



Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Lake Association Network Event SUMMARY REPORT 2020

Overview of the Day

In the ongoing spirit of cross-border collaboration, the fourth international Lake Association Network Event took place virtually on November 24, 2020. The half day workshop was attended by 24 individuals from Ontario and Minnesota, representing 15 different lake associations, resource agencies and organizations (see Appendix A). The session was a mix of very practical and relevant presentations, a Q/A session and a roundtable of association highlights. A full recording of the session can be found at [Rainy Lake of the Woods Watershed](#).

The day began with a presentation on "Green Infrastructure for the Cottage: Rain Gardens, Buffers and More" by Tiffany Sprague (NRRI, MN Sea Grant) and Jesse Schomberg (MN Sea Grant). This presentation focused on landscaping ideas to help reduce adverse water quality or algae blooms with a focus on managing stormwater runoff. There was an overview of climate forecasts for the watershed showing a trend towards more intense rainfall, which can enhance erosion and the flow of nutrients into a lake. Practical solutions were offered such as buffer zones, rain barrels, adopting a "no mow" policy, locating downspouts to drain into a vegetated area like a native garden, using pervious pavers and creating bioswales.

A practical example of utilizing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Stormwater Calculator to help determine landscaping needs to reduce runoff was presented and the question was asked whether there was a Canadian equivalent. While knowledge of a Canadian equivalent is not known, the tool (see link in Appendix B) can be used in Canada, but may require additional research or knowledge on soil types and precipitation. The tool has access to data for the U.S. so equivalent data for Canada could be plugged in and if it's for a location near the border, nearby U.S. data could be used as an estimate.

Next up was Diane Schwartz-Williams, Executive Director of the Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association who gave a very practical approach for setting up an Environment Committee and strategies to keep it going. Key pointers she offered included asking the question "Why do you Want an Environment Committee?", ensuring that it fits with your organization's mission, ensuring you have Board support and member buy-in and being clear on the issues to be tackled. Setting up the Committee involves establishing goals and parameters, seeking funding if needed and identifying leadership. Recruiting and engaging members for the Committee can be successful if

you look for expertise in your existing membership or even outside of it, keeping communication lines open and providing encouragement. It's important to prioritize projects, listen to members, go beyond the status quo where possible and capitalize on successes. It was noted that FOCA has a good resource tool for anyone looking to start an association and can be requested by contacting communications@foca.on.ca.

Our third presentation was focused on communication and was delivered as a Q/A session between Matt Julius (Professor of Biology, St. Cloud State), Debra Japp and Jeff Bineham, both Professors at St. Cloud State in the Communication Department.

Q.1 Is there one basic suggestion for helping associations to communicate better with stakeholders?

- Keep it SIMPLE; don't give too much data/information, use simple language

Q.2 How Should We Respond to Disagreement/Disbelief (e.g. in BMPs)

- It's important to realize not everyone is on the same page
- It is very important to LISTEN more, talk less; seek to understand the reason for the disagreement; find common ground and start with small goals

Q.3 How Does a Lake Association Motivate People to Engage?

- Use storytelling; try to make the connection between lake stewardship activities and human emotion

Roundtable

Each association and organization in attendance was given time to share information on who they are, what their focus is and to showcase success stories – here are the highlights from each:

Granite Lake – no association formed yet but the blue-green algae issue of the summer of 2020 has galvanized lake residents; this could be a good foundation for moving forward with establishment of an association

Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association – LakeSmart program continues to be the flagship program (dock to dock visits to do shoreline assessments, hand out stewardship information); currently involved in cross-border conversation regarding management of flowering rush; started a webinar series to bring key information to members

Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations – found success when they incorporate food and fun into an event, for example, music at the dock, scavenger hunt, virtual kids fishing derby; capitalize on big issues (e.g. blue green algae) when you can; for 60 years FOCA has polled members about their top interests/concerns and it is ALWAYS water quality. Starting a group focused on hot environmental concerns or an emerging concern will surely garner local interests, get some community activation underway

