



# Loon Call

Official Newsletter of the **Courte Oreilles Lakes Association, Inc.**

Autumn 2009

Volume 15 Issue 2

## The State of Our Lake

By Alf Sivertson – COLA President

Have you noticed some of the changes happening to Lac Courte Oreilles? That there is more algae in the water or that the rocks at your shoreline are slippery with green slime? Or, that the lake is less clear than you remember and more weeds are showing up? If so, those are just a few changes, the ones you can actually see.

The health of our beautiful lake is at a tipping point with regard to its most precious and delicate commodity: the water. For that reason, we've devoted much of this issue to giving our members an objective update on the water quality situation. We'll tell you some of the things COLA is doing and let you know what you can do to help. It's a difficult, complex task and we all have a vested interest in the outcome. The main thing is we can make the difference between our lake deteriorating, or improving.

The single most important factor affecting our water quality is the phosphorus in our lake. This has led to unnaturally high volumes of algae and vegetation growth, both native plants and invasives like curly leaf pondweed. These have a huge impact on our recreational use of the lake, the health of the fish popula-

tions, and the future of Lac Courte Oreilles.

COLA has developed a successful Clean Boats, Clean Water Program to monitor boats for invasive species (see the accompanying article by Jan Hahn). COLA is aggressively treating curly leaf pond-

## COLA and Cranberry Growers Finally Meet

The continuing dispute between COLA and Wisconsin Cranberry Growers over causes of failing lake quality reached a new level in September when COLA representatives and a cranberry association panel met face-to-face for two hours in Hayward. It was the first such meeting between the two groups since the discord over the role of phosphorus loading in the water on the Bay began in the 1960s. The two groups agreed it was time for "meaningful discussion" about a common problem while agreeing to disagree as to its source. The COLA panel maintained the rapid degradation of Musky Bay was caused mostly by phosphorus in the water discharged from cranberry fields on the bay. This resulted in excessive weed growth, reduced oxygen levels and even toxic slime on the surface by late summer, rendering the bay largely inaccessible for boating and

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**Courte Oreilles Lakes Association, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 702, Hayward, WI 54843**

**www.cola-wi.org**

## The State of Our Lake

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weed, an aquatic invasive plant species, with herbicide (see accompanying article by Gary Pulford). The plant is thriving in Musky Bay because of the high concentrations of phosphorus found there, and would be much worse if not for COLA's herbicide treatment efforts. Unfortunately, it is not isolated; it has been found in two other locations in the lake. COLA has hired one of the nation's top limnologists under a Lake Management Planning Grant to study the Lac Courte Oreilles watershed to determine how best to protect and preserve the water quality of our lake.

COLA has just been awarded an Aquatic Plant Management Grant to conduct an aquatic plant survey of all of Lac Courte Oreilles. This plan is essential to effectively combat curly leaf pondweed. Future grants will enable COLA to purchase property and conservation easements around the lake for water quality protection.

COLA continues its programs for walleye and musky stocking and the establishment of natural shoreline buffers among other things.

But until the phosphorus levels are brought under control all of these efforts by COLA to protect and preserve the water quality of our lake will be minimized.

There is still much we can and must do. In the coming months we'll continue our efforts on your behalf but we can't do it all. Educate yourselves. Volunteer. We need every property owner to join COLA. But COLA dues alone won't meet the financial needs to deal with these critical water quality issues. We also need every property owner to make a tax deductible contribution to the new Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation, Inc (see Foundation article on Page 6). Donate what you can to help fund our important work. And please add your voice to ours. Help us protect our property values and the lake we all love.



### 2009-10 COLA BOARD OF DIRECTORS (With area of oversight)

**Alf Sivertson**, President  
634-2957, 651-778-0575  
president@cola-wi.org

**Mike Persson**, Fishing  
634-4543  
fishing@cola-wi.org

**Allan Hoeft**, Picnic Chairman  
865-2232  
picnic@cola-wi.org

**Rob Engelstad**, Water Quality  
612-581-5775  
secchi@cola-wi.org

**Susan Horrocks**, Communications  
865-2113  
communications@cola-wi.org

**Mickey Odawa**, Web Site  
865-2503, 415-381-2650  
webmaster@cola-wi.org

**Steve Lillyblad**, Treasurer  
865-4612, 952-431-6658  
treasurer@cola-wi.org

**Dave Johnston**, Secretary  
865-6518  
secretary@cola-wi.org

**Tom Burgess**, Vice President  
634-2291  
vp@cola-wi.org

**COLA & Growers**

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damaging to fish habitat. Also, recent tests for water quality all across the lake indicated marginal oxygen levels for fish survival in Musky Bay, and beyond, even into the adjacent west bay.

