

WCOLA Newsletter

Wabana Chain of Lakes Association

WCOLA Calendar:

WCOLA Meetings:

July 13th @ 3pm

August 15th @ 9am

Sept. 14th @ 3pm

Summer Solstice:

June 20th- 5pm

"FUN Raising" Concert:

August 7th, 2026

Hello WCOLA members & future members—

I'm sure you're happy with the warm weather that has finally arrived! We are looking forward to a great summer ahead!

We enjoyed seeing everyone who came to the Spring Social at Cedar Creek Tavern! Bill Grantges gave an excellent talk. We have informational hand-outs from Mr. Grantge. Reach out if you'd like a copy.

The next social event of the year is the Summer Solstice party on June 20th hosted by the Downing/Colburn families. We look forward to seeing you there. (More information on the Summer Solstice party is on page 3 of the newsletter.)

The WCOLA "FUN Raising" event is Friday, August 7th, featuring Adessa & the Beat. It's going to be a fun evening of dinner & dancing, and it's a great way to support WCOLA while meeting your neighbors. (More info. on page 11.)

Our Annual Meeting is August 15th at 9am at the Wabana Town Hall. We'd love to have you attend and learn more about the Lake Association and what we've been doing.

We have begun water testing of our area lakes, and we will continue with our Loon Count. We hope to get you the reports by fall.

As you will see in this newsletter, our Lake Association is about much more than keeping our area lakes clean & healthy. We are equally committed to protecting the surrounding land, preserving our natural resources, and strengthening our community. The choices we make every day—whether on our properties, in our neighborhoods, or around the lakes—have a direct impact on the health and beauty of the waters we all cherish. Through our newsletter, we hope to provide information to keep you informed of things going on on the lakes, and in our community.

We thank you for being part of our lake association! We look forward to a fun summer ahead! Be sure to tell your friends & family members about WCOLA. We love meeting new people! If you have any questions, please contact me at the email address listed below.

Scott Hutter
president.WCOLA@gmail.com



Welcome to the DOG Days
of Summer!

Looking Back:

Spring Social



The WCOLA Spring Social was held at the Cedar Creek Tavern on May 16th and was a well-attended event. It was nice to see so many of our friends & neighbors again after such a long winter.



Bill Grantges, Itasca County Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator, spoke on AIS

(Aquatic Invasive Species). It was great to hear that the things we are doing to combat the spread of AIS are helping.

Several local businesses donated items to the silent auction and WCOLA received \$494 from the auction sales. Door prizes were given out to many guests. Cedar Creek Tavern did a nice job

accommodating our large group on a busy evening.

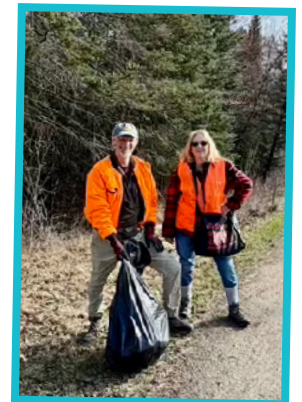
Thank you to all who attended! We appreciate you! Also a big thanks to the "FUN Committee" for planning the Spring Social. There was a lot of "behind the scenes" work these past weeks to make the evening happen.



Road Cleanup

Thank You, Thank You, Thank You!

Our roadside cleanup was a tremendous success thanks to the 22 volunteers who came together on May 2nd. The sunshine was glorious, the coffee and donuts energizing, and the camaraderie was fantastic. We welcomed six brand new cleanup volunteers and rejoiced when the faithful "regulars" returned.



If you missed the opportunity this spring to join in the fun, we will gather once again this fall for round two. The date will be determine soon. If you have suggestions for future roadside cleanups, please let me know.

Sandra Nelson — sj.nelson57@icloud.com

Volunteers— Louie & Janeen Gueltzow, Susan & Dave Lick, Pam Friesen, Bonnie Larson, Steve & Jean Melin, Carol & Wayne Speedling, Loren Gorden, Eva Remiarz & Fuller, Michelle Cone, Jean & Dan Hagen, Sheldon Hedlund, Jill Rentas, Lynne & Ray Pernsteiner, and Sam & Sandra Nelson.