Vermilion Lake Association – large AIS prevention effort involving inspections, education at water-based events, partnering with local SWCD to deliver programs; no new AIS have been found in the last 5 years (since program began); also have loon and cormorant programs and quarterly newsletter; AIS work has shown high risk with private landings and resorts, so recommendation to anyone doing AIS prevention work to ensure resorts are included. Association has a website and they are active on Facebook; would like to discuss social media strategies with other associations

East Hawk Lake – small group that evolved around land tax issues initially and are now moving towards environmental issues

[White Iron Chain of Lakes Association \(WICOLA\)](#) – long-standing water quality sampling program continues; working with local SWCD to have AIS inspections done; working with Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness Coalition to help prevent AIS in boundary waters; distribute extensive newsletter but would like to see examples from other associations; updating website but still need to establish a mission statement

[Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District](#) – involved in Northeast Regional Sustainability Development Partnership which provides funding for small projects (forestry, water). RFPs are being sought for small projects like shoreline naturalization or community gardens or tree planting for January/February submission

[North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District](#) - also part of the Northeast Regional Sustainability Development Partnership and terrestrial projects also qualify, as they relate to water quality; support from profs/grad students at University of MN is available; planning is underway for Little Fork and Big Fort River watershed public participation meetings (Big Fork on Dec. 15) to provide updates on water quality testing; AIS programs for both aquatic and terrestrial species continue

[Rainy Lake Conservancy](#) - main goal has always been to protect land on Rainy Lake; Minnesota Land Trust picked the Conservancy as Partner of the Year this year; continue to support wolf project at Voyageurs National Park and keep an eye on mining activity

[Minnesota Pollution Control Agency](#) – planning the Big Fork River public participation event on Dec. 15 in support of the WRAPS process (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy); water samples collected this summer, more sampling to be done in 2021, then restoration and protection plans will follow

[Rainy Lake Property Owners Association](#) – currently considering supporting an initiative to look at water flow under the Causeway that has been impeded for years and is encouraging excessive plant growth; RLPOA began as a response to the 2014 flooding and have since branched out to other issues – it is effective to have a focus on an issue to help galvanize people

What's Next

In reading the comments from the evaluation forms for the workshop and the final comments during the event, it is clear that participants are in favour of another event being planned next year. Suggestions and comments included:

- Ask everyone to bring examples of newsletters to share; successful event ideas
- Consider a focused discussion on effective use of social media
- Consider a talk on the pros and cons of copper mining
- Consider information on algae and what conditions drive it
- Ask groups to comment on their priorities and the help they would like to see come from governments and NGOs
- Invite First Nation communities to join this event
- Show all lake associations on a map and identify those who could be attending
- Share association websites and Facebook pages
- When able, provide “how to” demos in person (e.g. tour a shoreline project)
- Consider a session on how to chair a meeting or how to deal with discord or apathy

Thank you for your feedback and watch for another event in 2021!

Appendix A

List of Participants and Contact Information

Name	Organization	Website	Social Media
Matt Julius	St. Cloud State U	Juliuslab.com	
Jeff Bineham	St. Cloud State U		
Debra Japp	St. Cloud State U		
Tiffany Sprague	NRRI, MN Sea Grant	seagrant.umn.edu	https://www.facebook.com/mnseagrant
Jess Schomberg	MN Sea Grant	seagrant.umn.edu	https://www.facebook.com/mnseagrant
Sharon Gurney	Granite Lake (ON)		https://www.facebook.com/groups/620110171844586/?ref=share
Paul Anderson	Rainy Lake Conservancy (ON)	www.rainylakeconservancy.org	
Diane Schwartz-Williams	Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association	www.lowdsa.com	www.twitter.com/@lowdsaLakeTime www.facebook.com/LOWDistrictStewardshipAssoc www.instagram.com/lowdsa/
Garth Collier	Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association, Schnarr and Ottermere lakes	www.lowdsa.com	www.twitter.com/@lowdsaLakeTime www.facebook.com/LOWDistrictStewardshipAssoc www.instagram.com/lowdsa/
Jolen Simon	Koochiching Soil and Water Conservation District	www.koochichingswcd.org	https://www.facebook.com/koochichingswcd Instagram: koochiching_swcd
Terry Rees	Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations	https://foca.on.ca/	https://www.facebook.com/foca.on.ca https://twitter.com/foca_info https://www.youtube.com/FOCAprograms
Becca Reiss	North St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District	www.nslswcd.org	@nslswcd.org or www.facebook.com/nslswcd/
Lindsey Krumrie	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	www.pca.state.mn.us	 (1) Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Facebook
Michelle Lewin	Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations	https://foca.on.ca/	https://www.facebook.com/foca.on.ca https://twitter.com/foca_info https://www.youtube.com/FOCAprograms
Terry Grosshauser	Vermilion Lake Association		 (1) Vermilion Lake Association Facebook

