



FALL 2008

## “Saving the Places We Love” Part 2

By Britta Reque-Dragicevic

### Their Gift Helped to Conserve Additional Land

Every spring, Jack and Betty Thomas write down the “first” events in the woods and water around their home on Mann Lake near Hackensack, Minnesota. Naturalists at heart and having spent years paying close attention to nature's ways-the Thomas's know how sensitive Mother Nature is and how easily humans impact that environment. That's why in 2002, they made the decision to donate part of their land on Mann Lake to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF).

“The land we donated is in a very sensitive bay-where loons and ducks nest every year-we didn't want to see that developed,” said Betty Thomas in an interview in Hackensack at the headquarters of their company, Mann Lake Limited-a leading global manufacturer of bee-keeping and candle making supplies.



“We live in a quiet end of the lake and we wanted to preserve that-we love watching the eagles and ospreys, the mallards and their ducklings, the beaver and otters that enjoy the freedom of that area of the lake,” said Jack Thomas, also present for the interview.

The land includes 454 feet of shoreline and 13.8 acres. The donation allowed the Thomas's the peace of mind that the property would be protected from future development and that the wildlife habitat would be preserved. In 2006, the LLAWF donated the land to the Minnesota DNR to be managed as an Aquatic Management Area (AMA) with the restrictions of no hunting or trapping.

“We don't have any children and as we started to get older, we began thinking about what we wanted to do with our land,” said Betty. “We've been fortunate in life and so instead of selling it, we decided to donate it. Plus, we really liked the idea of seeing the results of our donation in our lifetime.”

#### Mann Lake AMA



The Thomas's donated the land in two parcels in consecutive donations, which allowed them to maximize the tax benefit-taken as tax deductible contributions for multiple periods of six years.

“It wasn't about the money. Although, we did realize it didn't make a lot of sense to continue paying property taxes on land we didn't live on and had no plans to use. The bottom line, though, for us, is that we love nature. Jack has been coming up to this area since he was two-and we bought the property back in the 1960's. The land is partly what inspired us to go into the beekeeping supply industry. Some of our best memories together have been walks in the woods and time spent on the lake,” said Betty.



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LLAWF  
PO Box 455,  
Hackensack, MN 56452

## “Saving the Places We Love” Part 2, continued

Accepting donated land and/or buying land to protect its conservation value and returning the land to public ownership and enjoyment is part of what the LLAWF does to help preserve the water, woods, and wildlife in the watershed's 855,000 acres that includes 674 lakes, 312 miles of streams and rivers and 140,000 acres of wetlands. Donated land can have a major impact in preserving not only the land that is given, but additional land. By donating the Thomas's land to the DNR, the LLAWF triggered the release of \$600,000 from the State of Minnesota's “Reinvest in Minnesota”



(RIM) Program, which is funded in part by the sale of Minnesota conservation auto license plates. The RIM money was then applied towards a DNR purchase of 1,700 feet of sensitive lakeshore in Lantern Bay of Woman Lake. In the end, more than 2,000 feet of sensitive shoreline was preserved by the Thomas's gift—their own land and more.

The Thomas's couldn't be happier.

“Love for the environment is part of our lives and our business,” said Jack. “We deal with all of the natural sciences in our work—and we've learned a lot about how nature works in our work with bees. It's this increased awareness that also led us to the decision to do something that will give back to nature.”

“Oh, yes, you have to give back,” echoed Betty. “Nature has given us so many years of enjoyment—and we just love the beauty and how each year, we're still surprised by what nature does and how exciting it is to witness the life cycles. Donating land is just a very good way to know that you've made a difference. And we're so happy that our gift was able to be used to preserve additional land as well.”



Sporting a **Minnesota Critical Habitat License Plate**—the loon, deer, or fish license plate—is an opportunity for you to contribute to the conservation of Minnesota's natural resources. With an annual minimum contribution of \$30, the money generated from the plates goes in to the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program, where the money is used to buy and manage important critical habitats throughout Minnesota protected as public land and open to the public to enjoy (AMAs, WMAs, and Scientific and Natural Areas). Since

“We are also very pleased with the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation. They made the whole process smooth. We'd be more than happy to talk to anyone interested in hearing how it went for us. We really believe donating is a very worthwhile thing to do,” said Jack.

“You know, afterward, you really feel proud that you can give something that will preserve the land for the future. It's nice to know that after we're gone, it won't be able to be sold—the land will be there for the wildlife,” said Betty.

For more information on how you can donate your land to the LLAWF to help preserve the natural resources of the Leech Lake watershed, please contact the Foundation at 218-675-5773.



*Britta Reque-Dragicevic is a free-lance writer and marketing copywriter; see [www.redflowerwriting.com](http://www.redflowerwriting.com). Britta's family owned property on Leech Lake and she now lives near that area. She, too, has a special love of the natural resources in the Leech Lake Watershed.*

their inception in 1995, more than \$20 million for the purchase of critical habitats has been generated. Many of LLAWF's completed land conservation projects were aided by RIM money generated from the sale of the Critical Habitat License Plates. Want to help? Buy a Critical Habitat License Plate.



