

Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation

Protecting Water, Woods, and Wildlife for Future Generations to Enjoy

SPRING/SUMMER 2012

Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs) Provide Access for Public Enjoyment

By Kristen Blann, *The Nature Conservancy*



Have you ever climbed a stile over a farmer's fence in your waders to access your favorite trout stream? Fished a trout stream in southeastern Minnesota from a state-owned access? Paddled up to a lush stand of sedges, cattails, bulrushes, arrowhead, or water lilies, and bladderworts to get a closer look at a delicate floating flower? Have you ever motored up to a thick stand of sedges, cattails, and bulrushes to cast your line for bass or northern pike, and then noticed a Department of Natural Resources (DNR) sign? If so, you've probably experienced the benefits of one of Minnesota's many Aquatic Management Areas, or AMAs.

Since their establishment by the Legislature in 1992 as part of the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation System, AMAs have rapidly become one of the most successful state programs providing public access to our state's lakes, rivers, streams, and

wetlands while simultaneously providing protection for aquatic and shoreland habitats.

Like Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), parks, and forests, AMAs can be state-owned and managed land; or in the case of coldwater trout streams, they are often linear conservation easements along a privately owned stream corridor, purchased mainly to provide access to anglers as well as to limit land uses that would likely degrade the resource.

Responsibility for managing and maintaining AMAs falls mainly to the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife. AMAs have an even more important role to play in the wake of increasing lakeshore development. Much discussion has been taking place in Minnesota over the last few years about the fact that we seem to be "loving our lakes to death" including a series of articles that ran in the Minneapolis Star Tribune and the Brainerd Dispatch in summer 2010. The articles noted the trends and consequences from lakeshore development in recent decades.

As the best home sites have been selected and developed, there is increasing development in the shallower bays of lakes, which are typically important fish and wildlife nursery habitats. At the same time, failing and poorly maintained septic systems contribute nutrients, phosphorus, and other household wastes. We know these changes are cumulatively detrimental to our native fish and wildlife, northern pike, walleye, frogs, ducks, herons, and even our beloved loons.



After five years and multiple land acquisition projects by the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF), the DNR now owns and manages over 5,000 feet of shoreland and 60+ acres in Lantern Bay of Woman Lake (pictured above) as publicly available aquatic management areas. Since 1995, LLAWF has helped place over 16 miles of shoreland throughout the watershed in public ownership as AMAs. Photo credit: Kristie Coughlon, DNR

Natural shorelines help to stabilize shorelines, trap sediment, provide fish cover, filter nutrients and sediments from the water, and maintain water quality. They are the heart, lungs, kidneys, and wombs of our lakes and rivers.

In 2008, the Minnesota DNR convened a working group of citizens, the Aquatic Management Area Acquisition Planning Committee, to develop a 25-year acquisition plan for Minnesota's Aquatic Management Areas. Composed of anglers, lakeshore owners and resort owners, citizens, nonprofit groups, and other stakeholders, the challenge was to make recommendations to the legislature and agency on acquisition goals, considering both the threats and the needs facing Minnesota's streams, rivers, and lakes. After meeting several times over a year, the committee recommended more than a 300% increase in AMAs through 2033.

Cont. on page 2

LLAWF
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Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs) Provide Access for Public Enjoyment continued

The *Minnesota Aquatic Management Area Acquisition Plan 2008-2033* recommends a long-term (25-year) goal of protecting at least 2% (1,316 miles) of the state's lake and warmwater stream shoreline and 38% (2,118 miles) of coldwater stream miles. These acquisition goals included specific acquisition targets from willing sellers over 25 years for each region of the state.

Shoreland habitat protection is an essential component in preserving the clean water legacy that Minnesota's citizens and visitors appreciate and value. Yet the needs continue to grow. Aquatic management area acquisitions continue to provide a critical foundation for shoreland protection and management while providing public access to Minnesotans who fish, boat, observe wildlife, and recreate on this state's waters. However, they are not the only tool in the toolbox, and acquisition

alone will not achieve the goal of sustainable aquatic resource protection.

