



May 2026

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CHAIR'S CORNER

Welcome to the latest OLID newsletter! Spring is in full swing, trees are budding like crazy, the summer birds have returned and are busy building nests, docks and lifts are in place, pontoons and

boats are coming out of storage, and the spring stocking of fish to Lake Orono has been completed. What a wonderful upbeat time of the year for those of us fortunate to live on this lake!

Check out the stories on shoreline improvements and regulations in this issue; good info to know if you're considering an improvement to your property.

OLID's annual treatment plan of aquatic invasive species (AIS) has been finalized and approved by the DNR, and professional treatment will occur on or before May 15.

Your OLID board members wish everyone a fun, safe and enjoyable summer on the lake.

As always if you have concerns or questions please reach out to any of us!

Ice Out Dates

Upper Lake Orono – 03/29/26

Lower Lake Orono – 03/31/26

—Charlie Blesener, OLID Chair

OLID Awarded Two Grants from Sherburne County's Competitive AIS Program

We're excited to share that OLID was awarded **\$3,316** from the **Sherburne Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) AIS Cost-Share & Incentive Grant Program** – funding two separate projects that will directly support our ongoing work to protect and restore Lake Orono.

About the Grant Program

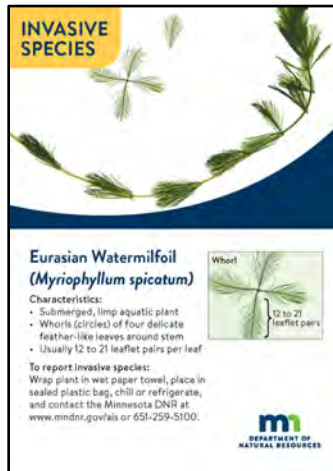
The Sherburne SWCD administers a competitive grant program that helps lake associations, lake improvement districts, and other organizations fund aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention, planning, and control efforts. Each year, the program accepts applications across four categories – Public Education, AIS Planning, AIS Volunteer Incentive, and AIS Control – and awards funding on a competitive basis to the most compelling projects. These grants are a valuable resource for our community, and OLID has worked hard to be a consistent, credible applicant in the program.

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Grants (continued from pg. 1)

Grant #1: AIS Public Waters Treatment – \$2,316 Awarded

The first grant funds up to **5 acres of Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) herbicide treatment** in 2026 using ProcellaCOR EC, the same product used successfully in our 2025 rapid response.



As you may recall, EWM was detected again in four areas in the upper portion of Lake Orono during our July 2025 vegetation survey – the first reappearance since 2020. We moved quickly: securing financial assistance from Sherburne SWCD and the City of Elk River, obtaining a rapid response permit from the MN DNR, and contracting Lake Management, Inc. (our nine-year contractor) to treat 3.47 acres on August 11, 2025. The treatment was successful, but given how the EWM presented – scattered across multiple areas – we’re planning for up to 5 acres of treatment in 2026 as a precaution.

This grant will help offset the estimated total treatment cost of \$5,790, with the \$2,316 award contributing meaningfully toward what can be an expensive but critical intervention.

Grant #2: CLP Delineation and Point-Intercept Survey – \$1,000 Awarded

The second grant funds our annual **Curly-leaf Pondweed (CLP) delineation survey** and **July point-intercept survey** conducted by Matt Berg of Endangered Resource Services, LLC (ERS).

ERS uses the same Madsen point-intercept methodology recommended by the MN DNR, with 204 sampling points spread evenly across Lake Orono (one point every 75 meters) and protocol for delineation surveys adding scattered points around the perimeter of the CLP beds to quantify the areas. These surveys have been conducted annually since 2017 and give us year-over-year data on aquatic plant health, species richness, and AIS presence — data that directly shapes our management decisions.

The 2026 total project budget is \$3,249, with the \$1,000 grant award helping offset the cost of the spring CLP delineation, the July full-lake native plant survey and species mapping and comparison analysis. Several additional items — including new plant photographic documentation and leveraged vegetation mapping — are being provided at no charge.

The Work Behind the Application

These grants don't happen automatically. Each application is a detailed, multi-page submission that requires compiling years of survey data, treatment records, cost estimates, contractor histories, and management plan documentation. Together, the two applications submitted this cycle – along with their supporting appendices – ran to over **45 pages of technical documentation**, representing dozens of volunteer hours from OLID board and committee members.

Questions about OLID's AIS work or lake management efforts? Reach out to Patrick Plant, Aquatic Vegetation Committee Chair, at patrick.plant@charter.net or (763) 441-6339.

That volunteer effort is what makes grant funding possible, and it's what sets OLID apart as a serious steward of Lake Orono. We're grateful to the Sherburne SWCD for recognizing the strength of our program and investing in its continuation.

