

WICOLA NEWS

White Iron Chain of
Lakes Association, Inc.

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President's Message

The prospect of **sulfide mining** has played a major part in the program and work of WICOLA this year. Through the work of many volunteers, led by **Ken Wichmann** and **Carla Arneson**, and the cooperation of lake associations in the area, WICOLA sponsored a forum on the issue on July 19th.

At our annual meeting in June, members present heard about the upcoming forum and approved the following resolution: **"After the mining forum, the WICOLA board will draw up a plan to address mining issues and submit it to the membership for approval."**

Your Board has now met and has drawn up a plan for its continued work regarding the sulfide mining issue as follows:

1. **Continue water testing** of the chain of lakes.
2. **Continue heavy metals testing.** The next test is in the estimated date of 2012.
3. **Review the upcoming Environmental Impact Statement** of Polymet.
4. **Pursue grant funding** for obtaining sediment core samples on the chain of lakes to determine the historical data for comparison of water quality.

Continue to gather and present more information regarding area mining.

Later in this Newsletter you will find

a **ballot** which you may use to indicate your approval of this plan.

Please return it so your Board will know if we have your approval for this plan.

The plan being proposed by the Board builds upon our current activities as well as suggests some new ones. In addition to the regular Secchi disk readings taken at multiple spots on the White Iron chain, a group of volunteers also does more **intensive monthly water sampling** for laboratory analysis for many indicators of the water quality. In addition over the past summer WICOLA worked with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to **specifically test for heavy metals** in the waters coming into the chain of lakes from the proposed mining areas. This will provide us with a baseline of the heavy metals in our water. We will test again in five years and compare the results with this baseline information.

The review of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Polymet is important as Polymet is on track to be the first of the mining companies to release their EIS for public review. As the Duluth News Tribune said in their news article of October 10, 2008, "The EIS will be the public's first insight into how the state plans to deal with environmental concerns from the state's first copper mine."

The current plans are for the EIS to be ready for review in early 2009 at

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IT'S A BIT EARLY TO THINK SPRING, BUT HERE ARE SOME DATES TO REMEMBER:

Our annual meeting will be June 20th, at Silver Rapids Lodge. Details to follow at a later date!

Don't forget our "Not on the Fourth of July" boat parade — Sunday the 5th next year!

Your Board of Directors has decided to pursue a "Minnesota Clean Water Partnership" (CWP) grant to fund sediment core sampling, our ongoing testing program, and other possible projects. As usual, they can use help! **VOLUNTEER! PLEASE!** Call or email a board member.

which time the public will have 45 days for comment. Not only is this an important document for understanding the issues, it will also be very long (pages numbering in the thousands). **If you are interested in helping the Board with the review, please contact Peter Davis or Ken Wichmann** (see directory in this Newsletter) as I will not be here this winter. [You can find the Duluth News Tribune article at <http://www.duluthnewstribune.com/event/article/id/75524/>]

Another piece of information we will need in the future is the historical data about changes in the water quality over a longer period of time as our Secchi disk readings date back about twenty years and our more intensive water quality testing has only been carried out for five years. The way to obtain this information is to take **sediment core samples** in at least four different places in the lake and have them analyzed in a laboratory. We are fortunate in that we do have both the technology and the expertise right here in Ely at the Natural Resources Research Institute Ely Field Office at Vermillion Community College. However, the cost to do the analysis is about **\$10,000 a core sample**, so WICOLA will be looking for grants and other support for this project. Again **if you have leads or ideas about how to fund this project, your ideas and help are more than welcome**. [For information about a similar study done by the Ely Field Office for Lake Vermillion, see <http://www.nrri.umn.edu/cwe/lakevermillionalqae.htm>]

And your Board is committed to bringing you as best we can the best information we have about mining in this area. We do hope, as you find more information to share, you will contact us so that we can point the way to others. The more we all know, the better we will understand all sides of the sulfide mining issue.

Please fill in the ballot and return it so we will have an understanding of your approval of the proposed plan.

Charlene Mason, President

And have a good winter!

WATER SAMPLING/TESTING REPORT

As mentioned in the Presidents Message, volunteers have been diligent in WICOLA's water testing program for the past four years. A pilot program was started in 2005, sampling on one location in Garden Lake. Secchi Disk, temperature at 1 meter intervals, and lab analysis for Chlorophyl-a,

WICOLA WATER TESTING 3 YEAR SUMMARY					
YEAR	VOLUNTEER HOURS	EQUIPMENT COST	SHIPPING	LAB ANALYSIS	TOTAL
2005	75	690.00	128.00	200.00	1018.00
2006	130	2839.00	303.57	1000.00	4142.57
2007	159	480.00	342.98	1000.00	1822.98
2008	133.5	480.00	308.69	1000.00	1788.69
TOTAL	497.5	4489.00	1083.24	3200.00	8772.24

Phosphorus, and Algae. In 2006 an instrument was purchased allowing us to add dissolved oxygen and PH along with the one meter temperature readings. In addition, four more sites were added, for a total of five locations on the chain. As the chart above shows, our volunteers have contributed the equivalent of a 3 month full-time job! Half of the equipment cost listed was actually member donated

boat use, included only for grant fund accounting. **We will continue to seek grants** and donations to help defray costs to WICOLA. Anyone interested in more detailed breakdowns of costs and/or test results should **contact Jim Pinckney at jmp468@frontiernet.net**. The information is all on Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets, which can be emailed to you. There is also a Powerpoint presentation that has many graphs of the data collected. If you do not have the Microsoft Office suite, go to openoffice.org. A complete office suite is available, compatible with Microsoft, at no charge. **Lab analysis data is available on line at <http://www.rmbel.info/>** Click on "Lakes Program" and follow the instructions. Since all data is listed by county, you will have to go into St. Louis as well as Lake to get data for the whole chain.

Jim Pinckney

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

(More than you ever wanted to know?)

Several articles on septic systems have been submitted—I'll try to condense many pages into some shorter, timely reminders.

1. **Protect your system from freezing.**

Let vegetation grow over drain fields and mound systems. Avoid compacting snow cover. Traffic of any kind will drive frost deeper. An insulating blanket of leaves or straw (even if snow has already built up) will protect against freezing.

2. **Cold Air infiltration?** Make sure all inspection covers and cleanout caps are in place and secure. Open inspection pipes will let the naturally generated heat out of the tank and cold air in.

3. **Water leaks?** Dripping faucets send small trickles of water which can freeze and continue to build up. Utilize a condensate pump for high efficiency furnaces and humidifiers to change the discharge from a steady trickle to an occasional large pump discharge.

System already frozen? Your best bet is to call a professional. There are too many possible trouble areas to discuss here, and a professional can quickly isolate and correct the problem.

For more detailed information, visit <http://www.septic.umn.edu>

SULFIDE MINING FORUM A SUCCESS!

Our membership directed our board to sponsor a sulfide mining forum for purposes of public education. The Forum was held at Vermillion Community College on July 19, 2008, sponsored by Eagles Nest Lake Association and our White Iron Lakes Association.

We had a packed house. The presenters were **Gary E. Glass**, Adj. Prof. U. M. D., **Frank Ongaro**, Ex. Director of Mining Minnesota, **Nancy Schuldt**, Water Projects Coordinator Fond du Lac Band of Chippewa and our own **Bob Tammen** who presented as a citizen not representing our Association. I think it safe to say all presentations were well done, well received and appreciated by the audience.

For those not in attendance and those wishing to review, **we offer a DVD** of the entire Forum presentation. Please send a check to WICOLA for \$4.95 to P. O. Box 493, Ely, Minnesota 55731. We will promptly mail your DVD. Please specify a dvd+r or dvd-r if that matters to you.

Next in the Mining approval process is the publishing of the Environmental Impact Statement. This is due in Late October and you should see an announcement in the local press. Your Association will do its best to review this document and comment if appropriate. Please see our Presidents Message in this issue.

If you would like a copy of the Polymet EIS when it comes out:

The DNR and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan to utilize a contractor to assist in preparation of a draft EIS, which will then be made available for public comment. Please address any comments or questions to Stuart Arkley at the address provided below, or send an email to Environmental.Review@dnr.state.mn.us with "PolyMet" in the subject line. If using the email address, please include your name and mailing address so that you can be added to the mailing list. **Any questions or inquiries should be made directly to Stuart Arkley at (651) 259-5089, or mail to Minnesota DNR, 500 Lafayette Road, Saint Paul, MN 55155.**

Ken Wichmann, board member

to and breed in wet areas where wastewater reaches the surface may also spread disease.

Many of the **synthetic cleaning products** or other chemicals used around the house can be toxic to humans, pets, and wildlife. These products may reach the ground surface or end up in the water.

Excessive nitrate levels in drinking water can result in serious health problems for infants. High nitrate levels in ground water can result from inadequately treated wastewater.

Inadequate treatment can also allow excess nutrients to reach your lake or stream, promoting algae or weed growth. Algal blooms and abundant weeds not only make the lake unpleasant for swimming and boating, but they also affect water quality for fish and wildlife habitat. As plants die, settle to the bottom, and decompose, they use up oxygen that fish need to survive.

SEPTICS REVISITED

Maintaining Your Shoreland Septic System

What Are Shoreland BMPs?

Best Management Practices (BMPs) are actions you can take to reduce your impact on the environment. In many cases, the best management for shorelands may be retaining the natural characteristics of your property.

Why Are Septic Systems a Problem?

