

# LAKE PEPIN LEGACY ALLIANCE

**FLOODING WASHES  
AWAY PROGRESS**

**MUD  
PICNIC**

Experience  
Lake Pepin's  
sediment  
threat

**CONTINUOUS  
LIVING COVER**

A solution that gets at  
the "root" of the problem

**10TH ANNIVERSARY!**

# THANK YOU,

Lake Pepin Legacy Alliance is a long name, but each word was intentionally chosen by the founding members. During our 10th anniversary, I've been thinking about the word "legacy" a lot. Originally, "legacy" referred to the version of Lake Pepin we want to leave the next generation. But this year, LPLA connected with so many of Lake Pepin's past leaders that "legacy" has also come to signify the responsibility awarded to us from the past.

LPLA is continuing a long legacy of advocacy to protect Lake Pepin. We do not exist to offer a one-time solution to a confined problem, but to fortify a modern river system that can sustain social, ecological, and economic viability. In doing so, we are creating new legacies while honoring those that built our foundation.

Over the last 10 years, we have more than doubled our size while putting a spotlight on Lake Pepin's sedimentation problem. Local communities, media outlets, and partner organizations are all more aware of Lake Pepin's sedimentation plight than they were before. Through creative events, like this year's first annual Mud Picnic, we have shown that sedimentation can no longer hide under Lake Pepin's majestic waters.

With member support, we are implementing projects and advocating for upstream land use changes that will improve local resiliency to flooding, erosion, and sedimentation. Your ongoing support ensures that Lake Pepin has a voice in the projects and decisions that affect its future. Our first major opportunity to improve local conditions is well underway as final restoration plans come together to improve water quality and boater access near Bay City, WI.

The political power and momentum we have built sets us on course to take tailored actions for all Lake Pepin communities. The last decade shows how much can happen when we unite as one Lake Pepin community!

Thank you for being part of our legacy,



**Rylee Main**  
**Executive Director**

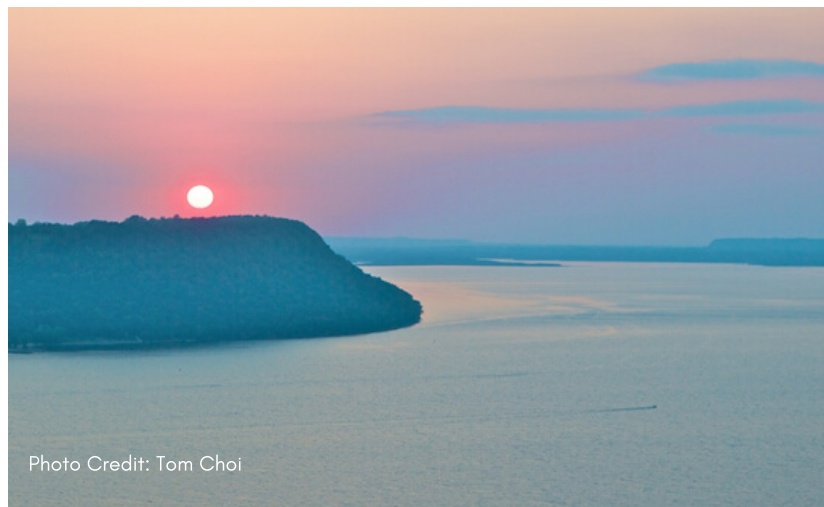


Photo Credit: Tom Choi



# 10 YEARS



Ten years ago, founding member Marilyn Albrecht decided that she needed to know if anything could be done about Lake Pepin's sedimentation problem. She and her husband, Arlin, had been watching Lighthouse Island grow just outside their living room window for decades.

After conversations with neighbors, they quickly discovered that they weren't alone. Suzanne Blue, Scott and Anne Jones, & Mike McKay were also eyeing the lake's sedimentation with alarm and wondering why there didn't seem to be an organized effort to do something about it.

In November 2009, this group of Wacouta Bay residents formed a non-profit, called the Lake Pepin Legacy

Alliance (LPLA), to be the change they wished to see. They started by answering two basic questions. Why is the lake filling in? Is there anything we can do to save it?

The questions weren't new, but at the time, no group was positioned to research them, disseminate information, and advocate for solutions. LPLA was, and still is, the only organization solely dedicated to protecting a disappearing Lake Pepin.

As LPLA's first Executive Director, Mike McKay used his local relationships to educate the public and pave inroads with other non-profits and government agencies. He went on to chair Minnesota's Clean Water Council and gain a reputation for collaboration and win-win solutions.