As of 2007, about 11% (618 miles) of Minnesota's 5,508 miles of coldwater designated trout streams had some level of protection within AMAs. The portion of lake and warmwater streams and rivers protected as AMAs is much less—only 0.3% (216 miles) in 2007, or less than 3 inches of shoreland per Minnesotan!

To protect Minnesota's critical shorelands, a comprehensive approach is needed using a suite of tools including acquisition, best management practice guidelines, shoreland regulations and incentives, zoning ordinances, conservation easements on private shorelands, and conservation development. Most importantly, we need our citizens and lakeshore owners to understand, value, and manage for native shorelands.



This 165 acres of natural shoreline on Bird's Eye Lake in Itasca County, owned by the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, is soon to become a new state AMA. The property was donated to LLAWF in 2006 by Carl Bergquist. LLAWF is currently donating 70% of the property value to the DNR for an AMA. The donation value triggers an equal match from the Critical Habitat License Plate Fund (RIM Fund) for other AMA acquisitions.

About the author and committee: Kristen Blann is a freshwater ecologist with The Nature Conservancy. She provides technical leadership for aquatic conservation planning, research, and monitoring in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. She has a Ph.D. in Conservation Biology from the University of Minnesota. Dr. Blann and Dave Thompson of Battle Lake co-chaired the DNR AMA Acquisition Planning Citizen Committee; Doug Payne of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation also served on the committee.



Meeting AMA Acquisition Goals: Where Are the Funds?

The AMA Acquisition Plan recommends both short-term (2008-2017) and long-term (2018-2032) priorities and goals for the acquisition of critical shorelands in Minnesota. As defined in Minnesota Statute 86A.05, Subd. 14, "Aquatic management areas may be established to protect, develop, and manage lakes, rivers, streams, and adjacent wetlands and lands that are critical for fish and other aquatic life, for water quality, and for their intrinsic biological value, public fishing, or other compatible outdoor recreational uses".

The plan's statewide goal for protection of Minnesota's 64,000 plus miles of lake and warmwater stream shorelands through public ownership should increase from the current 34% to 39% by 2032. These public lands include federal, state, county, and municipal ownership. These goals are based on the assumption that there will be no loss of shoreland that is currently under public protection.

To achieve this goal, the vision for the AMA Acquisition Program is to acquire 1,100 miles of lake and warmwater stream habitat in the next 25 years from willing sellers to provide sustainable populations of fish and other aquatic species and greater opportunities for angling recreation for future generations. This vision would increase the portion of lake and warmwater streams and rivers protected as AMAs from 0.3% (216 miles) in 2007 to 2% (1,316 miles) by 2032.

The Leech Lake Watershed is located in the Northern Lakes region of Minnesota, where there is a significant amount of land in public protection already but only a moderate amount of shoreland protected. Recreational demand on this region of Minnesota is high and population growth is still projected at nearly 50% by 2030. This region is a high priority for acquisition of critical shorelands. As of writing the plan in 2008, 63 miles...less than 1% of the 14,100+ miles of shoreland in this region... were in AMA protection. It is the mission of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation to help meet this critical need for more publicly owned shorelands of high habitat value.

The statewide AMA plan recommends an accelerated acquisition effort through 2017 by purchasing approximately 70% of the 25 year long-term goal or 750 miles in ten years (2008-2017) at a rate of approximately 75 miles per year. This may require approximately \$25 million per year from 2008-2017 and \$7.7 million per year between 2018-2032.

The new Legacy Amendment overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2008 provides the best source of current funding for AMA acquisition to meet the state's AMA acquisition goals as laid out in its long-range plan.

One-third (about \$80 million) of the approximately \$300 million generated per year from the Legacy Amendment (constitutionally dedicated sales tax for the environment and the arts) goes to the Outdoor Heritage Fund (OHF). The fund is designated to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forest, and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife. Yet very little of the OHF appropriations for the past four years since the amendment passed have been appropriated to the DNR for acquisition and/or restoration/enhancement of aquatic habitats.