This, while the cranberry group stated its studies show the phosphorus from William Zawistowski's fields represented only 10 percent of the total phosphorus load in the bay, blaming another 40 percent on runoff and ground leaching from other non-cranberry farms some distance behind his fields. They could provide no scientific evidence of this source.

Taking part in this informal meeting for COLA were Phil Nies, Town of Bass Lake supervisor, Steve Umland, who also represented the Victory Heights Association, Mickey Odawa and Tom Burgess, both COLA directors.

On the other side of the table were Tom Lochner, executive director of the cranberry growers, and Ed Sabey, Bill Hatch and Randy Jonjak – all cranberry farmers (Jonjak being the only local representative). Notably absent from the latter group was Zawistowski himself, even though he was invited. The COLA panel said his absence was unfortunate because the basis for COLA's interest in this discussion was to

find a way to reduce his operation's phosphorus load. To accomplish this, COLA urged his cranberry operation to install a tailwater recovery system (closed system) to capture and hold the phosphorus laden water, and further pledged to help Zawistowski obtain state and federal funds for this project. Such a system is a Best Management Practice adopted by the Cranberry Growers Association.

Umland stated at the outset, "Our goal, and our only goal is to save our lake," and Odawa later added, "we will do whatever it takes to save the lake."

Lochner responded that the cranberry association has no direct authority over Zawistowski's cranberry farm and can only recommend changes it believes are suitable for his operation. Such a closed system is viewed by association experts as "unpracticable," according to Lochner.

One of the cranberry panel members added that Musky Bay was basically a mud bay anyway without a second outlet and would continue to degrade regardless of phosphorus loading. However, the panel left the door open to further discussion when one member said "we'll take care of (cleaning up) our 10 percent if you take care of the rest."

"Just suggesting some responsibility on their part indicates an admittance of some cause and effect. This discussion is not over yet," noted Burgess.



## Phosphorus Levels in Musky Bay

by Brett McConnell

The LCO Conservation Department has analyzed its 2009 Musky Bay Total Phosphorus (TP) Concentration Sampling Data from the cranberry harvest discharge period (10/26-10/30) into Musky Bay. Average TP concentrations were calculated for both the East and West Musky Bay Cranberry Tributaries. The data revealed that discharge concentrations are at least 10 times higher than normal background levels from other monitored locations in the lake, including prominent bays and basins. This data is very consistent with the past 8 years of discharge monitoring in Musky Bay.

Brett McConnell is an Environmental Specialist with the Conservation Department of the LCO Band of Lake Superior Indians

## ***Sail Our Lake*** **Sailing Club Plans for 2010**

by Tom Burgess

The Courte Oreilles Sailing Club (COSC) completed its schedule of races in 2009 with plenty of rain/wind dates because of weather problems. COSC will announce dates for its 2010 schedule in the spring issue of *Loon Call*. It is anticipated there will be at least one or two race dates in June, one over Labor Day weekend and several in July and August.

Meanwhile, sailing instructor Bruce Lillyblad would like a show of hands among young people who want to learn to sail. Interested in sailing lessons next summer? Bruce can be reached at 715-865-4164.

### **Conservation Star Home**

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to have someone come out and walk your shoreline and talk with you about what more you could do at your property, or that you are doing everything right.

