

Minnesota Resorter



Resorters Helping Resorters

Spring 2012
Vol. 28 No. 2

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the Spring Conference



How to Offer Your
Guests the Best this Summer

CMR Website: Continuous Improvement

A PUBLICATION OF THE CONGRESS OF MINNESOTA RESORTS

Submit Your Nominations for Resorters of the Year!

Congress of Minnesota Resorts Members,
The Resorters of the Year Award is given annually to a resort that exemplifies the spirit and goals of the CMR. The criteria centers around the operation of a successful and progressive business, service to the tourism industry both at the local and state levels, and community service in other areas. Mentoring and helping other resort owners and membership in the CMR are also part of the requirements. Nominations for the award are generated entirely by CMR members, and the whole program is dependent upon the time and effort you give in order to recognize excellence. We encourage you to participate through nominations of resorters you feel uphold the highest standards and are dedicated to service within our industry.

Here are the guidelines:

The Congress of Minnesota Resorts selects, through nomination by its members, one resort and resorter(s) that have shown a dedication to the improvement of the Minnesota resort industry by adopting and carrying out business policies and practices that reflect a personal pride in the industry as a whole. They also live up to the organization's motto of "Resorters Helping Resorters" by involvement in community activities and by displaying a willingness to help other resort owners to successfully operate Minnesota resorts.

To this end, any member of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts can submit a nomination for this prestigious award. Nominations must be received by September 1st each year. The nominating member is not required to verify the eligibility criteria. In the event none of the resorts nominated meet all the eligibility requirements, the Awards Committee will make a selection based on the resort most closely meeting the criteria and notify the winner. The winner will be asked to be present at the annual Congress

of Minnesota Resorts Fall Conference where the formal announcement and presentation will be made.

The following criteria are considered by the Awards Committee in making their selection:

- CMR member in good standing for the previous three consecutive years under the same ownership.
- Ability to maintain a successful and progressive resort.
- History of helping and mentoring other resort owners/operators.
- Involvement in community activities.
- At least five years between awards.
- Not a current member of the Awards Committee.

To obtain a nomination form, go to the CMR website www.Minnesota-Resorts.com, scroll to the bottom of the home page and click on Membership. Login using your Login and Password, select Application from the list on the left, click on Resorter of the Year Nomination, and print a copy. Mail the completed form to the CMR address below. If you need further assistance please contact Vicky Krattenmaker, CMR Office Manager, by emailing: CMR@Minnesota-Resorts.com or calling 320-212-5107.

NOMINATION DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 1ST

Send nomination form to:

Resorters of the Year Nomination Committee
Congress of Minnesota Resorts
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Minnesota Resorter

Resorters Helping Resorters



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About the cover: Photograph submitted by Jennifer Bateman, Two Inlets Resort

The Minnesota Resorter is a triannual publication of the Congress of Minnesota Resorts. The opinions expressed in the articles printed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions nor the official position of the CMR nor any of its officers, directors, or members. Please address any comments or inquires to the committee contact. The Minnesota Resorter is printed by Arrow Printing.

From Your President's Pen



President Mark Novotny
Congress of Minnesota Resorts

Howdy Fellow Resorters!

As you can tell by my greeting, I have a farming and ranching background and like to use it from time to time. I feel my background has given me a great work ethic in resorting and I like to use this analogy; as spring approaches, we are planting seeds and calving as we prepare for a great harvest; guests coming to the resort.

As I am writing this, we have about six inches of snow on the ground. With the warm and mild winter, I hope your phones and Internet inquiries

have increased and you are filling those vacancies!

As in past years the cost of gas will be a hurdle for us as prices are beginning to climb. At the first of the year, regular gas was \$3.19 per gallon. Now (March 1), it is \$3.59 and climbing. When you get this magazine, I hope that it has leveled off but I know they are predicting \$4.00 by spring (I hope their prediction is as wrong as our last weather report. We just missed a predicted 10-12 inches of snow.).

On January 24th and 25th, I attended an Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference. The whole conference stressed the importance of customer service and how we need to stop and think about how we feel in our customers' shoes. Also, another big theme was *profitability first – growth second*. If you are looking at a loan or refinancing this coming year, banks are looking at cash flow. There is no more equity position. It is important to watch your expenses and revenues. Many of the resorts that I know, are very progressive and business minded so this is no surprise to them.

On February 28th and 29th, 40 resort owners flooded the capital building during our Day on the Hill event. As always, we had some big issues to tackle. Again, Post Labor Day School Start was at the top of the list. HF 2325/SF 1892 Bill was introduced to repeal the Post Labor Day School Start and not have school the Thursday and Friday before Labor Day as a compromise. This was not a compromise for

us. We continue to fight this issue every year.

Another issue, we are opposing is HF1523/SF 1190 which eliminates the ability of local government to control the location of all lodging that is considered to be a vacation rental home. The bill prohibits any ordinance that would preclude the use of property as a vacation rental, regardless of zoning or other surrounding uses.

Once again, we are supporting HF 632/SF 411 which allows the transfer of restricted plumbing licenses to new owners or family members. We have several new CMR members unable to obtain a plumbing license to perform simple plumbing maintenance on their own resort.

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) has become a major issue for our lakes and rivers. We now have 40 infested lakes in Minnesota and that number will grow if we do not proactively do something. There is a lot of talk about educating the public and last year, the legislature passed a bill that every boat that is launched in a lake in Minnesota has to have a sticker on it explaining how to NOT transport AIS. These stickers are becoming available in the next couple of weeks and will be available to all boaters at no cost. I hope that you join the CMR members and all resorters around the state to get these stickers on your guest's boats and help to educate them. All this is being done to help slow the spread of AIS.

With all these issues and more, please contact your senator or representative and let him know how you feel. And, if you are a member of CMR, plan to get on the bus. We are planning another event for Day on the Hill for February 2013.

Another topic that is very much of interest to everyone is the demand for lodging in Minnesota. I obtained an informational sheet from Explore Minnesota Tourism that indicates the demand for lodging rooms have been on the rise. In the past four years, there has been quite a change. In 2008, we had a decline of 2.1 percent in demand, 2009 declined by 5.6 percent, 2010 was a nice increase of 7.4 percent and as of November 2011, we were seeing a 4.5 percent increase. To see more information about this, go to industry.exploreminnesota.com. Personally, I have not seen big swings and occupancy for me has been *steady as she goes*. I hope that you will see increases in the coming months.

Respectfully,

Mark Novotny

WE'RE LOOKING FOR YOUR RESORT STORIES AND HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOGRAPHS OF RESORT LIFE!

SEND THEM TO: ANN WARLING
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EDUCATION

Migration Vacation

By Judd Brink, MN Backyard Birds

Is this your *Big Year*? The spring bird migration would be a great time to start a *Big Year* – counting as many bird species as you can in one year. Well, you don't have to be a Hollywood star, like Jack Black, Steve Martin or Owen Wilson, to enjoy and have a passion for birds. Bird watching and bird feeding is the 2nd largest recreational activity in the United States. Minnesota has an impressive checklist of 437 bird species, which is more than any other state in the Midwest. For many avid or novice birders, Minnesota is a great place to stay and watch birds year-round. Bird feeding stations, bird guiding tours or bird guiding packages are new "green" ways to increase occupancy rates during the peak bird migrations when the industry as a whole is in between seasons.

There are many bird watching locations near you that are very popular with bird watchers like national wildlife refuges, state parks and wildlife management areas. Many of these locations or other areas are nearby but are unused. Knowing a location and what it offers (hiking/nature trails, maps and a bird checklist) would be a huge marketing advantage for the resort and a valuable resource for your guests. One great example is the Northland Arboretum in Brainerd, which is the only Audubon, designated Important Bird Area (IBA) in central Minnesota. Unfortunately many of the local resorts don't use this resource or are unaware of its IBA status.

