



PLCOA  
PO Box 206  
Coolin ID 83821

## Priest Lake Cabin Owners' Association, Inc.

Randy Absalonson – President, John Brumley – Vice President, Maggie Drummond – Treasurer  
Sherry Lee -Secretary, Denny Christenson, Tom Hartanov, Jennifer Lehn, Matt Rudolf, Mike Budig  
Trustees: Darin Davidson, Bill Symmes, Jerry Whitehead; Bud Belles, Web Tech

August 14, 2021

9:00 a.m. – The Inn at Priest Lake - Coolin, Idaho

Board/Trustees Present: Randy Absalonson, Maggie Drummond, Sherry Lee, Denny Christenson, Tom Hartanov, Jennifer Lehn, Mike Budig, Darin Davidson, Jerry Whitehead; Bud Belles, Web Tech/Past President

The Annual Meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m. at The Inn at Priest Lake by President Randy Absalonson.

### *Treasurer's Report and Accounting Certification – Maggie Drummond*

Maggie referenced the Treasurer's Report handouts for both 2020 and 2021 that all attendees received.

PLCOA's *Profit & Loss* totals for January through December 2020 showed Income at \$14,075.81 & Expense at \$11,662.43, resulting in Net Income of \$2,413.38. Our totals for January through December 2021 showed \$14,957.16 in Income with \$7,376.93 Expense, resulting in Net Income of \$7,580. 23.

Our *Balance Sheet* for 12/31/20 showed Total Assets at \$76,519.07, with Total Liabilities & Equity of \$76,519.07.

Total Assets for 12/31/21 are \$84,099.30, with Total Liabilities & Equity standing at \$84,099.30.

Elaine Widman reviewed PLCOA's financial records and found them to be well organized and complete. Her Statement of Financial Records Review dated 1/12/2021 was included in the Treasurer's handout to our PLCOA membership.

Maggie explained that in addition to checks and cash payments for Association dues, PLCOA now accepts electronic payments through Braintree/Paypal. This can be accessed through our website.

We currently have ~\$61,000 in our bank savings account.

PLCOA has designated \$7,500 to support the new East Priest Lake Fire District. When funding for the fire district comes in from Bonner County taxes beginning in 2023, \$2,500 of that sum will be repaid to PLCOA.

Maggie asked for a motion that (for ease of bookkeeping & tracking) the period of PLCOA membership dues will go from Annual Meeting to Annual Meeting. Jennifer Lehn so moved, and it was seconded by Denny Christenson. The motion passed.

### *Minutes from PLCOA's 2019 Annual Meeting – Sherry Lee, Randy Absalonson*

Minutes from our Annual Meeting in 2019 (pre-Covid) were handed out to all attendees. Randy asked for a motion to approve the minutes. A motion to accept the minutes was made, seconded, and passed.

### *Nominating Committee Report – Bud Belles*

Jennifer Lehn, who has served on PLCOA's Board for 19 years, will be going off the Board. Sherry Lee, Board Secretary, will go off after serving 7 years.

Randy Absalonson and John Brumley, who have each served as President, have terms ending in 2021 and have agreed to another 3-year term.

Darin Davidson and Mike Belles have been nominated as new PLCOA Board Members.

A motion to accept the new slate of Board members was made, seconded, and passed.

Trustees Jerry Whitehead and Bill Symmes have agreed to serve another term, and the motion to approve their nominations was seconded and passed.

Randy asked for any member interested in filling the Board's Secretary position to please let him know. We have learned that the Secretary position does not necessarily need to be a Board member.

*Annual Dues – Randy Absalonson*

Randy stated that PLCOA dues will remain at \$100 annually.

*Website Update and Online Payment – Bud Belles*

This has been an active year for our PLCOA website, with 45,450 hits.

Among the topics receiving the most hits were: Priest River/Outlet Bay Siphon Project aka Cold-Water Bypass; Bonner County Assessor information; and PLCOA.org.

Most pages on our PLCOA.org website are open to the public.

\*It is now possible to pay our PLCOA dues online through our website.\*

Bud requests that if anyone is interested in helping with our PLCOA website, please let him know!

