

Becker County COLA Meeting Minutes: Tamarac Wildlife Refuge
Thursday, August 19, 2021 6:30 PM CST

Attendees: Chuck Becker – Big Sugarbush
Kelly Blackledge – Tamarac Wildlife Refuge – Presenter
Sue Borstad – Pickerel Lake
Rich Cieslak – Buffalo, Rice, Rock
Steve Corbin – Fox Lake
Marietta Keenan – Island Lake
Karl Koenig – Becker County Soil & Water - Presenter
Jan Lee – Buffalo, Rice, Rock Lake
Roger Lee – Buffalo, Rice, Rock Lake
Ken Mattson – Big Sugarbush
Tim Monson – Pickerel Lake
Carol Oberhaltzer – Lake Detroiters
Carl Oberhaltzer – Lake Detroiters
David Oberlander – Stakke Lake
Danny Pinske – Tulaby Lake
Sue Pinske – Tulaby Lake
Wanda Roden – Melissa/Sallie

4:30 pm

After calling the meeting to order, President David Oberlander, called the meeting to order and introduced Kelly Blackledge, Tamarac Visitor Services Manager, who provided a knowledgeable 30 minute overview of the Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge. Some of Kelly's key points included:

- The Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge was established on May 31, 1938, as a breeding ground for migratory birds.
- The refuge is 43,000 acres and contains 25 lakes, 3 rivers and multiple ponds.
- There are approximately 20 miles of hiking trails.
- An abundance of multiple species inhabits the land and waters of this refuge. It is also home to a sizable number of Trumpeter Swans.
- This a fantastic year for wild rice on the refuge and harvesting has begun and will continue until early September. Only Tribal members are allowed to harvest in Tamarac.
- They recently hosted children grades 5 – 8. The children put on waders, explored, and identified creatures of all kinds in the streams located within Tamarac. One of the goals of the educational programs offered at Tamarac is to provide an emotional connection between children and nature, so that they can grow up with a desire to share a little bit of nature with someone else in their life!

5:00 pm

Following Kelly's presentation, David invited everyone to have a little lunch, provided by BCCOLA. After everyone was served, David called the business meeting to order.

- A copy of the June 24, 2021 Zoom meeting minutes had been forwarded to membership prior to the meeting. Tim Monson made a motion to approve. Stephen Corbin seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.
- Two new policies had been forwarded to membership prior to the meeting; Harassment Prevention and Discrimination Prevention.

These two policies had been approved by MN COLA and brought to the BCCOLA Executive Board for consideration in their original MN COLA format.

Rich made a motion to approve the two new policies. Ken Mattson seconded the motion. Both policies were approved and have been added to the BCCOLA Policies and Procedures document. A copy of the revised document is attached to these minutes and will be added to the website.

- Wanda made a motion for BCCOLA to donate \$500 to the Tamarac Wildlife refuge to purchase additional waders for children. Tim Monson seconded the motion. Motion carried.
- Rich provided an update of the annual MAISRC (Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center) Showcase which will be held on Wednesday, September 22nd. It will be held at the University of Minnesota Continuing Education and Conference Center on campus in St. Paul. There is also a virtual option that is available. Becker COLA is hoping to find a conference room locally, where we can attend as a group.
- David then introduced Karl Koenig from the Becker County Soil and Water Conservation District. Karl is responsible for managing the Becker County Starry Trek, which is an annual statewide effort to try and find Starry Stonewort at highly trafficked public accesses across the state. Currently Starry Stonewort has been found in 18 MN lakes. Starry Stonewort was identified in 4 of these lakes through the Starry Trek experience. Over 200 volunteers will participate in the MN Starry Trek on Saturday, August 21, 2021. BCCOLA members are encouraged to participate!

When his presentation ended, many of us drove to the public access on Buffalo Lake to put what we learned to practice. After dragging in multiple aquatic plants using two connect rake heads tied to a rope, we inspected the plants, along with Karl's expertise.

