

# 

# NATIONAL LOON CENTER



#### RICHARD NOLAN

Governor Tim Walz Senate Majority Leader Kari Dziedzic Senate Minority Leader Mark Johnson House Speaker Melissa Hortman House Minority Leader Lisa Demuth Senate Capital Investment Committee Chair Sandy Pappas Senate Capital Investment Committee Minority Lead Karin Housley House Capital Investment Committee Chair Fue Lee House Capital Investment Committee Minority Lead Dean Urdahl

RE: Crosslake and National Loon Center 2023 Bonding Bill Request

March 2, 2023

Dear Governor Watz and Legislative Leaders,

It is incumbent upon us Minnesotans to restore and protect loon breeding habitats and promote responsible recreation where loons thrive. None of us want to see a future where our state bird no longer nests in Minnesota, but that could happen if the quality of freshwater lakes is diminished, and shoreline habitat is developed or destroyed.

I have been proud to support this project from the beginning, and now that we have made significant progress toward realizing this vision, I write in support of HF 976 and SF 1092, which would invest \$8,650,000 in 2023 bonding bill funds to the City of Crosslake to help construct the world class National Loon Center facility.

The National Loon Center Foundation (NLC) in Crosslake, Minnesota was established in 2017 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and protecting loon breeding habitats, promoting responsible recreation where loons thrive, and serving as a national leader in advancing loon and freshwater research and education. Upon its inception, the NLC launched exciting plans to build a world class educational facility and visitor attraction that is projected to welcome 200,000 guests annually. The family-friendly amenity will celebrate and protect the clean lakes that are home to the beloved loon, our state bird, and the star subject of the NLC's educational efforts.

#### Timeline:

- 2019: the NLC received a \$4 million grant from the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota resources (LCCMR) for the project.
- 2021: The NLC completed the installation of docks, boardwalks and outdoor exhibits and finished a shoreline restoration project. The work has been coordinated by the architectural and engineering

firm Widseth. The NLC also received a \$355,000 grant from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council's Conservation Partners Legacy Program to purchase and permanently preserve a 6-acre parcel of essential loon habitat in Fifty Lakes, MN.

• 2024: Architectural design and plans for this net zero energy building are underway. The grand opening for the building is anticipated in 2024.

#### List of Supporters:

 Congressman Pete Stauber, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator Tina Smith, Former Governor Mark Dayton, Former Congressman Rick Nolan, State Senator Foung Hawj, State Senator Nick Frentz, State Senator Sandy Pappas, State Senator Justin Eichorn, State Senator Karin Housley, State Representative Sydney Jordan, State Representative Jamie Long, State Representative Josh Heintzeman, State Representative Ben Davis, State Representative Leon Lillie, City of Crosslake, MN, Brainerd Lakes Chamber of Commerce, US Army Corps of Engineers, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council's Conservation Partners Legacy Program, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Audubon Minnesota, National Eagle Center, University of Minnesota -Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation, Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation, Whitefish Area Property Owners Association, Pelican Lakes Association

#### Economic Development and Environmental Stewardship:

- The NLC will be a significant national visitor attraction, infusing millions of dollars into the Minnesota economy in tourism spending as well as design and construction work. It will also bring dozens of valuable, permanent jobs to the local economy.
- The NLC will incorporate diverse educational initiatives to engage many audiences including the Ojibwe tribe and other underrepresented communities in metro and rural Minnesota. Our shared pride in loons and lakes will be reflected in the welcoming nature of the facility and organization.
- Among many renowned attractions and recreation opportunities in northern Minnesota, the NLC will add to the region's appeal as a tourism destination in much the same way that the National Eagle Center has contributed to the economy in southeastern Minnesota. Our state can make good on its promise to promote its natural gifts to the nation.

I ask for your full support of HF 976 and SF 1092, which would invest \$8.65 million toward the National Loon Center project by including it in the State Capital Investment Bill this year. Thank you for your consideration and support of the National Loon Center, which contributes positively toward the economic growth and environmental quality of northern Minnesota. The National Loon Center will be a source of pride for the citizens of Minnesota and a gift to our visitors from across the nation.

Sincerely,

Former U.S. Congressman

All the best to everyone!



MINNESOTA

2355 Highway 36 West Suite 400 Roseville MN 55113 651.739.9332 **mn.audubon.org** 

Senate and House Capital Investment Committees State Office Building 100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

February 21, 2023

Re: Support of S.F. 1092/ H.F. 976 – National Loon Center

Dear Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders,

Audubon Minnesota supports appropriating funds for the National Loon Center, located in the City of Crosslake, Minnesota, as described in S.F. 1092 / H.F. 976. The Common Loon is classified as a Minnesota Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The National Loon Center provides critical public education and research to support Minnesota's state bird, including a study of the breeding biology of loons and the impacts of climate change.