*Water Quality & Temperature Monitoring – Dr. James Lea and Amy Anderson*

The Selkirk Conservation Alliance (SCA) is a 35-year-old non-profit, non-partisan organization based in Priest River. Its main focus is on ecology, emphasizing water quality in the Priest Lake Basin. Amy Anderson is the Executive Director of a staff that is almost 100% community volunteers who work on projects such as science monitoring and adopt-a-stream programs.

Dr. James Lea volunteers his time and effort for testing, including water quality and temperatures of East Side Priest Lake streams. Our PLCOA has contributed to this effort by purchasing necessary water-monitoring equipment. Dr. Lea gave a slide presentation on some of their work, monitoring algae and seaweed that has plagued Kalispell Bay in the summer months. He has discovered algae growth primarily in areas where there is ground-water entry into the bay. Nutrients introduced with this ground-water, especially Phosphorus, combine with increased temperatures and sunshine to promote algae growth. Further north, in Mosquito Bay, algae was not present, leading toward a conclusion that Phosphorus is the key factor. (Dr. Lea mentioned that Washington State eliminated Phosphorus use in 2017, and now most of Idaho's fertilizers are sourced in from Washington.) Dr. Lea noted that sewers and septic systems eliminate only 40% of Phosphorus. Washington State University is monitoring ground water for nutrients in shallow wells on the West side of the lake. Dr. Lea has found that the North part of Kalispell Bay has little Phosphorus, while there is a much higher concentration in the South part of the Bay.

An interesting study found that a Reynolds Creek groundwater well in an area where ground water is being filtered through a wetland that takes up and filters out Phosphorus, *no Phosphorus is being discharged into the Lake.*

Phosphorus is not fully eliminated by current water treatment systems, but the DEQ is not convinced and wants \$50,000 to test this by monitoring wells.

Huckleberry Bay does have monitoring wells, and Selkirk Conservation Alliance (SCA) would like to use their results to monitor Phosphorus and Nitrogen filtration and determine the effectiveness of their filtration system regarding concentrations of these elements entering the Lake.

Dr. Lea invited Cabin owners to check with him if they have algae problems.

This year a new species of algae never-before seen in Idaho was found at Priest Lake. Its identity was confirmed by Bob Steed, of the Idaho DEQ.

*EAST-SIDE STREAM MONITORING PROJECT (Note: PLCOA is a sponsor) – Dr. Lea*

This project has been on-going since 2016.

Nutrient Loading: Dr. Jim Lea (SCA) tested nutrient loading in Cougar Creek in Cavanaugh Bay. While nutrient levels of the other East-side streams were within limits, Cougar Creek showed high nutrient levels of Phosphorus. The Cougar Creek drainage has been heavily harvested by IDL. In 2016 IDL clear-cut 1/3 of the drainage, and the area has been replanted. Monitoring will continue. Ideas as to the source of the Phosphorus will be welcomed by Dr. Lea.

Temperature Monitoring: All East-side streams entering Upper Priest Lake are cold-water streams. Spawning trout can tolerate only small changes in temperature. SCA is the only organization currently monitoring East-side stream temperatures, which can be affected by human-caused interventions such as logging close to streams, road-building, and development. If temperatures in these cold-water streams elevate, DEQ can be notified. Dr. Lea's team employs devices called "Hobo Tidbits" to monitor stream temperatures. Volunteers place them in designated streams. The devices are battery-powered, take readings every 15 minutes, cost ~\$135, and last for years. If stream levels fall or you take them out of the water, the Hobo Tidbits sense when they are out of water and immediately start downloading their data to Dr. Lea's iPad. Over the last year, data has been accumulated from Lion & Soldier Creeks, and now from Caribou & Trapper Creeks, Upper Priest River, etc. Logging operations are occurring at higher elevations along these streams. Keeping clear-cuts and logging prescribed distances away from streams, plus leaving tree-lined areas next to streams for shade, is key. As stream temperatures rise, spawning trout will be in danger. Idaho's DEQ (Dept. of Environmental Quality) and the Idaho Conservation League are not much involved in this work. SCA is the only organization currently monitoring and tracking East-side Priest Lake stream quality and temperatures. PLCOA supports Selkirk Conservation Alliance's work.

#### *Thorofare and Outlet Dam Update – Randy Absalonsen*

All Thorofare work is complete, with a new Breakwater plus dredging to enhance boaters' accessibility to the Upper Lake. PLCOA donated toward funding this critical project.

