



CEDAR LAKE CONSERVANCY

P. O. Box 152, Aitkin, MN 56431

8 December 2021

Rob Robasco
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
[by email]

Re: Minnesota Loon Restoration Project – Cedar Lake, Aitkin County

Dear Rob,

We understand that as part of the settlement from the Deepwater Horizon Oil spill, funds have been set aside for loon recovery efforts in Minnesota through the Minnesota Loon Restoration Project. In reviewing the eight-county area this project covers and the criteria of priority loon habitat, we are writing you to request your consideration to add Cedar Lake in Aitkin County to the loon-friendly lake registry.

There are several points that we believe make Cedar Lake a strong candidate for this list, many of which, align with the exact criteria DNR has highlighted in designating lakes as suitable loon habitat. The first detail we'd like to highlight is the unique shape of Cedar Lake. Cedar Lake has over 22 miles of shoreline that is comprised of an abnormally high number of segregated bays. Many of these bays behave as individual loon pair territories – in fact, we have volunteers around every section of the lake keeping an eye on these pairs and maintaining a loon count each year. At last count, we had 29 loons on Cedar Lake.

In addition to the bays that comprise the 22 miles of shoreline, Cedar Lake also has large segments of shoreline that are undeveloped or lightly developed and have significant potential for protection. Cedar Lake was recently able to partner with Northern Waters Land Trust to help acquire 46 acres with 1200' of shoreline and incorporate this parcel into an adjacent 50 acre WMA. This parcel now has almost 100 acres of contiguous state wildlife land for the public to enjoy. The map below shows the shoreline of Cedar Lake. Cedar Lake is also partnering the Aitkin County Soil and Water Conservation District to help guide and offset costs to lakeshore owners to implement shoreline restoration projects. This project will go through 2022.

Geographically speaking, Cedar Lake is also unique as it is a cold-water cisco lake positioned in the southernmost area of the eight-county area covered in the Minnesota Loon Restoration Project. As a cisco lake, Cedar provides loon with forage fish for loons to feed on during the summer and importantly during in the fall migration, while also providing suitable habitat for a variety of other fish species and other aquatic wildlife. These characteristics make Cedar Lake a prime location for loons to produce chicks and support loon migration. We have many personal recollections of annual fall migration loon “conferences” as an impressive population of loons prepared for their trip south.

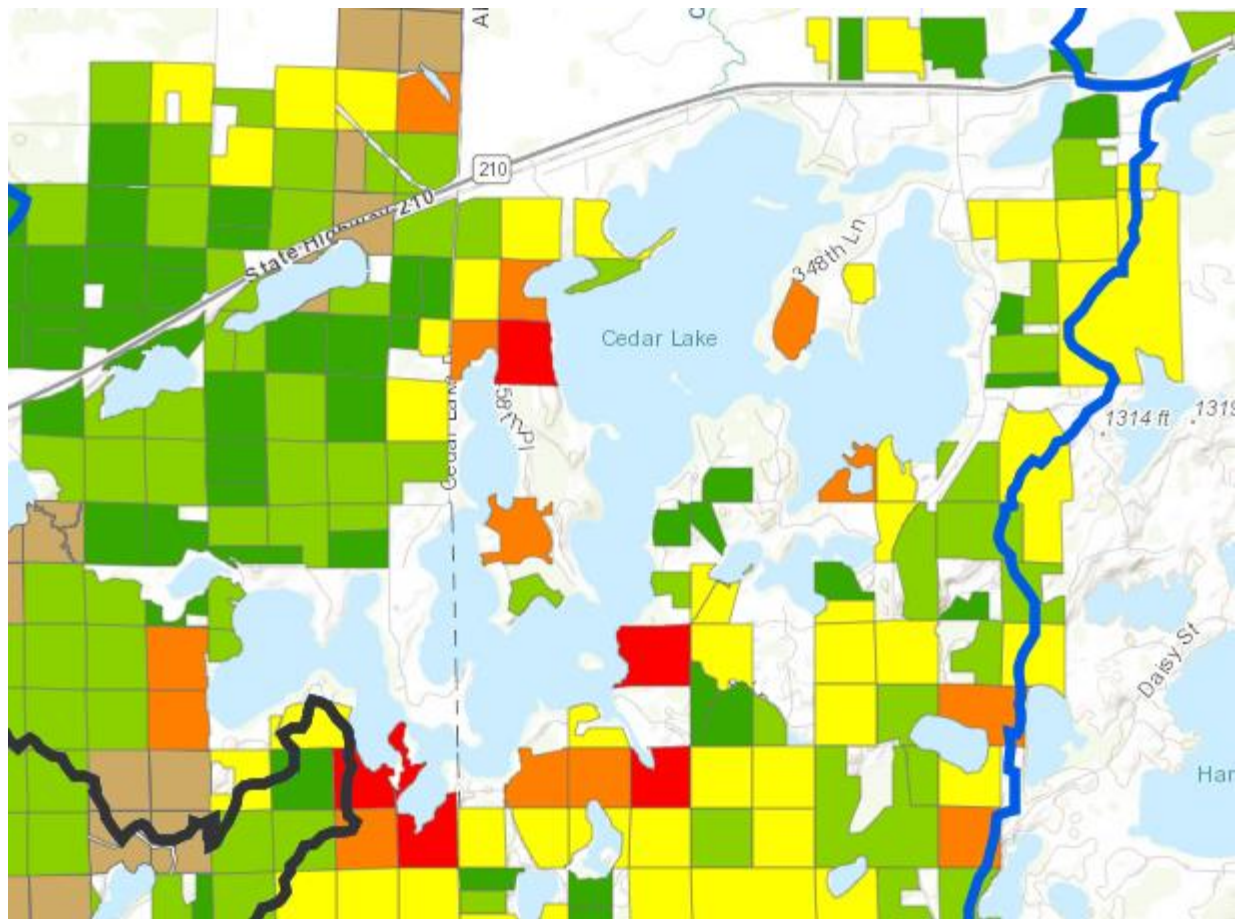


Figure 1 2021 Critical Habitat Map of Cedar Lake

Finally, the landowners of Cedar Lake have a full and deep appreciation of the unique habitat that Cedar Lake provides to the prized wildlife. Currently, the Cedar Lake Conservancy (CLC) has over 240 members and also has robust funds for habitat protection and response to invasive species. Cedar Lake has historically had a strong relationship with the DNR and is prepared to support and partner with the DNR on this important conservation program. In addition to our preparedness to partner with DNR, CLC has the technical resources needed to support a robust loon management plan as will be required for the lakes selected for this program.

We believe that Cedar Lake is a prime candidate for this project and we are excited at the prospect to help protect our loons in a partnered effort with DNR and MPCA. We think that we have the natural and human resources needed to make the program successful. We are excited about the direction of this project and hope to be included as you move forward with the program. We respectfully ask for your consideration and would appreciate a call or email to discuss further.

Thank you,
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