



Lake of the Woods
water sustainability foundation

PROGRESS REPORT

20 24

PHOTOS BY TOM THOMSON

Your support is crucial to
our mission as champions for
Lake of the Woods!

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We work to protect the ecological integrity of the water quality of Lake of the Woods and its watershed by being a champion for the Lake, while building and maintaining trusted relationships with essential partners.



Get involved. Sign up and show your support
www.lowwsf.com
Box 112, Kenora ON P9N 3X1

OUR STORY

The Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation (LOWWSF) was launched in 2005 as a registered charity dedicated to sustainability planning for the watershed, based on sound science and international cooperation. From the beginning, supporters like you wanted to make sure the lake would remain swimmable, drinkable and fishable for generations to come.

LOWWSF and our supporters envision the Lake of the Woods as majestic waters with sustainable ecological integrity supporting the health, economy and beneficial use for current and future generations.

LOWWSF is the critical connector that brings together an international network of scientists, water managers, governments and Indigenous nations, citizens, and policy makers, keeping our focus on protecting and preserving the Lake of the Woods watershed.

Ours is the only organization that provides this service – an essential part of turning science into policy – and we couldn't do it without your help.

Our mission: To secure a sustainability plan for the Lake of the Woods watershed with internationally agreed water quality objectives, targets and actions needed, an international framework to oversee the plan and the resources to support it. Through the help of supporters like you, we have ensured water quality planning is anchored in the International Joint Commission's presence in the watershed. We contributed to Minnesota's plan to reduce phosphorus, the nutrient that drives algae blooms, and we are now helping Canada put a parallel plan in place.

WHO WE ARE

Board of Directors

LOWWSF is governed by a volunteer international Board of Directors working with a small staff who share their passion for the Lake of the Woods basin. All our Directors are multigenerational Lake of the Woods residents, from Morson in the south to Coney and Treaty Islands in the north.

Don Konantz, *(Canada), President*

Richard Sjoberg, *(U.S.A.), Vice-President*

Polly Craik, *(Canada), Director*

Michael Radcliffe, *(Canada), Director*

Jim Dagg, *(U.S.A.), Director*

Staff



Todd Sellers, *Executive Director (Minaki, ON and Winnipeg, MB)*

Todd leads the Foundation's activities in water quality research, international policy coordination, and development of the sustainability plan for the Lake of the Woods watershed. Todd is a third-generation summer resident of Minaki and a past president of the Lake of the Woods District Property Owners' Association. He has been appointed to the IJC's International Rainy - Lake of the Woods Watershed Board (IRLWWB) since its inception and is the Canadian co-chair of its aquatic ecosystem health committee. Todd can be reached at tsellers@lowwsf.com



Teika Newton, *International Watershed Coordinator (Kenora, ON)*

Teika Newton leads the Foundation's International Watershed Coordination Program and is a long-time participant in regional watershed science, policy, and governance activities. She has served as a board member and committee co-chair for the IRLWWB. Teika also has been helping to guide the IRLWWB's work on climate adaptation since 2016. Teika can be reached at teikanewton@lowwsf.com

OUR COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

IJC WATERSHED BOARD

International governance and resource management for the watershed

IMA International Multi-Agency Arrangement

Engine for research and management collaboration among international resource agencies, hosted by LOWWSF

WATERSHED COORDINATOR

Convening, coordination & facilitation, grounded in science and international co-operation

LOCAL GROUPS

Linking local people and communities to watershed science and policy

INDIGENOUS NATIONS

Rightsholders are crucial contributors to our projects and collaborations.

Driven by excess phosphorus, a nutrient, algae blooms on Lake of the Woods were becoming more frequent, toxic and lasting later in the year. LOWWSF formed to advocate for IJC participation and government investment in freshwater science and policy.

2005

LOWWSF formed;
Advocacy for IJC
Mandate begins

2006

3rd Watershed Forum



2009

1st State of the Basin
Report



2010

1st Phosphorus Budget and
Water Quality Models for Lake



We've worked to grow
a network of informed,
engaged local people.

Along the way, researchers have learned a lot about how and why harmful algae form and we all are starting to understand how climate change, invasive species, contamination, erosion and water levels changes affect the lake ecosystem."

MOMENTUM FOR THE LAKE

2021

Invasive Species Risk
Assessment



2021

Public consultation on
Canadian phosphorus
reduction options



2021

MN plan to cut
phosphorus approved



2022

3rd State of Basin
Report - partnering
western science and
Indigenous knowledge
systems



WHAT DO THE ICONS MEAN?



Science milestone



Policy/planning milestone



Investment/funding milestone

Achieving a mandate for the IJC to invest in Lake of the Woods has been critical to securing investments in ongoing science and policy development.