Work on the Outlet Dam began this year, but has been delayed. The next phase of Dam construction requires a lower lake level than our typical summer level & will be worked on this winter. When complete, the dam will hold an extra 6" of water above the recreational level for water flow.

#### *2021 VAFO and Future VAFO Discussion – IDL's Josh Purkiss (for Sid Anderson) & Lessees Future Options*

Josh Purkiss, IDL Real Estate Service Bureau Chief from Boise, stepped in for Sid Anderson (who will be in Coeur d'Alene next weekend for the 2021 VAFO Auction).

IDL's Dan Brown, area manager from the Cavanaugh Bay, was called away on a fire.

Josh Purkiss noted that the State will reinvest all proceeds from the Cottage Sites according to their mandate.

Cottage Site Leasing: Currently, VAFOs are eligible through the year 2024, depending on demand. Of the initial 350 leased properties, 288 have been sold.

Stakeholder Options for remaining lessees will be discussed at the November Land Board Meeting. On the table are changes such as options for shorter leases, etc.

The frequency of VAFOs will depend on how many leased properties are ready to go to auction. It takes a certain number of properties to make it worthwhile for IDL to go through the process of setting up an auction.

Approximately 50-60 cabins are still on leases, and that number will go down to about 40 lots after this year's VAFO.

The 2021 auction will include 6 unleased lots and 10 or 11 cabins on leased lots.

Going forward, IDL may offer leases at different rates for long-term and short-term leases.

Randy: There will be 40 lessees remaining after this 2021 VAFO auction. IDL is asking that current lessees share information with Randy & PLCOA regarding 1) do they wish to continue leasing, and 2) do they still want to be in a VAFO. IDL is requesting this information so they can make future plans at Priest Lake.

Steve Mumm (with Century 21 Realty) regarding market conditions, noted that Idaho is the “most Moved-to State”. With high-speed internet & mobile communications, people are working remotely and have the option to flee from the cities. Their attraction to Idaho will fuel growth in our region.

*Bonner County Comprehensive Plan Revision – Jeff Connolly, Bonner County Commissioner*

Bonner County Commissioner Jeff Connolly introduced himself as a Priest River-born former logger (40 years). Jeff stated that Bonner County is in the process of revising their 2008 Comprehensive Plan with a new Comprehensive Plan for Growth, including land use, planning and zoning. Jeff said he favors Sub-area Comprehensive Plans. His three sub-areas are Priest River, Blanchard, and Priest Lake. The Board has a target of November for revealing the new plan.

Jeff noted that latent, dormant projects are now becoming active so planning & zoning is important & timely. Highways, transportation, and services will all be considered.

A member of the audience asked if it is possible to have a moratorium for a stated time while the Comprehensive Plan is being finalized. Jeff answered, “Probably not.” One item at issue is the fact that Bonner County has no Building Department. They seem to want to keep it that way.

A question was asked about whether there is a plan for logging at Priest Lake. Jeff Connolly’s answer: They have big-time plans. Connolly noted that such plans for the East side of the lake go through the local IDL office to the Land Board in Boise for approval.

Connolly brought up the current problem of Wildfires due to high temperatures and drought in the region. Three fires are active in Boundary County including Trestle Creek Fire. He cautioned everyone to be extremely cautious.

When pulling over to the side of the road in these extremely dry conditions, Randy cautioned everyone to use a designated pull-out and never drive into tall dry grass, where heat from the underside of a vehicle could be enough to spark a wildfire.

East River Road is under construction for paving (2.7 miles). Jeff Connolly would like to pave it all the way from the shingle mill to Coolin. There is a new bridge between Stations Way and Big Creek. Jeff is also advocating for hard-surfacing the East Side Road from Canoe Point to Sandpiper Shores.

*Covenants, Conditions, & Restrictions (CC&Rs) – Darin Davidson, Denny Christenson, and Mike Belles*

Randy explained that when an IDL leased property is bought/owned, the property is still subject to the (IDL) CC&Rs that were in effect when we purchased our ground.

CC&Rs are in place for each Neighborhood (current and former lessees’ land). Denny, Darin, and Mike Belles will help PLCOA negotiate the issues that may arise with CC&Rs in our current status as land-owners. Denny noted that Cottage Site Guidelines included Development Standards. Lessees were not beholden to Bonner County or State regulations.