After deciding that, yes, upstream and local solutions to protect Lake Pepin exist, LPLA turned to make it happen. They began to educate the public about the answers to their initial questions, spearhead habitat restoration to improve local conditions, and advocate for upstream mitigation to reduce sediment loads.

LPLA still feels like a neighborhood group fighting for the lake, but the neighborhood has grown to include all Lake Pepin communities and those who visit. Together, like a neighborhood watch, we are uncovering sedimentation impacts, identifying local sources of sediment, and creating a united front to protect a place that feels like home to all of us.

## STAFF



**Rylee Main**

Executive Director



**Mac Becco**

Communications Director

## OUR CREW

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# FLOODING WASHES AWAY PROGRESS

## THE CLIMATE CHANGE, FLOODING, & SEDIMENT CONUNDRUM

Lake Pepin is disappearing from sediment accumulation that is 10x greater than normal. Annual sediment loads—equivalent to a city block filled to the height of the Foshay Tower—are wreaking havoc on our communities, recreation, and fish and wildlife. There is a statewide focus to clean up the Minnesota River, which contributes 75-90% of the sediment, and yet sediment loads are not diminishing. Why not?

**C**limate change is contributing to higher than normal streamflows and erosion that is outpacing upstream mitigation efforts. At LPLA's public meeting in August, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) explained that sediment concentrations are improving slightly, but **total sediment loads to Lake Pepin might actually be increasing.**

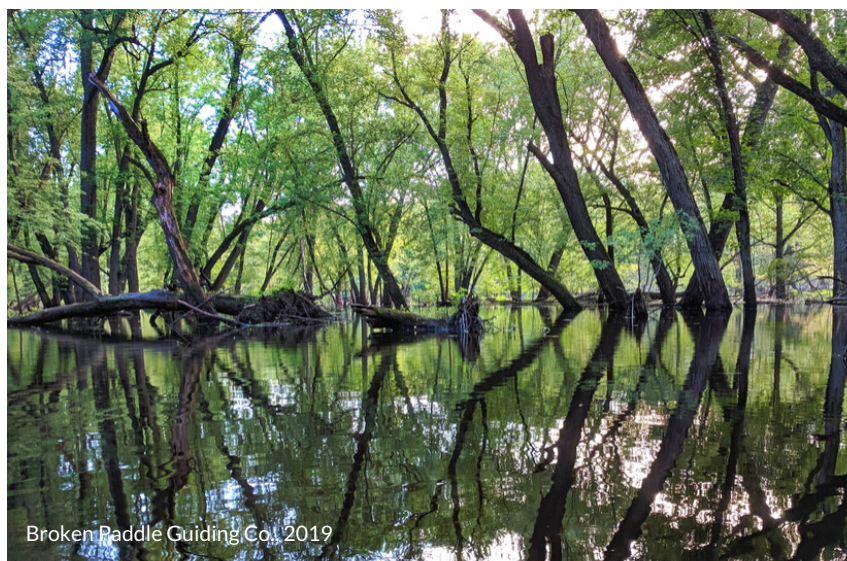
Spring flooding typically flushes in the biggest proportion of Lake Pepin's annual sediment load, but this year was different. After a record breaking 200 consecutive days of high water, sediment loads exceeded the Army Corps of Engineers' (ACOE) dredging capacity.

By mid-August, the **ACOE Rock Island District had already dredged 1.5 million cubic yards of material—a 500% increase** from the typical 200,000 to 300,000 cubic yards. Near the head of Lake Pepin, the ACOE St. Paul District estimates the need to dredge 91,857 cubic yards of material, but placement sites are not available.

The new climate reality makes it difficult to keep the river open for business. When the water is too high, barges cannot pass under bridges; but when water levels normalize, barges have to contend with new sediment deposition. It's a lose-lose for an industry that relies on the river for its most affordable and lowest carbon-emitting transportation.

Of course, the ACOE is only tasked with dredging the navigational channel. **If it weren't for LPLA's habitat restoration project, nothing would be happening to help the rest of Lake Pepin.** The project is expected to improve local conditions by dredging critical backwaters and using dredge material to create protective barriers.

