

Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

Wanted: Anglers who know how to harvest pike By Kathy Hanson

Contributing Writer April 3-7 was a busy week on Lac Courte Oreilles,

particularly Musky Bay, and it wasn't about watching the ice go out. The LCO Esox Recovery Plan was launched—a

cooperative effort between the Wisconsin DNR, LCO

Conservation Department, COLA and the Hayward Lakes Chapter of Muskies, Inc. - to reduce the abundance of northern pike and increase the abundance of muskellunge (Esox). It's not the first time pike have been netted and removed

from the lake and it won't be the last. It's one of the

objectives laid out in the 2006 LCO Fisheries Management Plan, according to DNR Fishery Biologist Max Wolter who said historically Lac Courte Oreilles had only muskellunge and was a world-renowned musky fishing destination. "Pike are not believed to be native to the Couderay drainage. Records show they likely got into the lake in the

1940s and slowly increased in abundance. By the 70s

the lake has had a much higher abundance of pike

ended.

pike were starting to overtake musky and since that time

compared to musky," Wolter said the day after the project

Kevin Horrocks, a member of COLA's board of directors, emphasized the scope of the problem. "It gets down to the food chain. The large number of northern pike, which are top tier predators, means they are eating virtually any fish they can. They are eating machines. They don't eat just minnows like people put on a hook as bait. The pike are eating young muskies, walleye, bass, other northern pike, perch, cisco, and whitefish, too."

Wolter added, "We can estimate that a pike would eat

That means about 45 grams a day for an average pike.

0.05 grams of food per gram of their body weight per day.

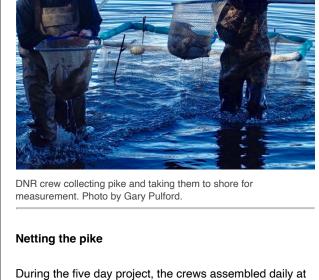
Extrapolate that out to the number we removed and we're talking about almost 300 pounds of other fish eaten every day... Take that out to a year and we're looking at 100,000 pounds of fish consumed annually by the LCO pike population." Removing pike is just one of the strategies, Wolter said, adding that the next stage will involve stocking musky into LCO to try and boost the population in the short term; and the last step—and the most challenging—will be to restore

the musky spawning habitat in Musky Bay to promote a

"These three actions together give us the best chance of

healthier population over the long term.

achieving out goal," said Wolter.



8:30 a.m. Boats were launched and the fish in the 14 fyke nets that were placed all around Musky Bay on April 2

vice-president who was part of the team.

The fyke nets are set along shorelines where pike like to spawn. The pike follow the lead of the net into the area called the "pot" where they are trapped. The fish are not ensnared in any way, Wolter emphasized. Rather, they swim into the net and cannot find their way out.

DNR crews visit each net every day and collect the pike,

were nearly all pulled by April 8, said Gary Pulford, COLA

take them to shore where they are measured, sex determined and examined for fin clips (several thousand pike were given a fin clip in 2016 as a means to estimate the total population size). Wolter said from that effort they are estimating today's population of pike in LCO to be 4,700-8,700, with a majority of those spawning in Musky Bay.

Pike being measured, sex determined, and examined for fish clips.

Mike Persson, who is leading COLA's effort to re-establish

the Musky habitat on Lac Courte Oreilles, was also part of

this mission. He said the goal of this netting effort was to

remove 3-4,000 pike, with some of the fish given to the Tribe for food, some put in the Couderay River and the bulk processed into fish patties and donated to area food

Photo by Gary Pulford.

Processing the pike

benefit.

banks, with the Hayward Lakes Chapter of Muskies, Inc. picking up the tab for the processing fee.

Wolter explained that the smaller pike are turned into fish

patties, resulting in about 1,000 pounds of food donations.

into pike patties, and food shelves and senior centers will

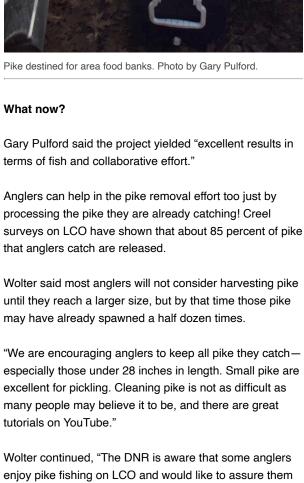
In this case, Mark Heath of Whiskey Ridge Meat Processing and Sport Shop of Radisson is turning them

The larger pike are transferred to the Couderay River, giving anglers a chance to catch the "big fish." Generally, anglers are not interested in catching/keeping small pike but these fish should appeal to anglers. And some of the pike were cleaned and processed for LCO elders. As of April 24 Wolter said 2,928 pike had been removed or

transferred to the Couderay River, but those numbers are

expected to rise as hatchery crews continue to work the nets through the end of the week, resulting in a few more

hundred added to that total.



