

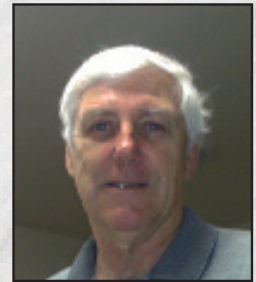
## President's Letter

Having completed my first year as President of your COLA, it is time to review the direction our COLA is going. One can always wonder if the direction available to us is the correct one; are we aggressive enough on matters; are we too aggressive, and what is our role to be. But mostly, do we reflect the issues that matter to our members. In any case, we have established ourselves as a resource for you and your lakes interest.

We have continued providing you with informative summer programs with the new Thursday evening format. We have noticed nominal increased participation with the new meeting day. Of note, we have a somewhat different group who are now participating. Overall, the meeting day other than a weekend day has been very popular with many, so we expect to keep the meetings on Thursday nights.

Beyond our meeting focus, we are finding active support with our voluntary and very active Executive Group working behind the scenes. Their active participation in Otter Tail County groups include the AIS Task Force, County Water Plan group, and others. My thanks go out to their commitment to our mission in COLA, and the active participation addressing the many issues affecting our lakes. Considering there are few who effectively representing the interests of owners of lake and river recreation properties and homes in Otter Tail County at the state or any level, we have a tall task if we are to assume that responsibility. But if not us, who?

*Con't on page 5*



*Dave Sethre is President of the OTC COLA for 2014 & 2015*

## Ice Push-up is Radical this Year

This is tuning out to be the winter of the ice heave on many of our larger Otter Tail County lakes. The lack of snow cover has allowed radical expansion and contraction of the ice sheets. The alternating warm weather shrinkage with freezing of water in crack openings has resulted in expansion of unprecedented levels in recent years. Estimates are that expansion has been 150 to 200% at some locations. And we are only half ways through the winter. On Otter Tail Lake, the push has been non-existent on the north shore, thereby concentrating its force totally on the south shore.

At times in the past, major ice breakers with mid-lake pushups have occurred to relieve the impact to shore-line areas. Unfortunately, we have not seen this in recent years. That's good for ice fishermen who travel the lake without impairment, but not so desirable otherwise. And with ice thickness about 24" now, there will be little hope for any stress relief to occur with a mid-lake ice breaker from here on to the end of the winter.

*Con't on page 5*



*Ice damage is concentrated on the south shore of Otter Tail Lake rather than the north shore.*

# Train the Teachers to Train the Kids

*By Jerry Horgen, Program Developer*

## Winter Update: 2015: We're Moving Right Along...

"Train the Teachers to Train the Kids" is "Moving Right Along." This program is funded by the Otter Tail County Commissioners and approved by the Otter Tail County Aquatic Invasive Task Force. We're giving accurate data to science teachers in eleven school districts and they in turn, give that data to kids. Our goal is to have "kids train Kids" in each of the eleven school districts. We have an "Aquatic Invasive Species Video Contest" that each school district has received a contest flyer explaining the criteria. Essentially, kids come up with a 1-3 minute video to an online hosting service (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.) The video is from a kid's point of view in a format that other kids will want to view-kids training kids. The video submissions are due May 22, 2015. The first prize winner will receive \$100 and the science teacher/school district will receive \$900 for science related teaching on AIS.

In the meantime, Jerry Horgen, Program Developer and Moriya Rufer, Biologist and expert are providing workshops in the area schools. What we do is ask kids for their help (we target middle level kids) in being the eyes and ears of keeping our lakes clean. Then we give out information to groups of kids (80-100) in a lecture format. About halfway through the presentation we start a double jeopardy game and test their knowledge. If kids pick an easy question for \$200, the kid may receive a small prize like a pen or boat chamois. If the student takes a \$1000 question, the student can win a T-Shirt. We have been well received in the school districts we have completed our program/workshop. I then write up articles for each local newspaper (if the editor can't make it) to spread the word and I invite a TV station to come and visit as well. We have completed two presentations and in the next two weeks we have two more and more are being scheduled. We hope to have our presentation in all eleven school districts completed as soon as we possibly can. Very simply, the school presentations have been a lot of fun and the kids love them as well.

This coming spring and fall we will be offering an outdoor experience on an infested lake to our school districts. We take "43" kids at a time and have a four hour presentation on a pontoon where the kids actually see aquatic invasive species and then are tested. We do serve a bag lunch for the kids and upon completion; we give an AIS T-Shirt to each attendee and take a group picture. The group pictures are given to the local newspaper. It's simply fun!

It's our goal to have a "unique video message" in the schools by fall for "kids to train other kids."