As you talk to legislative candidates this summer (all legislators are up for re-election) ask them "why not?" If our lakes are important enough to feature on our state license plate and state quarter, aren't they important enough to fully protect?

Session Law	DNR Aquatic Habitat Request	Appropriated
ML2009	\$12.900M	\$5.748M
ML2010	\$17.158M	\$3.416M
ML2011	\$17.815 M	\$6.500M
ML2012	\$12.204M	\$3.480M

Source: www.lsohc.leg.mn

AMA Acquisition Plan (2008-2033)
<http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/strategic-documents/ama-acquisition-report.pdf>

AMA Fact Sheet:
http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/aboutdnr/reports/conservationagenda/keymeasures/shoreline_protected_amas.pdf



Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation

Mission: The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation whose mission is to promote activities that preserve and sustain the natural resources of the Leech Lake watershed for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.

Board of Directors:

Jim Bedell, chairman
Maggie McGill, vice chairman
Tom Rogge, treasurer
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Bob Iversen
Doug Sandstrom
Dave Schneider
John Valen

Paula West, executive director
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Newsletter Design:

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Chair's Remarks

Jim Bedell, chairman

At the annual board of director elections last August I signed on to be the vice chair of LLAWF but sadly with the sudden loss of our chairman Ray Payne a few weeks later, I was instantly elevated to the chair. With big shoes to fill, I'm pleased to carry on the mission of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation that Ray so loved and was dedicated to and to which our entire board is committed. "Protecting the water, woods, and wildlife of the Leech Lake Watershed" is a passion for each of our directors, who give countless hours of their time to insure that the beautiful natural resources we all enjoy can also be enjoyed by our grandchildren and future generations.

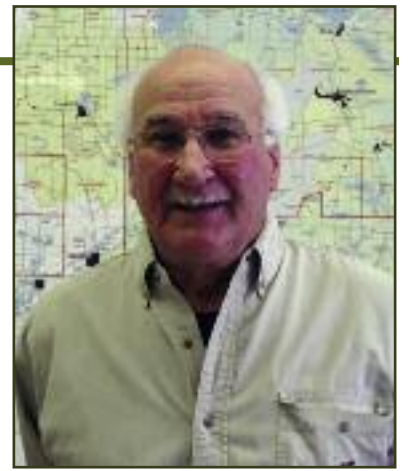
Ray was an avid outdoorsman with a passion that enabled him to provide strong leadership for the Foundation. Joining the board in 2004 and chairman from 2009-2011, his leadership was an outgrowth of his love and respect for nature. In March, the board lost another dedicated director, Bob Weidemann, who though only having served on the board for one year, was a driving force behind the initiation of the Miller Bay Conservation Project (see page six for details). Bob, a lifelong conservationist, and wife Teri moved to Leech Lake permanently in 2008, but had been coming to Leech Lake for the past 40

years from their home in Cedar Falls, Iowa. Bob was dedicated to protecting this truly special place in their lives. We will

miss Ray and Bob and their enthusiasm for protecting the special places we all love.

The Foundation continues on with new dedication to protecting the critical shorelands; fish spawning, loon nesting, and other wildlife habitat; and the pristine water quality of this region. We need a few more good "men and women" who have a conservation heart to serve on the board of directors and govern the Foundation towards continued success in protecting the "water, woods, and wildlife" of this place we call home.

If you have a passion for protecting our special places and would like to learn more about the responsibilities and expectations of board directors, please contact me at 218-251-4926, jibdel@tds.net or contact the LLAWF office at 218-675-5773, info@leechlakewatershed.org.



What Does the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation Do?

