



Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Group

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Topic of the Month - January 2019

Giving Thanks for our Lakes

The beginning of the new year is a time for us to think about what we are thankful for, and I am thankful for our lakes.

"A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature." – Henry David Thoreau

In Minnesota we are blessed with abundant natural resources. What can we do to protect them and inspire others to do the same?

First, the facts: Minnesota is the "land of 10,000 lakes", but we actually have 11,842 lakes over 10 acres and 69,200 miles of rivers and streams. Even the name "Minnesota" comes from the Dakota Indian name "Minisota," which means sky-tinted water. Minnesota's surface area is 9% water (includes lakes, rivers and wetlands).

We have set aside some of the most picturesque areas in the nation for our enjoyment. Voyageurs National Park in northern Minnesota is the largest water-based park in the National Park System. In the Mille Lacs Lake area we have Father Hennepin State Park, Mille Lacs Kathio State Park, and the Mille Lacs National Wildlife Refuge. We enjoy of our natural resources, and the figures prove it. Minnesota is first nationally in the sales of fishing licenses per capita. By the numbers, 29% of Minnesotans fish, 14% of Minnesotans hunt, 41% of Minnesotans boat (including fishing from a boat) and 52% of Minnesotans watch wildlife.

So what are some creative ways can we protect these resources? I bet you do some of these things already, because they are tied to using our natural resources. To contribute monetarily, you can buy a fishing license, hunting license, state park permit, critical habitat license plate, and even a lottery ticket. On your taxes, look for the loon where you can contribute to the nongame wildlife fund. There are also endless conservation organizations to donate money or time to.

What will really protect our resources in the long-term is adopting the behavior of appreciation and awareness for our natural resources and sharing it with others. Invite a friend or child fishing, commit to learning more about conservation issues, watch the sunset over the lake, and go for a walk on a trail. When we really take the time to stop, think and enjoy our surroundings, we become inspired to protect them.

"In the end, we will conserve only what we love." – Baba Dioum, a Senegalese ecologist