How can my resort increase or at least maintain occupancy rates during the off seasons (spring/fall) with bird watching tours, guided weekends and bird feeding sanctuaries? The same off seasons coincide with peak bird migrations during the spring (April/May) and fall (September/October). A guided tour could be just a few hours at a state park or a full day event to Hawk Ridge in Duluth. Having a bird watching guide can greatly increase and enhance their success and enjoyment of birds.

In Minnesota, there are more people who participate in bird watching than hunting and fishing combined. Most resorts offer some type of package deal during a holiday weekend or for fishing/hunting. The same concept also applies to a bird-guiding weekend. A spring/fall *migration vacation* could include an evening program and a day of bird watching with an experienced and knowledgeable guide. Each package can be designed according to the resort location, time of year and birding locations that are nearby. There are several advantages to consider when offering a bird-guiding package versus a guided fishing package, which can require a lot of your extra time and additional resort expense. Just a few of the benefits of a bird-guiding weekend are... no fees, restrictions, regulations, repair/replacement expenses, fuel, stickers/licenses and high insurance costs. This is not in competition with fishing, but birding is a cost saving alternative that can be offered at the same time for anyone, without limitations.

Just recently one of the lodging facilities in the area was awarded the prestigious exterior property of the year award, which included bird feeders and bluebird boxes provided by MN Backyard Birds. For the resorts that have nature trails, adding one or several bird feeding stations along the trail would significantly increase and enhance a guest's experience and usage along this trail.

What is a birding page and how can it promote my resort on a webpage or social network? One of the first questions I ask when visiting resorts is *do you have a birding page on your website?* Most often the answer is no. Their response is usually *what would I include?* A simple Common Loon

*Lynn Scharenbroich,
Black Pine Beach
Resort Owner, offers
migration vacations.*

"You [Judd Brink] were a huge hit with Karen and Larry! They had a great time and talked about how knowledgeable you were. In fact, they were busily trying to help me figure out birding packages, a very nice endorsement of the quality of your bird guiding services. Thanks for adding a great memory to Karen and Larry's vacation experience."



Judd Brink guides a migration vacation for Karen and Larry Anderson.

photograph with some facts would be a great start to your new birding page. Our Common Loon is uncommon to many people from out of state and even more so for anyone on the coast. The loons that spend their winters on the coast (most often the Gulf Coast) are in their drab winter plumage, making them almost unrecognizable. Minnesota has the highest breeding population of Common Loons besides Alaska. Many resort guests ask me specifically to guide them to see our loons in their bright summer *tuxedo* plumage. By making this opportunity available to see loons, with the many other birds in your area can be a huge advantage. I would also explore the many other social media networks that are available to increase awareness and traffic to your sites. This is a very powerful marketing tool; it's free and is used by millions of people hourly.

Birdsofthebyway.com is a new and exciting webpage that was recently created to give birders information about current sightings along the Paul Bunyan Scenic Byway. This is the first birding webpage for any of Minnesota's 22 Scenic Byways that promotes and features bird watching. This past fall the National Audubon Society accepted the Uppgaard Wildlife Management Area as a new site for the Christmas Bird Counts. The Uppgaard Christmas Bird Count was a first for the area and for a Minnesota Byway.

I know for many that birding is new and so it's easily overlooked at your resort. The above options are opportunities for the industry to increase their occupancy rates during the peak bird migration and to market themselves as new bird watching destinations. Birding is big business and continues to grow in popularity across the country. According to the 2006, survey from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service over \$120 billion dollars was spent nationally on wildlife recreation. In Minnesota, \$2.1 million non and state residents participated in wildlife recreation and spent \$192 million on lodging/food supporting Minnesota wildlife tourism. With bird watching and or bird feeding you can increase and enhance everyone's enjoyment of birds by providing this unique experience. Birding is the start of a new tradition for every generation at your resort. *Happy Birding!*

MN Backyard Birds offers birdscaping by designing, installing, and maintaining the most attractive and active bird feeding stations and wildlife sanctuaries for Minnesota resorts. Judd Brink brings over 25 years of bird watching and bird feeding experience to the lodging industry to create and promote new bird watching destinations. He works with resorts to help them design and display birding pages as well as offering free bird watching tour signs with cards. For more information about guiding along the byway you can contact Brink at (218) 838-4784 or info@birdsofthebyway.com.Brink.



Natural Cleanin' Corner

By Kim Bowen, Crow Wing Crest Lodge

For a healthy RESORT, and a healthy YOU!

To bleach, or not to bleach?

If you know me at all, I reckon you'd assume my immediate answer to this question would be a big, fat **NOT!** followed perhaps by a rather annoyingly muttered *duh*. Well, you'd be wrong. *Bleach* simply means to leach out color, or to whiten.

As you might suspect, the bottom line of this article is about the dangers of chemical bleach, the kind you buy at any supermarket in the white gallon jug, and what kinds of alternatives there are. It's worth a read through, even if you're pretty sure you'll never, ever, ever give up your trusty, stinky white jug 'o germ-away.

So, here's the real reason why I don't use chemical bleach at my house or resort - I don't want cancer. I'm really afraid of it and uncomfortable admitting to it. I've seen my daughter fight breast cancer for a year and lose, I've experienced my grandson dying of brain cancer at age three, too many of my resort guests and personal friends have gone

through cancer. There are many things I cannot control in my life: so what I can control, I try hard to make educated decisions about. In particular, when I learn something is a known carcinogen (*directly linked to causing cancer*), I avoid it as much as possible, research how I can reduce any damage I may have already caused to myself when I didn't avoid it in the past, and try to pass along any wisdom learned to others as much as I feel they might be open to it.



The chemical chlorine bleach is a known carcinogen. Not only can you absorb toxic carcinogenic amounts into your body by inhalation, skin absorption or ingestion (*if dishes or eating implements are rinsed with it, or a piece of food set onto a countertop rinsed with chemical bleach is eaten it may have collected residual chemicals*) it can also be an instant killer. If you accidentally mix liquid bleach with ammonia in a poorly ventilated room, you can be instantly suffocated from the toxic *chloramine gas*. This is what our government used in World War II as a very effective chemical warfare weapon - called *mustard gas*. Also, if you accidentally mix chemical bleach and vinegar, or chemical bleach and hydrochloric acid (found in many toilet bowl cleaning solutions) you will also be instantly poisoned by the new kinds of toxic gases produced by the mixture.

So why are we *allowed* to use such a volatile, unstable substance? My personal opinion is: somebody somewhere is making tons of money selling this very cheaply and easily manufactured product, the marketing campaigns are very successful and chlorine bleach is a very inexpensive germicide and bleaching agent. In the past 100 years, it has indeed been used to successfully eradicate bacteria and nasty diseases caused by contaminated potable water supplies. But being that we're fighting bacteria with a known poison, how much is too much?

Ready to consider some possible alternatives to using chemical bleach at your resort?

Instead of chemical bleach to whiten, try these natural alternatives:

Hydrogen Peroxide - It's a natural bleaching agent. Cheap, too: about a buck a bottle at any pharmacy. The brown bottles are only about three percent peroxide, but it works well on some things. For example:

Refrigerator Seals - brush on a few coats



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with a toothbrush to eliminate dark mold spots and to prevent future mold.

White Towels Spots – if used WITH lemon juice. If it's used by itself, or if lemon juice (also a natural bleaching agent) is used by itself, it doesn't seem to work as well as when used together. Soak or rub each spot/stain with lemon juice then throw all of the pieces into the washer and let it fill with hot water. Shut off the washer and dump in two quarts of hydrogen peroxide and let the washer load sit overnight to soak. Start the washer and run the load like normal.