- Identifies and protects sensitive lands and waters in the watershed through land conservation projects, often in partnership with county, state, and federal governments; other non-profits; lake associations and sporting groups.
- Accepts donations of land and/or helps conservation-minded landowners explore options for selling their land while preserving its conservation value as a legacy for ongoing public enjoyment.
- Facilitates the establishment of conservation easements on private properties to prohibit or limit future development and preserve conservation value while the landowners still retain ownership and use of the land.
- Provides education on individual and community responsibility for stewardship through workshops, publications, and partnerships with lake associations and professional organizations.

We Need Your Support

Donate cash. Your donations help support conservation projects and stewardship education to protect the natural resources of the watershed. Memorial gifts are an excellent way to honor a loved one's appreciation of the region's natural resources. Donations are fully IRS tax-deductible.

Give securely online. Make a secure, tax-deductible donation online at GiveMN.org. Search for Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation.

Donate land or gifts of stock. Donate land for conservation purposes or resale to support LLAWF's mission. The land value, in full or part, is usually eligible for an IRS charitable deduction. A gift of stock is an easy way to make a lasting gift while avoiding capital gains tax.

Utilize Workplace Giving Programs. Check with your company to see if they will match your donation and/or utilize monthly payroll deduction giving programs.

Volunteer your time and talents. Volunteer to serve on the LLAWF board, committees, or assist with a special project.

Reasons to Protect the Natural Resources of the Leech Lake Watershed

- Fishing- sport and commercial**
- Boating and sailing**
- Swimming**
- Water skiing**
- Canoeing**
- Hunting and trapping**
- Scenic values**
- Protected and endangered species**
- Wildlife habitat**
- Wildlife viewing**
- Residential and commercial development**
- Timber production**
- Cultural and historical values**
- Water quality protection**
- Water supply**
- Wild rice harvesting**
- Community economic sustainability**
- Enhanced quality of life**

Protecting Land Through Conservation Easements

What is a conservation easement?

A conservation easement is a legally binding agreement between a qualified entity (government agency or non-profit conservation organization) that allows a landowner to voluntarily limit the use and development of their land in order to permanently preserve the land's natural features. Landowners continue to hold title, pay property taxes, and use the land in any way not prohibited by the terms of the agreement. Landowners can sell or lease the land, or transfer it to their heirs, but future owners will also be bound by the terms of the agreement. This is how the land is forever protected. The entity that holds the easement inspects the land periodically to insure that the conditions of the easement are satisfied.

Each easement is unique and is individually crafted to reflect the special character of the land and the particular situation of the landowner. Conservation easements give landowners peace of mind knowing that their commitment to protecting their land will be forever respected and remain an enduring legacy for their family and their community.

There can also be potential tax benefits (income, estate, or property). The value of the easement, as determined by a special appraisal, may be eligible for an IRS charitable donation and it may reduce estate taxes by reducing the value of the land. Preserving the land with a conservation easement has helped many families transfer their land to the next generation with its natural features intact. A conservation easement that reduces the overall value of the land may result in lowered property taxes; this can vary by local jurisdiction.

Not all land is suitable for protection with a conservation easement. Some small or isolated properties, lands with limited natural resources to protect, or situations in which a landowner desires to retain certain rights that would conflict with an easement's conservation purpose may not warrant a conservation easement.

This brochure on conservation easements is available at www.leechlakewatershed.org on the conservation options page or it can be mailed/emailed to you.



*"The trouble with land is that they're not making it anymore."
-Will Rogers*

Will Rogers understated the issue! Not only are they not making land anymore, with population growth in our area still projected at up to 50% by 2030, more land is sure to get developed. As a result, the looming question is: what will the quality of our waters, forests, and fish and wildlife habitat be like 20 years from now? We want development to happen to sustain our communities but it must be balanced with the protection of the resources that draw people to live, work, and play in the Leech Lake Watershed.

If you're concerned about the future of your land and want to do something about it—something that will last forever—consider protecting your own "special place" in the Leech Lake Watershed and/or surrounding North Central Minnesota region.

What Can You Do?

As a landowner, you have several options to limit development on your property and permanently protect its natural resources while leaving a living legacy for your family and future generations to enjoy.