Looking Ahead:

Summer Solstice Gathering



Please come to the Summer Solstice Party on **Saturday June 20, 2026 at 5pm.**
We will be holding the party OUTSIDE this year if the weather isn't rainy.
Come by land or by water!

Where: Downing/Colburn Family residence: (Sandy Arc) 38067 Forest Lane
Park at the top of the hill if there is no more parking near the house.
If you're coming by water, look for the Tiki lights and action on shore.
Anchor, dock at either dock, or beach the boat on the sand.

As in previous years, we will have locally sourced beef hot dogs on the grill for all, but please bring an appropriate beverage & some solstice party snacks to share.

We will be sitting on the dock with an appropriate beverage (as Bill Downing would have suggested) at 5 pm waiting to welcome old friends and new!

John & Marcia Downing, and Libby & George Colburn



July 4th Boat Parade

Meet up on the water with your friends & neighbors for a 4th of July boat parade!

Meet in Wakeman Bay at 2pm if you'd like to join in.

Decorate your boat in a patriotic theme and send your photos in to be published in the next WCOLA newsletter!



“Common Sense” Summer

(PSA from Hill City Police)

PSA for the folks in Hill City and surrounding areas, we are going to try a little thing called “common sense” this summer, and over the 4th of July holiday... it is going to be tough for a few folks to understand, but here are some reminders:

If you have a dirt bike, golf cart, e-bike, or ATV, the traffic signs are not just for cars, and good looking people, you need to use them too! We love the fact that kids, and some adults who should be classified as kids, use these things to get around, but for the love of Pete and/or Karen, (Sorry if your name is Pete, or Karen), please wear helmets and follow the law.

Yes, we understand you like fireworks, most of us do! But, at 2am because you slammed a bottle of fireball, doesn't mean it's a good time to light them off. Roman candles are not made to shoot at each other.
Be respectful of your neighbors!

Now onto the water- Yes, we love boats; jet skis, and any other cool contraption you have, but for Pete & Karen's sake, please respect other boaters & recreational folks. There are laws for a reason. If you have 37.5 folks on a pontoon, make sure you have 38 life jackets. (Just kidding - a little over board there - no pun intended), but use common sense. There is a bright yellow sticker that says how many you can have in a boat. Make sure everyone has a life jacket.
They aren't just for decoration — use them!

Jet skis- please, please, please, understand that people get pissed when you go within 5 feet of a dock, or boater at full throttle, or drive in circles for 375 minutes straight in front of a house. Please, again, use common sense, and be respectful of the folks who own property on the lake.

I only speak for the guys wearing the blue uniform, so if you see a brown, green, or a maroon uniform, you better know the law and be abiding by it.

Wishing everyone a safe & happy summer!

Presentation at the WCOLA Spring Social:
Bill Grantges, Director, Itasca County AIS Program
Saturday May 16, Cedar Creek Tavern



Bill discussed the various types of AIS that have infested lakes in our county. As AIS continues to spread to more lakes, it is more of a challenge to keep non-infested lakes, like the Wabana chain, AIS free.

Bill has committed to providing inspectors at both Wabana's public accesses similar to last year, but acknowledges that he must provide inspections and decontaminations at boat landings on infested lakes as a priority.

Bill provided handouts at the gathering:

Handout A showed the dramatic drop in violation rates since inspections were initiated in 2014. An example of a violation would be entering the

launch area with the drain plug in place. Handout B pointed out that the rate of new AIS infestations have slowed since the inspection program was initiated.

Handout C discussed what boat and lakeshore owners can do to prevent AIS from spreading:

1. Know what is normal for your lake shore. If something changes, call the county AIS program.
2. Remember to Clean -Drain - Dry watercraft and trailers.
3. If you utilize a Lake Service Provider, or rent a watercraft, ask them questions: What do you do to keep AIS from spreading? What was the last lake they were in?
4. Used equipment must stay out of the water for 21 days before entering another lake.

Please thank Bill if you have a chance for providing an entertaining and informative lecture on AIS.

Mark Conover

Ice Out Dates:

Wabana- April 26th
Bluewater- April 25th
Trout- April 26th
Little Wabana- April 23rd
Little Trout- April 27th
Clearwater- April 19th
Doan- ?