2021 BECKER COUNTY COLA POSITIONS AND POLICIES

Minnesota, "The Land of 10,000 Lakes"..... The State's lakes are its most important asset and essential to its economy, and to the heritage and culture and quality of life of its residents. Becker County values these resources for recreational enjoyment, tourism, and local economy.

BCCOLA By-Laws – Article II Purpose:

Section 1: *The Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations hereafter referred to as Becker County COLA, is organized for the purpose of facilitating cooperation among member lake association to protect and enhance the quality of lakes and their shore areas.*

Section 2: *Becker County COLA will sponsor a water quality monitoring program, assist in the identification of environmental impacts to lakes, communicate information to association members and the public regarding the preservation of lakes as an important natural resource, develop and present recommendations related to shoreland development, coordinate and cooperate with County and State agencies in maintaining and improving water quality.*

General (not in priority ranking)

1. COLA is organized for the purpose of facilitating cooperation among member lake associations.
2. COLA aims to protect and enhance the quality of Becker County lakes and their shore areas.
3. COLA seeks to influence state, county, township, and city public officials and agencies in accordance with positions and policies adopted by its Board of Directors.
4. COLA will collaborate with neighboring COLA's and other organizations that advocate similar goals.
5. COLA recognizes education of lake association members, non-association lake residents, businesses, and the general public are important vehicles for achieving COLA goals.

Environment/Zoning (not in priority ranking)

1. COLA, in support of lake associations and lakeshore property owners, urges the Planning and Zoning Administrator, County Commissioners and County Attorney to consistently investigate reported violations and aggressively enforce the provisions of Becker County Ordinance and Minnesota Shoreland Standards.
2. When notified by the County, COLA will inform its member lake associations of proposed amendments to the County Zoning Ordinance and Minnesota Shoreland Rules. In addition, COLA will notify with member lake associations about land subdivision or variance requests in cooperation with Becker County Zoning.
3. When notified by the County, COLA will notify member lake associations about land subdivision or variance applications to include arranging a conference with the Zoning office on the matter. COLA encourages individual Lake Association's contact information be placed on the Zoning and Planning Committee's communication list.
4. COLA supports the strict and consistent application of Becker County's Non-Conformities Ordinance provisions. Further, in cases where deviation from a standard is granted by Variance, COLA urges the Board of Adjustment to require mitigation as a condition of approval and the Planning and Zoning Office to assure that mitigation has been implemented and if not, issue an enforcement statement to the property owner.
5. COLA urges Becker County to identify those shorelands unsuitable for traditional lot/block development and confer upon them "special protection zone" status. Further development of these areas would require conservation design, restrictive measures and/or mitigation features to protect the lake and its shoreland.
6. COLA requests Becker County improve the Shoreland Septic System program by: implementing an Ordinance provision covering Point of Sale re-certification, establishing a Septic System Inspector audit procedure, timely enforcement on those cases where property owners fail to comply with the program, formulating a sewage Pumper/Hauler policy that restricts disposal on land that drains to a lake, and implement an Ordinance provision covering sewage disposal from Recreational Vehicles located on shoreland.
7. COLA encourages each lake association to establish a Lake Management Plan either by use of a model program or custom approach that leads to documentation and a community commitment to preservation of the natural resource. COLA will serve as a resource to a lake association undertaking a Lake Management Plan.
8. COLA urges Becker County officials establish publicly announced, open application process for appointments to the Board of Adjustment, Planning Commission, Ordinance Advisory Committee, and other Becker County appointments. Further, COLA urges that term limits be placed on membership of Boards, Commissions, and committees involved with shoreland regulation.
9. COLA urges local government officials to encourage public participation in decision-making by including representatives of COLA and lake associations in the process of formulating policies and programs that have an impact on the management of lakes and lake-related issues.
10. COLA supports the proposed Minnesota Buffer Zone program to protect the public waters in Becker County.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) (not in priority ranking)

1. COLA places a high priority on education of lake association members, other lake residents, businesses, the general public, and especially youth, as an important mechanism for achieving COLAS's goals.
2. Existing Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) allocation of resources, regulations, administrative structures and programs are insufficient to prevent, manage, and contain the spread of AIS.
3. COLA advocates for state-level changes, including preparation and execution of an effective and efficient statewide AIS plan to stop the spread, early-intervention plans, AIS research, increased funding

for local partners, more aggressive treatment efforts, and education about AIS which threaten Minnesota lakes.

