

Protecting Lake Roosevelt Through a New Aquatic Management Area

The newest Aquatic Management Area (AMA) in Crow Wing County will be dedicated in spring 2017. The Roosevelt Lake State Aquatic Management Area - Judy and Charlie Eggers Tract is 105 acres and over 5,000 feet of pristine, forested shoreland in Woods Bay.

Following the death of their parents, Judy and Charlie Eggers, the three Eggers siblings wanted to implement their parents' wishes to preserve this special place as protected public land to be managed for fish and wildlife and public recreational opportunities. Through the vision and generosity of Jo Ann Todd, Linda Van Straaten, and Allan Eggers, the natural features of this "sensitive shoreline" will be permanently protected and contribute to the long-term health of Lake Roosevelt.

The property had been owned, enjoyed and treasured by the Eggers Family for more than 65 years. Jo Ann, Linda and Allan consider their father to have been an early environmentalist. "Our Dad always loved the out of doors and it was his goal to nurture wildlife habitats on the lake property and his tree farm. His business life reflected his personal interests, as he was a manufacturer's representative for hunting and fishing equipment. In 1951 our parents bought land on Lake Roosevelt that has been enjoyed by four generations of our family. Over time he purchased all available land around Wood's Bay to prevent it from being developed. This is the land that will become the AMA Tract and we are pleased to have made our parents' wishes a reality."

Lake Roosevelt is a deep cold-water 1,585 acre lake in which cisco, also known as tullibee, are able to survive. The lake is important to protect because it is predicted to be a refuge for these highly temperature sensitive cold water fish if 75% of the land draining into the lake can be protected from land conversion. However, land protection isn't the only approach for preserving these unique lakes. As the Roosevelt And Lawrence Area Lake Association (RALALA) has been promoting for years, it is also important for landowners to minimize their household impact on lakes by keeping shorelines natural; eliminate sources of phosphorus and nitrates such as fertilizers, runoff, and erosion; maintain septic systems on a regular basis; and motor at slow speeds in shallow water and near shorelines.

Tullibee are an important forage fish for walleye, northern pike, muskellunge, and lake trout. Tullibee require cold, well oxygenated waters – a condition most common in lakes with deep water and healthy surrounding watersheds. This cold-water fish is a "canary in the coal mine" signaling three major threats to Minnesota's sport fishery and clean water – degraded watershed health, shoreline development, and climate warming. Deep, cold-water tullibee lakes with high quality, well oxygenated waters and natural, undisturbed land cover and shorelines will offer the best chance for tullibee and other fish populations to survive these threats.

There are 68 cold water lakes that are considered "refuge lakes" for tullibee in Minnesota and 38 of these are found in the Aitkin, Cass, Crow-Wing and Hubbard counties. These north central Minnesota lakes attract people nationwide for their natural states, beauty, fishing, and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

All of the shoreline in Woods Bay has been designated by the MN Department of Natural Resources as "sensitive shoreland" using a scientific field-based model and survey in 2009. "Sensitive shoreland" has critical aquatic and wildlife features that would be severely impacted by shoreland development. The natural features of the new AMA are also highly vulnerable to the impacts of development or land

conversion. The property is listed on the Minnesota County Biological Survey because of its high biological significance and intact old growth forest canopy.

The journey culminating in the Roosevelt Lake AMA has been a long one marked by patience and perseverance by the Eggers Family and wide support of several key partners who advocated and received the funding to purchase the property for an AMA. The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation worked with the Eggers Family for eight years and received a grant from the Lessard - Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund in 2014 to acquire the property for an AMA. The Roosevelt And Lawrence Area Lake Association (RALALA) partnered with the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation to appeal to landowners in the watershed to provide both financial and community support for the protection of this property. The Twin Cities Chapter of Muskie Inc., Hugh C. Becker Foundation, also provided a grant in 2014 for the acquisition of this property which includes muskie spawning areas. Although the acquisition was delayed when ownership of adjacent state and federal tracts on the Crow Wing/Cass County borders required additional review, the purchase was completed in late 2016. "It is thrilling to add this property, of such high ecological value, to the Aquatic Management Program where the public, treading lightly, will be able to enjoy it in perpetuity" said Marc Bacigalupi, DNR Brainerd Fisheries Supervisor, who will be the local DNR land manager.

The Outdoor Heritage Fund was created in 2008 when Minnesota voters passed the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment (Legacy Amendment) to the Minnesota Constitution. These funds "may be spent only to restore, protect, and enhance wetlands, prairies, forest and habitat for fish, game, and wildlife." Lindsey Ketchel, Executive Director of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, notes that "The protection of this property is a significant contribution to efforts to protect our northern waters for clean water, healthy habitat, and resilient communities and economies. We are so very grateful to the vision of the Eggers Family, the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, our many partners and the State of Minnesota for recognizing the importance of healthy natural resources and local communities."

Contact Lindsey Ketchel, Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (218-675-5773) or Marc Bacigalupi, MN DNR (218-203-4303).



Aerial view of Woods Bay, Lake Roosevelt.



Judy and Charlie Eggers, 75th wedding anniversary, 2009.