



Executive Director Note

10 YEARS

Ten years ago, I began my journey with Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance. In the course of that time, I've observed and now more deeply understand the scale of the challenges we face in our effort to protect and revive Lake Pepin. However, I've also seen that LPLA has the ability to make change possible.

By generating synergy between organizations working toward shared river goals and creating new river-oriented experiences for the public, we have built greater awareness of the threats to (and love for) Lake Pepin. Supported by the power of our board, staff, supporters, volunteers, and partners, we have taken significant steps toward the lake's protection and revitalization.

Next year we will break ground on a project that will restore boat access to Bay City's public boat launch and improve habitat for fish, ducks, migratory and resident birds, small mammals, and invertebrates (including important pollinators). The completed project is an essential first step in a system-wide effort to bring life back to the most degraded parts of the lake.

As we tackle big challenges like protecting Lake Pepin and the overall Mississippi River, we believe in creating unique opportunities that inspire others and spark true engagement. We have a vision for a future Lake Pepin that is ecologically healthy, multi-functional, and accessible for all.

I am forever grateful to be a part of this critical work and I look forward to seeing what more we can accomplish together, like protecting Lake Pepin and achieving greater Mississippi River restoration.



RYLEE HINCE
Executive Director



STAFF

RYLEE HINCE

Executive Director

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Community Outreach Specialist

EMILY BURTON

Member Engagement Coordinator

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AN ILLUSTRATION OF THE COMPLETED RESTORATION PROJECT

Driftless Bluffs & Goat Prairies

A dry variant of the tallgrass prairie, stewardship of these rare ecologies is accomplished with controlled fire to rejuvenate the ecosystems. One of several rare and threatened biomes in the Driftless ecology, without fires Eastern Red Cedar colonizes and displaces rare endemic species.



Double Breasted Cormorant

Loggerhead Shrike



Prothonotary Warbler

Mississippi Main Channel

The main corridor and central current which feeds oxygen and nutrients to the whole river ecology. Focusing its flow is key to cycling and water storage for the entire water table. Establishing prairie and forest will also help to prevent new islands from being overtaken by invasive reed canary grass, which provides no habitat for forest-dependent birds and prevents the natural regeneration of trees.



Sandhill Crane



Bells Vireo



Bufflehead



White Pelican



Higgin's Eye Pearly Mussel



Golden Redhorse



Shipjack Herring

Overwintering Pools

The project will restore submerged, emergent, and floating vegetation where it has been lost. Construction of islands to protect existing aquatic vegetation beds will improve conditions for the growth of aquatic vegetation in other shallow areas. When combined with the construction of islands, backwater dredging will incrementally improve fishery habitat in the project area. Increased availability of deeper water combined with reduced velocities greatly improves wintertime habitat.



Cerulean Warbler



Swamp White Oak



Cottonwood

Flooded Forest Backwaters

Wetland restoration and riparian island creation will increase nesting habitat and migratory stopover habitat. Restoring islands, establishing native grassland and oak savanna, and restoring depth diversity will help bird species like Wood Ducks, Cerulean Warblers, Prothonotary warblers, Louisiana Waterthrush, and many others. Lake Pepin provides critical stopover habitat for the common merganser and has been designated a globally important bird area.



Walleye



Sauger



Shipjack Herring



Arrowhead



Ribbon Leaf Pond Weed



Flat Stemmed Pond Weed



Aquatic Wild Celery



Common Coontail



Northern Water Milfoil

A PATHWAY TO RESTORATION

In LPLA's first years as an organization, (then) Executive Director Mike McKay spent much of his time vetting possible solutions to the rapid shallowing of Lake Pepin. He compiled research on the benefits of existing island building projects elsewhere on the Mississippi River to trap, divert, and repurpose river sediment for the benefit of the river's ecosystem. Then he worked with local experts to consider a similar project's viability in Lake Pepin. The top three challenges that surfaced from his research were: 1) Likelihood of contaminated sediment 2) Competitiveness of funding for big river projects, and 3) Cost to restore an ecosystem at the tipping point of a cascading decline in water quality, habitat, and wildlife.

New staff member Rylee Hince (now the current Executive Director) joined LPLA's team in 2012 and shortly thereafter began attending an interagency river workgroup – the River Resources Forum (RRF) – where she could push for more clarity about paths to restore the river. Rylee toured other projects on the river and reviewed previously established state and federal goals for Lake Pepin. The most promising potential project for Lake Pepin was the highly competitive Upper Mississippi River Restoration (UMRR) Program, administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, with its primary emphasis on habitat restoration and resource monitoring.