*If you are interested in tracking ice in/out dates for your lake, please contact us at— president.WCOLA@gmail.com

One Hundred Summers on Wabana Lake:

The WA-GA-THA-KA Story, By Kim Miner & family



WA-GA-THA-KA Resort founded in 1926.

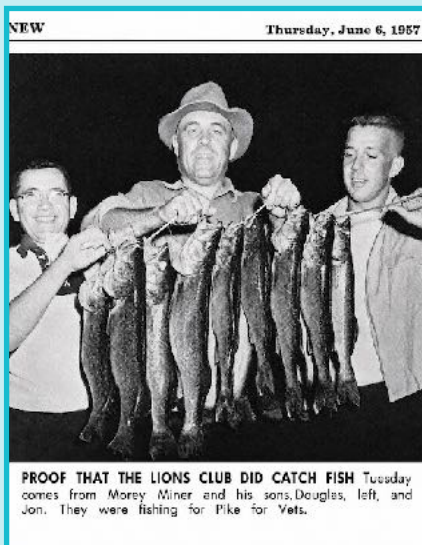
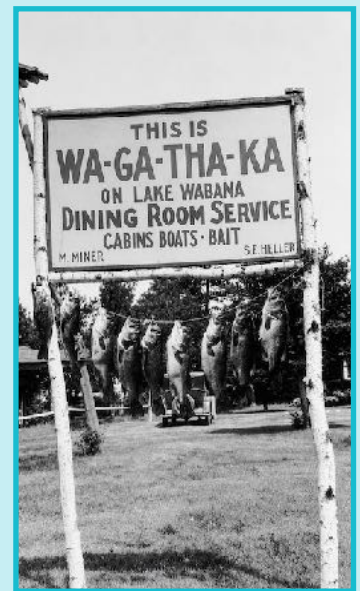
Founded in 1926 by Morey and Barbara Miner, two schoolteachers with a dream and a deep appreciation for the outdoors, WA-GA-THA-KA began as a place where families could gather, relax, and reconnect. Alongside their sons, Jon and Doug, the Miners created more than a resort—they built a tradition that would span generations.

In the early years, the heart of the resort was The Lodge, where guests gathered for Barbara Miner's famous chicken dinners and homemade pies.

People would come from miles around for her renowned Sunday dinners and to enjoy time with family and friends. Days were spent fishing, swimming, and exploring the lake, while evenings were filled with stories, laughter, and the simple joys of a Minnesota summer. These treasured moments helped create memories that lasted a lifetime and established WA-GA-THA-KA as a beloved destination for generations of families.

As the decades passed, the resort evolved to meet the changing needs of vacationing families. Kitchens were added to the cabins in the 1960s, allowing guests to enjoy even greater flexibility while preserving the relaxed atmosphere and authentic Up North experience that had become the hallmark of WA-GA-THA-KA. Today, the resort remains proudly family-

owned and operated by the third generation of the Miner family—Mark and Kim Miner, and Jay and Connie Miner. While thoughtful updates have added modern comforts, the resort continues to reflect the charm, hospitality, and family spirit that guests have cherished for a century.



For nearly 100 years, families have returned to WA-GA-THA-KA year after year. Grandparents who once visited as children now bring their own grandchildren to the same cabins, beaches, and fishing spots. These shared traditions and treasured memories have become an enduring part of the resort's story.

(WA-GA-THA-KA Story Continued on page 6)

One hundred years later, WA-GA-THA-KA is more than a resort. It is a place where families create lifelong memories, where traditions are passed from one generation to the next, and where a commitment to protecting Wabana Lake ensures those experiences will continue for generations to come. At WA-GA-THA-KA, you're not just a guest—you become part of the family and legacy that has endured for 100 years.



Sherry Miner

Equally important as preserving those family memories is preserving the lake itself. At the direction of Sherry Miner, WA-GA-THA-KA Resort began restoring its shoreline more than 15 years ago. Having grown up on Wabana Lake, Sherry developed a deep appreciation for its natural beauty and, after retiring, returned to the lake to manage WA-GA-THA-KA Resort. Working together, the family restored the resort's eroded shoreline using native vegetation.