"We are encouraging anglers to keep all pike they catch especially those under 28 inches in length. Small pike are enjoy pike fishing on LCO and would like to assure them that there are still many pike left in the lake to catch. Additionally, the size of pike is expected to improve. The current average size is around 20 inches. This fall, the DNR plans to stock 3,500 musky fingerlings and 25,000 walleye fingerlings to replace the biomass of pike that were removed. With less pike in the lake to prey on these stocked fish the DNR is expecting better survival of the stocked walleye and musky. This should lead to better fishing for all three species down the road with more abundant walleye and musky, and a pike population with

View this email in your

Issue #19 May 1, 2017

<u>browser</u>

COLA ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday June 24, 2017 St. Francis Solanis

Mission Church **COLA PICNIC**

Saturday July 15, 2017

Trails End Resort TIME TO RENEW

YOUR COLA

MEMBERSHIP FOR

2017!

COLA membership is a pretty good deal. For only 25\$/year, you help COLA protect LCO, and you get a

picnic in return! Renew your membership today in one of Wisconsin's most active and respected lake associations.

Are your neighbors and extended family members of COLA? If not, please ask them to join.

COLA IN THE NEWS DNR Settles Suit by

Agreeing to Move Toward Lake Pollution Limit April 18, 2017

By Steven Verburg, Wisconsin State Journal

DNR Agrees To Investigate Stricter Phosphorus Limits On Lac Courte Oreilles: Tribe, Lake Association Claim DNR Not Doing Enough To Protect Lake, Fishery April 18, 2017 By Rich Kremer, WPR News

April 26, 2017 By Terrell Boettcher, Sawyer County Record **UW-STEVENS POINT** SELECTS COLA FOR **OUTSTANDING**

PARTNERSHIP AWARD

The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Geographic

DNR, COLA, Tribe Settle <u>Lawsuit on Lake</u>

Phosphorus Procedure

Information Systems Center (GIS Center) has selected COLA for its annual Outstanding Partner Award. The award honors COLA's long-term commitment to

gathering scientific and geographic evidence at the watershed scale and applying it to protect the

two-story fishery on Lac Courte Oreille. (More about this project in next month's Short Ears Long Tales.) SHORELAND **BUFFER GRANT** MONEY AVAILABLE COLA has received a WDNR grant to develop

plant purchases, and arrange construction and installation services from area landscapers. COLA will

shoreland restoration plans

and designs, make bulk

also help provide continuing education and a hands-on buffer zone training in partnership with the Sawyer County Lakes Forum and other local groups. The primary intended audience for education efforts extends to the Upper Couderay River Watershed lakes including Whitefish, Sand, Grindstone, Windigo, Sissabagama, Osprey, Round and Little Round. Visit the COLA website for a variety of helpful, downloadable information on Shoreland Restoration for lake associations and lakefront homeowners. For questions and details, email Kris Sivertson, COLA

much-needed feature - a place to record lake observations. As we've seen over the last several years, we need to have a timely record of unusual events on LCO, and now

you will have the chance to help out. There are forms

available for those who want to report dying fish, invasive aquatic

plant species, algae

The COLA website has been revised to include a

FEATURE - LAKE **OBSERVATION FORMS**

events. **POLICY** COLA has developed a new land use policy addressing developmental pressures on LCO. **SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS** We'd like to spread the news of COLA's good people and good works throughout the upper

president, at krisw3690@gmail.com or call <u>715-210-0818</u>. **NEW COLA WEBSITE**

blooms, ice on/off dates, loon sightings, and other **COLA'S LAND USE**

Help COLA by sharing this newsletter with friends.

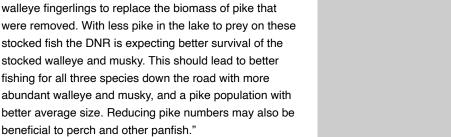
ARCHIVED ISSUES OF SHORT EARS, LONG TAL

Couderay River watershed.

If you have friends or family

on nearby lakes who would

enjoy Short Ears Long Tales, <u>let us know</u>.



COLA Mission: 1) to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles, 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 COLA's membership. The eNewsletter Editor can be reached at:

courte.oreilles.lakes.association@gmail.com

Kathy Hanson is a free-lance reporter for the Sawyer County Gazette, the Sawyer County Field Editor for Our Wisconsin magazine, and Copy Editor for the Bayfield County Journal. She has also served as Staff

Reporter, Business Feature Writer, Columnist, and Copy Editor for the Sawyer County Record.

COLA P.O. Box 702 Hayward, WI 54843