In shoreland areas it is particularly important to maintain your septic system properly because soil and water conditions near shore may make the system less efficient in treating wastewater. Incomplete treatment can result in health risks for humans and water quality problems.

Potential health risks are the most serious concern related to failing septic systems. Hepatitis, dysentery, and other diseases may be spread by bacteria, viruses, and parasites in wastewater. These disease-causing organisms, called pathogens, may make nearshore water unsafe for recreation. Flies and mosquitoes that are attracted

How a Septic System Works

The purpose of an on-site wastewater treatment system, commonly known as a septic system, is to treat sewage from your household. A septic system has two parts: the sewage tank and the soil treatment system. The most common sewage tank in Minnesota is a septic tank that receives raw sewage from the household. Three layers form in the tank: solids settle to the bottom and a layer of scum or grease floats on the surface of a liquid layer. As raw sewage is added to the tank, an equal amount of liquid flows out into the soil treatment system.

Newer tanks will have access ports for pumping. Older tanks may have a manhole cover that should be removed for pumping. Inspection ports on older tanks are not suitable for pumping.

Wastewater treatment is completed in the soil absorption area. There are three basic types of soil treatment systems. Drainfield

trenches are the most common and do the most effective job of treating wastewater. They take full advantage of evaporation and plant life to help treat sewage. Seepage beds do not require as large a lawn area, but they have a smaller capacity and are less efficient than drainfield trenches. Mounds are elevated systems that may use pressure to distribute sewage effluent. Seepage pits, dry wells, and cesspools are no longer approved and may not be installed.

How to Tell If There Is a Problem

These conditions indicate your septic system may be failing:

Sewage backup in your drains or toilets. This may be a black liquid with a bad odor.

Slow toilet flushing. Even if you use plungers or drain cleaners, drains may run slower than usual.

Wet areas or water seeping near drainfield. It may or may not have an odor.

Excessive growth of aquatic weeds or algae in the lake near your home. Incomplete treatment of nutrient-rich water seeping from your system promotes this growth.

Unpleasant odors around your house. This may result from improper venting or a failing system.

Bacteria or nitrates are found in your well water. This indicates a serious water contamination problem that may come from your own or a neighbor's failing system.

Biodegradable dye flushed through the system shows up in the lake or river.

What to Do If Your System Fails

Immediate Actions:

Have your septic tank pumped. This may solve the problem, at least temporarily.

Cut back on water use.

Don't use additives. Additives are no benefit and may harm the system.

If problems persist call your county health department for assistance.

If water quality in the lake deteriorates, property values are likely to decrease. In addition,

if your on-site treatment system fails, you'll have the inconvenience of being unable to use household plumbing until the system is replaced.

Again — go to <http://www.septic.umn.edu> for detailed information on everything from new installations to maintenance and seasonal usage.

REGULATIONS IGNORED

Paul Haraldson

On August 17th I was fishing in White Iron Lake with a mother and her 5 year old daughter. Around 8:00pm we were **contacted by DNR Conservation Officer Marty Stage** for a routine fishing license check.

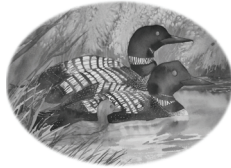
After the check was completed I had a cordial conversation with Officer Stage. I explained that I lived on the lake and was a board member of WICOLA. I explained some concerns I had heard from WICOLA members regarding **violations of the fish slot limit** and also the complaints regarding **snowmobile water skipping** on the chain. Officer Stage informed me that he had heard some of the complaints reference slot limit violations and was at that time looking for snowmobile water skipping violations.

Recently I contacted Officer Stage and asked him for phone numbers for WICOLA members to use if they wanted to report a violation on the Chain of Lakes. Officer Stage suggested **members call 218-365-4070 or the tip line 800-652-9093**. Officer Stage stated that **a 90% compliance rate with the fish slot limit was needed for the program to be successful**.

Officer Stage also informed me that **snowmobile water skipping in the summer months was illegal** unless the skipping was at a sponsored event and the sheriff's office had issued a permit.

Officer Stage welcomed all calls regarding area violations.

WICOLA NEWS



P O Box 493, Ely, MN 55731

We're on the Web!
Minnesotawaters.org/wicola

To contact a **White Iron Chain of Lakes Association board member:**

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*Feel free to contact any board member at the addresses above or at the Association address. We welcome (and encourage) your comments and suggestions. Our Association is dedicated to continuing and improving the quality environment of our chain of lakes. Please join us in this endeavor **VOLUNTEER!***

WICOLA NEWS is published three times a year and mailed to members of
WHITE IRON CHAIN of LAKES ASSOCIATION, INC.

If you are interested in improving the water quality, fishing, and recreational opportunities on White Iron, Farm, Garden and South Farm Lakes, **JOIN WICOLA TODAY**. Annual Membership is still just 20.00 per year. Send a check to our address above for all the benefits of membership.