

Protecting Lakes: Three Decades of Becker County COLA

On the occasion of COLA's 15th anniversary in 2006, MPCA's Bruce Paakh, and MDNR's Robert Merritt credited a February 7, 1991 meeting of the Bad Medicine Lake Water Quality Committee with the idea of creating a mechanism for bringing together Lake Associations to address water quality and other issues of mutual concern to lakes in Becker County. In addition to Bad Medicine representatives, Paakh and Merritt were present as was Dean Ash, also of the DNR, Mike Swan of the White Earth Reservation, and Floyd Svenby of Becker County Zoning. In the course of wide-ranging discussions on Bad Medicine's fisheries, water quality, septic systems conditions, and lake management planning, Bob Merritt suggested that a Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA), one similar to an existing COLA in Hubbard County could serve as a vehicle for exchange of information and lake protection strategies among lake residents.

The suggestion was well received by those present, so Paakh and Merritt drew up a list of potentially interested parties to be invited to an April 11th meeting at the Detroit Lakes Library. At that meeting a large number of those invited heard the President of the Hubbard COLA describe the benefits of their COLA. By meeting's end, the group had decided to have a follow-up meeting to draw up specific plans for a Becker COLA. ^{1/}

Just two months later (June 6), Becker COLA's Bylaws were adopted. COLA's organizational structure centered on a Board of Directors comprised of the chosen representative from each of the member lake associations.^{2/} Lake Associations became COLA members upon application and payment of dues. COLA dues were assessed to lake associations based upon membership numbers. Officers were elected by the Board of Directors. An Executive Committee comprised of officers and the chairs of standing committees was tasked with directing COLA affairs during intervals when the Board of Directors was not in session.

The 1990's

"COLA's goal is to assist in the proper development, improvement and preservation of lakes and their shoreland. COLA through its membership will identify environmental problems in area lakes. COLA will present association positions to government agencies and private individuals to bring appropriate action. COLA will provide its membership a direct link to county government where local land use decisions and policies are made. "

From 1st COLA Newsletter, August, 1991

Mark Geihl, a Floyd Lake resident (and teacher in Detroit Lakes) became President of the fledgling organization. Before the end of 1991, in large part because of efforts by Geihl, 16 lake associations, with a total membership of over 1200 had affiliated themselves with the new Becker COLA, including some lakes which had not previously had lake associations.

The early bylaws described COLA's purpose "to facilitate cooperation among member lake associations and assist in fostering wise and legal use of the lakes." To carry out the purpose, three standing committees were identified: Communications, Monitoring, and Environmental, the latter charged with improving the regulations impacting lakes.

1/ Immediately prior to the April 11th meeting, according to Paakh, some representatives of the United Lake Property Owners Association (ULPOA) attempt to discourage the formation of a COLA, urging instead membership in their existing organization as an alternative. Merritt and Paakh, observing that ULPOA was "almost exclusively a property tax reform organization", were able to convince key Becker County lake association representatives that a Becker COLA organized to deal with a broad range of lake issues would not be well-served by ULPOA.

2/ But the organization was not incorporated as a non-profit until 1/11/94.

3/ these funds were derived from a state block grant made available to carry out a mandated County Water Plan. The chemical analysis of water samples was conducted by AW Research Labs, a Brainerd firm, which opened a satellite office in Detroit Lakes to collect the samples.

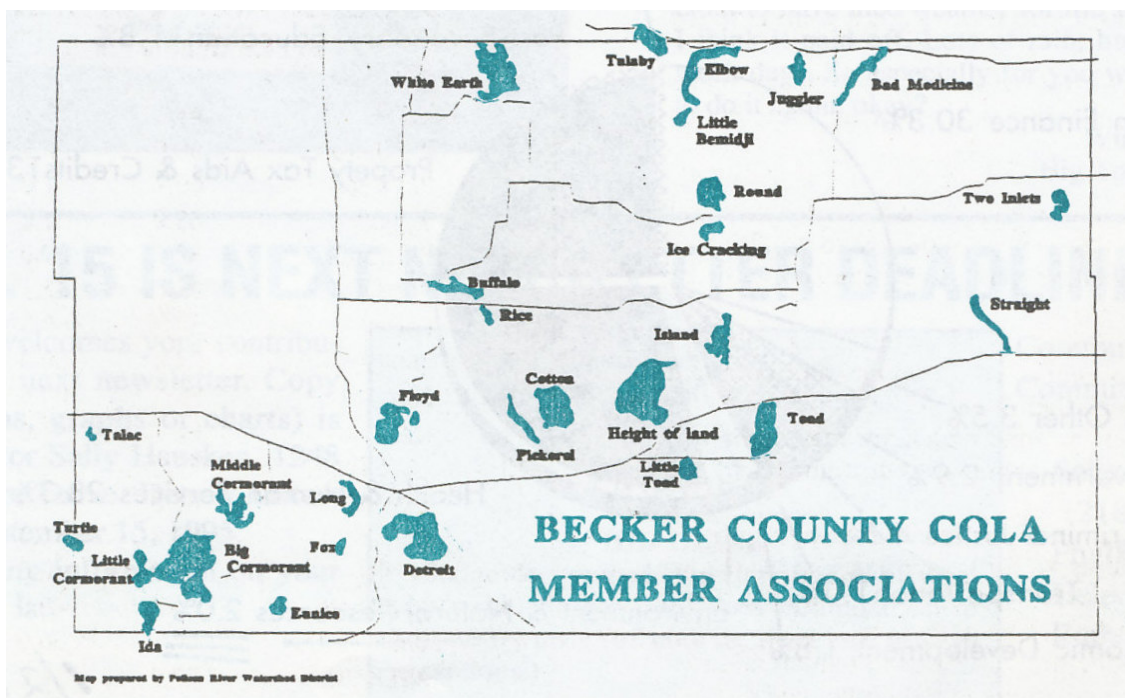
Becker COLA held its first Lake Conference on August 26, 1991. Speakers representing MPCA, the Freshwater Foundation, University of Minnesota Extension Service, DNR, the Mayor of Detroit Lakes, and a County Commissioner were among the speakers.

As to monitoring, by the end of its first year of operation, in the summer of 1992, sixteen COLA member lakes were systematically measuring water clarity. And by the end of the second year, eighteen COLA lakes had begun water chemistry testing through a program enabled in large part through funds provided to participating lakes through the Becker County Soil and Water Conservation District.^{3/} Typically a lake would gather four to five chemistry samples at approximately monthly intervals during the open-water season in order to be able to identify a lake's trophic condition, and to establish a base line to be used to identify trends. COLA's involvement in monitoring Becker Lakes continued in this manner for about ten years at a cost of about \$4000 per year; a major event in most of those years was publication of the results of COLA lakes' water monitoring efforts.