## What Does the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation Do?

- Identifies and protects sensitive lands and waters in the watershed through land conservation projects, often in partnership with county, state, and federal governments; other non-profits; lake associations and sporting groups.
- Accepts donations of land and/or helps conservation-minded landowners explore options for selling their land while preserving its conservation value as a legacy for ongoing public enjoyment.
- Facilitates the establishment of conservation easements on private properties to prohibit or limit future development and preserve conservation value while the landowners still retain ownership and use of the land.
- Provides education on individual and community responsibility for stewardship through workshops, publications, and partnerships with lake associations and professional organizations.
- Builds leadership and local responsibility for watershed protection by developing new lake associations and encouraging active land conservation projects within lake associations through the formation of Sustainability Committees.
- Promotes land-use decisions and regulations by local and state governments that will ensure sustainability of the watershed's natural resources.

## Summary of Accomplishments

31 completed land conservation projects.

79,000+ feet of shoreline protected.

2,000+ acres preserved.

\$13 million+ in estimated value of land conservation projects completed, many of which are now part of the DNR, U.S. Forest Service or county land base.

1" shoreland conservation easement in Minnesota (Little Boy Lake Project).

#1 biggest partnership (22 organizations) to team with the DNR to buy a conservation property (Mule Lake WMA @ \$2.7 million).

This November, there's an amendment on the ballot to protect Minnesota's water and fish and wildlife habitat.

Vote on it.

On the November 4th ballot, you will have an opportunity to vote on the Clean Water, Land, and Legacy Constitutional Amendment to provide long-term funding to save the places that Minnesota loves. The amendment will fund the protection of our drinking water sources; enhance and restore our wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; preserve our arts and cultural heritage; support our parks and trails; and protect, enhance, and restore our lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater so we can pass the Minnesota we love on to future generations.

Last February, legislation was passed placing the constitutional amendment on the ballot this fall to let the people of Minnesota decide on the future of their natural resources. The amendment would raise the state sales tax by three-eighths of one percent for the next 25 years, raising about \$300 million per year in 2008 dollars. The amendment language designates that each year the revenue raised will be dedicated among one-third going for clean water initiatives, one-third to the Outdoor Heritage Fund to protect fish and wildlife habitat, 20 percent to the Cultural Heritage Fund, and 14 percent to improve state parks and trails. Why a constitutional amendment? It is the only way to truly create a dedicated source of funding that cannot be changed at the whim of future legislative sessions.

This opportunity could not have come at more critical time. State spending on the environment and natural resources recently hit its lowest point in thirty years—less than one cent of every general fund dollar is spent on protecting Minnesota's natural resources. Meanwhile, forty percent of Minnesota's lakes, rivers and streams that have been tested are impaired and unsafe for fishing and swimming. One in four wildlife species and one in five plant communities are endangered or threatened. Almost half of Minnesota's original wetlands no longer exist, and access to woods, fields, lakes and streams is increasingly threatened by development.

Some question the need for and oversight of the money the amendment would raise, such as "isn't the lottery supposed to be paying for our state's environmental protection?" Unfortunately, only a small percentage of proceeds from the state lottery are actually contributed to the Minnesota Environmental Trust Fund. And, while the Trust Fund is an important source of revenue, it does not come close to meeting the funding needed to protect Minnesota's natural resources.

"Why give the money to the DNR to spend as they wish?" has also been asked. As a safe guard to insure wise spending of the 33% going to the Outdoor Heritage Fund for fish and wildlife habitat protection, the legislature created an Outdoor Heritage Council of 12 appointed members—eight citizens and four legislators who have experience relating to the environmental and natural resources. Senator Satveer Chaudhary, author of the legislation and chairperson of the Senate Environmental Policy Committee, said "This will insure that sportsmen and conservation interests will see dedicated funding dollars spent directly in their community through a local matching grants program." He also said, "If we don't pass this amendment now, with competition for general fund dollars and budget deficits in Minnesota, there won't be new money for natural resource protection."

**Importance to the Leech Lake Watershed**

Here in the Leech Lake watershed, this amendment can provide more acquisition money for land conservation projects to protect sensitive shorelands from future development. The DNR's Long Range Plan for Aquatic Management Areas (AMAs) identified a need for \$35 million per year statewide for the next 10 years to acquire aquatic areas that need protection. In the plan, the Leech Lake watershed was identified as a high priority region for protection of sensitive aquatic resources. Ultimately, passage of the amendment will be an investment in maintaining the water quality, recreational opportunities, aesthetic values and economic drivers that are important to our quality of life.

**What Can You Do?**

Vote "Yes" on November 4th and tell people you know—friends, children, and grandchildren—about why it's important to vote yes. By doing so, we can continue to enjoy our natural resources and insure that they pass on to future generations.

