



Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

FBPEVAWQ

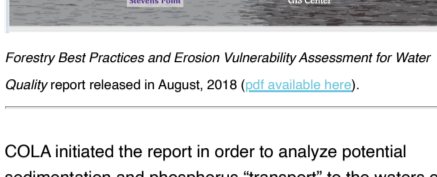
By Allison Slavick
Contributing Writer

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.

-John Muir

What's going on with the title of this article? Obscure Star Wars character? Your next killer Scrabble word? First name of that new feudal lord in Game of Thrones? Fell asleep on the keyboard? None of the above and, well, who doesn't love an acronym. The letters stand for the *Forestry Best Practices and Erosion Vulnerability Assessment for Water Quality* report, initiated and paid for by the Courte Oreilles Lakes Association (COLA) and released in August, 2018. Please don't stop reading! The report encompasses the Upper Couderay Watershed in Sawyer and Washburn Counties, and it is relevant to property holders on Big and Little Lac Courte Oreilles and in the broader Couderay Watershed. Indeed, if you enjoy recreation on your lake, a stroll in the woods, clean air and water, birdwatching, fishing and hunting – all the good stuff of living in the north – the report will be important to you.

First, take a look at the report. It's available [here as a PDF](#). With the plan on your screen, you might want to review the list of acronyms found on page five. Then look at page four, where you can learn about the many contributors to the report. The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Geographic Information Systems Center took the lead, with Douglas Miskowiak as the Principal Investigator.

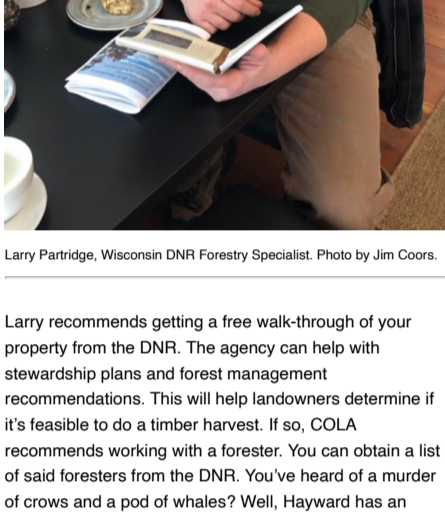


Forestry Best Practices and Erosion Vulnerability Assessment for Water Quality report released in August, 2018 ([pdf available here](#)).

COLA initiated the report in order to analyze potential sedimentation and phosphorus "transport" to the waters of the Watershed as a result of logging, AKA timber harvests, and prioritize properties with the greatest erosion risk. The key word here is "potential." The report provides a survey of the potential property risks for the lake, not past or real-time activities that have harmed or are in the process of harming the lake. Ultimately, COLA has recommendations, based on the report, for landowners who want to manage their forested land.

COLA's president, Kevin Horrocks, states, "Virtually any tree cutting, thinning, logging, removal stirs up the forest. Roads or paths to get to the trees, roads and skids to haul out wood, ruts, scrapes, you name it – all of these can result in erosion into ditches, creeks, streams, ponds, rivers, lakes. All cause pollution and damage the waters of the LCO lakes."

Larry Partridge is the Wisconsin DNR's Forestry Specialist, providing services in managed forest law and crop law. "There are steps you can take to be sure you're not damaging the watershed," he said last month, reflecting on the report. "Landowners shouldn't view these recommendations as limiting. You can make money from forestry and still do right by the watershed."



Larry Partridge, Wisconsin DNR Forestry Specialist. Photo by Jim Coors.

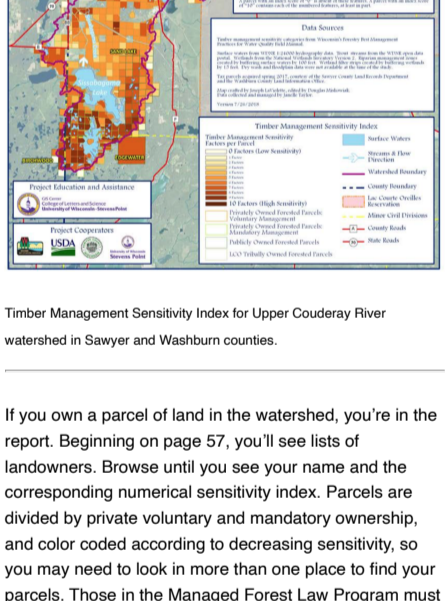
Larry recommends getting a free walk-through of your property from the DNR. The agency can help with stewardship plans and forest management recommendations. This will help landowners determine if it's feasible to do a timber harvest. If so, COLA recommends working with a forester. You can obtain a list of said foresters from the DNR. You've heard of a murder of crows and a pod of whales? Well, Hayward has an "embarrassment of foresters." (Thank you, Larry Partridge, for the term. And BTW, another term for a flock or bevy of partridge is a bew of partridge. Bew is an obsolete form of the word "beau," and we all know that our local partridge, the ruffed grouse, is a real beauty, and it needs a healthy ecosystem in which to thrive.)

