

Spring — Summer 2025



AREA NEWS

P.O. Box 407 - Waskish MN 56685

www.urlaa.org

Email: Contact@urlaa.org

Greetings from the Upper Red Lake Area Association,

Spring is a time of hope and new life, in our community, and around the nation. I am thrilled to report that our memberships are up and our association is stronger than ever. We have been committed to improving our community and protecting our public lands and waters. Friends from far and wide have shown their support by standing with us and providing over 5000 signatures to a petition we circulated in opposition to public land transfer efforts. We are grateful for the contributions and donations that allowed us to face this challenge by finding facts and learning the laws. We can't continue to protect and preserve our community without the sustained efforts of our dedicated board and the full participation of our extended community and our elected representatives.

Area residents, businesses, property owners, tax payers, and visitors have a long and rich history in the Upper Red Lake Area, which we celebrated at Waskish Days last fall. All year long we support community leaders and public school students who dream big and get things done! Working with our partners at Shotley and Waskish Townships has been a pleasure, and I look forward to continued partnerships in the year ahead. Beltrami SWCD, the MPCA, Red Lake Watershed District Board, Clean Water Land And Legacy Fund, and Rep Myers and Senator Putnam have advanced our Keep it Clean program and legislation. Reps Bliss and Duran and Senator Green have respected our fight to keep public lands and waters public. This work is not an individual effort- it takes a village!

Please take time to come to our meetings and consider volunteering with the Association. You are welcome and you are needed. We are here to promote and enhance the Upper Red Lake Area, and the economic, commercial, and social interests of its inhabitants. Everyone has time or talent to share. Join us as we go forward celebrating and advancing our Northern Minnesota way of life in the Upper Red Lake Area.

Sincerely,

Robyn Dwight

President: Upper Red Lake Area Association

Executive member: Keep it Clean Coalition

Member: Upper Red Lake For All Coalition

Advisor: Upper/Lower Red Lake One Watershed One Plan

**Mark your
calendars for
these
summer
festivals and
fun
activities in
the area!**

May 17

ATV Tri County Dirt
Devil Ride
Kelliher

June 21

ATV Tri County Dirt
Devil Ride
Kelliher

July 11, 12 & 13

Kelliher Days
Kelliher

July 17, 18 & 19

Kilde Barn Country Music
Fest—27773 Lanet Rd NE
Blackduck

July 19

ATV Tri County Dirt
Devil Ride
Kelliher

July 25, 26 & 27

Billy Hillman
Memorial Softball
Tournament Waskish

July 26

Woodcarvers
Festival
Blackduck

August 8, 9 & 10

Koochiching County Fair
Northome

August 16

ATV Tri County Dirt
Devil Ride
Kelliher

August 29, 30 & 31

Waskish Days
Celebration
Waskish

September 20

ATV Tri County Dirt
Devil Ride
Kelliher

October 18

ATV Tri County Dirt Devil
Ride
Kelliher

Join the “Save Upper Red Lake For All Coalition”

The “Save Upper Red Lake for all Coalition” is a diverse group of people united by a shared love and appreciation for Upper Red Lake. Members include business owners, homeowners, outdoor enthusiasts, recreators, and others who cherish the lake as a natural treasure. Members believe Upper Red Lake is a unique and vital resource that should remain accessible and open to everyone. The lake plays a critical role in Minnesota’s outdoor heritage, supporting recreation, tourism and community connection. Whether you fish its waters, enjoy its serene beauty, or rely on it to sustain your livelihood, Upper Red Lake belongs to all who value its importance.

The mission of the coalition is to protect public access to the lake for future generations. The coalition works collaboratively to ensure that Upper Red Lake remains a place where everyone can gather, explore and enjoy the natural beauty that makes Minnesota special.

The coalition is committed to fostering respect and sound environmental stewardship while advocating for policies that balance preservation and access for the benefit of all. The coalition steadfastly opposes efforts to turn ownership and control of Upper Red Lake to the closed Red Lake Nation.

The Coalition needs your help! If you agree that Upper Red Lake should remain open and accessible to everyone add your name to the growing number of people who have already joined the coalition and ask your friends and family to join as well. Besides adding your name to the coalition, your financial support is also needed. There are expenses that go along with opposing this bill that would give ownership and control of Upper Red Lake and several acres of land surrounding the lake to the closed Red Lake Nation. These expenses include lawyers, lobbyists, running the website, mileage and lodging to the capital when and if members are called to give opposition to the bill.

You can also help by calling and writing your representatives to let them know your opposition to this bill. If you called or wrote them last year, we need you to do it again this year. This year’s Legislative session is scheduled to end on Monday, May 19th so you still have time.