Shaklee's Nature Bright powder - The best clothing/bedding whitener and it's organic! We did a test at the last Green Cleaning Class (the next Green Cleaning Class is on April 9th as a CMR Pre-Workshop Bonus Class – it's free!) which involved cutting up a dingy used-to-be-white rag and soaking pieces in hydrogen peroxide by itself, lemon juice by itself and Shaklee's *Nature Bright* by itself, overnight. We were all amazed at how white the piece of cloth in the *Nature Bright* solution turned out. This product can be bought directly from www.shaklee.com, \$3.40 for 32 oz.

Restore EnzAway Spot Remover - This is great at getting out bloodstains and other protein-based spots in sheets, even those you missed the first time around and baked in after a clothes dryer cycle. (\$6.09 for a quart spray bottle at www.greenmercantile.com) Spray EnzAway on sofa arms and chair rests where body oils have soaked in. This natural enzyme will actually *eat* up the protein and make it go away. Use on carpet spots and upholstery to remove bacon grease, poo spills, and urine.

Instead of chemical bleach to disinfect, try these natural alternatives:

Counter tops, dish rinse, produce rinse - Vinegar and three percent hydrogen peroxide. Don't mix the two together. Put some white or apple cider vinegar in one spray bottle and one or two brown bottle(s) of hydrogen peroxide in another spray bottle. Spray your surface with one, then the other (doesn't matter which one you spray on first, it's just important to keep in separate spray bottles). I have read that the Mayo Clinic actually uses these two common items, plus distilled water to disinfect bi-pap and c-pap plastic tubing, humidifiers, etc. I also found a source (<http://www.michaelandjudystouffer.com/judy/articles/vinegar.htm>) which talks about Virginia Polytechnic Institute studies that found "*pairing the two mists killed virtually all Salmonella, Shigella, or E-coli bacteria on heavily contaminated food and surfaces when used in this fashion, making this spray combination more effective at killing these potentially lethal bacteria than chlorine bleach or any commercially available kitchen cleaner.*"

Shower curtains - I use polyester cloth shower curtains, so when they start to get a little moldy, instead of washing them in chemical bleach, I instead use borax (*MuleTeam* borax is available at grocery stores/Wal-Mart) and vinegar. I use hot water for this wash to dissolve the powdery borax, then put a full cup of vinegar and a lot of normal soap. Borax is a natural deodorizer not just a disinfectant and mold inhibitor.

Shock your well with 35 percent hydrogen peroxide. It's not going

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to be as cheap as using bleach, but it's going to be healthier. I'm still googling sources of bulk hydrogen peroxide, as most instructions are calling for four gallons of it initially to shock your well, then one-two gallons the next time you smell odors or see rust. *Ehow* website has a guideline, http://www.cleanairpurewater.com/images/stories/documents/well_treatment.pdf, or just try searching and feel free to chat on the resorter chatline so we can trade notes!

Thirty-five percent hydrogen peroxide can be used instead of chlorine bleach for your pool or hot tub (guidelines: <http://purehealthsystems.com/hydrogen-peroxide-pool-spa.html>). I thought some of you might be interested in exploring the possibility. It looks as though we'll either have someone speaking about alternatives to chlorine for your pool (a salt cleaning system? Ozone?) at the Spring Workshop April 10th in Walker, or a Crackerbarrel with this topic.)

There are a ton of resources (website, books, magazines) out there for *green* cleaners, and several local groceries/department stores are carrying a couple of organic cleaning lines to make it easy to try it out. I've been asked to write a few more articles on natural cleaning and will attempt to keep the topic running for chats, 'cause I'm learning stuff all the time. I've got a rant on air fresheners I'll save for when I need to work out some frustration, tub & tile cleaner alternatives, natural pesticides, and maybe another look at general cheap natural cleaning solutions. I make up a glass/window cleaner here at my resort for about \$.04 quart – compare that to the toxic blue stuff at \$2.50 a quart! Looking forward to seeing you at the next Green Cleaning Class on April 9th and the CMR Spring Workshop on April 10th!

EDUCATION

Staff applying for unemployment?

Does it count in a seasonal business?

By Kim Bowen, Crow Wing Crest Lodge

The following story is a Question & Answer email session I had with Minnesota Unemployment Insurance (UI) Program Director Jim Hegman to clarify some of the items he presented at the last CMR Fall Conference in Grand Rapids. These questions are from various CMR members who left notes on feedback forms. There is a link to the UI Program's website at the end of this piece along with the phone number to reach a UI specialist if you have other questions, or try a chat thread on the CMR group email - resorters@yahoo.com - to further the conversation.

CMR Question: Are any Minnesota seasonal small businesses treated differently than non-seasonal businesses?

UI Program Answer: No. There are no special rules for seasonal businesses.

CMR Question: If one of our resort employees does get awarded unemployment, will this affect our UI premiums?

UI Program Answer: It depends a great deal on your particular situation, but probably the answer is yes.

Your UI tax rate can increase or decrease each January 1, based on the amount of benefits paid to your former employees through the prior June 30. The rate is calculated to recover the benefit cost from you over a four-year period going forward.

CMR Question: Are seasonal resort employees eligible for unemployment?

One of our resort members suggested that they handle this issue by having every employee sign a form at the beginning of each spring, acknowledging the limited duration of the employment because of their resort's seasonal nature. Would this work?

UI Program Answer: Under Minnesota UI law, seasonal employees are considered laid off due to a lack of work at the end of the season when there is no more work for them. An employer is then responsible for UI benefits paid. Signing an agreement with the employer that they know the job will end on a certain date does not change this. In addition, one should be careful as an employer about implying that applying for unemployment insurance benefits may jeopardize employment or that agreeing to not apply is a condition of employment. Such *agreements* are specifically unenforceable under UI law and therefore not binding on the employee.

CMR Question: When *raising an issue* with an employee who is filing for unemployment: (A) What type of information is the department looking for? (B) Is there some type of strategy used in reporting the information, especially if the employer doesn't feel the unemployment is justified?

UI Program Answer: When someone applies for UI benefits, you always get a notice or determination with instructions about what

common issues are raised and how to raise one. If the employee is laid off and you know he or she is looking for full-time work, there is probably no issue to raise and you do not have to respond.

The best way to raise an issue is in your online UI account. Click on **Determinations** and **Issue Summary**, and then input the social security number of the applicant. Follow the links for raising an issue. You choose from a menu of possible issues, such as **quit, refused offer of work, not available for work**, and so on. Once you choose the issue you want to raise, a questionnaire appears with specific questions you need to answer about the issue. So there is no strategy or secret to contesting UI benefits, other than to give complete and detailed responses to the questions. All of your responses are reviewed by real human beings who do this for a living. You may assume that they will read your submission carefully, but you should not necessarily assume they understand your business or why certain rules are important to you and how they affect your business. We deal with 120,000 employers and they are all a little different. Don't use shorthand or inside jargon. Don't assume that we know how your particular business works.

CMR Question: This is an actual unemployment scenario from one of our members: Three housekeeping employees (who work four to six hours each week for 12 to 14 weeks each summer) filed for and received unemployment benefits. We paid between 3.7 percent and 10.3 percent of the wages and therefore the same percentage of the employees' unemployment benefits. However, because we are a seasonal tourist or recreation business in active operation fewer than 15 weeks per year and paid the applicant base period wages that are less than 600 times the state or federal minimum wage (www1.uimn.org/ui_applicant/staticcontent/Issue_Raise.htm), we should not have to pay the unemployment benefits, right?

