



Keep It Clean Program

Mike Hirst

Lake of the Woods Soil
and Water
Conservation District

MISSION

Keep It Clean was created to protect, maintain and promote cleanliness for the beautiful landscape, water resources and shorelines of Lake of the Woods as a special place for everyone to visit and enjoy.

WINTER ICE FISHING PRESSURE ON LAKES HAVE CHANGED

- Winter is by far the most popular time for fishing on Lake of the Woods. For two decades now, the amount of time spent fishing on the lake in the winter has exceeded one million hours annually. And this is just on the U.S. side of the lake!
- During the winter of 2020-21, people spent 2.7 million hours fishing on Lake of the Woods. This is nearly triple what it was 20 years ago.
- One driver of this change happened in the late 1990s with the introduction of wheeled fish houses. Since then, the wheeled fish house industry has evolved and improved.
- This has created a cultural shift in the way people fish in the winter. Winter fishing is now an excursion. Anglers from all over can pull their fish house and head out onto Lake of the Woods for overnight or weekend trips in their home away from home.

WITH CHANGE COMES CHALLENGES ...AND THE KEEP IT CLEAN PROGRAM

- In the winter, small communities of houses on wheels began to pop up on Lake of the Woods and many Minnesota lakes. It became apparent that the increase in winter angler hours was changing things.
- Another change was brought about by overnight trips, where people needed more amenities such as bathrooms and multiple meals. Waste being left on the lake, whether on purpose or accidentally, was becoming more and more of an issue.
- So, in 2012, the Keep it Clean Committee was formed. This committee came about because of the need to address human waste and trash left on the lake.

KEEP IT CLEAN IS CATCHING ON!!

- Fast forward 10 years to 2022. Just recently, partners from Mille Lacs Lake and Upper Red Lake have joined our mission and a Regional Keep it Clean Committee has been formed. These three lakes combined host over 7 million angling hours in the winter!
- This regional committee is reaching out statewide, and people are starting to take notice. The Star Tribune, Outdoor News, and Grand Forks Herald have featured stories about the Keep it Clean Program and the statewide problem of trash left on our lakes.
- The message is simple, but the answers are more difficult. This regional committee is asking lawmakers and state agencies like the DNR for financial and technical support, enforcement assistance, and statewide recognition of the amount of trash and human waste that is generated during the ice-fishing season.

Keep it Clean Initiative
seeking support on the
following three items:

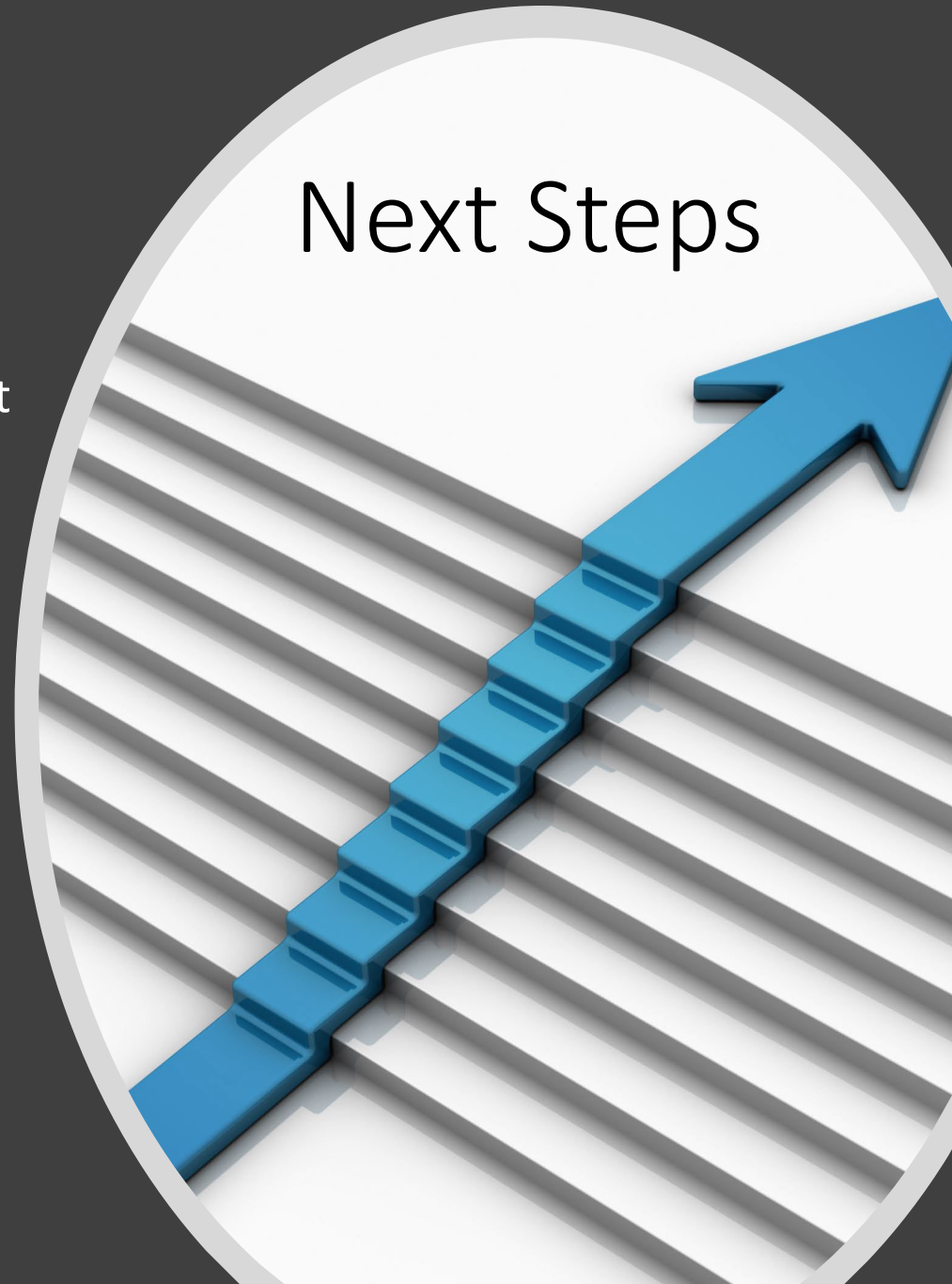
1. **Seeking local and state changes in ordinances and laws to make it unlawful to place trash on ice.**
2. Seeking technical and financial support for local infrastructure to assist local communities.



3. Seeking State Agency Partnership to address:

- Unregulated activities needing local leadership with state support
- Statewide coordination need
- Similar to AIS programs trying to change human behavior.
- Non-point source pollution

Our list of partners is ever growing.





QUESTIONS?

Thank you for your time.

Mike Hirst

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Soil & Water Conservation District

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