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## COLA Receives “Outstanding Partner Award” from UW Stevens Point Geographic Information Systems Center

Hayward, WI (May 18, 2017) The University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point Geographic Information Systems Center (GIS Center) selected the Courte Oreilles Lakes Association (COLA) for its annual *Outstanding Partner Award*. Jim Coors, COLA board member and communications director for COLA attended UWSP Department of Geography and Geology’s Annual Spring Banquet on May 4, 2017, to accept the award on behalf of COLA. The event was held at Sentry World – The Atrium.

“The UWSP GIS Center Outstanding Partner Award recognizes people and organizations who help demonstrate the value of a geographic approach to problem solving and the utility of geographic information systems for addressing significant societal challenges,” said Douglas Miskowiak, Senior GIS Education Specialist at UW-Stevens Point GIS Center. “This year’s award recognizes COLA’s long-term commitment to gathering scientific and geographic evidence at the watershed scale and applying it to protect the two-story fishery on Lac Courte Oreilles.”

“The important thing about this work is the watershed approach,” said Coors. “During the award presentation, Miskowiak repeatedly emphasized the importance of the study’s ability to identify individual ag parcels that merit further attention. This project with UW Stevens Point has been a process of great science, involves talented and highly trained people, and promotes a wonderful cause.”



The [UW Stevens Point Erosion Study](#) contains the modeling and mapping necessary to help both farmers and lake associations in the watershed identify 40-acre farm parcels most vulnerable to erosion. The next step is to ground truth the results of the study and where appropriate encourage farmers—with the help of Sawyer County conservationists and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)—to adopt necessary management plans. Those parcels with a high Environmental Vulnerability Index value will undergo on-site evaluation. Sawyer County and the NRCS have agreed to undertake this task.

Because all lakes in the watershed ultimately flow into the Lac Courte Oreilles lakes, the erosion study was designed to provide guidance on protecting productive soils in the watershed as a means of ultimately preserving the water quality of all lakes in the watershed including the LCO lakes.

According to Miskowiak, “We are seriously committed to helping COLA and want to use this Partnership Award to attract widespread attention to the combined efforts for UW Stevens Point, COLA, Sawyer County, the Natural Resources Conservation Service to improve both land and water quality in Upper Couderay River Watershed.”

**Learn more about COLA’s efforts** to protect the water quality of Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO)—the fifth-largest natural lake in Wisconsin, an Outstanding Resource Water, and a rare, two-story cold-water fishery. As part of this goal, COLA is committed to helping provide the science and lead the way in reducing pollution, to serve not only the LCO Watershed but also other lakes and the organizations that support them. Visit [www.cola-wi.org](http://www.cola-wi.org). For questions and interviews, contact Jim Coors at [colacommunications@gmail.com](mailto:colacommunications@gmail.com) or call 608-628-0694.