Moriya Rufer provides training in aquatic invasive species spread issues and prevention for Battle Lake students in 2014.

# Oil Pipelines Have Otter Tail County in Their Sight

*By Dave Sethre*

After the recent initial go-around of review of pipeline routes for the Enbridge solution for moving oil, it appears that Otter Tail County has one of the three remaining routes. Our position is that oil needs to be moved somehow, but we are concerned with routes traveling through our upper reaches of the Otter Tail River watershed. The route is currently positioned to exit Becker County and pass by Vergas with a crossing of the Otter Tail River south of Perham. It generally follows the route of an existing gas pipeline.

Note the letter sent to the Public Utilities Commission in opposition to the route through lakes country in Otter Tail County:

Honorable Eric L. Lipman  
Office of Administrative Hearings  
600 North Robert Street  
PO Box 64620  
St. Paul, MN 55164-0620

RE: In the Matter of the Application of North Dakota Pipeline Company LLC for a Certificate of Need for the Sandpiper Pipeline Project in Minnesota  
MPUC Docket No. PL-6668/CN-13-473; OAH Docket No. 8-2500-31260

Dear Judge Lipman,

I represent the Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations (OTC COLA). Our organization is a countywide network of lake associations, representing the interests of lakeshore property owners, organized to protect and improve the waters and shorelands of Otter Tail County.

We agree with many comments made by others who question the need for an additional pipeline corridor at all in northern Minnesota. The uncertainty of global oil needs, the volatile pricing of oil versus development costs, the viability of alternative delivery systems and the lack of benefit to Minnesota specifically are all valid reasons to deny the Sandpiper altogether.

If indeed it is determined that there is a need for additional pipeline capacity through Minnesota, our attention turns to the routing of such lines. The company's practice of leaving abandoned pipelines in the ground is surely a major factor in their desire to develop a new corridor. The Sandpiper could, if it were to be built at all, be placed in the established Highway 2 corridor after the removal of abandoned lines.

Any new corridor will not only disrupt the environment directly by its installation, but also put at perpetual risk those lands and waters through which it travels. That a corridor will eventually be filled with several pipelines only magnifies the risk.

The specific route desired by the company as their preferred new Sandpiper corridor has been chosen for reasons of the company's convenience because it is shorter and presumably cheaper, rather than environmental safety. In the long run it may easily prove very expensive to the citizens of Minnesota, without bonded assurances and enhanced safety protocols.

This corridor will go through areas of very sensitive soils over our shared groundwater, through many wetlands, under too many rivers and streams, and far too close to lakes and residential development. Moreover, the company's preferred route also endangers old growth forests on high ground and ecologically important lowland conifer forests and critical habitat. It plows through state parks and designated scientific and natural areas. Much of the preferred route is too remote to facilitate timely cleanup of the leaks and spills that will inevitably occur.

If a new corridor is needed, surely a better route can be found with less danger to both the environment and the public; several have been suggested. These alternatives should be thoroughly explored and any route through Minnesota should be provided a full Environmental Impact Statement.

Oil pipelines should be required to follow established public right of way corridors, and never allowed in either remote areas or close to populated residential districts.

The parent company Enbridge has a terrible record of significant oil spills, which has been well documented by others. For this reason the Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations urges great caution in the routing of this corridor, with a full Environmental Impact Statement required by a third party monitor for any route considered as a finding of fact, before you, Judge Lipman, would be able to make an informed decision on this issue of importance.

Sincerely,

David Sethre  
President,  
Otter Tail County Coalition of Lake Associations



# Aquatic Invasive Special Summit

*Attended by Locals*

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Many thanks to the participants from Otter Tail County attending the recent AIS Summit in St. Cloud. From our Executive Group and the AIS Task Force were Dave Majkrzak, Roger Nietzke, Jeff Stabnow, Jerry Horgen and Bernie Steeves, as well as Marsha and Bill from the county. The following is a reflection of the discussion and presentations at the Summit from Dave Majkrzak's perspective. Many report, thankfully, that Otter Tail County is somewhat ahead of many of the other counties and COLA's in addressing the fight against spread of AIS.