Another early COLA start-up activity had to do with revising the County's zoning ordinance. This revision was necessitated by changes to Minnesota's original **1971 Statewide Shoreland Standards**, changes which had occurred shortly before COLA came into existence. Members of the COLA's Environment Committee, especially through the efforts of Mark Geihl and Gary Desing who were appointed to a county committee that recommended changes to the Zoning Ordinance that were consistent, and in a few instances exceeded, the requirements set forth in the new statewide standards; these were adopted in 1993. The Environment Committee, later chaired for some years by Duane Bellefeuille, also began to track permit applications that came before the County Planning Commission and the Board of Adjustment. After 1993, Dick Hecock served as COLA liaison to the Pelican River Watershed District.

Similarly the Communications Committee began almost immediately to disseminate information to lake association members by means of direct mailings of quarterly newsletters. By 1994, under the editorship of Sally Hausken, the lengthy newsletter included news of COLA activities as well as articles of interest to lake residents and was aimed at increasing awareness of lake problems and their causes. An important feature of Hausken's newsletter program was the exchange of ideas among member lake associations

To further its communications-education thrust, each year COLA continued to hold a well-publicized "water conference" dealing with some important issue (s) of consequence to lake association members —e.g. septic system management, exotic species, the significance of a watershed to a lake, the status of zoning regulations affecting shoreland, and more. In 1996 a brochure describing COLA's mission, structure, committees, meetings and accomplishments was developed and widely circulated for use both in recruiting lake association members, and in informing the public of COLA's existence and purpose.



1996

As outgoing President in 1995, Mark Geihl suggested that future COLA work was required to protect lakes from certain logging and agriculture practices, and called for larger lot sizes on more vulnerable lakes. He also noted that County enforcement of existing zoning rules needed strengthening,

His thoughts presaged a re-statement of COLA Goals in 1996; these implied a COLA commitment to working with governmental agencies emphasis on pressing forward towards more lake-friendly regulations at several levels..

1996 COLA Goals

1. *Maintain and improve the water quality in our lakes, streams' and rivers*
2. *Work toward the enforcement of existing township, city, county and state zoning ordinances*
3. *Expand membership by increasing the number of lake associations belonging to COLA and increase memberships within each lake association*
4. *Support legislation that will adequately fund a program to research ecologically sound methods to control or eradicate harmful exotic species which are or may become a threat to the environment*
5. *Work aggressively to strengthen our relations with appropriate government agencies and identify resource people representing those agencies*
6. *Promote environmentally sound decisions at appropriate levels of government*
7. *Encourage implementation of "Best Management Practices" for the protection of water quality*
8. *Monitor all COLA member lakes for water clarity, lake level, rainfall, total phosphorus, chlorophyll-a and share the data regionally*

COLA News, Vol. 6, #1, May, 1996

Indeed, in 1998 based on work of a broad-based committee containing several COLA members and other Lake Association delegates, numerous changes were made to the shoreland portions of the county zoning ordinance: these included more restrictions on utilizing recreational vehicles as guest cottages, reductions in Planned Unit Development densities, placement requirements for water-oriented accessory structures, specific limitations on shoreline vegetation removal, prohibition of use of phosphorus fertilizers in most shoreline areas, increased restrictions on retaining wall usage, and more detail on plat requests.

At the same time COLA Environmental Affairs committee said the process of improving ordinance was not complete, noting specifically that more work on gravel pits and agricultural runoff control was needed.

Ruth Bergquist had succeeded Geihl to the COLA Presidency with Phyllis Onsgard as Vice President, Carolyn Wenger as Secretary with Paul Bursik continuing as the organization's Treasurer. Bergquist pressed COLA's involvement at the state level. Onsgard, who had had considerable governmental and lobbying experience in her own right, succeeded Bergquist as COLA President, COLA became active in the Minnesota Lakes Association, participated in statewide meetings of that organization, and occasionally welcomed officers of that organization at monthly COLA meetings. Onsgard saw COLA's relationship as part of a hierarchy of lake-protection groups – Lake Associations, COLA's, Minnesota Lakes Association, and North American Lake Management Society, the latter in fact a professional organization whose membership was largely resource managers and scientists. Bergquist continued service as COLA's liaison to state government and it was during this period that important progress was made in controlling the use of weed-rollers, septic systems and jet-skis and other matters of interest to members of COLA's member lake associations as determined by a 1997 member-survey.

As the 1990's drew to a close, COLA received representatives from 26 member lake associations, containing 31 lakes with 28 of those undertaking some water quality monitoring. The "Restore the Shore" tree planting program was into its third year. COLA Had provided multi-year funding for a prize-winning "Waterwatch" program, and interdisciplinary curriculum at the Detroit Lakes Middle School. Paul Bursik had completed his service as the organization's treasurer with nine years under his belt, , and Sally Hausken ended a five-year stint as COLA Newsletter Editor. COLA published an annual monitoring report, and was able to show trends in water quality for many lakes.

1990's Meeting Topics

"How Well is your Well?" – Lisa Axton, USDA Extension Service
Roads and Timber-Harvesting Sensitivity – DNR Forester, Chip Lohmeier
County Zoning Regulations – Dan Holm, BC Environmental Services
"Keeping our Shores" – Ginny Imholte, BWSR
"Problems with Jet-Skis" – Ray Heino, BC Sheriff's office
Bio-control of Purple Loosetrife – Paul Glander, DNR Fisheries
"Feedlots and Lakes" – Mike Vavricka, MPCA
"High Water Levels" – Bob Merritt, MDNR
"Have your voices heard" – Peterson of MLA
"Aquatic Plants are your friends" – Anderson, MNDNR
"Feedlots and Wetlands" – Grant - SWCD
"River Keepers" – Bachman of Fargo
"Landscaping for Water Quality" – Carrol Henderson, DNR
"What has Happened to our Groundwater?", Merritt, Hydrologist MNDNR
What about Exotic Species" – Jay Rendell, MNDNR Exotic Species Coordinator

COLA News, various issues

The 2nd Decade (2000-2009)

President Onsgaard continued her service as COLA's president until 2001, then was succeeded by Lanny Brantner who had joined the executive committee as VP in 1998; Mary Schutz who had been treasurer stepped into the VP role. John Postovit became Chair of the Environmental Affairs committee, and Fred Touminen took over as Communications and Education Chair, which included editorship of the newsletter.

In late 2000, a committee consisting of Dick Hecock, John Postovit, John Peterka, and Lanny Brantner was appointed to develop a long-range plan for COLA. After some months of deliberations, in March 2001, the committee delivered its report (Appendix A). In general the committee affirmed that COLA was moving in the right direction in its education/communication efforts, environmental initiatives and monitoring activities. In each of those three established areas it suggested slight adjustments to existing practice. For example, with respect to communications and education, it urged the development of an e-mail network and a webpage to facilitate increased direct contact with lake associations and their members. Regarding environmental activities, the committee urged the creation of policy to direct COLA's adoption of positions on specific, contentious development or zoning issues. Regarding monitoring, the committee recommended adoption of lake-specific monitoring programs to replace the one-size fits-all approach, and urged COLA to make a major commitment to training members in data interpretation.

