



# Board of County Commissioners Agenda Request

**5A**  
Agenda Item #

**Requested Meeting Date:** September 28, 2021

**Title of Item:** Long Lake Conservation Center Report

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REGULAR AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> CONSENT AGENDA <input type="checkbox"/> INFORMATION ONLY	<b>Action Requested:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Approve/Deny Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt Resolution (attach draft) <i>*provide copy of hearing notice that was published</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Direction Requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Item <input type="checkbox"/> Hold Public Hearing*
<b>Submitted by:</b> Rich Courtemanche	<b>Department:</b> Land	
<b>Presenter (Name and Title):</b> Dave McMillan, Long Lake Conservation Center Manager		<b>Estimated Time Needed:</b> 20 min
<b>Summary of Issue:</b> Long Lake is opening for the 2021-2022 school year. The Director will provide a report of the status of the center.		
<b>Alternatives, Options, Effects on Others/Comments:</b>		
<b>Recommended Action/Motion:</b>		
<b>Financial Impact:</b> <i>Is there a cost associated with this request?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>What is the total cost, with tax and shipping? \$</i> <i>Is this budgeted?</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Please Explain:</i>		

Legally binding agreements must have County Attorney approval prior to submission.





# FALL 2021 ADJUSTMENT PLAN

LONG LAKE CONSERVATION CENTER | SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

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## OVERVIEW

Due to the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus, schools in St. Paul, Rochester, Anoka and others have cancelled all of their fall field trips. This has had an impact on Long Lake's fall calendar. Ramsey, Oneka (2 groups), Sunrise Elementary, and Rum River have cancelled their fall LLCC trip, are looking at rescheduling for the winter or spring, but have yet to commit to a date. Yinghua cancelled, and has already rescheduled for April. In addition to school groups, three quilting groups cancelled their weekend retreats. All three are looking to reschedule for the spring.

This is a bump in the road and certainly not what we were hoping for when we reopened in early summer. However, the news has an upside. We still have school and non-school groups on our schedule that fill a big chunk of October. Our spring, which was already looking pretty good, recently added a weeklong school (Great River), and with rescheduling of schools has a chance to be sold out.

This is a problem that is not unique to Long Lake. The uncertainty with COVID-19 has impacted other RELCs just as hard as it has LLCC. Eagle Bluff has lost 38% of their Sept.-Dec. schools, and anticipate ultimately losing half of their fall schools. Osprey Wild has lost 30% of their fall schools and are anticipating more. One big difference is that they can access Shuttered Venue Operators Grants, and LLCC can't. Osprey Wild accessed funds, and Wolf Ridge deposited \$515,000 in SVOG money.

"Thank god for SVOG funds to keep me soundly sleeping at night," Colleen from Eagle Bluff said.

### UPCOMING SCHOOLS AND GROUPS

October 11-15: St. Michael Albertville West  
October 15-17: Hannah Johnson Quilters  
October 18-21: St. Joseph's  
October 21-24: North Country Quilters  
October 26-27: Aitkin, McGregor and Hill City  
October 29-31: Buffalo Crafters (quilt group)  
November 1-5: St. Michael Albertville East  
November 5-8: WQE Quilters  
November 8-10: St. Michael Albertville 7th Grade Group

It should be noted that St. Michael Albertville seem solid, as does Aitkin/McGregor and Hill City. The quilters are less solidly committed. Because quilting group participants tend to be on the older side, they might change their minds, or lack minimum numbers for a group.

With the help of Aitkin County Department of Public Health, and following the direction of the Centers for Disease Control and the Minnesota Department of Health, Long Lake has created a COVID Policy, and put steps in place that takes COVID seriously. This has helped assuage the fears of some schools and groups. This policy is consistent with the state's other RELCs.





## THE PLAN FOR THE FALL AT LLCC

There this no state of federal funds coming to the rescue, and trying to fill holes this fall with other overnight school trips is unrealistic - because of timing and ongoing COVID fears. We do not consider this fall to be a loss and hope to recoup some of the lost revenue and keep our tremendous staff employed, while staying true to our mission of Environmental Education. The overall plan is to utilize the existing team to assist in these efforts when not performing their normal Naturalist Educator duties.

