

Cook County Coalition of Lake Associations (CCCOLA)

- 30th Anniversary Reflection and Celebration
- September 12, 2024



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

— Margaret Mead





The Beginning Years: 1991-1995

- ▶ The Cook County Coalition of Lake Associations was officially chartered in 1994, but organization was beginning to take shape as early as 1991 with the start of communications between Phil Serrin (West Bearskin Lake) and George Carlson (Poplar Lake). George was organizing a startup group named the Gunflint Trail Council.
- ▶ The Council's purpose was to improve communications up and down the Gunflint Trail among private property owners, organizations already formed such as the West Bearskin Property Owners, and various outfitters.
- ▶ After 2 years, the council folded due to lack of participation,

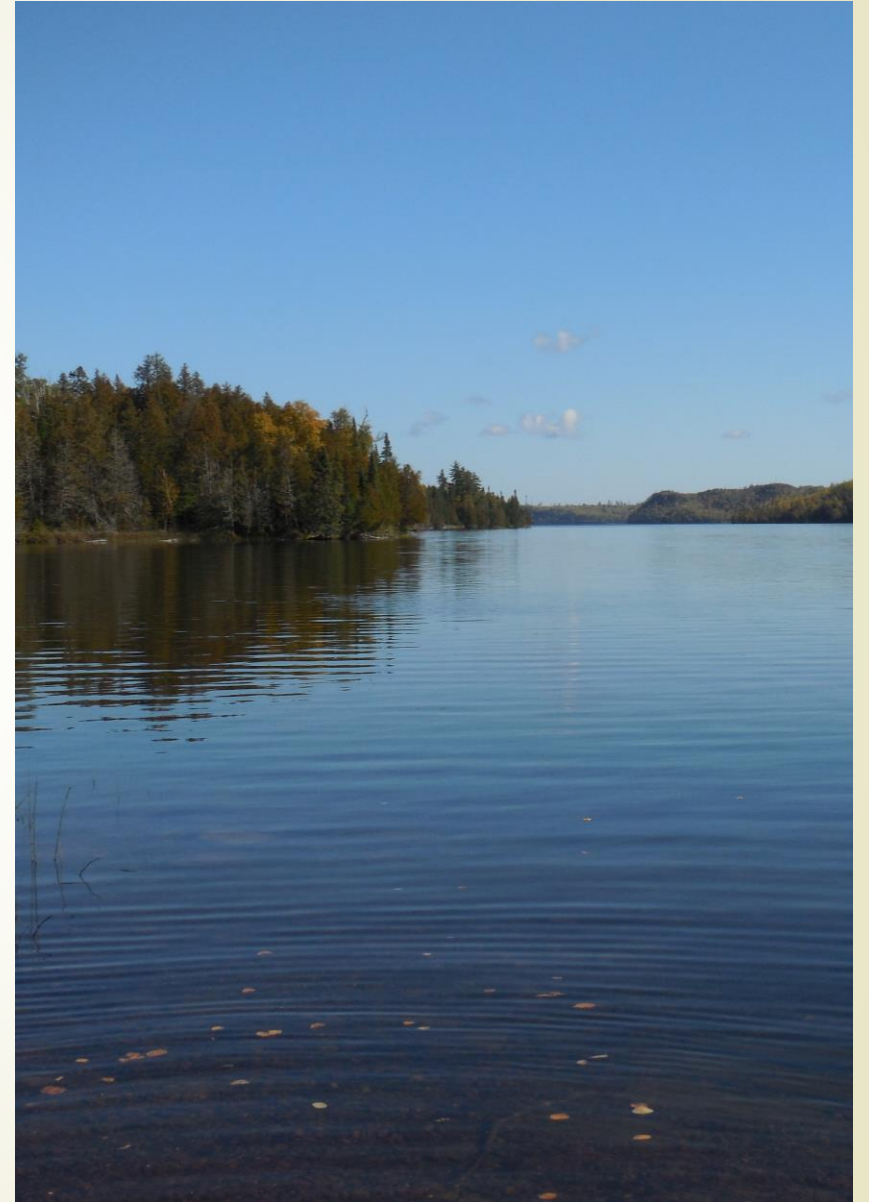


Phil Serrin's Leadership

- ▶ Phil Serrin, of West Bearskin Lake committed himself and his neighbors to fighting what they perceived as an unfair tax structure favoring year-round lakeshore property owners and penalizing seasonal residents. He sought parity between the two groups.
- ▶ Phil affiliated with a statewide organization having similar tax concerns and a growing awareness about the deterioration of lakes based on studies by the DNR. Some of these studies indicated that healthy lakes influence property values— a powerful incentive for Lake Property Owners to get involved in activities we now call stewardship.
- ▶ Over the next few years, Phil worked to convince people that organizing around common goals would be the pathway to achieving those goals whether they be a fair tax structure or water quality issues.