The 2001 Plan also called for creating a Political Action Committee to interact and influence all levels of governmental decisions that impact lakes. Contained in this recommendation were also some substantive positions advocating for stricter enforcement, building inspections, working to implement measures that would ensure adoption of best management practices, and greater limitations to development on unsuitable lakeshores.

The final 2001 recommendation had to do with a major commitment to assist lake associations in preparing lake management plans based upon the **Minnesota Lake Association Sustainable Lakes Management Model**. The rationale for this idea lay in the recognition that shoreline development was intensifying, and that development was taking place on less suitable shoreline sites. Explicit to this recommendation was COLA's commitment of resources to training lake association personnel to prepare lake management plans for their lakes.

The 2001 plan was accepted by the membership at its annual meeting in 2001.. President Brantner worked to recast the organization to achieve the various recommendations. For example,, within a year, e-mail was in use to communicate with COLA representatives, COLA had hosted a candidate's forum for county commissioner candidates, and had issued a new set of monitoring guidelines that included emphasis on lake-specific monitoring strategies.

A major COLA event began in mid-2001 when COLA did obtain a Board of Water and Soil Resources Grant to provide assistance to lakes willing to prepare Lake Management Plans, utilizing the **Sustainable Lakes Management Plan** (SLMP) Model. With Hecock as project leader, and (Brantner, Postovit, Onsgaard, and John Peterka, a retired NDSU Fisheries Biologist) as an advisory committee, the program was kicked-off with much fanfare at COLA's summer Lake Conference. In late 2001 a series of training sessions were held, and an effort to assemble data from existing data bases was begun. The project extended to early summer 2004, and while it fell short of its larger goal of engaging all COLA lakes in plan development, the project did have broad impacts on how lake associations looked at lake-related problems. Among other outcomes, each lake was supplied with technical materials including aerial photography, lakeshed delineations, contour and soil limitation maps. Only three lakes (Pickerel, Cotton, Bad Medicine) completed plans, but the **SLMP** model was largely incorporated into the Pelican River Watershed District's 2005 Revised Management Plan which developed goals and implementation strategies for about 30 lakes in Becker County, including 10 COLA lakes.

Though the long-term impacts from this effort were mixed, one significant indirect benefit of the **SLMP** project was to greatly improve COLA finances. This was possible because terms of the grant allowed COLA to charge for in-kind services of officers and lake association personnel. In this manner more than \$20,000 was infused into COLA coffers.

Another spinoff of the 2001 plan was a review of COLA's Monitoring program. In March 2002 a special committee made specific recommendations for COLA's monitoring in accord with the 2001 overall plan recommendations. A committee comprised of Dick Hecock, Fisheries Biologist John Peterka and others concluded that the COLA monitoring emphasis should continue, but for statistical efficiency and cost reasons, lakes should place greater emphasis on transparency (Secchi) measurements. The committee also acknowledged that for lakes that had not previously determined their trophic status by obtaining phosphorus and chlorophyll-a levels, and those for which significant changes in transparency were noted, that lakes should attain the PCA standard of obtaining 12 Chl-a and TP samples, preferably 12 separate observations over two seasons, every ten years. To operationalize this goal, lakes were urged to collect two samples per month, for one season in every five years, and to take weekly transparency readings. COLA agreed to pay for the chemistry sampling costs for each member lake. In 2001 lab work for COLA monitoring was shifted to RMB Labs, located in Detroit Lakes.

In recognition that lakes have different monitoring needs, the monitoring review effort also urged COLA to encourage lake-specific monitoring programs, and to support lake associations in obtaining more sophisticated interpretations of the monitoring data being collected.

One setback during this period was the withdrawal from COLA of several member lakes, including some which were charter-members. The Lake Associations objected to COLA's unwillingness to take a stand against certain fishing rights ascribed to the White Earth Nation. One of those Lake Associations later rejoined COLA.

Mary Schutz began a two-year term as COLA President in 2003, and while the Vice President's position went empty, her administration included Woody Olson as Treasurer, Arlene Mickley as Secretary, Committee chairs Harold Stewart (monitoring), John Postovit (Environmental), Fred Tuominen (Communications) and Phyllis Onsgard (political action). Mary Ulmer succeeded to the Presidency in 2005, while the rest of the officers and chairs continued more or less as before, except that George Maher became Vice President in 2006 and Bob Taylor took charge of Monitoring in 2007.

While exotic species had been recognized as a problem for our lakes for at least twenty years, and had been one focus of early COLA meetings, it became an overriding topic of concern in the early 2000's. In 2002, using DNR matching grant, COLA published an AIS awareness brochure. In 2008 COLA co-sponsored a county-wide two-day session on AIS. Thus began a series of education efforts that involved brochures, signage, and meetings about AIS that has continued to the present.

The "Restore the Shore" program grew in popularity; working with Becker Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), carefully selected native and lake-friendly trees and shrubs were ordered by lake associations members (and sometimes by lake associations themselves), purchased in bulk through SWCD, and then re-packed and distributed in May. This popular program continued until 2009.

Meanwhile, as recommended in the 2001 plan, the Environmental/Zoning committee led by John Postovit played a more active role, especially within Becker County. Coincident with the implementation of this committee there was growing recognition on the part of the County officials that a comprehensive plan was needed. As the process developed, COLA assumed important roles in the plan preparation through the efforts of Phyllis Onsgard (now chair of Political Action) and John Postovit. It is not surprising then that the final 2002 Becker County Comprehensive Plan contained many goals, policies, and proposed actions that were consistent with COLA interests. Indeed, within days after the plan's approval, Postovit, on behalf of COLA, called for the County to create an Ordinance Review Committee in order to rationalize the shoreland ordinances with the new Comprehensive Plan. .

Aside from the need to fully implement various aspects of the Comprehensive Plan, a significant COLA action suggested lakes encountering major development plans and projects to petition for an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). This approach resulted in a substantial increase in zoning staff workloads, and revealed some gaps and inconsistencies in the existing zoning ordinance. The county appointed an EAW committee included COLA's Environmental Affairs chairman Postovit, Tom Redman and Dick Hecock as well as representatives from the DNR, SWCD and County Zoning. And eventually, in 2004, the **Zoning Ordinance Review Committee (ZORC)** was created, and included Postovit as a member.

ZORC's work produced numerous enhanced provisions which in 2006 were adopted in the shoreland portions of the County's Zoning Ordinance. These included more precise definitions of impervious surface, changes in setbacks rules governing non-conforming properties, and elements that governed resort conversions. A major enhancement was a feature that offered mitigation to more flexibility to setbacks and impervious surface requirement. To replace the EAW Committee, the ordinance revisions also added a Technical Review Panel tasked with previewing applications for new subdivisions. For some years, COLA members Postovit, Hecock, Lee and Redman were appointed to this committee, which was responsible for avoiding some serious subdivision blunders.

In 2006 COLA celebrated its 15th anniversary with a special edition of a Lake Conference at which time the Paakh and Merritt remembrances described earlier were presented, and there were special presentations by local legislators, including Paul Marquart, Kent Eken, Keith Langseth, and Rod Skoe.

