

**MN Star Lake Board
Report to the Legislature
2011**

The Star Lake Board was created in 2008 as a result of Chapter 363 of House File Number 1812 Section 17 (103B.701) STAR LAKES. The legislation is intended to acknowledge and reward lake and river associations using citizen stewardship to make their surface waterway the best it can be.

As of January, 2009, the Star Lake Board had legally organized, developed its articles of incorporation and submitted and received legal 501(c)(3) status. At that point, the real work began for the Board to:

- **Establish application process for Star Lake / Star River Status**
 - **Develop criteria for Star Lake/Star River designation**
 - **Identify the benefits of Star Status for organizations of lakes and rivers**
 - **Provide guidance to lake/river associations wanting to achieve Star status**
 - **Work with partner organizations to continue development of educational information and resources for lake/river associations wanting to achieve status**
 - **Work with private and public entities to leverage financial resources**
 - **Continue developing administrative structure - including staffing needs and establish a reporting process**
 - **Determine criteria for Star Status and a system to evaluate applicants**
 - **Use the criteria system to accept, evaluate and award Star status of applicants**
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During the legislative session of 2009, the Board worked with the committees of the legislature to explore funding from the new Legacy funds. Because the original bill forming the Star Lake Board was funded from the General Fund and was not intended to be on-going funding, the Legacy Fund seemed to be an ideal match for this type of work. Unfortunately, although a bill was passed by the House and Senate, the bill did not receive the Governor's signature.

Also, in the winter/spring of 2009, the board met monthly to develop the Star organization, and worked diligently to develop a set of criteria that could be used to determine Star status. Three interested associations were selected to conduct a pilot application process to refine the criteria and application. After a series of meetings and revisions, all three associations completed their applications and were rated. On July 9 of 2009, the first three associations were given Star Status.

In the fall and winter of 2009 and 2010, the Board refined the Criteria/Application process and started to recruit applicants for Star Status. Also at that time, the Board continued to work on the initial objectives and conferred with the legislature about bills for future funding from the Legacy Fund. Unfortunately, again in the 2010 legislative sessions, a bill was passed by both houses and submitted to the Governor with the same results. At that time the Board determined to restrain expenses as much as possible and continue its efforts to find exceptional organizations and grant them Star Status.

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Applications were solicited throughout the winter and spring of 2010 and the rating process began in the summer. Of the 50 or so associations that believed they were potential applicants, we received 15 applications for the summer and fall deadlines. On November 12, 2010, eight more exceptional associations were awarded Star Status. Much work has been done to help and encourage good organizations that did not meet the requirement of Star Status, and several more associations were reworking their applications at the end of the year.

The Star Board has made every effort possible to fulfill the spirit of the original bill and also stay solvent until more funding can be found. We the Board have become more and more convinced that this is a great investment in the waters of Minnesota. The organizations we certify are perfect examples of how to extend the value of money. Every dollar we provide them gets extended by their volunteer efforts and supplemented by their personal donations to their efforts to protect and improve the waters of Minnesota. The interest in the program is high, and organizations are working hard to improve their associations so they can qualify. As a separate program funded by a bill from the Legislature for Legacy Funds we are not competing for funds with the associations we support, we are helping them meet goals for the waters they protect.

The Star Lake Board has worked very hard as volunteers to extend our efforts with the money from the original bill. At the present time the Board has enough funds to grant a few more applicants with Star Lake Status and operate until July of 2011. It is our hope that we can get the support of the State Legislature and our new Governor to support a bill that will continue this great program into the future.

The Star Lake Board

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