



**Minnesota  
Lakes and Rivers  
Advocates**

***2020 Annual Report***

**Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates  
protects Minnesota's lake and river heritage  
for current and future generations by forging powerful links  
among lakes, lake advocates and policy makers.**



*(Photo credit: Kevin Corrigan)*

**MLR supports  
local capacity  
with organizing,  
science, media,  
and professional  
advocacy in  
St. Paul**



“Politics is what we do when we define problems and advance solution strategies. Politics is always grounded in a set of principles or values that justifies the need to take action and achieve our purpose.”

*Peg Michels,  
Midwest Active Citizenship Initiative*



*(Photo credit: Kevin Corrigan)*

**From Executive Director Jeff Forester**

Greetings,

It is hard to believe that it was 26 years ago that I joined a group of cabin owners that would become the Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates.

Today MLR is the largest and most effective citizen-based water protection group in the state with a long list of accomplishments. Our committed and organized membership makes MLR a powerful force at the MN State Legislature.

In 2020 the MLR Board adopted a Civic Organizing structure in line with the Midwest Active Citizenship Initiative and have internalized this civic identity. MLR now leads a new water-based civics at the local level. This actionary instead of reactionary strategy forges “powerful links” among lake advocates and policy makers. We now lead Civic Organizing test pilots in Ramsey County, the BWCA, and soon on starry stonewort infested lakes across MN.

This year MLR focused on science, civic organizing, media and professional legislative advocacy. While Covid-19 interrupted the legislative process, you will see we made tremendous progress in the other areas.

I wake up every morning humbled and grateful that I get to work with so many of you whose values I share, doing work that matters, and ensuring a better “lake and river legacy for current and future generations.” Thank you for this opportunity to serve you and the public good of clean and healthy lake ecosystems.

Please stay in touch,

Jeff Forester  
Executive Director

MN Lakes and Rivers Advocates is a 501c4 non-profit organization. Contributions are not tax deductible because we lobby at the Minnesota legislature. We always work to strengthen our lobbying strategy to have greater impact on our mission.

We launched a Civic Organizing strategy to build a broad cross sector base of active citizens across Minnesota.

MLR is more than a service delivery or traditional special interest advocacy organization and always has been. We actively serve the public good as we work to protect a lake and river heritage for current and future generations. This civic identity is now part of a dynamic strategy.

The traditional lobbying strategy requires **mobilization of constituents** around an issue, the raw application of political power; leveraging member phone calls, emails and even direct actions to push either an agency or the legislature to make change.

Meanwhile the “other side” does the same, creating an “us versus them,” “win or lose” dynamic. Because of our lobbying and active membership base, MLR has been effective with this strategy.

Here is one truth I have learned; the worst place in Minnesota to resolve a controversy is at the State Capitol. By working with partners to solve issues at the local level, we can focus on advancing solutions at the legislature that already have a broad base of support.

In 2021 MLR will work with key stakeholders to define the problem, develop a solution with each partner contributing time, expertise, funding or constituents to that solution. There is much that can be done without a change in laws to advance our mission.

When and if legislative action is necessary, the pre-work has been done. All stakeholders have either been brought into the solution strategy, or are well informed. We will approach the legislative process with deeper and more authentic partnerships. Over time the capacity of MLR’s members, member organizations and citizens will increase.

## Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center



Civic organizing is based on a politics where “politics” is defined simply as “the work of the citizen.” All citizens have rights, but civic organizing calls on citizens to express their politics as a responsibility to act for the common good of clean and healthy lake ecosystems. MLR is using a Civic Organizing framework developed over the last 20 years by the Midwest Active Citizenship Initiative, MACI. Using Civic Organizing standards and principles, MLR is building a broad cross sector base around water efforts in local communities across Minnesota.

Civic policy making relies on data and science driven solutions. In 2012 MLR knew that applied science solutions for Aquatic Invasive Species were lacking - policy decisions were being driven by institutional inertia, personal agenda or best guesses.

MLR worked with Dr. Peter Sorensen to advocate for the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center, the largest AIS research facility in the country. This year, the MAISRC will launch AIS Explorer ([aisexplorer.umn.edu](http://aisexplorer.umn.edu)), a data-driven approach to decision making that will help AIS professionals make better resource allocation decisions, and improve outcomes.

**MLR is a trusted advocate and advisor supporting MN’s lake and river communities.**



(Photo Credit: Kevin Corrigan)

## Database of Aquatic Plant Habitat

Since the 1980s, lake associations have been doing point intercept studies and aquatic plant surveys to meet permit requirements and write lake management plans. Other water agencies that survey aquatic plants, like Watershed Districts or the Pollution Control Agency, collect plant data in different formats.

