**What You Can Do to Protect the Lake You Love**

Lake home and cabin owners have an unmatched passion for Minnesota’s lakes. Collectively they volunteer 1.2 million hours towards lake protection.

But there is one action that many have not yet taken and it is critically important. Become an advocate for lakes by joining Minnesota Lakes and Rivers, *even if you belong to a lake association that is an MLR partner*.

Said Jeff Forester, Executive Director of Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, “What happens in Saint Paul impacts each of us out on our docks, often to our detriment. There are hundreds of thousands of lake home and cabin owners in Minnesota. They have a commitment to the health of Minnesota’s lakes, but their voices were not heard because they were not organized.”

Since 1993, MLR has been lake home and cabin owner’s voice at the MN Legislature. Beginning in 2012, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates started working with lake associations’ members’ to advance aquatic invasive species prevention efforts, and other issues important to them. MLR has built the largest and most active grassroots conservation group in Minnesota, but there is more work to do, and the financial support of individual lake home and cabin owners has fallen as Lake Association support has increased.

“Some people believe, I think, that if their lake association is a member, that MLR does not need their support. But that is not the case,” said Jeff Forester, MLR Executive Director. “We are dependent on individuals to keep us financially viable and effective at the legislature - we count on Minnesota’s lake home and cabin families. We are a unique model in that way.”

A grassroots strategy requires individual members to step up. Lake Associations are key civic organizations at the Township, City and County levels, and do incredibly important work. But for Statewide advocacy, individual voters must engage. In order to be most effective, lake home and cabin owners must be active in their lake associations while also participating in a statewide effort through Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, MLR.

**MLR is building both a grassroots base, and organizing local civic engagement through lake association members to impact water related policy in Minnesota.**

**MLR pushes both local and statewide media stories about lake issues, lobbies for legislative changes at the Capitol while supporting local groups as they engage zoning boards, city councils and county boards.**

**Said Forester, “Statewide legislation is sometimes undone at the local level. Efforts to protect water will require coordinated action at local and state levels. By combining both a statewide grassroots of individual voters with a local civic organizing effort of Lake Association groups at the local level, we will have incredible success. Our lakes deserve no less.”**

**Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates provides:**

* Full time lobbying at the State Capitol to change laws, push pro-water initiatives, and direct funds towards local lake and river projects, including $10 million annually in County AIS Prevention Aid to our counties,
* A strategic and coordinated series of pro-water news stories in press, television and radio to educate citizens and politicians on water issues,
* Support for local partnerships that build lake association capacity and give local water advocates a seat at the table,
* Support funding for world class science (MLR was the only organization to advocate for creation of the Minnesota Aquatic Invasive Species Research Center, to identify issues and discover on-the-ground solutions to our water problems.

This effort is generating benefits for lakes and support for the people that work to protect them. But to leverage this process, MLR needs the support of individual lake home and cabins owners.

One MLR member wrote, “*I have been receiving your email updates for awhile now. After reading through your purpose and hearing about the action you are taking, my family has decided to join…. While we only have 90 feet of shoreline, we believe we’re doing what we can to keep our lake healthy. As we continue to see reports of area lakes being infested with various AIS, it is more important to us than ever to help reduce this spread. We hope that our donation will help to keep our lakes and rivers healthy, and perhaps there will be opportunities for us to become more involved as well. I have been learning a lot from the content on your website (thanks for your work with respect to property taxes!)”*

Thousands of lake home and cabin owners across the state are building a grassroots constituency to protect lakes from runoff pollution, aquatic invasive species, poor fisheries management, loss of lake habitat. Membership contributions for Minnesota Lakes and Rivers are set by the members. People contribute what they can, with the average being about $8 a month. This small investment in their lake is having a huge impact.

Said Forester, “No other group of people is better positioned to advocate for water protection and the local economic and lifestyle benefits our waters provide to our communities and state than lake home and cabin owners. By organizing this large grassroots constituency, we will be able to advance legislation and secure funding to ensure we leave a healthy lake legacy for our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.”

To learn more, and to join, go to [www.mnlakesandrivers.org](http://www.mnlakesandrivers.org). Consider being a sustaining member to maximise your contribution. Or call 952-854-1317 for more information.

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