

CARIBOU LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION

Saturday September 4, 2010

9:40 a.m. – 12 noon

Meeting Notes

CLPOA Members Present: Bill Dunn, Diana Kamp, Jesse Neihart, Bob Reid, Louise Soumi, Pat Vaughn, Sally Westby

1.0 Call to order – the meeting was called to order at 10:05 a.m. Board members and guests were introduced. Guests attending included Cook County Commissioner Bruce Martinson; Karen Evens (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)); Bill Lane, Cook County Zoning Administrator; Mike Larson and Nancy Mankevil, Cook County Visitors Bureau; Cheryl Walimaa, Cook County Firewise

2.0 2009 Annual meeting notes – It was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** that the minutes of the 2009 Annual meeting be approved. Motion **CARRIED**.

3.0 Treasurer's Report

Louise Soumi presented the treasurer's report (appendix A). As of the end of July 2010 there is \$3,785.60 in the checking account. 53 members have paid dues already for this year not including those who paid today. There are 125 potential members. The organization has cut costs by using the Internet for communication whenever possible rather than the U.S. mail.

Bob Reid noted that everyone in the watershed was assessed \$18 this year to cover the cost of five years of water quality sampling for Caribou Lake.

4.0 Water Chemistry and Environmental Standards Presentation - Karen Evens of the MPCA gave a power point presentation regarding water chemistry and environmental standards. The water quality standards are built on the different eco regions in the State. The water quality in our area (the Northern Lakes and Forests) is related to the type of eco region we are in. In forested areas, water moves slowly across the landscape and this gets reflected in our lakes. Northern lakes are generally low in phosphorous but there is a lot of variability. Karen described how a phosphorous standard is built. Knowing the water quality in the past can help set the bar for what standards should be now and in the future. The Minnesota standard for phosphorous is set at 30 parts per billion. Any lake that violates the standards sufficiently gets designated as "impaired". Data indicates that the pre-European level of phosphorous in Minnesota lakes was 11-16 parts per billion. While the State has set the standard for Caribou Lake at 30 parts per billion, the Cook County Water Plan has set 15 parts per billion as the goal.

Karen presented a series of slides that showed the complexity of what occurs in lakes. She stressed the importance of continued investigation, vigilance and data gathering as we work to implement our Lake Management Plan. Our work so far is setting the stage for much better management of Caribou Lake.

5.0 Land Use Regulations = water quality = quality of life

Bill Lane is the new Cook County Zoning Administrator. He discussed the challenges of the job and the role of the Board of Adjustment. The Board is composed of volunteers appointed by the County. Their role is make decisions regarding variances – that is, things that people want to do on their property that would otherwise be prohibited. Many of the things that property owners want to do on land abutting Caribou Lake require variances because many lots are small or buildings were placed closer to the Lake than is currently allowed. The Board tries to make uniform decisions and often uses reasonableness as a standard. There are currently two openings on the Board of Adjustment and Bill encouraged Cook County residents to apply.

Septic issues will be one of Bill's priorities. Cook County has a large land area so it is important for him hear from people when they have a concern. He will respond to all inquiries and concerns. There is a tendency in the County for people to do "stealth" construction to avoid having to comply with regulations. It is important to call the Zoning office immediately when you see things such as: bulldozing land into the lake; construction in bluff areas; or cutting of vegetation in the shore land area. Property owners who wish to make changes on their property are encouraged to come into the Zoning office and talk with Bill *before* beginning construction.

6. 0 Cook County Economy -Mike Larson and Nancy Mankevil of the new Cook County Visitors Bureau made a presentation about Cook County tourism and the goals of the new Visitors Bureau.

Mike suggested that a healthy economy is important for a healthy environment. Different parts of the County have different types of tourism. For example, in the Lutsen area the golf course and ski hill are important, but so are good restaurants and the ability to be able to work from remote locations.

80% of Cook County's tourism money comes from the core areas of: lodging, restaurants/bars, retail, real estate/construction and recreation/entertainment. 20 % comes from indirect sources.

While the lodging industry did well in the 1990's, since 2000 growth has been very small and expenses increasing. Interestingly, Lutsen Mountain revenues have been flat while revenues in other tourism venues have been going down. The golf course, for example, has seen a 33% decline in revenues since 2001.

The Visitors Bureau has been formed to counter some of these trends and strengthen the "North Shore brand". There is increasing tourism competition from Duluth and Lake County, neither of which has traditionally been considered the North Shore. Both are spending significantly to promote themselves. Other competing destinations are the Iron Range and the Twin Cities.