**If you vote and skip voting on this ballot question, the state will vote "no" for you.**



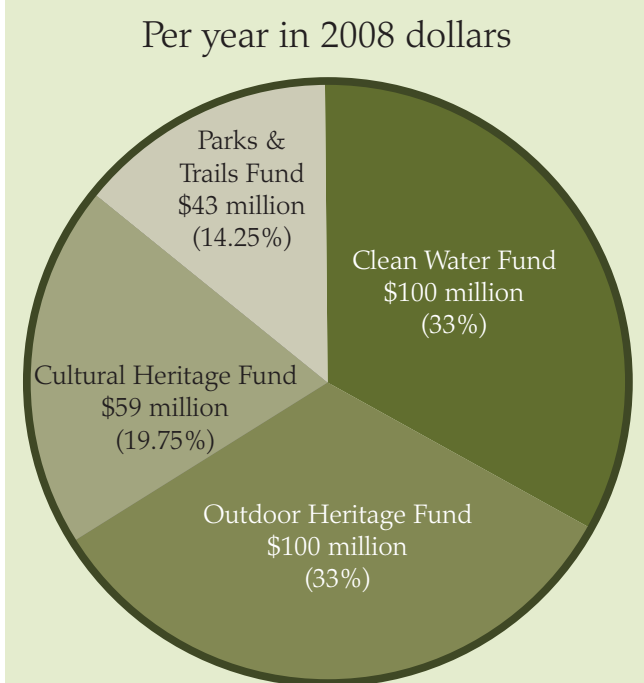
**The Question on the Ballot on Nov. 4 Will Read:**

"Shall the Minnesota Constitution be amended to dedicate funding to protect our drinking water sources; to protect, enhance, and restore our wetlands, prairies, forests, and fish, game, and wildlife habitat; to preserve our arts and cultural heritage; to support our parks and trails; and to protect, enhance, and restore our lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater by increasing the sales and use tax rate beginning July 1, 2009 by three-eighths of one percent on taxable sales until the year 2034?"

For the amendment to be approved, it must get "yes" votes from a majority of all people who vote in the November general election.

**Casting a ballot, but leaving the amendment question blank will count as a "no".**

**Where the Money Would Go**



Source: Legislature, Star Tribune, YesForMN.org

**How Much Would You Pay?**

Here are the projections of how much more sales tax various households would pay in 2009 if the state rate were raised from 6.5 percent to 6.875 percent, as the proposed constitutional amendment would do.

Household income range	Avg. annual increase in sales tax
\$19,737-\$27,504	\$31
\$45,584-\$58,509	\$52
\$93,488-\$129,879	\$92

Source: MN Department of Revenue 2007 Tax Incidence Study

The average Minnesota household will pay approximately \$56 per year in additional sales tax if the amendment passes—about four cents on a \$10 purchase (excluding food and clothing).

**What a great return on investment and small price to pay for the protection of clean water, fish and wildlife habitat, and natural areas.**



## Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation

**Mission:** The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation whose mission is to fund, promote, and enable activities that will protect the natural environment of the Leech Lake watershed, with all its beauty, wealth of natural resources and diversity, for the use and enjoyment of current and future generations.

### Board of Directors:

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Board of Directors: Front row, left to right: Pat Larson, Doug Payne, Ray Payne, Ted Mellby, Jim Bedell, Jack Shaffer, John Kovar. Back Row, left to right: Paula West, Harvey Nelson, Tom Buss, Jerry Amundson, Bob Gisvold, Al Griggs, Doug Bryant

## Conservation Donors and Retiring Board Directors Honored

On August 23, 2008, at King Gardens near Walker, the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation honored past conservation donors and recognized retiring board directors and special friends for their contributions to the Foundation's success over the past 10 years in completing 31 land conservation projects, protecting over 14 miles of shoreland and 2,000 acres of land.



Left to right: Jack and Betty Thomas, Cy and Loretta Sorrells, Ted Kolderie and Kay White were recognized as generous conservation donors to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation.

"Many of the Foundation's completed land conservation projects were possible because of the generosity of conservation-minded landowners who donated land or easements to their property to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) to limit develop and permanently preserve their land's natural resource value," Foundation Chairperson Pat Larson and Vice Chairperson John Kovar told the invited participants. "We recognize these individuals for their generosity and conservation passion towards protecting the water, woods, and wildlife of the Leech Lake watershed."

Jack and Betty Thomas of Hacksensack were among the donors present to receive recognition. In 2005, they donated 14 acres of upland and 454 feet of shoreline on an environmentally sensitive portion of Mann Lake. The Foundation in turn gifted the land to the Minnesota DNR to be managed as a state Aquatic Management Area (AMA) and triggered the release of over \$600,000 from the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Program. The RIM funds were then used to protect sensitive shoreland in Lantern Bay of Woman Lake. See the feature article for more on the Thomas's generosity.

Cy and Loretta Sorrells were honored for donation of a permanent conservation easement on their 46 acres in Woodrow Township, which now remains in its natural state into perpetuity. The easement, held and monitored by the Foundation, restricts hunting, fishing, boating and building on the property. The Sorrells still own the property, but any new landowner will be bound by the conditions of the conservation easement insuring that the eagles, otters, birds and other wildlife will always have a place to nest, romp, and raise their young.

Ted Kolderie and Kay White, siblings, were thanked by the Foundation for their generosity and stewardship in donating 18 acres and approximately 1,560 feet of shoreline on the main lake and Flower Pot Bay of Ten Mile Lake. The land donated is an area of the lake identified by the DNR as sensitive shoreland in need of additional protection. The Foundation will insure that the land remains in a "wild state" forever through land use restrictions and careful management to protect its beauty and contribution to the pristine water quality of Ten Mile Lake.

Others honored but not present included the Carl Bergquist Family for donation of 165 acres of property on Birds Eye and Sand Lakes in Itasca County; Katherine and Gene Bradfield for the donation of an easement and fee title to 203 acres of land and 2,000 feet of shoreline that embraces Portage, Rice and Elbow lakes in Cass County; and Mary Harlow, who donated 21 acres of land with shoreline on Long Lake near Walker in honor of her late husband and father.