CC&Rs are important for maintaining the character of Priest Lake.

Cottage site guidelines came about early in the process with IDL, including discussions with IDL and lessees -- even considering Huckleberry Bay’s covenants. IDL pared the covenants down to the current CC&Rs in preparation for VAFO cottage site sales.

Darin spoke of establishing a working group including Mike Belles regarding current CC&Rs. Some of the guidelines are vague. *The CC&Rs document means that all IDL lease lots that become deeded are subject to these CC&Rs, as recorded in our deeds. It is necessary to bring an enforcement mechanism to the CC&Rs to keep a lid on illegal development. Violation of our CC&Rs is not an issue that County Commissioners can over-ride or give approval for (example: New construction on IDL lease or VAFO lots must have a 40’ setback from the lake, and*

*Bonner County can't negate that rule). We must educate every owner on the CC&Rs Document they signed, including enforcement of CC&Rs on IDL Lease lots & VAFO lots. It may be necessary to bring in legal counsel to ensure that CC&Rs are enforced, even following up with a lawsuit. Right now, it is neighbor to neighbor. PLCOA would like to take on the enforcement role to avoid the neighbor-on-neighbor issue.*

Question from the floor: Why not make (our rules) the same as Bonner County? Answers:

- Our set-back is more stringent than Bonner County. (It has to do with preserving the character of Priest Lake).
- Bonner County rarely enforces the rules they have right now.
- Randy made a point that Variances requested from Bonner County are rarely denied.
- Steve Mumm voiced his observation that most people want to be good neighbors.
- Jeff Connolly advised us that if we want more regulations, don't look to Bonner County. They can't keep track of the various HOAs & developments around the lake, so we're on our own. He also noted that Bonner County is not opposed to *density*.

Connolly noted that LUPA (Land Use Planning Act) in Idaho is very general, very generous, & very vague. \* **He recommended that PLCOA (Members & Board) keep Local Control as much as we can.**

Randy (responding to a question) said that PLCOA is still working the kinks out with IDL to establish a path to HOA documents/enforcement, but that we do not actually *need* IDL's involvement to complete the HOA process.

PLCOA could be the administering organization for the HOAs. PLCOA could act as the enforcement arm in disputes. With outreach and better communication via their website and membership, PLCOA's goal is to grow stronger and have a greater impact within a thriving community while preserving the character of Priest Lake.

Regarding development, Randy followed up on the large (TriCore Investments/Clifford Mort) development moving forward for the Coolin Bay waterfront with multiple secondary acreages in the soon-to-be-former wetlands area. This has been contested in court but so far has not been deterred.

Questions came up about a new development around Paul Jones Beach in Coolin. Four waterfront lots are being developed now, and ~38 hillside lots are platted. Concerns arose about Coolin Sewer District capacity (which is said to be at maximum). Is this a 'subdivision' that requires impact statements, DEQ approvals, ensuring standard setbacks from the lake, rear-yard setbacks/access setbacks, etc.? Denny said they are using 40' lake setbacks and 5' side-yard setbacks. He has no information on rear-yard/access setbacks next to the road. Members questioned how the density of the development impacts traffic and pedestrian safety along the narrow road leading around the bay to Sherwood Beach. This area near the boat launch, Leonard Paul store, & post office is already congested during summer.

An issue came up about Rosalia Bay, regarding the long-established Lakeshore Trail that runs along the waterfront toward 8-mile island. Some property owners are trying to shut it down. Randy suggested this could be a situation where their Neighborhood could organize to protect the Lakeshore trail.

Regarding Neighborhood HOAs, we were reminded that each neighborhood can revise their CC&Rs to meet its individual needs. For example, Pinto Point has already worked on revisions to the original CC&Rs. Denny pointed out that Pinto Point neighborhood doesn't relax restrictions, but enhances them for specific conditions, adding depth to their meaning, e.g. "what is meant by the term 'Forest'?"

*Enforcement of CC&Rs is often an issue with Home-Owner Associations, and Randy suggested that rights of enforcement may be turned over to a sub-board of the Neighborhood HOA or to another entity such as PLCOA,*

which has knowledge of all the neighborhoods and would be a neutral body that could work with issues as they arise. (e.g. solving 'neighbor-against-neighbor' disputes)

Denny Christenson noted that of the original 18 neighborhoods, 4 have already been set up without HOAs, leaving 14 neighborhoods that are not yet officially set up. (IDL was obligated in our deeds to do this for us, but they haven't come through on it.)

