

**Thank you, Chair Hansen, for the opportunity to testify before this committee today. My name is Robyn Dwight. I am the President of the Upper Red Lake Area Association and one of the spokespeople for the Keep it Clean initiative.**

**This initiative began over ten years ago at Lake of the Woods to address the growing problem of garbage and human waste as a byproduct of winter angling and recreation on frozen lakes every winter. Concerned Mille Lacs Lake and Upper/Lower Red Lake stakeholders joined their efforts within the last two years. Together we represent the three largest Minnesota Walleye fisheries. Thirty-eight lakes and other organizations across the state have joined our initiative since then, because they see the same leftovers on their waters and shore-lines, and they also lack the resources to provide sustainable solutions.**

**To learn about this problem, our partners visited with local residents and business people who shared first-hand accounts and provided hundreds of pictures that weren't very pretty. We started looking at available data as well, to get an understanding of the scope of the human waste problem on our frozen lakes.**

**The 2020-2021 DNR Creel survey showed that the three major walleye fisheries had over 7.25 million angler hours clocked in the winter of that year. That is a lot! There were over 79,000 trips to Upper Red Lake, with 2.4 million angler hours reported. This year's Zip Code data revealed that there was at least one angler party from seventeen different states. Minnesota anglers made up 92% of interviewed parties. There was representation from 390 different Zip Codes scattered across Minnesota. Creel Survey data collected at Lake of the Woods shows more than a 500% increase in fishing pressure from 1981 to 2020, during the ice-angling season, while summer angling pressure remains fairly constant. The trend at Lake of the Woods reflects similar trends on other Ice Belt Lakes and coincides with the introduction and increasing popularity of RV styled**

wheelhouses.

With a good understanding of the number of people visiting our frozen lakes and with evidence of what they leave behind, our Keep it Clean Committee began to work, both locally and regionally, to bring about changes we believe are necessary and sustainable. At Upper Red Lake, we had town hall meetings to learn how we could work together to change the culture and human behavior.

We collaborated with non-profits and agency folks who agreed with our mission and who, subsequently, provided support and funding for our media campaign and Human Waste Removal Pilot Program. We provided resources to lake businesses and developed our own media outreach through a new KeepitClean website and Facebook page to encourage lake visitors to change their behavior and bring trash and waste off the ice.

Thanks to partnerships with local businesses, Keep it Clean at Upper Red Lake operated a fairly successful Pilot Program this winter. Anglers and winter campers on Upper Red contained and delivered over 23 tons of human waste to designated dumpsters, separate from solid waste collected by access owners onshore, as part of the Keep it Clean - Human Waste Pilot Project. At Lake of the Woods, Mille Lacs Lake and Upper/Lower Red Lake, businesses are sharing our message and using the resources Keep it Clean has provided.

In spite of our efforts, we still see evidence that too many people have little to no respect for our natural resources and who continue to ignore local ordinances, taking the easiest way out with their trash and sewage. At a recent stakeholder meeting, lake business owners estimated that 75% of their lake passes are issued for folks who drive on the ice and find their own campsites making garbage & waste removal the shelter owners' responsibility and their problem.

Anglers and sportsmen who have enjoyed a lifetime of fun on the ice are

**sometimes the same folks that leave a trail of waste, unaware that their small contribution adds up. There are others who don't mean to pollute the waters, but who arrive unprepared to remove the trash that freezes to the ice before they move their shelters. Change is not easy but it is time.**

**So, we are increasing our messaging and building partnerships at the local, regional, and state levels, but another piece of our puzzle is the inconsistent approach to regulation and enforcement. How is the State responding to the ice tourism phenomenon as it unfolds? The short answer is that improvements could be made.**

**Existing Statutes that cover activities in open water must be amended to support necessary regulation and enforcement of activities on ice-covered waters. House File 2745 was introduced, with bi-partisan support, on March 8. It has been carefully crafted, with input from everyone we have been working with since our initiative began. This has truly been a grassroots effort.**

**We thank supporters from the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, MNFISH, the Department of Natural Resources, the Association of Minnesota Counties, Minnesota Lakes and Rivers, and many, many others, who agree that human waste and garbage do not belong in waters, or on the ice of the waters of the State. We especially thank Representative Andrew Myers and Senator Paul Utke for being the chief authors in the House and the Senate.**