4. COLA encourages increased AIS cooperative efforts between State and Federal agencies, including consistent AIS policies, water related equipment border inspections, increased enforcement/fines, and cooperative/complimentary AIS research.
5. COLA supports the DNR to identify program deficiencies and actively engage in efforts for legislative change.
6. COLA supports local government role and authority in preventing the introduction of AIS to County lakes with county AIS Prevention Aid funding. This should include establishing partnerships with state agencies to enhanced protection that may include increased decontamination facilities, enhanced enforcement, centralized inspection/decontamination areas, enhanced training and identification of Lake Service Providers, education, rapid response, and enhanced programs for special events and resorts/hotels/campgrounds.
7. COLA will encourage and assist lake associations to engage their members and lake property owners in AIS issues along with the risks they pose and to utilize all prevention and control methods.
8. COLA supports the MAISRC Lake Detector program and encourages Lake Association members to attend the various meetings that are held throughout the state of MN.

Communications (not in priority ranking)

1. COLA places a high priority on timely communications between COLA and member lake associations. It is the responsibility of the lake association officers and COLA representatives to facilitate communication between COLA and lake association members.
2. COLA will explore new ways to provide expertise to lake associations.
3. COLA recognizes member contact information as an asset and maintains strict protection of that data.
4. COLA seeks to broaden its means of delivering COLA's messages to the general public.
5. COLA strives to enhance communications with local governments, officials, agencies, businesses and organizations with common missions and goals.

Monitoring (not in priority ranking)

1. COLA understands that transparency (clarity) measurements are the most important component of a lake water quality monitoring program. COLA asks lake associations to recruit volunteers to participate in the Minnesota Citizen Lake Monitoring Program (CLMP) by taking and reporting 12 secchi disk readings each year.
2. COLA urges lake associations to facilitate monitoring to ascertain the trophic condition of their lake(s). It is understood that this involves obtaining sufficiently paired chlorophyll (chl-a) and phosphorus samples; for most lakes this requires 5 samples for each season for three years. The process should be repeated if there is a significant change in transparency.
3. COLA will direct lake associations to employ the appropriate resources to supplement monitoring activities described above.

Harassment Prevention (not in priority ranking)

COLA is committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to be involved in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, COLA expects that all relationships among persons in the course of our work will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and harassment.

Examples of unlawful harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations, or comments.

- Visual conduct such as derogatory and/or sexually oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings, e-mail and faxes or gestures.
- Physical conduct such as assault, unwanted touching, blocking normal movement or interfering with work directed at a volunteer because of the volunteer's sex or another protected characteristic.
- Threats and demands to submit to sexual requests in order to keep one's position, or to avoid some other loss, and offers of volunteer opportunities in return for sexual favors.
- Retaliation for having reported or threatened to report unlawful harassment.

Discrimination Prevention (not in priority ranking)

COLA is an equal opportunity volunteer organization, committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all of our volunteers, staff, clients, subcontractors, and vendors. Each individual has the right to be involved in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices. Therefore, COLA expects that all relationships among persons in the course of our work will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. In order to keep this commitment, COLA maintains a strict policy of prohibiting unlawful discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex, age, physical or mental disability, or any other characteristic protected by state, federal or local employment discrimination laws. Volunteers will not be discriminated against in volunteer opportunities and the election of officers.

Minutes submitted by Wanda Roden

Approved: