

Burntside Lake Association Summer 2023 Newsletter

Greetings, Neighbors!

This issue is coming to you electronically, since the hardcopy newsletter has been at the printer since late June.

Volume XXX

Summer, 2023

Letter from the President

Greetings Burntside Neighbors

It's an honor to produce a thirtieth volume of the Burntside Lake Association Newsletter. Participation in our lake association is truly a labor of love; fortunately love for our lake is what keeps us busy protecting the lake and all that we enjoy about it. Our organization lacks police power, and even our authority to provide comment on regulatory matters is fairly minor. That said, we do play a role in reaching the owners of property here on Burntside, regardless of whether or not they pay dues. We feel that our mission to inform our neighbors would be diminished were we to withhold information for the sake of a \$20 renewal or new membership. Plenty of people do find enough value in what we do to support us. In fact our dues haven't kept pace with any known measure of inflation. It's something of a privilege to lead a group where people ask why membership costs are so low, rather than so high. When I related these conversations to the BLA Board, an interesting response was provided: our finances seem to be fine and we have no difficulty as yet meeting our obligations, so why raise rates if we don't need to? A deeper look into the finances of our little organization reveals the answer. Several of our members contribute far more than their share; these few people effectively subsidize the memberships of the rest of the organization. Were it not for these excess contributions, we certainly could not afford to do what we do with the present rate structure. I am deeply grateful to these anonymous sponsors of the Burntside Lake Association.

Our primary expenses are printing and mailing of this newsletter and the earlier dues reminder and AIS update and venue rental and catering costs associated with the Annual Meeting the first Saturday of August. These costs are steadily (and during COVID, not so steadily) creeping

upward; it is likely that at some point we shall have to raise rates to stay afloat. Hopefully it will be after my tenure as President has passed!

Close followers of BLA activities will recall that in the past couple of years, we have expanded the testing that we do of Burntside's water beyond Aquatic Invasive Species to more fundamental water quality analyses. The Minnesota North students who test for AIS also collect water samples, which are sent to a lab for testing. There is a strong link between the water chemistry and specific AIS threats, and our partners at St Louis County recognize this and are funding this water quality testing. We have anecdotal evidence of larger and more frequent algae blooms, and we know that there are more days of open water per year [see graph elsewhere in this issue] and that water clarity has decreased over the decades that BLA volunteers have been collecting data. Testing for Phosphorus, Chlorophyll-A, Dissolved Oxygen and Conductivity began in 2022, and are underway for 2023. During this initial 3 year period, we hope to determine whether the lake chemistry is changing and if so how. If it turns out that the chemistry is stable, we plan to use the data as a baseline for subsequent testing and less frequent intervals.

Given the recent emphasis that BLA has given water quality and testing, it seemed timely to invite a representative of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to present what is new and current in the world of lake monitoring and specifically volunteer efforts (thank you Island Representative Martie Sparks for the suggestion). BLA has worked with MPCA for four decades or more on Secchi Disk testing for water clarity (note: we are looking for more volunteers to assist with this – it is fun, easy, educational, and helpful!), and now we are sharing our new data with MPCA as well. To help us better understand how our lake might be changing and how the data will be used, we have invited Amy Mustonen from the Duluth office of the MPCA. Ms. Mustonen is a project manager for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) watershed program. Her work is focused on collaborating with local water quality specialists to develop strategies to restore and protect rivers, lakes, and wetlands in the Rainy Basin. These strategies support the development of local water plans and restoration projects. We will make sure that there is adequate time for Ms. Mustonen to answer our questions after her presentation.

We hope to see you at the Annual Meeting, which will be held Saturday August 5th at Minnesota North College Vermilion Campus (formerly Vermilion Community College). Check in and social hour begins at 800a and business begins at 930a.

Finally I would like to thank our advertisers. They help get this newsletter into the hands of everyone on the lake. I hope that you visit them on your next visit to town.

2023 AIS Prevention Program

Hans Olsen, BLA AIS Coordinator

BLA members, hi everyone. I'm Hans Olsen, the new Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Coordinator for the BLA Board, taking over for Carrie Ohly Cussack who has held this role since 2016. It is hard to overstate the vital contribution that Carrie, Reynold Mack and many others have made to launch the existing AIS Program on Burntside, write extensive Grant requests to St Louis County to fund BLA specific action, and to work with the DNR and North St. Louis Soil and Water (NSL/SWCD) to manage the Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Program that has been the core effort trying to stop the spread of AIS.

I am writing this BLA Newsletter article today to provide an update on the overall AIS Program on Burntside with the intent to provide practical information for your use this summer, coming to you in two parts. This article contains only a high level summary of important information you will need. Separately I am in the process of updating the BLA website (www.burntside.org) to include a much wider and deeper discussion of what we can all do, individually, to keep further AIS out of Burntside and stop spreading the bad stuff that is here already into other area lakes and into Boundary Waters lakes nearby. I am also developing a brochure for use by Burntside resorts to keep their guests well informed on these issues.

BLA members need to know that while this statewide Program has been effective in slowing the spread of AIS, it has not stopped the spread. There are now known AIS infestations in almost 1,000 Minnesota lakes, including Lake Superior Smelt and Spiny Water Fleas (SWFs) here in Burntside. Without the existing Inspection and Decontamination Program, AIS would be in probably twice that many lakes. Unfortunately just in the past year Spiny Water Fleas have now been found in Snowbank Lake, and they may very well have come from Burntside, spread by local boaters, and Zebra Mussel have been found in Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, and multiple local mine reclamation lakes. The risk of further spread is imminent.

Having examined the results of our 2016 through 2022 programs, we are approaching the 2023 season with a few key changes to help get a better result for the dollars spent. The primary change will be to expand our boater education efforts to directly reduce the risk of new AIS infestation in Burntside, reduce the risks of exporting the AIS already in Burntside to other local

area lakes, and initiate a whole new boater education program for Boundary Waters permit holders with the goal of reducing the risk of canoeists transporting Burntside AIS across our Entry Point portages directly into the Boundary Waters.

With these changes we will continue to support the Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination program but will not rely on that as a primary function of the BLA. The Inspection and Decontamination Program is now solely managed by the DNR and by NSL/SWCD in this area. BLA no longer has any meaningful management responsibilities for this program. Recognizing these administrative changes, the 2023 BLA Proposal has eliminated all money planned for Enhanced Inspector training, which was budgeted for \$5,300 in 2022, but was not spent. In fact, we ended with over \$7,000 in unspent Grant money last season. For 2023, the BLA Board made an AIS Grant Request of \$19,796 which was fully funded by a vote of the St. Louis County Commissioners in March.

The St. Louis County Commissioners also fully funded the NSL/SWCD Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Program for 2023, which funds this Program on Burntside. We hope that they can return to full capacity the number of inspections and decontamination actions at VanVac Landing this summer, after two Covid impacted years when the Program operated far below plan due to staffing limitations and other issues. We also plan to continue to fully support our early detection lake Sentry Program in which BLA volunteers are trained to look for new Invasives entering the lake. Please let me know if you would like to be part of that volunteer effort. You can contact me at (holsen.ely@gmail.com).

For new BLA members, you may not know that Burntside was always a great Lake Trout fishery and was one of the best Walleye lakes in the state back in the 1950s. The introduction of Lake Superior Smelt here has been devastating. The DNR has said that this toothy little carnivore essentially ended natural reproduction of Lake Trout, Walleye, Cisco and Whitefish in Burntside. Only recently have we seen the re-emergence of natural reproduction of Lake Trout and to a limited degree, Whitefish. Walleye are now totally dependent on biannual stocking in this lake. Walleye size and growth rates are estimated by the DNR to be 20% lower than normal due to Spiny Water Fleas throughout the water column in the summer. The good news is that Burntside is still a great lake to catch personal best, trophy size Lakers, Walleyes and Northern Pike. All that is required is a little patience and some good Karma.

The BLA Board is deeply concerned that some of the worst forms of AIS are now making inroads in nearby waterways that threaten Burntside, and any AIS introduced here threatens releasing this scourge in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) and Quetico Park. This broader risk presents a serious and imminent challenge to the entire economy of Northeastern Minnesota. More must be done and what is needed is not more Grant money and more rules and regulations, but better education of boaters to enable them to understand the

serious risks of our own choices. We need better informed boaters to voluntarily make better decisions. We outline here and on our website some measures that would be helpful.

Please look to our website (www.burntside.org) in the near future for new, detailed sections describing specifically what we can do individually to carry out the following Burntside Lake Association AIS action plans for 2023.

1.

Communicate directly to BLA members that we cannot solely rely on the Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination Program to keep additional AIS out of Burntside. That program has slowed the spread of AIS but not stopped it for two simple reasons: First, due to resource constraints only a small percentage of all boats launched in this region are ever inspected and an even smaller percentage ever decontaminated. Second, even the best efforts to decontaminate a boat and trailer by boaters themselves or by our Decon units is not always 100% effective. It is very difficult to fully decontaminate any boat and trailer that has spent the entire summer on some AIS infested lake and then hope to safely launch that boat off that trailer into a clean lake. We know that process has failed Statewide 1,000 times and counting. We now encourage our members to communicate this risk to any and all family and friends who may be planning to bring their boat from an AIS infested lake and launch it in Burntside. We need those prospective boaters to fully understand this risk and react accordingly. We both hope and believe boaters who fully understand this risk will voluntarily stop bringing boats from AIS infested lakes to Burntside and other lakes in the Kawishiwi drainage in order to better protect our own home lakes and thus protect the Boundary Waters.

2.

Directly seek the help of BLA members in stopping the spread of AIS already in Burntside to other lakes in the local area. We now urge BLA members to do two things. First to stop taking their own boats out of Burntside contaminated with our existing AIS, and launching them in our neighboring lakes. Second, to reach out to their friends and family in the region to make everyone aware of the inherent risks of bringing their boats to Burntside, picking up Spiny Water Fleas and their reproductive units on fishing gear, and taking that back to their home lake, as may very well have happened last summer introducing SWFs to Snowbank Lake which is partially in the Boundary Waters. As part of this boater education goal, we have or will initiate contact with the WICOLA lake association and the Eagles Nest lake association to enlist their support in communicating this risk assessment directly to their members. The lowest risk is for local folks on other lakes to go boating with friends who already have a boat on Burntside or rent a boat from a resort on the lake. If folks do bring their own boats here and fish on Burntside they need to learn how to clean fishing gear from all remnants of Spiny Water Fleas.

3. Directly seek the help of BLA members in keeping Burntside Spiny Water Fleas and their reproductive units off their fishing gear when taking a fishing trip into the Boundary Waters, especially over the Crab Lake portage and the Slim Lake portage. Have our members communicate this risk information to their family and friends taking BW canoe trips that start at these two Entry Points.

4. Work with the DNR and the Forest Service to develop a short video to be seen by all Boundary Waters permit holders that gives both boaters on motor access lakes and canoeists on all BW lakes, information on how to remove SWF from their fishing gear. Of utmost importance in spreading AIS within the Boundary Waters is to set a policy that does not allow the use of live bait in these lakes and streams. Keeping live bait alive often requires carrying water from one lake to another over numerous portages. That is how most existing AIS would be spread and how newly introduced AIS will be spread. This controversial policy is already in place for Quetico Provincial Park and needs to be in place on this side of the Border. In the meantime we are asking BLA members and their friends and family to voluntarily stop using live bait in the Boundary Waters.

5. Build on our other long running public awareness and education initiatives of 2016-2022 to promote the importance of understanding the threat and promoting actions to prevent the spread of AIS in or out of Burntside Lake and throughout the Ely area focusing on boaters who intend to launch their boats on any of the Ely-area lakes.

Please help us accomplish these goals.

Seliga Canoe for Sale

Perfect for your home on Burntside Lake

Own a little piece of Ely history

made by Joe Seliga

Excellent condition - wood canvas canoe

Forest Green \$9000

Serious inquiries text 218-349-5147

2023 Burntside Lake Association Board of Directors

President: **Eric Webster**

Vice-President: Diane Hofstede

Secretary: **Kelly Klun**

Treasurer: Mindy Cowen

Area Representatives:

Scott Olson, *North Arm*

John Verby, *North Arm*

Hans Olsen: *West Arm*

Carrie Ohly-Cusack: *West Arm*

Sandy Cowen: *Islands and Water Access*

Martie Sparks: *Islands and Water Access*

Phil Voxland: *Central Area* (one-year term)

Mike Loisel: *Central Area*

David Oliver: *East Arm*

Pam Freeman: *East Arm*

Note: (**Boldface** names) are up for election at the Annual Meeting (Vermilion Community College, August 5th, 8am for check in and socializing, 9am for business)

2023 Burntside Lake Association Annual Meeting

Minnesota North Vermilion Campus (formerly Vermilion Community College)