These plantings help prevent erosion, improve water quality, strengthen the lake's ecosystem, and enhance the natural beauty enjoyed by guests and local year-round residents.



In recognition of these efforts, WA-GA-THA-KA Resort received the Itasca County Shoreland Stewardship Award, honoring the resort's commitment to shoreline restoration, conservation, and protecting the health of Wabana Lake for future generations.

As WA-GA-THA-KA celebrates its centennial year, the Miner family remains committed to the values that have guided the resort for a century—family, hospitality, community, and stewardship. The shoreline restoration work is helping preserve the crystal-clear waters, abundant wildlife, and natural beauty that have made Wabana Lake a treasured destination for generations.



The name WA-GA-THA-KA, an Ojibwe phrase meaning "dwelling place among the birch trees," reflects the resort's deep connection to the land and water that surround it. That connection remains as strong today as it was in 1926.

Wabana Recreation Project

After 5 years of planning, fund raising and building, this year will hopefully find the Wabana Recreation Project completed. The new recreation facility includes a new hockey rink and lighting, a 'kiddie' rink, a new playground, pickleball, tennis and basketball courts, new picnic tables in the pavilion, and a new walking trail. The new recreation complex was built to be handicap accessible.



As the project moved into the final phase, plans included a comprehensive landscaping plan, a couple small, additional playground items and overall finishing of the grounds. Sitting benches will be added this summer to the pickleball and tennis courts, plus a couple benches for the playground as well.



A group of residents: Pam Friezen, Susan Lick, Carol Speedling and township maintenance staff, Ken Aho, worked on the landscaping plan, including 4 separate 'pocket woodland' plantings (roughly 15 feet x 20 feet) between the County Road 49 fence line and the walking trail. The pocket woodlands include a mixture of native trees, shrubs, and plants. A central larger woodland pocket is planted closer to the ice rinks. This larger area will offer community members an opportunity to support and enhance the woodland with plants, trees or benches in honor of or memorial to others. Two shade trees will be planted on the east side of the playground.



Instrumental to development of the landscaping plan has been the expertise of Matthew Picklo & Austin Steere with Itasca County Soil and Water Conservation District. It will take several years for landscaping plantings to take hold and mature. Care and watering will be crucial to the success of the plantings. Temporary fencing protection was installed to prevent damage from browsing animals.



Educational components are an important part of the landscaping plan. The plan includes permanent signage for native species present. Information on how native plants support

pollinator habitat, assist with water run-off, offer shade as well as aesthetics will be included. Local Grand Rapids High School students, and their teacher Jordyn Hellerud, participated in the project on May 20th. Community members also joined in, learning about ground preparation, planting techniques and maintenance of woodland gardens.



The Wabana Township Recreational facilities have seen significant use by township residents as well as people coming from across the county and state. Many, many thanks go out to the volunteers, donors, grantors and committee members who have made this project possible. Community volunteer labor will continue to be needed throughout the landscaping project and finishing of the playground. Plans to install the new playground pieces will take place the last week of July. Please contact Susan Lick (218) 256-9346 or Pam Friesen (218) 343-8583 if interested in volunteering with landscaping or to finish work on the playground.

In the News:

Minnesota Lake Lookout

Minnesota Lake Lookout is a statewide project led by Minnesota Sea Grant & the Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI) to improve monitoring of chloride pollution and harmful algal blooms (HABs) in Minnesota lakes. The project will establish and support a network of trained, community-based volunteers who collect water samples and observations from their local lakes during key seasonal windows.



Volunteers will monitor chloride levels after snow melt and document HABs in late summer and early fall. Data collected by volunteers will be verified and analyzed by University of Minnesota scientists to improve understanding of how chloride and HABs move through lake systems over time. By expanding monitoring capacity beyond what natural resource agency staff alone can provide, Sea Grant's Minnesota Lake Lookout project helps fill critical data gaps, especially in rural lakes where episodic runoff events and blooms are hard to capture. The project runs until June 30, 2028.

