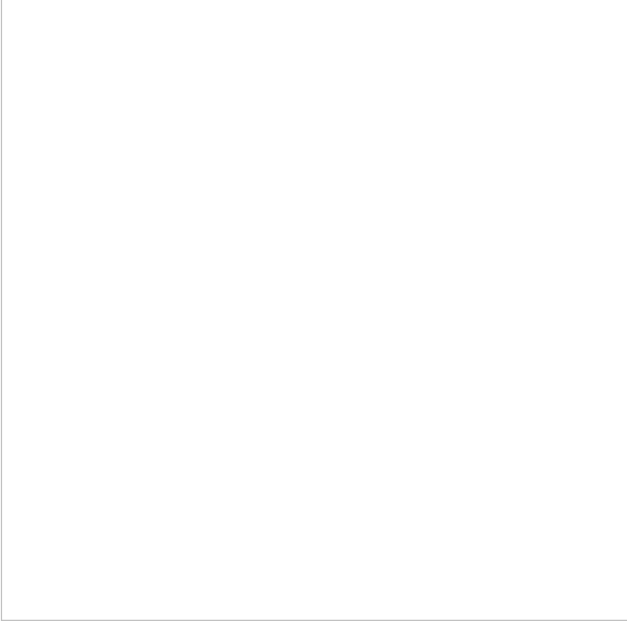


'Lac Courte Oreilles a rare gem, magnificent resource,' a scientist's point of view

By Kathy Hanson
Contributing Writer

Not everyone who gets their hands wet trying to improve the water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles lives on her shores. There are many people—experts—, who love her shores and waters and devote their time and talent to protect them, regardless of residency.

Meet Bruce Wilson, senior staff scientist with over 38 years of limnological monitoring/diagnostic and rehabilitation, including Total Maximum Daily Load (TDML) study experience that spans the waters of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio and Canada—including, of course, Lac Courte Oreilles. Wilson's ties to Lac Courte Oreilles go back to 2007 when he worked with Gary Pulford at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.



"One day I dropped by LCO to see Gary and Linda who then took me out on the lake and I was hooked," Wilson said. Wilson said he immediately recognized the vulnerability of LCO to minor shifts in water quality and volunteered to meet the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal water experts, Dan Tyrolt and Brett McConnell.

"I was totally impressed with their efforts." Wilson said, adding that he began reviewing LCO water quality data for COLA in 2009 and offering some guidelines regarding its vulnerability to degradation. He also then met Dale Olson, Sawyer County Conservation head, and in 2010 officially began studying the lake for COLA, and prepared an [LCO Lake Management Plan](#) and completed a [LCO Resident-Specific Economic Survey and Report](#)—"with lots of help from Dale and Dan and LCOCD."

Gary Pulford, who has known Wilson for 30 years, going back to years of working with him at the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, said he knew Wilson was the right scientist to start helping COLA with their first real lake management plan. "I knew he could do it with his eyes closed," Pulford said.

Pulford said Wilson entered into contract with COLA for the Lac Courte Oreilles Lake Management Plan, helped draft proposals for securing impaired water status, aided COLA in discussions with the Wisconsin DNR and the USEPA about impairment of Musky Bay and then that led to the [Total Maximum Daily Load study](#) that details restoration and protective measures needed to preserve the LCO lakes into the future.

Pulford also credits Wilson with helping COLA to identify and retain other expert scientists and consultants who have been instrumental in improving lake water quality.

"He's representative of the kind of people we've hired over the years," said Pulford.

Wilson grew up on water near Detroit Michigan; his family had a small boat and they spent many a day on Lake St. Clair. His love of water runs deep: he joined the Navy and performed temperature salinity gradients off the Atlantic Coast, most likely for submarine use, he speculates.

After Navy service he studied lake restoration in graduate school at Kent State University, earning an M.S. in Aquatic Ecology/Lake Restoration (B.S. in Biological Science, Kent State University).

