

# Short Ears, Long Tales

Courte Oreilles Lakes Association

## Aquatic Invasive Species

### What Happened in 2022?

By Jim Coors

COLA had a very difficult summer trying to control aquatic invasive plants in the LCO lakes. We attempted to use all the tools at our disposal, both chemical and mechanical, but the summer brought some serious challenges. Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) infestations have increased beyond our worst expectations. EWM is a real beast and is now spread across both big LCO and little LCO. This happened much more quickly than expected.



Eurasian watermilfoil in Chicago Bay.  
Photo credit: Jim Coors

Beginning in early spring, COLA requested permission from WDNR to use the systemic herbicide ProcellaCOR to control EWM. ProcellaCOR was developed in 2010, approved by the EPA in 2017, and is the current herbicide of choice for EWM since it is highly selective for EWM, has no known effect on aquatic animals, and has almost no impact on other aquatic plants, especially native milfoils. It is used in many Wisconsin lakes and in neighboring states.

Unfortunately, since LCO's cranberry growers use LCO's waters for flooding their bogs, WDNR denied COLA's request for the permit on LCO because ProcellaCOR's label does not specifically address the herbicide's effect on agricultural crops. WDNR tentatively approved ProcellaCOR on little LCO, but the timing was not optimal for 2022.

COLA will ask to use ProcellaCOR in 2023 only on bays and other areas far removed from cranberry production, but it's unlikely that WDNR will approve this practice. COLA has used the herbicide Aquathol K in past years and may use AquaStrike, a combination of Aquathol K and Diquat Dibromide, to control both curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) and EWM, but ProcellaCOR remains the preferred option for targeting EWM.

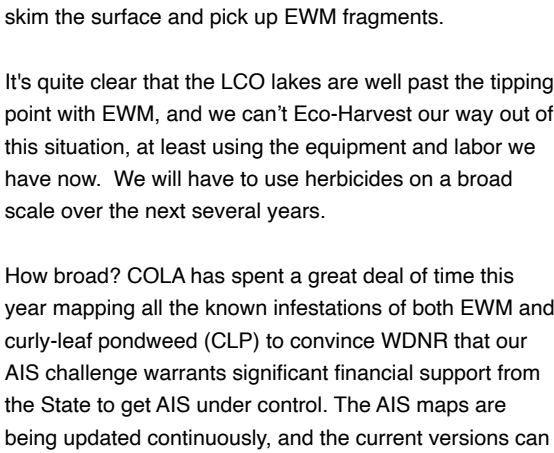
Given the WDNR mission statement – "To protect and enhance our natural resources: our air, land and water; our wildlife, fish and forests and the ecosystems that sustain all life" – one has to wonder how we ever got to this point. But that's a battle for another day.

Without the assistance of herbicides, the entire AIS control effort in 2022 fell to the Eco-Harvester and its volunteer operators. Just a reminder, around six people are needed to operate the Eco-Harvester. These include two on the Eco-Harvester itself, at least two others in satellite boats to remove plant fragment generated by the Eco-Harvester, and several others to offload the Eco-Harvester and transport the plants to the disposal site. The LCO Tribe has been very supportive, but for the most part, the operation of the Eco-Harvester on LCO depends on COLA volunteers.

Finally, the weather, the final arbiter of action. The Eco-Harvester can only function under good conditions, especially minimal wind.

Starting in mid-June, the first stop was Musky Bay for curly-leaf pondweed, then on to those sites with the most Eurasian watermilfoil – Chicago Bay, Anchor Bay, and finally Little LCO. The Eco-Beast is much improved from last year, and multiple trailer loads (nearly 20 tons) of plants were hauled away from the lakes. The volunteer effort was outstanding. There were still some issues – mechanical glitches and the need for even more volunteers. The low lake level made it difficult to get the Eco-Beast into and out of the lakes. The trailer needed modification to make it a little easier to transport the machine.

Unfortunately, after about ten days of operation, just when the Eco-Harvester was operating most effectively, one of the drive motors failed. A replacement motor was ordered immediately, but weeks passed before the motor arrived and Eco-Harvester was ready for action once again – in early October!

