

4 - What is One Thing You Can Do Today to Protect the Lake You Love?

By Jeff Forester, Executive Director, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates

The answer is to join Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, (MLR) if you are not a member already. There is no other group in Minnesota that does so much to protect the lakes and rivers we all love.

As Bernie Steves, President of the Otter Tail County AIS Task Force, says ***“No group has done more to protect water than Minnesota Lakes and Rivers.”***

JOIN Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates NOW to protect the lake you love!

You can make a contribution online at www.mnlakesandrivers.org.

Or, mail a contribution to MLR, PO Box 22262, St. Paul, MN 55122

Your membership in Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates provides a significant Return on Investment. MLR has successfully lobbied to lower property taxes on lakeshore, create grant programs through DNR that support lake association programming, trainings and education from the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center for lake home and cabin owners, and technical assistance from local units of government to support property owners and lake associations.

When our members told us they were seeing more boating conflicts, dangerous boating, damage to shorelines and lake bottoms, and rude boating behavior, MLR took action.

Last year we worked to ***fund research (\$160k) at the St. Anthony Falls Lab***, the oldest fluid dynamics lab in the US, to study the height and energy of different wakes, from an 18 foot runabout to a wake surfing boat. The study was released in February. Check the blog section of the new MLR website (<https://mnlakesandrivers.org/>) to see the released study.

Last fall we worked to build a broad base of partners, including Hennepin and Goodhue County sheriffs, the National Marine Manufacturing Association, Marine Retailers Association of the Americas, the Community of MN Resorts, Tonka Bay Marina, and MN DNR in ***support of a new boater education and certification requirement.***

- Minnesota is one of only 8 states without a watercraft certification program,
- Boating deaths broke a decades old record the summer of 2021,
- Boating sales of paddle craft and larger pontoon and wake surfing craft have been up over 30%, escalating conflicts among user groups,
- Training will include Best Practices for safety, reducing user conflicts, preventing the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species, preventing damage to shorelines from wake action and protecting lake bottoms from prop thrust.

During the pandemic more and more people bought lakefront property to self isolate. More sales created a spike in the value of shoreline. The resultant increases in property taxes are now starting to show up on proposed property tax statements. This is resulting in a rise in market driven property taxes. ***MLR is working this session to create a state buydown to offset these market driven tax increases.***

MLR has gotten calls about both the cost and red tape lake associations must navigate to manage aquatic invasive species in infested lakes. The DNR does not typically take any action to treat AIS once they are in a lake, yet the DNR has stringent and costly permitting requirements. Local governments and lake associations bear the cost of lake management and are required to do the planning and execution of the work. Lake home and cabin owners like you pay the costs directly through contributions to your lake association or through local property tax levies. MLR took action, we:

- ***Surveyed Lake Associations about the DNR aquatic plant management programs*** to document the issues. You can find a report of the results on the blog on our website.
- ***Lobbied to create a \$850k grant program*** for lake associations working to control AIS.

MLR has launched four programs as well in our efforts to protect your lake and river heritage and investment. While COVID-19 disrupted our pilots last summer, we had good feedback and impact and will work this summer to expand them.

- ***Stop Starry*** - with funding from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, MLR is providing boat cleaning stations at the public accesses of lakes infested with Starry Stonewort so boaters can Clean, Drain and Dry as they leave. This will lower the risk of AIS spread to the lake you love.
- ***Lake Steward*** rewards and recognizes property owners who have preserved their shoreline and supports those who want to restore their shore.
- ***Up the Creek Meats*** connects lake associations with meat producers in their watershed that use regenerative agriculture practices and work to protect water in their operations. You can buy food directly from producers that farm in a way that protects the water in
- ***Project WET*** is a national program that trains people and provides curriculum so they can engage audiences from classrooms to fair booths to Chamber of Commerce events. Education is the first step in protecting our lake heritage.

MLR's mission is to, "Protect Minnesota's lake and river heritage for current and future generations by forging strong links among lakes, lake advocates and policy makers." ***Our strategy focuses on four legs: (1) advocacy at the Minnesota Legislature, (2) promotion of aquatic science, (3) education and organization of lake home and shore line owners to create a strong advocacy base, (4) professional media outreach to get your issues and accomplishments into local and state media.***

We cannot do this work without your generous contributions. Unlike most conservation groups, MLR receives the majority of its funding from individual members like you. There is no other group so focused on the issues important to you and we have a long track record of success.

By joining MLR you will receive communications on our legislative efforts, action alerts that make it easy for you to contact your legislators on important legislation, an invite to our annual "Water Connects Us All" annual meeting as well as free webinars and events. But more than that, you will be supporting the statewide lake group that does more to protect the lake and the good times you have for the future.

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"JOIN" button.

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