**Our bill seeks to prohibit the placement of garbage and waste on the ice of waters of the state, in effect, requiring us to contain it at source and remove it when we leave the ice. We would do no less, on open water or in state parks and campgrounds. We can no longer neglect the management of a rapidly growing, state-wide, multi-million dollar, ice fishing industry, and we must invest in education, resources and infrastructure, and better regulation and enforcement,**

**to protect our public waters. With the passage of this bill into law, counties will have the opportunity to build the programs they need to protect State Waters and the people who use them, not just in the summer months, but all year round.**

**Thank you for your time this afternoon. I will do my best to answer any questions you may have.**



AITKIN COUNTY SOIL AND WATER  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

307 2<sup>nd</sup> St NW Rm 216  
Aitkin, MN 56431  
Telephone (218) 927-7284

MINNESOTA  
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

March 13, 2023

**RE: HF2745 & SF2789: Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.**

The Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District supports the work of the Keep it Clean Committee and stands behind the bill as introduced. This law will help manage the leftovers from winter angling and camping visitors on Lake Mille Lacs and other lakes across the State of Minnesota. The popularity of overnight stays on our frozen lakes has grown ahead of the local and State's ability to deal with the impact of human waste being generated and left behind for others to clean up. This has been a problem for numerous years, with local residents and lake users left to clean up the debris each spring. The popularity of wheelhouses has just increased the impact of this sport to our natural resources. Impacts to our waters are preventable through the passage of this bill.

We believe that during the winter fishing and recreational extravaganza on Minnesota's public waters, human waste and garbage do not belong on the ice, under the ice, or along our shorelines. We work to manage, protect, and preserve this valuable resource now, and into the future. Mille Lacs Lake is a crown jewel of our outdoor recreation experience. It is a resource worth protecting.

Sincerely,

Janet Smude

District Manager

March 20, 2023

**REGARDING HF2745: Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.**

Representative Isaac Schultz

I am writing to you today to voice my support for the Keep It Clean Committee and the passage of HF2745. Passing HF2745 will help us address the growing problem of anglers and other winter visitors leaving garbage and human waste on the ice on Mille Lacs Lake and other lakes and rivers across Minnesota.

In recent years, winter activity has dramatically increased on Mille Lacs Lake and other lakes and rivers in our state. Ice fishing has quickly grown more popular with better technology, better equipment and wheelhouses, which make it more comfortable for ice anglers and winter campers to stay on the ice for extended periods of time. This increased activity leads to more garbage and waste left on the ice, which pollutes lakes and rivers and strains ecosystems.

According to DNR Creel Survey data, during the 2020-2021 ice fishing season, anglers collectively spent more than 2.1 million hours on Mille Lacs Lake. It's exciting to see more people enjoying the lake during the winter months — but the amount of garbage and waste that anglers and other winter visitors are leaving behind is reaching unmanageable proportions.

This year, to help address the problem, the Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation brought the Keep It Clean campaign to Mille Lacs Lake. One hundred percent of the businesses around the lake that offer ice access and/or sell bait are supporting the campaign. They have hung Keep It Clean banners and posters and put out table tents and other materials to encourage visitors to pick up and remove all their garbage and waste from the ice.

Across Minnesota, there is a massive coalition of local businesses, nonprofits, lake associations, government organizations (including the DNR and MPCA) and individuals supporting Keep It Clean and working to address the problem of garbage and human waste being left on or under the ice. In fact, since the KeepItCleanMN.org website launched in mid November, over 30 lakes looking for a solution to the problem of garbage and human waste on the ice have joined the Keep It Clean Campaign.

Across our state, local business owners and their staffs, DNR conservation officers and naturalists, Soil and Water Conservation District members, community organizations, property owners and others are doing what they can to help curb the problem of garbage and human waste being left on the ice, but they need your support. Please vote to approve **HF2745**.

Thank you,



**Jake Janski**

Mille Lacs SWCD District 3

15452 220th St  
Milaca MN  
JakeJanskiSWCD@gmail.com



# Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District

701 Minnesota Avenue NW, Suite 113  
Bemidji MN 56601  
(218) 333 - 4158

March 17<sup>th</sup> 2023

The Honorable Andrew Myers  
District 45A  
377 State Office Building  
St. Paul MN 55155

**REGARDING HF2745 & SF2789: Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.**

The Beltrami Soil and Water Conservation District endorses the work of the Keep it Clean Committee and supports the bill as introduced. Over the past 15 years, the increase in access to winter recreation throughout the state has led to increasing trash and human waste not properly handled by people who use these resources.

