024 DNR report on the investigation of starry stonewort infestation

On May 1, 2024 starry stonewort (SSW) was discovered in Middle Cullen Lake by MN DNR Invasive Species Program staff while conducting a curly leaf pondweed survey. Starry stonewort was found in an area approximately 100 feet lakeward of the boat ramp on the northeast side of the lake. Accurate documentation of the SSW beds was not possible on the day it was discovered due to very windy conditions. Continued investigation took place on May 3. More favorable wind conditions on May 9 allowed MN DNR Invasive Species Program staff to do more precise mapping of SSW. It was not found in any other part of the lake.



Starry stonewort was found in water depths from 9-14 feet. No SSW was observed or sampled in water deeper than 14 feet. Pure SSW stands occurred in deeper water, typically from 12-14 feet. In shallower areas the SSW was more frequently part of a more diverse plant assemblage. The map above shows three sites where SSW was documented.

Much of the SSW in Site 1 is intermixed with vascular plants and macroalgae. Site 1 is shallow with water depth from 6-10 feet.

Site 2 is a deeper site, and it was here where pure SSW stands were more common. It starts approximately 175 feet from the boat landing and extends to the southwest following increasing water depth.

Site 3 is the farthest south of the sites and water depth is from 8-12 feet.

What is the CLA Board doing regarding Starry stonewort?

AIS Committee co-chair Carol Lindahl had a lengthy phone conversation with the SSW contact from Lake Koronis where SSW was first found in 2015, the first such infestation in Minnesota. Due to their heavy infestation throughout the lake, they have had to use chemical treatments to the tune of $130,000 per year just to keep it from taking over.

Lindahl and Ann Beaver met with DNR personnel on May 30 to discuss the SSW discovered in Middle Cullen. Some highlights of their conversation are:
*SSW does NOT have a reliable set of behaviors. For example, it flourishes in Lake Koronis but has been present in Lake Winnibigoshish for several years and it poses no threat to recreation or navigation and even appears to be receding by itself.
*When stressed, SSW can go into excessive production mode, so the outcome may be worse than the original infestation, especially if treated with chemicals,
*The Middle Cullen SSW is in a depth that is not likely to impact boating unless it “decides” to grow towards the water’s surface.
*The SSW is imbedded with a healthy amount of chara (good plant growth) which might be helping contain it
*The SSW has probably been there a year or two already.
*Based on the DNR’s varied experience so far with SSW in Minnesota lakes they said, “We don’t know what we don’t know. It tends to act differently in different lakes.”

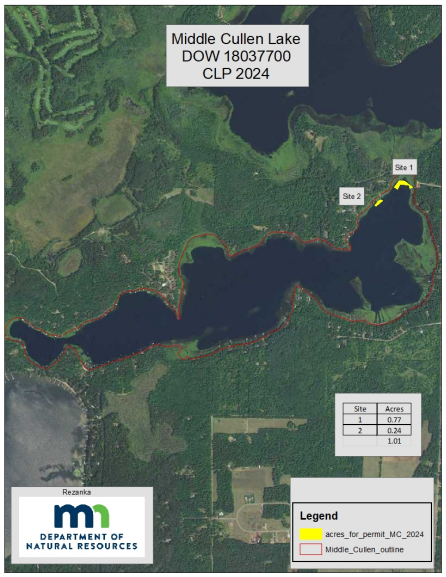
On June 17, Lindahl, Beaver and C.B. Bylander had a Zoom conversation with Dan Larkin, a U. of MN Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center specialist who has been conducting a special project on recent analysis of SSW control — measuring outcomes given treatment approach and size of infestation. His study is finding chemical treatment is not a good long term option as there is no evidence that chemicals really reduce the SSW biomass. Six years of data show hand pulling is effective in greatly reducing biomass.

The Board is looking into this option and has asked for a proposal from a local company for hand pulling the Middle Cullen SSW before areas of it get much larger. but getting a permit from the DNR to do so is not a “slam dunk”, as they have their reservations about this method. The company doing it must be thorough in their approach and not allow any fragments to escape and float on to new locations.

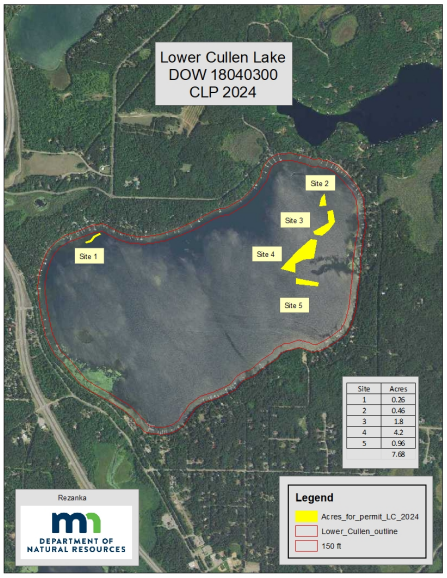
2024 Curly leaf pondweed (CLP) treatment

The number of acres of CLP the DNR allowed to be treated this spring in Middle and Lower Cullen was considerably less than what we requested, but the treatment in all three lakes was very effective in the areas allowed.