Results from an anniversary survey of members of lake associations indicated a continuing interest in COLA's pursuit of continued zoning reform, better ordinance enforcement, improved water quality and septic system management, lake stewardship education, shoreline restoration and many other established COLA initiatives.

Also in 2006, COLA's monitoring program received a Legacy Grant. Bob Taylor assumed the chairmanship and personally trained lake association personnel to conduct monitoring. As a part of the program, he also engaged students in public school and 4-H settings concerning the importance of measuring water quality. As a result of this program approximately 18 non-COLA lakes established and maintained a monitoring program. The project ended in 2010.

Far from resting on its laurels, the Environment Committee led by Postovit continued to offer suggestions for improving the county ordinance. A conservation subdivision ordinance passed in 2007 provided more flexibility in subdivision design; 2008 brought the 15% impervious limit within 150 of lakeshore.

Working within COLA, Postovit expanded a long-standing COLA program that involved monitoring variance and planning commission actions in order to alert a lake association to relevant *proposed actions*.

In 2007 The County adopted a septic survey program, partly in response to COLA advocacy (though COLA disagreed with many provisions of the way the program was implemented). From 2007-2010 the program focused on lakes with known nutrient problems, but it was plagued by administrative and enforcement problems. Vlasik, Church and Postovit joined in an effort to re-establish and upgrade the program – their recommendations were accepted and adopted in 2011, and the program continued for several years after that.

Throughout its history, and responding to repeated concerns expressed by lake associations, COLA was frustrated by episodes of uneven and inadequate enforcement of county zoning regulations. When COLA was drawn into a specific controversy over a resort expansion on Big Toad Lake in 2008 there was considerable pressure for COLA to provide

support for legal action against the county's zoning administration. A survey of Member lakes produced a mixed reaction to pursuing litigation so COLA did not pursue the matter. Unfortunately the specific Toad Lake controversy continued and in 2009 led to some weakening of the zoning ordinance with respect to conversions of resort properties to residential use. The matter of legal proceedings returned in 2010 in the form of request by Hubbard County to join in a lawsuit. COLA again declined.

By 2007 there were 28 COLA lake associations representing over 3000 lake residents on 42 lakes. Monthly meetings continued to be the heart of the COLA educational and communication efforts. In most years there were eight monthly meetings. Still, an analysis of 2007 COLA meeting attendance showed that one third of the lake associations had regular representations at regular monthly meetings (5 or more), one third more attended up to 4 meetings, and one-third had little or no participation in COLA meetings.

In partial recognition of the understanding of the limitations of meetings as mechanism to extend lake knowledge, and to better communicate directly to lake association members, COLA continued to employ an elaborate Newsletter program throughout the decade. Fred Touminen was dogged in obtaining lake association membership address lists, and distributed as many as four newsletters per year.

Another shift in COLA operations took place at about this time as an increased emphasis was placed on electronic communications. After a couple of false starts, and some problems with vendors, COLA implemented a website. Unfortunately that project was soon abandoned because the Minnesota Lakes Association, the website host, was disbanded. However, starting in 2009 e-mail became the primary means of connecting to COLA Representatives, and Lake Association Officers and members. Print newsletters were discontinued, but communications to lake associations and to lake association members via e-mail were greatly increased.

In 2009, also under Communications Chair Fred Tuominen's direction, COLA joined Becker County, BCSW, PRWD and other watershed districts in the preparation and distribution of a colorful "Landowners Guide" which included a wealth of educational materials deemed to be valuable to property owners in general, and lakeshore owners in particular.

Other problems emerged among the leadership and its relationship to its constituents as the decade drew to a close. COLA retained a corps of very active and dedicated members, Lanny Brantner, Marietta Keenen, Ruth Smith, John Lee, Fred Touminen, and Bob Taylor, George Wallman, Tom Redman, among them. However, there were some concerns about the dues structure, and some COLA initiatives languished, most notably the Political Action (Public Policy) Committee. George Maher, who had become COLA's president in late 2007, abruptly resigned in 2008, apparently as a result of some dissension among the executive committee membership.

In late 2008, Dick Hecock agreed to become "interim president", and led the executive committee to make major changes in the format of the meetings. The role of the executive committee as a planning, rather than a decision-making body, was re-established. A tri-partite meeting model was adopted, with sections devoted to COLA business, an educational program, and information exchange.

To reinforce the role and importance of meetings, and draw attention to the respective roles of lake association members, lake associations, COLA representatives, and the COLA board of direction, Postovit prepared a Memorandum of Understanding which described the roles and their various obligations. Each member lake association was asked to agree and sign the Memorandum (See appendix B).

Besides Environmental Awareness and Communications, Monitoring continued to play an important role in COLA programming. A continuing effort was made to encourage lake monitoring, and to recruit monitors to take measurements in accordance with COLA recommended standards (these were in some part based upon criteria employed by MPCA to ascertain whether lakes were considered to be "impaired"). Annual training sessions were pursued, and in 2010, a major all-day workshop on monitoring techniques and analysis of water quality data was presented to over 100 attendees. Generally speaking, the efforts were successful, as most COLA lakes conducted regular monitoring practice in accord with COLA recommendations.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
# of COLA lakes	41	40	35	35	40	36	38	38	42	40
COLA lakes w/ 10+ Secchi*	26	24	25	22	28	25	25	30	30	29
Total COLA lakes Secchi Obs*	666	720	713	680	671	559	630	718	671	764
COLA Lakes w/ 4+ chemistry	24	8	10	7	11	7	16	18	35	20
Total COLA lakes Chl-a tests	130	70	60	68	74	70	109	193	226	134
Total COLA lakes TP tests	234	149	113	116	155	131	108	193	228	134

The monitoring by non-COLA lakes supported by the Legacy program administered by Bob Taylor is not included in this table.

Sources: COLA Annual Lake Water Quality Monitoring Reports

Towards the end of the decade the dues structure was revised. Responding to some pressure from larger lake associations, the per-member assessment of Lake Association dues to COLA was abandoned in favor of dues assigned by lake association membership size categories, the largest being set at 300 or more members. This move greatly reduced what larger lake association had come to see as an unreasonable barrier to their on-going COLA membership. Some revenue was lost, but a reduction in postage (because of increased use of electronic communications) provided an offset.

As the decade drew to a close, COLA joined other groups and the DNR in advocating for an upgrade to the Statewide Shoreland Standards. In recognition of his innovative and successful work with the Becker County Zoning Ordinance, Postovit was asked to be a part of the statewide ordinance upgrade. Unfortunately implementation of the much-needed improvements was blocked by the governor.

Third Decade (2010-present)

As COLA moved into this period its leadership continued with Hecock (who had been elected in 2009), Church as Vice president, Brantner as past president, Lee as treasurer, Touminen as chair of Newsletter/Communications, Postovit in charge of Environmental Affairs, and Taylor of Monitoring. After Keenen's resignation, and a period of vacancy, the secretary position was filled by Barb Halbakken-Fischberg. This executive committee met throughout the year to direct the affairs of COLA and to prepare plans and programs to be acted upon by the Board at their monthly summer meetings (April through October).

