



Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group Annual Report 2025

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Group (MLLWG) was formed in 1997 to protect water quality and the long-term health of the watershed. Since then, grants from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, and other partners have supported water-quality projects, monitoring, and landowner education. MLLWG includes both seasonal and year-round watershed residents. Its advisers represent Environmental Services; the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Department of Natural Resources; the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency; the Aitkin, Crow Wing, and Mille Lacs Soil and Water Conservation Districts; the Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation, a partner fund of the Initiative Foundation; and the Aitkin County Rivers and Lakes Association. Together, property owners and agency representatives work to improve water quality throughout the region. In 2005, MLLWG launched the Mille Lacs Compass program to expand outreach and education and promote shoreland preservation and restoration projects.

2025 PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

Mille Lacs Compass Program

Mille Lacs Compass builds lasting relationships with landowners who want to reduce shoreline erosion and stormwater runoff while enhancing their natural landscapes. Participating landowners receive ongoing, on-site guidance from Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) experts on property improvements that support watershed health. These experts may also identify opportunities for additional assistance. MLLWG also provides online access to Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates, which offers shoreline stewardship contacts and resources. Participants are encouraged to share information about Mille Lacs Compass with neighbors and friends.

Healthy Land, Healthy Lake Expo

Our 2025 event was held on the morning of Saturday, May 3, at Tulibee Tavern in Wahkon, Minnesota. This was the 10th anniversary of the Expo. It featured six speakers and more than 20 exhibitors representing agencies and businesses. Additional activities included a watershed stewardship roundtable with shoreline steward Guy Haglund; "Get the Lead Out" lead tackle exchange; the display of a mobile "Clean, Drain, Dry, Dispose" boat-cleaning unit; and numerous giveaways. Estimated Expo attendance was 75.

Expo presentations included:

- Mille Lacs Lake Water Quality Update with Perry Bunting, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe DNR Director of Environmental Programs

- Keep It Clean: What's Happening Locally and Statewide with Ann Brucciani Lyon, Keep It Clean Coalition Member
- All About Loons and How to Help Protect Their Habitat with Maddi Nistler, National Loon Foundation
- Get Hooked: Smallmouth Bass Habitat, Fishing and Tourism with Mark Olson, Norseman Guide Service
- How Your Shoreline Affects Water Quality and Habitat with Lily Carr, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Lake Steward Coordinator
- Free Shoreline Stewardship Resources through Mille Lacs Compass with Lynn Gallice, Mille Lacs SWCD Resource Conservationist

Healthy Land, Healthy Lake 2025 was made possible in part by a grant from Mille Lacs Corporate Ventures.



Presenter, exhibitors, and attendees at the 2025 Healthy Land, Healthy Lake Expo.

Keep It Clean Campaign

MLLWG continued its support of the Keep It Clean campaign which addresses the problem of garbage and waste left on the ice of Minnesota lakes. In 2025 Keep It Clean introduced the Mille Lacs Trash Tracker website, and by September more than 1600 pounds of trash had been recorded on the site.

Lead Tackle Exchange

MLLWG continued to participate in the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's "Get the Lead Out" campaign at its Healthy Land, Healthy Lake Expo where anglers were encouraged to exchange their lead tackle for nontoxic alternatives.

ADMINISTRATION

Organizational Development

On July 23, 2025, MLLWG officially became a Minnesota nonprofit organization, and it received its IRS determination of 501(c)(3) status September 4. These were significant steps forward for the organization, assuring its independence and increasing its ability to raise funds for its programs.

Meetings

MLLWG held seven regular business meetings in 2025. These were held in February, March, April, July, September, October, and December. (The April and October meetings were held in-person; the others were held virtually.) An additional business meeting was conducted August 15.

Membership

At the end of 2025, MLLWG had 10 regular voting members and 14 non-voting advisory members. (According to MLLWG bylaws, a regular voting member is someone who has attended at least two meetings in the previous 12 months.) Advisory members play a crucial role by bringing expertise in outdoor issues and connections to local government. SWCDs, the MPCA, and Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe DNR are regularly represented at meetings. Meeting attendance in 2025 averaged 14 individuals.

Officers

Officers are elected in the fall of odd-numbered years to serve two-year terms beginning in the coming January. Officers serving during 2025 included:

- Chair: Margaret Vos
- Vice Chair: Jake Janski
- Secretary and Treasurer: Barb Eller



Shoreline buffer on Mille Lacs Lake.

2025 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

BEGINNING BALANCE JANUARY 2025 **\$1,254.64**

INCOME

Donations received 2025

 Restricted , Healthy Land Healthy Lake (HLHL)

 ML Corporate Ventures Grant, HLHL '25 **\$1,000.00**

 Individual Donors, HLHL '25 **\$750.00**

 Initiative Foundation Grant, HLHL '26 **\$2,500.00**

 Unrestricted

 Fundraising at HLHL '25 **\$78.00**

 Individual Donors **\$1,750.00**

Savings Account Interest **\$0.27**

TOTAL INCOME: **\$6,078.27**

EXPENSES

Organizational

 Domain Registration 2024 pd in 2025 **\$23.17**

 MN Lakes and Rivers Membership **\$125.00**

 Website, WP Forms, Zoom for 2 months **\$457.90**

 Postage **\$14.60**

 Office Supplies **\$7.07**

 State and County Filing of Nonprofit Corporation **\$146.00**

 Federal Filing for 501(c)(3) Determination **\$275.00**

 Refreshments for October Organizational Meeting **\$10.28**

Operational

 Mille Lacs Trash Tracker Website **\$100.00**

Healthy Land, Healthy Lake Expo '25

Administration

 Fiscal Agent Expense for MLCV Grant Admin* **\$100.00**

 Host Venue, Tulibee's Event Center **\$300.00**

 Bakery Items, Isle Bakery **\$52.00**

Advertising and Marketing

 Mille Lacs Messenger Ad **\$278.00**

 Facebook Ads **\$266.72**

 SpeedPro Hard Surface Stands (2) **\$158.46**

 VistaPrint Signage (4 directional signs, 1 thankyou sign) **\$200.16**

 FedEx: Print of handouts, entry forms **\$104.54**

 FedEx: tape, pens, markers **\$9.32**

 Pearson Promotion and Production, 25.5 hrs.** **\$250.00**

 Brucianni Lyon Promotion, 40 hrs.** **\$250.00**

TOTAL EXPENSES: **\$3,128.22**

ENDING BALANCE **\$4,204.69**

**Note: Aitkin Soil and Water Conservation District served as the MLLWG fiscal agent until 7/24/25 and administered the 2025 MLCV Grant.*

***Note: Reimbursements for services under 2024 Volunteer Rate of \$36.31/hr. (Pearson and Brucianni Lyon were reimbursed only partially under this budget. Their remaining time was volunteer hours.)*

PARTNERS

MLLWG is grateful to its funders, volunteers, program participants, and representatives of government agencies and organizations without whom its work could not continue.

Local and State Partners

Aitkin County Lakes and Rivers Association
Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District
Crow Wing Soil & Water Conservation District
Keep It Clean Coalition
Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation, a Partner Fund of
the Initiative Foundation
Mille Lacs Soil & Water Conservation District
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Board of Water & Soil Resources
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Minnesota Lakes and Rivers Advocates
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Round Lake Association, Aitkin & Crow Wing County

Help protect the Mille Lacs Lake watershed—visit <https://millelacswatershed.org>
or email millelacswatershed@gmail.com to learn more and get involved.