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NEWS RELEASE

NATIONAL LOON CENTER RECEIVES GRANTS SUPPORTING THE LAUNCH OF ITS FLOATING CLASSROOM

Crosslake, MN, August 26, 2021: The National Loon Center (NLC) in Crosslake has received a \$40,000 grant from the Crosslake Ideal Lions Club to support the launch of its floating classroom program. The gift was celebrated at an open house at The Nest on the Crosslake Town Square on August 20. An additional \$4,000 grant from the Land & Waters Preservation Trust enables the NLC to purchase water testing equipment, sample kits, and safety and mooring equipment for the floating classroom.

The National Loon Center has acquired a 31' tri-toon boat that will serve as the vessel to conduct floating classroom programs. Recognizing the value of the commitment from the Crosslake Ideal Lions Club, the boat will include branding that celebrates the partnership, serving as an enduring reminder of the strength of this community-driven project.

The idea of a floating classroom was raised in community sessions years ago, and the concept was refined and developed further by the Northern Lakes Initiative Work Group (NLI), a program committee of the National Loon Center. The boat will provide visitors with an opportunity to see loons from a respectful distance in their summer habitat, and to learn how citizens can contribute to the protection of loon habitat and freshwater ecosystems. With the assistance of graduate students from the University of Minnesota, the NLI has developed a curriculum for a two-hour, on-the-lake educational program. The curriculum was tested this summer during "Loon Lab" courses hosted with Gull Lake Sailing School on Gull Lake.

This is a major step in the development of the National Loon Center and its National Freshwater Institute that was proposed at open community meetings in 2016 and endorsed by the Minnesota Design Team. Based on that concept, the National Loon Center has received strong local, regional, state and even national support. Starting in 2022, educational trips will be offered regularly and are expected to take two hours on the lake. Floating classroom courses will be made available to the public with an emphasis on hands-on science. On-board guides will share information about the loon's physical and behavioral characteristics as well as shoreland management, watershed conservation, and water quality monitoring.

The courses will be interactive, focusing on the importance of protecting the water quality of our lakes, which is critical to the health and survival of loons.

The National Loon Center Foundation in Crosslake, Minnesota aims to restore and protect loon breeding habitats, enhance responsible recreation, and serve as a national leader in advancing loon and freshwater research and education. The National Loon Center's world-class facility, slated to open to the public in the spring of 2024, will be an interactive and family-friendly educational destination that transforms visitors into champions for loons and freshwater everywhere. To learn more about the National Loon Center, please visit www.nationallooncenter.org.

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