And remember, these are suggestions only. It will be your choice whether to take action, or not. This is something every lake shore owner can do today. It will only take a few minutes and is crucial for our lake at this time. You can make a difference. Call: 715-634-6463, or email [lwsec@sawyercountygov.org](mailto:lwsec@sawyercountygov.org) For more information please go to [www.sawyercountygov.org/CountyDepartments/LandWaterConservation/](http://www.sawyercountygov.org/CountyDepartments/LandWaterConservation/)

## **The Mystery Postcard**

by Jenifer Williams



The Wismo (Wisconsin – Missouri) Club was one of the first resorts on Lac Courte Oreilles and has been a happy part of many families for several generations. The club was founded by Walter Cronkite's grandfather, Dr. F.P. Cronkite, in 1906. Dr. Cronkite and several of his fishing buddies from St. Louis, Missouri went in together and bought ten acres of what was then Hayden's Resort, and turned it into the Wismo Angling Club.

Several years after the original members had organized the resort they brought in a new member, J.M. Studebaker, Jr. He was the son of J.M. Studebaker, one of the original family owners of the Studebaker car company.

J.M., Jr. was apparently quite the character and sometime in the late 1920's he built a 75' wooden (ouch!) slide that plummeted it's riders into the cool, clear water of Lac Courte Oreilles! The slide was located just off of the west side of Wismo Point – a place that is currently the summer hotspot to drop anchor and gather with friends. It's said that J.M., Jr. also built a three story boathouse and along with a harbor on the Wismo point. He was a young man of great wealth and one could write a book about his exploits although some are probably better left untold!

I have several postcards showing the slide and while none of the handwritten notes on the cards specifically mention the slide, the dates the postcards were sent helps to narrow down when the slide existed. For reference I've got a postcard that is dated July 20, 1925 and is from Dr. H.S. Fargrave (or Forgrave – it's hard to determine). Dr. Fargrave wrote to Miss Virginia Vaucil of St. Joseph, Missouri. The photo on the front of the postcard says "Wismo Angling Club" and while it shows the three story boathouse there is no slide in the picture. So I will assume that the slide was constructed after 1925.

The next postcard is dated August 5, 1930 and is from Mr. & Mrs. Nelson to Mrs. M. Banic of Schiller Park, Illinois. Mrs. Nelson writes that the "*weather is swell.*" The photo shows the slide in the background. Yeah! We know the slide must have been built before 1930.

The third postcard is from "Mother" to Miss A. Wall of St. Joseph, Missouri and is dated August 14, 1939. "Mother" (Mrs. Wall?) writes that she was staying with her cousin Emma. She'd also called on Mrs. Moore and saw Winifred and her new husband. The picture on the postcard shows the upper portion of the slide. So it would seem that the slide was around for most of the 30's although it may just be that "Mother" was using an old postcard.

If you have any knowledge of when the slide was built and/or torn down please pass it along to me. Do you have any stories about this slide? I'd love to hear them! Please email me at [jenwms@gmail.com](mailto:jenwms@gmail.com) or call me at 612-703-0780. Often the small details add up to make a big story! I look forward to learning more about this interesting moment in Lac Courte Oreilles history and passing it along to you.

## PROTECTING OUR LAKE, ONE BOAT AT A TIME

By Jan Hahn

Curly leaf pondweed and milfoil were found on several boats being launched into Lac Courte Oreilles this summer. Thanks to Clean Boats Inspector, Wendy Sue Hagins, these invasive, destructive aquatic plants were removed before the boats were launched. Anyone who has seen the awful results of weeds like this on many of the lakes in the Twin Cities and Minnesota knows how critical it is that we keep them out of our beautiful Lac Courte Oreilles.

COLA has accomplished a great deal toward preventing the spread of harmful, exotic plants, animals and VHS over the last five years of the Clean Boats, Clean Water Program (\*see note at end of article regarding VHS). Wendy Sue inspected approximately 1,000 boats, trailers and live wells at the main public boat landing on Highway K this last summer.

Boat inspections were conducted during times of peak lake usage, namely Thursday through Monday every week, holidays, and any other days when fishing tournaments or other events increased lake usage.

In addition to catching and stopping these introductions, Wendy Sue has shared valuable information with boaters about the identification of invasive species and helpful tips about controlling invasives from entering our lake. Wendy Sue has noted that even though there is a definite, positive change in boaters' awareness of their role in preventing invasive species it took inspections to find the milfoil and curly leaf pondweed on the boats and trailers. For these reasons, we must continue to place a high level of visibility on this potential threat and maintain the Clean Boats, Clean Water Program as a high priority.