CCCoLA Chartered in 1994

- ▶ Phil Serrin obtained model bylaws and Articles of Incorporation from similar groups around the State and applied for non-profit status. The Cook County Coalition of Lake Associations was officially chartered on August 26, 1994.
- ▶ Original CCCoLA Charter Members were Caribou, Clearwater, Gunflint, Seagull/Saganaga, West Bearskin, and a group of lakes called the Mid-Trail Property Owners Association. Dues were set at \$50/organization and \$5/individual.
- ▶ The stated purpose of CCCoLA was “the preservation and enhancement of the quality of life on and adjacent to the lakes, rivers, and streams of Cook County, the promotion of a sense of community, the education of its members and others on issues of concern to lake shore property owners, the monitoring of water quality and management, and reporting of observations and findings to its members and other interested persons.”





CCCoLA was and continues to create a culture of stewardship

- ▶ While CCCoLA members still had concerns about how the County was assessing lakeshore property, environmental legislation was moving through the Legislature which would have profound impacts on the management of Minnesota's water resources.
- ▶ The new environmental rules and regulations provided CCCoLA with a "lake stewardship" agenda which continues to this day. With the help of the County Water Planner and personnel from the County Soil and Water Conservation District, CCCoLA designed and offered programs and workshops that focused on the substance of these mandates, especially lakeshore management.

Support from Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

- It is important to note that from early on, CCCoLA has been supported by the Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District and by the MPCA.
- CCSWD has been instrumental in coordinating the lake water testing program and providing leadership for numerous initiatives to study and protect lake and shoreland quality.
- Former MPCA Staff person, Karen Evens, who lives in Cook County, has been integral to understanding lake quality issues.
- Their input, and guidance from these agencies helped shape CCCoLA's emerging concern for water quality and shoreland development and continues to be an invaluable source of information and connection.





Ilena Hansel,
Cook County Soil and
Water District Director

- ▶ Over the years the CCSWCD has been able to support the efforts of CCCoLA with water monitoring, education and outreach, attended meetings, shared information, watershed planning, aquatic invasive species, and other opportunities as they arise.
- ▶ Cook County Soil and water Conservation District thanks the members of the Cook County Coalition of Lake Associations and the members of the individual lake associations for all the hard work over the years and their efforts in promoting stewardship for benefiting soil and water quality.

Affiliation with Minnesota Lakes & Rivers and the Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations

- ▶ CCCoLA's long association with Minnesota Lakes and Rivers and Minnesota Coalition of Lake Associations has been integral to its engagement with Statewide initiatives to preserve and protect waters and shorelands.
- ▶ MLR provides research data, coordination among Lake Associations throughout Minnesota, legislative lobbying for issues affecting lakeshore property owners, and hosting of the CCCoLA website.
- ▶ MLR Executive Director, Jeff Forester has been a helpful advisor on matters of legislative engagement and working collectively toward effective outcomes.





Persistent Threats to Waters and Shorelands

- ▶ By 2004, when Linda Hendrickson from Hungry Jack became Chairperson, the scope of the CCCoLA's concerns expanded to include issues of land exchanges, salt on roads, surface water conflicts, and use of chemicals under powerlines.
- ▶ In 2006 CCCoLA dealt with perceived septic system problems, commented on the inadequacy of the Department of Natural Resources current lakeshore zoning regulations, saw a need for more environmental sensitivity in County road construction and worked extensively on the new County zoning ordinance which affects lakeshore development.
- ▶ A major issue of concern has been and continues to be requiring point-of-sale inspections of septic systems. Failing septic systems threaten lake health and contaminate waters that many lakeshore residents rely on for drinking and household uses
- ▶ Other issues continue to emerge: the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species, wildlife poisoning caused by lead tackle, shoreline erosion caused by wake boats, micro plastics in the air and water, shoreland damage caused by OHV's, and others.

Tangible Solutions

- ▶ Through studying these issues, consulting with experts, thoughtful discussion, and working with like-minded organizations and governmental bodies, CCCoLA members have and continue to seek tangible solutions to problems that threaten the health of Cook County's waters and shorelands.





A Few Examples

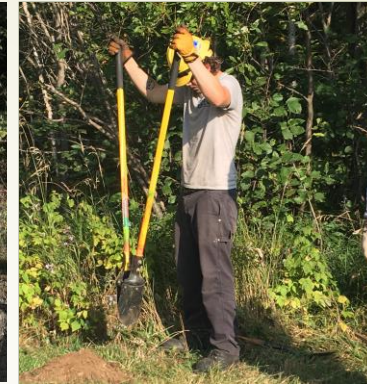
Caribou Lake

- ▶ After several years of research, documentation, and working with the County, Caribou Lake Association succeeded in its efforts to limit the use of wake boats on Caribou. The diligent efforts of Irene and Larry Mullen were key to achieving this goal.
- ▶ Cook County passed a surface water ordinance in May of 2024 to make sure wake boats aren't stirring up sediments, destroying loon habitat, or eroding shorelines on Caribou Lake. In addition to protecting wildlife, waters, and shorelines, this wake boat ordinance increases safety on lakes. Cook County was the first in the State to pass such an ordinance.

