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Landmark Wisconsin Lake on Path to Reduced Phosphorus Contamination

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association (COLA) achieves critical step in getting long-needed protections in place

HAYWARD, WI (July 29, 2017) Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker, has approved a scope statement submitted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) on May 15, 2017, that initiates the rulemaking process to establish a protective water quality standard for Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO). At 5,030 acres, LCO is the fifth largest natural lake in the state. It is also designated an Outstanding Resource Water (ORW) in Wisconsin, which requires greater protections against further deterioration.

The decision from Walker comes a little over a year after the Courte Oreilles Lakes Association (COLA) and the LCO Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa submitted a joint petition for judicial review of the process the WDNR was using to safeguard LCO's water quality. As a result of that review, the WDNR agreed to develop a more protective phosphorus standard for LCO on March 31, 2017.

"Getting Governor Walker's approval of the scope statement was critical," said Alf Sivertson, attorney for COLA. "COLA has worked long and hard to get to this point. It has amassed and paid for all the required testing and documentation over the past 10 years. The next step now is approval from the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board."

The current phosphorus standard for the lake is set at 15 ppb by the state. The new, proposed lake-wide standard of 10 ppb as outlined in the Site Specific Phosphorus Criterion (SSPC) for LCO would provide a reasonable and long-term mechanism for preserving the lake. The current standard is not protective of the ORW classification and will not protect the habitat of the lake's cold-water fish, cisco and lake whitefish. LCO is now plagued by excessive algal and aquatic plant growth that leads to reduction of dissolved oxygen, fish kills, and general degradation of water quality for all uses, including swimming, boating, and fishing.

"Support from the state is critical in all of this." added Sivertson. "COLA is doing all it can, but it is the protective standards the state of Wisconsin puts in place that provide the means by which we can all continue to enjoy this magnificent lake for generations to come. We greatly appreciate the leadership of the WDNR and Governor Walker's approval of the scope statement from the WDNR. We now look forward to approval by the Wisconsin Natural Resources Board as well."

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Learn more about COLA's efforts to protect the water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles—the fifth-largest natural lake in Wisconsin at 5,030 acres, an [Outstanding Resource Water](#), and a rare, two-story cold-water fishery. As part of this goal, COLA is committed to helping provide the science and lead the way in reducing pollution, to serve not only Lac Courte Oreilles and its watershed, but also other Wisconsin lakes and the organizations that support them. Visit www.cola-wi.org. For questions and interviews, contact Jim Coors at colacommunications@gmail.com or call 608-628-0694.