Invasives will always be a threat to our lake. We must continue to keep the basics in mind - removing aquatic plants and animals from all parts of our boats and trailers and accessory equipment, including fishing lures, and draining all water from a boat including bilges, livewells, and other water containers **BEFORE** we put our boats into our lake. This is especially true if you use your boat in other lakes besides Lac Courte Oreilles.

If you have guests who will visit and bring their boats you should be certain they have thoroughly cleaned and prepared their boats and trailers before putting them into our lake. We also have the responsibility of thoroughly cleaning and draining our boats whenever we take them out of Lac Courte Oreilles, before leaving the water access. It is important not to transfer water from one water body to another or release live bait into any waters.

And last but not least, washing a boat and trailer thoroughly with regular tap water after its use. Flushing water through a motor's cooling system, live wells, and other areas that hold water removes any invasives that may have entered while the boat was in use.

While we know that invasive plants such as Eurasian milfoil exist in surrounding lakes in our area, it

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## Dramatic New Effort To Save Our Lake

You may not realize it, but Lac Courte Oreilles needs all of our help. As spectacular and beautiful and clean as our lake is there are problems. It used to be that for most lake home owners the problems were something we heard about over in Musky Bay. But the problems are spreading. Invasive weeds, algae blooms, fish kills, poor water oxygen levels are moving into the main body of the lake and downstream.

Lac Courte Oreilles is a recreational lake. Hundreds of people using it count on healthy fish populations which require stocking of fish like walleye and muskellunge. Boat safety relies on buoys marking rock piles and shallows. Just getting boats into the water requires sound boat launching areas.

The costs to save our lake far exceed what the Courte Oreilles Lakes Association (COLA) can address from membership dues alone.

**The Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation, Inc.** was created to provide funding to protect, preserve, and restore the water quality of our lake, for all of us and for our kids and

grandkids. And, as an extension of that, preserve the property values of lakefront property.

**The Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation Inc.** is actually a corporation created exclusively for charitable and education purposes within the definition of the IRS Code for 501 (C) (3). For the first time your charitable contributions can now be tax deductible. Support for the Foundation is separate from membership in COLA.

Funds raised by **The Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation, Inc.** will be used to stop all pollution but particularly from phosphorus, and restore habitat. We'll be better able to research and study water quality issues, and combat aquatic invasive species. By meeting financial requirements under state grants that benefit the water quality of the lake the Foundation can bring additional resources to help us. The Foundation can use funds to help educate property owners and the public about proper lake stewardship practices so we can all do more to protect the water quality of the lake, and for such other uses as may be appropriate.

It is our hope that the Foun-

dation can successfully perform these functions so that lake front owners, day users, and visitors to our lake can enjoy a clean and beautiful lake.

There will be more about **The Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation, Inc.** in later publications. But we can all start right now helping to save our lake by making a tax-deductible contribution.

To donate by check, please send it to:

The Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation, Inc.  
c/o Richard R. Land, Trustee  
6756 N. Victory Heights Circle  
Stone Lake, WI 54876-3054

For more information visit the Foundation website:  
[www.lcofi.org](http://www.lcofi.org)



**Be Careful Out There!  
See You In The Spring.**

## COLA's Spring Membership Meeting

June 2010

Date Will Be Announced in the Spring *Loon Call*

**PROTECTING OUR LAKE, ONE BOAT AT A TIME**

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is important that all of us keep this checklist handy when moving a boat from one lake to another.

Equally important, as you travel within the Musky Bay area in particular, you need to check your prop to ensure that curly leaf pondweed is not transported to other locations of our lake. In general, it is always a good idea to periodically check your prop while boating to ensure that any weed that looks suspicious is removed. Keep in mind that the local DNR office on Highway 27 accepts weed samples and will provide you with an immediate analysis.

**Help us protect our lake**

State grant money is no longer available for boat inspections at our lake. In order to keep the Clean Boats, Clean Water Program working for Lac Courte Oreilles we need your help. The cost to maintain the same level of protection at the main landing in 2010 will be \$5,000. COLA must look to you for help in funding this very critical program.