Place a conservation easement on your property that prohibits or limits future development yet you still retain ownership and use of the land. If the land is sold, the easement will pass on to future owners to insure permanent protection of those features that are special to you.

Donate or sell your undeveloped land to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, state of Minnesota, local government, or other qualifying nonprofit conservation organizations for the purpose of returning it to public ownership to be managed into perpetuity for wildlife and aquatic habitat protection and public use and enjoyment.

The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation can helpgive us a call.

Assistance Available for Qualifying Landowners Interested in a Conservation Easement

For a limited time, financial assistance grants are available to qualifying conservation-minded landowners who are interested in a conservation easement. Through June 2014, qualifying shoreland (lake or river) property owners in Cass, Crow Wing, and Aitkin counties interested in a conservation easement may be eligible for grant assistance to cover the associated costs of placing an easement on their property. This funding is available through the Outdoor Heritage Fund established through the Legacy Amendment of 2008, an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution supporting lands, habitats, waters, parks, and Minnesota's arts and cultural legacy. The amendment is funded through the new 25-year constitutionally dedicated sales tax for the environmental and the arts.

The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and the Minnesota Land Trust (MLT) are collaborating on the project "Protecting Sensitive Shoreland Habitats in North Central Minnesota" to protect critical fish and wildlife habitats on key recreational lakes in Minnesota's premier lake county. The local governments of Cass, Crow Wing, and Aitkin counties are also participating partners in the project. LLAWF is managing the project and working directly with willing landowners and local lake associations to recruit participating landowners. The MLT will hold the easements in perpetuity and be responsible for the ongoing stewardship of the easement, including annual monitoring.

The three-year project that started in 2011 will provide landowner financial assistance for 18-22 easements throughout the three counties that will protect more than six (6) miles of critical shorelands and 600-800 acres of adjacent northern forest habitats. The project will leverage \$6 to \$8 million in donated property value from the landowners whose donation will help to insure continued fishing and other recreational opportunities for the public and future generations.

For more information on conservation easements in general or participating in the grant program, contact LLAWF at 218-675-5773 or info@leechlakewatershed.org.



You Have Choices to Protect the Places You Love

Two sources of funding have enabled the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) in collaboration with Cass County Environmental Services to assist conservation-minded landowners with conservation easements on some of the most critical shoreland properties in the watershed. While current funding does not apply to properties in Hubbard County, new sources of funding are being explored to open up opportunities in the western reaches of the watershed.

In both the grant from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) to Cass County (2010-2013) and the recent grant to LLAWF and the Minnesota Land Trust (2011-2014) from the Legacy Amendment, willing landowners donate the easement to their property and the grant will pay the out-of-pocket costs, which can be significant.

Critical Shoreland Protected on Lake Washburn

Landowner Richard D. Nelles and sons Bradley Nelles, Bruce Nelles, David Nelles, and Cary Nelles recently completed a conservation easement with Cass County on their DNR-designated sensitive shoreland on Lake Washburn. "My parents bought this property and the property across the channel in 1946 and I've been here on Lake Washburn since I was a kid. Putting the easement on this property (39 acres; 1,180 feet of shoreline) was important to my family and me to preserve its natural features for the benefit of timber, wildlife, and the sensitive nature of the lakeshore" said Richard Nelles. "Conservation was imprinted on me from an early age when my father would take me to the Minnesota Sportsman Show and I was in awe of the DNR and their work to protect our resources. Also, my grandfather was the first supervisor of the Itasca State Park."

Love of nature has always been an avocation for Nelles. He is an avid volunteer for the DNR who trapped and installed 437 radio transmitters in deer over 13 years and for the past four years has been radio collaring fishers. He has been a firearm safety training instructor for 40 years and in earlier years started a woodland advisor program in Sherburne County. Nelles helped craft "voluntary best management practices" for forestry management with the Minnesota Forest Resources Council.