Besides looking for additional funding sources, the Bureau has been promoting things that enhance the visitor experience such as music after skiing. Also important will be the installation of broadband so there can be reliable, fast Internet service.

Lance Johnson suggested that the Bureau consider using the name North Shore/Cook County to promote tourism. Bill Dunn asked Mike and Nancy to reiterate the importance of guarding against the importation of invasive species in any tourism materials/promotions.

7.0 Firewise – Shirley Walimaa distributed information about the Firewise program. Associations are being encouraged to become “Firewise Communities” and hold one Firewise event per year. The fire threat in our area is down because of the fuel reduction events we have sponsored, but we are not in the clear yet.

There is still some funding available for the installation of sprinkler systems to protect against fire. Interested property owners should go online to the Cook County website.

8.0 Caribou Lake Management Plan – Bob Reid reported that CLPOA received an award from the Cook County Soil and Water Conservation District for the Lake Management Plan we put together for Caribou Lake. He reiterated the point made earlier by Karen Evens regarding the phosphorous goal set for Caribou Lake (15 parts per billion). This is the same goal set for Caribou Lake in the Cook County Water Plan. This is a difficult but achievable goal that is the right thing to do for the future of the lake and community. The highest phosphorous load ever found at Caribou Lake was 25 parts per billion. If the load ever got that high again, Karen Evens said the State or County would do an alert.

In light of the presentation by the Cook County Visitors Bureau, Bob noted that the Lake Management Plan recognizes the importance of a vibrant economy and support for amenities that enable people to enjoy and experience the lake.

Bill Lane reported on the owl survey he has been doing since 1987. Boreal owls have disappeared from the area and have been supplanted by another type of owl. He cautioned against too much “dismantling” of the boreal forest. The boreal forest provides important habitat for owls.

Diana Kamp reported on a meeting between CLPOA board members and the DNR to begin work on the Lake Management Plan. Issues discussed were improvements to the public access, public lands protection, and lake water levels. CLPOA is working with the DNR to inventory the public lands adjacent to Caribou Lake so that we can develop a plan to protect them.

Lake Level Monitoring - Sally Westby reported on the lake level monitoring for 2010. Official readings from the Westby dock show the lake down 14 ½ inches from the high point observed in 2008 when CLPOA began official readings. While the lake level is low right now, it is not an historic low. After quite a few dry years and warm summers, it will take several years for the lake level to come up again.

Bill Dunn said that work done on a culvert on the Caribou Trail, whether it was done correctly or not, does not affect the level of Caribou Lake.

Pat Vaughn reported that neither of the floating loon nests installed resulted in successful breeding this year. Hopefully things will go better next year.

There was discussion of the increase in weeds near the public access this year. This could be attributable to a number of things including the low lake level, warm temperatures, motorboat use in the shallow water and use of fertilizers by nearby property owners. CLPOA will monitor and work on this issue.

Invasive Species - there are 14 lakes on the Gunflint Trail that now have an invasive water flea. We need to be on alert to keep invasive species out of Caribou Lake.

Septic Upgrade Compliance (see appendix B) – Bill Dunn reported that, after much work, we now have an updated report on the septic inspections done on Caribou Lake several years ago. Of the 80 septic systems initially surveyed, 50% or 39 were out of compliance. Of those 39 systems that failed, 29 have now been replaced or brought into compliance. While 10 are still non compliant, 9 were recently contacted by the County and 7 have already responded. This is good news. We should soon begin to see improvements in water quality readings and within 10 years we could have a very different lake.

9.0 Board of Director's Nominations –

The following people have been recommended for two-year terms on the CLPOA Board 2010-2011.

Sally Westby, Incumbent
Bob Reid, Incumbent
Bob Hewitt, Incumbent
Jesse Neihart, Incumbent

It was MOVED by Joe Mullen and SECONDED that the nominations for 2 year terms for Board of Directors for 2010-11 be approved. Motion CARRIED unanimously.

10.0 Issues from the Floor – In response to a question, Bill Dunn said that committees established in 2009 to work on the Lake Management Plan did a great deal of work in 2010. As reported earlier, a small group has begun meeting with the DNR to address public lands, water quality and the public access. The communications committee has been compiling email lists and now has an updated list of property owners. Follow up has been completed on septic upgrade compliance. **There was agreement with the suggestion that a report card be developed to track progress on the Lake Management Plan each year.**

11.0 President's Farewell – Bill Dunn was thanked for his outstanding service as president. He has graciously agreed to continue on as a board member.

12.0 Adjourn – 12:00 p.m.