As a result of the revelation that Pelican Lake was infested with Zebra Mussels, and attendance by several COLA members at regional and state AIS awareness meetings, early in the year it was decided to add an Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force to the list of committees.

That COLA was active on a number of fronts is indicated by this item, distributed to Lake Association members in June, 2010

COLA Activities/Accomplishments 6/10/10

Monitoring

- advocate that all LA have monitoring program – exceeds PCA and CLMP criteria
- goals – to characterize WQ, ascertain trends, assist with diagnosis and lake-specific monitoring
- subsidy – about 2/3rds of standard chemical testing
- all member lakes comply with COLA testing standards
- trying to move towards more lake-specific diagnoses and monitoring programs – e.g. Monitor workshop on June 26

Environment/Zoning

- advocate more aggressive and consistent enforcement of shoreland zoning ordinances
- advocate for more lake-friendly zoning ordinances
- advocate for zoning ordinances that are more tuned to specific lakeshore conditions
- participate in re-writes of zoning ordinances, 1992, 1998, 2006,
- membership on boards re-writing statewide dock ordinances and shoreland standards
- membership on Star Lake Board
- Monitor zoning decisions; alert LA's of pending zoning actions
- Inform LA's of changes in regulations
- Role in pressing for shoreland zone septic system inspection and re-certification; advocating for required point-of-sale certificates of compliances
- Advocating for rules changes to facilitate new approaches to waste treatment
- Advocating for county-wide building code

Communications

- Facilitate communication among lake association; exchange of ideas
- Maintain website
- Newsletter(s)
- E-communication network for rapid responses
- Shoreland Booklets
- Public relations

Public Policy (Political Action)

- Develop new approaches to increase effectiveness
- More successful advocacy

Aquatic Invasive Species Task Force

- Advocate for expanded statewide inspection, public education, control and treatment programs
- 2009 Advertising campaign
- Plans for training of inspectors/educators on each lake

So COLA continued to be active in its traditional thrusts, and had taken on the additional AIS focus (though in one form or another AIS had been a COLA concern since its beginning).. However, among other important events during that year was the adoption of COLA's first statement of **"Positions and Policies"** a response to concerns that had arisen about how various Lake Associations and COLA representatives could represent COLA to government agencies, to other Lake associations, and to the general public. These positions grew out of multiple committee meetings, and ultimately were approved by the COLA Board of Directors in September. While the core of the positions/policies document remained unchanged, for at least five years the document was annually reviewed updated and re-affirmed at COLA's annual meeting in October and its successors continue to serve the organization as a touchstone document .

COLA's website had been reinstated in 2010, and by early 2011 it had been decided to add e-newsletters to the more traditional hard-copy newsletter. Thus monthly "**COLA Updates**" were sent out describing activities of the executive committee, as well as other news relevant to lake association members. By June the e-newsletter was reaching 325 individuals.

Also missing from the list compiled in June was the decision to improve COLA's understanding on what neighboring counties were doing to deal with monitoring and other issues. In this manner the June session on monitoring was jointly sponsored with OtterTail County, and in July Hubbard County sought Becker's cooperation in dealing with a particularly intractable zoning matter. The latter encounter led directly to the establishment of something called the COLA Collaborative, which soon became MNCOLA (See Box below)

BC COLA was heavily involved in the founding of MNCOLA. Early meetings were held in Park Rapids and involved reps from Becker and Hubbard County. Here are notes from a July 2010 meeting in Park Rapids:

Becker COLA Vice President George Wallman organized a meeting with the Hubbard COLA Executive Board on Tuesday, July 13, at 10AM at the Chamber of Commerce Building in Park Rapids. Dan Kittelson, Hubbard President, was joined by executive committee members Chuck Diessner, Ken Grob, and Larry Roberts. Becker was represented by Chuck Church, George Wallman, John Postovit and Dick Hecock.

The main purpose of the meeting was for Becker's COLA to find out more about the Hubbard COLA's involvement in a lawsuit against Hubbard County (and others). However, other matters of mutual interest were on the agenda.

This gathering led directly to another Park Rapids Meeting, this time in November, and involving 11 groups from across the state plus some leaders of state organizations (MLA, etc.). The group agreed on a name - the COLA Collaborative; several more meetings ensued. Postovit and Hecock continued to attend these meetings, but Barb Halbakken-Fischburg. Joined in soon, and became BCOLA's official delegate.

Though the idea of joint action by COLA's started with Hubbard's interest in litigating a specific case, the COLA Collaborative very quickly shifted its focus to statewide issues. One of the first CC efforts was to oppose weakening of the legislation that governs the granting of Variances (they failed in that quest). By late 2011, the organization shifted emphasis towards AIS concerns, and supported revisions to the Statewide Shoreland Standards. Barb stuck with the organization as it morphed into MNCOLA (spring, 2012), and became one of that organization's first MNCOLA officers or board members.

MNCOLA continues to serve COLA's and similar organizations and has been aggressive in pursuing legislative and policy objectives. In recent years BCOLA involvement has been limited to payment of dues.

(Summary in 2018)

Another outcome of this intercourse among counties, was the decision to join in the Tri-County Aquatic Invasive Species Legislative Summit" held in January 2011 at the M-State Conference Center. Principal sponsors of the Summit were the three county COLA's, but PRWD, City of Detroit Lakes, the Becker County Board of Commissioners, Chamber of Commerce, RMB Labs, Zorbaz, all supported the effort in one way or another. A major figure in planning and carrying out the summit was Terry Kalil, who had succeeded Church as Vice President in late 2010. The 250 attendees included members of lake associations from the three counties, local officials, numerous DNR and PCA officials, and many legislators.

There is little doubt that the local Summit had some stimulating effect on statewide AIS concerns. Key legislators and other state officials said as much at the time, and since.

Locally the establishment of the Becker County AIS Task Force, was an important step forward, and its membership included several COLA members. On its own COLA developed and distributed AIS brochures and signage, and began plans for an even more elaborate 2012 AIS Legislative Summit, referred to by its theme “BOLD ACTION NOW”, and again based to a large degree on the efforts of Terry Kalil who had been duly elected COLA Vice President in 2011. COLA’s anxiety over AIS was in no small part associated with the fact that Zebra Mussels had been discovered in both Douglas and Otter Tail counties.

Several hundred attended the 2012 summit organized by COLA, PRWD and Lake Detroiters. Support and encouragement came from many COLA’s from across the state as well as from local businesses, sportsman groups, and local governments. The meeting included comments by 15 legislators who reacted to speakers, and offered various levels and directions of support in combatting AIS. It culminated with a statement containing a series of priorities for action to be urged at the state level. It is no coincidence that a few days later, the DNR proposed numerous enhancements to the AIS Prevent bill that had been passed the year before.

Its AIS efforts resulted in COLA being named “Conservationist of the Year” by the Becker Soil and Water Conservation District in 2012.