UI Program Answer: The webpage you refer to incorrectly included outdated information, and we apologize for that. The page has been updated and no longer has the reference to seasonal tourist or recreation business. We made the change right after the CMR Fall Conference session in Grand Rapids, and we appreciate you bringing it to our attention. In 2009, the law was changed to remove the provision you mention. There is no longer any UI benefit charge relief specific to seasonal businesses of any kind.

CMR Question: The law that was rescinded in 2009 regarding seasonal businesses ... Do you happen to know the name of the law? Did it have a title or number associated with it?

UI Program Answer: These sorts of laws don't typically have names as such. If you look up that section of the law in the State Revisor of Statutes website, you can see the note about rescission. Until the law was removed, it was clause (3) of Minnesota Statute 268.047, subdivision 2.

CMR Question: We're crystal clear that this is a lawmaker issue; your department is just following the laws that get passed or rescinded. It seems as if you have been in the department for a number of years. Do you remember when this law was in place and did it affect seasonal

businesses to any significant degree? If this rescinded law only affected our fixed *tax/premium* percentage a few dollars either way, it doesn't seem like something we, as a group, would need to look into. If, in fact, it might affect the way the state looks at employee benefits and eligibility, hence our risk is different, maybe we might want to discuss with our lobbyist and our state representative and senator a possible bill to re-enact something similar to help our little mom and pop industry out.

UI Program Answer: Typically, when any change to the unemployment insurance law is proposed, we are asked to calculate the impact of the law: how much the change will cost or save in terms of payments to applicants and taxes for employers, along with the administrative cost (how much it costs to change automated systems and staff time to administer). Unemployment insurance is funded solely by taxes paid by employers. Once it is determined which applicants are eligible, for how much and how long, the next question is how is this cost passed on to employers. Unemployment insurance is required by federal law to be experience rated. This means that employers who have layoffs bear the majority of the cost of paying benefits. If the cost of a layoff is not born by the employer who had the layoff, then the exception has to comport with federal law, and the cost of paying those benefits has to be distributed across all other employers. How this balance is struck is a matter for policymakers.

CMR Question: Please address the issue of seasonal employees collecting unemployment in the off-season (i.e., a person works for the school district as a cook during the school year and cleans cabins during the summer. She applies for unemployment benefits and receives 3.7 percent from us and presumably 96.3 percent from the school district. However, each fall she returns to the school district as a cook and each summer she returns to housekeeping.) Why does she continue to get unemployment wages?

UI Program Answer: Your question cannot be answered fully without information about what periods and amounts she is receiving UI benefits. If an employee works full-time at a resort in the summer and only part-time for another employer in the winter off-season, it's possible her part-time weekly earnings in the off-season are less than her UI weekly benefit amount. That would make her eligible for a partial UI benefit in the off-season that you could be responsible for because she is in layoff status from you. You might also be charged for periods she applies for UI benefits when there is no school, such as Christmas or spring breaks. One strategy would be to try to hire someone else who has other full-time employment in the off-season.

CMR Question: My resort keeps getting telemarketing calls and junk mail stating that we are not in compliance with Minnesota State Employment Laws if we don't pay this supposed company for posters/flyers regarding new Minnesota State Employee Laws. Is this a scam or are they correct?

UI Program Answer: UI law requires employers to post an **Unemployed?** poster within their workplace so that employees may readily see it. Posters can be downloaded at www.uimn.org >

Employer Information > Workplace Posters. Or you can call 651-296-6141 to receive free posters. There is no reason to pay anyone to get these posters.

CMR Question: Just to clarify, we only need to post the one **Unemployed?** poster somewhere near where the bulk of our employees collect their tools/supplies. Does it have to be eye level? Are there any other hanging requirements? Can we post any other Minnesota employment posters we want?

UI Program Answer: There is no particular requirement for the posters other than displaying them prominently. In larger organizations, they are typically posted in break rooms. If you don't have that kind of structure, then posting them in an area frequented by employees makes sense. There are no particular height requirements, but eye level makes sense. There are actually a number of posters required for all employers. Along with the UI poster, there are wage and hour and workers compensation posters. The Department of Labor and Industry maintains a site where you can download the required posters: <http://www.dli.mn.gov/LS/Posters.asp>.

CMR Question: There has been lots of chat on our group email about the New Hire Law. Do they need to call every spring with new employees, even if they hired them the previous year? When calling, what info do they need to have available during the recorded message?

UI Program Answer: We do not administer the New Hire Law. This is done through the Department of Human Services. I just looked quickly and found this page on the DHS website at <http://newhire-reporting.com/MN-Newhire/default.aspx>.

Information about Unemployment Insurance is available for employers and applicants at www.uimn.org. Employers can call 651-296-6141 to reach a Unemployment Insurance Specialist.

*Join the Congress of
Minnesota Resorts
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*Keep updated on this and
other hot topics that are
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EDUCATION

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Sandy Pines Resort – Dream to Reality

By Tina Reuper, Sandy Pines Resort

This is the story of Chad & Tina Reuper and how their dream became reality.



Chad and Tina Reuper with daughters, Myah and Patience

We come from Dawson, a small town 150 miles straight west of Minneapolis. Chad and I met and started dating in high school and now have been married for 11 years. When we were first married Chad worked for West Con in agronomy sales, and I worked in the office for

AMPI, a milk/cheese production plant. In 2004, Chad bought his own semi-truck and trailer and began working over the road driving truck.

In 2006, our first daughter Patience was born, and in 2009, our second daughter, Myah, was born. It became harder for Chad to be gone all the time, so in November of 2010, he decided to go to the oil fields of North Dakota. This was a hard transition for the family as we thought he would be home more but ended up being gone three weeks at a time and then home for six days. In April, we started realizing that Chad needed to change his career to be home more.

We had thought a little about owning a resort the summer before when we were on vacation at a resort in Walker. But in May, at my cousin's graduation party at my aunt and uncle's resort, which they have owned for 17 years, Sunset Beach Resort in Battle Lake, we decided *this is a career/lifestyle that would be wonderful to raise kids*. We went home that night, and the next morning we did nothing but research resorts for sale and how to start the process.

In June, we set up appointments to look at five resorts. We were so excited we could hardly wait! The first resort we visited was very nice, but we just couldn't see ourselves there. We were definitely disappointed and we both felt pretty down that evening, thinking this process may be harder than we thought. I'm not sure what we were thinking when we thought the first one would be it. The next morning we were refreshed and ready to go to visit a second resort, Sandy Pines Resort. We drove up into the resort and felt an instant connection. We were so excited we could hardly handle it. This felt instantly like home. My parents were with us and much involved in our decision process. All along our biggest concern was that we would all like a different resort, but that was not the case. We all felt the same way. We loved that Sandy Pines had a large sandy beach with clear water, 11 cabins that were almost all redone in some way or another and spaced out well. It also had 23 beautiful camping sites, 18 of them seasonal. It was everything we wanted.

We were all on a huge high that night, but the next morning it was off to see another resort. We went in with an open mind. We really loved that resort too, but felt like the owner's home just didn't fit our family and knew that with the budget, changing it would not be an option. So, on to the next resort. This one was so beautiful we loved every bit of it, but it definitely was more than we wanted to spend. We ended up not going to the last resort visit, as we drove by knowing that wasn't the fit for us. We went home, took some time to think, and decided it was time to make an offer. We didn't realize what this entailed and it took a little while. I was a little excited and impatient I would say. We are now the proud owners of Sandy Pines Resort in Backus, MN! The transition has gone really well, we all adjusted easily. We know we haven't hit our busy time yet but we are loving every minute of it!