2012

US & Canada give IJC mandate for Lake of the Woods



2014

2nd State of the Basin Report

2015

IJC master plan of study



2016

Canada commits \$6M for Lake of the Woods science program



2020

Ask An Expert Webinars launch

2020

Watershed Forum focus on Canadian nutrient and algae science results



2020

Canadian science completed to support phosphorus targets



2022

Binational phosphorus management plan framework



2023

Canada Water Agency: Federal investment in Freshwater Ecosystem Initiative for LOW



2024

21st Annual Watershed Forum. Projects underway:

1. International Water Quality Objectives for Phosphorus
2. Designing a system to alert about other contaminants
3. Scoping a monitoring program for 1) & 2)
4. Developing a Canadian phosphorus management plan

What We've Achieved, TOGETHER



LOWWSF has been the driving force of international cooperation to reduce phosphorus, the main nutrient driving harmful algal blooms in Lake of the Woods.

In Minnesota: LOWWSF's studies and reports on nutrients and water quality launched the science that resulted in Minnesota's TMDL, a restoration plan to reduce phosphorus entering the lake. The TMDL went into effect in 2021, following ten years of study and planning.

In Canada: LOWWSF has worked to keep the Government of Canada's eyes on this basin, and in 2023, Canada announced a 10-year investment in Lake of the Woods freshwater protection. The lake's national significance is now recognized under the new federal Canada Water Agency, with a program aimed at improving water quality by decreasing algae-causing phosphorus pollution from Canadian sources. This marks a significant step forward in the collaborative actions to control and protect the lake.

With both countries now equipped to work toward shared water management goals, we are close to achieving our founding members' vision of a sustainability plan for the lake.



And now we turn our sights to putting the plan into action, helping to improve and sustain the water quality in this majestic, complex basin.





SPOTLIGHT:

Annual International Rainy-Lake of the Woods Watershed Forum

The LOWWSF has our hands in many crucial and influential projects in the basin, but none captures the public eye quite so well as our annual Watershed Forum. Begun in 2004 as a one-day science symposium focused on Lake of the Woods research, the event has become one of the most important events of the year for watershed managers, governments, scientists, project teams, Indigenous communities and citizens to learn from one another, discuss priority concerns, and tackle the actions necessary for the lake and its surrounding ecosystem to thrive.

For two days in early March, close to 150 water experts from all over North America gather at International Falls, MN and take in dozens of presentations from scientists and policy experts that showcase the latest inquiries and understanding of our complex and precious watershed.

On the margins of the symposium, the IJC watershed board and its committees, and many project teams hold meetings and workshops, and each year, the public is invited to hear seasonal forecasts and plans from transboundary water levels managers.

Each year at the Forum banquet reception, we honour outstanding service to the watershed, recognizing preeminent researchers working to advance watershed science and policy through the Larry Kallemeyn Award, and exemplary citizen service to environmental stewardship through the Gerry Wilson Award. Past award recipients are a who's who of many of the most important and influential people who have dedicated their lives to the betterment of our watershed.



WHAT'S NEXT WITH YOUR SUPPORT?



For 20 years, we've brought together citizens, dozens of municipalities and Indigenous nations, and state, provincial and federal governments in Canada and the U.S.A to amass the scientific, technical and community knowledge needed to inform an international water quality plan, and to build enough trust and capacity among partners to be able to implement it. We're the only group that does this, and we've never been needed more!

Our Work Ahead:

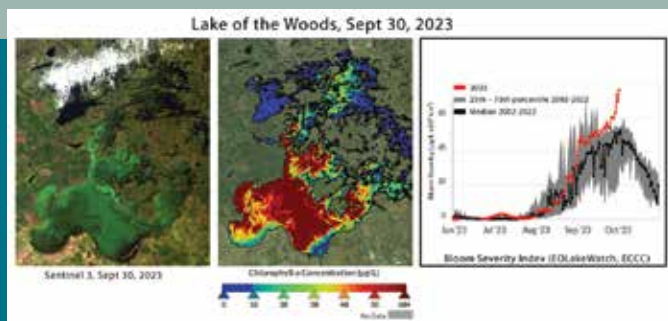
Your donation will help us:

- Sustain watershed coordination
- Develop Canada's Lake of the Woods phosphorus remediation plan
- Continue our research & publications like SOBR

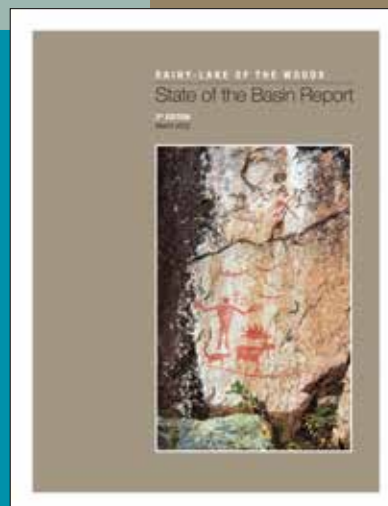
LOWWSF is leading a regional planning exercise, with the Canada Water Agency, to develop Canada's path to phosphorus reductions to improve water quality and reduce harmful and nuisance algae blooms.

Putting plans into action will take even more focus. Over the coming years, LOWWSF will coordinate cooperation among the dozens of science, policy, and civil society partners invested in this basin.

At the same time, we will be ensuring these sustainability plans remain evergreen, adapted to emerging risks and changing conditions in our watershed.