Saturday, August 5th

800am for coffee, check-in, and socializing; 900am for business

Featured Speaker

Amy Mustonen

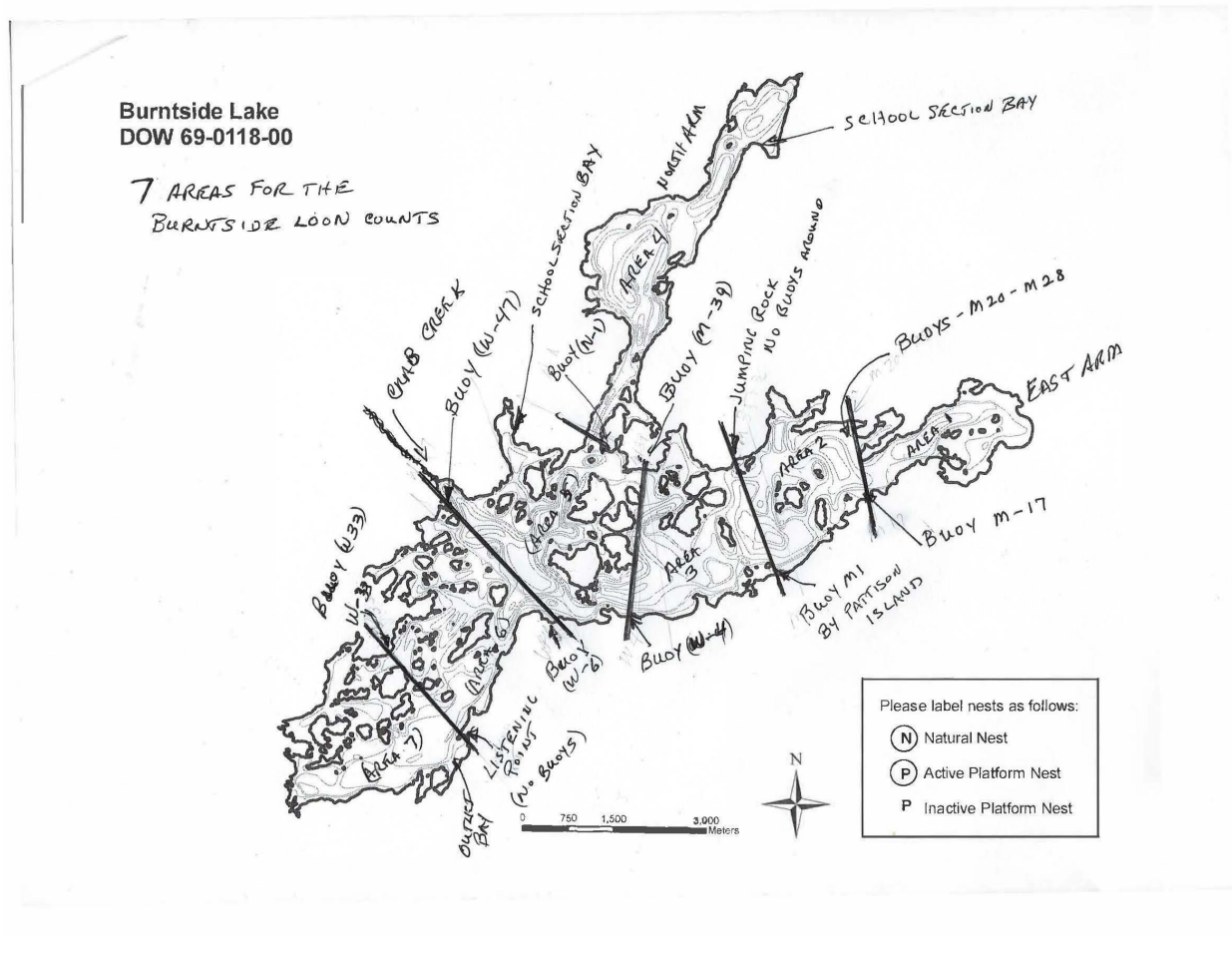
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

“Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Programs”

Counting Loons

This year the Burntside Lake Association will return to its tried and true practice of counting loons on the same Saturday as the Annual Meeting. This year, the date of the count will be August 5th. If you are available that day to count loons in any one or more of the zones in the map below, please contact Eric Webster at mayoreric@gmail.com. The best time of day to count

is early morning when the lake is usually calm. It is highly recommended that each boat have both an operator and a spotter. Binoculars help tremendously, particularly when attempting to distinguish loon chicks from their parents.



Burntside Septic Systems Analysis & Review

In 2022, the Burntside Lake Association reported on the policies that St Louis County had for residents to upgrade their septic systems. We subsequently asked the County for an inventory of the septic systems on the lake. We wanted to know how many systems there were on the lake, and when they were last inspected. Not surprisingly, not much is known about many of the systems on the lake. Here is a summary of what we learned.

The County has records of 396 systems (including privies) on the lake, of which 254 have some sort of classification. "Compliant" and "Non-Conforming" are passing systems, whereas "Non-Compliant" and "Imminent Threat to Public Health and Safety" are failing systems. Fortunately, none of Burntside's inspected systems fall into this latter category. Most of the documented Non-Compliant systems are due to an expired operating permit, or the system is a drywell on shoreland which no longer meets today's standards. St Louis County's compliance management strategy has triggers as to when a system must be upgraded, repaired, or replaced, or even when a compliance inspection is required.

Compliant systems: 88

Non-Conforming: 12

Non-Compliant: 19

Expired Operating Permits: 26

Unknown: 40

Limited Records: 10

No Records: 48

No Information: 140

The balance of the records are for resorts or are permits awaiting final inspection.

I imagine that many of the septic systems about which neighbors are concerned fall into the categories of "Unknown", "Limited Records", "No Records", or "No Information". These categories comprise 60% of the systems on the lake. Property owners are the sole source of information about their systems, and many of those systems predate the advent of zoning and permitting. Septic inspections are made upon the sale of a property, though it appears that at least some of that data does not make it into the dataset we were provided.

That's a wrap for this year. If the printer gets back to us, we will send out the hardcopy to everyone.