CMR Board Member Appointed to MN DNR Fisheries Oversight Committee

By Ed Fussy, Pimushe Resort



CMR Board Member Dave Thompson

Congress of Minnesota Resorts Board Member Dave Thompson of Fisherman's Village Resort, has been appointed to serve on the new Fisheries (Fish) Oversight Committee. The ten members on this board were appointed by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Commissioner Tom Landwehr. There is also a ten-member Wildlife (Game) Oversight Committee. Dave is the only Minnesota resort owner on either committee. Dave had also served on the former Fisheries Citizen Oversight Committee from 2000 to 2006, with one year as their chairman.

The oversight structure has evolved over the years. It was established in 1994 with seven separate committees. In 2001, it was reauthorized and restructured and a Budget Oversight Committee (BOC) was created as an umbrella group. In 2011, it was again reauthorized and restructured with two oversight committees, game and fish, under the BOC group.

The DNR prepares an annual Game and Fish Fund Report as directed by Minnesota Statute. The title Game and Fish Fund refers to a series of game and fish accounts whose purposes are closely related. In addition to the Game and Fish Operations account, the report also describes the purpose and activity in the Heritage Enhancement Account (Lottery), as well as the Lifetime Fish and Wildlife Trust Fund. The fund is made up of Hunting and Fishing License Fees, Hunting and Fishing Stamps, Lifetime Licenses, Commercial Licenses, Federal Grant Fisheries (Dingell-Johnson); Federal Grant Wildlife (Pittman-Roberson); Lottery In-lieu-of Sales Tax (Heritage Fund); Sale and Lease of Natural Resources; License Issuing and Application Fees; Fines and Sales of Contraband, wild animals and other property. The DNR views the production of the annual report as much more than an exercise in meeting the statutory requirements. The annual report requires the DNR to be accountable to the BOC and legislators on its financial operations outcomes. Under the new format the committee will also look at future program planning and make recommendations to the DNR.

Most Minnesotans do not realize that the DNR Fish and Wildlife is now totally funded by user fees and federal matching funds based on the number of game and fish licenses sold each year. The revenues transferred into the Game and Fish Fund in 2011 was in excess of \$95 million. The Game and Fish Fund is currently going to go into the red projected in 2013. DNR and many sporting and angling groups have been promoting a fee increase to keep the fund solvent. In the coming legislative session, a fee increase will be part of the governor's budget. It will be a political hot potato.

This is a very important role that allows Dave to not only represent resort owners, but all tourism business, for this committee. Since many of us are required to purchase commercial licenses as part of our operations and many of us sell game and fish licenses, it gives us a great voice at the DNR.

Increasing Resort Sales

By Bill Byrne, Lakeview Resort

No one goes into resorting with the goal of being a salesman or saleswoman, but it is one of the many hats we wear, and while it is often the one we spend the least amount of time on, and have the least fun doing, we have to sell our products and services if we want to have a successful year.

Getting started is often the hardest part, but the process of increasing your resort's sales this year can be broken down into steps. First, list all the products and services you offer and how much you made on each of those items in 2011. Now set some *stretch goals*. The goals should not be just increased revenue from rate increases but rather more units sold. For example, if your resort has 1,000 rentable nights in a season and you rented 700 last year, set a goal of 10 percent more for a total of 770 in 2012.

Now, that you have a goal, make plans on how you will drive those increased sales at your resort. Some items could include updating your CMR web page with last minute openings, updating your current resort web page with new features at your resort, set a goal to visit 10 local businesses and ask if you can display your resort brochures. Work your past guest list -- do you have reservations from everyone who has stayed at your resort in the last three years? Try new things, and retry things that may not have worked in the past. Sometimes it's just a matter of timing.

When working your prospect list, remember to cover the basics in every sales opportunity:

- Invite your customer back.
- Listen to what they are looking for and try to provide that service.
- Once you know what they want, show them how your resort meets those needs.
- Ask for the sale, it's amazing how often we forget to just ask for the reservation.

Now that you have your goals, plan time each week to work those plans, don't just hope to find the time, make it.

Increasing your resort's sales is an ongoing process. Once your guests arrive, talk to them. Listen to what they would like to see at the resort next year. As they check out, make sure everything was all right and fix any issues they may have had. Lastly, don't let them leave this year without inviting them to come back in 2013. Ask them to make the reservation before they leave!

Increasing sales at our resorts doesn't have to be scary or a task we dread. It should be a fun time to tell people about the great resort you have built, to invite them to be part of a great place and to have some fun by doing business with you.

At the end of the day, we are all selling **SOME SUMMER FUN!**

THE CONGRESS OF MINNESOTA RESORTS



What the CMR Can Do for You!



MARKETING



Your resort is listed on our website www.Minnesota-Resorts.com.



Our site is professionally marketed through links, banners and extensive search engine optimization.

LEGISLATION



Full-time lobbyist working for the interests of **RESORTS ONLY!**



Day on the Hill- Make your voice heard in St. Paul.



Stay informed on legislative issues that affect our industry.



EDUCATION



Fall Conferences and Spring Workshops - informative sessions and networking with other resorters.



School of Resorting educational classes.



Yahoo Groups - online resort chat room.



Members only online resources on our website.

PLUS- Vendor Discounts to CMR Members • Educational Scholarships • “Resorters of the Year” Award • And Much More!

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!! *Resorters Helping Resorters - Since 1985*

Thank you to all who were on board for the website's Last Minute Openings (LMO) web enhancement. I have been able to fill the openings I had for the last four weeks. We were concerned a month and a half ago. In this last week I have spoken to two people who were looking for openings. At that time I had just filled the vacancy for the week they were looking. I had to tell them I was full, and when I tried to explain about CMR's LMO, they told me they were already on CMR's LMO map page. That is how they had called us!

Jim, Kohl's Resort

To Jennifer Bateman, Two Inlets Resort, regarding the CMR's 2011 Day on the Hill Event

We wanted to thank you and the other CMR members for making this a great experience for us. We felt very welcomed by all and really appreciated everyone's kindness and help getting us through yesterday. Please pass this on to the others that did such a great job setting this up.

Shaun & John Karakash, Retreat Lodge, Lake Vermilion

JOIN THE CMR - YOUR MEMBERSHIP COUNTS

Your membership in the Congress of Minnesota Resorts (CMR) is a good investment for both you and your resort business. Join in the organization's philosophy of "Resorters Helping Resorters." So many benefits await you! Fill out the membership application today and become a member of a unique association of resorters, run by resorters, for resorters. Our focus is very clear!

Resort Name _____ Lake _____

Owner/Manager _____ Years in resorting _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip (9 digit) _____

Township _____ County _____

Phone _____ No. of rental units _____ No. of bedrooms _____

Resort E-mail Address _____ Resort Website Address _____

Membership investment is only \$16 per bedroom (Min. \$160 for 10 bedrooms or fewer, max. \$830 for 53 bedrooms or more.) Membership rates good through Aug. 31, 2012.

Associate Memberships - Dues \$160 For vendors and for those with an interest in resorting but not owning a resort.