Until today none of this disparate data has been standardized. Researchers in both agencies and academia cannot benefit from all this work that has been done. Over 40 years of data collection cannot be used today to inform decision makers as we attempt to deal with a changing climate.

**In 2020 MLR began working with multiple partners, including scientists at University of MN, State Agencies, MN Association of Watershed Districts and other partners to both standardize data collection of aquatic plants in MN, and create a usable database for future researchers.**



## Boat Wake and Prop-Wash Impacts on Lakes Research

Boat wakes and prop-wash have always had some impact on shoreline and lake bottoms. We have all seen the cleared paths cut in aquatic plants beds by repeated passes of boat traffic. We have seen clouds of resuspended sediments emerge from behind boats running in shallow waters.

MN has almost 900,000 registered watercraft and many hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. Boats today are far more powerful and faster than even five years ago. It is time to study the impacts of wakes and prop thrust on lake ecology, and develop best practices so boaters can protect our lakes.

Early in the summer of 2019 MLR began getting calls about a new type of boat, a “wake surfing boat.” Large wakes were eroding shoreline erosion, destroying aquatic plant beds, and flooding loon nests. Lake bottom churned up by prop thrust was silting in spawning beds.

According to industry, there are about 600 “wake surfing” boats registered in Minnesota. Wake surfing is immensely popular. It is one of the fastest growing segments of watercraft sales.

With these boats, a marvel of engineering designed specifically to make large, powerful wakes, there are significant questions. How deep does the prop thrust go, how far must a wake travel to dissipate its energy?

Public policy discussions must be based upon solid data on large, high energy wakes and prop thrust.

In St. Paul, MLR advocated for funding for the Fluid Mechanics Lab at St. Anthony Falls Laboratory to study these questions. On March 17th the MN Legislature shuttered due to Covid-19, and no funding mechanisms were viable. When the University of MN launched a crowdfunding effort for the St. Anthony Falls Lab, MLR worked with MN Cola, Safe Wakes for Small Lakes, Tonka Bay Marina and others to fund the first phase of the research. The initial goal was \$93k. The effort has raised \$137k so far-a good start for funding the second phase research.

The fluid dynamics lab placed their instrument booms this fall, and over the few nice days, they ran a variety of boats over or past the sensors. Researchers at the St. Anthony Falls lab continue analyzing the data.

With science-driven best practices MN can improve safety, reduce conflicts between user groups, and eliminate negative ecological impacts to shoreline and water quality.



# Programs to Protect Water — MLR Launches Pilots

## Up The Creek Meats

Modern farming practices of plowing, spraying herbicide and pesticide, using fertilizers and drain tiles has had disastrous impacts on water quality.

Today some farmers use a new model focusing on soil health instead of yields. Known broadly as “regenerative agriculture,” they are finding that over time their yields rise while input costs fall. An added benefit is that water infiltrates into their fields instead of flushing into our lakes and rivers.

In 2020, working with Pine River Watershed, Happy Dancing Turtle and the Association of Cass County Lakes, MLR identified farmers who practice regenerative agriculture and connected them with lake associations. By expanding the markets and demonstrating the profitability of regenerative agriculture, more and more farmers will be convinced to make the change. More water will be protected and flooding will be reduced. So if you want to improve water quality, eat a hamburger. Just make sure it is from Up the Creek Meats.



*(Photo credit: Kevin Corrigan)*



“If we want to manage water,  
we must manage land.”

*Ron Meyer,  
Pine River Watershed Alliance*

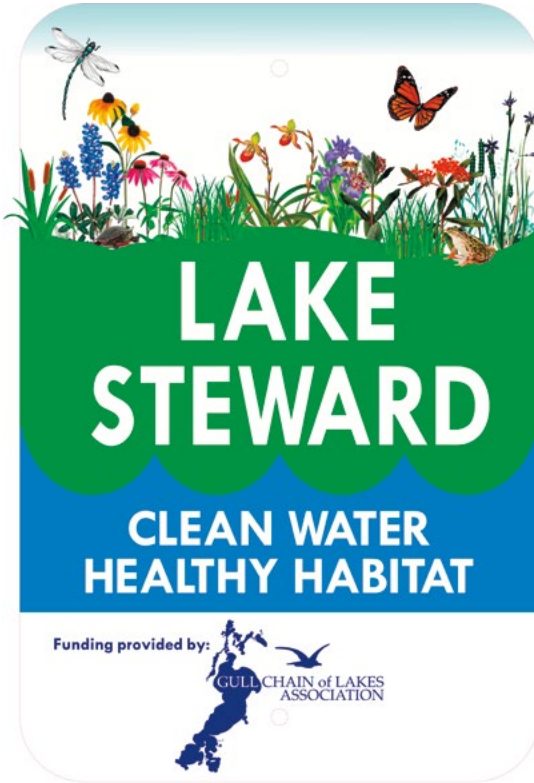
# Programs to Protect Water — MLR Launches Pilots