"To date, six conservation easements funded by the ENRTF grant have afforded the opportunity to conserve over 4,700 feet of the most sensitive shorelines in Cass County. These 6 parcels total almost 85 acres on 5 lakes. Two additional easements are nearing completion on Child Lake, funded by a companion grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service through the Glacial Lakes Partnership. There is still funding for 5-6 additional easements with this grant," said John Sumption, land conservation specialist for LLAWF. "The willingness of landowners to donate easements through this grant project is a quantum leap forward in our efforts to mitigate the natural resource impacts of development, preserve water quality, and enhance fish spawning, waterfowl, and wildlife habits."

It is Nelles' goal to turn his property in to a diversified forest and protect the vernal pools, which are seasonal ponds that support more than 23 different species. "These pools are 'jewels in the woods' of species diversity that are often ignored in normal forest management" said Nelles.

"The process of putting the easement on our property was made easy by working with John (Sumption) and the grant was a very valuable service. Without the financial assistance, the easement probably would not have been accomplished. Before my mother died in 1980, she talked about a conservation easement on the property, now it's finally accomplished. My sons and I are of the same conservation mind and made the decisions together. A future building site has been set aside in the easement for each son and we agreed on only one dock for all dwellings."



Grants from the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resource Trust Fund are recommended by the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR). Currently 40% of the net Minnesota State Lottery proceeds are dedicated to building the Trust Fund and ensuring future benefits for Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

Ten Mile Lake Easement Protects Flower Pot Bay

Jim Miller, chair the Ten Mile Lake Association Conservation Committee, is finalizing an easement on 2.77 acres and 240 feet of shoreline primarily on Flower Pot Bay of Ten Mile Lake. The easement will be held by Cass County. "As chair of the conversation committee, I want to lead by example and practice what I preach" said Miller. "All of our shoreline in Flower Pot Bay was improved under the Shoreline Restoration Program in 2011 and now Pat and I are putting a conservation easement on a portion of our property to take advantage of this grant opportunity."

"The willingness of landowners to donate easements is a quantum leap forward in efforts to mitigate the natural resource impacts of development, preserve water quality, and enhance fish spawning, waterfowl, and wildlife habits."

"We've had our place on Ten Mile for over 35 years. Starting with a 2 bedroom cabin we've expanded to accommodate our family of 5 children, 4 son-in-laws, 14 grandchildren, 1 grandson-in-law, and one great grandson. Every year the whole family comes to Ten Mile for a week or two over the 4th of July; only once did one grandchild miss coming."

Over 200 feet of Miller's easement is in Flower Pot Bay, an environmentally sensitive area on Ten Mile as identified by the DNR's Sensitive Shoreland Study in Cass County. "Our family has enjoyed coming to a small lagoon in the wetlands area covered in the easement by a walking trail, by canoe or kayaks. The lagoon is a quiet protected area with ducks, fish, turtles, birds, frogs and other wild life. Our family is in 100% agreement about protecting all of the easement area into perpetuity so future generations can continue to enjoy the area as much as our family has for the past 35 years" said Miller. "Our property is owned by a trust which will convert to a family trust upon the death of Pat and I; our goal is to keep our property in the family permanently."

Protecting Muskie Spawning in Miller Bay/Leech Lake

Miller Bay (aka Roger's Point area) is one of seven known muskellunge spawning areas on Leech Lake. Its unique features of shallow depth, soft bottom, abundant aquatic vegetation, isolated location, and minimal disturbance from boats, make it ideal for spawning and nursery habitat for a number of fish species.

A study conducted by the DNR Walker Area Fisheries office in 2009 confirmed that this bay is used by a substantial number of different adult muskellunge for spawning as determined by mark and recapture. Every four years, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) collects muskie eggs from Leech Lake solely in Miller Bay. The high concentration of muskie present in this bay makes egg collection very efficient. The collected eggs are the wild Mississippi-strain muskellunge used to maintain a genetically viable statewide stocking program.

Protecting this bay from future development is a high priority for the Minnesota DNR and the future of its muskie stocking program.

The eggs are hatched and grown to fingerling size, then used to replenish the genetic stock in the DNR's brood stock lakes while some fingerlings are also returned to Leech Lake to insure the natural strain continues.