You'll want your forester to know and follow Best Management Practices (BMPs). BMPs are designed to protect lakes. BMPs affect things like water quality and temperature, nutrient balances, habitat diversity, and hydrology (the movement of water).

The DNR maintains a list of "cooperating foresters" that they provide to landowners. The list is long and inclusive, and it may be tough to know where to start, i.e., how to select an excellent individual or firm. There is a smaller professional forestry organization – WCF – which is the acronym for Wisconsin Consulting Foresters. This group aspires to maintain a very high standard in their sustainable professional forestry services provided to property owners. WCF is also Green Tier Certified (GTC) by the DNR; GTC recognizes and supports businesses and organizations that go beyond compliance. When selecting a forester, you should investigate his or her qualifications, experience, and professional affiliations. A Green Tier Certified Forester applies water quality BMPs, as a minimum, on all projects as a standard business practice.

What do the foresters think about this? "A forester provides predictable results during the forest management process. A timber harvest should never just happen. A timber harvest should be the result of forest management planning, forest engineering, and timber sale closure," said Jeff Groeschl, a GTC forester in the area.

Okay, back to the report. With many maps it is interesting to browse through, but don't try to do so on your phone. You can pick up a free paper copy of the report at the DNR's office. For example, on page 40, you'll see a map that lays out the Timber Management Sensitivity Index for the watershed. Visually, you'll see which parcels of land in the watershed, if in which timber harvest practices took place, have the potential to negatively affect water quality and rare or endangered species. The sensitivity indices, while color-coded on this map, are based on a numerical value that factors in soil type, slope, the presence of a trout stream, wetland or surface water, and other indicators.

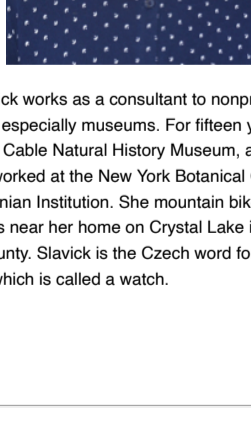


Timber Management Sensitivity Index for Upper Couderay River watershed in Sawyer and Washburn counties.

If you own a parcel of land in the watershed, you're in the report. Beginning on page 57, you'll see lists of landowners. Browse until you see your name and the corresponding numerical sensitivity index. Parcels are divided by private voluntary and mandatory ownership, and color coded according to decreasing sensitivity, so you may need to look in more than one place to find your parcels. Those in the Managed Forest Law Program must follow certain requirements for forest management and are subject to all Best Management Practices.

Again, the purpose of the report? To provide landowners with the information needed to manage timber harvests, as a poorly managed timber harvest can negatively impact nearby water and ultimately the LCO lakes. And again, a professional forester can help. "The greatest potential threat to water resources during the timber harvest process is sedimentation from skid trails and haul roads. The forester can provide forest engineering and other procedures for a timber harvest to minimize or reduce the risk of soil erosion and water quality impacts," Groeschel, the forester, said.

To summarize: if property owners decide to conduct a forest harvest, for the good of the lake – the schools of fish, the bales of turtles, not to mention their diverse habitats, water quality and temperature, strength of the fishery, and the overall hydrology of the lake – COLA implores the use of stewardship plans and qualified foresters who follow Best Management Practices. Walk through your property with a DNR rep while an aptly named scourge of mosquitoes circles overhead. Be careful not to step on a knot of toads. If you plan to harvest timber on your land, refer to the FBPEVAWQ report. Be proud that you're doing everything you can to safeguard the lake. As a landowner in the watershed, you'll benefit. All things are hitched together.



Allison Slavick works as a consultant to nonprofits all over the country, especially museums. For fifteen years she directed the Cable Natural History Museum, and previously worked at the New York Botanical Garden and the Smithsonian Institution. She mountain bikes, skis, and picks berries near her home on Crystal Lake in southern Bayfield County. Slavick is the Czech word for nightingale, a group of which is called a watch.

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PLEASE RENEW YOUR COLA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2019-2020

COLA membership is a pretty good deal. For only 25\$/year, you help COLA protect the LCO Lakes, are informed about issues involving the LCO Lakes, 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](#).

DATES TO REMEMBER

COLA ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, June 15, 2019
St. Francis Mission

COLA MEMBERS' PICNIC

Saturday, July 13, 2019
Trails End Resort

OH NO!! ZEBRA MUSSELS

They are not in the LCO Lakes yet, but they've been found nearby in Big McKensie Lake in Washburn Co. according to a [recent article in the StarTribune](#). The Zebra Mussel is a serious invasive species and could destroy our lakes.

See the message from COLA President Kevin Horrocks [here](#).

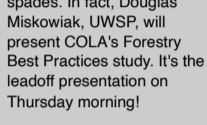


Photo provided by [USDA](#) and [USGS](#).

2019 WISCONSIN LAKES PARTNERSHIP CONVENTION

April 10-22 Holiday Inn Convention Center Stevens Point, WI

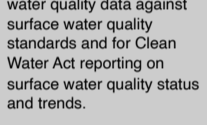
This year's convention theme, "Pay it Forward," and COLA demonstrates this in spades. In fact, Douglas Miskowiak, UWSP, will present COLA's Forestry Best Practices study. It's the leadoff presentation on Thursday morning!