By making a tax deductible contribution to the new Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation, Inc. we'll be able to continue this and other important work for our lake.

A special "thank you" to Wendy Sue Hagins for her dedication to this year's program and to all our COLA members, for your cooperation and support of this very important effort.

\*VHS is viral hemorrhagic septicemia. This is a virus that is already known to attack and kill fresh water fish such as muskellunge, bluegill, perch, small mouth bass, crappie, and virtually all trout. One way it can be introduced into a lake such as Lac Courte Oreilles is if baitfish carrying the virus are brought to our lake for fishing, especially if they are released or dumped into the lake when someone is done fishing. This is another reason COLA's inspection and education efforts are so important to the future of our lake.

**Your COLA Membership**

Supporting your *Courte Oreilles Lakes Association* for just **\$25.00** per year may be one of the biggest bargains available to all shoreline property owners.

**Now, more than ever**, COLA represents your special interests by working to preserve the beauty and quality of our lake environment.

**Please join or renew today!**

For more information, visit our website

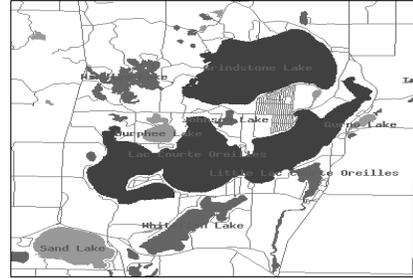
**[www.cola-wi.org](http://www.cola-wi.org)**

Or contact the Board of Directors

Any additional contributions beyond the \$25 membership should be made out to the Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation, Inc.  
Help us continue our work for our lake.



**Lac Courte Oreilles  
Watershed Management  
"Working Lands, Working Waters"  
Roadmap to 2010**  
by Bruce Wilson



The Lac Courte Oreilles watershed.  
Light gray indicates poorer water quality.

This is an update from the Lac Courte Oreilles lake management planning grant. Working with Dale Olson (Sawyer County), Dan Tyrolt (LCO Conservation Department) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, COLA obtained a grant for a state of the art study of our lake and the entire watershed area. The purpose is to develop a Management Plan for the entire, interconnected watershed.

From both national and regional perspectives, the Lac Courte Oreilles area is blessed with beautiful working lands as well as extraordinarily rare, high quality wetlands, lakes, and streams. The same forests, hills and high quality waters draw large numbers of people to live and recreate.

We have learned from regional and national experiences, that increasing populations with ever increasing needs also can cause degradation of our working lands and working waters. Each of us affects the runoff from our lawns or fields in small or large ways and each of us can do specific things to minimize negative effects upon our lakes. The extraordinary quality of the lakes and streams means that we also need to begin or continue to practice extra care in our land conservation practices. In that regard, we are fortunate that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has provided grant resources to aid in detailing of what each of us can do to help better manage lands and waters. Jim Kreitlow is our project manager from the WDNR.

In this phase of the grant, we are defining our watershed drainage areas, identifying stressors together with an understanding of the economies of the region. The first step in understanding what is affecting Lac Courte Oreilles is to understand the entire watershed (upland areas and land uses). Secondly, we measure and estimate the amounts of runoff and associated pollutants through the system – like a big checkbook of what goes in and out of the watershed. The checkbook for Lac Courte Oreilles includes tabulation from about 70, 099 acres of upland areas that **all** drain into Lac Courte Oreilles:

- Sand Creek (18,006 acres, note the clarity of Sand Lake and Whitefish Lake in the above figure);
- Osprey Creek (18,452 acres);
- Grindstone Creek (15,495 acres);
- Ghost Creek/Spring drainages (4,695 acres);
- Ring Creek (213 acres);
- Durphee/Schoolhouse Lake seepage areas (510 acres, note water clarity in the first figure);
- and
- Direct runoff into Lac Courte Oreilles.

