



# Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

Issue #27 May 1, 2018

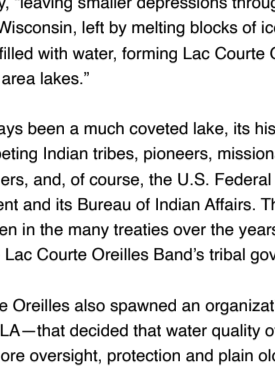
## How COLA got started—'a bunch of amateur people who cherished the lakes'

By Kathy Hanson  
Contributing Columnist

When people in this neck of the woods hear the word "COLA", they are not thinking Coca Cola. They are thinking Courte Oreilles Lakes Association. Such is the growth, reputation and standing of this organization in Sawyer County and beyond, whose sole mission has always been as clear as the 5,139 acres of the lake waters itself:

"To protect, preserve and enhance the quality of the Courte Oreilles Lakes, 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 the membership of the organization."

Lac Courte Oreilles—meaning Lake Short Ears—was created by the last glacial intrusion into Wisconsin, roughly 12,000 years ago. It is described well in "Tales of Lac Courte Oreilles," a popular local book published in 2002 and co-edited by Tom and Sue Burgess.



In the book, Burgess informs that the glacial intrusion created the basins for Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and Green Bay, "leaving smaller depressions throughout Northern Wisconsin, left by melting blocks of ice, gradually filled with water, forming Lac Courte Oreilles and other area lakes."

It has always been a much coveted lake, its history rife with competing Indian tribes, pioneers, missionaries, white settlers, and, of course, the U.S. Federal Government and its Bureau of Indian Affairs. The results can be seen in the many treaties over the years and, finally, the Lac Courte Oreilles Band's tribal government.

Lac Courte Oreilles also spawned an organization—today called COLA—that decided that water quality of the lake needed more oversight, protection and plain old common sense.

Jim Burgess, another of the Burgess boys whose family spans multiple generations of Lac Courte Oreilles shore landowners and intends to keep it that way, was directly responsible for the beginnings of this lake association, back in the 60s.

"I founded it with Harry Vincent," said Burgess when he talked to me recently by phone. "Harry Vincent and I teamed up, ran ads, knocked on doors and made speeches at taverns, usually on Friday nights when we knew there'd be a crowd," Burgess explained. Burgess said that 20 years ago there weren't many lake associations in Sawyer County, but he and others could see the remarkable growth—usually by people from Minneapolis—in building lakefront homes and summer dwellings.

"There was this notion that Courte Oreilles was the most beautiful lake in the area, so we picked up Harry Schroeder and went to Attorney Lien to create a legal status," Burgess said, adding that it was a hard job to get going. "People in northern Wisconsin are rather shy about getting involved sometimes, Burgess said, adding that the Tribe was very supportive from the beginning and has never faltered in their commitment to COLA and its mission.

Two years later they had 50-100 people signed up. People were beginning to see the issues: drainage, septic systems run amok, fertilizer and agricultural issues, and cranberry bogs.

Burgess said he went to Harry Schroeder and asked him if he wanted to be the first president. Harry said, "I'll do this if you'll go run the (Wisconsin) State Lakes Association. It was a deal. Burgess was on the COLA board, however, and stayed on it for 10 years.

"We were just a bunch of amateur people who cherished the lakes," he said.



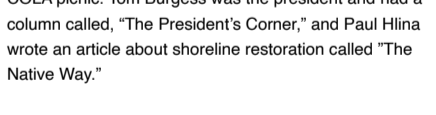
Harry Schroeder, the first COLA president, holds up a beautiful nature print that was raffled at a COLA picnic. (Year unknown. Photo submitted.)

### The first years

Tom Burgess, Jim's brother and lakeshore resident as well, said COLA wasn't even called COLA back in the 1960s.

"A group of shoreline owners on LCO got together and formed what they called "Lac Courte Oreilles Protective Association," in reaction to noticeable changes in water quality. This was an informal forum, asking questions, debating on solutions and exchanging ideas—no formal structure," said Tom.

It was in 1995 this core group established COLA as a nonprofit organization with a set of bylaws and structure. The first board included Mary Austin, Harry Schroeder, Myrtle Pino, Carol Causer, Harry Vincent, George Paine, Pete Sanders, Paul Eckerline and Jim Burgess.



COLA picnic in full swing. Tom Burgess (in blue T-shirt) was the second COLA president. Circa 2008. (Photo submitted.)

Tom said he joined the board in 2003 and was elected COLA's second president in 2004, remaining on the board until 2010.

"During this time COLA initiated an annual program of treating portions of the lake for Curly Leaf Pond weed and other invasive species to reduce concentrations of phosphorus," Tom said.