The increasing frequency of harmful algal blooms and chloride pollution from road salt and water softeners pose growing risks to Minnesota's lakes, aquatic ecosystems, and public health. These issues are difficult to monitor because runoff events are episodic, non-point in nature, and often occur outside routine monitoring schedules. Minnesota Sea Grant is well-positioned to address this challenge by connecting communities with scientists and providing trusted, science-based training and tools. By supporting community-based participatory monitoring, this project expands statewide capacity to detect chloride influxes and HABs, improves understanding of lake processes, and strengthens partnerships among lake associations, local organizations, researchers, and natural resource managers.

<https://seagrant.umn.edu/programs/healthy-coastal-ecosystems-program/mn-lake-lookout>

Minnesota Cattail Collaborative



MAISRC is bringing research to real-world application by partnering with state, tribal, and local groups on lakes across Minnesota to test the effectiveness of its research-based invasive cattail removal protocol. The project aims to restore nearshore lake zones by opening dense cattail stands, encouraging native plant regrowth, reconnecting inshore and open-water habitats, and supporting healthy fish communities and lake food webs.

MAISRC research shows that localized invasive cattail removal can successfully increase native plant communities, reconnect lake littoral zones, and potentially benefit fish communities. This demonstration project is critical for moving research findings into statewide best practices. It will provide essential data on the effectiveness and practicality of our approach, measure the success of community-driven science, and ultimately empower lake managers and owners to restore and protect Minnesota's nearshore lake ecosystems. For more information— <https://maisrc.umn.edu/research/MCC>



Catch More Fish, Leave Zero Trace.

Every year, an estimated 200 million soft plastic lures are lost in U.S. waters – nearly 550,000 a day polluting our lakes, rivers, and coastlines with microplastics, BPA, and phthalates. Anglers are left with a frustrating dilemma: fish effectively, or fish responsibly. Zero Trace Baits refuse to accept that trade-off. Born from a deep love of fishing and an even deeper respect for our waters, we set out to change the game.

The result? Premium, scent-infused soft bioplastics that perform like top-tier lures – and are designed to biodegrade completely. Made from a unique gelatin and glycerin base that’s safe for the environment and even safe for fish to eat, our lures break down naturally – eliminating the microplastic pollution that traditional baits leave behind.

<https://zerotracebaits.com/>



Wrap Recycle Right is the branded program of a nonprofit stewardship organization that represents boat wrap producers and develops and operates a recycling program under Minnesota’s Boat Wrap Stewardship Law (Minn. Stat. § 115A.1416)–the first such law in the United States. Formed to promote environmental responsibility and reduce plastic waste in the boating community, WRR supports producers in meeting regulatory requirements and building a network for boat wrap collection and recycling.

Our team will partner with collection sites across the state and continue to expand access as the program evolves.

Practical Water Wisdom: Virtual Learning Series



The Practical Water Wisdom: A Virtual Learning Series webinars are a partnership among Itasca Waters, Minnesota Sea Grant, and others.

Webinar announcements and registration information are posted to MNSG’s events webpage, included in MNSG’s monthly newsletter, and are on the Itasca Waters

Water Wisdom website. , co-sponsored by Minnesota Sea Grant. Past webinar recordings are available, including: What Lakes do in the Winter?, and PFAS in Water: How did they get there, and why are they so challenging to address?

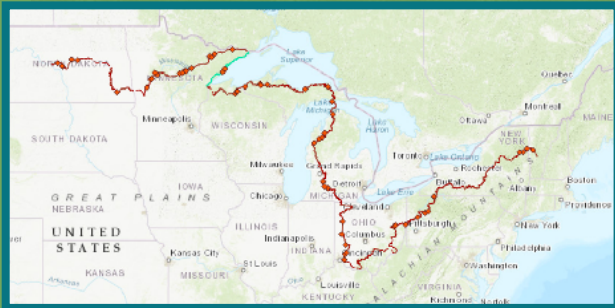
By Co-Host John Downing, Director

<https://seagrant.umn.edu/programs/healthy-coastal-ecosystems-program/practical-water-wisdom>