This law will help us to manage the leftovers from winter angling and camping visitors on Upper Red Lake and other lakes across the State of Minnesota. The popularity of overnight stays on our frozen lake has leapfrogged ahead of the State's ability to deal with the impact of human waste being generated and left behind for others to clean up.

We believe that during the winter fishing and camping on Minnesota's public waters, human waste and trash do not belong on the ice, under the ice, or along our shorelines. We pledge to help protect and preserve this valuable resource now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zach Gutknecht".

**Zach Gutknecht**  
*Clean Water Specialist*  
701 Minnesota Avenue, Suite 113  
Bemidji, MN 56601  
(218) 333-4157  
[zachrie.gutknecht@co.beltrami.mn.us](mailto:zachrie.gutknecht@co.beltrami.mn.us)



# **LAKE OF THE WOODS COUNTY**

## **Lake of the Woods County Commissioner**

---

TO: Honorable Representative Andrew Myers

FROM: Lake of the Woods County Board of Commissioners

RE: HF 2745

DATE: March 14, 2023

The Lake of the Woods County Board of Commissioners would like to acknowledge the work of the Keep it Clean Committee by supporting HF 2745 as introduced. This proposed bill will help manage the leftover waste from winter angling on Lake of the Woods and other waters across the State of Minnesota. The popularity of overnight stays on the ice has outpaced the State's ability to adequately address the impact of trash and other waste left behind for others to clean up.

The Lake of the Woods County Board of Commissioners believe that it is time for a change to address the trash and other waste left behind from irresponsible winter anglers. We have and will continue to support the efforts of the Keep it Clean Committee to keep Lake of the Woods free of waste for future generations to enjoy our valued water resources.

Sincerely,

Ed Arnesen  
Chair, Lake of the Woods County Board of Commissioners



# MASWCD

## Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts

255 Kellogg Boulevard East, Suite 101, St. Paul, MN 55101 | 651-690-9028 | [www.maswcd.org](http://www.maswcd.org)

### PRESIDENT

CHARLES RAU  
Rice, MN  
(320) 493-9503  
[chuck.rau@maswcd.org](mailto:chuck.rau@maswcd.org)

### VICE PRESIDENT & SW AREA 5 DIRECTOR

CLARK LINGBEEK  
Comfrey, MN  
(507) 920-9884  
[clark.lingbeek@maswcd.org](mailto:clark.lingbeek@maswcd.org)

### SECRETARY/TREASURER & SC AREA 6 DIRECTOR

MARK SCHNOBRICH  
Hutchinson, MN  
(320) 587-3760  
[mark.schnobrich@maswcd.org](mailto:mark.schnobrich@maswcd.org)

### NW AREA 1 DIRECTOR

RANDY SCHELLACK  
Glyndon, MN  
(701) 238-8121  
[randy.schellack@maswcd.org](mailto:randy.schellack@maswcd.org)

### WC AREA 2 DIRECTOR

TOM GREGORY  
Kimball, MN  
320-398-7312  
[tom.gregory@maswcd.org](mailto:tom.gregory@maswcd.org)

### NE AREA 3 DIRECTOR

KURT BECKSTROM  
Milaca, MN  
(612) 390-2459  
[kurt.beckstrom@maswcd.org](mailto:kurt.beckstrom@maswcd.org)

### METRO AREA 4 DIRECTOR

LAURA ZANMILLER  
West St. Paul, MN  
(651) 270-2856  
[laura.zanmiller@maswcd.org](mailto:laura.zanmiller@maswcd.org)

### SE AREA 7 DIRECTOR

RANDY SMITH  
Adams, MN  
(507) 438-4570  
[randy.smith@maswcd.org](mailto:randy.smith@maswcd.org)

### NC AREA 8 DIRECTOR

KEN LAPORTE  
Pillager, MN  
(218) 746-3927  
[ken.laporte@maswcd.org](mailto:ken.laporte@maswcd.org)

### IMMEDIATE PAST

PRESIDENT  
PAUL KRABBENHOFT  
Moorhead, MN  
(701) 799-0369  
[paul.krabbenhof@maswcd.org](mailto:paul.krabbenhof@maswcd.org)

### STAFF

Executive Director  
LEANN BUCK

Assistant Director  
SHEILA VANNEY

Office Manager  
STEFANIE MARTINEZ

March 21, 2023

Senator Paul Utke  
95 University Avenue W.  
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2403  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-9651, [sen.paul.utke@senate.mn](mailto:sen.paul.utke@senate.mn)

Rep. Andrew Myers (R) District: 45A  
377 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-296-9188,  
[rep.andrew.myers@house.mn.gov](mailto:rep.andrew.myers@house.mn.gov)

**RE: SF 2789/HF 2745** *Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.*

Sen. Utke and Rep. Myers,

The Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (MASWCD) would like to acknowledge the work of the Keep it Clean Committee by supporting SF 2789/HF 2745 as introduced. The MASWCD adopted a resolution of support of the Keep It Clean efforts at their annual meeting in December of 2022.