Together, Mike and Rylee hosted a meeting with key river partners, including the Corps, MN Department of Natural Resources (DNR), WI DNR, and Audubon MN to evaluate the costs and benefits of a UMRR project specific to Lake Pepin. Based on feedback from those present, and Audubon's support, LPLA spent the next 6-12 months completing a major first step: We drafted a report outlining the proposed project area, current river conditions, resource problems and opportunities, and developed a list of proposed project features. This was the initial phase of proposing a project to the RRF for multi-agency and multi-state support.

When the draft report was finished, we still had not been formally considered by the RRF for inclusion in their UMRR list of priority projects. Rylee continued to attend RRF meetings and the fish and wildlife subcommittee meetings to track all opportunities. It was at one of these subcommittee meetings when the idea of pursuing an underused program called the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material came to light.

The beneficial use program is comparable to UMRR in its focus on improving river habitat, but it taps into channel maintenance funding. The program offers federal funding up to what it would cost to otherwise dispose of the dredged material (often millions of dollars) with the requirement that material dredged from the main navigation channel will be used to benefit river habitat. The remaining project expenses are cost-shared 65% federal and 35% local. (*Note: the UMRR also uses dredged material for their island building projects, but it is not a program requirement.) This program offered a timelier solution to a declining ecosystem, and it reduced the local cost-share requirement.

On December 31, 2015, LPLA and Audubon MN jointly submitted a formal request to the Corps' St. Paul District program manager to study the feasibility of a beneficial use project on Lake Pepin. The following year, our request was deemed to be "of federal interest" and feasibility planning was approved. LPLA agreed to be the project's local sponsor during the planning period with hope the WI DNR would eventually step into this role.

Feasibility work was planned over an 18-month period and would include taking deep sediment core samples to analyze for contamination. As we waited for sampling results, and crossed our fingers and toes for clean silt, we considered our upcoming challenges: 1) Will the WI DNR permit this project 2) Can we raise the local cost-share (millions of dollars) to see the project come to fruition, and 3) If the WI DNR is unable or unwilling to sponsor the project, will the Corps enter a multi-million-dollar project agreement with our tiny organization?



OUR GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN

It was springtime in 2016 when we hosted our first public meeting about the beneficial use project at the St. James Hotel in Red Wing, MN. More than 100 people crowded into the room. Being somewhat new to event planning, Rylee asked all 100+ people to introduce themselves and share a 30-second story about their connection to Lake Pepin. It was a long but powerful moment for the LPLA board and staff to hear the deep concern from so many around the lake, their history and connection to the lake, and their cautious glimmer of hope that there is a solution.

It was not long after this momentous public meeting that LPLA lost its fearless leader, Mike McKay, to a 4-year battle with cancer. He was the inspiration for a movement grounded in science, shared knowledge, and inclusive coalition building. He set the stage for everything to come.

Rylee became LPLA's new Executive Director prior to Mike's passing and committed to carrying LPLA's torch. She set out to deepen LPLA's engagement with each of the cities and towns around the lake to begin coalition building for the beneficial use project. In 2016, LPLA secured letters of support for an island project at the head of Lake Pepin from two counties (Pierce and Pepin, both in WI), seven cities and towns, sportsmen clubs, environmental organizations, and the Upper Mississippi Waterways Association.

As the feasibility work continued, and the results of sediment core analysis showed clean material (yay!), WI DNR Secretary Cathy Step agreed to Wisconsin's interest in becoming the local project sponsor under the condition the project aligned with the DNR's goals and objectives and had public support. This was an especially exciting development because the WI DNR would need to permit the project, enter a contract with the Corps of Engineers, and manage any future project maintenance. Now all we had to do was raise a few million dollars to meet the local cost-share requirement for project construction.

To date, we've raised \$4.2 million which will leverage \$16 million in federally designated river restoration funds for a \$22 million project. Funding came from Red Wing, MN; Bay City, WI; Stockholm, WI; Pepin County, WI; Ducks Unlimited; Minnesota's Outdoor Heritage Fund; the Wisconsin Waterfowl Stamp; Wisconsin's Mississippi River Capital Development Fund; and the Wisconsin State Budget. In September of this year, the Corps of Engineers had sufficient funding on hand to award a project contract to LS Marine.

Bay City, Wisconsin, has experienced the greatest ecological, social, and economic degradation from the rapidly accumulating sediment at the head of Lake Pepin. Restoring habitat for fish, waterfowl, and other shorebirds, and creating a new boat channel from the harbor to the lake, is a huge step forward for this community and the Lake Pepin community as a whole. A special thanks to all the partners who have made this happen.



