

## **Watershed News: A Series about Water Quality on Lake of the Woods**

*By Kelli Saunders, International Watershed Coordinator*

Water...it gives us life, it symbolizes summer, it has spiritual meaning, it calms us, it's what defines our community. To celebrate the importance of water locally and the great efforts collectively to protect it, this space will be dedicated to water throughout the summer months – its quality, its governance, its future and how we can all help to preserve it.



Here in Kenora, we are at the downstream end of the vast Rainy-Lake of the Woods watershed – 69,750 sq.km in size, the size of New Brunswick! We share our water with Minnesota and Manitoba – it is an international treasure, providing drinking water to over three quarters of a million people. What happens upstream impacts what happens downstream and this is why we need to work together with our neighbours on research and on a plan with actions to protect our water. Over the last 15 years, the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation has been working to put a plan in place for the lake, ensuring there's enough science and management expertise, and uniting and coordinating actions binationally – communities, researchers and policy makers.

Seven years ago, together with our partners, we launched the International Watershed Coordination Program to connect agencies, share research, educate and inform communities around the greater watershed. This series of articles is part of that program. Over the summer, we will touch on many topics, including understanding algae, Minnesota's plans to improve water quality for the south end of Lake of the Woods, understanding where phosphorus comes from, providing insight into the role of the International Joint Commission (IJC), and suggestions on what can we do as citizens to help protect water quality.

Check back each week and learn about your lake! Next week, we will delve into the topic of setting international water quality objectives and a project underway by the IJC to set the groundwork for this – learn how you can get involved in this important discussion.

*This series is provided as part of the International Watershed Coordination Program of the Lake of the Woods Water Sustainability Foundation.*