This bill will help manage the leftover waste from winter angling on waters across the State of Minnesota. The popularity of overnight stays on the ice has outpaced the State's ability to adequately address the impact of trash and other waste left behind for others to clean up.

MASWCD supports efforts to address the trash and other waste left behind from winter anglers. Support of the Keep It Clean efforts will help to keep our waters waste free for future generations to enjoy our valued water resources.

Sincerely,

Chuck Rau  
President  
Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts



307 2nd Street NW, Rm 216, Aitkin, MN 56431

March 20, 2023

REGARDING HF2745 & SF2789: Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.

The Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Group (MLLWMG) helps area landowners manage their property in ways that support the water quality of Mille Lacs Lake and its surrounding area. Formed in 1997, it connects interested citizens with local and state agency experts and resources, provides educational materials, and inspires simple actions that can have a positive impact on the area's land and waters.

MLLWMG supports the work of the Keep It Clean Committee and the passage of HF2745 & SF2789. Passing HF2745 & SF2789 will help us address the growing problem of anglers and other winter visitors leaving garbage and human waste on the ice on Mille Lacs Lake and other lakes and rivers across Minnesota.

In recent years, winter activity has dramatically increased on Mille Lacs Lake and other lakes and rivers in our state. Ice fishing has quickly grown more popular with better technology, better equipment, and wheelhouses, which make it more comfortable for ice anglers and winter campers to stay on the ice for extended periods of time. This increased activity leads to more garbage and waste left on the ice, which pollutes lakes and rivers and strains ecosystems.

MLLWMG supports the coordinated efforts of the Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation and the Keep It Clean campaign and this legislation to keep Mille Lacs Lake healthy.

Thank you and please vote yes for healthy land, healthy lakes.

*Margaret Vos*

Margaret Vos  
Chair, Mille Lacs Lake Watershed Management Group  
(320) 292-4090 / mvos@stcloudstate.edu



**MILLE LACS AREA**  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

**March 13, 2023**

**REGARDING HF2745 & SF2789: Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.**

The Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation supports the work of the Keep It Clean Committee and the passage of HF2745 & SF2789. Passing HF2745 & SF2789 will help us address the growing problem of anglers and other winter visitors leaving garbage and human waste on the ice on Mille Lacs Lake and other lakes and rivers across Minnesota.

In recent years, winter activity has dramatically increased on Mille Lacs Lake and other lakes and rivers in our state. Ice fishing has quickly grown more popular with better technology, better equipment and wheelhouses, which make it more comfortable for ice anglers and winter campers to stay on the ice for extended periods of time. This increased activity leads to more garbage and waste left on the ice, which pollutes lakes and rivers and strains ecosystems.

According to DNR Creel Survey data, during the 2020-2021 ice fishing season, anglers collectively spent more than 2.1 million hours on Mille Lacs Lake. It's exciting to see more people enjoying the lake during the winter months — but the amount of garbage and waste that they are leaving behind is reaching unmanageable proportions.

This year, to help address the problem, the Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation brought the Keep It Clean campaign to Mille Lacs Lake. One hundred percent of the businesses around the lake that offer ice access and/or sell bait are participating in the campaign. They have all put up Keep It Clean banners, posters and other materials to encourage visitors to pick up and remove all their garbage and waste from the ice. Other local businesses have joined the effort as well. These businesses include:

**Businesses Providing Lake Access and/or Selling Bait**

- |                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Agate Bay                       | 14. MSA Flagship                              |
| 2. Bayview Bar & Grill             | 15. Nitti's Hunters Point                     |
| 3. Barnacles Resort & Campground   | 16. Randy's Rentals                           |
| 4. Beachside Resort                | 17. Red Door Resort                           |
| 5. Castaway's                      | 18. Reed's Family Outdoor Outfitters (Onamia) |
| 6. Castles Resort                  | 19. Rocky Reef Resort                         |
| 7. Garrison Sports Bait & Tackle   | 20. Sue's Bait & Tackle                       |
| 8. Izaty's Resort                  | 21. Terry's Boat Harbor                       |
| 9. Johnson's Portside              | 22. Trailside Bait & Tackle                   |
| 10. KJ's Ice Fishing on Mille Lacs | 23. Tutt's Bait & Tackle                      |
| 11. Lyback's Ice Fishing           | 24. Twin Pines Resort                         |
| 12. Malmo Market                   | 25. White Cap Inn                             |
| 13. McQuoid's Inn                  |   |

**Additional Keep It Clean Participants**

- |                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Beckham's Bar & Bistro        | 8. Isle City Hall                    |
| 2. Charlie's Bar & Grill         | 9. Mille Lacs Lake Community Library |
| 3. Country Corner Café           | 10. Onamia Vets Club                 |
| 4. Da Boathouse Restaurant & Bar | 11. VFW 1816                         |
| 5. Harbor Inn Garrison           | 12. Wahkon City Hall                 |
| 6. Isle Bakery                   | 13. Wahkon Inn                       |
| 7. Isle Bowl & Pizza             |                                      |

Several community businesses and organizations have also issued grants or given dollars to fund our local Keep It Clean efforts, including:

1. Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District
2. City of Onamia
3. East Central Energy
4. Initiative Foundation
5. Isle Lions Club
6. Isle National Honor Society Students
7. Mille Lacs Drift Skippers
8. Mille Lacs Watershed Management Group
9. Nitti's Hunters Point Resort
10. Spire Federal Credit Union

**These are only some of the businesses and organizations working to address the problem of garbage and human waste left on the ice on just Mille Lacs Lake!**

**Across Minnesota, we have a massive coalition of local businesses, nonprofits, lake associations, government organizations (including the DNR and MPCA) and individuals supporting Keep It Clean and working to address the problem of garbage and human waste being left on or under the ice.** In fact, since the KeepItCleanMN.org website launched in mid November, over 30 lakes looking for a solution to the problem of garbage and human waste on the ice have joined the Keep It Clean Campaign. And we continue to hear from more and more lakes and rivers desperate for a solution to this problem.

#### **Keep It Clean Campaign Members as of March 13, 2023**

- |                           |                            |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Amber Lake             | 18. Lake Ripley            |
| 2. Big Sauk Lake          | 19. Lake Sisseton          |
| 3. Big Swan               | 20. Lake Stella            |
| 4. Budd Lake              | 21. Lake Vermilion         |
| 5. Clear Lake             | 22. Lake Washington        |
| 6. Collinwood Lake        | 23. Leech Lake             |
| 7. Dunns/Richardson       | 24. Long Lake (Dassel)     |
| 8. George Lake            | 25. Long Lake (Grove City) |
| 9. Hall Lake              | 26. Mille Lacs Lake        |
| 10. Kandiyohi County SWCD | 27. Prior Lake             |
| 11. Lake Arville          | 28. Round Lake             |
| 12. Lake Francis          | 29. Spring Lake (Dassel)   |
| 13. Lake Jennie           | 30. Spring Lake            |
| 14. Lake Koronis          | 31. Star Lake              |
| 15. Lake Manuella         | 32. Upper Red Lake         |
| 16. Lake Minnie Belle     | 33. West Battle Lake       |
| 17. Lake of the Woods     | 34. Wolf Lake              |

Across our state, local business owners and their staffs, DNR conservation officers and naturalists, MPCA members, Soil and Water Conservation District members, community organizations, property owners and others are doing what they can to help curb the problem of garbage and human waste being left on the ice, but they need your support. Please vote to approve **HF2745 & SF2789**.

Thank you,

*Ann Brucciani Lyon*

**Ann Brucciani Lyon**

Vice Chair | Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation | <https://mlacf.org>

[annbruccianilyon@gmail.com](mailto:annbruccianilyon@gmail.com) | 612-202-3793

C/O Initiative Foundation

405 First Street SE

Little Falls, MN 56345

Source: MPR News.

<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2023/03/20/lake-residents-want-a-tougher-law-to-keep-trash-and-worse-off-the-ice>. 03/20/23

## Environment

**Lake residents want a tougher law to keep trash (and worse) off the ice**

**Dan Gunderson**Moorhead, Minn. March 20, 2023 4:00 AM



The Keep It Clean initiative started in 2012 around Lake of the Woods along the Canadian Border as trash proliferated on the popular winter fishing destination. Kerem Yucel | AFP via Getty Images 2022

Share

Many popular Minnesota lakes turn into towns on ice over the winter.