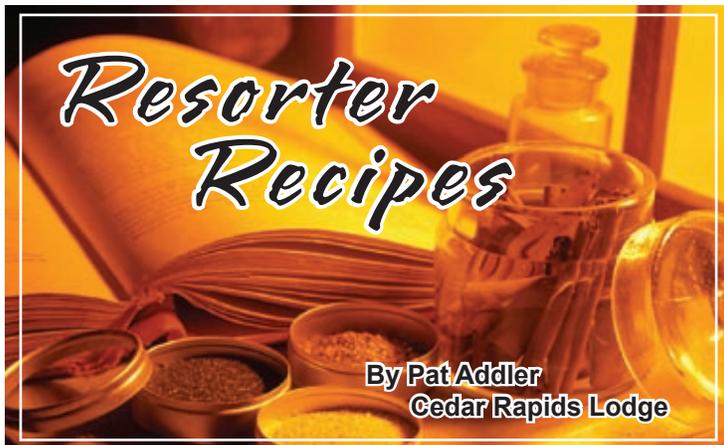
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Send to: Congress of Minnesota Resorts
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New London, MN 56273-0358

Questions regarding Membership?
Contact Vicky at CMR@Minnesota-Resorts.com or 320-212-5107

MARKETING



COFFEE CAKE IN A MUG

- 1 T. butter, softened
- 2 T. sugar
- 1 T. egg beaters or beaten egg
- 2 T. sour cream
- drop of vanilla
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/8 tsp. baking powder

Topping

- 1 T. butter
- 2 T. flour
- 1 T. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. cinnamon

In a microwave-safe mug, cream butter and sugar; add rest of ingredients and stir well. Mix the topping in another bowl and sprinkle on top. Microwave on high for one minute or until done.



HOT CORN DIP

- 2 T. butter
- 1 lb. bag frozen corn or fresh corn(not canned)
- 1 cup minced onion
- 1/4 cup chopped green onion
- 1 jalapeno, seeds removed and diced
- 2 tsp. minced garlic
- 1/2 cup red bell peppers, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 4 oz. shredded cheddar cheese
- 4 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
- salt & pepper to taste
- Tortilla chips

Preheat oven to 350° F. Melt one tablespoon butter in skillet and sauté the corn until it is roasted, slightly browned. Set aside. Melt one tablespoon butter in skillet and add onions and bell peppers; sauté about two minutes; add green onions,



jalapeno and garlic and sauté two minutes longer, until softened. Add to the corn. Add the mayo, cayenne pepper and half the cheeses and stir all together with the corn & onion mixture. Pour mixture into an 8" square baking dish and sprinkle the rest of the cheese on top. Bake 10-12 minutes, until the cheese bubbles. Serve hot with the tortilla chips.

ASIAN MEATBALLS

- 2 lbs. ground beef or beef & pork mixture
- 2 tsp. sesame oil
- 1 cup Panko or breadcrumbs
- 1/2 tsp. ground ginger
- 2 eggs
- 3 tsp. minced garlic
- 1/2 cup green onions, sliced thin

Asian Sauce

- 2/3 cup hoisin sauce
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 T. soy sauce
- 1 tsp. sesame oil
- 1 tsp. ground ginger



Preheat oven to 400° F. In large bowl, mix all meatball ingredients together. Shape into balls, using smallest scoop. Put in 9" x 13" pan. Bake for 10-15 minutes, until meatballs are browned. Whisk together all the sauce ingredients; transfer meatballs to crockpot; pour sauce over and gently stir. Set crockpot to low setting. Serve.

CHEWY CHOCOLATE OATMEAL RAISIN COOKIES

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 T. milk
- 2 tsp. vanilla
- 1 3/4 cup flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 3 cups quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup coconut

Mix butter and sugars together; add milk, eggs, vanilla and stir well. Add the flour and baking soda. Stir in the oats, chocolate chips, raisins and coconut. Bake at 375° F for 10 minutes. Very chewy cookie!

Have a recipe to share?
Send it to Ann at:
ann.warling@gmail.com

How to Offer Your Guests the Best This Summer

By Janet Janssen, Travel Guard

In February, Puxatawny Phil saw his shadow – forecasting six more weeks of winter. Whether or not you believe this furry folklore about the onset of spring, chances are, as a resort owner or manager,



your thoughts are already ahead of the season and onto the families that are now making plans to vacation at your resort this summer. While you are glad for the reservations, does a part of you wonder what more you can offer them to make their experience second-to-none? The following are a few tips to set your resort apart from the competition for a great summer vacation experience.

Find out guest expectations up front: While a guest is on the phone booking his or her reservation; ask what they are looking forward to during their stay and perhaps what would enhance their stay. Note areas of interest and if they come up in conversation more than a few times, consider adding these things to your amenities, if possible. Send a welcome email to the guest 30 days prior to arrival; the added communication will build anticipation for their vacation with you.

Survey your guests: Send a short survey via email to your guests before or after their stay. Ask about expectations for amenities and what little extras they find enjoyable. Then plan to put the best suggestions into practice at your resort.

Stop in at each dwelling weekly and personally ask if your guests' experience is going as planned. Then take any feedback and turn it into an opportunity to further amaze your guests by doing some of the extra things that they suggested.

Post contact information in convenient location: Sure, your contact information may be on your website or resort brochure, but is it listed in the facility at which your guests will be staying? List assistance or emergency contact information in a prominent place within each property so guests know whom to call if they need assistance or experience an emergency.

Clear communication: Offer your guests clear, concise information

(the who, what, where, when) on your resort website and in a paper brochure left at the location which they will be staying. This way they can be aware of resort expectations, amenities and other helpful information.

Stock beverages on site: It's only a few dollars to stock each property's cupboards with bottled water, coffee and an assortment of tea. The gesture will go miles and bring many smiles from your summer guests.

Local hot spot list: Why not leave a laminated list of your favorite family hot spots (water parks, amusement parks, golf courses and family restaurants) for your guests? They'll appreciate the recommendation to local favorite spots.

Flip flops: They're cheap, fun and your guest family will appreciate the gesture. Leave a few pair of various sizes for men, women and children in a closet as a surprise.



Extra blankets or mattress pads: Adding extra blankets and/or a mattress pad to your cabin is a great way to spruce up your cabin's welcoming nature and place you above the other properties in the area.

Offer them travel insurance: Not every vacation experience is without mishaps. Sometimes they are medical in nature and sometimes the weather is to blame.

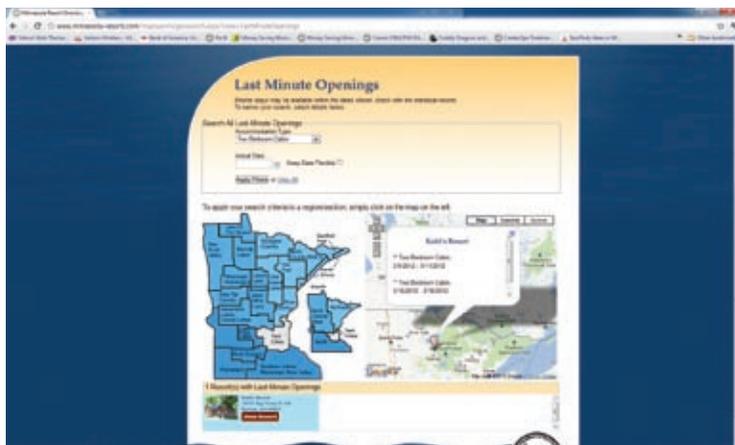
Help your guests prepare by offering them a travel insurance plan that includes 24/7 assistance services. They can be covered for forfeited, pre-paid, non-refundable travel expenses should they need to cancel or interrupt their trip due to reasons such as unexpected illness, injury or death to them or a family member, inclement weather or other covered reasons, unexpected medical expenses, assistance with any travel related mishap they might encounter day or night, and more. You can also offer them an accidental rental damage plan, which provides coverage for accidental damage to their rental unit, caused by them, during their stay. A covered customer can be a happy customer and they may smile knowing it was your resort that offered them this incredible value – on top of everything else!

To learn more about offering travel insurance plans to your guests you can contact Travel Guard at vacationrental@travelguard.com, or visit us at www.travelguard.com/vacationrentals.

