**Spider Chain of Lakes**

**President’s Letter**

**Preserving and Protecting Our Lakes and Watershed**

**December 1, 2018**

Dear Spider Lake Community,

The single biggest threat to the quality of our lakes and watershed today is “Aquatic Invasive Species” (AIS). The primary way to mitigate this threat is to employ trained boat inspectors at our public boat launches to keep AIS out.

The responsibility to fight all threats and to protect our lakes rests squarely on each of us. The most effective long-term way to fight AIS is to fully fund the SCLA Endowment and Emergency Reserve funds, now.

**Preserving and Protecting Our Lakes and Watershed**

Your Spider Chain of Lakes (SCLA) Board has worked hard this year to build on our traditions to preserve and protect our lakes and watershed. Our progress this year has only been possible because of the many volunteers who give selflessly of their time and talents. We are all fortunate to have the support of over 50 SCLA volunteers. We are equally grateful to our generous benefactors who contributed significantly to our Annual Giving Program. We encourage all members to join our community of volunteers and generous benefactors to help extend our legacy to future generations.

***What is the most important step you can take now?***

Participate in the SCLA Annual Giving Program. To date 50% of our members have contributed gifts to SCLA. Our goal is to engage 100% of our members in participating in the SCLA Annual Giving Program. *Since 2014:*

* Over 100 SCLA Members have donated an average of $6,000.
* 31 SCLA Members have donated $5,000 or more.
* 17 SCLA Members have donated $10,000 or more.

We are grateful to those who have donated and urge all members to participate in our SCLA annual giving program.

**Preventing Aquatic Invasive Species is an Increasing Challenge**

Your lake association relies on several sources of income to support our mission activities including our single largest expenditure – paying trained boat inspectors to inspect watercraft for AIS as they enter and exit our lakes at public landings.

***Why are boat inspectors at the public landings so important?***

Because the Spider Chain of Lakes is surrounded by lakes increasingly infested with more aggressive forms of aquatic invasive species (AIS) our boat inspectors are our first line of defense.



*Photo: Wisconsin Lake AIS*

In past years SCLA recruited volunteers to serve as boat inspectors, however this proved to be unfeasible because an insufficient number of members were unwilling to volunteer their time to this activity. As a result, SCLA decided to pay boat inspectors at public landings to provide this critical service and line of defense against AIS.

***Why is it important to prevent more aggressive AIS in our lakes and watershed?***

Because they have the potential to significantly impact our collective enjoyment of our lakes. Aggressive AIS can make it extremely difficult for boating and recreational use of our lakes as illustrated below.



*Photo: Wisconsin Lake AIS*

Removal of AIS can be a very labor intensive and expensive activity.

 

*Photos: Wisconsin Lake AIS Manual Harvesting*

Removal of AIS can force lake communities to spend a significant amount of money annually to harvest, chemically treat, or otherwise remove AIS. There are many lake associations in Wisconsin that spend $50,000 to $100,000 and more annually just so they can enjoy their lakes.



*Photo: Wisconsin Lake AIS Harvester*

Our neighbors at Lost Land Lake (about one mile from the Spider Chain of Lakes) are battling Hybrid Eurasian Water Milfoil (HEWM). HEWM is a more aggressive strain of Eurasian Water Milfoil increasingly choking Wisconsin lakes. To mitigate HEWM, Lost Land Lake leaders are currently working to secure $75,000 in pledges to purchase an AIS harvester to harvest HEWM. That is just the first of significant ongoing expenses required to operate and maintain the harvester as well as dispose of harvested HEWM.

In the judgment of your SCLA Board, the continuation of paid boat inspectors at our public landings is one of the most important mission activities we must fund.

***What are the current sources of revenue for SCLA?***

SCLA supports our mission through several sources of revenue. These include: member dues; annual donations to cover current operating costs (ie – ‘Tier Renewal” Donations); grants from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; event fees; spending from the Endowment Fund (governed by the Spending Policy in the Investment Policy Statement); spending from the Emergency Operating Reserve Fund (also governed by an Investment Policy Statement).

***Did you know that current sources of revenue cover only 75% of our annual costs?***

* Member dues cover only 10%
* “Tier Renewal” donations cover only 15%
* Grants from the DNR cover only 20%
* Events cover less than 5%
* Projected spending from the SCLA Endowment Fund covers up to 33%

It is unsustainable for SCLA to operate with a 17% funding gap.

***How Can You Best Help Preserve and Protect Your Lakes and Watershed?***

Donate to the SCLA Endowment Fund!

The most important financial need facing SCLA with the greatest long-term positive impact is to raise an additional $275,000 for the SCLA Endowment Fund. This single accomplishment will achieve the goal of creating an $800,000 Endowment Fund with the capability of providing annual support to cover 50% of the annual operating costs of SCLA in perpetuity. Support from the Endowment Fund in conjunction with member dues, annual donations, grant income, and revenue from events has the potential to create a sustainable financial model for SCLA (example below):

***What if SCLA is Not Successful Creating an $800,000 Endowment Fund?***

If your SCLA is not able to create a sustainable financial model the SCLA Board will need to pursue several other options:

* Increase annual dues to $50
* Increase annual ‘Tier Level’ donations
* Increase fees for annual events
* Reduce the number of hours of boat inspectors at the public landings
* Some or all of the above

Your SCLA Board is actively considering all of these ideas and more to balance the annual operating budget and create a more sustainable financial model for SCLA.

In addition to creating a more sustainable financial model SCLA needs to raise an additional $220,000 to fully fund the Emergency Operating Reserve Fund to help fight AIS emergencies.

***What is the most important step you can take now?***

Participate in the SCLA Annual Giving Program. To date 50% of our members have contributed to SCLA. Our goal is to engage 100% of our members in participating in the SCLA Annual Giving Program. *Since 2014:*

* Over 100 SCLA Members have donated an average of $6,000.
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We are grateful to all benefactors and urge all members to participate in our SCLA annual giving program.

***The Future Quality of our Lakes Depends on You.***

The ability of SCLA to help preserve and protect our lakes and watershed depends on the participation of all of our members in the SCLA Annual Giving Program.

***If you have already contributed, THANK YOU. If not, please make your Annual Donation to SCLA today.***

Sincerely,

Steve Smith