



Contact: Jim Coors, Communications Director, COLA
Email: colacommunications@gmail.com
Mobile: 608-628-0694

Wisconsin DNR Supports Effort to Protect Landmark Wisconsin Lake

WDNR to work with Courte Oreilles Lakes Association and Lac Courte Oreilles Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa to limit phosphorus contamination

HAYWARD, WI (April 13, 2017) On March 31, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) in Madison, WI, reversed its water protection policies for Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) by [agreeing to develop a protective phosphorous standard for Lac Courte Oreilles](#) in a negotiated settlement. The decision comes nine months after the submission of the Courte Oreilles Lakes Association's (COLA) and the LCO Tribe's joint petition for judicial review of WDNR's prior refusal to consider a protective phosphorus standard for the lake.

"This is a banner day for LCO," said Kris Sivertson, COLA board president. "The importance of this settlement with the WDNR is immense. COLA has worked tirelessly to get this rulemaking process started. The WDNR in Madison now has shown its willingness to be a partner in preserving and protecting this important Wisconsin lake."

The WDNR will submit a scope statement that initiates development of a phosphorus Site Specific Criterion (SSC) for LCO to Governor Walker by May 15, 2017. If the Governor approves the scope statement, it will then be submitted to the WI Natural Resources Board (NRB) for its approval, and the real work can begin.

With LCO already at a tipping point, timing of these approvals will prove critical. The current level of allowed phosphorus in LCO is now set at an average of 15 ppb, but phosphorus concentrations higher than 40 ppb have been recorded in several sections of the lake. COLA has asked WDNR to implement a new, lake-wide phosphorus standard of 10 ppb as a reasonable and long-term mechanism to preserve LCO's water quality.

LCO is an Outstanding Water Resource, a designation that entails higher levels of protection from the state in the face of threats to its water quality. But, this 5030-acre lake in Sawyer County, has been deteriorating rapidly due to excessive and unregulated phosphorous entering the lake for years. On LCO, 40 percent of the controllable phosphorus discharged into LCO comes from three cranberry operations totaling 140 on acres along the lake's shoreline.

Apart from the legal settlement with WDNR, COLA has offered to assist cranberry growers on LCO with building tailwater recovery systems, also called "closed systems," to eliminate phosphorus from being carried from their bogs into the lake. [COLA will provide up to \\$100,000](#) for the design and construction of these systems. COLA's funds are intended to supplement funds now available to growers as grants from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

"We can now see the solutions we've been looking for falling into place," added Sivertson. "The state is taking steps to provide a new, healthy long-term phosphorus standard for the lake. We have some hope that the cranberry growers will embrace tailwater recovery, a best practice in their industry, and our lake association members are raising the funds to support the process. We are very grateful to be at this point with the support of the WDNR and look forward to continued momentum at the state level."

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. Contact Jim Coors, colacommunications@gmail.com or 608-628-0694.