Miki Odawa, part of the O'Neill and Higbee legacy of generations, said another important task COLA took on was organizing the History Committee. Signe Andersen Schroeder, Harry's wife, initiated this and was a major contributor in documenting history through interviews and photos for the book, "Tales of Lac Courte Oreilles."

"Signe felt, as I do, that a very important internal goal of COLA should be developing a sense of community, of shared experience among the members and lake residents.

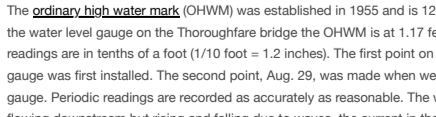
Thus, it was important to hold not one, but two annual meetings—the business meeting in June and the picnic in July—where people could get together and schmooze in a relaxed atmosphere," Odawa said.

### The Loon Call archives

COLA's first newsletter was the Loon Call, first published in the Fall/Winter 1995 with Colin Williams as the editor. There are 37 issues in the archives, the last being Spring 2015.

All 37 newsletters, in some way, touch on water quality. It is not an occasional subject. It is THE subject and you can read about all the water quality studies, swimmer's itch, water testing in Musky Bay and Stukesy, the Cranberry Bill, shoreline restoration, and "The State of Our Lake."

You can also read about the COLA finances (in 1997 COLA had \$4,218 balance in hand; in 2000 there was \$10,140.09.); membership and dues (membership rose quickly, with 303 members in 2000; dues rose slowly, beginning at \$10 in 1965 and \$25 in 2009-current); how the Green Bay Packers won Super Bowl XXXI; the sale of the Beach Club by Pam and Terry Fairclough to Roxana and Steve Jackson; and the first annual meeting and COLA picnic on August 23, 1995 at the Bass Lake Town Hall where 150 people ate "beer, brats and stuff" provided by COLA.



Fish crates are taken out to strategic spots on Lac Courte Oreilles by a LCO/DNR conservationist to attract fish. (Photo submitted.)

On July 30, 2005 the first pig roast was introduced at the COLA picnic. Tom Burgess was the president and had a column called, "The President's Corner," and Paul Hlina wrote an article about shoreline restoration called "The Native Way."

The annual COLA picnic is a much-revered event, even drawing news coverage from the Sawyer County Record. There are raffles, pork, food, beer from the Angry Minnow and lots of big talk.

Mostly there is history repeating itself. The picnic tables are full, usually with the same faces year after year. But then a face is gone, replaced, however, by a son, a daughter, a grandchild. Remarkably, the surnames do not go away. Lac Courte Oreilles' legacy is its generational stability, pride and the continuity of love for its waters.

Today's COLA President, Kevin Horrocks, speaking for the appreciative board, said this: "First have fun. Unwind. Enjoy. Appreciate. Love these lakes. They are jewels."



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, copy editor for the Bayfield County Journal, and feature writer for the Sawyer County Gazette. She was previously a staff reporter, business writer, columnist and copy editor for the Sawyer County Record.

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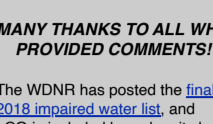
### DATES TO REMEMBER

**COLA ANNUAL MEETING**

Saturday, June 16, 2018  
St. Francis Mission

**COLA MEMBERS' PICNIC**

Saturday, July 14, 2018  
Trails End Resort



### LAC COURTE OREILLES INCLUDED ON WDNR'S FINAL LIST OF IMPAIRED WATERS

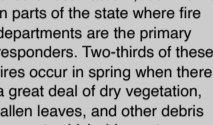
**MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO PROVIDED COMMENTS!**

The WDNR has posted the [final 2018 impaired water list](#), and LCO is included based on its low dissolved oxygen concentration. **Of the 153 comments received from the entire State, 132 related to LCO!**

Of the 132 LCO comments, 130 supported the listing of LCO, and two opposed. The Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association was one of the two.

Excessive phosphorus is the probable cause of the low dissolved oxygen, but the WDNR still maintains that the cause is unknown.

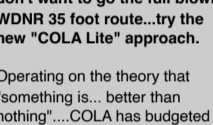
**Thanks to all who submitted comments to the WDNR in support of the listing.** WDNR will soon submit this final list to EPA for approval. Stay tuned for future developments.



### PREVENT WILDFIRES

[From Steve Suman's Outdoor Report \(3/25/18\)](#), "According to DNR Forestry, the fire season is just starting and so far, 57 fires in DNR protection areas, caused by debris burning and equipment, have destroyed three outbuildings and threatened 14 homes and 12 outbuildings. Each year, an estimated 1,100 wildfires burn in DNR protection areas, with another estimated 2,500 wildfires in parts of the state where fire departments are the primary responders. Two-thirds of these fires occur in spring when there is a great deal of dry vegetation, fallen leaves, and other debris present, which dries out quickly...**Debris burning is the leading cause of wildfires, especially this time of year.**"

If you do burn, get a [burning permit](#) and stay aware of [fire restrictions](#).



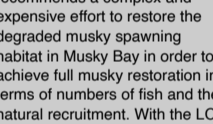
### ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR INSTALLING SHORELINE BUFFERS

COLA will assist property owners with shoreland restoration plans including design, bulk plant purchases, and arrangements for construction and installation services from area landscapers. **For those looking to restore or enhance their shoreline... but don't want to go the full blown WDNR 35 foot route...try the new "COLA Lite" approach.**

Operating on the theory that "something is... better than nothing"...COLA has budgeted \$20K to assist property owners on the LCO Lakes to establish or enhance their shoreline buffer with native plants, with the size of the buffer pretty much to their choosing. So don't miss this one of a kind offer.....sign up today....first come, first served.

COLA will also help provide continuing education and a hands-on buffer zone training in partnership with the Sawyer County Lakes Forum and other local groups. The primary intended audience for education efforts extends to the Upper Couderay River Watershed lakes including Whitefish, Sand, Grindstone, Windigo, Sissabagama, Osprey, Round and Little Round.

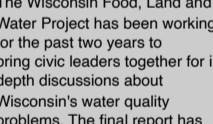
For questions and details, email Kris Sivertson ([krisw3690@gmail.com](mailto:krisw3690@gmail.com)) or call 715-210-0818.



### 2000 PIKE TO BE REMOVED FROM LCO

The WDNR with help from the LCO Tribe Conservation Department and COLA volunteers will be removing up to 2,000 northern pike this Spring from the waters of Musky Bay. This is the second year in a row of pike removal being conducted in accordance with the WDNR/LCO Conservation Department "Lake Lac Courte Oreilles Ecosystem Recovery Plan." In addition to pike removal, the recovery plan calls for same level or increased stocking of extended growth (10-12 inch) musky fingerlings.

Stocking last October saw nearly 3,000 large musky fingerlings released into LCO at various locations around the lake. Finally, the Musky recovery plan recommends a complex and expensive effort to restore the degraded musky spawning habitat in Musky Bay in order to achieve full musky restoration in terms of numbers of fish and their natural recruitment. With the LCO Tribe in the lead and with support from COLA and WDNR...The LCO Tribe has expressed interest in working with the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers under the Corps' "Tribal Partnership Program" to initially study the feasibility of; 1) chemically "fixing" phosphorus in the sediment in Musky Bay, 2) dredging and removing sediment in the known musky spawning areas and, 3) re-establishing wild rice in areas of the Bay. COLA will keep the members apprised as this effort further unfolds.



### CRITICAL WATER RESOURCE REPORT DELIVERED TO WIS' NATURAL RESOURCES BOARD

The Wisconsin Food, Land and Water Project has been working for the past two years to bring civic leaders together for in-depth discussions about Wisconsin's water quality problems. The final report has been presented to the Natural Resources Board. See Steven Verburg's [article about the project](#) in the April 9, 2018 Wisconsin State Journal.

Find out more about the [The Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association](#), the organization that spearheaded the project.

### NEW DATA GIVE FARMS AND LAKES SOME SMART SOIL SCIENCE

COLA, the Sawyer County Land and Water Conservation Department, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service are working together to address erosion control issues in the Upper Couderay River watershed. See the [article about this](#) by Susan Kendrick in the April 11, 2018 Sawyer County Record.

### 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.

### 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 team 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 of cash, or stock.

### 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!

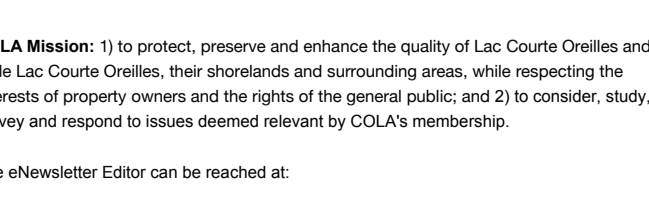
COLA membership is a pretty good deal. For only 25\$/year, you help COLA protect LCO, and you get a picnic in return!

[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](#).

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

## LCO Water Depth Recorded at Thoroughfare Bridge Gauge



The [ordinary high water mark](#) (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 (orange line). 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, 2017, 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.

The eNewsletter Editor can be reached at:

COLA  
P.O. Box 702  
Hayward, WI 54843  
[communications@cola-wi.org](mailto:communications@cola-wi.org)