

MEETING MINUTES: CCCoLA, FEBRUARY 12, 2026

PRESENT: BETSY BLUME (DEVIL TRACK), KATHY BOGEN (LOON LAKE ROAD ASSOCIATION), BARB BOTTGER (HUNGRY JACK LAKE), BIZ CLARK (POPLAR LAKE), PATTI CRADDOCK (POPLAR LAKE), DAVE HOLT (WHITE IRON CHAIN OF LAKES (WICOLA)Gail Gieseke (Greenwood Lake), Wolfgang Greiner (Devil Track), Rory Laiho (South Greenwood Lake Homeowners), Doug Laiho (South Greenwood Lake Homeowners), MARGRE LIND MILLS (PIKE LAKE), KIRSTEN LONG (POPLAR LAKE), IRENE MULLEN (CARIBOU LAKE), LARRY MULLEN (CARIBOU LAKE), AL FLIEDER (ASPEN LAKE), KATE KELNBERGER (WEST BEARSKIN), JOHN MILLS (PIKE LAKE), GARY MACIEJEWSKI (TAIT LAKE), LARRY MONTAN (HUNGRY JACK), Kathy Schaaf (TOM LAKE), ANN SULLIVAN (DISTRICT 4 COUNTY COMMISSIONER),. Guests: Senator Grant Hauschild (SD 3) Representative Roger Skraba (HD 3A)

Item	Discussion	Action
<p>Welcome, Introductions, and Context</p>	<p>Review of CCCoLA mission: Protecting and preserving the waters and shorelands of Cook County. CCCoLA Board’s position: The CCCoLA Board members have been studying the impacts of copper nickel mining within the BWCA and Cook County waters. Having ascertained that the environmental risks to the waters and shorelands (and thus the tourism-based economy) outweigh any possible economic benefits, CCCoLA has developed a position paper opposing copper nickel sulfide mining in the Lake Superior and Rainy River Watershed regions. This meeting with our District 3 Senate and District 3A Representative legislators is an opportunity to hear their positions and perspectives on copper nickel sulfide mining and other threats to the health of Cook County’s waters and shorelands.</p>	<p>See attached position paper.</p>
<p>Question responses from Senator Hauschild and Representative Skraba</p>	<p>See attached questions with answers filled in.</p>	
<p>WICOLA’s project to study the feasibility of using bioremediation technology to remove sulfate from water contaminated by iron ore mining.</p>	<p>WICOLA applied for a grant last year with the LCCMR, which is the Minnesota agency that uses lottery funds for environmental projects. WICOLA won the grant, \$727,000. “What the grant will do is allow us to test a new bioremediation technology to remove sulfate from the water. The reason we want to do this: the sulfate is directly correlated with the increase in mercury levels in game fish. Birch Lake, which is one of the lakes in our lake association, is impaired waters because of the sulfate and the</p>	<p>Kudos to the WICOLA organization for taking this initiative and receiving the funds needed to test the technology for effectiveness.</p>

	<p>mercury levels in the fish. Like, if you are a pregnant woman, you should not eat even one fish from that lake. That's the level of pollution that is there. We're going to test this bioremediation technology over the next year starting in July of this year. And if it proves effective, it is less than 1% the cost of pre-existing technologies to remove sulfate from the water. So, we will then be able to take it to the mining companies and to the state and say, since the MPCA's standards get ignored, now there is a cost-effective way for them to no longer be ignored for the mining companies to implement and adhere to the standard. And by the way, that technology is specific to taconite mining. It is not applicable to copper nickel. It would have to be completely new bacteria strains developed and tested, and I don't even know if that's possible."</p>	
<p>CCCoLA Board opportunity to sign on to letter from Friends of the Boundary Waters</p>	<p>Friends of the Boundary Waters is sending a letter to the DNR Commissioner urging the DNR to cancel the Twin Metals lease for mining. This is within the authority of the DNR since it has been 36 years since the lease was put in place and no mining has taken place on the leased land. The royalties of \$100,000 also haven't been paid.</p> <p>Larry Montan noted that the number of people signing is important, he urges everyone to submit their vote individually.</p> <p>Biz Clark commented that the DNR has 2 responsibilities relative to the State's resources. Much depends on the composition of the legislature.</p> <p>#1 To promote the wise use of the State's natural resources. #2 To generate money from the State's natural resources</p>	<p>Patti Craddock made a motion for the CCCoLA Board to sign on as an organization to the letter to Commissioner Strommen. Gary seconded. <u>The motion passed unanimously.</u> Kathy will submit a signature on behalf of the CCCoLA Board. Individuals are encouraged to sign individually as well.</p>
<p>Meeting with DNR staff</p>	<p>Betsy Blume has been in touch with the DNR Commissioners regarding a meeting with CCCoLA members. She has now heard back from Marissa who said we'd be hearing back from the ecological resources team.</p>	<p>Betsy will keep us posted when she hears back from the DNR so other CCCoLA members may attend.</p>
<p>Summary of actions we can take in the next month</p>	<p>CCCoLA Action Groups: At the March meeting, meet in legislative, community outreach, and education groups to determine next steps and actions based on what was learned.</p> <p>CCCoLA members: Consider attending or sending questions to the upcoming</p>	

	Friends of the Boundary Waters webinar/meeting on February 17th regarding the Twin Metals lease issue.	
	Coordination of monthly water sampling since CCSWD will not be doing this beginning this 2026 sampling season.	Patti will be meeting with Ilena Hansel about this and will report back to CCCoLA
	Margre mentioned that Commissioner Mills is planning to bring up the topic of opening up the CJ Ramstad Trail to ATV's	Ann Sullivan will investigate this and let us know what she learns.
Meeting Reflection	<p>A great session with the two legislators. / Dave from White Iron COLA hit the nail on the head regarding that you can have all the regulations, you can have all the scientific analysis, but if the company doesn't abide by it, it's useless./ What, Biz brought up is going to come again, and that being the internal conflicts of interest between the 5 or so divisions of DNR. / It's obvious we're going to draw people to this topic that are probably anti-mining. So, how do we, in looking at our legislators, taking the position of their constituents which is half and half, pretty much, in their mind, at least, because they're not taking a position. Where do we need to educate to sway those people, and how do we get those people to any of our events? / I appreciated the strategies of WICOLA in going after a grant to address the sulfide issue from another point of view. / All of us can agree on is the Lake Steward approach to connect with others. / I just want to add that something that's already been, floating around in the chat, Kathy, I hope you pay attention to it, I really, truly believe that we're able to have these conversations with our Representative and Senator because of your ability to facilitate the conversation./I'd like to see more said about the economic benefit of the Boundary Waters and other areas, and what they mean to the country and to the world. So I'd like to see more attention to the economic benefits that go along with a pristine wilderness./ Wolfgang, I don't think, has said anything about this, but he's building a strong relationship with the snowmobile Club up here and I want to thank him for that. /Excellent.</p>	
Next Meeting	Next meeting will be held 10-11:30 a.m. via Zoom Thursday, March 12, 2026	