From there he worked in private industry before coming to Minnesota to lead their lake restoration—where he has, indeed, led ever since, earning Minnesota's Water Resources Lifetime Achievement Award—the Dave Ford Water Resources Award (2015), the Environmental Initiative Award Minneapolis Chain of Lakes Project (2001), the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District Partnership Award (2000), the Secchi Disk Award, North American Lake Management Society (1996), the Technical Excellence Award and the North American Lake Management Society (1991), to name a few.

Wilson says he has seen many of Minnesota's largest lakes and rivers substantially degraded—despite some of the best lake scientists, residents, farmers and local units of government. Yet, he says using the same tools they used in the Lac Courte Oreilles TDML they have accomplished large and successful restoration of systems that were described as impossible to improve.

"For example, the Sauk River system in central Minnesota has achieved a 75 percent reduction in phosphorus loading over the past 25 years—with measurable and observable improvements in water quality. The same for the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes," Wilson said.

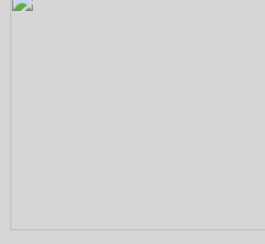
Most recently Wilson has been working with COLA to help prepare the shoreline restoration grant that was awarded to COLA a year ago.

Perhaps the best news in all of this is knowing that Wilson is optimistic about LCO's future. Why?

"COLA members have become active advocates of sound management based on understanding natural limits (Mother Nature's checkbook) and (there are) exceptional partnerships between COLA, Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe, Sawyer County and businesses that have grown and flourished," Wilson said, adding that good water quality is good for business, helps maintain Tribal needs and has enhanced regional competitiveness through diversification of local economies and recreation. It is these very partnerships, said Wilson, that offset the political excesses that come with maintaining clean water.

Bruce and his wife Denise live in St. Paul with their three daughters, Alexis, Kim and Natalie. They love to fish, sail and rehab houses.

Kathy Hanson is a free-lance reporter for the Sawyer County Gazette, the Sawyer County Field Editor for Our Wisconsin magazine, and Copy Editor for the Bayfield County Journal. She has also served as Staff Reporter, Business Feature Writer, Columnist, and Copy Editor for the Sawyer County Record.



COLA COMMUNICATIONS

COLA Issues [Press Release](#): [Lake Association Foots \\$200,000 Bill for WDNR study](#)

2016 WDNR [Impaired Waters List Updates Fact Sheet](#)

WDNR's [Draft 2016 Impaired Waters List](#)

COLA's [Response to WDNR's 2016 Impaired Waters List](#)

COLA issues [Press Release](#) on [Shoreland Restoration Grant](#)

COLA Issues [Press Release](#) on [Saving Lac Courte Oreilles Monster Musky and Walleye Fishing.](#)

COLA [Comments](#) on the [Northwoods Beach Public Reserve Strip Draft Ordinance.](#)

From [The Guardian](#): [A cranberry politics primer focusing on Lac Courte Oreilles and written by a Washington, DC based tribal rights attorney.](#)

COLA [releases](#) its [Total Maximum Daily Load Report](#)

COLA [finalizes](#) its [strategy to address the future health of our lakes](#)

NOTICES

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

Why "Short Ears, ...?"

Lac Courte Oreilles, or Lake Short Ears, was the name used by the first French traders who visited what was then known as Ottawa Lake. There are at least two explanations for the name "Lac Courte Oreilles." One traces to the practice of a local band of Ottawas who trimmed their ears. Another stems from the many small (ear-shaped?) bays located on big Lac Courte Oreilles. For additional information, see the references that follow.

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. The book is available through COLA and the [Sherman & Ruth Weiss Community Library](#) in Hayward.

Spirit of the Ojibwa Images of Lac Courte Oreilles Elders

A well-referenced compilation of paintings, stories, photographs, and history published in 2012 by Sara Balbin, James R. Bailey, and Thelma Nayquonabe. It is available from the [Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community Library](#).

History Comes Alive

This 2004 publication, compiled and written by Caryl A. Pfaff and Ann Marie Penskov, is a compilation of community and history center photographs available from the [Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community Library](#).

[Archived issues of Short Ears, Long Tales](#)

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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