In 2013 COLA received another DNR grant to support AIS awareness efforts by creating new materials for the use of the general public, developing a program and materials for resorts, developing a COLA booth.

COLA’s Environmental Awareness Committee led by Postovit continued to successfully advocate for tightened zoning regulations. In 2011 the “string test” was replaced by a setback calculation that required an additional 20 feet of setback for non-compliant replacement structures. Lot sizes on Environmental lakes were in 2014 and 2016 commissioner-led attempts to roll-back shoreland regulations were defeated. Postovit was also a leader in recruiting and hiring a professional zoning administrator.

Another COLA program was initiated in the early part of the decade. To follow through with its long-standing commitment to improving the use of data in helping lakes to understand the specific problems they faced, COLA initiated the NEXT STEP Project – using grant money from MPCA, and with the assistance of RMB Labs, twenty COLA lakes agreed to gather data to supplement their monitoring data, from which specific recommendations for future monitoring and management programs would be derived. This program was completed in 2012; some were disappointed with the results which tended to lack the lake specificity and detail that had been anticipated.

As the decade began there was a growing concern among COLA leaders that they were “ageing out”, and that replacements were not forthcoming. A 2013 survey of officers of member lake associations indicated that COLA continued to be held in high regard for its accomplishments, and that there was no lack of support for the organization, its stated aims or its programming. However, there was acknowledgement that among lake association members and leaders, there was little appetite for volunteering at the COLA level. Indeed, many lake associations indicated that they were having trouble finding board members and officers too.

In order to generate greater attendance and more physical support for COLA, the Executive Committee experimented with having different lake associations sponsor a monthly Board meeting in a location of their choosing. In that manner meetings were held at Cormorant Village, Toad Lake Hall, Dunton Locks, and Ice-Cracking Lodge. The idea was considered successful, except that smaller lake associations were reluctant to assume meeting arrangement responsibilities.

In addition to the aging of COLA’s leadership, the organization increasingly relied upon one-member committees. Workloads for active COLA leaders increased. A vacancy in the treasurer’s office took two years to fill, as did the Vice Presidency and Communications Directorship when Kalil resigned in 2013. When Hecock completed his presidency also in 2013, the office went vacant in 2014.

Spring, 2014 marked a venue change for monthly Board Meetings to the Holiday Inn, COLA having spent about fifteen years mostly meeting in classrooms at M-State.

Tera Guetter, Administrator of the Pelican River Watershed District assumed the presidency in 2015. She restored some energy to the organization, and with John Postovit worked hard to prevent emasculatation of County zoning ordinances.

At least partly in response to the awareness brought by the COLA-inspired Legislative Summits in 2011 and 2012, Minnesota Lake Counties received an infusion of state funds earmarked for AIS prevention and management. COLA had continued involvement with In the County's AIS advisory panel, which advocated for an independent county AIS office, but the AIS funds and their administration were assigned to the SWCD. Citizen (and COLA) in AIS decisions was curtailed, though some AIS funds continued to flow to COLA in support of some educational activities.

Also in 2014 the County sought to replace its zoning administrator; COLA's Postovit was able to play a role in selecting a replacement, and continued to have some influence with the new administrator. However, the new administrator's tenure was short-lived, and COLA's influence in zoning matters began to wane.

Nevertheless, well into the decade Postovit continued to operate a program that monitored planning and zoning actions, and the variances addressed by the Board of Adjustment and alerted specific lake associations about issues that might be concerning. And though he had been stripped of a vote on the Ordinance Review Committee, Postovit continued to be a major player in both advocating more lake-friendly requirements, and avoiding the weakening of others.

Tera Guetter was elected president in the fall of 2014. Jennifer Thompson became Vice President Barb Halbakken continued as Secretary, and Rachel Moen as Treasurer. Jules Duvall became Communications Chair, and Hecock and Postovit served as chair of Monitoring and Environmental Awareness, respectively.

Unfortunately John Postovit ended his long service in the spring of 2016

Executive Board

After 15 years, John Postovit, Floyd Lake resigned from the Environmental Concerns committee and will use his talents in other capacities within COLA. His "voice for our lakes" advocacy has had far reaching effects in a number of lake conservation programs towards keeping our lakes clean for future generations. He led the charge for lake-wide septic system surveys and system replacements; shore land zoning changes to lessen the negative affects of highly altered shorelines while promoting responsible development; and AIS watercraft inspections and decontamination. This legacy, is truly a gift to our lakes and waters and will help protect and preserve water quality and increase lakeshore habitat for all of our recreational enjoyment. In addition to his work with COLA, John plans on devoting more time to his other volunteer commitments.

We look forward to seeing you next week. Please invite other members of your lake to come too!

Sincerely,
Tera Guetter, President



John Postovit

Wanda Roten and Steve Lindow having joined the Executive Committee in 2015, assumed responsibilities for the Environmental Concerns Committee.

At the end of 2016 Thompson succeeded to the Presidency. Others continued as before, except that Barb Halbakken resigned as Secretary in March, 2017 and was replaced by Wanda Roten. Rich Cieslak became vice president, and Linda and Howard Anderson, and Larry Anderson and joined the Executive Committee in the fall of 2017. Ms. Guetter replaced Halbakken-Fischberg as delegate to MNCOLA.

The Executive Committee has continued the tri-partite meeting model (segments on lake exchange, business meeting, and program). The programs continued to innovative and moderately well attended. Some special meetings, as in the

June meeting featuring a regional meeting of the Minnesota AIS Research Commission have attracted large crowds.

So in the last five years, the entire executive committee has been replaced, and somewhat expanded. COLA has continued to facilitate distribution of high quality information such as the **Lake Smarts Program, Know your Lake Health, A Fresh View of the Lake**” and more. But the increase in active executive committee members also has permitted COLA members and members of COLA’s constituent Lake Associations to participate in a broader range of state and regional meetings, bringing back experiences and expertise to share with lake association colleagues.

COLA finances remain strong, and as a result of efforts by Treasurer Rachel Moen the organization recently qualified as a 501c-4 exempt organization by the IRS.

COLA’s future seems bright.

Acknowledgments:

Sally Hausken had a near complete record of COLA newsletters from the 1990’s which were of great help for writing about that period. John Postovit provided a huge cache of records upon which most of the writing about the 2nd and 3rd decade was based. Bob Merritt (DNR, retired) and Bruce Paakh (PCA, retired) contributed their 2006 recollections on which COLA’s “Creation Story” is based. Late in the process, a cache of old documents became available, serving to provide some additional depth of record. Tera Guetter of the Pelican River Watershed District contributed miscellaneous, helpful records about the years after 2013, though after that year, the records are less consistent than those from earlier times. In any case, errors of facts, sequencing, and interpretations presented here are mine alone.

Dick Hecock, September, 2018

Appendix A

Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations Report of the Long Range Planning Committee March 2001

In October 2000, President Phyllis Onsgard appointed a Committee to develop a long-range plan for Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations. Dick Hecock, John Postivit, John Peterka, and Paul Jones were asked to comprise the committee. Dick Hecock served as chair, and Lanny Brantner, COLA's Vice President, served as liaison to the COLA Board. Mr. Paul Jones resigned from the committee in January, 2001; Paul Bursik was invited to take his place, but was unable to do so.