Upper Red Lake is visited by tens of thousands of anglers and many spend a weekend or a few days on the ice. And some leave more than footprints and frozen-over ice-fishing holes when they depart.

This winter the Upper Red Lake Area Association ran a pilot project to address the issue of people dumping human waste on the ice. They installed dumpsters at lake access points and mounted a public awareness campaign to encourage anglers to properly dispose of human waste.

“They recorded well over 10 tons of human waste bags, toilet bags that people had put in those dumpsters,” said Robyn Dwight, president of the Upper Red Lake Area Association.

### **MPR News is Member Supported**

What does that mean? The news, analysis and community conversation found here is funded by donations from individuals. Make a gift of any amount today to support this resource for everyone.

[Donate Today](#)

The campaign was so successful Dwight said the group is looking for funding to continue it next year.

Dwight is among a growing number of Minnesotans organizing to call for tougher enforcement and more resources to keep lakes clean over the winter.



A holiday wreath among the trash left behind on Lake Mille Lacs. Courtesy Ann Brucciani Lyon

### **Keep it Clean initiative**

The Keep It Clean initiative started in 2012 around Lake of the Woods along the Canadian Border as trash proliferated on the popular winter fishing destination.

In the past couple of years, Upper Red Lake and Lake Mille Lacs joined the effort because of what they saw as a worsening problem. Dwight said they've heard from other lake groups in Minnesota and in surrounding states who also want to join the initiative.



Minnesota DNR conservation officer Brent Grewe collected this trash in March 2021 from the ice on Medicine Lake in Hennepin County. Courtesy of Minnesota DNR

Trash left on the ice has [long been a issue](#) for many Minnesota lakes, but Dwight said the evolution of wheel houses has exacerbated the pollution and the concerns. Wheel houses are essentially fully appointed recreational vehicles with holes in the floor for fishing through the ice. They allow anglers to spend days at a time on the ice.

- **More anglers equals more trash**

“More and more people have an opportunity to leave trash on the ice, not only trash but human waste because these beautiful RVs are now equipped with black and gray water holding tanks,” she said.

“We don't have the resources in the state of Minnesota to deal with these new winterized wheel houses. We don't have winterized (sewage) dump stations and we don't have the resources to keep up with the whole phenomenon of winter camping on the ice.”

So the groups teamed up to push for [legislation](#) that would toughen state law regarding leaving garbage on the ice.

The bill also would require a study of the costs of expanding enforcement of the law. It has garnered bipartisan support from lawmakers since it was introduced earlier this month and will go before a Minnesota House committee later this week.



Organizers of a campaign to reduce trash left on ice are pushing for tougher enforcement and more funding to address the problem on Minnesota lakes. Courtesy Ann Brucciani Lyon

The majority of anglers manage their trash properly, and some resorts provide trash service on Mille Lacs said Ann Brucciani Lyon with the Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation.

“It’s that group that doesn’t pick up after themselves that’s creating challenges for everybody else that’s out there and it’s affecting everybody else’s enjoyment,” she said.

Brucciani Lyon said social media is rife with examples of a wide range of waste abandoned or dumped on the ice.

“You will see very heated language when people are finding a garbage bag that’s been left behind or trash that’s out there,” she said. “And it is a polarizing issue because people, the majority, would like to see the lakes clean and healthy.”

Source: Outdoor News. <https://www.old.outdoornews.com/2022/11/30/keep-it-clean-campaign-ramps-up-for-22-ice-season/> 11/30/2022

'Keep It Clean' campaign ramps up for '22 ice season

November 30, 2022 [Javier Serna](#)

Baudette, Minn. — The Keep It Clean Campaign this ice season is expanding its footprint to work on the trash issue that has become a bigger problem each ice-fishing season, something many attribute to an increase in wheelhouse use.

"The point is to educate, promote, and enforce keeping all forms of trash off the ice," said Joe Henry, longtime executive director of Lake of the Woods Tourism and a member of the Keep It Clean committee.

The effort originally was undertaken to combat the trash issue on Lake of the Woods. In recent years, the campaign has expanded to add chapters on Upper Red Lake and Lake Mille Lacs. This year, Lake Vermilion and the Fairmont Chain of Lakes in southern Minnesota also have added chapters.