LPLA is uniquely positioned to cultivate a sense of urgency and facilitate collaborative action across environmental, commercial, and community stakeholders. We've been discussing high water and sediment loading with influential leaders, like **U.S. Representative Angie Craig and the Upper Mississippi River Basin Association (UMRBA).**



At Angie Craig's Flood Resiliency Roundtable, LPLA joined a small group of leaders representing diverse interests—agriculture, natural resources, emergency services, river industry, and local communities. There was resounding agreement that **this year's emergency funding for dredging is not a long-term solution and proactive solutions are needed upstream.**

During UMBRA's sediment management planning session, LPLA found stakeholder support for upstream water storage, Continuous Living Cover (CLC), and expanding programs that use dredge materials for habitat improvement.



# CONTINUOUS LIVING COVER

## A SOLUTION THAT GETS AT THE "ROOT" OF THE PROBLEM

It's based on a simple, but powerful idea: green lands support blue waters. Continuous Living Cover (CLC) relies on diversified crops to protect water during shoulder seasons when traditional agriculture leaves land bare. As research develops new crops and facilitates markets for their demand, CLC is becoming a feasible solution to many water quality problems.

### Underlying Problem:

#### Rainfall is greatest when the land is bare.

CLC directly addresses a major problem with a landscape dominated by corn and soybeans—both crops leave the land bare exactly when it's most vulnerable to rainfall: the spring. During spring rains, there is no vegetation to secure the soil, absorb the water, and take up nutrients. Not surprisingly, most pollution enters our waterways during this timeframe. As climate change increases rainfall frequency and intensity, the problem is only getting worse.



## BENEFITS OF KERNZA

**Sediment Reduction** Root structures keep the soil secure and less susceptible to erosion.

**Nutrient Absorption** Root absorption prevents nutrient leaching into drinking water supplies.

**Flood Mitigation** Plant evapotranspiration reduces high flows and flood impacts.

**Farm Security** Alternative markets provide new profits and climate resiliency.

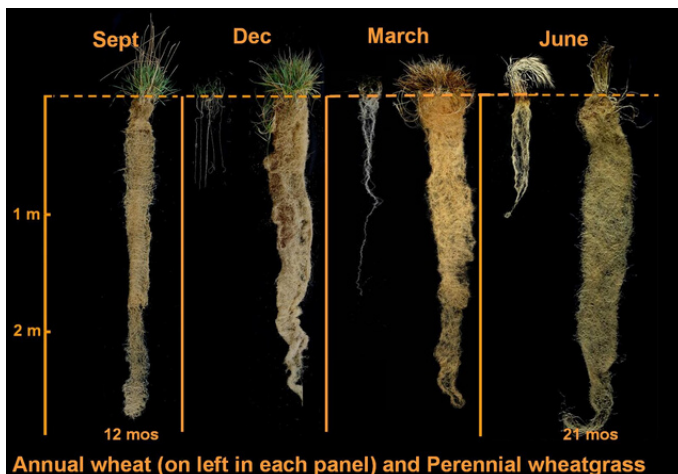


Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons, Jerry Glover, 2008

### Overarching Solution:

#### Grow crops all year to cover the land.

With CLC, farmers don't need to stop growing corn and soybeans, but simply incorporate additional crops that can protect the water and add profit during the spring and fall. CLC crops currently available include perennials (alfalfa, clover, switchgrass) and winter annuals (pennycress, camelina). Researchers are also developing new perennial grains, like Kernza and Clearwater, that maximize water quality and farm profitability. These intermediate wheatgrass varieties have deep and dense root systems that secure more soil, absorb more nutrients, and mitigate more water than traditional wheat.

## LEARN WITH US.

LPLA attended a CLC conference and over six field trips related to sustainable agriculture this year. You can follow along with us through social media. Additional information about CLC can be found online through the University of Minnesota's Forever Green Initiative; Green Lands, Blue Waters; and the Land Institute.

## ADVOCATE WITH US.

LPLA participated in Water Action Day at the Minnesota State Capital to educate legislators about CLC and advocate for public investment into the development of new crops, like Kernza, and markets to support their adoption among farmers. Executive Director, Rylee Main, also supported public funding for Forever Green in her position on the Minnesota Clean Water Council. Minnesota increased its funding to the program, but only approved \$4.3M of the \$10M advocated for by environmental groups.

**Contact your elected officials and join us for Water Action Day at the Minnesota capital next spring!**

## CREATE DEMAND WITH US.

Use your purchasing power to increase demand for CLC crops. General Mills, Pepsi, and Patagonia Provisions are already using Kernza in products like cereal, bread, and beer. Many local bakeries and breweries are too: Birchwood Cafe, Dumpling & Strand, Bang Brewing, Brewery 56, and Baker's Field Flour and Bread.