"Conserving the sensitive lands and shorelands within the Leech Lake watershed from future development permanently protects these areas as valuable fish and wildlife habitat and helps to insure high water quality as a legacy for the continuing enjoyment of the watershed's natural resources for generations to come" said Paula West, executive director of the Foundation. Individuals interested in exploring conservation options on their land are encouraged to contact the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation at 218-675-5773 or info@leechlakewatershed.org.

## Conservation Requires Dedication

### Saying Thank You to Retiring Directors and Special Friends



Left to right: Ted Mellby, Jerry Amundson, Bob Gisvold, Isobel Brown, and John Steward.  
Not pictured: Doug Sandstrom



Gary Lyall pictured with Pat Larson, Foundation Chairperson

Three retiring board directors, Ted Mellby, Jerry Amundson, and Bob Gisvold, were recognized as board directors emeritus after collectively serving over 27 years on the board of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation. Ted was the founding father of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and played a key role in most of the Foundation's 31 completed projects. Jerry, also a founding board director, provided financial grounding to the Foundation since its beginning as the active treasurer for the past 10 years. Bob Gisvold's legal expertise and experience with local government processes helped keep the Foundation grounded in a strong conservation ethic.

Doug Sandstrom, retiring after nine years on the board, and previously retired directors, Gary Lyall and Isobel Brown, were recognized for their years of service and dedication to the Foundation. As a recently retired DNR Conservation Officer with many local, state, and federal conservation connections, Doug will continue to help the Foundation build strong public/private partner-

ships. Isobel's experience in varied professional and leadership roles always brought sensibility and forward thinking to the Foundation's decisions, and Gary's more than 40 years of experience in sales, marketing and general management of major corporations served the Foundation well in selling the benefits of protecting our natural resources. John Steward, former project director of the Tri-County Leech Lake Watershed Project, was praised and honored for his vision of land conservation that started the Project and later spawned the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation.

Thank you to all the retired board directors, conservation donors, and special friends of the Foundation for their dedication and passion for protecting the water, woods, and wildlife of the Leech Lake watershed.

The recognition event keynote speaker was Harvey Nelson, current Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation board director, who shared his thoughts about conservation after 40 years with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, including seven years as assistant director in Washington D.C. and regional director for the North Central Region, and personally as a lakeshore property owner on Woman Lake since 1951.

Harvey told the 100 guests that "Conservation requires dedication and personal passion, which is the driving force behind our actions and willingness to cooperate with others that develops out of our personal experiences." He shared how his experiences with conservation leaders across the country shaped his personal passion and his career. Further, he noted that while he saw the emphasis on conservation and resource protection shift over the years, the one ingredient of successful conservation projects that never changed was personal passion and citizen involvement. He acknowledged it is that passion that drove the personal decisions to donate land by those recognized, the retired directors and current board who put so much personal energy and time into the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation's conservation projects, and the Foundation's many donors at all levels. Harvey concluded with "Passion for the places they love makes citizen involvement in resource protection so critical. We can accomplish a lot when we focus on critical, priority issues and develop the leadership and support needed to get the job of preserving and improving habitat and water quality done within this watershed and others."



Harvey, on behalf of the board of directors of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and all its supporters, thank you for your personal passion and dedication to protecting the water, woods, and wildlife throughout Minnesota and for modeling a conservation ethic we all can follow.



The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation recognition event was held August 23, 2008, at King Gardens special event center ([www.kinggardens.com](http://www.kinggardens.com)) near Walker, Minnesota. Approximately 100 guests celebrated the successes of the first 10 years of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and the people who helped make the success possible through donations of land, time, and passion for the protection of the natural resources of the Leech Lake watershed.

# Preservation of Lantern Bay Near Completion

After five years of legal and political effort, the final chapter on the permanent preservation of over 5,000 feet of shoreland in Lantern Bay on Woman Lake is finally being written. The Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) has facilitated the purchase of approximately 20 acres with 1,800 feet of shoreland, protecting this remaining shoreland from being developed into more than 30 home sites. This property will join the 3,000 feet of shoreland in Lantern Bay already under DNR ownership to be preserved and managed as a DNR Aquatic Management Area (AMA) for the benefit of the public and the protection of water quality and fish & wildlife habitat on the Woman Lake chain.

A total of six lots are being purchased from Thousand Acres Development Company. The Minnesota DNR will purchase four lots, three of which are part of the original Ridges of Lantern Bay plat and one from the Shorewood plat of eight lots that were re-platted out of the original plat. LLAWF will provide financial assistance for the DNR's purchase and will also directly purchase two lots in the Shorewood plat and later convey them to the DNR for their final ownership. Following completion of the project by the end of

this year, there will be two remaining lots to be developed and two lots already with buildings for a total of four developed lots instead of the original 32.

To complete the purchase of the six lots, the LLAWF has secured a loan from The Conservation Fund, a national conservation lender. The Child, Girl, and Woman Lake Property Owners Association (CGWLPOA) will partner with the LLAWF to raise the \$340,000 necessary to repay the loan.