## Lake Stewards Program

This spring MLR member Dorothy Whitmer emailed me, “A few years ago a quiz dropped into my mailbox called ‘Rate Your Shoreland!’ I took it because I was certain I’d get a high score. Well, I tanked. This was the beginning of my realizing that I was responsible for the water quality of my chain of lakes.”

Dorothy worked with the Gull Chain of Lakes Association to create the Lake Stewards program. Land owners take a brief “Score Your Shore” quiz. Trained volunteers from the lake association conduct a site visit and work with the landowner to meet the criteria to be a Lake Steward. When they complete the work they are awarded a Lake Stewards sign for their shore which other owners see. The program grows from there. The sign has the logo for the lake association, which helps them grow membership and advertise their mission.

In 2021 we will expand the pilot statewide. The program not only provides support for owners, but also connects with One Watershed One Plan efforts/ funding.



12" x 18"



(Photo credit: Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District)

## Stop Starry Program

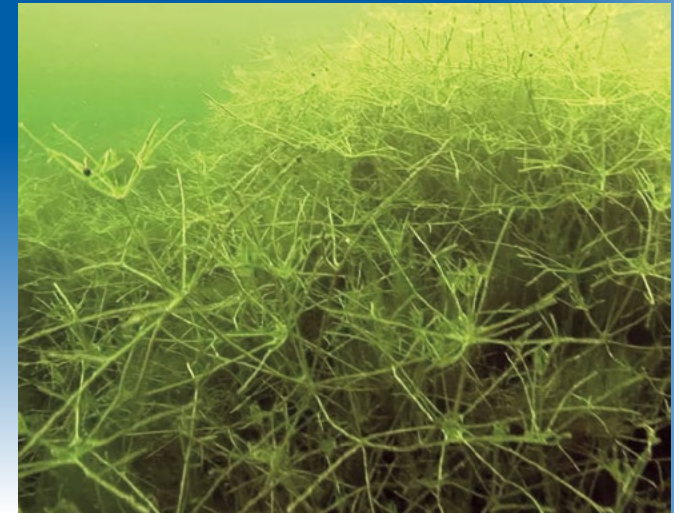
Starry Stonewort is perhaps the most destructive Aquatic Invasive Species in MN. The good news is that it is currently only in 15 lakes. In 2020 MLR worked on a grant that will help contain this AIS by placing boat cleaning stations at every access on every lake that has become infested. This work brings together businesses, local resource managers, MN DNR, Tribes, and lake associations in a dynamic and productive way.

MLR is leading the charge to contain Starry in Minnesota.

Starry stonewort forms a dense, vertically thick mat that completely covers the lake bottom.



(Photo credit: [dnr.wisconsin.gov](http://dnr.wisconsin.gov))



(Photo credit: [watershedcouncil.org](http://watershedcouncil.org))

# Financial Statement 2020

## Balance Sheet for Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2020

Assets	2020	2019
Cash	\$60,404.96	\$35,433.16
<u>Fixed Assets</u>	<u>\$1,947.68</u>	<u>\$1,822.68</u>
Total Assets	\$62,352.64	\$37,255.84
<b>Liabilities &amp; Equity</b>		
<u>Net Assets</u>	<u>\$62,352.64</u>	<u>\$37,255.84</u>
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$62,352.64	\$37,255.84

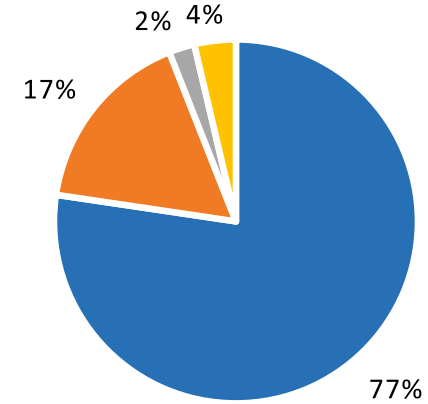
## Expense Allocation

Program	\$166,679.99
Management & General Expenses	\$56,853.86
<u>Fundraising</u>	<u>\$4,794.90</u>
	\$228,328.76

