



Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

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Shining the light on our WDNR partners in Hayward

By Kathy Hanson
Contributing Columnist

Over the years, COLA has created, nurtured, sought and solidified many partnerships in their mission to preserve Courte Oreilles Lakes.

One steadfast and sturdy partner has been the local Wisconsin DNR people; in particular, Max Wolter and Doug Casina from the Hayward office.

Max Wolter, WDNR Senior Fisheries Biologist for Sawyer County, has had ties to the Hayward area all his life. His family fished all the lakes in the area as well as the Namekagon River.



Nine-year-old Max Wolter caught his first walleye on Lake Namekagon. Max is now the leader of the Hayward DNR "Fish Team." Photos submitted.

"I have a very early memory (I must have been 6 or 7 years old) of visiting LCO and looking out across Musky Bay from Victory Heights Road," Max recalled.

Those boyhood memories lured him into a degree in Fisheries and Limnology from UW—Stevens Point and a graduate degree studying muskellunge at the University of Illinois.

Almost immediately Max was hired by the Wisconsin DNR as a biologist—his "dream job," he said. "Working in Hayward where I had spent my whole life fishing was just surreal at first. I don't think my 6 year-old self would have believed it."

Wolter's work in Illinois—musky genetics, panfish management, surveying large waterbodies—was the ideal fit for the Hayward area and he has been hard at it since 2012.

He explains his job as a lot more than surveying fish. In fact, that makes up only a quarter of the year: typically April, May and September. He must develop stocking plans, conduct habitat work and shape policy. He also shared an insight: that the Hayward job comes with high expectations for natural resources quality. After all, we hold the World Record Musky for the 69- pound, 11-ounce musky caught by Louis Spray in 1949.

Max coordinates the WDNR Panfish Team, a group of biologists and researchers that work to improve panfish and panfishing opportunities; works with a demanding and knowledgeable public in a high recreational area; and writes a column for the local newspaper.

He calls COLA a "very necessary and, fortunately, a very competent partner."

"LCO is a unique lake facing some unique challenges. There is no cookbook on how to fix some of the big fisheries problems that we are trying to tackle: declining muskellunge, faltering walleye recruitment, and challenges for coldwater fish," he said.

Currently there is an ambitious plan underway that the WDNR experts and COLA are working on side-by-side—increasing muskellunge through reducing pike abundance while increasing size; restoring muskellunge spawning habitat and trying new stocking strategies; and minimizing mortality of adult muskellunge. Walleye declines are also on the radar screen, even though the lakes in the Couderay drainage were exempt from this for years, according to Max.

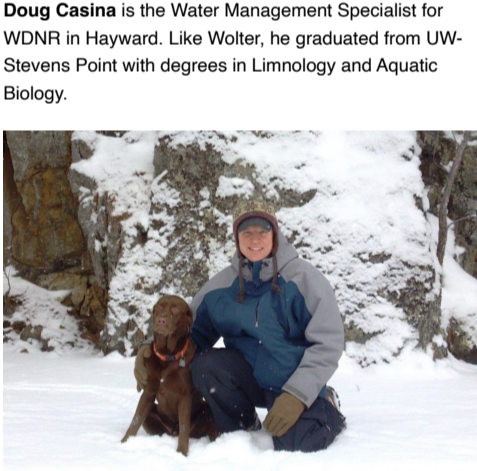
LCO maintained good walleye recruitment until 2011 but after that point recruitment became weak and by 2017, Max said, "we could no longer wait (so) the decision was made to stock walleye"—to the tune of 52,000 over two stocking events in the summer and fall of 2017. Now it's time to monitor that and see if natural recruitment happens or if more stocking has to be done in 2019.

Max is optimistic about LCO, calling it "a fantastic water resource with huge fishery potential," and he credits the cooperation between COLA and WDNR as the hope for blazing new trails for fish management.

"I'm looking forward to putting in that work," he said.

COLA Vice-President Gary Pulford said, "Like his predecessor Frank Pratt, Max appreciates the significance of Lac Courte Oreilles to the local economy, the LCO Tribe, and all the residents of Wisconsin. COLA sincerely appreciates all that Max has done to help protect and enhance this unique lake and the fish that live in it."

Doug Casina is the Water Management Specialist for WDNR in Hayward. Like Wolter, he graduated from UW-Stevens Point with degrees in Limnology and Aquatic Biology.