Tait Lake

- ▶ Through studying and publicizing the problems that would arise due to a proposed gravel pit /asphalt plant in their vicinity, the Tait Lake Association and property owners effectively halted the project. CCCoLA members advocated for this outcome.
- ▶ Ultimately, the Association members purchased the property in 2023 and placed it in a conservation land trust thereby protecting the site from future development and protecting the land and waters for wildlife and future generations.

Conservation Corps Members Assist
Loon Lake Road Association
Members Kathy and Wayne Bogen
with AIS Sign Installation



Outreach and Education

- ▶ From its early days, CCCoLA members have taken an active role in educating lakeshore property owners and the community about strategies for lake preservation and protection.
- ▶ Workshops, articles in the Cook County New Herald, radio interviews, on WTIP, booths at community events such as the Fisherman's Picnic, and information shared at Lake Association meetings are among the many ways that CCCoLA continues to reach out to the community.



Water Quality Workshop

June 19, 2007

The Water Quality Workshop sponsored by CCCoLA took place at Rockwood Lodge on June 19, 2007

Presenters included:

- ❑ Peder Otterson, principal investigator, North Central Lakes Project
- ❑ Tim Nelson, director, Cook County Zoning and Planning
- ❑ Cliff Bentley, hydrologist with the MN Department of Natural Resources
- ❑ Karen Evens, staff member of the MN Pollution Control Agency
- ❑ Dave Stark, coordinator, Cook County Water Plan



County and State Staff Partner with CCCoLA to Share Expertise and Address Water Quality Issues Together

► Pictured here from left to right. Rebecca Wiinanen, (Cook County SWD), Dave Stark Cook County SWD), Peder Otterson DNR), Karen Evens (MPCA), Cliff Bentley (DNR)

Photo taken outside of Rockwood Lodge at the Water Quality Workshop June 19, 2007



Booth at Fisherman's Picnic

- ▶ Carrie Framsted spearheaded the initiative to have a presence at Fisherman's Picnic and other events.
- ▶ Since 2022, CCCoLA members have staffed a booth to educate the public about important water and shoreland issues such as proper septic care, use of non-lead tackle, healthy shorelines, and preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species. The "spinning question wheel" is quite a draw for young people and adults alike!





Steering Committee Established


In June of 2023, the CCCoLA by-laws were amended to establish a Steering Committee leadership model. Steering Committee include a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and up to 3 other members who commit to providing key leadership functions for CCCoLA. The Steering Committee's duties include:

- ❑ establishing meeting agendas and leading the meetings.
- ❑ arranging for meeting space or virtual meetings and presenters
- ❑ maintaining communication with key partners, members, and the community

Also in 2023, CCCoLA members began meeting monthly throughout the year with the November-May meetings being held virtually. Every other month, members met in their Action Groups.

This year-round engagement provided opportunity for people to:

- ❑ dig deeper into the issues
- ❑ build relationships with key partners
- ❑ become more involved in legislative strategies to address areas of focus



Action Committees Address Specific Focus Areas

To better focus efforts on specific action areas, 4 Action Groups were formed:

- ▶ Septic system compliance and care
- ▶ Lead tackle abatement and exchange “Get the Lead Out”
- ▶ Aquatic Invasive Species mitigation
- ▶ Surface water issues