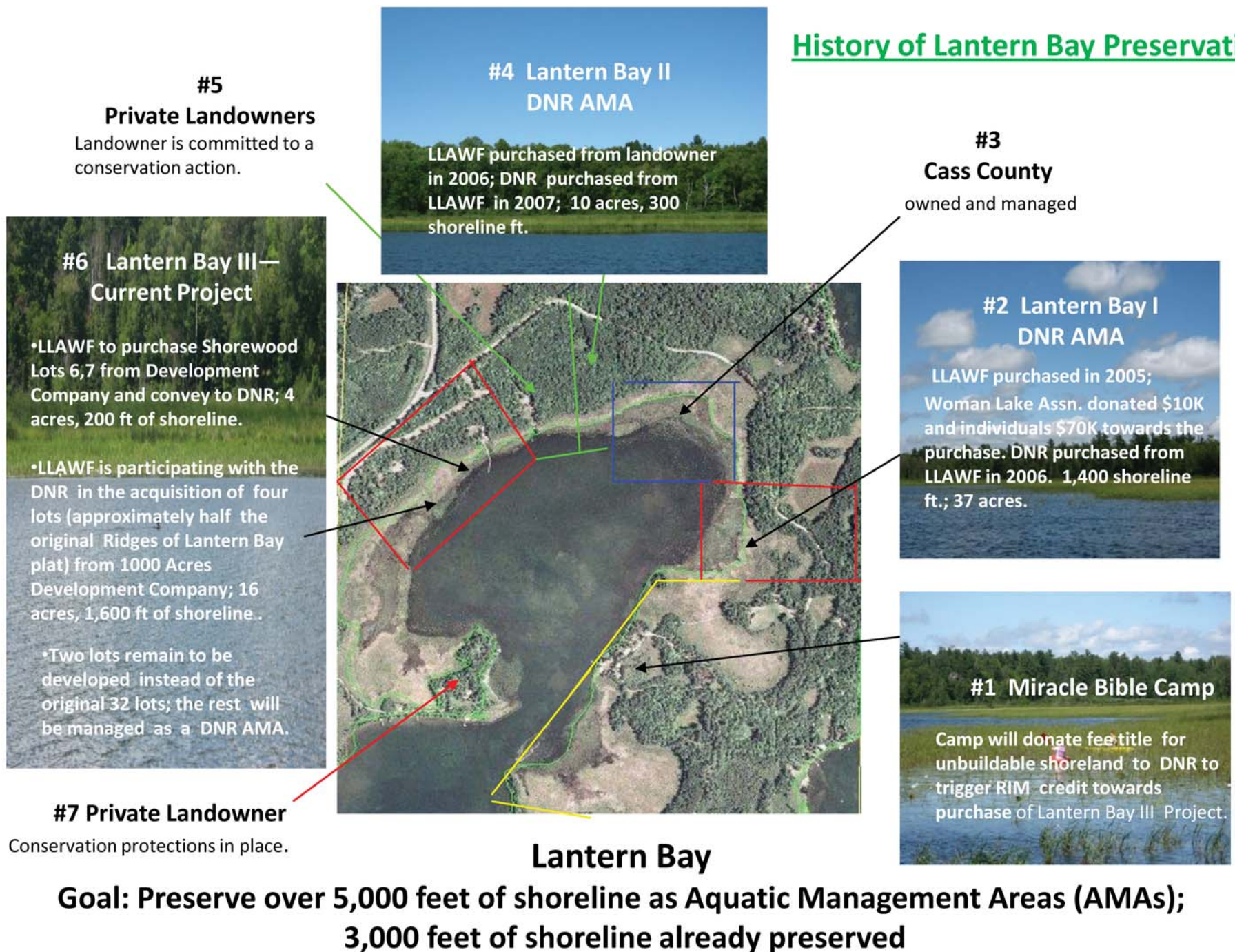
The 120-acre Lantern Bay of Woman Lake with an average depth of 5 feet and abundant shoreline vegetation is a pristine ecosystem that functions as the "lungs and kidneys" of the Child, Girl, Woman Lake chain. This bay is a nursery for fish, nesting area for loons and eagles, resting station for migratory ducks, food producer of zooplankton and invertebrates that are essential food for fish and wildlife, and vegetative filter that helps maintain lake water clarity throughout the chain.

Protection of this bay is critical since it functions as a natural development lake but for zoning purposes it is classified as general development, which

allows much higher density of development than ecologically this bay can sustain. For example, the increased motorboat activity resulting from 30+ developed lots would have had adverse consequences in this bay. Consider that a 10 hp motor mixes the water column to a depth of six feet; Lantern Bay is an average of five feet. This activity would stir up sediments and release toxins, including mercury, that could have circulated throughout the chain, and it would have led to destruction of wild rice and other critical habitat, disturbance of wildlife, and increased water turbidity.