Doug Casina and his Chocolate Lab "Ike" enjoy the Northwoods. Photo submitted.

His experience is notable: 14 years with the Bayfield County Planning and Zoning Department as Assistant Planning and Zoning Administrator, and stints in the private sector as project manager with various environmental consulting firms. He was also an Agricultural Runoff Management Specialist, working with the numerous CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations) in central and north central Wisconsin.

His move to WDNR was a natural fit and he said it had always been a professional career goal.

What he does now is two-fold: help people understand their water rights and enforce the laws which protect them; and help people understand and administer wetland laws that protect wetland functions and values.

"Wisconsin is blessed to be a water-rich state, and water is a basic need to many organisms, including humans and their quality of life, as well as important to commerce and the state's economy," Doug explained.

He works with the public and other partners to help guide development patterns that maintain Wisconsin's character and minimize negative environmental effects. Yes, a lot of that means permits, enforcement and regulations, but Doug said, "I know that in the end, protecting water rights and wetland communities will benefit the environment as a whole and future generations."

"Doug has been a big help sorting through a number of sticky regulatory issues on LCO, including cranberry dredging of the lake bottom and working to remedy some egregious storm water discharges into Chicago Bay. It's good to know that WDNR is watching and can be counted on to help protect LCO," said Pulford.

Doug's love of the outdoors and being on and around our lakes, rivers and wetlands spills over into his work, and he sees the future of LCO as continuing to remain one of the highest quality water resources in the state with COLA's continued promotion of good riparian and watershed stewardship.

COLA President Kevin Horrocks sees the relationship between the Hayward DNR experts and COLA as collaborative and mutual.

"We get involved in any number of efforts trying to protect the LCO Lakes and have to work through the WDNR. It's rewarding when they offer ideas from their experience, like contacting Boy Scouts to see if they'd assist us with hand-pulling invasive weeds, and when we can offer something back to them, like volunteering to help with the capture and recording of several thousand northern pike, and assisting and helping pay for the PIT tagging of LCO muskies to enable ongoing study of hundreds of them".

Editor's Note: The Hayward DNR office has approximately 25 people working in it, depending on the time of year, including one warden, seven to 10 foresters, four wildlife people, customer service people, lands and facilities people, air quality and wastewater engineers and others. All of these people have a vested interest in our lakes and woods, our fish and wetlands. COLA thanks all of them for their work.



Kathy Hanson is a free-lance writer for various local and regional newspapers and Duluth magazines. She is the Sawyer County Field Editor for Our Wisconsin magazine and copy editor for the Bayfield County Journal. She was previously a staff reporter for the Sawyer County Record and copy editor for the Sawyer County Record.

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DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

COLA NEEDS YOUR HELP

COLA is creating a new position on its Board of Directors. The new Director will work closely with COLA's leadership to obtain grants to continue COLA's studies of LCO and the upper Couderay river watershed. Please [let us know](#) if you can lend a hand - it's fun and rewarding work.

LAC COURTE OREILLES OJIBWE HISTORY



This [PBS special](#) narrated by Rick St. Germaine is a wonderful recounting of the history of LCO and Reserve, WI.

St. Germaine is a retired Professor of History and Professor of Education at University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire and former Chairman/Vice-Chairman of the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe Tribe.

DATES TO REMEMBER

COLA ANNUAL MEETING

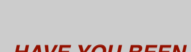
Saturday, June 16, 2018
St. Francis Mission

COLA MEMBERS' PICNIC

Saturday, July 16, 2018
Trails End Resort



HAVE YOU BEEN KEEPING RECORDS ON ICE-IN AND ICE-OUT DATES?



The WDNR is looking to enter any available ice on/off records into the SWIMS database.

If you or anyone you know has been keeping a record of ice-on/ice-off dates for either of the LCO lakes [please let us know](#).

2018 SAWYER COUNTY FISHERIES FORUM

February 15
6:30 p.m.
Hayward High School

Max Wolter and his WDNR colleagues are excited to tell people about some of the projects they've been working on to improve trout, walleye, musky, panfish, and bass fishing. You'll also get to hear from many of the excellent groups in the area about their work on habitat projects, youth fishing opportunities, and fish stocking.

Want to learn more about the meeting? There's a YouTube video about it [Click here](#) for that.