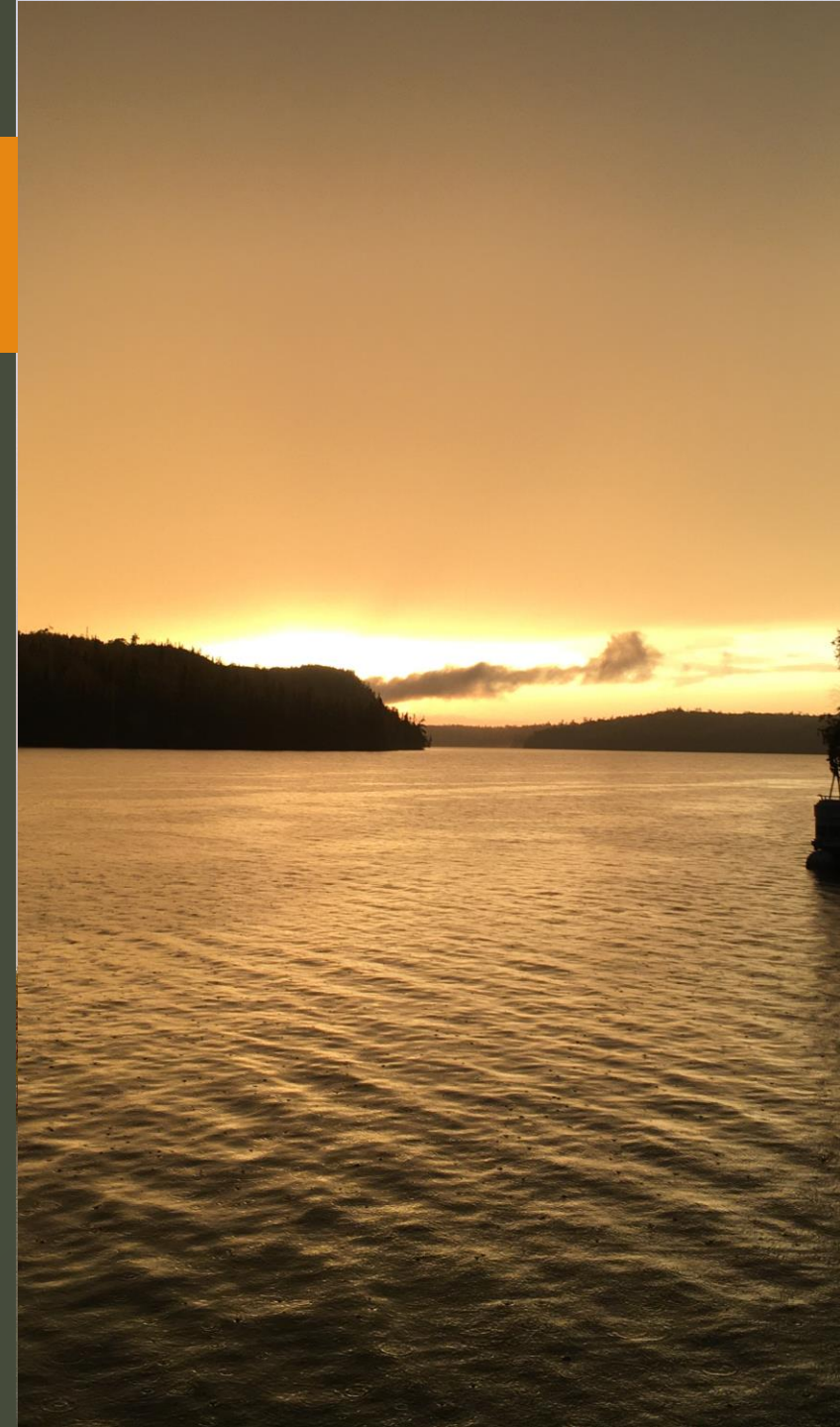
These projects involve public outreach and coordination with governmental entities with the expertise, resources and authority to support effective initiatives.

Involvement of key individuals has strengthened our understanding of issues and how CCCoLA members can be effective in addressing them:

- ▶ CCSD Director, Ilena Hansel
- ▶ Cook County AIS Coordinator, Amanda Weberg
- ▶ Cook County 4th District Commissioner, Ann Sullivan
- ▶ Cook County Land Services staff members Tim Nelson, Neva Maxwell, and Mitch Everson
- ▶ Jeff Forester and staff of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers

A legacy to honor, a future to protect

- ▶ From its inception, CCCoLA has succeeded in engaging lakeshore property owners and others in better understanding and advocating for measures that will protect and preserve the pristine waters and shorelands of Cook County.
- ▶ While CCCoLA continues to address ongoing issues, the future will include the most critical threat which is climate change and its impacts upon our resources. Collectively, we can begin to develop resilience strategies to protect and preserve the lakes and shorelands for future generations.





With Gratitude

- ▶ To all CCCoLA members past and present who have dedicated time, thought, and effort to living out the mission of CCCoLA
- ▶ For the leadership of past Presidents Phil Serrin, Linda Hendrickson, Biz Clark, Irene Mullen, and all who have served as officers over the years.
- ▶ To the staff of Cook County Land Services whose generosity in sharing their expertise has supported CCCoLA's community outreach efforts
- ▶ To Ilena Hansel and staff at Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District for their partnership in protection of the waters and shorelands
- ▶ To Amanda Weberg for including CCCoLA in her innovative approaches to mitigating the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species in Cook County
- ▶ To Ann Sullivan, 4th District County Commissioner, for listening to the concerns of CCCoLA members, advocacy, connection, and serving her constituents
- ▶ To Jeff Forrester and staff at Minnesota Lakes and Rivers for their work advocating for waters and shorelands statewide and in the legislature
- ▶ A special thanks to Biz Clark for her leadership in CCCoLA over the years and thoughtfully summarizing the archives for this presentation.