"We have other areas going through their boards to get approved," Henry said.

The group is launching a new website soon, and the current home page also includes a video called, "Keep It Clean: Be Nice to Our Ice." The film was produced by retired outdoors host (and *Outdoor News* columnist) Ron Schara, president of the MN-FISH organization.

Schara, in a press release announcing the collaboration with the campaign, said, "Fishing is good for the soul as winter anglers seek the peace and solitude of a frozen landscape, but we have an ice-fishing problem, a nasty problem, a pollution problem and, frankly, an embarrassing problem. Garbage and human waste are being left on Minnesota lakes during the ice-fishing season, and in the spring this garbage and waste infiltrates our waters, sinking to the bottom or washing up on our shore."

The three-minute video is on Youtube and can be viewed on the group's website ([www.keepitcleanmn.org](http://www.keepitcleanmn.org)) and it will be aired before seminars at the St. Paul Ice Fishing and Winter Sports Show, which runs Dec. 2-4.

The video was done in collaboration with soil and water conservation districts in Aitkin, Beltrami, Crow Wing, Lake of the Woods, Mille Lacs, and Roseau counties, as well as Lake of the Woods Tourism, Mille Lacs Area Community Foundation, and the Upper Red Lake Association.

Upper Red, another major ice-fishing destination, was the second area to add a KIC chapter.

"At the end of the day, though we have to deal with it locally, it is a statewide issue," said Zach Gutknecht, of the Beltrami County SWCD.

Evolving technology has made the problem worse, Gutknecht said, pointing to heated holding tanks on wheelhouses, which have allowed some wheelhouse anglers to drain human waste directly onto and into lakes.

Gutknecht said the campaign is highlighting five points for anglers to follow heading into this ice-fishing season.

The first of those is for anglers to make a plan for trash and waste removal before they get on the ice. Many access points and resorts have garbage collection.

The second point is to use colored bags because white bags can be difficult to see in snowy conditions. Brightly colored or black bags are easier to see, which makes them less likely to be left behind.

Third, store garbage and waste off the ice – in vehicles, trailers, or fish houses. Make sure they are secure before traveling to prevent bags from blowing out of truck beds.

Fourth, make sure to check for trash before leaving, picking up anything that may be lying around.

Fifth, always take support blocks, insulation, wood, and anything else that may be part of the setup with your wheelhouse.

Gutknecht suggests reaching out to the resorts. There will be 25,000 human biowaste bags handed out this winter at Upper Red Lake resorts, he said.

He mentioned trash receptacles that will be at JR's Corner Access, Great Minnesota Rentals, Mort's on Upper Red, and West Wind Resort.

"We can't have the general public going to these bins," he added.

A similar effort on Lake of the Woods has since been abandoned there because of being abused by non-anglers.

"It was unsustainable," Henry said.

But the group worked to ensure that wheelhouse anglers have places to empty their holding tanks. There was one dump station in Baudette, he said.

There has been a lot going on behind the scenes with the group, which has been courting legislators for both funding and for statute changes. The current statutes don't really address the modern situation occurring out on frozen Minnesota lakes, officials say. The rules deal more with the open-water season.

Mike Hirst, of the Lake of the Woods SWCD, has been working with a state legislative subcommittee on water policy on the issue.

"This is one they are looking to run with," Hirst said.

There's also a realization that the problem is bigger than any one chapter can handle.

"We started this as a grassroots effort," Henry said. "We have made it regional. It takes some time and resources to keep it going."

Henry said the group would consider passing it along to a conservation organization that wanted to champion the cause, maybe even taking it beyond the Minnesota border.

"This is an ice belt issue," Henry said.

Tags: [Ice fishing](#)

# *Red Lake Watershed District*

**President**  
Dale M. Nelson

**Vice President**  
Gene Tiedemann

**Treasurer**  
Terry Sorenson

1000 Pennington Avenue South  
Thief River Falls, MN 56701  
218-681-5800  
218-681-5839 FAX  
e-mail: [RLWD@redlakewatershed.org](mailto:RLWD@redlakewatershed.org)  
[www.redlakewatershed.org](http://www.redlakewatershed.org)

**Secretary**  
LeRoy Ose

**Managers**

Brian Dwight  
Allan Page  
Tom Anderson

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Andrew Myers  
District 45A  
377 State Office Building  
St. Paul MN 55155

**RE: HF2745 & SF2789: Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.**

Dear Mr. Myers:

The Red Lake Watershed District endorses the work of the Keep it Clean Committee and supports the bill as introduced. Over the past 15 years, the increase in access to winter recreation throughout the state has led to increasing trash and human waste not properly handled by people who use these resources.