The April and early May pre treatment surveys found only sparse CLP growth, but we knew from experience and last summer's mid season survey where the CLP would be abundant once its growth got started. However, with ice out in all three lakes the second week in March, the DNR moved the deadline for treatment of CLP up two weeks to May 15 & 16, which turned out to be before Middle and Lower Cullen water warmed enough for the CLP to start to take off. Upper Cullen's water warms more quickly than the other two lakes and the pre treatment survey found abundant CLP growth in the areas where it was found last year.



Knowing where the nuisance CLP would be, based on the 2023 mid season surveys, in our Middle Cullen permit application we requested treatment of 9 acres, but the DNR only allowed 1.1 of those acres to be treated.



In our Lower Cullen permit application we requested treatment of 17.6 acres but were allowed to treat only 8 acres.

These reductions in acreage were due to the DNR not finding much CLP growth when they did their verification surveys prior to issuing the permits.

In our Upper Cullen permit application we requested treatment of 14.6 acres. Because the DNR was unable to do a verification survey, they agreed to permit the entire 14.6 acres based on the 2023 mid season survey.

The following is the summary and conclusion from the mid season CLP survey report by our survey treatment contractor, Central Minnesota Aquatics.

Midseason surveys were performed during 2023 in the Cullen chain of lakes and clear identification of curly leaf pondweed was documented. DNR treatment permits were requested to treat limited areas during 2024. Spring surveys were performed in late April and early May. Middle and Lower Cullen lakes had very little curly leaf pondweed present but Upper Cullen lake had dense populations. Due to the lack of observable curly leaf pondweed in Middle and Lower Cullen lakes, DNR permits with May 16, 2024 expirations were issued for less area size than requested. Treatments were performed the day before the permit expiration dates and midseason surveys were performed about a month or so following those treatments.

Even though it was a very warm and nearly snowless 2023-2024 winter, there was a lack of curly leaf pondweed in Middle and Lower Cullen up until May 16, 2024, the DNR treatment permit expiration date. Midseason surveys were performed on June 14, 17, 30 and July 3, 2024. Abundant curly leaf pondweed was observed in Middle and Lower Cullen lakes and is documented in this report. Based upon two consecutive years of spring and midseason surveying and documenting it is clear that treatment dates need to be extended to obtain better management of this invasive plant within the Cullen chain of lakes.

Now, the problem is how to convince the DNR to let this happen.

Fourth of July boat parades

The predicted rain held off until later in the afternoon, so Cullen Lakers were able to enjoy their annual July 4th boat parade.

There were 36 boats as well as the traditional flag-bearing waterskiers in the Lower Cullen parade. There was a good mix of boat types and a little good natured water gun interaction between several of them.

The Middle Cullen parade included 24 boats, mostly pontoons. As usual, everyone seemed to be having a good time.

How safe is your well water?

by Debi Oliverius

You and a licensed well contractor have important roles in keeping your well safe. Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) recommends that you 1) test your well, 2) inspect your well, 3) protect your well, and 4) seal any unused wells.

In regard to testing, both natural sources and human activities can contaminate a well. MDH recommends using an accredited laboratory to test your water. According to the MDH the water should be tested annually for coliform bacteria and every other year for nitrates. Other contaminants such as lead, manganese, arsenic and fluoride are recommended to be tested at least one time.

The well should be inspected for any cracks in the well casing and ensuring the cap is securely attached to the casing. Keeping your well area free of ground debris, ponding water, animal waste and chemicals will help to protect the safeness of the water. Protect your well from any vehicles or machinery that could hit or run into the above ground well pipe. In case of damage, call a licensed well contractor. The well can be flushed, water cleaned and a new casing and cap can be installed.

Resources to utilize may include the following:
*www.health.state.mn.us/welltesting
*www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/construction/handbook.pdf
*www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/labmap.pdf
*www.awlab.com

Is purple loosestrife growing on your shoreline?

This is your yearly reminder that 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. If you choose to poison the plants, contact the DNR for more details on spraying and to apply for a permit to do so. You do not need a permit to hand remove the plants or cut them back.

If you need help identifying purple loosestrife, you will find helpful information on the DNR website — dnr.state.mn.us — under “Invasive species, aquatic invasive species.”