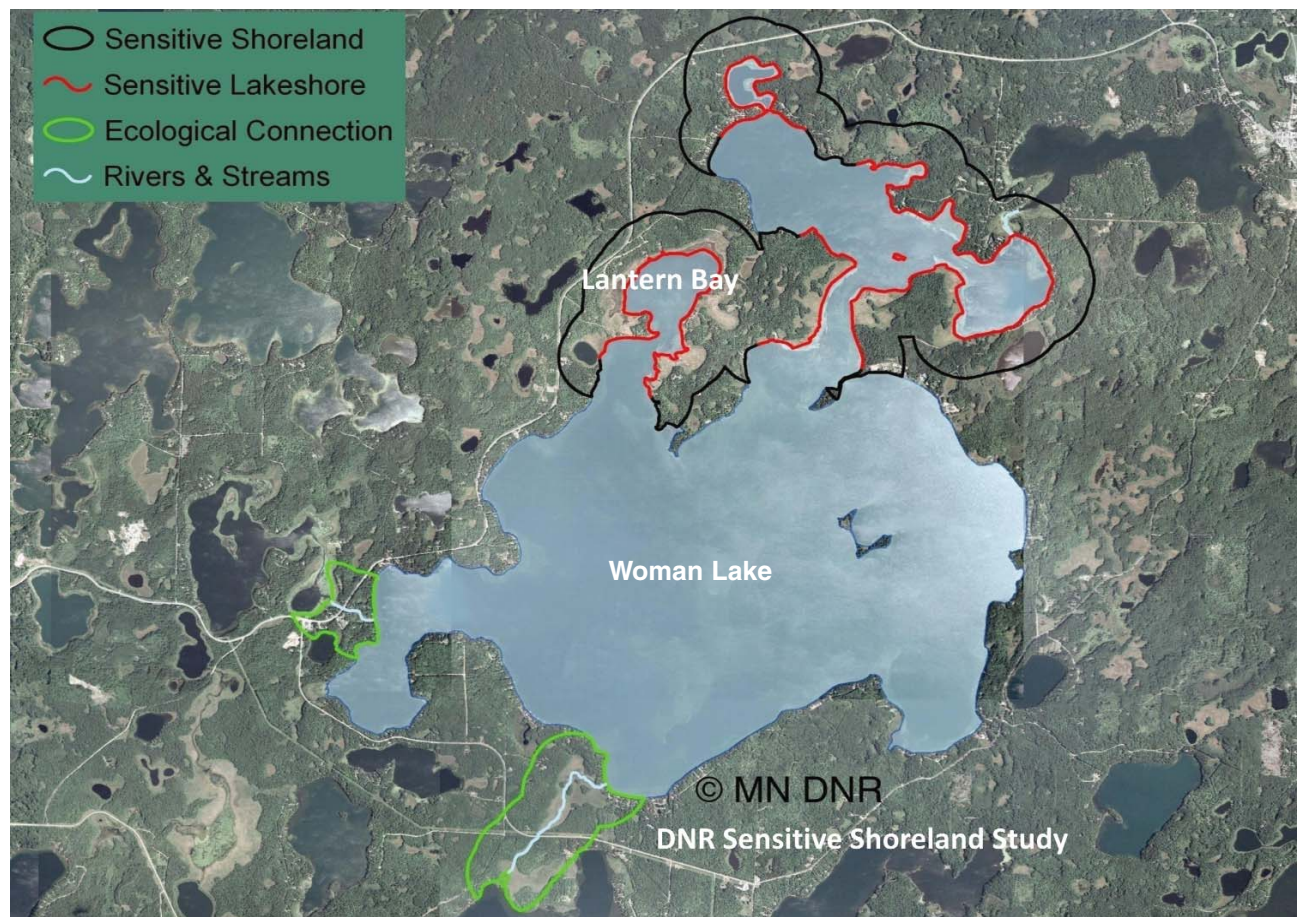
## History of Lantern Bay Preservation



The Minnesota DNR Sensitive Shoreland Study of 17 lakes in Cass County has designated all of Lantern Bay as sensitive shoreland along with other parts of Woman Lake. Sensitive shorelands need additional protections because slight changes in aquatic vegetation and shoreland habitat can have tremendous impacts on water quality and fish and wildlife populations.

A comprehensive fundraising effort by LLAWF and CGWLPOA was just launched with property owners on the Woman Lake chain. Other lake associations have already contributed to this effort and donations of cash or stock are encouraged from anyone interested in the overall water quality of the Leech Lake watershed. Contributions, marked as "designated for Lantern Bay Preservation" can be sent to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, PO Box 455, Hackensack, MN, 56452.

Our waters belong to all of us. As Don Kruse, president of CGWLPOA wrote in their newsletter, "You are lucky to have spent many summers on this chain of lakes and in this area, drawn to a particular spot in 'God's Country' for many reasons, one of which is the pristine water. If we are going to pass quality natural resources down to our children, grandchildren and others to follow we need to step forward now and save this valuable bay."



Shorewood Lot 7,6 to be purchased by LLAWF and conveyed to DNR as Aquatic Management Area. Lantern Bay is a primary natural nesting area for loons on the Woman Lake chain.