This law will help us to manage the leftovers from winter angling and camping visitors on Upper Red Lake and other lakes across the State of Minnesota. The popularity of overnight stays on our frozen lake has surpassed the State's ability to deal with the impact of human waste being generated and left behind for others to clean up.

We believe that during the winter fishing and camping on Minnesota's public waters, human waste and trash do not belong on the ice, under the ice, or along our shorelines. We pledge to help protect and preserve this valuable resource now and for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Myron Jesme  
Administrator



Office of **SHERIFF OF BELTRAMI COUNTY**

613 Minnesota Avenue NW  
Bemidji, Minnesota 56601

**Jason Riggs, Sheriff**

Phone (218) 333-9111  
Fax (218) 333-8325

To: Representative Andrew Myers, Dist. 45A

Re: **REGARDING HF2745 & SF2789**

As the Sheriff of Beltrami County, I am writing you to show my support for the Keep it Clean Committee and the two afore mentioned bills; HF2745 and SF2789. As a resident of Northern Minnesota and an avid outdoorsman I am appalled at the behaviors of some people who leave trash and human waste on our area lakes during the winter months. I know this complaint originated from the upper Red Lake residents but I also know this is not the only lake in Minnesota that experiences this disgusting behavior. It is important to me and the citizens of our County that we have funding and penalties for those who would wish to not be responsible while enjoying our great outdoors.

Thank you for authoring these bills.

Sincerely,

Jason Riggs, Sheriff  
Beltrami County

**Turtle River Watershed Association  
PO Box 3088  
Bemidji, Mn 56619-3088**

March 17, 2023

Rep. Andrew Myers  
377 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support of HF 2745

Dear Rep. Myers

We are writing on behalf of the Turtle River Watershed Association (TRWA) in support of HF 2745 which will provide common sense regulations to prohibit the depositing of any waste on the ice of state waters. Our watershed encompasses 13 lakes on 217,530 acres north of Bemidji in the Mississippi River headwaters area of Beltrami County. Thank you for introducing this important legislation.

The popularity of ice fishing (and winter camping) has increased in our state with many more anglers accessing our lakes, both large and small. Some are using fish houses while others fish near their cars or snowmobiles. Unfortunately, as the numbers of people on the lakes has increased, so has the amount of general garbage (rubbish, cigarette filters, cans, etc.) dead carcasses and human sewage that is left behind. This garbage and waste freezes into the lake and can't be removed. It ends up directly in the water and on the shoreline after the seasonal thaw.

It is our hope that this legislation will send the message that we can no longer accept the current level of degradation to the waters that provide food and recreation for our families as well as the basis of our multibillion-dollar tourism industry. Again, thank you for your interest in preserving our waterways.

Sincerely,

Carl Isaacson, Co-chair

John Wingard, Co-chair



UPPER RED LAKE AREA ASSOCIATION License # 02724

P.O. BOX 407

Waskish, MN

56685

March 13, 2023

**REGARDING HF2745 & SF2789: Deposit of waste prohibited outside a shelter, motor vehicle, or any other conveyance on ice of state waters; and report on options for funding additional enforcement of laws on ice of state waters required.**

The Upper Red Lake Area Association, Board of Directors, endorses the work of the Keep it Clean Committee and supports the bill as introduced. This law will help us to manage the leftovers from winter angling and camping visitors on Upper Red Lake and other lakes across the State of Minnesota. The popularity of overnight stays on our frozen lake has leapfrogged ahead of the State's ability to deal with the impact of human waste being generated and left behind for others to clean up. It is past time for change.

We believe that *during the winter fishing and camping extravaganza on Minnesota's public waters, human waste and garbage do not belong on the ice, under the ice, or along our shorelines. We pledge to help protect and preserve this valuable resource now, and for generations to come.*

Yours truly,

President: *Pat Wright* phone: *218-556-5844*

Vice President: *[Signature]* phone: *218-766-2274*

Secretary: *Brian D. [Signature]* phone: *218-556-709*

Treasurer: *Kellee Halverson* phone: *218 407-4265*

Director: *David DeNayer* phone: *218-393-2238*

Director: *Tom Welde* phone: *218-766-8124*