A bit of Cullen Lakes history

Last member of the Cullen Lakes Property Owners Association organizing committee dies

Arlene Rice, Nominating Committee chair of the 1981 Organizing Committee of the Cullen Lakes Property Owners Association (CLPOA), now the Cullen Lakes Association (CLA), died on May 27, 2024 at the age of 94. Arlene was a resident on Middle Cullen Lake from 1978 to 2012. Her husband, Ted, died in 2006. She served on the CLPOA board of directors for four years, serving one year as president and two years as treasurer.

The CLPOA Organizing Committee was made up of Bernice and Les Loomer (LC), Helga and Bill Maucker (LC), Arlene and Ted Rice (MC), Tyrola and Paul Smith (LC), and Dorine (Dee) and Harold Weber (LC?). Dee Weber, Bernice Loomer, Bill Maucker, Arlene Rice, and Paul Smith went on to serve on the 14 member first board of directors.

Midsummer loon report

Upper Cullen: 2 pairs of adults, 3 chicks
Middle Cullen: 1 single and 2 pairs of adults, 1 chick
(also 2 trumpeter swans with 4 chicks)
Lower Cullen: 3 pairs of adults, 3 chicks

Loons and lead poisoning

Loons routinely swallow small pieces of gravel on the bottom of lakes. The gravel passes to their stomach and helps in digestion like grit in the stomach of a chicken. When fishing tackle is lost in the course of fishing and drops to the bottom of the lake, it can be picked up by loons or other waterfowl. Some loons also swallow fishing jigs when they mistake them for minnows As the lead tackle is exposed to the acids of the stomach and to other pebbles, lead enters the bird's system and slowly poisons the bird. It's not a pretty or quick death.

There are inexpensive and safer alternatives to lead tackle available at many fishing equipment stores.

Your tackle box is likely filled with many lead jigs, weights, and other fishing tackle. You may bring your old lead fishing tackle to the CLA annual membership meeting on August 10 and CLA will properly dispose of it. Ask your local retailer for lead free tackle. If they don't have any, go to the MPCA web site (pca.state.mn.us)where you can find a long list of companies that sell it.

Six at-home bear wise basics

from **bearwise.org**

There have been increasing numbers of bear encounters so far this summer, so heed these reminders. This youngster was recently on the back steps of a Lower Cullen Lake cabin. It later checked out garbage containers along Wilderness Road.

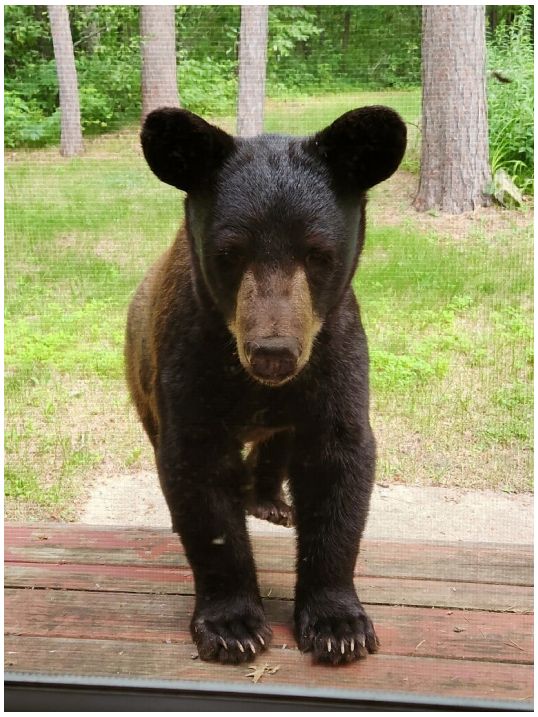


photo by Joe Hogan

***Never feed or approach bears** Intentionally feeding bears or allowing them to find anything that smells or tastes like food teaches them to approach homes and people looking for more. Bears will defend themselves if a person gets too close, so don't risk your safety and theirs!

***Secure food, garbage and recycling** Food and food odors attract bears, so don't reward them with easily available food, liquids or garbage.

***Remove bird feeders when bears are active** Birdseed and grains have lots of calories, so they're very attractive to bears.

***Never leave pet food outdoors** If you must feed pets outside, feed in single portions and remove food and bowls after feeding. Store pet food where bears can't see or smell it.

***Clean grills** Clean grills after each use and make sure that all grease, fat and food particles are removed.

***Alert neighbors to bear activity** If you see bears or evidence of bear activity in the area, tell your neighbors and share information on how to avoid bear conflicts.

Bears have adapted to living near people; now it's up to us to adapt to living near bears.