LOWWSF looks forward to leading a regional planning exercise to develop Canada's path to nutrient reductions to improve water quality and reduce harmful and nuisance algae blooms.



The State of the Basin Report (SOBR) collates all watershed science and policy for scientists and decision makers. 4th Ed due 2027.



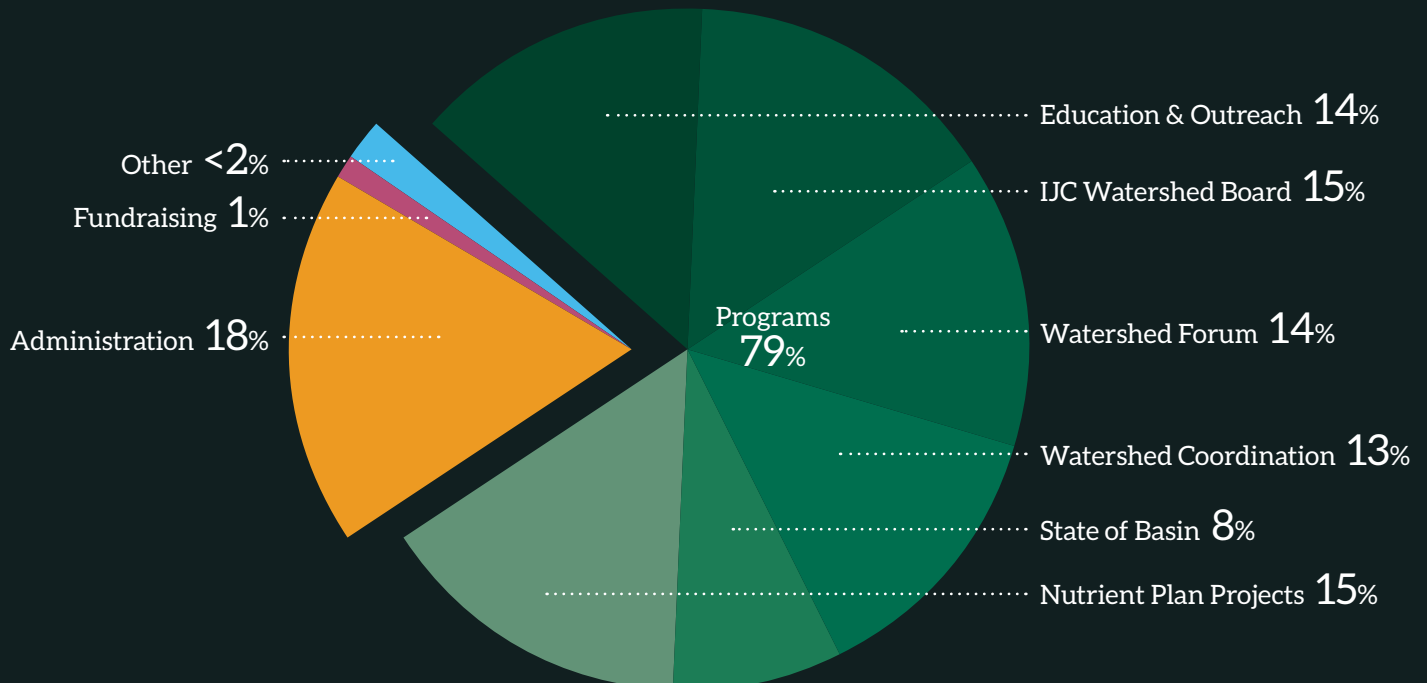
FINANCIAL UPDATE

LOWWSF's work is generously supported through private donations and our projects often are supported through government contribution agreements. Our primary expense is our personnel - our Executive Director and International Watershed Coordinator - who deliver our core programs. A small allocation of the Executive Director's time is dedicated to the organization's administration.

Our human resources are our greatest asset and are an invaluable investment that allow us to continue to be influential with governments as a champion for Lake of the Woods, and its waters, for generations to come.

REVENUE	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Donations	51,686	78,508	85,141	76,905	102,752
Government	87,180	120,001	191,713	77,697	-
Watershed Forum	26,637	23,102	9,832	14,424	24,150
Other	3,730	3,675	1,078	2,238	9,081
Total Revenue	169,233	225,286	287,764	171,265	135,982

Expenditures 2019-2023 Average



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

The Lake of Woods Water Sustainability Foundation is proud to be part of a community of individuals and organizations who care passionately about Lake of the Woods. Thank you to all our donors and supporters for your financial contributions and your personal support at meeting with governments and the International Joint Commission. Your backing has made a difference in raising the profile and importance of Lake of the Woods to be an international priority and your ongoing support ensures the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation's continued mission of championing the lake that we so love.



We are blessed to have the support of many lake families, businesses and partners. **Tom Thomson** inspires us with his beautiful images of Lake of the Woods throughout this report and we thank him for this contribution.



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Your support is crucial to our mission as champions for Lake of the Woods! Become a sustaining donor today and subscribe to receive Lake of the Woods science and policy updates from us.