1. **Education:** Education remains a critical area. The classroom training on AIS developed and implemented in Otter Tail County schools by Jerry Horgen and Moriya Rufer is being copied by others. Use of billboards and signs provide reminders for traveling boaters to remember to "Clean, Drain & Dry". Information cards are being used by all for distribution at bait shops, resorts and convenience stores, among other locations. New means of communication need to be explored.
2. **Inspection:** Inspection, incoming and exiting a lake, also received much attention. There is an effort to improve detail and consistency of all inspections, as well as coordination between states.
3. **Many Fronts:** The fight against zebra mussels is really just getting started in Minnesota, and receives most of the attention, but other AIS, like spiny water flea, needs to be given more attention as it is also in our state. As an example, the combination of ZM and spiny water flea, and many other factors, along with muskie stocking, netting and slot limits, has created a major negative impact on Mille Lacs Lake fisheries. No action seems to be forthcoming to correct the problems there.
4. **Equipment Movement:** Once a piece of water equipment leaves an infested lake, the need to follow proper decontamination procedures first falls into the hands of the operator/owner. Secondary inspections, road side inspections and future safeguards received lots of attention, but at the same time, recognition that it is a difficult and challenging undertaking.
5. **Decontamination Units:** Decontamination is another critical area for discussion. Local entities are taking different approaches to purchase and implementation of decontamination units. A major issue is the commitment of resources to man the units.
6. **Fines & Penalties:** Fines and penalties are pretty much felt to be too low. The point was made many times, that if someone poaches a deer, they can lose their hunting license, gun, and in some cases vehicles. If someone brings AIS into a lake and causes millions of dollars of damage, the fine is \$500. Expect our legislature to consider ways to increase penalties for AIS violations.
7. **Reports from Other States:** Many Western states (Montana, Colorado, Utah etc.) have become very aggressive with inspections and decontamination strategies partly because of commercial and industrial needs (water plants, irrigation etc.) and have had more public buy in as everyone relates to "plugged pipes" on their water supply. Multiple "small" recreational lakes like we have in Minnesota puts the problem more on local property owners and government, with the overall public not affected as much.
8. **Colorado Experience:** A Colorado inspection location recorded zebra mussel violators from many states including Minnesota and surrounding area. If they drive all the way to Colorado with ZM on their boat, they can surely drive to Otter Tail County.
9. **Local Experts:** Mr. Mike McCartney and Dr. Peter Sorensen from the University of Minnesota, both spoke on zebra mussels and AIS. Dr. McCartney has shown that ZM veligers floating down stream more than about 1.5 miles do not seem to then be able to survive on a concrete block. Dr McCartney is also using molecular and gene based analysis to track where ZM have come from, and how they are moving.
10. **Zequanox:** Dan Molloy, inventor of Zequanox (dead bacteria based killer of ZM) was at the conference. Zequanox has been tested and trying in controlled, open water and lab testing for the control of ZM. And while quite successful in controlled, longer term exposure conditions, the less controlled "open water" use is felt to be of limited effectiveness, and very expensive.
11. **Christmas Lake:** The zebra mussel (ZM) infestation of Christmas Lake (in Minneapolis area near infested Lake Minnetonka) received lots of attention. They have tried Zequanox, copper sulfide and now potash in a very small (about 60x120 foot) and shallow area. Young adolescent ZM's were found there, and they have curtailed off the area and are trying to eradicate this small area of ZM.
12. **World Wide Impact:** The accidental and sometimes intended movement of species around the world has created hundreds of examples of what not to do. Information from New Zealand and Australia, and other remote areas show the magnitude of problems that can arise from moving species accidentally, or on purpose.

*Con't from page 1, President's Letter*

We have published our "Mission Statement" in our most recent newsletters. This comprehensive list has the fight against the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS) as its most important pillar. But other work is most certainly necessary as we provide a united front to keep our waters clean, recreationally attractive and viable for our fisherman, among other goals. It actually takes more effort than our great group of volunteers can achieve. If we can find sufficient resources to hire a staff person who can provide the level of effort we find appropriate, our mission will be made much easier. But this will take more money than we currently generate through our dues and other sources of income. An extra source of income has to one of our goals. We can do so much more with the resources.

Thanks for your support for the past year. Please let us know what your priorities might be. And if you can volunteer to join us to make a difference in Otter Tail County lakes country, please let us know. Call me at home at 218-367-3322 or email at dsethre@arvig.net. Survive the remainder of the winter and get ready for spring. It's just around the corner.