Miller Bay is noted for its critical near-shore and aquatic habitat sensitive to lakeshore development and associated disturbances, such as boating. While currently the bay is largely undeveloped, concerns have been raised that future development around Miller Bay could increase boat traffic. This could pose a significant risk to developing fish eggs, particularly muskellunge, as muskies spawn in Leech Lake around the highest-use peri-



LLAWF board director Bob Iversen with a 47 inch muskie caught on Leech Lake near Pelican Island.

od (fishing opener through end of May). Protecting this bay from future development is a high priority for the Minnesota DNR and the future of its muskie stocking program.

The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) in collaboration with the DNR Walker Area Fisheries office has identified and prioritized properties in Miller Bay where land conservation measures can have the greatest long term impact on protection of aquatic habitat and muskie

spawning. Nine (9) critical properties were initially identified in Miller Bay and landowners were contacted by LLAWF about the protection project. Working with willing landowners, four of the parcels are currently in the acquisition process by the DNR and slated to be purchased as aquatic management areas with state Legacy funds along with conservation license plate money and private donations. These AMAs will protect 1,600 feet of critical shoreline and 51 acres of adjacent shoreland.

The Leech Lake muskellunge population is maintained entirely by natural reproduction. Land acquisition projects on Leech Lake and other lakes in Minnesota focus on spawning and nursery habitat because the future of good fishing depends on good habitat.

Muskies Inc. and LLAWF Team Up

The Hugh C. Becker Foundation of the Twin Cities Chapter of Muskies, Inc. recently awarded LLAWF \$10,000 to be used towards the Miller Bay Protection Project. LLAWF in turn will donate the \$10,000 to the DNR to trigger the release of a matching \$10,000 from the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Fund derived primarily from the sale of critical habitat license plates.

The Hugh C. Becker Foundation also granted \$10,000 to LLAWF for land purchases in Lantern Bay of Woman Lake and \$10,000 to LLAWF in 2011 for application towards the DNR acquisition of additional muskie spawning habitat near Five Mile Point of Leech Lake. In addition, LLAWF raised another \$15,000 in private contributions to support the recent Five Mile Point Project. All grant money and private donations were matched equally by the RIM Fund.

These donations from private foundations, organizations, and individuals help offset the use the other dedicated funding sources for acquisition



and are excellent examples of critical public/private partnerships for habitat protection.

The Hugh C. Becker Foundation provides grants nationwide for projects/activities that include, but are not limited to: muskie stocking by either purchase or raising fingerlings for public use; habitat improvement and protection; water quality protection and improvement; professional research; and expansion of the present muskellunge range with special consideration for the Missouri river system in North/South Dakota. For more information on Foundation grants, contact: George Selcke, gselcke@yahoo.com or 952-933-2608.

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For the Love of Lakes

By Darby Nelson, author of the new book, *For Love of Lakes*

We love our lakes yet degrade them-what explains the paradox?



We love our lakes yet we not only allow but participate in their deterioration. What explains this paradox? I could not reconcile the inconsistency in my mind and set out on a lake journey to seek understanding. That

journey led me to write the book *For Love of Lakes*.

I began my exploration believing that people do not purposely damage lakes, but may do so inadvertently because of lack of understanding of lake ecology. Paddling the shore of a Minnesota lake, my wife and I discovered a situation where that had apparently happened. A lot owner had massively removed Chara, an alga the size of a short wild blueberry bush, across his entire lot width. Had he known that Chara plays three extremely important roles in maintaining lake clarity and health, I expect he would have treated it differently. Chara provides protective habitat for game fish sac fry, aquatic invertebrates, micro-crustacea such as water fleas, and myriad others—all critical to the food chain. Chara also stabilizes bottom sediments, preventing wind and wave action from stirring sediment particles into the water column, reducing water clarity. It also keeps phosphorus in the sediments, preventing its release into the water column to feed blue-green algae, turning lakes into pea soup.