- **Day Trips to schools within a 60-mile radius of LLCC**  
*Full nature immersion trips contained in a day-long hike around Long Lake. Students will explore and learn up close what is happening in Minnesota forests in the fall and how plants and animals are able to survive the Minnesota winters. While we are out we will also learn about human outdoor survival including building shelters and small cooking fires to cook an outdoor lunch. It will be a memorable day of challenges, cooperation and connecting with nature. The Long Lake staff will reach out to all local schools. Proposed cost: \$20 per student, which includes lunch.*
- **Naturalists in the Schools**  
*If the students can't come to nature, we'll take the nature to the schools. The Naturalist team will develop nature classes that can be taken on the road. This will include Snakes (and More) Alive, Lake Bottom Organisms, The Art of Nature (making paper with recycled materials), Forestry, and Phenology Hike with journals (Know Your Neighbors). We can also create classes to fit the schools curriculum. Price will vary based on the time commitment, but a minimum of \$100 per trip.*
- **Naturalists after school programs**  
*We will offer Long Lake as a destination for after school programs for area schools, daycares and other youth organizations. Our programming will be based on what is happening at the time, and will likely include the Art of Nature, Nature Hikes and more. Price will be based on the programming, but if food is not involved, the price will be \$5 per child.*
- **Phenology Fish Fry with John Latimer, November Fundraising Event**  
*This program will be through the Long Lake Conservation Foundation. All proceeds will go into a scholarship fund to pay for students to attend LLCC. This event will feature a phenology hike with noted KAXE phenologist John Latimer, followed by a Walleye fish fry. John Latimer is donating his time (normally \$150 per event), and the LLCF has provided Red Lake walleye in past events. Cost will be \$50 per person. We anticipate a crowd of 100 or more.*
- **Nature Holiday Parties**  
*This is a new program for groups and organizations looking for a nature adventure Holiday Party. Groups can select from a menu of outdoor activities and naturalist-led adventures. A festive holiday meal will follow. Prices will be based on menu choices and other needs. These parties will be promoted through area Chambers of Commerce, press release and digital media.*





## THE PLAN FOR THE FALL AT LLCC, CONT.

- **Nature Gift Bags for the Holidays**  
*The Long Lake naturalists are putting together Nature-themed holiday gift baskets that will include a camping coffee mug, natural fire starters, a nature journal with pressed flower bookmarks and more. Price will be determined after the gifts are finalized.*
- **Nature Nights Series (food with adult programming) and more.**  
*The Long Lake naturalist team is putting together a multi-week yet-to-be-branded Nature Night series. It will include a fun, adult-focused nature course/adventure/discussion followed by a meal.*
- **More Yoga and other non-school groups, including churches.**  
*We don't often have openings during the fall for non-school groups. A marketing effort will be made to reach out to yoga studios, quilters, churches and other organizations to use the facility during the day, or for overnight stays.*
- **Long Lake Conservation Foundation fundraising**  
*Long Lake will work with the Foundation to raise funds for scholarships and other targeted needs. Long Lake's goal is for there to be a major fall MPR-style scholarship fundraising campaign to take place in the weeks before Thanksgiving. It would include a PR and marketing push, asking businesses and the public to donate to LLCF's scholarship fund for kids to enjoy nature school. People who donate \$75 or more will receive admission into the Phenology Fish Fry. People who donate \$125 or more will receive a Long Lake metal water thermos. All proceeds would go to scholarships. Though we collaborate closely, the ultimate decision as to what is done is made by the Foundation. Stay tuned for details.*
- **Grant Writing**  
*Long Lake, and the LLC Foundation will identify and apply for governmental and non-governmental grants in support of our long-term vision projects, such as the Four-Season Ojibwe Village, and the Better Living Initiative. Naturalists will assist with this.*
- **Campus projects**  
*Anthony Miller has requested assistance from the naturalists with long-overdue maintenance projects such as repainting rooms in the North Star Lodge, and grounds and facilities project.*
- **Niche school recruitment efforts**  
*Home School Week and Spanish Immersion Week are planned for later this winter/early spring. We will try to convince these groups to come to LLCC through targeted digital media messages, public relations and direct communications.*
- **2022-23 Recruitment Efforts**  
*Naturalists will be assigned a list of schools to recruit to LLCC. They will communicate with the teachers, and administrators from these schools, building relationships.*