



The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Fisheries has identified and is interested in purchasing two lots with approximately 900 feet of shoreline on Deer Lake. The purpose of the acquisition will be to protect the lots in their undeveloped, natural state. The purchase will be pursued under the Critical Habitat component of the Reinvest in Minnesota Program. This is the same program that recently purchased Bear Island. The difference is that the area will be protected as an Aquatic Management Area (AMA). The lots are located on the east end of the Kocemba's Acres plat in Kocemba's Bay on the east shore of the Deer Lake.

**DNR Fisheries is interested in the lots for the following reasons:**

- 1) Spring muskellunge assessments on Deer Lake have indicated that the bay in which the parcels are located is a very important spawning/nursery area for muskellunge. Walleye and smallmouth bass also use the area for spawning. The unique, varied habitat that defines this bay should be protected in its natural state to maintain the naturally reproducing, native muskellunge fishery.
- 2) The adjacent property owner, south of this lot, recently deeded a Conservation Easement to the Minnesota Land Trust on over 1/2 mile of his shoreline to protect its habitat from future development. This proposed AMA will extend the protection of this critical wetland complex.
- 3) Wetlands are poor choices for development. Extensive filling is necessary and improperly functioning septic systems can occur on these lots. Water quality can ultimately be impacted.
- 4) This area is an important wildlife "quiet" area on heavily developed Deer Lake. The islands and varied terrestrial and aquatic vegetation in this area provide food, cover, nesting and resting area for a variety of wildlife and non-game wildlife species.

Please discuss the proposed purchases with the Deer Lake Association and its Board of Directors. As you are aware, under the Critical Habitat Match component of the Reinvest in Minnesota Program, contributions must reflect 50% of the appraised value of the property. Muskie's Inc. has been contacted and has expressed an interest in participating financially in the project. The appraisal of the properties has been completed and negotiations with the landowners are currently being conducted. It should be mentioned that although both owners have expressed an interest in selling to the DNR, they have the right to refuse our offer. We intend to have the acquisition completed by July 1. Your financial support in protecting this critical habitat would be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Richard Thompson Fisheries Specialist

## **LAKES AND RIVERS FESTIVAL**

*The first annual Lakes and Rivers Festival will be held Saturday, June 23, 2001 on the campus of Itasca Community College. There will be many presentations to inform people on the wise use of Itasca County's waters. To keep kids occupied, there will be numerous activities with a conservation or nature study theme. The festival will run from 9 am to 1 pm. DLA members are encouraged to make every effort to attend.*

*The Festival was initiated by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, Itasca Community College and the Itasca Coalition of Lake Associations in response to the County's new Comprehensive Land Use Plan. The plan strongly promotes the sustainability of Itasca County's natural resources. The water quality and esthetics of the county's lakes and rivers are a major concern. The Festival will provide important information about these concerns and discuss ways for individuals to help address these concerns.*

*The Itasca Soil and Water Conservation District and staff from the DNR offices in Grand Rapids have been helping with the planning for the Festival and will be doing some of the presentations. Some other participating Agencies or Organizations are the Mississippi Headwaters Board, the Children's Discovery Museum, the Itasca Historical Society, Minnesota Sea Grant, the Forest History Center, Itasca Master Gardeners and the Itasca County sheriff's Boat and Water Safety Division.*