LAC COURTE OREILLES PROPOSES AN AN IMPAIRED WATER BODY

On Nov. 15, 2017, the WI Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) issued a notice soliciting public comments on its proposed [2018 list of Impaired Waters](#). The WDNR is proposing to list all of Lac Courte Oreilles as impaired—which is a good thing. But they are proposing to list "low dissolved oxygen" (DO) as an indicator of that impairment without citing excess phosphorus as the cause of the impairment. (Here is the [full story](#).)

Thanks to all who submitted comments to the WDNR in support of the listing along with the request to cite excess phosphorus as the cause. Stay tuned for future developments.



THANKS TO ALL WHO DONATED TO THE LAC COURTE OREILLES FOUNDATION IN 2017

A NEW RECORD!

We raised \$118,852 by year's end thanks to the generosity of 319 contributors. This is a dramatic affirmation of the dedication of LCO property owners to the preservation of the lakes for generations to come. These funds ensure that COLA can continue its work on shoreline restoration, invasive species control, water-quality monitoring, watershed outreach and much, much more.

And what's even more impressive, we now have a long-term endowment of \$125,550! See more below.

THE LAC COURTE OREILLES LEGACY FUND

Many families have enjoyed LCO's pristine beauty for generations. Your generous donations over the past eight years have helped preserve the lake and remain the essential funding for current activities. But now we have another opportunity to protect the lake far into the future by putting the Lac Courte Oreilles Foundation into your estate plans.

The LCO Foundation teamed up with the Eau Claire Community Foundation to create the [Lac Courte Oreilles Legacy Fund](#). Endowment gifts include: planned gifts such as a bequest in a will, charitable remainder trust, or outright gifts, such as cash, or stock.



COLA PRESIDENT IN THE NEWS

When COLA's President, Kevin Horrocks, is not wading around in LCO's waters, he runs an artistic belt business. See the [recent column about Kevin](#) in the Sawyer County Record.

SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS

If you have friends or family on nearby lakes who would enjoy Short Ears, Long Tales, [let us know](#).

Help COLA by sharing this newsletter with friends.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR COLA MEMBERSHIP FOR 2018!

COLA membership is a pretty good deal. For only 25\$/year, you help COLA protect LCO, and you get a picnic in return!

[Renew your membership](#) today in one of Wisconsin's most active and respected lake associations.

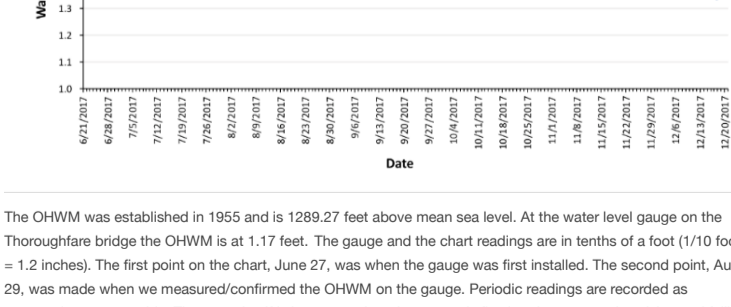
Are your neighbors and extended family members of COLA? If not, please ask them to [join](#).

HELP US FIND MISSING ISSUES OF THE LOON CALL

We are missing two back issues of the Loon Call - Vol. 14 #1 (Spring) 2008 and Vol. 15 #1 (Spring, 2009). Please [let us know](#) if you have copies of either that we can scan and place in COLA's web archive.

[ARCHIVED ISSUES OF SHORT EARS, LONG TALES](#)

LCO Water Depth Recorded at Thoroughfare Bridge Gauge



The OHWM was established in 1955 and is 1289.27 feet above mean sea level. At the water level gauge on the Thoroughfare bridge the OHWM is at 1.17 feet. The gauge and the chart readings are in tenths of a foot (1/10 foot = 1.2 inches). The first point on the chart, June 27, was when the gauge was first installed. The second point, Aug. 29, was made when we measured/confirmed the OHWM on the gauge. Periodic readings are recorded as accurately as reasonable. The water itself is in perpetual motion, not only flowing downstream but rising and falling due to waves, the current in the channel, the wind which can actually push water and "stack" it toward one end of the lake or the other and the seiche effect caused by the gravitational pull of the moon and sun.

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COLA Mission: 1) to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Lac Courte Oreilles and Little Lac Courte Oreilles, their shorelands and surrounding areas, while respecting the interests of property owners and the rights of the general public; and 2) to consider, study, survey and respond to issues deemed relevant by COLA's membership.

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