Go to **upperredlakeforall.com** to include your name in opposition to this legislation. You can also make a donation in any amount to help us stop the transfer of public lands and waters.

Open Water Coming Soon! We can’t wait to see you!

Camping ~ Hiking ~ Picnics ~ Swimming

Biking ~ Off-Roading ~ Fishing ~ Boating ~ Birdwatching

Campfires ~ Resorts ~ Restaurants ~ Relaxing in the Northwoods

Fun with Family & Friends ~ Solitudes Under the Stars ~ Cabin Life

Wildlife Galore- even the mosquitoes are friendly!

We have it all in the Upper Red Lake Area

Waskish, Minnesota

Contact@urlaa.org

URLAA.ORG



Upperredlakeforall.com

DNR Fisheries Update from Tony Kennedy & Edie Evarts

Winter fishing is in the rearview mirror and Fishing Opener is just around the corner. We broke 2 million angler hours of winter fishing pressure for just the second time ever. This was likely due to good, safe ice early in the season and outstanding on-ice travel conditions all winter. Winter walleye harvest set a record for the second consecutive year at 175,000 pounds.

In early March, as we do each year, we met with the Red Lake Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). This group is made up of individuals that represent a variety of interests connected to Upper Red Lake – including the Upper Red Lake Area Association. During our meetings, we review the status of the walleye population and discuss regulation options for the upcoming summer and winter seasons.

As I wrote in the fall newsletter, spawning stock biomass (abundance of mature female walleye) is currently in the surplus condition, which gives us a target harvest range of 240,000 to 336,000 pounds for Dec 1, 2024 through November 30, 2025. Even with winter harvest coming in at 175,000 lbs, we have a fair bit of harvest opportunity for the upcoming summer since we have more available harvest in the surplus condition compared to the optimal condition we were in last year (120,000 to 240,000 lbs). After discussion, the CAC recommended we proceed with a **five fish bag limit with one fish allowed over 17 inches**. This regulation will allow folks to take an “extra” small fish compared to the commonly used four fish limit while keeping harvest for the 2025 within the target range. We used this regulation in 2023 when the strong 2019 year class was small and it helped dampen the spike in spawning stock as these fish reached sexual maturity. That is important because we see the best reproduction when spawning stock is at moderate levels and not too high.

The walleye population remains in great shape and full of young fish. Spawning stock biomass for Fall 2025 is projected to again be near the optimal/surplus threshold (4.5 lbs/acre). The Red Lake Fisheries Technical Committee is working on a ten-year update to the 2015 *Harvest Plan for Red Lakes Walleye Stocks*. This document outlines the walleye harvest framework for the state and Band. Currently, spawning stock is categorized into either the optimal or surplus condition and that prescribes a specific target harvest range. In the revision, a formula that calculates the target harvest from the actual spawning stock estimate would be used to set the target. If adopted, this would smooth out variability in the target harvest range from year to year but target levels would stay within the historical range. For example, in the current plan a small drop in spawning stock from 4.6 lbs/acre to 4.4 lbs/acre results in the target harvest dropping from 240,000 to 336,000 pounds to 120,000 to 240,000 pounds. Using the new method, the target harvest would drop from 180,000 to 300,000 pounds to 168,000 to 288,000 pounds. We will know before the fall newsletter goes out if this new approach will be adopted.

We seem to be on track for an average-ish ice-out that should result in much better fishing than last year. Increasing the bag limit will allow some additional harvest as well.

If you have any questions or concerns feel free to contact Edie or myself.

Tony Kennedy and Edie Evarts
Bemidji Area Fisheries
218-308-2339

New DNR mobile app and licensing system launching later this year

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources’ new electronic licensing system (ELS) will modernize the issuance of fishing and hunting licenses and the titling and registration of boats and off-road vehicles.

The DNR is working with Minnesota IT Services (MNIT) and external vendor PayIt Outdoors to launch the new system. The original rollout date was March 2025, but the rollout was moved to later in the year.

Until the new ELS system is launched, nothing will change for license agents, deputy registrars, anglers, hunters, and recreational vehicle and watercraft users as they buy licenses or register motorized vehicles. The current system is fully functional.

The DNR feels people are eager to have a new, modernized system, and they are focused on ensuring a smooth and successful launch and the best user experience from the start. You can go to the Minnesota DNR page to sign up for email updates on the new licensing system so that you can stay informed on the timeline and rollout.

Waskish Area DNR Officer Brice Vollbrecht Profile



My patrol area starts at Highway 1 south of Kelliher and runs north of Waskish to the Beltrami/Lake Of The Woods line. The western side of my patrol station is the Red Lake Reservation and the east side is the Beltrami/Koochiching County Line.

