



# Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

Issue #20 June 1, 2017

## COLA named 'Outstanding Partner' in award for protecting Lac Courte Oreilles

By Kathy Hanson  
Contributing Writer

The Courte Oreilles Lakes Association recently received the "Outstanding Partner Award" from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point GIS (geographic information system) Center. COLA's Communication Director Jim Coors accepted the award in Stevens Point, commenting later that, "There are a lot of people involved and a lot of people to whom we should all be grateful"—naming COLA board members Gary Pulford and Mark Lastrup as essential players in forming the partnership with UWSP.



Jim Coors accepting, on behalf of COLA, the Outstanding Partner Award from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Geographic Information System Center. Photo submitted.

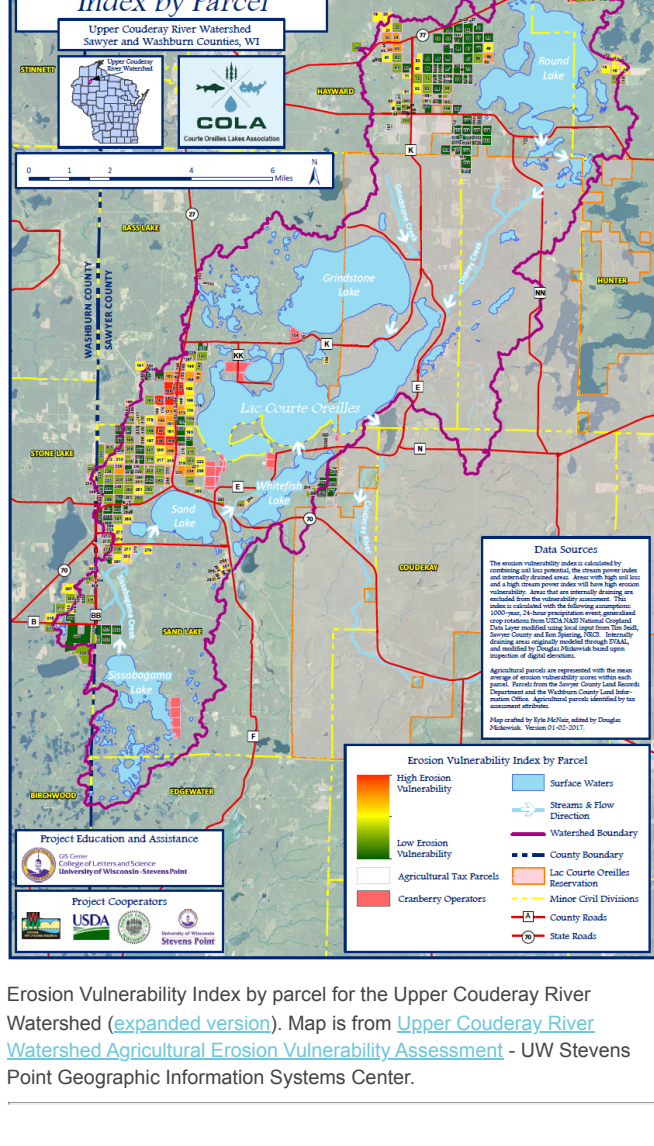
Much of the work COLA pursues, studies, chases and relentlessly hunts down for the cause of sustaining the waters of LCO is not easy to explain in lay terms. But it is oh-so important because it reflects the degree of commitment and dedication the board and all its membership devotes to the mission and the understanding they want to bring to everyone.

In 2016 COLA commissioned the UWSP to conduct an erosion study of the Upper Couderay River Watershed.

The erosion study was designed to assist Sawyer County in the identification of "priority farms" in the county that may benefit from implementation of erosion control best management practices that would conserve valuable topsoil and prevent soil sediment and phosphorus from entering area lakes.

The idea of focusing on priority farms has been around for a number of years and identifying them has been a major commitment spelled out in the Sawyer County Land and Water Resources Management Plan (link) that has been approved by the State of Wisconsin for implementation in Sawyer County.

The erosion study, now completed, contains the modeling and mapping necessary to help both farmers and lake associations in the 125-square mile Upper Couderay River Watershed—all of which eventually flows into LCO—identify and better manage farm parcels most vulnerable to erosion.



Erosion Vulnerability Index by parcel for the Upper Couderay River Watershed (expanded version). Map is from [Upper Couderay River Watershed Agricultural Erosion Vulnerability Assessment](#) - UW Stevens Point Geographic Information Systems Center.

Soil erosion hurts both farmers—because their crops are denied fertile topsoil—and lakes—because of the people who live, enjoy and recreate in the area when soil erosion adds sediment and phosphorus to the water, resulting in algal blooms, low dissolved oxygen levels and loss of fish spawning habitat.

Indeed, everyone loses, especially the cold-water whitefish and cisco that are dying off from lack of oxygen in the lakes because they are the most vulnerable species and the first affected by polluted waters and a warming atmosphere.

Two scientists from UWSP, Douglas Miskowiak and Kyle McNair, used large, map-based databases to combine information on elevation, precipitation, crop rotation, crop management, drainage, soil erodibility and runoff, and created an Erosion Management Index with vulnerability scores for the parcels of land (one parcel = 40 acres).

