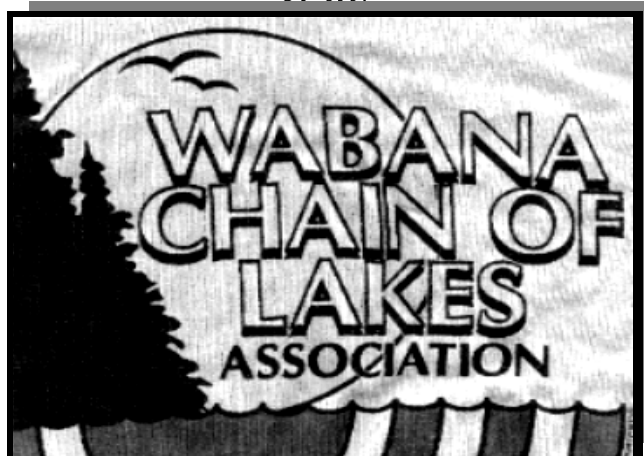


The Chain Letter

of the



Dedicated to the care and preservation of our lakes, for the enjoyment and safety of all.

May 2005

Volume 9, Number 1

A new year for the Chain Letter

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FROM PRESIDENT CHAMBERS

Greetings:

We are still on our winter vacation but hope to be home soon. Hope everyone had a good winter. Spring is here and summer just around the corner. We all seem to look forward to its arrival and all things connected with it.

Recently I was informed of the death of Bob Sage while he was in Florida. He will be sadly missed by all. He was always ready to give a hand to our association in any way he could.

Our next WCOLA meeting will be the 21st of May. Hope you can all be there with your views and suggestions. We are all members, and all voices are heard and welcomed.

Dick

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2005

I asked Vice President Bud Sage to give me meeting dates for 2005 so I could publish them in this issue, and by telephone and email with members of the Steering Committee he established those listed below. He followed the times as set in 2004, that is, the third Saturday of the summer months, and he succeeded except for June, when there was a conflict for the Township Hall.

May 21, 2005
June 25, 2005
July 16, 2005 (Picnic date also)
August 20, 2005
September 17, 2005

The meeting hours will remain the same as last year:

Coffee at 8:30 AM

Program at 9:00 AM

Meeting at 9:30 AM except when program is longer.

The time of the July 16 meeting is yet to be determined, and can be discussed at the May 21 meeting. Should we hold a meeting in the morning and the picnic in the afternoon, or combine them into one time, in some way?

Please enter these dates on your calendar now, while you are thinking of it!

AGENDA FOR MAY 21, 2005

- 1) Call to order—President Richard Chambers.
- 2) Additions and corrections to the Agenda.
- 3) Minutes of September 2004, as printed in the December 2004 *Chain Letter*—Secretary Susan Lick.
- 4) Treasurer's Report—Treasurer Catherine Rudolph.
- 5) Reports of Committees.
 - a) Steering Committee
 - b) Water quality Committee
 - c) By-Laws Committee
 - d) _____
- 6) Unfinished Business.
 - a) By-Laws.
 - b) _____
- 7) New Business.
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
- 8) Adjournment.

Robert Earl Sage

Nov. 11, 1922 – April 5, 2005

The Wabana Chain of Lakes Association, and environmental advocates in general, lost a very good friend with the death of Bob Sage. His cousin and friend Bud Sage wrote: "Bob Sage died on the 5th of April in Florida. He had Colon surgery on [the preceding] Monday, corrective surgery on Wednesday and with all the complications he just could not pull out of his situation".

Bob was a lifelong summer resident on Bluewater Lake, and was a strong advocate in the formation of the WCOLA. He was its Secretary for years, served as Chair of several committees including the group that wrote the original By-Laws, and the committee that wrote the first WCOLA brochure. Recently he has been very active in helping people make Conservation Easements on lakeshore property, to protect the wild shores and clear waters. The Association will sorely miss both his wisdom and his work.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

The last communication I received from Bob Sage concerned Conservation Easements. Harold Dziuk had sent him information on these procedures, which I do not reprint here but it can be obtained on a web site; but I reprint Bob's note to me, his note to Harold, and Harold's response, since both may be of great interest to several of our members.

The forwarded message is attached, Bill. I am forwarding some details on conservation easements from Harold Dziuk that are most interesting, and it is possibly subject matter for the Chain Letter. L.W. Sage "Bud" has done a lot of work in this area with the Minnesota Land Trust as well. This may be of interest to you and Betsy as well as the members of the Chain. Hope you're having a great winter. Bob

From Bob to Harold Dziuk:

Harold; Great work! What are the parameters for a conservation easement to qualify as such? Size of parcel? Location? Financial incentives, if any, tax deduct incentives, if any. Restrictions? , etc..etc. Thanks, Bob

From Harold to Bob, forwarded by Bob to the Chain Letter:

Hello Bob:

Some organizations, such as the Trust for Public Land and Nature Conservancy, typically require large parcels. But parcel size is only one parameter that is looked at. Often it is the type of land and where it is located that is of great importance in their decision to accept the parcel for a conservation easement. Land that is adjacent to an established wildlife or aquatic management area or public land is often of a higher priority. The North Central Lakes Project will be especially interested in supporting shoreland or wetland protection through conservation easements. The Minnesota Land Trust has shown an interest in shoreland parcels, some are not very large. There are financial incentives. In a few cases the land owner has been given some funds to help offset the loss of assets as a result of restrictions on land use such as not allowing timber harvest or agricultural uses or construction of buildings.