Lake Pepin is a model for the entire Mississippi River

# HABITAT RESTORATION & BENEFICIAL USE



There is simply too much water and sediment draining into the Mississippi River and Lake Pepin for a thriving ecological or commercial system to exist without ongoing management efforts. **As the problem intensifies, habitat restoration projects that use dredge material, like the one underway in Lake Pepin, are gaining support as a win-win solution for the environment and industry.**

LPLA spearheaded Lake Pepin restoration through the Army Corps of Engineer's (ACOE) Beneficial Use of Dredge Material Program (Section 204) to reduce turbidity, spark ecological improvements, and improve recreational access. The project relies on the same restoration techniques used elsewhere on the river, but at a lower overall cost since the dredge material is excluded from the local cost-share.

Despite the obvious benefits, **Lake Pepin restoration is only the second "beneficial use" project initiated on the Upper Mississippi River.**

Acknowledging the need for dredge placement sites, the U.S. Congress authorized an ACOE pilot program (Section 1122) to support beneficial use projects that are expected to have high social and ecological benefits. LPLA and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) co-sponsored an application for Lake Pepin and, in January 2019, **our project was one of ten projects selected nationwide.**

The pilot program will increase federal funding and expand the project scope to include recreational features, like dredging the harbor in Bay City, WI. However, the amount of congressional appropriation to fund the program has been uncertain and caused local planning delays. **LPLA is now working with U.S. Representatives Angie Craig (MN) and Ron Kind (WI) to ensure that sufficient funds are available by 2021 when construction is anticipated to begin.**

As government agencies and elected officials look for new solutions to high water and sediment loads, **LPLA's habitat restoration project has become a model for the entire Mississippi River!**



Wisconsin State Representative Warren Petryck is pushing his state to match Minnesota's contribution to Lake Pepin's restoration project (A). Minnesota State Representatives Barb Haley and Leon Lillie championed bipartisan support to approve \$750,000 from the MN Lessard Sams Outdoor Heritage Fund to Lake Pepin restoration (B).



**Feasibility Report:** In November, LPLA met with ACOE, WIDNR, and other project partners to review the completed feasibility report, which is an analysis of ecological benefits, construction costs, and potential impacts of concept features. We learned that the final design will be restricted by project costs, which are much higher than initial estimates. **The ACOE will share the report and their recommended plan with the public early next year.**

**In the News:** LPLA and the restoration project received widespread media attention after being **selected for the ACOE pilot program and recommended for MN Clean Water Funds.** These news reports amplified our work, but raised questions from a public concerned about ACOE dredge placement decisions.

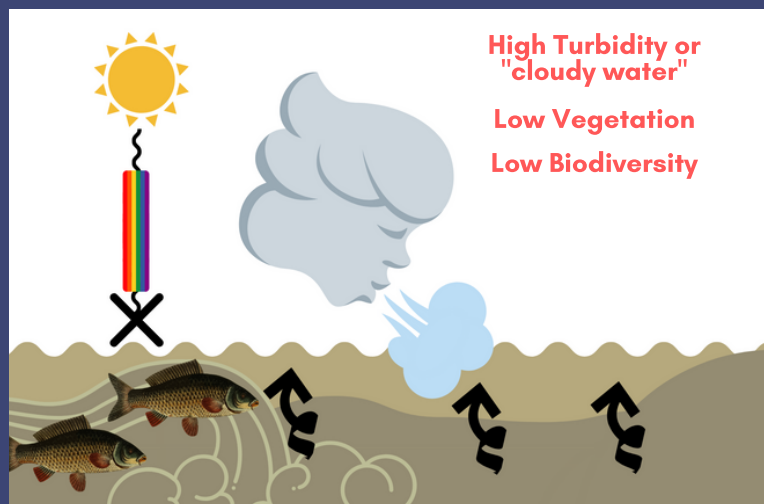
LPLA collated the most popular questions into a presentation that we used for a series of community discussions around the lake. The presentation included the graphic series below to explain how restoration techniques work together to improve water quality and initiate ecological benefits.