The North Country Trail is growing in Itasca County

By Amanda MacDonell

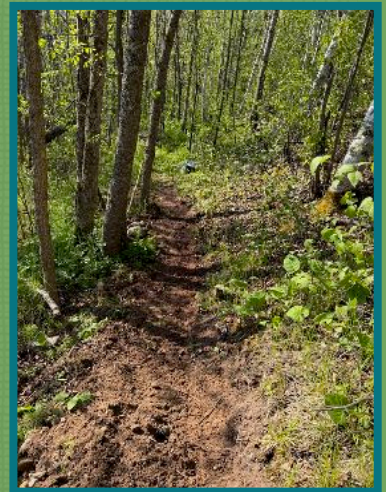
You may, or may not, be aware of the existence of North Country Trail that's coming to Itasca County. The North Country Trail is a hiking trail that spans 8 different states in the upper midwest, and is a federally recognized National Scenic Hiking Trail, just like the Appalachian Trail or the Pacific Crest Trail. Itasca County happens to be the home of over 50 miles of the trail, which seems like a tiny segment of the nearly-5,000 mile trail, but those 50 miles are beloved miles, and frequently used by those who live here!



Over the past year, crews have expanded and improved trail corridors, added new signage and kiosks, hosted monthly

hikes, and partnered with local groups from Cohasset Recreation to the Chamber of Commerce. With new campsites, fresh blazing, and ongoing work to connect communities, the North Country Trail is becoming an even stronger asset for residents and visitors who love exploring the Northwoods. Specifically, we are working on our future plans to route the North Country Trail off of the Mesabi Trail and

into the woods, routing it across public and private lands (with permission), through historic sites such as the Joyce Estates and state parks like the McCarthy Beach State Park. Some flagging work has started to occur north of County Road 61 to County Road 60 in Itasca County, with plans to develop future trail in the beautiful backcountry of Itasca County.



We plan to share more details on the upcoming work that will be happening specifically in the area, but everyone is welcome to hike, volunteer, or simply enjoy the miles of quiet beauty right in our backyard. To find out more or become involved, visit northcountrytrail.org/arw, check us out on Facebook at NCTA Arrowhead Chapter, or send an email to arw@northcountrytrail.org.

It's not too late to join WCOLA!

The 2026 annual dues are \$40 each, and \$50 for a mailed newsletter copy.

You don't have to live on the lake to be a member!

Send your dues payment or donation to WCOLA in care of our treasurer—

Jean Koewler, 32040 Wakeman Bay Trail, Grand Rapids, MN 55744

You can also conveniently pay by Venmo— @WCOLA-Treasurer.

WCOLA Treasurer
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ADESSA
& THE BEAT

**WABANA
CHAIN OF
LAKES
ASSOCIATION**



WCOLA's "Fun Raising" —Benefit Concert—

SAVE THE DATE!

Type to enter text
Friday, August 7th @ Cedar Creek
Tavern from 5pm-9pm

Grand Rapid's very own, *Adessa & the Beat* musical trio will perform live under the big top Friday, August 7th from 5-9pm at Cedar Creek Tavern for WCOLA's inaugural "Fun Raising" event.

Join us for an evening of dinner, dancing, and socializing while raising money for a great cause! Make sure to tell your Family & Friends to save the date!

Tickets on Sale soon... Watch for more information!

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We're here when you need us.

We are excited to announce we will be selling advertising to help support our organization. If you are interested in advertising in our quarterly newsletter, introductory pricing is being offered through June 2026. The cost of a full-page color advertisement per quarterly newsletter is \$100, a half-page ad is \$50, and a quarter-page ad is \$25. Advertisements can be for local businesses, they could be personal too, such as a birthday greeting. It's a great way to support a good cause and it's tax deductible.

WABANA CHAIN OF LAKES ASSOCIATION

Jean Koewler, Treasurer
32040 Wakeman Bay Trail
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

WCOLA Board Members:

President- Scott Hutter, Steve Melin- Past President, Vice President- Tom Horton
Secretary- Chris Freidlieb, Treasurer- Jean Koewler

Committee Members:

Environmental/AIS-Mark Conover, Government Liaison- Sam Nelson,
Communications- Lynne Pernsteiner, Secchi Disc- Jack Hartung,
Shoreland Advisor- Susan Lick, Historical- Carol Speeding, Website- Mark Miner,
Loon Count- Mary Hutter, Roadside Cleanup- Sandra Nelson

Website: WCOLA.org