While you would not enjoy swimming in Chara, by removing just enough for boating and swimming purposes, leaving the rest alone, Chara can continue to produce the benefits of a healthy, clear water

lake. One cannot claim to love a lake if he knowingly hauls away its Chara.

I also learned that we perceive lakes very differently than we perceive terrestrial systems. Walk through a woods and you will quickly see much about the diverse life forms and how it all is interconnected. Go to a lake and what do you see? Emergent shore plants, shore birds, maybe a crayfish or frog, and also the lake surface. But we cannot see 99 percent of a lake. It lies hidden beneath the waves. We are visual creatures. So our perception of lakes is incomplete. That matters! Perception is the mother of behavior.

I also learned we have innate habits of mind that prevent us from doing right by lakes. In my travels for the book, I came on a person clearing a lake shore of all fallen, partly submerged, woody tree limbs. A second person with soil and water conservation credentials acknowledged that removal of such material was against the DNR's advice to leave reasonable amounts of such material in the lake, given its extreme importance for lake creature habitat.

She then launched into a tirade about how stupid the DNR's ideas were on this issue, despite the fact that researchers have solid data that woody material provides extremely important lake habitat. We have a tendency to see what we want to see and ignore factual evidence that conflicts with the "reality" we favor. Other examples of our innate habits of mind support this conclusion and are described in the book.

At the end of my lake journey, I think I understand the causes of our paradoxical relationship with lakes. Human nature itself plays a significant role in the human/lake paradox.

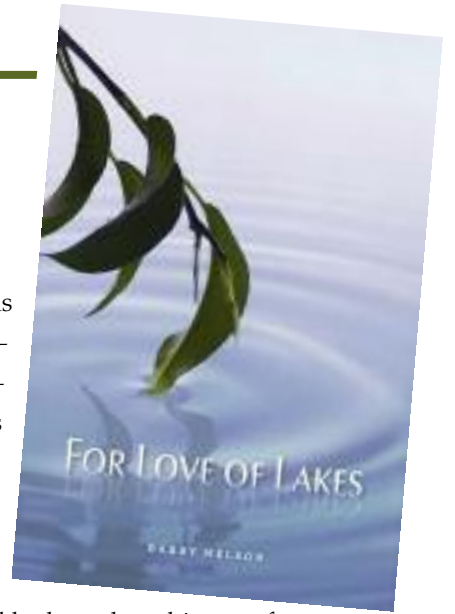
Darby Nelson is an aquatic biologist and professor emeritus of biology and environmental science to college students

for 35 years, and he has a long history of conservation work. Currently, he is a board member of Conservation Minnesota and the Freshwater Society, he served three terms in the state legislature, and most recently two years on the Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Council that makes recommendations for appropriation of one-third of the state's Legacy funds.

Darby's book, *For Love of Lakes*, weaves a delightful tapestry of history, science, emotion, logic, and lake natural history for all who love lakes or enjoy nature writing. It is an affectionate account documenting our species' long relationship with lakes and their glacial origins. Darby draws his inspiration from Thoreau and has packed the new book with observations both emotional and scientific, much like his muse. This is a necessary and thoughtful book that addresses the stewardship void while providing improved understanding of our most treasured natural feature.

"The language is so descriptive, I savored every word as I read the book," said Paula West, executive director of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation. "Darby's writing is in the tradition of Sigurd Olson and Aldo Leopold, our conservation founding fathers. Darby's love for lakes and the creatures in them comes through so vividly."

The book has received excellent reviews, many of which you can read on Darby's website, www.darbynelson.com as well as reading his lake blog. Information is also available on how to purchase the book through Michigan State University Press or the book is available on Amazon.com. Darby is willing to speak to organizations and community groups on lake issues. Contact him through his website or at darby.nelson@q.com.



This book has the potential to change lake behavior because it speaks from the heart to the heart.

Please help preserve the sensitive lands and natural resources of the Leech Lake Watershed. All donations to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) are fully tax deductible.

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