

Our Lake Needs Your Help

MINNESOTA GOVERNMENT ADDS LAKE OF THE WOODS TO IMPAIRED WATERS LIST

The Foundation was formed because of concern about deteriorating water quality on Lake of the Woods. This concern has been confirmed in September by actions taken by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to designate the lake on its draft list of "Impaired" waters. The reason for this is that after years of study, the MPCA has determined that the lake fails to meet US Federal and Minnesota State water quality guidelines because of too much of the nutrient phosphorus and as a result, excessive blooms of algae.

Minnesota's actions were first discussed in Canada this summer at the Foundation's summer meeting, held in Kenora on July 11th. Nolan Baratono of the MPCA presented results of his agency's assessment of the lake and the process that will begin in Minnesota to develop a plan to improve the lake water quality.

Importantly, Minnesota cannot do this alone for a lake shared with Ontario and Manitoba and for which the majority of the watershed is in Canada. Restoration of the lake and its watershed will require an internationally coordinated effort involving Ontario and Manitoba, and not just Minnesota.



From left: David Gourley, Bryce Douglas (behind), Nolan Baratono (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency), Tony Stephens, and Paul Hill discuss Minnesota's plans to designate Lake of the Woods as "Impaired", at the Foundation's meeting in Kenora, July 11

FOUNDATION TARGETS GOVERNMENTS FOR ACTION

International Response Required to Nutrient Pollution and Algae on Lake of the Woods



Decomposing scum of blue-green algae on Lake of the Woods, September 7, 2007.

Since its inception, the Foundation has been urging our provincial, state, and federal authorities to bring in the existing international framework of the International Joint Commission (IJC) to resolve this problem via a "Reference" (or mandate) from our federal governments to the IJC for transboundary water pollution on Lake of the Woods.

The Foundation has been successful in building stakeholder support for an IJC Reference. In each of the past three years, the Foundation has made presentations to all the communities around the lake in Minnesota, Ontario, and Manitoba. Each of these communities has responded with a unified voice, by sending written resolutions of support to their respective provincial, state and federal governments, demanding that they call in the IJC, including:

- The City of Kenora
- The Township of Sioux Narrows-Nestor Falls
- The Lake of the Woods District Property Owners Association
- The Northwestern Ontario Tourism Association
- Buffalo Point First Nation
- Rainy River First Nations
- Roseau County Minnesota
- Lake of the Woods County Minnesota
- Koochiching County Minnesota

Our governments have yet to respond to these formal requests for action and the Foundation is continuing to advocate and push our governments for this response.

FOUNDATION DRIVES RESEARCH CONSORTIUM FORWARD State of the Basin Report and Nutrient Loading Study Projects

During the past year, the Foundation was the catalyst and coordinator bringing together a research consortium of the Foundation, Ontario Ministry of Environment, Environment Canada, and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to initiate two research projects.

This research, a State of the Basin Report and a Nutrient Loading Study Feasibility Assessment, would not have happened without the instigation and coordinating efforts of the Foundation and indeed financial partnership of the Foundation to get the ball rolling.

Now nearing completion, these projects will provide the definitive baseline state of understanding of the lake's problems and shortcomings to current information. The feasibility assessment for a nutrient loading study provides an outline of the research plan for identifying and reducing the sources of nutrients causing the excessive algae blooms on Lake of the Woods. Continued efforts by the Foundation will be needed over the next year to bring all of the responsible governments and agencies to the table in partnership with the Foundation to fund and complete the full nutrient loading study for the lake.

THE CHALLENGE

The push to move this forward is a full time struggle. It is a continual challenge to get all of the governments and agencies focused and aligned on the Lake of the Woods. Lake of the Woods is a long way from the concerns of Ottawa, Toronto, and St. Paul. Surprisingly, it also seems to be a low priority for Winnipeg and Manitoba, despite being the source of drinking water for the City of Winnipeg (via the Shoal Lake sub-basin) and a major source of nutrient loading to Lake Winnipeg.

Minnesota appears to be taking the problems of Lake of the Woods seriously. However, we've still got a long way to go to raise Lake of the Woods onto the priority list of Manitoba, Ontario, and Canada. It needs constant attention, advocacy, reminders, and coordination from the Foundation to keep the Lake of the Woods "agenda" moving forward and to keep our government agencies and authorities on the same page.

If you were at the lake as I write this in early September, you'd see the fall algae bloom and you'd realize that we must take action – Now!

In the coming year, the Foundation needs your financial support to continue to:

- conduct the nutrient loading study to determine where the nutrients are coming from and how to reduce them (in partnership with the provincial, state, and federal government agencies);
- be the catalyst and coordinator with all the government agencies to focus their attention on Lake of the Woods;
- make Lake of the Woods a priority for our legislators and Ministers at the provincial, state, and federal levels;
- advocate with our governments for an international framework, such as the International Joint Commission, to coordinate transboundary research and corrective action to protect and restore our lake.

We believe our lake is worth the investment of time and money

Our lake needs your help

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Please invest in our lake's future by donating to the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation. Donations are tax deductible in Canada.



Box 112, Kenora, Ontario, P9N 3X1
Todd Sellers, Executive Director
866•370•8891 Toll free
204•489•0252 Fax
tsellers@lowwsf.com Email
www.lowwsf.com Website

CRA 84160 6346 RR0001