This is only a brief description of the coverage(s) available. The Policy will contain reductions, limitations, exclusions and termination provisions. Insurance underwritten by National Union Fire Insurance Company of Pittsburgh, Pa., a Pennsylvania insurance company, with its principal place of business at 175 Water Street, New York, NY 10038. It is currently authorized to transact business in all states and the District of Columbia. NAIC No. 19445. Coverage may not be available in all states.

CMR Website: Continuous Improvement

By Su Ugstad, CMR Marketing Committee/Website



Resort owners and operators, like other business owners who wish to retain profitability, must continuously strive to improve processes, products and services to remain viable in the marketplace with competitors, right? How we manifest these improvements into value-added perks for the consumer is, I would guess, dependant upon our individual business model and budget constraints.

There's no doubt that the CMR Website www.Minnesota-Resorts.com is a core part of our Internet marketing strategy to promote member resorts. Working within a budget and in accordance with the CMR mission statement and ideology, here's a recap of some of the improvements to the website over the last few years.

- In 2009, to increase user friendliness and enhance **search functions**, *Amenity Choices* were added to the *Advanced Search* page, as well as a snowflake icon to designate resorts open for winter business. A database was built, and a system for collecting visitor email addresses was also implemented.
- On November 4, 2010, a totally **redesigned website** was launched for the CMR using the latest technology in web standards and featuring geo-mapping search options (*or what we refer to as the push-pin interactive map*).
- By January of 2011, an **interactive** version of our *Minnesota Resorter magazine* was developed and added to the website that included clickable links to our advertiser's website or email.
- In 2011, we introduced two more large changes for the website. The new **Last Minute Openings** feature was launched in July that gave members an opportunity to list their specific vacancies to our website visitors. Secondly, a **mobile** version of the CMR website was constructed and launched just in time for preview at the October Fall CMR Conference.
- Our latest feature to the website was just introduced last month. It offers members an opportunity to enhance their resort listing with unique descriptions and photographs for each of the three **Landing Pages**: Family Vacations, Fishing Getaways, and Winter Resorts. This is a great way to further advertise your resort features, amenities, proximity to popular attractions, and activities offered at your resort, while also providing an eye-catching and relative listing for our website visitors to view.

Why go mobile?

The Times They Are A-Changin'

This song title from Bob Dylan's 1964 album of the same name seems as pertinent now as it was then. However, it is not the commentary on social and political issues that I refer to here, but rather a tagline for our current technological era. Consider these lyrics:

Come gather 'round people wherever you roam, And admit that the waters around you have grown, And accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone, If your time to you is worth savin', then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone, For the times they are a-changin'.

I'm not a techie myself, but certainly can't ignore the ever-changing advances in today's technology. Couple that with this global-wide push to make things bigger/smaller, cheaper, safer, better, faster, or whatever, and it's enough to make me long for a vacation! I would prefer some secluded haven *away* from the daily routine of computers, phones, TVs, etc., but this may not be the case with the X & Y Generations! Now here's where it gets really scary:



www.Minnesota-Resorts.com
Mobile Version

Generation Z (also known as Generation M (for multitasking), the Net Generation, or the Internet Generation as defined by Wikipedia, as "highly connected, as many of this generation have had lifelong use of communications and media technologies such as the World Wide Web, instant messaging, text messaging, MP3 players, mobile phones, smartphone, touchscreen, iPhone, iPod, Zune, iPad, Tablet Computer technologies, and YouTube. No longer limited to the home computer, the Internet is now increasingly carried in their pockets on mobile Internet devices

such as mobile phones. A marked difference between Generation Y and Generation Z is that members of the former remember life before the takeoff of mass technology, while the latter have been born completely within it."

But just so you don't think this *mobile* revolution is just for teens and the 20-somethings, a fellow resorter recently forwarded me some interesting data from the University of MN Extension: "There will be over 7.1 billion mobile-connected devices in 2012 - approximately equal to the world's population in 2015 (7.2 billion)," and "Mobile Data traffic will increase 26-fold between 2010 and 2015."

So what does all this mean to us as CMR members? Well, it may just mean that the CMR's decision and timing to invest in a Mobile Website was spot on! We are now well positioned to reach an ever-increasing segment of the tourism market. Part of the benefit of a CMR membership is inclusion in these types of marketing strategies that would otherwise be cost prohibitive to us as individual resorts. So I close with these lyrics:

The line it is drawn, The curse it is cast, The slow one now will later be fast, As the present now will later be past, The order is rapidly fadin', And the first one now will later be last, For the times they are a-changin'.

Facebook - One Resorter's Perspective

By Jennifer Bateman, Two Inlets Resort



I attended the CMR Fall Conference in 2010, and there was much discussion about Facebook and how it could help my business. Since I go to conferences to learn and embrace new ideas, I embraced Facebook. I decided that Facebook was going to be my new, FREE, advertising avenue to get reservations.

It only took about six months to figure out that Facebook, was indeed, NOT going to directly produce any reservations. After all, resorts are not like a restaurant where you can get people in the door by offering “free coffee with every dessert purchased” or a retail business that can offer “20 percent off women’s jeans today only” to help get people inside their establishments. We are seasonal businesses that offer, comparatively, an expensive product. Posting about your resort on Facebook needs to be about relationships and experiences. It became clear to me that Facebook was going to be used for entertainment first, information/education second, and advertising last.

Entertainment: I’ve decided that most people spend some of their spare time on Facebook because they want to be entertained. They want to watch funny videos, read jokes, learn about what goofy things their friends’ little kids say, see pictures of family members, etc. It’s similar to spending free time watching TV or a movie. So if someone *Likes* your resort page, you need to entertain them in some fashion to hold their attention.

One way to do this is to vary your posts. If you do nothing but talk about the weather changes or post pictures of fish day after day, people will quickly get bored and pass by your posts. That’s not to say that a portion of your fans wouldn’t love to hear about the weather or see fish pictures every day, but your goal should be to engage as many fans as possible, and variety should increase this number. Your goal is to get them to interact. Interaction includes *liking, commenting, or sharing a post*, and it also includes clicking on your picture to enlarge it to see it better (however, this last action is not measured).

To make a post entertaining, try not to state the obvious. If you post a picture of people waterskiing, don’t say “These people are enjoying a day of waterskiing.” People can tell that by looking at the picture. A caption such as “In his first summer at XYZ Resort, David pops out of the water on his first try!” This caption is more likely to encourage people to think about their own waterskiing experiences and hopefully comment on the post. It humanizes the picture, which helps with the whole idea of building relationships. Really, anything that you say that you think will make the reader smile, whether is be funny or corny or heartwarming, will be a good post.

If your post is entertaining, it is memorable. And if it’s memorable, it is talked about. And if it’s talked about, your resort name is mentioned

to any number of people around the dinner table, at church, at the basketball game, to relatives, etc. And ideally, if your resort name is in the forefront of people’s minds, it may (eventually) lead to a reservation sometime in the future.

Information/Education: Facebook users are interested in what is going on at your resort the 51 weeks out of the year that they’re not there. What goes on during the spring, fall and winter? What do the owners do when they aren’t catering to my vacation needs? Feel free to show them what goes on behind the scenes, keeping a positive spin on all your posts. Tell them about the sport show you’re going to, the resort clothing you’re shopping for, the cabin you’re building, the day-to-day work you’re doing, the trees you’re planting, the docks you’re buying, the wildlife you’re seeing. And it wouldn’t be out of line to mention the vacation you went on, the high school basketball games you’re going to, your recent volunteer adventure, the grandchildren you’re enjoying, or the birthday’s you’re celebrating. Your fans are all members of their own family, so they can relate to your family functions easily.