The National Audubon Society's <u>Survival by Degrees report</u> paints a dire picture of the future for birds: More than 150 species in Minnesota are threatened by the impacts of changes to Minnesota's weather patterns. A recent study from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology also found a staggering loss of birds. Collectively, North American bird populations have declined by 29% since 1970. But Minnesota has more common loons than any state other than Alaska. Threats to loons include human disturbance and pollutants such as lead and mercury.

Interesting facts<sup>1</sup> about loons:

- Most birds have light, hollow bones. Loons have solid bones.
- That extra weight helps loons dive as deep as 250 feet and stay underwater for up to five minutes.
- Because their bodies are heavy relative to their wing size, loons need a 100-600 foot "runway" to take off from a lake. But once in the air, loons can fly more than 75 miles per hour.
- The distinctive red in the loon's eye helps them see underwater.
- Scientists think loons can live for 30 years or more.

The work of the National Loon Center aligns with two best management practices contained in the <u>2014</u> <u>Common Loon Minnesota Conservation Summary</u>, a project supported by Minnesota's Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund:

- On a lake-by-lake basis, recreational activity in the north-central region of the state may be the highest concern to loon occupancy and reproductive success. Working with lake associations to monitor loon activity and educate lakeshore residents about the impacts of recreational activities on the lake's nesting pairs is among the most effective management practices.
- Inform the angling public about risks related to lead fishing sinkers and lures (i.e., jigs) and encourage the use of non-toxic materials.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/birds/commonloon.html



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The National Loon Center's mission of restoring and protecting loon breeding habitats, enhancing responsible recreation, and serving as a national leader to advance loon and freshwater research and education benefits all Minnesotans. We support this work to protect the Common Loon for future generations.

Sincerely,

Rob Schultz, Vice President <u>Audubon Minnesota Iowa Missouri</u> Dale Gentry, Ph.D. Conservation Director Lindsay J. Brice Policy Director

#### Alongside the following independent Audubon chapters across Minnesota:

- Peter Mattson, President of Austin Audubon Society
- Catherine McGoldrick, Vice President of Brainerd Lakes Area Audubon Society
- Viola Riggle, President of Prairie Lakes Audubon Society
- Greg Burnes, President of <u>St. Paul Audubon Society</u>
- Joel Dunnette, President of Zumbro Valley Audubon Society

City Hall: 218-692-2688 Planning & Zoning: 218-692-2689 Fax: 218-692-2687



13888 Daggett Bay Rd Crosslake, Minnesota 56442 www.cityofcrosslake.org

Governor Tim Walz Senate Majority Leader Kari Dziedzic Senate Minority Leader Mark Johnson House Speaker Melissa Hortman House Minority Leader Lisa Demuth Senate Capital Investment Committee Chair Sandy Pappas Senate Capital Investment Committee Minority Lead Karin Housley House Capital Investment Committee Chair Fue Lee House Capital Investment Committee Minority Lead Dean Urdahl

Re: Crosslake and National Loon Center 2023 Bonding Bill Request

February 22, 2023

Dear Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders,

The National Loon Center Foundation (NLC) in Crosslake, Minnesota was established in 2017 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and protecting loon breeding habitats, promoting responsible recreation where loons thrive, and serving as a national leader in advancing loon and freshwater research and education. Upon its inception, the NLC launched exciting plans to build a world class educational facility and visitor attraction that is projected to welcome 200,000 guests annually. The family-friendly amenity will celebrate and protect the clean lakes that are home to the beloved loon, our state bird and the star subject of the NLC's educational efforts.

## We write in support of HF 976 and SF 1092, which would invest \$8,650,000 in 2023 bonding bill funds to the City of Crosslake to help construct the world class National Loon Center facility.

The National Loon Center will exemplify sustainable, place-enhancing architectural design principles while inviting the public to enjoy a uniquely immersive loon and freshwater experience designed by industry-leader Dimensional Innovations. The interior of the 15,000-square foot center will highlight the air, land and water environments associated with loons and freshwater ecosystems.

#### **Timeline:**

- 2019: the NLC received a \$4 million grant from the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota resources (LCCMR) for the project.
- 2021: The NLC completed the installation of docks, boardwalks and outdoor exhibits and finished a shoreline restoration project. The work has been coordinated by the architectural and engineering firm Widseth. The NLC also received a \$355,000 grant from the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage

The National Loon Center is a 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization based in Crosslake, MN. Its mission is to restore and protect loon breeding habitats, promote responsible recreation where loons thrive, and serve as a national leader in loon and freshwater research and education.

Council's Conservation Partners Legacy Program to purchase and permanently preserve a 6-acre parcel of essential loon habitat in Fifty Lakes, MN.

• **2024:** Architectural design and plans for this net zero energy building are underway. The grand opening for the building is anticipated in 2024.

