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COLA Petitions WDNR to List Correct Cause of Impairment for Lac Courte Oreilles in 2018 Impaired Waters List

Public Comment Period Ends Dec. 29, 2017 - *Please Send a Letter or Email!*

HAYWARD, WI (December 1, 2017) Every two years, Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to publish a list of all waters that are not meeting water quality standards. In the proposed 2018 list update, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) proposes to add 240 new water segments. The WDNR issued a notice on November 15, 2017, soliciting public comments on its proposed [2018 list of Impaired Waters](#). The WDNR is proposing to list **all** of Lac Courte Oreilles as impaired—which is a good—but, it is proposing to list “low dissolved oxygen” (DO) as an indicator, or symptom, of that impairment without citing Total Phosphorus as the **cause** of the impairment. During the Public Comment Period, through Dec. 29, 2017, the Courte Oreilles Lakes Association (COLA) and others are requesting that the WDNR also correctly list the cause of the low DO impairment of LCO.

LCO is one of the few waters on the proposed 2018 Impaired Waters list with a “Cause” stated as “Unknown,” while Total Phosphorus is stated as the cause of impairment for most of the other 240 waters. If the WDNR does not list the correct [cause of the impairment](#), it cannot act to correct it.



It is helpful to note that the COLA welcomes the Impaired Water designation for Lac Courte Oreilles because it qualifies the lake for both attention and improvement by the U.S. EPA and WDNR under both federal and state law.

In 2014 COLA and its membership were successful in convincing WDNR of the need to list Musky Bay as an impaired water due to excessive aquatic plant and algae growth **caused** by total phosphorus. Now all of LCO is being proposed as impaired because of low DO and once again the COLA membership are being called upon to convince the WDNR that the cause is total phosphorus pollution. [See the 2018 WisCALM Assessment for Lac Courte Oreilles.](#)

Phosphorus, a nutrient, causes water impairment because it acts as a fertilizer in the lake, causing the massive growth of algae and algal mats and excess aquatic plant growth, including invasive species like curly leaf pondweed. Dissolved oxygen is then “depleted” from the water when the algae and other plants die and “consume” all the DO in the decomposition process. When this happens, fish species—particularly the cisco and whitefish—literally suffocate and die off, as during the huge [fish kill in Aug/Sept 2016](#).



How to Send a Letter or Email to the WDNR – *The deadline for public comment is Dec. 29, 2017*

. Use the [Sample Letter](#) provided by COLA

This letter does two things: (1) Supports the WDNR proposal to list the entire lake as impaired and (2) Asks the WDNR to list

the correct reason for that impairment—Total Phosphorus.

. Send your letter or email by December 29, 2017

The following is from the WDNR: “Public comments may be submitted by December 29, 2017, and can be emailed to DNR at DNRImpairedWaters@wisconsin.gov, or sent by U.S. mail to Ashley Beranek, DNR, Water Evaluation Section (WY/3), Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707. Comments postmarked or received by December 29, 2017, will be considered before submitting the final draft list to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval.”

If you have any questions, please contact Gary Pulford, COLA Vice President, at garylindapulford@charter.net.

Learn more about COLA’s efforts to protect the water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles—the fifth-largest natural lake in Wisconsin at 5,030 acres, an [Outstanding Resource Water](#), and a rare, two-story cold-water fishery. As part of this goal, COLA is committed to helping provide the science and lead the way in reducing pollution, to serve not only Lac Courte Oreilles and its watershed, but also other Wisconsin lakes and the organizations that support them. Visit www.cola-wi.org. For questions and interviews, contact Jim Coors at communciations@cola-wi.org or call 608-628-0694.