*Con't from page 1, Ice Push-up*

For those with major shoreline damage like me, we should be wishing for some snow to cover the ice. Even 6" of snow cover would provide sufficient insulation to reduce the temperature variation impacts to the ice sheets. It is estimated that in extreme years such as this one, total expansion will exceed 3 feet per mile of lake. That means that a real additional shoreline mess will occur from the 10 mile long fetch of ice in front of my location on Otter Tail Lake. Here's hoping you will escape the mess at your location. Dave Sethre



*Damage on the north point of Otter Tail Lake is avoided by a breaker that formed right on the shore line.*

## Otter Tail Coalition of Lakes Association

Presents:

**What:** Seminar on lakes and lakeshore issues.

**When:** May 23, 2015 from 12 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**Where:** Thumper Pond Resort in the Lakes Room

**Speakers:**

Darby Nelson, author of "For Love of Lakes" | EOTSWCD speaker/s | RMB Labs speaker/s

*Look for more updates in the next COLA newsletter*

# Editorial Page

*The opinion of the author does not necessarily represent the opinion of OTC COLA or its Members. Information is provided as part of a dialogue on important issues facing us.*

## Editorial: Say No to More Muskies

*By Dave Majkrzak*

Many of you in the lakes country are aware of the MNDNR ongoing policy of stocking muskie in some of our Otter Tail lakes, and their plans to add more lakes to the list. So you may ask why this important? The primary reasons are two-fold. First, the opportunity to spread aquatic invasive species (AIS) is high on the list. But in addition to this, we have little information on the impact that muskie presence in a lake has on populations of other fish. We think that other game fish are a major food-source for muskie and general game fishing success is negatively impacted.

The muskie fisherman has been very aggressive in promoting and supporting their sport. I say they are probably pushing too far. Why? Muskie fishermen represent about 10% of the taxpaying citizens who fish in Minnesota. And because only about 1/3 of our taxpaying citizens fish, they actually represent less than 4 % of our taxpaying citizens. Yet their aggressive and successful lobbying of the MNDNR, and the legislature, already have muskie stocking on 35% of the accessible lake acreage in Minnesota. Muskie fisherman are trophy fisherman, they do not eat the fish, and rarely keep any fish over the legal length limit. Last year they got the MN legislature to approve a change to the legal catch limit size, from 48 inches to 54 inches.

We do not object to muskie fisherman or their sport, however, as mentioned, we are very concerned about the negative impacts on the other sport fishing communities. Panfish (sunfish, perch, and crappie) are the most sought after fish in Minnesota, with over 9.7 million pounds harvested for fun and human consumption. After panfish, walleye is the popular fish, followed by pike, bass and then muskie. The MNDNR says 4.6 million pounds of pike and 4.6 million pounds of walleye are harvested for consumption every year. Muskie are a fierce sight hunting predator, and with new length standards, and no known natural enemies, their population and size will continue to grow in our lakes.

Unfortunately, muskies also leave their original plant site and travel up and down the river chains. This means that their range and available fishing acreage is much larger. For example, a 48.5 inch muskie was caught on non-stocked Crane Lake this year, 40 miles from stocked Lake Vermillion. Here in Otter Tail County, muskie have migrated from Battle Lake to other lakes in their river chain. They have also moved from Pelican Lake to as far as Lake Lida.

Muskie is a native fish on 44 lakes and 8 rivers in Minnesota, mostly in the north central area of the state including Lake of the Woods. At the end of 2011, the official number has now grown to 116 waters, and pretty much covering the whole state, including the Minneapolis/St Paul area. Muskie are not native to Otter Tail County, or any counties east or south of Otter Tail County. But the muskie fisherman groups want more stocked lakes.

The muskie fisherman will argue those muskie are good for a lake, that they will be part of a new balance. They are right on this point, a new balance with more muskie, and less of everything else. However, our lakes are all public water to be shared by all. And, we do not believe that the sport of a few should override the sport of many. This is especially of concern now when so many muskie lakes are contaminated with AIS including zebra mussels. The movement of AIS from one waters to another is especially opportunistic with the very transient muskie fisherman.

Because muskie are not native to our county, they fit the definition of an Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). It is impossible to add a new species to an ecosystem, without it having an effect on others in the ecosystem. And it is especially a problem when you add a fish to the top of the food chain. With the millions of dollars being spent on AIS, it is mystery how the muskie expansion is allowed to continue.

Limited scientific and technical reports are available on the affect muskie have on the other fish in a lake. No reports yet address what happens when muskie are now allowed to get to 54 inches. We need more research on these issues before any more consideration is given to expanding muskie lakes. But common sense and the definition of invasive species will tell you there will be change. We think fishing success on Pelican Lake has been significantly effected by some factor over the years, and it likely is the muskie. In any case, ask your fisherman friends what they see happening with fish populations on muskie stocked lakes.

So, we need your support on this issue to influence our voting legislatures. Please go to <http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/members/hmem.asp> and contact your senators and house members with your concerns.

*The Long Range Plan for Muskie can be found at [http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fisheries/muskiepike\\_2020.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fisheries/muskiepike_2020.html)*



# Drought or Temporary Wet Cycle Reprieve

*By Dave Sethre*

This almost snowless winter is an interesting development; at least since some low snow years a couple of years ago. Even those years ended with some significant snow late in the season to recharge the groundwater table and increase flows to the river systems. And that may be the case yet for Otter Tail County this next March and April.