## **Curly Leaf Pondweed Found in Stuckey and Barbertown Bays**

by Gary Pulford

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Early this past summer the aquatic invasive plant curly leaf pondweed (CLP) was discovered by COLA search volunteers to be growing in Stuckey and Barbertown Bays of Lac Courte Oreilles. The COLA volunteers also discovered and mapped two (2) additional acres in Musky Bay bringing the total acres in Musky Bay infested with CLP to nine (9) acres. The area in Stuckey Bay where CLP has gotten a foothold is located deep in the bay at the point of discharge from a cranberry operation and measures a little over one (1) acre in size. The Barbertown Bay discovery of CLP has yet to be fully characterized.

CLP is an aquatic invasive species that thrives in nutrient (e.g. phosphorus) rich environments. If left untreated, CLP grows and reproduces widely to the point where it not only chokes out native aquatic plants but becomes so pervasive that it can make boating, fishing, and swimming impossible in infested areas.

This invasive aquatic plant was likely brought into our lake tangled on the propeller or trailer of a boat used in another, infested lake and then launched into Lac Courte Oreilles a couple of years ago. Pieces of curly leaf pondweed can survive for a considerable time out of the water. If it comes loose and sinks to the bottom of a lake it can take root and begin to spread.

In May of this year COLA coordinated the herbicide treatment of seven (7) acres of previously discovered curly leaf pondweed in Musky Bay. The treatment was very successful with nearly 100% of the growing plants destroyed. However, since CLP, like many invasive plants, is virtually impossible to completely eradicate, it is necessary that annual spring treatments of all known infested areas of Lac Courte Oreilles be done for at least three (3) years in succession in order to keep it from spreading further into our lake.

In the spring of 2010 COLA will again coordinate the herbicide treatment of CLP in Musky and Stuckey Bays. The 1 acre infestation in Stuckey Bay and the 9 acres in Musky Bay will be treated at a cost to COLA of \$600.00 per acre or \$6,000.00 in total. Fighting and controlling the spread of CLP is expensive, but critical for trying to save Lac Courte Oreilles from an even larger CLP problem.

Recognizing how critical this is to the future quality of our lake COLA applied for and has just been awarded funding for the Aquatic Invasive Species Grant Program by the State of Wisconsin. This will permit us to do a whole lake aquatic plant survey and develop an aquatic plant management plan for Lac Courte Oreilles. And this will enhance our ability to fight curly leaf pondweed. For example, we'll be able to characterize and map the CLP in Barbertown Bay and include that to be treated in the spring of 2011. The goal is to plan and act to do everything we can to protect our lake now, and for the long term.

## Protecting Our Lake Starts at Your Doorstep

Many problems facing Lac Courte Oreilles will take our collective efforts, through COLA, to be fixed. But, you can help tackle some of the problems starting at your own lake-home.

The Conservation Star Home Project was set up to help shoreline homeowners look at their own, particular situation and identify beneficial things they are doing, and to answer questions and make suggestions about some things homeowners may not have thought of.

And, these are just suggestions...not

requirements or things you have to do. Just good ideas.

For example, if you fertilize your lawn or garden use fertilizers that do not contain phosphorus, since even small amounts of this can make its way into the lake and promote unhealthy growth of algae and weeds. Or, have your septic system pumped out and have it inspected every three years to be certain it's working properly and not seeping into your land, maybe into the lake.

COLA has partnered with Sawyer County Land & Water Conservation to help all of us ensure that we are doing what we can to protect the



water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles. The Conservation Star Home Project blue signs with the yellow star you see at some of your neighbors' homes indicate they were already practicing good conservation measures, or that they've made a few changes and are now a Star Home.

All you need to do is call 715-634-6463 (Sawyer County Land & Water Conservation). You can get more information, or even better, arrange

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**RESTATEMENT OF PURPOSE FOR COLA** The purposes of the **Courte Oreilles Lakes Association, Inc.** (COLA) are (1) to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of the Courte Oreilles Lakes, their shorelands and surrounding areas, while respecting the interests of property owners and the rights of the general public, and (2) to consider, study, survey and respond to issues deemed relevant by the membership of the organization. The Courte Oreilles Lakes consist of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles, both located in Sawyer County, Wisconsin.

**DON'T FORGET THE  
ANNUAL COLA SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
IN JUNE 2010**



**Courte Oreilles Lakes  
Association, Inc.**  
P.O. BOX 702  
Hayward, Wisconsin 54843  
www.cola-wi.org