Lori Ptak	Vermilion Lake Association		(1) Vermilion Lake Association Facebook
Willa Toovey	East Hawk Lake Association		
Diane McGhee	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry	Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Ontario.ca	(1) Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Facebook
Jim Yount	Rainy Lake Property Owners Association		(1) Rainy Lake Property Owners Association Facebook
Linda Ganister	White Iron Chain of Lakes Association	www.wicola.org	https://www.facebook.com/WhiteIronChainofLakes
Sue Duffy	White Iron Chain of Lakes Association	www/wicola.org	https://www.facebook.com/WhiteIronChainofLakes
Anne Molyneux	Rainy Lake Property Owners Association		(1) Rainy Lake Property Owners Association Facebook

Appendix B

Green Infrastructure & Stormwater Management Resources

Lake Association Network Event for the
Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed
November 2020

Jesse Schomberg, MN Sea Grant, jschombe@d.umn.edu
Tiffany Sprague, MN Sea Grant, tsprague@d.umn.edu

Green Infrastructure: Overview

Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Low-Impact Development & Green Infrastructure
<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/water/stormwater-management-low-impact-development-and-green-infrastructure>

Environmental Protection Agency Green Infrastructure
<https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure>

Green Infrastructure for the Home

LakeSuperiorStreams.org You Can Make a Difference
<https://www.lakesuperiorstreams.org/citizen/action.html>

LakeSuperiorStreams.org Stormwater Site Design Toolkit
<https://www.lakesuperiorstreams.org/stormwater/toolkit/index.html>

Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant Stormwater@Home Video Series
<https://iiseagrant.org/new-stormwater-at-home-video-series/>

New Hampshire's Guide to Stormwater Management
<https://www4.des.state.nh.us/SoakNH/>

Vermont Guide to Stormwater Management for Homeowners and Small Businesses
[https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wsm/erp/docs/2018-06-14%20VT Guide to Stormwater for Homeowners.pdf](https://dec.vermont.gov/sites/dec/files/wsm/erp/docs/2018-06-14%20VT%20Guide%20to%20Stormwater%20for%20Homeowners.pdf)

EPA National Stormwater Calculator
<https://swcweb.epa.gov/stormwatercalculator/>

Native & Rain Garden Resources

Lawns to Legumes: Your Yard can BEE the Change
<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/l2l>

Blue Thumb
<https://bluethumb.org/>

UMN Extension How & Why to Build a Rain Garden
<https://extension.umn.edu/landscape-design/rain-gardens>

Green Infrastructure for Communities

Tackling Barriers to Green Infrastructure: An Audit of Municipal Codes & Ordinances
<https://www.seagrant.wisc.edu/our-work/focus-areas/coastal-communities/green-infrastructure/>
<http://www.ci.superior.wi.us/302/Stormwater-Utility>

The Watershed Game
<https://watershedgame.umn.edu/>

Appendix C – Additional Links

Tools to schedule meetings with multiple people:

www.doodle.com

<https://whenisgood.net/>

Sim River Tool – Matt Julius

<http://lbm.ab.a.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~omori/srhtml/diatom.htm>

OR

<http://www.u-gakugei.ac.jp/~diatom/en/simriver/>

Federation of Ontario Cottagers Associations Resources

www.foca.on.ca

<https://foca.on.ca/toolkit-overview/> for information about starting an association, getting volunteers and more.

Email info@foca.on.ca with any further questions.

Linking and scheduling social media posts

<https://hootsuite.com/>