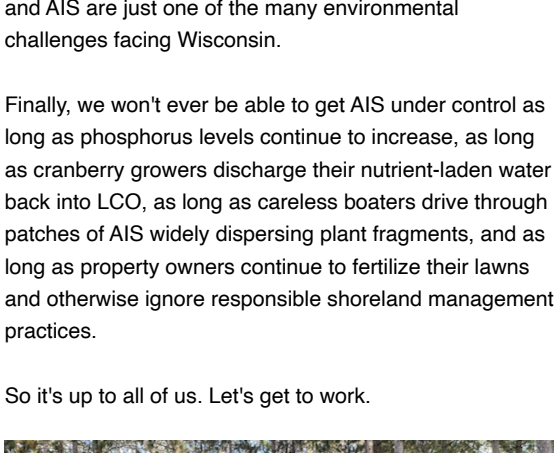


Kevin Horrocks, Mark Lastrup, Jim Paine, and Dick Laumer launch the newly repaired Eco-Harvester.  
Photo credit: Jim Coors

You can see the operation of the Eco-Harvester [here in a video](#) taken mid-October. October is not the right time to remove EWM since it easily breaks apart, and plant fragments can be spread far from the site of infestation. The Eco-Harvester was merely being tested to verify that the repairs were effective and make plans for further modifications over the winter. Most of what the Eco-Harvester was doing in the video is testing its ability to skim the surface and pick up EWM fragments.

It's quite clear that the LCO lakes are well past the tipping point with EWM, and we can't Eco-Harvest our way out of this situation, at least using the equipment and labor we have now. We will have to use herbicides on a broad scale over the next several years.

How broad? COLA has spent a great deal of time this year mapping all the known infestations of both EWM and curly-leaf pondweed (CLP) to convince WDNR that our AIS challenge warrants significant financial support from the State to get AIS under control. The AIS maps are being updated continuously, and the current maps can be seen [here](#). A (very) conservative estimate is that AIS are now spread over about 50 acres on both LCO lakes. This is an increase from 15 acres last year and about five acres two years ago.



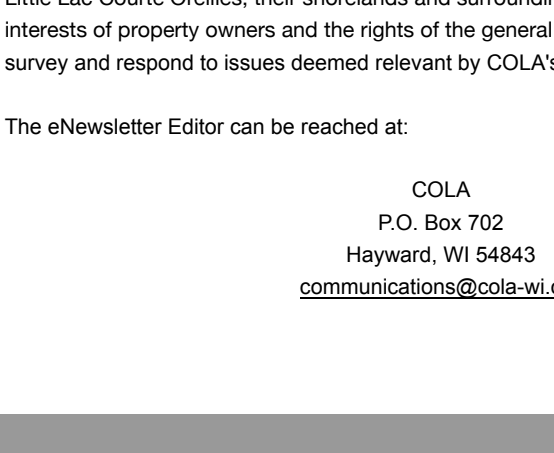
Eurasian watermilfoil has now spread throughout the LCO lakes. To help identify this invasive plant, use [this brochure](#).  
Photo credit: Jim Coors

COLA's WDNR AIS grant is due on November 15. While the grant is not quite finished, COLA will likely request around \$150,000 over a three-year period starting in 2023. This will include a substantial cost-share from COLA, mostly in terms of volunteer "in-kind" support. COLA will also continue monitoring boat landings and increase its outreach/educational efforts about all things AIS.

Next year will bring even bigger challenges. Even if COLA receives the WDNR grant, COLA will need to develop new strategies to get more control over AIS. One option is to contract a full-time work staff to operate the Eco-Harvester. There's a lot of budgetary uncertainty at the moment, and plans will be more fully developed over the winter, when COLA's financial resources are better known. WDNR's budget is also limited. AIS are not just in LCO, and AIS are just one of the many environmental challenges facing Wisconsin.

Finally, we won't ever be able to get AIS under control as long as phosphorus levels continue to increase, as long as cranberry growers discharge their nutrient-laden water back into LCO, as long as careless boaters drive through patches of AIS widely dispersing plant fragments, and as long as property owners continue to fertilize their lawns and otherwise ignore responsible shoreland management practices.

So it's up to all of us. Let's get to work.



COLA uses all resources at its disposal to control AIS.  
Photo credit: Jim Coors



Jim Coors is a member COLA's Board of Directors. He retired from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2007 where he was a professor in the Plant Breeding and Genetics program and the Department of Agronomy for 24 years. He is married to Ann Pollock whose great grandparents, Edward Cady Higbee and Grace Fassett Higbee, purchased the land now referred to as the "Camp at Reserve" on the east shore of Lac Courte Oreilles in 1919.

Questions, comments or suggestions for future articles maybe sent to [communications@cola-wi.org](mailto:communications@cola-wi.org)

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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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Issue #57 October 17, 2022

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### SELT'S LAST ISSUE FOR 2022

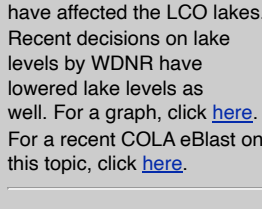
This is the last issue of Short Ears, Long Tales for 2022. We all share LCO's natural treasures, and we are grateful for the care you've shown for the LCO lakes. Many, many thanks!

See you again in April, 2023.

### COLA NEEDS YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

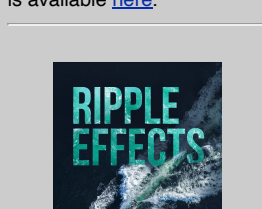
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### LCO LAKES WATER LEVEL

The last several years of below-average precipitation have affected the LCO lakes. Recent decisions on lake levels by WDNR have lowered lake levels as well. For a graph, click [here](#). For a recent COLA eBlast on this topic, click [here](#).



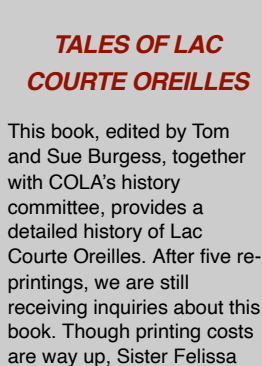
### 2021 LCO WATER QUALITY

The 2021 LCO water-quality assessment based upon WDNR's WisCALM protocol is available [here](#).

### RIPPLE EFFECTS

How We're Loving Our Lakes to Death  
Ted J. Rulseh

Ted Rulseh has completed a [new book](#), published by the UW Press, that captures much of what we are dealing with on LCO. He forcefully argues that Midwesterners should double down on their efforts to confront the many man-made challenges facing our unique natural resources.



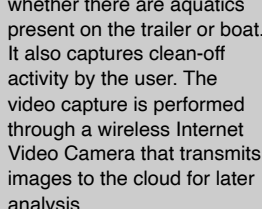
### TALES OF LAC COURTE OREILLES

This book, edited by Tom and Sue Burgess, together with COLA's history committee, provides a detailed history of Lac Courte Oreilles. After five re-printings, we are still receiving inquiries about this book. Though printing costs are way up, Sister Felissa from the St. Francis Solanus Mission in Reserve convinced Tom to share costs of one more limited press run. Now there are more copies available at the Mission or by calling Tom at 715-699-3798.

The book is also available at the [Sherman & Ruth Weiss Community Library](#) in Hayward.

### I-LIDS ON THE LOOKOUT

The Internet Landing Installed Device Sensor (I-LIDS) is now operational at the DNR landing in Chicago Bay. The [I-LIDS system](#) uses advanced sensors that tell it when a boater has entered the launch area and turns on the bottom monitoring of the boat to identify whether there are aquatics present on the trailer or boat. It also captures clean-off activity by the user. The video capture is performed through a wireless Internet Video Camera that transmits images to the cloud for later analysis.



### COLA WEBSITE UPDATE

COLA's [website](#) has been redesigned. It's simpler to navigate and more informative. Take a look.

### LAKE OBSERVATION FORMS

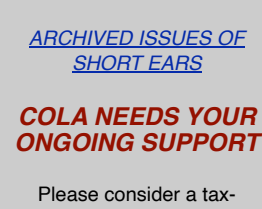
### SEE ANYTHING WEIRD?

If you observe green water, algal mats on the surface or floating or dying fish - anything out of the ordinary - please take pictures and report this using COLA's [observation forms](#) immediately! COLA will alert the WDNR, the LCO Tribe, collect water samples, etc.



### LCO NEEDS YOUR HELP

COLA is a **volunteer organization**. That means essential jobs don't get done unless someone steps up to help out. Contact [communications@cola-wi.org](mailto:communications@cola-wi.org) if interested or you need more information.



### ARCHIVED ISSUES OF SHORT EARS

### COLA NEEDS YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT

Please consider a tax-deductible donation today!

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