SUMMER KICKOFF PICNIC

Friday, May 29 | 6:00 PM

Lake Orono Park Pavilion

Potluck • Games • Volleyball • Family Fun

Join your neighbors and celebrate the start of summer!



Restore your shoreline



Living on a lake is great, but erosion of your shoreline can be frustrating and contribute to poor conditions in the lake. Erosion can increase on developed lakes when native vegetation is replaced with lawn grass, which has shallow roots and provides little stabilization. Restoring shorelines with a more natural approach offers numerous benefits for the lake and helps to keep your shoreline from literally washing away. Native plants help to capture pollution from reaching the lake, which contributes to algae blooms. Their deep root systems also provide strong, natural erosion control while creating valuable habitat for fish, birds, and pollinators. By incorporating even small areas of natural vegetation, shoreline owners can play a vital role in supporting a healthier, more resilient lake.

Sherburne SWCD offers free site consultations and guidance for landowners wishing to restore their shoreline to a natural state. Plantings are designed with the landowner's input in mind – shorter plants can be incorporated to maintain a view of the lake and breaks in the planting can be made to provide lake access and recreational space. Often, there is grant funding available to help pay for the costs of site preparation, seed or plant plugs, erosion control fabric, or contractors to install a project. For more information contact Franny Gerde at the SWCD (fgerde@sherburneswcd.org or 763-220-3434).

–Dan Cibulka, Senior Water Resource Specialist, SWCD

Shoreland, Floodplain, and Wetland Compliance

The spring season seems to bring renewed enthusiasm among lakeshore owners to improve their shorelines. Before beginning any shoreline project, it's important to be aware of the regulatory framework that surrounds Orono Lake. Complying with these laws and regulations will ensure that your project is completed without delay or unexpected costs.

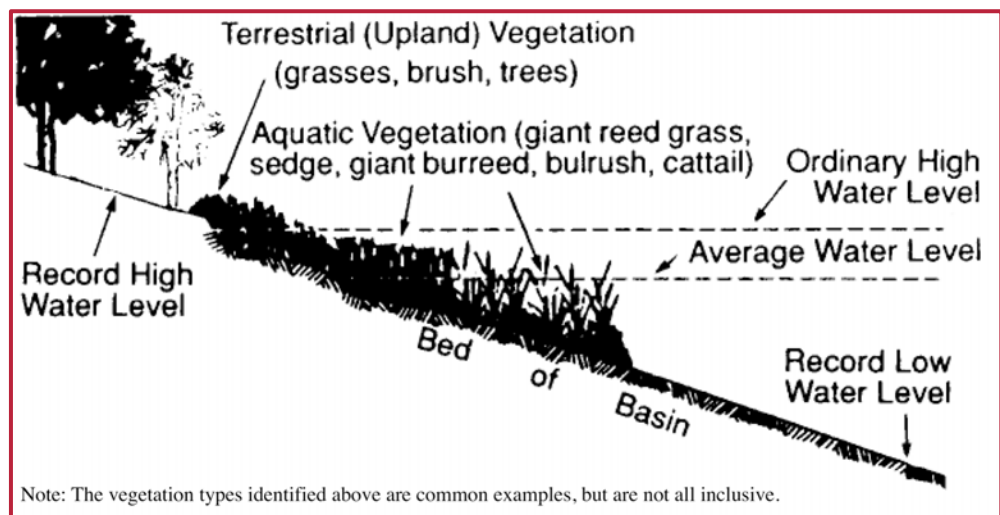
Orono Lake is situated within both the shoreland and floodplain zones, which have strict standards for land alterations. To add another layer of complexity, some parcels along the lake also contain wetlands and are subject to the additional rules. Navigating these layers of rules can be daunting, but understanding each will help you narrow the scope of your project.

Shoreland Ordinances and Public Waters

The purpose of the shoreland ordinance is to maintain existing natural aesthetics, prevent shoreline erosion and instability, and reduce run-off going into the lake. The ordinance has specific requirements related to building setbacks, grading, impervious surfaces, vegetation management, and shoreland alterations.

Briefly, the ordinance allows for stairs, small landings, and one water-oriented structure to encroach within the building setback, but no parcels may exceed 25-percent coverage of impervious surface. When there is existing and healthy tree cover, it will need to be preserved as much as possible to provide screening of structures and hardscape when viewed from the lake.

There is a shared responsibility between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the City of Elk River regarding shoreland rules. Basically, the city is responsible for anything above the Ordinary High-Water Level, and the DNR has permitting authority for any work below the water line. Early coordination with both the city and DNR is highly recommended.



