

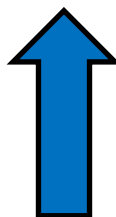


Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed News

Like This Logo?

The binational Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed logo is available for your use.

It was designed as part of the International Watershed Coordination Program and is meant to be a symbol of the committed, cross-border partnerships that have been developing around watershed stewardship. For those or-



ganizations who work to understand, communicate and preserve water quality in the basin, the big picture message that we are all part of a large, international watershed is emulated in this logo and we encourage you to use it

where relevant. Contact: kساunders@lowwsf.com

New watershed website soon to be launched!

Watch for **www.rainylakeofthewoods.org** soon—a place to learn about the watershed and showcase the good work being done by partners from both sides of the border.

Local Success Story

Lake Vermilion Boat Inspection Program Expands

To counter the increasing threat from aquatic invasive species (AIS), watercraft inspections at Lake Vermilion topped 12,000 in 2016, a 15-fold increase over the prior year. Lake Vermilion in St. Louis County is a popular destination for fishermen and recreational boaters throughout the Midwest.

Beginning at fishing opener in May, over 25 Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources-trained inspectors covered high-traffic public accesses at busy times of the day and week. Later in the summer, inspectors began a pilot project at 3 resorts on Saturdays to work with resort owners to understand how resorts can best protect Lake Vermilion as they provide a high level of service to their customers. That very successful pilot will expand to additional resorts and campgrounds in 2017.

To support launch-site inspections, two boat cleaning stations are positioned at busy

convenience store parking lots on each end of the lake – the Y Store near Tower and the Country Store in Cook. These centrally-located cleaning stations are staffed on weekends and provide courtesy AIS boat and trailer cleaning, preemptive cleaning for those headed to an area launch site, and corrective decontamination for boats found to have an AIS problem after reaching an access. Over 200 boat operators took advantage of this free service during 2016.

“Launch-site activities are not just about inspections,” said Jeff Lovgren, Lake Vermilion AIS Prevention Program Leader. “We view this as an unequalled opportunity to get the AIS message to boat operators to help them help Lake Vermilion. Our inspectors also show boat operators how to self-inspect their boat, making sure it’s clean and dry, leaving all water behind.”

The Vermilion inspection program is a partnership between North St Louis

Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the Vermilion Lake Association. Funding is provided by a grant from St Louis County’s AIS Prevention Program.

For additional information about Lake Vermilion AIS prevention activities, visit www.VermilionLakeAssociation.org.

AIS inspector checks a boat and trailer at Pehrson Lodge Resort on Lake Vermilion (Photo credit: North St Louis SWCD)



Collaborative Research and Partnerships

Lake of the Woods Water Quality Study Team Invites Input

The Lake of the Woods Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) study and the report being developed meet the requirements of Minnesota and United States regulations. However, the stewardship of the resource is a responsibility shared binationally by residents, visitors, and governments. That's why even though the study is not completed yet, the work to engage stakeholders on restoration planning has already begun. The project team leaders facilitated three meetings in northern Minnesota as well as one webinar conference during the end of October and early November. The purpose of the meetings was to explain the project, describe the watershed and lake characteristics, provide early information on the study results, and most importantly begin to gather input and ideas from participants on challenges, priorities, and opportunities for resto-

ration efforts in the lake, near the lake, and throughout the whole watershed, including the Rainy River basin.

A survey taken following the meetings had varying responses as to what the primary issues affecting Lake of the Woods are, but most responses indicated a strong support for shared stewardship in order to restore the lake. When asked what types of practices or activities might have the most success on reducing pollution, shoreline protection and agricultural best management practices (BMPs) rose to the top followed by forestry BMPs, zoning ordinances, pasture BMPs, wetland restoration, and feedlot BMPs. Urban stormwater and permanent protection of sensitive lands ranked the lowest. Participants also indicated that the greatest barriers to implementing those solutions are the availability of financial assistance and that not enough people care enough to help (or perhaps don't know how). Some themes from the volunteered thoughts and comments included the need for strong

binational commitment to monitor and restore on such a large scale and more robust public involvement.

The project team will continue to seek out more opportunities and more effective ways to engage the public. If you have thoughts or ideas you would like us to consider for the study, the restoration plan, or public engagement, please do not hesitate to send an email to tmdl@lakeofthewoodsswcd.org or call one of the following individuals:

Mike Hirst, Lake of the Woods SWCD, 218-634-1842 x4

Cary Hernandez, MPCA, 218-846-8124

Julie Blackburn, RESPEC. 651-305-2272

Also be sure to visit <http://lakeofthewoodsswcd.org> and click on the 'projects' tab for more information.

Cross Border Communication and Binational Stewardship



Watershed Placemats Land in 23 Restaurants/Tourist Sites Across the Border!

Restaurant patrons had some reading material and fun activities for their kids this summer at several establishments that agreed to use paper placements designed specifically for the Rainy-Lake of the

Woods watershed. A colourful front page with interesting facts about the watershed and its geography, facts about Aquatic Invasive Species and a number of water stewardship tips was designed to help the public understand more about the watershed in which they live. On the back page, puzzles, word searches and colouring is provided for children to keep them busy while they wait for their meal to arrive. With a network of volunteers and partners at the ready, most

of the 5,000 placemats generously printed by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency were distributed to 23 locations across the binational watershed; not just at restaurants, but at B&Bs, resorts, the Ely Blueberry Festival, cottage association meetings and tourist centres. The remainder will be distributed throughout the winter and spring. If you know of a restaurant that may be interested, please do not hesitate to contact Kelli Saunders at ksaunders@lowwsf.com.

IJC's Rule Curve Review Study Board Holds Fall Meetings

The IJC's Rainy-Namakan Lakes Rule Curves Study Board hosted a Practice Decision Workshop and a public meeting on November 2, 2016. The rule curves review is meant to provide the IJC with scientifically supported recommendations for the modification or retention of the 2000 Rainy and Namakan Lakes rule curves. With the recommendations due to the IJC in Spring 2017, these meetings provided an opportunity for the Study Board to present a few rule

curve alternatives and the draft results of their Weight of Evidence (WOE) exercise. The WOE revealed that some of the expected benefits of the 2000 curves were borne out: improved navigation/tourism on Namakan and improved conditions for some fish, birds and other animals. Expected drawbacks that came to bear included slightly higher lake levels in high inflow years on Rainy and Namakan lakes, as well as reduced hydropower revenue. The general consensus after the meetings

was that the 2000 rule curves have been favourable overall, but there is great interest in looking at ways to better accommodate values such as wild rice and the fishery and reduce flooding where possible. For more information on the Rule Curve Review, please go to:

http://ijc.org/en/_RNLRCRB or contact Kelli Saunders, Study Manager at:

saundersk@ottawa.ijc.org



The IWCP is a partnership of the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation, the International Joint Commission and Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. For more information, contact Kelli Saunders, IWCP Coordinator at ksaunders@lowwsf.com.