Question from the floor: What happens if contractors use a 5' setback from the property line for a garage instead of the required 15'?

Answer: Randy explained that if you build with a 5' setback you will have an 'unintentional liability'. This means that you are liable for the encroachment error and even years later the owner of that adjacent property could decide to sue you or make you move your garage.

Jeff Connolly weighed in on behalf of Bonner County Commissioners. *He said that CC&Rs don't override Bonner County codes. You can go above, but you can't go below the setback rules. You must adhere to Bonner County code.*

Randy noted that not every (IDL-established) Neighborhood may want to form an HOA, but declining this opportunity creates issues as time goes by that may not be easily or amicably solved.

Question from the floor: Who is responsible for road maintenance on old IDL properties?

Answer from Jeff Connolly, Bonner Co. Commissioner: It's on the Land Owners.

#### *Preserve Priest Lake – A Joint Effort – Randy Absalonson*

Randy Absalonson, PLCOA President, and Eric Johnson, West-side Priest Lake Cabin Owners Association, have been heading up the "Preserve Priest Lake" effort to preserve the character of Priest Lake. We educate the lake's population – Recreational day-use users, Renters, Cabin owners, Boaters, Campers, etc. - on areas of awareness pertinent to preserving Priest Lake, Idaho's Crown Jewel, for generations to come.

This year's emphasis is: "SOUND AROUND THE LAKE"

PLCOA is handing out cards, stickers, and pamphlets educating & raising awareness on why SOUND is amplified on the water. *Preserve Priest Lake* is asking boaters, campers, and everyone to be respectful of their neighbors, wildlife, & others by not adding to noise pollution at Priest.

Marine Sheriff Patrol monitors and enforces Priest Lake's Sound Ordinance. They also hand out cards and stickers to raise awareness about Sound.

Each year *Preserve Priest Lake* will emphasize a different "Awareness" theme.

- Shoreline Cleanup will be organized
- Dark Sky Awareness : How to mitigate light pollution and up-lighting will be addressed

#### *Idaho Fish & Game Proposed Siphon Plan (Cold-water Bypass) – Randy Absalonson*

For the Siphon Project to enhance fish habitat in Priest River below the Outlet Dam, IDFG proposes drilling a 5-foot hole and placing a 2-mile long pipe from the coldest depths of Priest Lake stretching through Outlet Bay, under or around the Outlet Dam and spilling out into Priest River a distance beyond the dam.

Currently Outlet Bay creates a free-flowing waterway into Priest River. The dam is regulated for constant flow into the river. Downstream from the dam, summer water temperatures rise in the shallow Priest River.

This summer's drought conditions led to lower summer water-flow into the Priest Lake basin and resulted in higher water temperatures in shallow Outlet Bay, which is already susceptible to algae growth and poor water quality. Outlet Bay residents, who clearly see the potential damage of this siphon plan, are vocal in their disapproval of the concept.

The cost of construction of this cold-water bypass is extremely high, with no funding to sustain it. Millions of gallons of the coldest water would be sucked out of the lowest levels of Priest Lake. Many Priest Lakers fear irreparable damage to the ecosystem and environment if this monumental project goes forward.

Question: What does it do to the Limnology of Priest Lake when millions of gallons of its coldest water are being sucked out? IDFG has hired testing laboratory in Newman Lake, Washington, to come up with an answer.

IDFG and the Corps of Engineers have jurisdiction over this proposed project.

Q: *What can we do?*

A: Randy: *Write letters of opposition during the Public Comment period. Go on record as opposing the Cold-water Bypass (Siphon Project).*

Donna Herak, PLCOA member & Outlet Bay property owner, asked about the limnology study that is in progress by a firm from Newman Lake. She expressed concern that if they did their studies in the summer heat of 2021 and at a time when the lower end of the lake may have been somewhat stagnated, their results may be skewed in comparison with a more typical year.

\*\*John Allison, PLCOA member and Outlet Bay property owner, made a *Motion asking for a Resolution by the PLCOA Board (organization) to oppose the Siphon Project (Cold-water Bypass Project).* The motion was seconded and passed/carried unanimously.