Miskowiak said, "the parcel initiates conversations between land owners and conservationists to negotiate agricultural best management practices designed to keep soil on land where it's needed to grow crops, and out of surface waters where it fuels excessive plant growth and depletes dissolved oxygen." The data and maps for the project were shared with Tim Seidl, Assistant Conservationist for Sawyer County Zoning and Conservation, and Ron Speiring from the National Resources Conservation Department out of Spooner—two more critical players in this project.

Seidl said his job is to work with landowners of Sawyer County on erosion, water quality and other conservation issues.

"We now have a focused and prioritized list of properties we can focus on and work with the landowners to help them implement the various best management practices," Seidl said.

COLA Vice-President Gary Pulford said this has been a "team effort" and Tim and Ron will be talking to and visiting 14 landowners this summer whose parcels were identified as the most vulnerable to the soil erosion issue.

Pulford said there are 29 landowners in the next group who are scheduled for next summer; and finally, 68 in the last group that Tim and Ron will meet with two years from now.

Seidl and Speiring will make these visits, actually walking the fields, visiting the farmers, and helping them with upgrades to facilities and nutrient (manure and fertilizer) management plans.

Ultimately, people have to bring changes to this type of problem: technical fixes such as dredging or treating LCO are repairs, not solutions.

"With partners like these, COLA will undoubtedly be successful in preserving LCO and the Upper Couderay River Watershed," Coors said.

(For a closer look at the GIS study see [Geodesign for Sustainability - Protecting a Two-Story Fishery on Lac Courte Oreilles](#) by Douglas Miskowiak, Senior GIS Education Specialist, UWSP Geo News, Vol. 2/Issue 2/May/2017)



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### COLA ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday June 24, 2017  
St. Francis Solanis  
Mission Church  
[\(details\)](#)

### COLA PICNIC

Saturday July 15, 2017  
Trails End Resort  
Stone Lake, WI

### OTHER MEETINGS OF INTEREST

Northwestern Wisconsin Lakes Conference  
Friday, June 16 ~ 9am-3:45pm  
Hayward High School  
Hayward WI  
[\(details\)](#)

### 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

[DNR, COLA, Tribe Settle Lawsuit on Lake Phosphorus Procedure](#)  
April 26, 2017  
By Terrell Boettcher, Sawyer County Record

### OTHER NEWS

[Spring Hearings Expose Groundwater Concerns](#)  
May 18, 2017  
By Patrick Durkin, Green Bay Press-Gazette

[Garlic Mustard](#) (in the Northwoods)  
May 5, 2017  
By Emily M. Stone, Natural Connections - Cable Natural History Museum

[Cranberry Research to Get a Boost in Wisconsin](#)  
May 15, 2017  
By Barry Adams, Wisconsin State Journal

### COLA JOINS 20 CONSERVATION GROUPS TO OPPOSE LEGISLATION TO EASE PHOSPHORUS STANDARDS

A [letter](#) seeking to ease Wisconsin's phosphorus water-quality standards circulated through the WI State Legislature for sign-ons. It asked Wisconsin's Congressional Delegation to allow the state to revise phosphorus standards by loosening phosphorus regulations. Clean Wisconsin sent a [response](#) on behalf of the conservation community, including COLA. The [Wisconsin State Journal](#) covered the news and its impacts.

### LAKESHORE PROPERTY OWNER GUIDES

These guides provide guidance on selection of native plants as well as simple and inexpensive best practices for lakeshore property owners.

[Healthy Lakes 350 ft2 Native Planting Companion Guide](#)

[2014-2017 Wisconsin's Healthy Lakes Implementation Plan](#)

### SAWYER COUNTY LAND & WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 - 2026

Sawyer County is faced with ever increasing public demands on its unique natural resources.

This plan is an important tool to guide local government, various state and federal agencies, and individuals [\(more\)](#).

### SHORELAND BUFFER GRANT MONEY AVAILABLE

COLA has received a WDNR grant to develop shoreland restoration plans and designs, make bulk plant purchases, and arrange construction and installation services from area landscapers. COLA will 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 president, at [krisw3690@gmail.com](mailto:krisw3690@gmail.com) or call [715-210-0818](tel:715-210-0818).

### NEW COLA WEBSITE FEATURE - LAKE OBSERVATION FORMS

The COLA website has been revised to include a much-needed feature - a place to record [lake observations](#). There are forms available for those who want to report dying fish, invasive aquatic plant species, algae blooms, ice on/off dates, loon sightings, and other events.

### COLA'S LAND USE POLICY STATEMENT

COLA recently developed a new land use [policy statement](#) addressing developmental pressures on LCO, and it proved useful for evaluating the merits of a recent request to [rezone a property adjacent to Fleur de Lane](#).

### OBITUARIES

[Dr. Thomas L. Austin](#)

[Nancy H. Pollock](#)

[Jean Higbee O'Neill](#)

All three were long-term supporters of COLA and the Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation.

### SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

If you have friends or family on nearby lakes who would enjoy Short Ears Long Tales, [let us know](#).

Help COLA by sharing this newsletter with friends.

[ARCHIVED ISSUES OF SHORT EARS, LONG TALES](#)

Kathy Hanson is a free-lance writer for various local and regional newspapers and Duluth magazines. She is the Sawyer County Field Editor for Our Wisconsin magazine and copy editor for the Bayfield County Journal. She was previously a staff reporter, business writer, columnist and copy editor for the Sawyer County Record.

**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.

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