One thing is for certain; the nation is seeing some really radical temperature and precipitation fluctuations completely different from past memory. In the east, some low temperature records are being broken from the extremes of the 1930's and 1880's when so many low temperature records occurred. New England is catching all the snow that should be spread over our central U.S. and the midwest through the Ohio Valley. In contrast to that, the west is seeing record warmth.

As far as snow around here, or the lack of it, the weather reporters in Fargo noted that the long standing record for longest period without at least one inch of snow was broken by about 10 days this past January. And that after a really wet calendar year in 2014 when my official recording station had over 30 inches of precipitation, when the average is less than 20 inches.

We could reminisce about the dry conditions in Otter Tail County in the mid to late 1930's; possibly 1936. It was so dry that my father, who grew up in Pelican Rapids, remembers the waters edge in Lake Lida a couple hundred yards from the ordinary shore line today. It was probably the same period when the Otter Tail River and Red River at Fargo was reduced to intermittent pools, with no flow that summer.

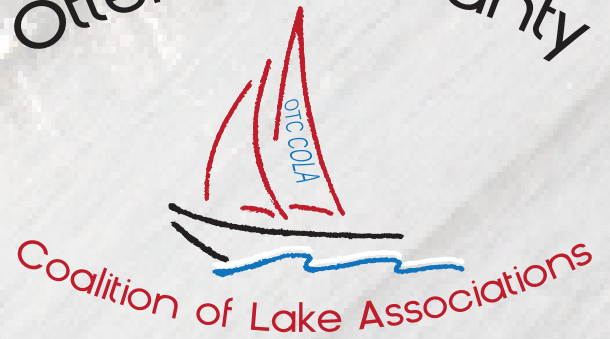
We all understand that those events are quite unique and seldom occur. But we can be certain of one thing; that they will recur someday. I guess it is something to consider and hope and pray it will never happen.

That brings us to a situation which was very pointedly driven home during our August meeting this past summer. Our speaker for the meeting was MNDNR Hydrologists Janel Mersch and Julie Aadland and the topic was trends with agricultural wells in lakes country. One of the interesting points made were the possible connections of ground water reservoirs which supports lakes levels. In some cases, these ground water zones are pumped for irrigation. So if water is pumped from these undergrounds sources, they directly affect the lake level interconnected to the point of pumping. As a point of reference, Ms. Mersch is conducting research on irrigation impacts to the Straight River in Hubbard County, with a parallel research project in Douglas County.

The point of concern would relate to the added pressure to lake levels during drought periods from irrigation. It was noted that new irrigation well construction has accelerated and that man were added in recent years through the existing permitting process provided by the State of Minnesota. I am certain that there is much science involved in the permitting of new wells. But it would appear that the permitting process does not include consideration of whether an underground water source is interconnected to surface water. Irrigators benefit when their underground source is interconnected to a lake, because they have almost unlimited water available. However, our lake interests may be contrary to irrigators needs. Clearly, we need to establish a real understanding of these relationships as concerns the overt commercialization of our lake resources. And a dialogue needs to be established on further exploitation of ground water that is interconnected to lakes.

*Con't on last page*

# Otter Tail County



## Contact Info for OTC COLA:

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***Interested in joining COLA or  
forming a Lake Association?  
Contact the Membership Committee!***

Pat Prunty, Committee Chair  
45056 County Hwy 35  
Dent, MN 56528  
Home: 218-342-2226  
Cell: 612-750-6276  
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*Con't from page 7*

If hydrologic conditions return as was experienced in the 1930's, our lakes will surely be greatly impacted. And with the same hot and dry conditions affecting agriculture, we could see a doubling or tripling of water being drawn from underground water sources. For the current situation, each new well will possibly add pressure to limited water resources. And for those lakes which interconnect with the draw-down of the underground water, impacts will be seen with even lower lakes levels.

For each reader, we challenge you to determine if your lake or river will be affected by new wells being constructed or increased irrigation during extreme periods. If the information is not readily available to you, you may consider asking the DNR or other state agencies to research and develop that information as a tool for approving or disapproving further irrigation well permitting. While we understand that agricultural interests are very powerful politically, should we just stand by and do nothing?

Let us know your opinion on this and other issues. We care and are here to represent your interests as much as possible on issues within our Strategic Plan.



***Outflows from Otter Tail Lake show quite low levels with only 4" of water on the weir. Gauge reading is 4.6'. Much snow or spring rain will be needed to restore normal levels to the lake and the Otter Tail River.***