I started as a Conservation Officer in 2008 and was Stationed in the Blackduck #2 Station (Waskish/Kelliher). I patrolled the area for a little over three years before transferring to the Bemidji Station. I returned to the Blackduck #2 station in the spring of 2024.

I grew up in a small town in Minnesota and enjoy the small town communities of Kelliher and Waskish. I enjoy spending time on Upper Red Lake. I believe it's a valuable resource to the community and the State of Minnesota. It's important to protect our natural resources.

URLAA Board of Directors and Gambling Managers

(Back row: left to right)

Vice President - Kevin Waldo

Director - Tim Waldo

Director - Frank Duresky

Treasurer - Kellie Halvarson

Former Secretary—Brian Dwight

Director - Dave DeNoyer

(Front row: left to right)

Gambling Manager Rick Thayer

Gambling Manager Bobbi Oen

President - Robyn Dwight

Newly Elected Secretary - Val Waldo



Robyn Dwight was invited to speak at the Northland Progressive Meeting



Robyn Dwight of the Upper Red Lake Area Association gave an update on the Legislative Bill that would transfer Upper Red Lake to the Red Lake Nation. If passed, this Legislation would be devastating to the communities and businesses in Waskish, Northome, Kelliher and Blackduck to name a few. **Go to upperredlakeforall.com to oppose this legislation.**

Help us Keep Public Lands and Waters Public!

SPRING SHORELINE CLEANUP

Bag it and Bring It!
Waskish Transfer Station
Memorial Weekend May 23—26

Free yellow trash bags available
at the Bait Shop at West Wind Resort
or at the Local My Store Food & Fuel

Lake trash only please

Email: Contact@URLAA.ORG

Website: URLAA.ORG

Representative Myers Introduces Bill in House

New proposed Keep It Clean legislation seeks state agency leadership from the DNR or the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to address trash and human waste on the ice of Minnesota's waters.

A bill for an act relating to natural resources; establishing Keep it Clean program; appropriating money; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 97C.

H.F. No. 1120

**Thank you to Representative Myers
for your support!**

Thank you to Kim Nelson from Up North Storage for storing the Keep it Clean lake signs and Thank you to Brent Poxleitner, The Nistler Family and Waskish Township who have given us homes for the Keep It Clean Billboards.

Thank you also to Brian Dwight for collecting and repairing the signs again this Spring.

Robyn Dwight testified in the House Environment Committee for the Keep it Clean HF#1120 in February. Robyn had 35 letters of support, which are on file and was joined by Bob Meier (MDNR) and Tom Johnson (MPCA) in support of the bill introduced by Representative Andrew Myers. Since then, the bill has moved forward thanks to Representative Josh Heintzeman. Thank you to those of you who provided her with these letters of support.

Robyn Dwight met with Brent Rud, Beltrami Environmental Services, to get advice and let him know she would be applying for an LCCMR ENRTF grant to address the need for winterized holding tanks at numerous locations near Upper Red Lake. If the grant is approved they will be partnering with the Red Lake Watershed District Board. Robyn also applied for another round of Partner's grant funding to manage the dumpster program for another year.

The Keep It Clean coalition ran a survey to learn if there was interest and a need for RV dump infrastructure in Northern Minnesota. The overwhelming responses showed there is a need. The coalition plans to run the survey again early next winter.



***A BIG THANK YOU TO THE BUSINESSES WHO PARTICIPATED
IN THE WASTE REMOVAL PROGRAM OVER THE WINTER
AND A BIG THANK YOU TO THE PUBLIC IN KEEPING GARBAGE
AND WASTE OFF THE ICE AND OUT OF THE WATER!***

Fun activities at the Big Bog State Recreation Area in Waskish

- **Return of the Swans - May 17th 2:00 to 3:00**

The great trumpeter swan migration has begun! Once erased from the state of Minnesota in the late 1800s, the trumpeter swan population has made a successful comeback due to years of conservation efforts. Learn about their natural and cultural history and how they were brought back. The program will begin with a presentation in the Visitor Center and then we will drive to the Northern Unit to watch the swans that nest nearby. Bring your own binoculars or a limited quantity will be available to borrow.

- **Boglands Uncovered: Exploring Nature's Mysterious Wetlands - May 24th 10:00 to 12:00**

Step onto the Bog Boardwalk and immerse yourself in the serene beauty of one of nature's most captivating landscapes on this guided tour. This unforgettable expedition offers a rare opportunity to venture into the heart of a pristine bog ecosystem, where secrets abound and every step unveils a new wonder. Throughout the tour, the naturalist will illuminate the hidden mysteries of the bog, sharing fascinating insights into the unique flora and fauna that call this ecosystem home.