The Committee had no specific charge, except that consideration was to be given to the MLA's Sustainable Lakes Project, which had recently been published. After a preliminary meeting on November 2, 2000, the committee identified five general programmatic areas to review and make recommendations.

- Education/Communication
- Environmental Action
- Political Action
- Data Collection
- Lake Management Planning

The committee met seven more times to review existing programs and to make recommendations to the COLA. It is important to keep in mind that the committee was mindful of the adage "if it ain't broke – don't fix it". Throughout our deliberations there was a strong sense that COLA already is a viable and vital organization. Its shortcomings are few and its accomplishments are many. We found little to criticize and much to admire. In short, COLA already is headed in the right direction.

Hence our comments and our recommendations are not intended to denigrate COLA, its programs, or its dedicated volunteers. Rather our suggestions are meant to make marginal improvements in the operations and outreach of the organization.

For each of the items listed above here are our findings and our recommendations. We believe that these are consistent with COLA's Mission and its Goals.

EDUCATION/COMMUNICATION

The Committee acknowledges the pre-eminence of education in the COLA mission and goals. ***An Education/Communication committee should be formed and directed to...***

1. *Maintain a strong education component in existing meetings*
2. *Strive to extend the impact of meetings by...*
 - *improving regular meeting attendance and representation among member lake associations through enhanced advertisement and by inviting all COLA members to all meetings*
 - *send out meeting summaries to lake associations and members as soon as possible after the meeting (instead of the "minutes approach" at the time the next meeting is announced)*
3. *Develop an e-mail network for meeting announcements and distribution of meeting summaries; begin assembly of addresses as soon as possible..*
4. *Continue annual meetings; continue to use them to reach opinion-leaders and decision-makers (legislators and others)*
4. *emphasize less elaborate publications at more frequent intervals; distribute through lake associations (to keep costs under control)*
5. *acquire lake association publications (from COLA members and elsewhere); disseminate this information among members on a timely basis*
6. *sponsor some training session (data collecting techniques, interpreting data, watershed delineation, etc.); a small group, hands-on format should be employed; local expertise is sufficient to operate such a program; the goal could be that the*

participants will take from each session a finished product that can be directly used by their lake association. See also monitoring recommendations)

7. *Establish a web-page as soon as possible; links to other organizations would be provided (DNR, PCA, etc); explore possibility of piggy-backing a website with MLA or some other organization.*
8. *Undertake a wide dissemination of COLA knowledge and opinions; a public relations (public education) campaign using many vehicles such as newspapers, TV, brochures, and other media; consider a regular column in a local newspaper.*

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION.

COLA has had a strong record of monitoring and acting on environmental matters which confront lakes in Becker County (and elsewhere). The Committee believes that Environmental Action should continue to be a key part of the COLA agenda, and recommends that ***COLA should energize the Environmental Committee, chaired by the Vice President of COLA; such a committee should***

1. *receive and forward hearing notices in a timely fashion (variances, conditional use, plats, etc.)*
2. *ensure that all hearings notices, including those for subdivision, annexation, and plat proceedings are received; explore ways in which building permit information can be made available (perhaps in list form for the whole County)*
3. *ensure that COLA is represented in any major initiatives that would impact lake water quality in the County – including comprehensive plans, transportation plans, selection of lakes for septic system studies, etc.*
4. *prepare a policy concerning the circumstances under which COLA takes a position on contentious development or zoning issues (policy to be acted-upon by COLA Board or whole membership?); the policy also should give guidance concerning the involvement of COLA in controversies that involve non-COLA lakes.*
5. *undertake training sessions to assist interested individual lake associations to learn how to obtain information on building permits, variances, or other County decision-making processes, how to make effective presentations at public hearings, how to proceed in the face of suspected violations of regulations, and how to maintain positive neighborhood relations while undertaking “watchdog” functions.*
6. *have representatives attend key Planning Commission, Board of Adjustment, and County Commissioners meetings.*
7. *advocate for increased resources to permit more stringent enforcement, inspections of completed projects, and other improvements to current environmental management of lakeshore and related resources.*

POLITICAL ACTION

It was agreed the a Political Action Committee, chaired by a Board Member, should be activated, or re-activated, as the case may be. Among other tasks the Political Action Committee should...

1. *develop a strategy for dealing more effectively with local representatives (County and State). Such a strategy should emphasize direct communications with the representatives, possibly taking advantage of established personal relations between COLA members and these delegates. The use of e-mail networks will be important here.*
2. *develop an annual COLA legislative/policy agenda to advocate through COLA's direct contacts with decision-makers (see #1, above), and through Minnesota Lakes Association (MLA); be proactive, not reactive; ensure that COLA members are aware of this agenda.*
3. *monitor legislation, rules changes, policies and MLA activities with respect to COLA 's agenda; report results to members on a regular basis.*
4. *establish an awards program for good lake management; separate awards may be appropriate for legislators, government officials, developers, private landowners, etc. Criteria for making awards should be developed and circulated among members; solicit award nominations each year, and make and publicize awards at the annual meeting (or equivalent).*
5. *consider the following ideas for inclusion in COLA's political action agenda:*
 - a. *enhancement of general enforcement of existing rules, regulations through increased enforcement dollars, and/or administrative reorganizations to facilitate enforcement*
 - b. *particular attention should be given to routine follow-up inspections of building or land alteration permits to ensure that they were implement in accordance with the permit request and county regulations*
 - c. *work to institutionalize best management practices, lobby for property tax relief or other incentives to those who adopt good shoreline management practices (e.g. in line with “Restore the Shore” ideas).. Obviously an incentive system can not replace strict enforcement of existing rules, but greater reliance on persuasion and education may be more palatable to land owners, and may make a more positive contribution to changing the culture of lakeshore property owners.*

- d. *advocate for statewide programs that will offer greater protection to shoreline properties that are not suitable for development (development of such properties is a growing problem as suitable sites are fewer); funds for conservation easements, outright purchases, land trusts, etc. should be promoted.*

DATA COLLECTION

It was noted that data collection has been an important activity of the Becker County COLA since it began; for much of that time, COLA has received some financial support from the Becker County Water Plan Grant, made available by the BC Environmental Committee. The committee acknowledges that there is a public relations component to lake association data collection efforts (members are very interested in such data). The committee reviewed criticisms leveled at the existing program. Reflecting upon these, and acknowledging the December 7, 2000 Report from the COLA Data Resources Committee, the committee makes the recommendation that the COLA Data Resources Committee be charged with...