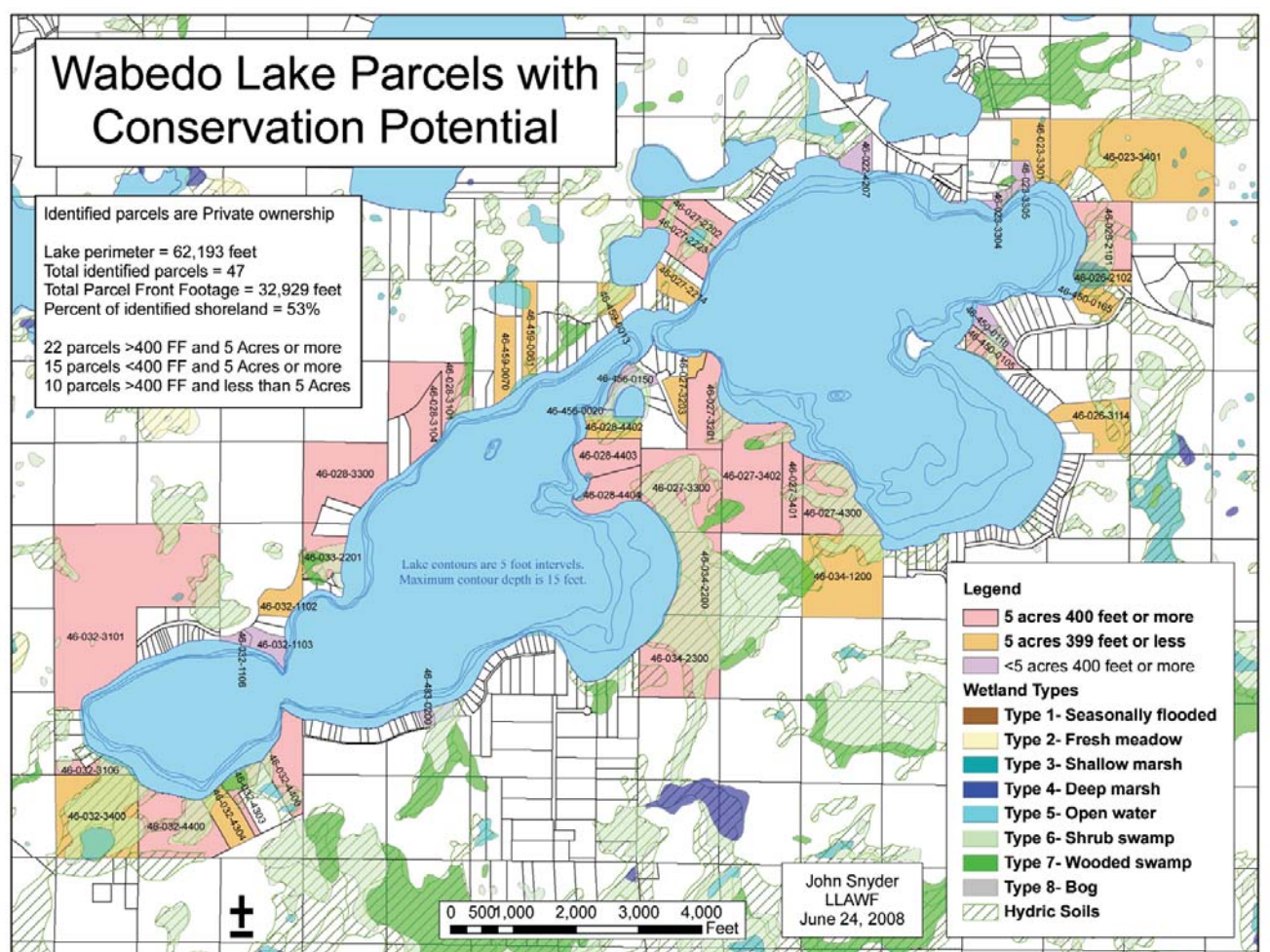
## High Priority Shorelands Identified

Maps of shoreland with high conservation potential on 54 lakes in Cass and Hubbard Counties were distributed to lake associations at the August 29th meeting of the Association of Cass County lakes. As a joint project of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) and Cass County Environmental Services and Management Information Systems (MIS) Departments, the maps were created using GIS technology to identify large parcels of undeveloped or minimally developed shorelands.

John Snyder, an undergraduate student in Geography at Bemidji State, created the maps and was funded by a grant to LLAWF from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota and the Initiative Foundation. Don Hoppe in the Cass County MIS Department provided project oversight and in-kind support. The maps were developed as a tool for lake associations to identify properties around the lake that are largely undeveloped and highly desirable for a conservation easement or other conservation option to limit development. Keeping shorelands undeveloped is a management strategy to protect water quality and valuable fish and wildlife habitat. Lake associations are encouraged to form Sustainability Committees (Land Conservation Committees) to work with identified landowners

to discuss conservation opportunities. LLAWF provides lake associations with assistance in forming Sustainability Committees and educational materials and training on conservation options. LLAWF will sponsor a workshop on communicating with landowners next spring, and it is available

for consultation with conservation-minded landowners to help them meet their conservation goals. Lake associations who did not pick up their maps can contact Tom Buss, LLAWF Land Conservation Committee chairperson, [ktbuss@tds.net](mailto:ktbuss@tds.net) or 763-213-6220.