- **Smokey Bear's Fun Fest - July 26th 11:00 to 1:30**

Come on out to Big Bog to celebrate Smokey Bear! Follow a treasure map to learn about the history of Smokey Bear and fire towers. Meet wildland firefighters and find out what they do to protect our forests and see fire trucks, climb the fire tower, meet Smokey Bear and more!

Check the Big Bog State Recreation Area Website for more information on these events.

Who Remembers the Old Sunset Lodge



Dave Lyons built the Waskish Hotel Building in 1916. John Morris purchased the building in 1930 and re-named it "Sunset Lodge". Throughout the years the Homer Whittings, Peter Backs, Charlie Carpenters, Harry Davidsons, Chuck Becks, and Ron Dureskys all have operated Sunset Lodge.

In 1976 fire destroyed a large part of the building and the remaining portion was razed in 1977 when the new Sunset Lodge was built.

Harry and Vera Davidson operated Sunset Lodge from 1938 until 1970 when Vera passed away. It included a café and bar, 9 cabins, and boat rentals.

A marker is located in Waskish Homestead Park in memory of Harry Davidson. Take Waskish Road NE to Homestead Park Rd NE. The marker is at the south end of the boat ramp parking lot.



Is it time to renew your URLAA membership for 2025? Check your mailing label to see if you're up for renewal.

Membership Fees: ☐ Individual/Family: \$25.00 per year or ☐ Business: \$50.00 per year

Individual Names or Business Name: _____

Business Contact Person: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Cell: () _____ - _____ Home: () _____ - _____

E-mail Address _____

Business Website: _____

Business Services & Products: _____

I am also enclosing an additional donation toward the legal fund. \$ _____ (Thank you!)

Please mail your membership to: URLAA— PO Box 407— Waskish MN 56685 or Join online at www.urlaa.org

Life Saving Awards were recently presented to four local Employees

Richard Wieneke, Dave Wieneke (aka Captain Dave), Carter Gilge and Marlys Carlson of Greater Minnesota Rentals recently received MN Sheriff's Association Life Saving Awards for their selfless actions at an incident that occurred on January 11, 2024.

Two males from a private access were coming off the lake from fishing when their Polaris Ranger side-by-side went through thin ice. They had been fishing with two other men who had been on snowmobiles. The group of men tried attempting self-rescue but were unsuccessful.

Richard Wieneke, an employee of Greater Minnesota Rentals, happened to be on the lake nearby when one of the men informed him that two men were in the water. Richard Wieneke, his brother Dave Wieneke and Carter Gilge all workers at Greater Minnesota Rentals responded to the scene.

One of the men had been able to extract himself from the Ranger through the window and was rescued by Dave and Carter. Upon pulling him from the open water, the other man floated to the surface. This victim was unable to grab the rope that was thrown to him but Carter Gilge was able to lasso the rope around him and he was pulled out. It was estimated that he had been in the water for well over 20 minutes before being pulled out. Thankfully, both men were wearing float coats. The estimated air temperature that day was about 0 degrees.

Dave Wieneke guided the group to Greater Minnesota Rentals where they were assisted by Marlys Carlson who provided first aid and helped to keep the group warm while waiting for the Blackduck Ambulance to arrive.

The actions of Richard, Dave, Carter and Marlys ultimately saved the lives of these two men.



Thank you for your selfless actions that saved lives that day!



P.O. Box 407 - Waskish MN 56685
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What's Cooking - Pistachio Dessert

1/4 c. sugar
5 T. butter, melted
1 1/4 c. graham cracker crumbs

Mix ingredients in a 9 x 13 pan to make the crust.
Bake at 325 for 6 to 8 minutes. Let cool.

8 oz. cream cheese
1 c. powdered sugar
2 c. Cool Whip (plus more for topping)

Mix ingredients together and spread onto the cooled crust. Let cool for 20 minutes.

2 - 3.4 oz. packages pistachio instant pudding
3 c. milk

Mix ingredients together until thickened. Spread onto the cream cheese layer in the pan and chill for 20 minutes and then top with a layer of Cool Whip.

Optional: sprinkle some mini chocolate chips on top.

Save The Date For Fun in Waskish!

Waskish Days

**SPONSORED BY
UPPER RED LAKE AREA ASSOCIATION**

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE
2ND ANNUAL WASKISH DAYS**

**LABOR DAY WEEKEND
AUGUST 29-31, 2025**