Financial incentives:

The Minnesota Land Trust, a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization, asks the landowner to make a donation to their efforts that are required by new conservation easements, such as legal fees to fight challenges and monitoring the easement on an annual basis for compliance. Through the North Central Lakes Project, I'm seeking to find funds to help pay the fees up front for those who are

willing to establish a conservation easement. The DNR also accepts conservation easements and they do not require any fees from the land owner but I believe they prefer to include allowing the public to enter the easement land. Easements accepted by the Minnesota Land Trust do not allow the public to enter the protected land unless the owner wishes to include that in the easement when it is drafted.

Some property owners may be concerned about the lack of support from the County in providing tax incentives or even in giving the appropriate reduction in assessed value for real estate taxes purposes that is required by law.

There is evidence that the estimated market value and assessed value of land that has land use restrictions resulting from a conservation easement must be lowered when compared to similar land that does not have restrictions. John Vigen, a well known and respected certified real estate appraiser, has informed us that the reductions in market value have now been clearly shown by the sales of parcels that have land use restrictions mandated by a conservation easement. The reductions range from a low of 30% to a high of 70%. The lower reductions are related to those parcels that are not suitable for construction of buildings because of wetland or bluffs or other reasons. Shoreland owners on Sugar Lake informed me that, without the help of an attorney, they were successful in getting a favorable decision from a judge who agreed that they should get a greater tax reduction than the Assessor had allowed.

Most people don't want to go to tax court to challenge the Assessor. I think that the attitude of the County would change if they found that they are required by law to give a tax reduction on restricted land. What I think is needed is to get several conservation easements established and then see what the Assessor does with the estimated market value after easements are in effect. If the reductions are not what the appraiser says they should be, then I'd like to see them challenged in tax court.

Restrictions:

This is entirely up to the landowner. In order to get a reduced market value, it usually means restrictions in land use, such as limits on construction and harvesting of timber. It can include a large number of items such as the number of docks, length of docks, setbacks of buildings from the shoreline, limits on additions to existing buildings, limits on roads, limits on utilities, etc. The greater the restrictions and the more suitable the land, the greater the expected reduction in market value.

Call me if you have more questions.

Best wishes,

Harold

WATER QUALITY SAMPLING

Rich Brasch, John Downing and Phil Gelbach week-ended at Wabana April 30-May 1, and took the ice-out samples that we did not get last year. Bob and Mary Gephart were out of town so they could not participate, and I sure was not available. It was cold! When they sampled at TN, north end of Trout, it was snowing so hard they could not see either shore, and a strong wind. Rich reported for the Water Quality Committee on May 22, in an email to the Chain Letter, as follows:

Here's a bullet summary of what happened and where things are at:

- Weather was delightful ☺. Overcast, 10-20 mph winds, with periodic snow squalls and Styrofoam "hail"
- Samples were delivered to the Instrumental Research Lab in Fridley at about 10 this morning. The prices we were quoted from IR were 10-20% lower than the prices from the lab used previously. Sample results should be ready in about 2 weeks. Price for this round will be \$500-550.
- We collected samples from the usual 10 sites, plus 2 more that Bill D requested. I had only enough bottles for the original 10, but John had enough samples for all 12. John will run samples for the 12 sites through his lab at ISU, I will have the samples for the 10 primary sites analyzed at IR and we will compare the common samples.
- We took dissolved oxygen/ temperature/ ph/ conductivity /etc. profiles at each site. The primary item of interest was that the profiles taken in Interlachen [*aka Little Trout*] showed evidence that it was the only lake that had not turned over completely. John will be working these up.
- We did not get to Little Wabana on this trip, but will try to get to it during the June sampling excursion.

That's what I know for now. Let me know if you have any questions.

Rich Brasch www.bonestroo.com

BILL BERG IN VOLUNTEER

Those members and friends who do not receive the *Minnesota Conservation Volunteer* may not have heard of the wonderful profile of our Trout Lake neighbor Bill Berg (also WCOLA Program Co-Chair with Susan Hawkinson) by Margaret Haapoja in the March-April 2005 edition. It is 6 pages long, with photographs, and is sub-headed "Bobcats, coyotes, and other critters are better known and understood, thanks to longtime DNR wildlife biologist Bill Berg." Rather than trying to excerpt any of it here, I'll refer you to the website for the whole article:

www.dnr.state.mn.us/volunteer/marapr05/speaking.html

You'll be glad you read about this wonderful naturalist and friend!

DEER TICKS & LYME DISEASE

Those members who live at a distance may not subscribe to the *Grand Rapids Herald Review*, and therefore may have missed the excellent warning article last week by Britta Arendt called "Itasca County—a hot spot for deer ticks, Lyme Disease." This is far from being a panic-inducing article, but it is a notification that we should be prepared when we come for a vacation in the north woods. The article quotes Sue Erzar, director of Itasca County Public Health: "We are no longer on the bubble of the hot zone for high incidence—we are now part of it." Itasca and surrounding counties had 164 exposed cases in 2004.

The disease is a serious one, the ticks that carry it to humans are very small (nymphs are 1/32 inch long), found in tall grass and woods, and there is no vaccination for it for humans, though there is for pets. Please read about the disease at the site www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/lyme/index.htm or look for Lyme Disease on your browser. This disease makes cats and dogs very sick, and it would be worth a call to your veterinarian to find out what to do before you visit.

Wabana Chain of Lakes Association

**First meeting of 2005:
Saturday, May 21
8:30 AM Coffee
9:00 AM Program
9:30 AM Business Meeting**

PROGRAM ON WETLANDS

Bill Berg has arranged for us to see the new video, *Preserving Wetlands Traditions*. It is a brand new production that was introduced just last week in Minnesota at several wetlands meetings, and depicts the wetlands crisis of today that is affecting wetland ecosystems, water quality, and wildlife, with the emphasis on Minnesota. We are very lucky to have this new program! And especially, since May is National Wetlands Month in the United States.

Ms Cathy Rudolph, Treasurer
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