## New Shoreland Homeowner's Guide Available

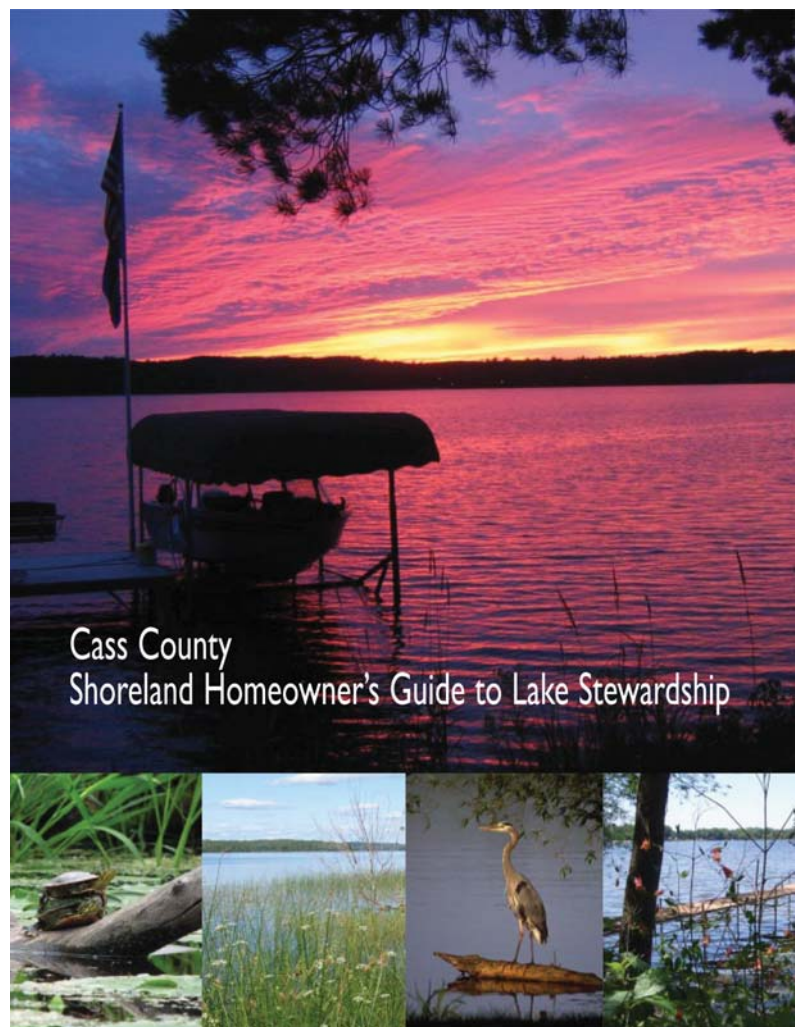
As a joint project of the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation, Cass County Environmental Services, and the Association of Cass County Lakes, the comprehensive *Cass County Shoreland Homeowner's Guide to Lake Stewardship* is now available. The publication was funded through grants from the Central Minnesota Sustainable Partnership and the Minnesota DNR Shoreland Habitat Program.

The 20-page Guide looks at two primary ways the shoreland homeowner can manage their property to protect water quality. They are: curbing pollution at the source and reducing, capturing, and cleansing runoff on their property. It discusses proper lawn care, pet waste disposal, and the use of household products; shoreline erosion control; and septic system maintenance as ways to curb pollution. Runoff that can pick up pollution and carry it to the lake can be reduced by minimizing hard surfaces on property and limiting clearing and grading. Runoff can also be captured and cleansed so it doesn't reach the lake by using shoreland vegetative buffers and by redirecting it to rain barrels and rain gardens.

Answers to common questions about "What can I do on my shoreland property and what permits are required?" are provided in the Guide along with many resources, references and frequent contact information in Cass County.

Copies of the Guide are free. Many lake associations picked up copies for their property owners at recent meetings of the Association of Cass County Lakes. It is also an excellent publication for realtors and businesses to give to customers to acquaint them with lake stewardship principles and practices. To obtain copies of the *Shoreland Homeowner's Guide to Lake Stewardship* contact the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation office or stop by the Cass County Environmental Services office in the Courthouse, Walker.

Featured cover photo by Carol Wedin, Stony Lake



## Congress Renews Tax Incentives for Donated Conservation Easements

Congress recently renewed, through 2009, a tax benefit for protecting your land by donating a voluntary conservation easement. Legislation raised the maximum deduction that can be taken for donating a conservation easement from 30% of adjusted gross income (AGI) to 50%, and it increased the number of years over which the deduction can be taken from six years to 16 years. This change allows many modest income landowners to deduct more than they could under old rules, bringing increased fairness to the tax code for land donations.

What should you know? A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a

qualifying nonprofit or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect important conservation values. It allows you to continue to own and use the land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs, but all future owners must abide by the conditions of the easement. The qualifying organization or agency that holds the easement will also monitor the easement to make sure the conditions of the easement are being followed.

The IRS tax benefit of a conservation easement as a charitable donation is determined by a land appraisal and equals the difference between the value of the land before restrictions and after

restrictions. To qualify as a charitable donation, the easement must be permanent and benefit the public by permanently protecting important conservation resources. Landowners are encouraged to get professional financial planning and legal advice before making a donation. Land conservation organizations such as the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation and others are working to make the temporary tax benefits of this important conservation tool permanent, but under the current law it will expire on December 31, 2009. If you are interested in more information on a conservation easement contact the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation.

Please help preserve the sensitive lands and natural resources of the Leech Lake Watershed. All donations to the Leech Lake Area Watershed Foundation (LLAWF) are fully tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Address #2 (Seasonal) \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

If you own lakeshore, which lake? \_\_\_\_\_ County? \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support the work of the LLAWF with the enclosed special donation: \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me regarding: \_\_\_\_\_ memorial gifts \_\_\_\_\_ planned gifts \_\_\_\_\_ gifts of stock \_\_\_\_\_ land conservation

Please include me on your future newsletter mailing list \_\_\_\_\_ email newsletter \_\_\_\_\_



Mail to: LLAWF,  
PO Box 455, Hackensack, MN 56452