## Revenue

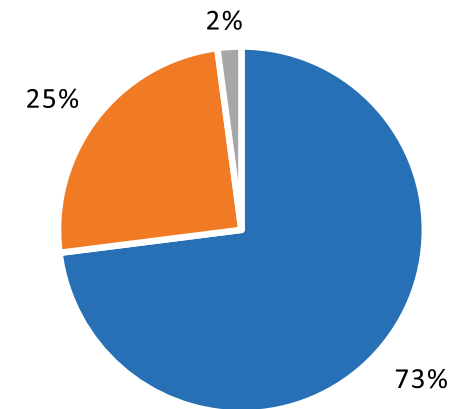
Contributions from Individuals	\$195,999.68
Contributions from Lake Associations	\$42,283.59
Initiative Foundation Grant	\$5,800.00
<u>Other revenue</u>	<u>\$9,342.29</u>
Total Revenue	\$253,425.56

## Revenue



■ Individuals ■ Lake Assn ■ Grants ■ Other

## Expense Allocation

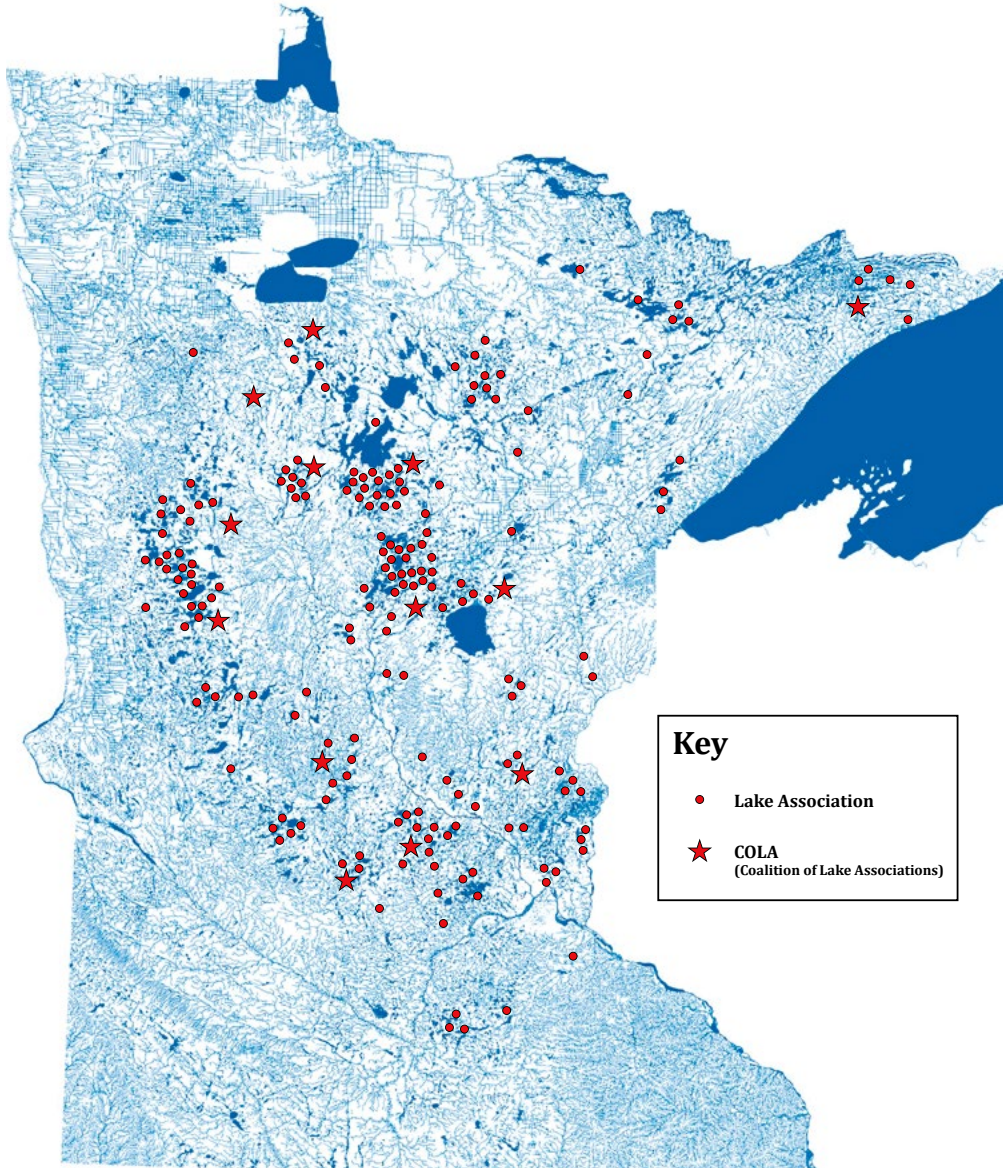


■ Program ■ Mgmt & General Expenses ■ Fundraising

# Water Connects Us All™

## MLR Lake Association Members

Over 200 Lake Associations in 35 counties are members of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates



# Contributions from January 1, 2020 - December 31, 2020

## Individuals

### Gold \$501-\$1,000

Edward & Nancy Coppola  
Sarah Fogderud  
John & Thelma James  
Howard Larson  
Carol Mulheran  
Thoms Nelson & Mary Blickenderfer  
Linda Nichols & Bill Phillips  
Ed & Jenni Ryan  
Jeff Stabnow  
Cyrus White  
Steve Yacyshyn  
Anonymous

### Silver \$301-\$500

Patrick Bauer  
Bre Bauerly  
Roger Benjamin  
Biz Clark  
Jim Cook  
Dan Costello  
Antoni Diehl  
Roger & Betty Duinink  
David Egloff  
John & Mary Espenmiller  
William & Patricia Eustice  
Kit Ferber  
Barb Halbakken Fischburg & Scott Fischburg  
Dale & Mary Harpstead  
Gabriel Jabbour  
Blaine Jones  
Kathryn & Orv Jonsrud  
Cleo Kriesel  
Mark Miedtke  
Timothy Scanlan  
Marie Schmid  
Dick Schmoker  
Walter & Shirley Sentyrz  
Steve & Jill Shipley  
Joe Shneider  
Lori & Jeremy Wacker  
Christine Warren  
Jim Weigle  
Dr. Dorothy Whitmer & Dr. Randy Johnson

### Bronze \$250-\$300

Wayne Andersen  
Jennifer Anderson  
Ronald & Margaret Berg  
Larry & Linda Berger  
Michael & Susan Blehert  
Milton Bock, Jr.  
Suzanne Boda  
John Broghammer  
Art & Cynde Brookfield  
Mike & Betty Chapman  
James Cownie  
Christine Depenthal  
Donn Lorenz  
Chuck & Joan Diessner  
Frazier & Heidi Eales  
Nicole & Brad Ertel  
Dave & Judy Feich  
Luise Forseth  
C.A. Furlong  
Richard & Linda Gohn  
Richard & Nancy Gongoll  
Catherine Graham  
Amy Grider  
Thomas Hansen  
Jeff & Lucy Heegaard  
Gerry Herringer  
Ann & Chris Hilger  
Karen Johnson  
Cathy & Darren Julfs  
Vaughn & Joyce Knapp  
Kelly Kylo  
David & Lori Larson  
Ralph Lindblad  
James Losleben  
Mary & Paul Manns  
Tuck Marshall  
Phillip Mason  
Jordan & Connie Moe  
John Nelson  
C. Dennis & Mary O'Hare  
Dorothy Ollmann  
Charles & Ruth Olson  
Art Peifer  
Nick & Judy Priadka  
Robert Rider  
Tom Sedgwick  
Roger & Phyllis Sherman  
Robert & Cherie Shreck

James Slade  
Judith Slawson  
Phil Stephens  
N. Martin Stringer  
Michael Sutley  
Greg Thrall  
Jim & Marie Uhrich  
Michael & Danielle Valley  
Ian & Tricia Wiitanen  
Jim Workman  
Nyle Zikmund  
Anonymous  
Anonymous  
Anonymous

### Gifts up to \$250

Thank you to the many contributors at this level.

## Lake Associations

### Platinum \$1,001 and above

Big Fish Lake Association  
Friends of Lake Bemidji  
Gull Chain of Lakes Association (GCOLA)

### Gold \$501-\$1,000

Becker COLA  
Pelican Lake Property Owners Association of Otter Tail County

### Silver \$301-500

Christmas Lake Homeowners Association  
Clamshell Bertha Lake Association (CBLA)  
Coon Lake Improvement Association (CLIA)  
Hubbard County COLA  
MN COLA  
North Long Lake Association  
Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations  
Thunder Lake Association



## MLR Board of Directors


**Barbara Halbakken Fischburg**  
Susan Henken Thielen

**John P. James**  
Mary Manns

## Staff Members

**Jeff Forester**                      [jeff@mnlakesandrivers.org](mailto:jeff@mnlakesandrivers.org)  
Executive Director                      612-961-6144

 MN Lakes and Rivers Advocates - MLR

 @JeffForester1

**Judy Corrigan**                      [judy@mnlakesandrivers.org](mailto:judy@mnlakesandrivers.org)  
Executive Administrator                      952-854-1317

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