#### List of Supporters:

 Congressman Pete Stauber, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator Tina Smith, Former Governor Mark Dayton, Former Congressman Rick Nolan, State Senator Foung Hawj, State Senator Nick Frentz, State Senator Sandy Pappas, State Senator Justin Eichorn, State Senator Karin Housley, State Representative Sydney Jordan, State Representative Jamie Long, State Representative Josh Heintzeman, State Representative Ben Davis, State Representative Leon Lillie, City of Crosslake, MN, Brainerd Lakes Chamber of Commerce, US Army Corps of Engineers, Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council's Conservation Partners Legacy Program, Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Audubon Minnesota, National Eagle Center, University of Minnesota -Minnesota Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation, Brainerd Lakes Area Community Foundation, Whitefish Area Property Owners Association, Pelican Lakes Association, Crow Wing Soil and Water Conservation District, Pine River Watershed Alliance, Land and Waters Preservation Trust, Gull Chain of Lakes Association, Sourcewell, Initiative Foundation

#### Economic Development and Environmental Stewardship:

- The NLC will be a significant national visitor attraction, infusing millions of dollars into the Minnesota economy in tourism spending as well as design and construction work. It will also bring dozens of valuable, permanent jobs to the local economy.
- The NLC will incorporate diverse educational initiatives to engage many audiences including the Ojibwe tribe and other underrepresented communities in metro and rural Minnesota. Our shared pride in loons and lakes will be reflected in the welcoming nature of the facility and organization.
- Among many renowned attractions and recreation opportunities in northern Minnesota, the NLC will add to the region's appeal as a tourism destination in much the same way that the National Eagle Center has contributed to the economy in southeastern Minnesota. Our state can make good on its promise to promote its natural gifts to the nation.

We ask for your full support of HF 976 and SF 1092, which would invest \$8.65 million toward the National Loon Center project by including it in the State Capital Investment Bill this year. Thank you for your consideration and support of the National Loon Center, which contributes positively toward the economic growth and environmental quality of northern Minnesota. The National Loon Center will be a source of pride for the citizens of Minnesota and a gift to our visitors from across the nation.

Sincerely,

Dave Nevin Mayor, City of Crosslake

Ph/C

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#### **RESOLUTION NO. 23-04**

#### CITY OF CROSSLAKE COUNTY OF CROW WING STATE OF MINNESOTA

# RESOLUTION SUPPORTING STATE AND FEDERAL FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL LOON CENTER

WHEREAS, the mission of the National Loon Center is to create a world-class public facility that educates and embraces the study and preservation of our state bird and the on-going effort to conserve and preserve its natural habitat, the Whitefish Chain of Lakes; and

WHEREAS, the National Loon Center enjoys widespread community support, including from the Brainerd Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Crosslake Ideal Lions Club, Crosslakers and the Whitefish Area Property Owners Association; and

WHEREAS, the National Loon Center is a major economic contributor to the community of Crosslake, supporting sustainable growth in the areas of tourism and trade while welcoming a projected 200,000 annual visitors; and

WHEREAS, State Senator Justin Eichorn, State Representative Ben Davis, and State Representative Josh Heintzeman are co-authors of SF 1092 and HF 976 seeking state bonding funds of \$8.65 million for a grant to the City of Crosslake to be utilized for site preparation, predesign, construction, furnishing and equipping of the National Loon Center in the City of Crosslake; and

WHEREAS, the City of Crosslake is also seeking federal funding in the amount of \$2 million through Congressionally Directed Spending requests to U.S. Congressman Pete Stauber, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, and U.S. Senator Tina Smith to fund part of the National Loon Center project; and

WHEREAS, there are no costs to the City of Crosslake or its residents related to this state or federal funding; and

WHEREAS, the City of Crosslake supports seeking state and federal funding for the National Loon Center.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Crosslake supports seeking state bonding funds in the amount of \$8.65 million for the National Loon Center, and requests support from our state legislators for these State bonding funds; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City Council of the City of Crosslake supports seeking federal funding for the National Loon Center in the amount of \$2 million through

Congressionally Directed Spending requests to U.S. Congressman Pete Stauber, U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, and U.S Senator Tina Smith, and requests their support of this federal funding.

Adopted by the Crosslake City Council this 22 day of February, 2023.