1. *seeing that data collection continues to receive a major emphasis by COLA, and that all member lakes fully participate in the Citizen Lake Monitoring Program (CLMP) which involves weekly Secchi readings throughout the summer;*
2. *overseeing the implementation of lake-specific monitoring programs to replace the one-size fits all approach currently employed. It is understood that lakes with many years of TP and CHL-a readings, may not be adding to their knowledge of their lake with additional monthly observations; lake associations on such lakes may benefit much more from other sampling protocols—for example, samples of inlet nutrient loads, winter conditions, bottom conditions, dissolved oxygen and so on - may provide much more useful data. On the other hand, lakes which do not already have a substantial amount of TP and CHL-a data should consider increasing the frequency of their sampling programs to provide more reliable data.*
3. *COLA should make a major commitment to training members in data collection and data interpretation (see also recommendations on education)*
4. *COLA should dispense with assembling and publishing data on all lakes on an annual basis; rather COLA data should be sent to managed data bases (CLMP, STORET, DNR), and placed in the Detroit Lakes Public Library and/or the Becker County Historical Society*

MLA'S SUSTAINABLE LAKES MANAGEMENT MODEL

Among committee members there was agreement that "The MLA Model" is a useful resource book. All lake associations should find parts of it useful to address some of the problems perceived by members. However, it is not likely that Becker County COLA lakes have had, or will have, the resources or personnel to carry out the full planning process as described in the book.

Becker County lakes face development/sustainability problems: 1) lakeshore properties in Becker County are rapidly being converted to year-round use and existing structures are being replaced or expanded and upgraded. Often these processes take place on lots not meeting current lot-size standards resulting in conflicts with respect to lot coverage (impervious surface), the removal of natural vegetation, encroachment on setbacks, and rules governing septic system design and placement, and 2) a large proportion of prime lake shore sites already has been developed on most lakes in Becker County. Much of the new lakeshore development takes place on lots that are too small, too low, too steep, or have other shortcomings for building purposes.

Accordingly, the Committee recommends that COLA...

1. *encourage each lake association (perhaps through some sort of subsidy) to acquire and study the MLA book, and to offer help in understanding the concepts and approaches used in the document (another workshop!);*
2. *assist lake associations in the design of a data collection approach that addresses their specific problems in light of their specific goals and objectives;*
3. *support the development of some pilot lake management plans to help provide examples of how the MLA model can be better adapted to the local circumstances in Becker County.*
4. *facilitate the transfer of such planning experience to other Becker County lake associations.*

Note that these recommendations do not imply that COLA endorses the MLA Sustainable Lake Management Plan Model, or any other specific approach, as a prescription for lake management planning on a specific Becker County lake.

Dick Hecock
John Postovit
John Peterka
Lanny Brantner

Memorandum of understanding and reference guide to membership in the Becker County Coalition of Lake Associations

The Mission of the Coalition of Lake Associations (COLA) is to facilitate cooperation among the member Lake Associations to protect and enhance the quality of lakes and their shore areas.

Since its founding in 1991, COLA has compiled an impressive history of accomplishments including the formation and ongoing administration of an organized water quality monitoring program; assistance to numerous governmental decisions on shoreland subdivision and variance applications and education concerning the need for wise management of lakes. COLA also participated in updating Becker County's Comprehensive Plan, Minnesota's Shoreland Rules and the County Ordinances regulating lake shore development and management.

The Coalition has a three-tiered organizational structure. First, the Lake Association members are the foundation of the Coalition. Second, each affiliated Lake Association elects or appoints a COLA Representative to serve as a liaison to COLA. Third, Officers of the Coalition are in turn elected by the COLA Representatives. The obligations of each of these components are:

Lake Association Members and Officials

The Lake Association members and their Boards support the operation of COLA through payment of membership dues, but have a further and equally important responsibility to identify and/or provide volunteer resources to fill positions of leadership in the Coalition. In order for COLA to effectively represent the Lake Association constituency, it must have individuals willing to serve on a voluntary basis as COLA Representatives, COLA Officers or as members of COLA Committees. Lake Associations must be prepared to disseminate to its members information obtained by its representatives.

COLA Representatives

In order for COLA to be effective, Representatives selected by the Lake Associations should:

- Attend the monthly (April thru October) COLA Representatives meetings.
- Participate in decision making and the conduct of Coalition business affairs at these meetings.
- Serves as a communications link to their respective Lake Associations, among other COLA Lake Associations and between their Lake Association and COLA Officers.
- Provides information and counsel to COLA Officers and serve on COLA Committees as needed.

Coalition Officers and Committees

The Officers are responsible for COLA's financial condition and must assure its functional operation. Many of the ongoing activities of the organization are handled by representatives and others appointed to these standing committees: Monitoring, Communications, Environmental Concerns. Other Committees are appointed as needed.

In order for COLA to meet its obligation in communications, it is necessary that the Lake Associations promptly provide updated names and addresses of officers-

The Coalition revenues and expenses are based on a calendar year operation. In order to meet its budget obligations and subsequently provide accurate and timely financial reports to the COLA Representatives, it is necessary that the Lake Association dues are payable July 1st of each year.

Acknowledged

Lake Association President

COLA President

March, 2009

BECKER COUNTY COLA 2015 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.*

COLA 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 associations 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. COLA will inform its member lake associations of proposed amendments to the County Zoning Ordinance and Minnesota Shoreland Rules. In addition, COLA will notify and consult with member lake associations about land subdivision or variance requests in cooperation with Becker County Zoning.
3. COLA will notify and consult with lake association officials and members about land subdivision or variance applications to include arranging a conference with the Zoning office on the matter.
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. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. COLA supports the DNR to identify program deficiencies and actively engage in efforts for legislative change.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.

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 sufficient 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 assist lake associations in interpreting data from their monitoring programs
4. COLA will help lake associations to employ additional lake-specific monitoring programs to supplement monitoring activities described above.
5. COLA will provide information on remedial actions needed to respond to problems identified by monitoring programs.

Appendix D:

COLA BYLAWS

Original Bylaws:	June 11, 1991	Mark Geihl, President
First Revision:	June 8, 1995	Mark Geihl, President
Second Revision:	June 8, 2000	Phyllis Onsgard, President
Third Revision:	May 14, 2009	Richard Hecock, President
Fourth Revision	May 12, 2011	Richard Hecock, President
<i>Fifth Revision</i>	<i>May 10, 2012</i>	<i>Richard Hecock, President</i>
<i>Sixth Revision,</i>	<i>May, 2018</i>	<i>Jennifer H. Thompson, President</i>

COLA's bylaws were originally adopted on June 11, 1991. Modest wording changes took place in 1995.

In 2000 the bylaws were changed accommodate

In 2008 – A major re-write and recodification took place; generally streamlining the 2000 version, but reducing terms of office, eliminating term limits, and increasing the number of committees

In 2009 **Many changes in wording – alternate representatives** substantive changes included enabling a change to the dues structure, changes in the committees and officer term limits, change to calendar year financing, mission statement established a transition budget for Executive Committee planning purposes,

In 2011 **Dues system changed; committee chairs were added to Executive Committee.** Member of the Board of Directors may represent COLA by citing policies or positions approved by the membership. An officer or chair may cite his/her COLA affiliation when presenting approved COLA positions to another group.

2012 – Removed specification that annual meeting be held in August.

2018 -