

MN Star Lake Board Report to the Legislature 2013

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.

Updates have been submitted in 2009 and 2011. This report reflects the progress of the Star Lakes Board for the years 2011 and 2012. During this time frame the Board has completed the initial set-up items requested by the legislation and moved into the certification stage with recruitment and certification of Star Organizations.

Also during this period the Board worked with the Legislature to develop a new bill requesting that funds from the Legacy Fund be dedicated to support the work of this Board. That effort failed to get support at the committee level. During this same period the Board solicited funding from several other sources and did not secure any ongoing funds.

In this period, the Board continued to work at fulfilling its mission with the minimum expense from the funds originally provided for support of this organization. The work continued and lake associations were selected and granted Star status in 2011 and 2012. The number of lakes that were awarded Star status as of January 2013 is sixteen; these sixteen came from eleven counties. Many organizations are in the process of completing applications, while others are working at completing some of the requirements of the Star application so they can make submission.

As this Board has continued to work to meet its original goals as set forth in legislation, we have become aware of the value of the process and the work of this Board. The Certified Star Organizations are providing a base of mentors to other organizations that wish to develop to a level where they can do more to protect and improve the waters of the State of Minnesota. In addition, it has become clear to us that the quality of the associations that receive the Star status are exactly what is needed to provide the volunteers for water quality protection and improvement projects that the Legacy Funds are supporting. These organizations have the structure, stability, and people that will multiply the value of every dollar they get in three ways: first, they have organizations that can make the project succeed; second, they will provide seed or matching money from their own pockets; and third, they will provide the volunteer labor to actually do the work for the grants. This is as good as it gets and can make the Legacy dollars go as far as possible to protect and improve the Waters of Minnesota.

In the coming year the Board will continue to work with the Legislature on the possibility of funding from Legacy Funds while it attempts to find other funding

sources.

Page 2

MN Star Lake Board Report

The financial situation for the Star Lake Board has become very limited. In the total time that the Star Lake program has been functioning, it has survived with volunteer help from all of its Board members. The Board members have donated their time and only received compensation for travel and expenses. Operating in this fashion, the Board has been able to extend the operation of the Star Lake Board to this point. The Board projects that, after the payout to the newly selected Star Lakes, the organization will only be able to operate until approximately July 1, 2013.

It would be unfortunate if this effort could not continue, as there are many Lake and River Associations, if given this recognition, would increase their efforts to improve and protect the Waters of the State of Minnesota. Also, there is a large number of Lake and River associations that are struggling to get stronger and to be able to do much more in their efforts. The Star Lake program is well positioned to help make this happen for these lakes.

The State of Minnesota continues to make an exceptional commitment to the environment through the Legacy Programs and is in need of organizations at the lake and river level that are strong and dedicated enough to successfully compete and secure grants through the State agencies such as MNDNR, BWSR, & MNPCA. With the changes in the focus of many of the private grant programs, there is a loss of funding for other organizations that provide this motivation and training throughout the state. An example is the Minnesota Waters organization that provided considerable training for Lake and River associations. Also, the Initiative Foundation has had to redefine its goal and has eliminated the Healthy Lake program that had jump started many of the associations that have already become Star organizations. The organizations in the State need help to continue to grow in their ability to protect and improve the Waters of the State of Minnesota.

The Star Lake Board

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