Dave Nevin Mayor

Mulal R. Lyonais

City Administrator



#### Governor Tim Walz Senate Majority Leader Kari Dziedzic Senate Minority Leader Mark Johnson House Speaker Melissa Hortman House Minority Leader Lisa Demuth Senate Capital Investment Committee Chair Sandy Pappas Senate Capital Investment Committee Minority Lead Karin Housley House Capital Investment Committee Chair Fue Lee

RE: Crosslake and National Loon Center 2023 Bonding Bill Request

House Capital Investment Committee Minority Lead Dean Urdahl

February 17, 2023

#### Dear Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders,

The National Loon Center Foundation (NLC) in Crosslake, Minnesota was established in 2017 as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to restoring and protecting loon breeding habitats, promoting responsible recreation where loons thrive, and serving as a national leader in advancing loon and freshwater research and education. Upon its inception, the NLC launched exciting plans to build a world class educational facility and visitor attraction that is projected to welcome 200,000 guests annually to Minnesota and the Brainerd Lakes Area. The family-friendly amenity will celebrate and protect the clean lakes that are home to the beloved loon, our state bird and the star subject of the NLC's educational efforts.

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Sincerely, 10n PMo

Jon Mobeck Executive Director National Loon Center

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# **STATE OF MINNESOTA**

### Office of Governor Mark Dayton

130 State Capitol + 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd + Saint Paul, MN 55155-1611

May 11, 2018

Chris Doley Chief, Habitat Restoration Division National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration 1315 East-West Highways, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Homer Wilkes Director, Gulf of Mexico Eco Restoration U.S. Department of Agriculture 1400 Independence Avenue South West Washington, D.C. 20250 Gale Bonanno Senior Policy Advisor, NRDA Environmental Protection Agency 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue North West Washington, D.C. 20460

Mary Josie Blanchard Deputy Director, Envir. Protection & Compliance U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 1849 C Street NW Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group Members:

I am writing to urge you to include funding for the Crosslake, Minnesota National Loon Center (NLC) in your Open Ocean Trustee Implementation Group (TIG)'s Draft Plan for the summer of 2018. The NLC project is vital to protecting and preserving the population of the Common Loon, also Minnesota's State Bird. The Common Loon suffered greatly from the British Petroleum (BP) Oil Spill in 2010 as migrating birds were exposed to highly toxic chemicals. Moreover, the Audubon Society and many Northern-tier states have officially designated the Common Loon to be endangered, threatened, or under threat of extinction due to an increasing amount of habitat destruction, climate change, an uptick in botulism of invasive species, and other environmental factors.

To help counter these challenges, the NLC seeks to construct a research and education center for the Common Loon with a mission devoted to restoring and protecting loon habitats, repairing shoreline infrastructure, enhancing water quality, boosting environmental recreation, and educating the public on best practices for preserving loon populations. The NLC project is directly in line with the Open Ocean TIG's underlying goal of choosing projects that provide long-term management and restoration of animals, birds, and natural resources that were affected by the BP Oil Spill.

Voice: (651) 201-3400 or (800) 657-3717 Website: http://mn.gov/governor/ Fax: (651) 797-1850

MN Relay (800) 627-3529 An Equal Opportunity Employer Chris Doley, Gale Bonanno Homer Wilkes, Mary Josie Blanchard May 11, 2018 Page 2

Furthermore, the NLC has gained support from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Crosslake and Brainerd Lakes Chambers of Commerce, University of Minnesota, Central Lakes College, National Joint Powers Alliance, Initiative Foundation, and over 50 other key stakeholders. It is clear that there is a local, regional, and national consensus that this project is key to ensuring that the Common Loon's survival is protected for the future.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely, Mark Dav Governor

#### **GREAT LAKES INDIAN FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION**

P. O. Box 9 • Odanah, WI 54861 • 715/682-6619 • FAX 715/682-9294

MICHIGAN

Bay Mills Community Keweenaw Bay Community Lac Vieux Desert Band MEMBER TRIBES •
WISCONSIN

Bad River Band Lac Courte Oreilles Band Lac du Flambeau Band Red Cliff Band St. Croix Chippewa Sokaogon Chippewa MINNESOTA Fond du Lac Band Mille Lacs Band



August 26, 2019

To Whom it may Concern:

The Voigt Intertribal Task Force of the Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (Commission) is aware of an effort to develop the National Loon Center at Crosslake, Minnesota. As you may know, the Commission is an intertribal natural resources management agency comprised of eleven Ojibwe tribes in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan that hold treaty-reserved rights on lands and waters ceded (or sold) to the United States in the mid-1800s.

For Ojibwe bands in the Great Lakes region the loon, or maang, is a principal clan animal exemplifying leadership. Clans, or doodems, are an important component of the traditional social structure of Ojibwe communities. The loon is also featured in stories that provide lessons for native young people on bimaadiziwin, or the Ojibwe lifeway.

As consideration of the Loon Center moves forward, the Commission supports efforts to propagate information, research, and learning about loons and their place in ecosystems as well as Ojibwe culture. It will be important to work closely with tribes and the Commission as plans move forward, as well as assure that Ojibwe bands are appropriately integrated into any partnerships that are developed.

Sincerely,

Michael Ascham 9

Michael J Isham Jr GLIFWC Executive Administrator