**Project Goal:**  
reduce water turbidity &  
initiate an ecological  
response that increases  
biodiversity

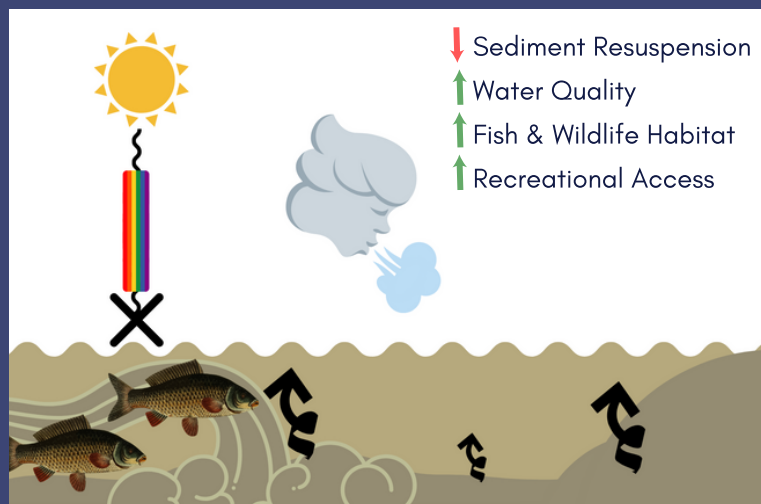
**Total Funds Raised:**  
\$1,142,500

\$750,000 | MN Clean Water Fund  
\$275,000 | WI DNR  
\$100,000 | City of Red Wing, MN  
\$10,000 | Bay City, WI  
\$5,000 | Pepin County, WI  
\$2,500 | Village of Stockholm, WI

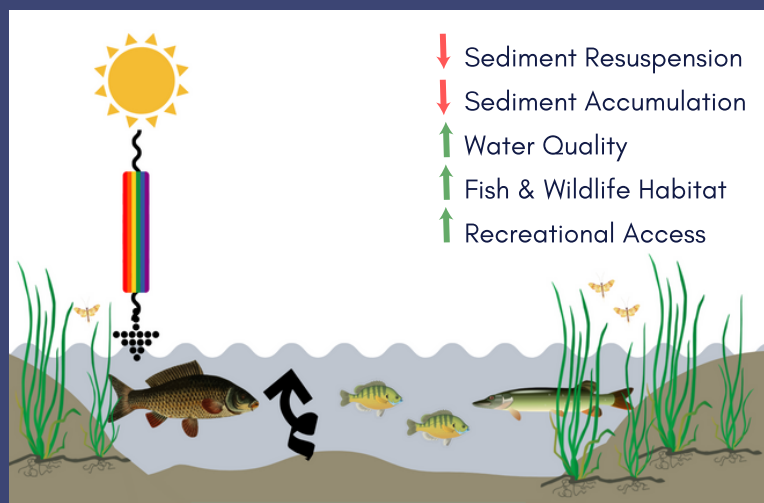
## CURRENT CONDITIONS



**DREDGE** to reduce wind and waves, create overwintering fish habitat, & improve access



**BUILD PENINSULAS** to reduce wind and waves & create habitat for fish & wildlife



**PLANT VEGETATION** to secure sediment & create habitat for fish and wildlife



**Sediment Resuspension**  
from waves, wind, & bottom-feeding fish is driving poor water quality.

**Wind & Waves**  
stir up more sediment in shallow waters & wide-open areas

**Bottom-feeders**  
like carp, stir up sediment & outcompete recreational fish in cloudy waters.

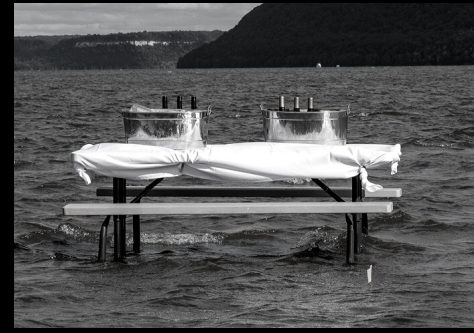




# MUD PICNIC

## EXPERIENCE A DISAPPEARING LAKE PEPIN

You and guest can join us next year by becoming an LPLA Bald Eagle Member (\$500 or \$50/month)



The LPLA Mud Picnic is a new tradition that highlights the severity of Lake Pepin's sedimentation problem. Attendees are ferried to a shallow area at the head of Lake Pepin for refreshments and special activities, then brought back for a picnic and campfire on the beach.

It takes place just downstream of Lighthouse Island, which has grown about a mile in the last 50 years. The area looks like a deep, open water basin, but it's often shallow enough to walk across in late summer. Boaters headed upstream can easily miss the navigational channel, which hugs the shoreline, and ground themselves in the shallow water.

This year, Mike Davis from the MN Dept. of Natural Resources led a mussel search (we only found empty shells, indicating poor water quality), Chap Achen snapped photos of people "walking on water", and Dan Traun captured drone footage.