Information on the Convention can be found [here](#).

NEW 700 FT SETBACK REQUIREMENTS FOR ENHANCED BOAT WAKES

A new enhanced boat wake ordinance became effective on November 12, 2018. To view the ordinance [click here](#). The essential elements are as follows:

"No person shall operate a motorboat ... on the waters within the Town of Bass Lake, Sawyer County in a manner to enhance an elevated wake for over 50 feet in length closer than 700 feet from any shoreline, dock, pier, raft or other restricted area(s) within the Town of Bass Lake, Sawyer County. An elevated wake is a trail of disturbed water left by the passage of a watercraft in excess of 24 inches. Such prohibited operation shall apply to wake enhancement watercraft by the use of ballast, mechanical hydrofoil(s), uneven loading or operation at transition speed. Transition speed means the speed at which the boat is operating at greater than slow-no-wake speed, but not fast enough so the boat is planning."



A higher resolution map is provided [here](#).

2018 ANNUAL LCO WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Wisconsin's Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (WisCALM), from the WDNr, provides guidance on assessment of water quality data against surface water quality standards and for Clean Water Act reporting on surface water quality status and trends.

The 2018 annual LCO water quality assessment is based upon the WisCALM protocol and the previous five years of monitoring data, i.e., 2014 through and including 2018. This assessment has been prepared for each of the last 6 years by LimnoTech Inc.

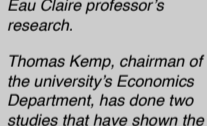
See the assessment [here](#).

[See more details about WisCALM on the WDNr website.](#)

A LAKESIDE COMPANION

The University of Wisconsin Press has recently published "[A Lakeside Companion](#)," by Ted J. Rulseh.

According to Michael Engelson, executive director, Wisconsin Lakes, the book "Delivers the magic of lake living while conveying water science topics in a clear and engaging way. Whether you are on the lakeshore or far away, it will bring you back to the waters you love. A great read."



IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Controlling runoff is important, and WDNr has provided some guidance on how to handle impervious surfaces. [More information.](#)

HOW MUCH IS CLEAN WATER WORTH?

From the [September 28 Eau Claire's Leader-Telegram](#).

About \$20,000 to \$30,000 in added property value for the average home on a murky lake that clears up so you can see at least a meter down, according to a UW-Eau Claire professor's research.

Thomas Kemp, chairman of the university's Economics Department, has done two studies that have shown the effect that improving a lake's clarity has on the sale prices of homes around it.

"It doesn't just matter from a tree-hugger perspective. It's straight up economics," he said. "People will pay for clearer water, period."

THE LAC COURTE OREILLES LEGACY FUND

Many families have enjoyed LCO's pristine beauty for generations. Your generous donations over the past eight years have helped preserve the lake and remain the essential funding for current activities. But now we have another opportunity to protect the lake far into the future by putting the Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation into your estate plans.

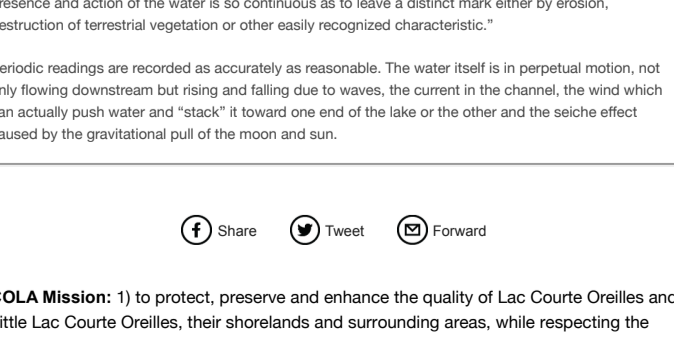
The LCO Foundation teamed up with the Eau Claire Community Foundation to create the [Lac Courte Oreilles Legacy Fund](#). Endowment gifts include: planned gifts such as a bequest in a will, charitable remainder trust, or outright gifts, such as of cash, or stock.

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](#)



Volunteers regularly monitor the depth gauge at the Thoroughfare bridge. The gauge and the chart readings are in tenths of a foot (1/10 foot = 1.2 inches). The first point on the chart, June 27, 2017, was when the gauge was first installed. The USGS "normal" water surface elevation for big LCO is 1287 feet and is represented by the lower orange line.

The Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) is represented by the upper orange line. The OHWM establishes the boundary between public lakebed and private land, was established for big LCO in 1955 and is 1289.27 feet above mean sea level. The OHWM is "the point on the bank or shore up to which the presence and action of the water is so continuous as to leave a distinct mark either by erosion, destruction of terrestrial vegetation or other easily recognized characteristic."

Periodic readings are recorded as accurately as reasonable. The water itself is in perpetual motion, not only flowing downstream but rising and falling due to waves, the current in the channel, the wind which can actually push water and "stack" it toward one end of the lake or the other and the seiche effect caused by the gravitational pull of the moon and sun.

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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:

COLA
P.O. Box 702
Hayward, WI 54843
communications@cola-wi.org