MET WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS



HOSTED COMMUNITY EVENTS



INTERVIEWED W/LOCAL RADIO



LEARNED FROM LOCAL EXPERTS



TALKED WITH THOSE IMPACTED



INTERVIEWED W/LOCAL TV NEWS

KernzaFest

OHUTA PARK LAKE CITY

LPLA HOSTED A SUMMER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION CENTERED AROUND KERNZA, THE FIRST COMMERCIALY DEVELOPED PERENNIAL GRAIN CROP THAT NOT ONLY REGENERATES SOIL, BUT ALSO CLEANS WATER WITH ITS DEEP ROOT SYSTEM.

Kernza is a new product in the perennial grain and consumer goods space, and Kernza Fest was designed to showcase the versatile use of this innovative perennial crop. It also aimed to deepen attendees' ecological understanding of the connection between commodity crops and the health of the river.



FOREVER GREEN INITIATIVE
RESEARCHING KERNZA

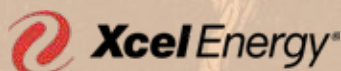


DOUGHP CREATIONS
BAKING WITH KERNZA

The festival offered:

- Cooking with Kernza demos featuring Chefs Jametta Raspberry (of House of Grittle) and Gustavo Romero (of Nixta Minneapolis).
- Expert panel speakers. Topics included fiber systems, grazing, and sustainable agriculture.
- Free water testing with MPCA, MN Dept of Agriculture, and MN Well Owners Association.
- Shopping at the Marketplace with vendors and exhibitors.
- Perennial Pairings Tasting Tent (the only paid portion of the overall free festival).

A special thanks to our partners and sponsors:



Southeast Regional Sustainable
Development Partnership

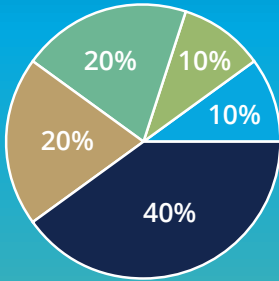
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
EXTENSION



WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU

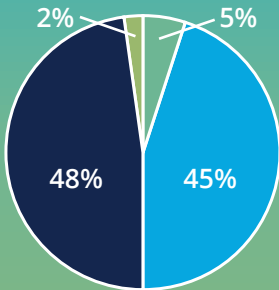
2022 FINANCIALS

2022 BUDGETED EXPENSES: \$279,483



■ RIVER PROJECTS ■ KERNZA FEST ■ EDUCATION
■ FUNDRAISING ■ ADMINISTRATION

2022 BUDGETED INCOME: \$280,000



■ PROGRAM SERVICE REVENUE ■ GOVERNMENT GRANTS
■ FOUNDATIONS ■ DIRECT PUBLIC SUPPORT

SOME OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- We hosted the “We Are Water” traveling exhibit in partnership with the Minnesota Humanities Center to help Lake Pepin communities strengthen their relationships with water. We partnered with more than 10 organizations to offer a wide-array of river-oriented experiences.
- We brought 30 river-friendly food, beverage, and non-food vendors to Lake City, MN, for Kernza Fest where we served 500 people at a zero-waste event.
- LPLA staff met with U.S. legislators in Washington, D.C., as part of a national River Action Day.
- LPLA staff attended the Mississippi River Network Annual Meeting in New Orleans, LA, with 40 other Mississippi River organizations; to strengthen our river partnerships.
- We reported on river conditions and hazards through our weekly newspaper column, “Pepie Insights,” on our channel conditions webpage, and through our e-newsletter and social media platforms.

A PLACE WORTH PROTECTING



GIVING A BRIGHTER FUTURE TO LAKE PEPIN

WWW.LAKEPEPINLEGACYALLIANCE.ORG



DIRECT GIFT

Give by cash, check, or credit card
- by mail or online.



AUTOMATIC MATCH

All gifts are doubled by the
Albrecht and Poss Family
Foundation through 2022.



WORKPLACE MATCH

Check to see if your workplace
matches employee donations.



OUR 2018
MERGANSER
HAT IS BACK
FOR A LIMITED TIME!

HELP US REACH OUR YEAR END GOAL

\$35,345

THE FIRST \$10,000 WILL BE
MATCHED DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR

Email: info@lakepepinlegacyalliance.org to discuss:



LEGACY
GIVING



CHARITABLE
IRA ROLLOVERS



STOCK
DONATIONS



Lake Pepin
LEGACY ALLIANCE

LPLA MEMBERSHIP

Full Name(s):

Mailing Address (Street, City, State, Zip)

Email

Phone

FREE T-SHIRT WITH ANY \$50+ GIFT

Choose Design: ☐ 2022 ☐ 2023

Choose Size: ☐ S ☐ M ☐ L ☐ XL ☐ 2XL

OR FREE HAT WITH ANY \$100+ GIFT

☐ Limited edition Merganser ball cap

Contribution: \$