

LOCALNEWS

Public may comment on Lake of the Woods Water Quality Plan of Study

Next step is final recommendations to governments

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

An international water quality plan of study for Lake of the Woods basin is open to public comment prior to recommendations offered to the governments of the United States and Canada.

The International Joint Commission announced the start of the 30-day comment period on the plan Wednesday.

The plan of study will guide the IJC in making recommendations to the governments of Canada and the United States for a water quality study for the basin.

The report and background information is available at http://www.ijc.org/en_/LOWWQPOS.

The plan of study was based on extensive engagement with public agencies, scientific and technical experts, community groups, First Nations, Métis and Tribes, and the general public. However, the costs and prioritization of projects in the plan of study have not previously been available for public review.

The plan of study identifies 32 projects that a study team found are needed to improve understanding of the basin ecosystem and



Rich Moy
U.S. IJC Commissioner

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support a balanced, binational approach to water quality management, said a news release.

IJC Canadian Acting Chair Gordon Walker recognized the student team’s effort to produce a science-based study plan that considered the needs of all the Lake of the Woods Basin interests, including citizens and grass-roots advisory groups; Tribes, First Nations, and Métis communities; the business community; and governments.

“Now it is important that the public has a final opportunity to review the full report with costs before the IJC makes recommendations to the governments of the United States and Canada for a water quality plan of study that will enable meaningful

actions to restore the quality of the water in the Lake of the Woods basin,” said U.S. IJC Commissioner Rich Moy in the release.

The plan outlines three funding options for consideration:

■ Option A proposes that 17 priority projects focusing on providing core data and knowledge, and allowing for a limited response to the full scope of current and emerging water quality challenges in the basin at a total estimated cost of \$4.15 million.

■ Option B proposes 11 additional important projects allowing for a more comprehensive undertaking to respond to water quality concerns in the basin for a total estimated cost of \$7.1 million.

■ Option C proposes the funding of all 32 projects recommended in the Plan of Study, at a total estimated cost of \$7.8 million.

The study team also identified three projects or activities that are in need of immediate attention:

■ Project 27: International platform for implementation. This project, which is crucial to the successful implementation of the plan of study and future binational management opportunities, determines who best of existing entities in the basin could do what.

■ Project 14: rapid evaluation and implementation of options to manage recent zebra mussel infestation in headwaters areas in Minnesota. Zebra mussels pose a significant, immediate risk to the ecosystem health of the Basin.

■ Long-term funding of Wheeler’s Point gage and designation as a gage of binational significance. This is a critical component for determining ecosystem health in the basin.

The International Joint Commission was established under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to help the United States and Canada prevent and resolve disputes over the use of the waters the two countries share. Its responsibilities include considering applications for projects that affect the natural levels and flows of boundary waters.

Workshop guides first-time home buyers

JOURNAL STAFF REPORT

First-time or repeat home buyers looking for insight into the topic can attend an upcoming community workshop focusing on various aspects of purchasing a house.

The Home Stretch workshop is 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Thursday at KOOTASCA Community Action. The topics covered by the workshop include:

■ Qualifying for a mortgage or loan programs.

■ Budgeting/credit issues/saving.

■ Shopping for a home or realtor services.

■ Professional inspections and appraisals.

■ Closing, title insurance and homeowner’s insurance.

■ Financial responsibilities as a homeowner.

■ Up to \$5,000 financial assistance to qualified buyers.

Registration is required, and attendees can register by calling Sandy O’Fallon at 218-999-0828. There is a \$40 fee for attending, and O’Fallon said attendees leave with a 244-page

manual with every step and form they may need when buying a house.

“It’s like the housing bible, it’s a great resource,” O’Fallon said.

Community professionals including lenders, home inspectors and realtors will be on hand to provide their expertise on the various topics, O’Fallon said. The program has three tiers, she said, and involves education, individual counseling, and help with finding financial assistance.

“It focuses on the ABCs of home buying: affordability, budgeting and credit,” O’Fallon said.

The program’s end goal is to prepare people as much as possible for buying their house, O’Fallon said. Some people might go out and find a house they love, but they don’t consider needs like affordability and upkeep, she said.

“Each speaker highlights things they could be doing to prepare on their own,” O’Fallon said. “The whole thing is very fun and informative, we don’t bore people to death.”

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RECYCLED MATERIALS HAULING PROPOSALS

Koochiching County is seeking proposals for the transport of **RECYCLED** materials from Int'l Falls to various recycling markets throughout the region for the period beginning January 1, 2015 and ending December 31, 2016.

Respondents must meet all licensing and insurance requirements as defined by State Statute. The selection process will not be based solely upon the lowest bid. Koochiching County will also consider the applicant’s company performance history and the overall proposals package to ensure the best services for Koochiching County residents.

Proposals will be accepted until 4:30 p.m. on Friday December 12th, 2014 at the Koochiching County Auditor’s Office.

For a copy of the complete Request for Proposal packet please contact the Environmental Services Department at the county courthouse or call 218/283-1157.

SOLID WASTE HAULING PROPOSALS

Koochiching County is seeking proposals for the transport of solid waste from Int'l Falls to the Mar-Kit Landfill located near Hallock, Minnesota, for the period beginning January 1, 2015 and ending December 31, 2016.

Respondents must meet all licensing and insurance requirements as defined by State Statute. The selection process will not be based solely upon the lowest bid. Koochiching County will also consider the applicant’s company performance history and the overall proposals package to ensure the best services for Koochiching County residents.

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