DNR

Floodplain/Floodway

If you are planning a shoreland project along Orono Lake, it is a safe assumption that at least a portion of the project will be within the floodplain. The floodplain code is often the most restrictive of the ordinances, especially within the area known as the floodway. The floodway is the portion of the floodplain preserved to convey stormwater during 100-year storm events. (View flood hazard map here: <https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps/national-flood-hazard-layer>)

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Shoreland Compliance *(continued from pg. 4)*

Communities participating in the National Flood Insurance Program, which includes Elk River, are required to adopt specific ordinances to remain eligible for the program. These ordinances regulate what is broadly defined as “development” within the floodplain. To put it simply, nearly all work within the floodplain must be permitted, whether it is a small landscaping project or a large construction project. There are very few exceptions.

The floodplain code has no flexibility when working within the floodway. Projects must result in 0.00 feet of change in flood stage; no more, no less. As a rule of thumb, if you are maintaining the existing topography of your shoreline, minimal analysis will be needed to determine that the floodway is unimpacted. However, if the project involves significant grading and modifications within the floodway, the applicant will be required to provide engineering analysis to demonstrate that the project will not increase or decrease the flood stage in any way.

Wetlands

Wetlands are much less commonly involved with the review process of shoreland projects, but they are present along certain stretches of Orono Lake. The Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) was established in 1991 to protect the rapid loss of wetlands that was occurring throughout the state of Minnesota. The rules established by WCA are intended to prevent the draining, filling, and excavation of wetlands. While it was created at the state level, WCA administration is delegated to the local government.



Indirect impacts to wetlands, such as sedimentation, must also be considered, so the City of Elk River adopted its own ordinance in 2006, which established wetland setbacks and buffers. Together, the wetland buffer and setback ordinances generally require any impervious surface to be located at least 45 feet from a wetland. However, there are some exceptions for older developments.

The complexities of these environmental rules go well beyond what can be summarized in a short article, but the main thing to remember is that even the smallest projects along the shoreline may require a permit and will almost certainly be subject to one or more ordinances. Planning your project in advance and leaving time for the required reviews will ensure that work commences within your desired timeline. Failure to do so and proceeding without authorization risks further delays, enforcement action, and increased costs if any corrections are needed to achieve compliance.

Fortunately, you are not alone, and I am always happy to assist with any questions or concerns. If you are considering a project, I encourage you to give me a call or email.

–Joe Hale, Environmental Services and
Projects Specialist, City of Elk River
Jhale@elkrivernm.gov
763-635-1030

Ripples & Reflections

The Best Dammed Lake

Tanya and I moved to the lake 10 years ago this spring! I still remember the moment we were standing in the kitchen of the home we were looking to rent and talking to the landlord, when suddenly the floor started shaking and the cupboards began to rattle. We looked at each other and then at our prospective landlord and said, "what in the world is that?" He simply said, the trains run across the street. We looked at each other and then out the window at the lake and said, ok, we will take it!



We didn't know anyone, we had a little 14' fishing boat and we shared a love for the water! Honestly, we felt like we were the luckiest people ever. Everyday our focus was how we could get on the lake for a sunset! Tanya actually told me how much she loved Elk River sunsets. When we got on the lake, it was like sunsets on steroids! Every day was more spectacular than the last.



Ten years later, that feeling did not change. What has changed is the relationships and the people we have met over the years. We all know it's the Best Dammed Lake for so many reasons. We think it's the Best Dammed Lake because of the people that we get to call our neighbors and our friends.

Rather than having next door neighbors in a typical neighborhood, we feel like our neighborhood is everyone on the lake.

We were asked to help with an appetizer at our very first progressive dinner the first year we were here. When we moved up the street 3 houses and bought our first house together, we ended up with a bar and a bandshell!

That move changed our outlook on the progressives forever! Now we could really entertain and since we both love live music, we felt like adding a band to the dessert stop was a no brainer! We really enjoy the nightly pontoon parade and saying hi to everyone as they cruise by. It's always great to see everyone and it's great when our neighbors stop in to say hello!

We felt really fortunate to have a front row seat to the dredge, it felt like watching an episode of Gold Rush in our backyard! We used to joke the lake was like the Dead Sea when it came to fishing, but post dredge, the fishing has been "off the hook" Tanya has made the paper on multiple occasions for her fishing skills! Stop by the Sunshine Depot and her picture is hanging in the front entrance with our granddaughter! Ten years later and now we have four grandkids and they have their own little oasis in our backyard!

Beach time, fishing, kayaking, boating, swimming and eating pickles at the bar are some of their favorite things! We have made so many memories on the Best Dammed Lake, from watching deer eat weeds underwater and birth twins on Boy Scout island and swim from island to island to having the band Hairball play in our backyard, we look forward to the next ten years!

—Joe Walters

We invite anyone with a memory, tradition or recent lake moment to share their own story.