As the sun started setting, a barge—immediately followed by a large passenger ferry—passed through the narrow navigational channel. People were about 100 yards away in ankle deep water and could have walked right up to the vessels. From the beach later, we watched a boat grounding occur right in the area we were just occupying.

While the navigational channel is dredged for commercial navigation, the rest of Lake Pepin continues to fill with sediment at a rate 10x above normal. Without intervention, the entire lake will become a navigational ditch, as portrayed on our cover.

Every moment of our first Mud Picnic stressed the urgency for action. Upstream changes are needed to protect Lake Pepin and the rest of the Mississippi River. Time is of the essence.







## LEGACY CONCERT

Over 250 people helped us cap off our Spring Member Drive with an outdoor benefit concert at Liberty Tree Farm in Stockholm, WI. The Pistol Whippin' Party Penguins, a Minnesota string-band with original songs about the river, performed on an open-barn stage. During intermission, we honored the Citizens for a Clean Mississippi (CCMI) for their generous gift to LPLA.

**Join us next year on May 30th, 2020 for the 2nd Annual Legacy Concert** that will honor Terry Woeltge, an avid Lake Pepin sailor and LPLA member, who passed away this year. You can donate to the Terry Woeltge Memorial Fund online at [www.lakepepinlegacyalliance.org/twmf](http://www.lakepepinlegacyalliance.org/twmf)



## PASSING THE TORCH

In the 1970s, Citizens for a Clean Mississippi (CCMI) advocated for Lake Pepin protections using the slogan "We Can't All Live Upstream". This year, CCMI passed the torch by giving LPLA their remaining funds. We celebrated with a joint picnic while sharing stories about CCMI's leader, Dorothy Hill, and brainstorming ideas to fight Lake Pepin sedimentation together.

## PEARL OF THE LAKE

The soggy fall didn't stop us from our much anticipated Pearl of the Lake Member Event. Over 50 people joined us for refreshments, prizes, and special remarks from LPLA staff, board, and members.

Thank you to Larry Nielson for donating this annual ride. **Join us next year on September 10th, 2020!**

## WATER MONITORING

LPLA intern, Jayden Jech, helped us collect water monitoring data from local tributaries. Data confirms that the Minnesota tributaries are impaired for e-coli, which peaks after large storm events. These big storm events also erode stream banks and flush sediment into Lake Pepin. Wisconsin tributaries will be the focus next year.

## UPSTREAM POLLUTION

LPLA hosted an event with speakers from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to share information about upstream pollution studies affecting Lake Pepin. The good news: phosphorus loads have significantly decreased. The bad news: sediment loads have not changed and might actually be increasing.





# 2019 GRANTS & SPONSORS

## TITANIUM

McKnight Foundation  
Albrecht & Poss Family Foundation  
Katherine B. Andersen Fund

## PLATINUM

Citizens for a Clean Mississippi, Inc.  
Red Wing Shoe Co. Foundation  
Wacouta Firefly Fund

## GOLD

Cargill CARES  
Frontenac Sportsman Club  
Lake City Chamber of Commerce  
Lake City Sportsman's Club  
Red Wing Area Fund

## SILVER

St. James Hotel  
Red Wing Grain  
Lake Pepin Partners in Preservation

## BRONZE

Abode Gallery  
Community Crust Pizza  
Cultural Cloth  
Flueger Crane, LLC  
Ole's Bar & Grill  
Indigo Swan Jewelry & Fine Arts  
Minnesota Environmental Fund  
Red Wing Masonic Lodge  
Red Wing Wildlife League  
Sargent's Nursery  
Swan Jewelers LTD  
Treats & Treasures

## BRONZE

United Lutheran Church  
West End Sports Center  
Xcel Energy

## IN-KIND

Pearl of the Lake Paddleboat  
Liberty Tree Farm  
Chap Achen Photography  
Lake City Sportsman's Club  
Stockholm Pie & General Store  
Broken Paddle Guiding Co.  
National Eagle Center  
Oliver's Wine Bar  
Indigo Swan Jewelry & Fine Arts  
Treats & Treasures  
Six String Saloon  
Turning Waters BB&B

# 2019 MEMBERS

*Individual donors from Nov. 26, 2018-Dec. 31, 2019. Every contribution of \$25 or more is considered an annual membership & entitles donors to certain organizational benefits.*

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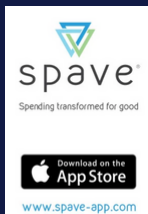
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