#### *Lakes Commission Update for Priest Lake – Randy Absalonsen*

Randy reported for Ford Elsaesser, who was not available for our meeting.

Warm water this year has resulted in algae and some milfoil which has been eradicated/treated with hand-pulling by divers and with chemical herbicides.

Zebra Mussels – None have been found to date. State and Federal funding has gone into checking boats for the mussels. While “fouled boats” have been discovered at their checkpoints, none of them have carried Zebra mussels.

Fisheries Plan – Randy said the Lakes Commission decided to “Stay Status Quo” as a designated Lake Trout fishery. Lake Trout are a non-native species that have become a favorite for fishermen.

Three species of fish Native to Priest Lake are bull trout, whitefish, and west-slope cutthroat.

Kokanee (non-native) were once abundant. Mysis shrimp were introduced into the lake in the 1960s and have affected the ecosystem for fisheries here.

Small-mouth bass numbers are increasing, & were likely (illegally) introduced by fishermen. They provide fry and food for Lake Trout.

#### *East-Side Priest Lake Fire Protection District – Ann McKinstry & Tom Renzi*

The East Priest Lake Fire District was officially formed in 2020. It stretches for ten miles from Hunt Creek to Cape Horn and Powerline, serving 225 homes. The area is divided into three zones, each with an appointed chairman.

North zone: Tom Clevenger; Pinto Point: Jenny Seaman; S. Horton Creek/8 Mile/Hunt Creek: Candace Mumm.

Fire Chief: Tom Renzi, with assistance from Dave Toole.

The new fire district receives support from North of the Narrows FD (Including CPR and extensive training) and Coolin-Cavanaugh Bay FD (Training).

Contact: [EastPriestLakeFD@gmail.com](mailto:EastPriestLakeFD@gmail.com)

Two grants have been received for start-up:

- 1) Gary Senise – Turnout Gear
- 2) First Five Radios

A summer-use Fire Engine (not 4WD) was donated by Coolin Cavanaugh Bay FD.  
Permanent building sites are being sought for the main fire district building, equipment storage, and a helipad.

No tax revenue from Bonner County will be forthcoming until 2022.  
Donations are being received from PLCOA (Priest Lake Cabin Owners Ass'n), businesses, and cabin owners.  
Budgets are being finalized, including \$100,000 for operations and a \$200,000 capital budget.  
A website is in the works.  
Volunteers are being recruited.  
A location for 2022-23 is needed.  
Grant-writing is ongoing.  
With Bonner County, the EPLFD is entering into agreements to work between other Fire Departments.

Randy stated that supporting the EPLFD is part of the overall mission of the PLCOA to serve and protect members.

Question from the floor: What will our tax assessment for the Fire District be?

Maggie Drummond suggested calling Bonner County for the specific *rate*.

Tom Renzi explained that the EPLFD currently cannot respond to fires. Their fire engine is being outfitted for training.

Their #1 Goal is a Fire Station Building.

Denny Christenson worked to initiate the Fire District 7 or more years ago, identifying a location on Park land in the Pinto Point area as a station site.

Tom Renzi stated that North-of-the-Narrows and Coolin Fire Districts may respond to fires in the EPLFD if they are available.

Renzi said a 3,000 gallon Water Tender is needed. Without a Water Tender, they must draw water from the lake to fight fires.

There are six cabins the Fire District cannot reach.

A Structural Quick Response Vehicle would be helpful.

A 25' Boston Whaler is available at a "low price" from a FD near the Hope Idaho/Montana area. They are hoping to purchase it.

For funding, the EPLFD is looking at Bonds – Municipality Loans to save interest – and possibly a loan from USDA (US Dept. of Agriculture).

*Local Fire Danger is Extreme!* Warning – Don't go off-road in vehicles in the mountains. Even pulling off main roads onto a grassy shoulder may cause fires as the hot undercarriage of a vehicle can cause dry grass to flame up into a fire.

New Business:

Maggie Drummond moved that PLCOA donate \$1,000 to the EPLFD. Jerry Whitehead seconded and the motion passed.

There being no further business, the Annual Meeting of the Priest Lake Cabin Owners Association was adjourned by President Randy Absalonson at 11:35 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Lee, Secretary