Remember that you can, and should, provide information beyond your resort. Feel free to report about community happenings, new businesses in town, Minnesota tourism, DNR activities, area fishing reports, and anything else that you think your fans would appreciate knowing.

Some resorters might think that reporting in the off-season on what they consider to be mundane topics is spamming their Facebook friends. I believe that if you are creative in the area of entertainment and keep your posts varied, you will not be spamming anyone. On the contrary, they will want to read your posts, wondering “I wonder how XTZ Resort is going to entertain me today!”

Marketing: You should most definitely market on Facebook, just don’t expect any measurable results. I follow the 80/20 Rule (sort of), meaning every fifth post markets my resort somehow. The best strategy for these posts is to direct users to your website. Driving traffic to your website should help with your search engine optimization. Don’t feel pressure to offer discounts or freebies. There is no need to do this. Just remind people of specific cabins available specific weeks, when fishing opener is, what cabins are best for family reunions, that you have pontoons available for rent, that rental rates are lower in the spring and fall, etc. My experience with marketing posts is that no one likes, comments or shares them, but that doesn’t mean they weren’t effective or that people didn’t read them. Your success lies in your website stats for that day.

From what I’ve read, you should post on your page daily, or at the very least, twice a week. This requires time, effort, and lots of creative thought. But once you get into the flow of it, it’s not that hard. Feel free to stockpile pictures, quotes, cartoons and other material for posts when your brain has run dry. This isn’t cheating! It’s smart!

I’ve decided there are two kinds of people in the world - those that use Facebook and those that do not. There doesn’t seem to be any kind of in between crowd. So with that said, what type of person are you? If you think Facebook is dumb, with the attitude of “What do I care what Susie ate for supper,” then give careful consideration before creating a Facebook page for your resort. If you are a Facebook user yourself, then there is no question that you should be engaging with your guests through a resort page.

MARKETING

This is part three of a four-part series, *Easy Sustainability - Resorting to Best Practices, on easy, proven, and low-cost or no-cost ways to improve the efficiency of your operations and cut your fixed costs without changing the experience of your guests and clients.* To see past articles, visit: <http://lodging.mncerts.org>

Water, Water Everywhere

Low-Cost Water & Energy Saving Opportunities for Resorts

By Michelle Vigen, Campaign and Metrics Coordinator of the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)

Water is an essential element of the Minnesota resort experience. Rivers and streams weave through forested property; lakes are the memorable testing grounds of new water skiers, boaters, and fishing enthusiasts. Water is an amenity and aspect of comfort in the cabins and guest rooms of Minnesota resorts: a cold glass of water, a hot shower, and the lakeside view.

This part of the series highlights four low-cost upgrades and fixes with incredibly fast paybacks that will enhance the experience of guests, lower water and energy bills, and help preserve the quality and beauty of local lakes, streams, and rivers.

It All Adds Up

In resorts and lodging, one opportunity to save can be applied across multiple rooms and cabins, resulting in significant savings. In addition, with water, you're not just paying for using it, but also for getting rid of it (sewer fees) and heating it. That means that we pay for water in three ways, which makes water use an important cost and saving opportunity.

Easy Upgrades, Easy Money: Showerheads and Faucets



Water conservation upgrades offer the lowest upfront costs and fastest payback upgrades that can be made in a building. In the past, water-conserving products did little to cater to the comfort and experience of the user. Today, new engineering and design means that upgrading a showerhead results in a noticeable improvement to flow and an increased even pressure, along with delivering significant hot water cost savings.

For example, upgrading showerheads to newer and massage models could prevent over \$60 a year in water and energy from going down the drain *per room*.¹ Most showerheads sell at a retail price of \$5-50 and offer a range of massage settings and appearances. An upgrade therefore means a step-up in quality and a payback of under a year, if not months.

Faucet aerators are even cheaper to upgrade and pay back even faster. The aerator is the last piece that water passes through in a faucet. Usually, the aerator has a metal netting or material to disperse and add air to the flow. New aerators often use threading, offering a soothing stream of water for hand washing. Upgrading your faucet aerators can prevent over \$15 a year in water costs per faucet.² Most aerators sell at a retail price of \$0.75-1.00 per unit. Some upgrades see paybacks in less than a month.

Tip: Ask your trusted supplier if you can try out a few different models of new showerheads and faucet aerators. Try the models out yourself or pilot a set with some of your guests.

Waste Not, Pay Not: Easy Fix for Leaky Toilets

Leaky toilets make up 90 percent of water bill complaints across the United States, and it is estimated that 20 percent of all toilets leak. These leaks are usually undetectable but can cost \$250 a year. This is a \$250 cost



that can often be eliminated with \$7 and a little food coloring.

Here's what you can do: As part of an upcoming maintenance routine, simply add 10 or more drops of blue food coloring (or a food coloring tablet) into the tank of the toilet. Return after 20 minutes and check the toilet bowl. If the water in the toilet bowl shows color, the tank is leaking water.

If you detect a leak, the most common cause is a worn out flapper, for which a replacement costs \$3-8 retail price. Replacing a flapper is easy enough for maintenance or other staff to do and only takes a few minutes. Money-saving maintenance is rarely easier!

Tip: Arrange to have color testing done over a period of time, perhaps with the cleaning routine, and then plan flapper replacement for any leaky toilets on a common date. Also, tablets used for dyeing eggs make a great tester. Visit <http://thisbluedot.ca> for more information.



High-Pressure Kitchen Sprayers

Spray valves are used in commercial kitchens to remove food pieces off of plates before placing them in the dishwasher. If your kitchen sprayer is older than 10 years, salt and other build up can hinder its performance, and it is probably time to upgrade it.

A simple do-it-yourself screw-on upgrade will offer a stronger spray and will clean plates faster than older models. In addition, new design standards can save you \$400 per year.³ Spray valves retail between \$30-70 per unit, making this an easy and low-cost upgrade that saves water and energy costs. To learn about this easy upgrade, visit <http://splash.mncerts.org>.

Resources for Resorts

For other resources on ways to save in your lodging business, visit the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) at <http://lodging.mncerts.org>.

Michelle Vigen is the Campaign and Metrics Coordinator of the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs). She has worked with the University of MN Tourism Center and Explore MN Tourism in energy efficiency over the last two years to help hospitality businesses maintain the high quality experience of their business through cost-effective operations upgrades. For more information, visit <http://mncerts.org> or email her at vigen010@umn.edu.

¹ Assumes new model is 2.0 gpm (models come as efficient as 1.25 gpm), one shower per room, 60% occupancy, 1.5 guests per night, average Minnesota water, sewer, and natural gas costs.

² Assumes upgrading from 2.2 gpm to 1.0 gpm (aerators come as efficient as .5 gpm), 60% occupancy, 6 minutes use/night occupied, average Minnesota water, sewer, and natural gas costs.

³ Assumes upgrading from 3.0 gpm to 1.28 gpm (spray valves come as efficient as 1 gpm), 300 days a year operation, 1 hour use per day, average MN water, sewer, and natural gas costs.

Explore Minnesota Tourism Conference in Rochester

By Carolyn Aarsvold, Geneva Beach Resort and Mark Novotny, Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort



Resorters of the Year Ed and Sara Becker, In-We-Go Resort, with CMR President Mark Novotny

The 2012 EMT Conference was in Rochester on Jan. 24-25. It was a great time visiting with others in the tourism business around state. The speakers were highly knowledgeable and entertaining, and the Kahler Hotel was a great host. Here is a short synopsis of a few of the sessions.

The main themes of several of the sessions were customer service and being a viable business. The keynote speaker was from Sun Country, Stan Gadek. He shared about the airline business and how they turned the airline around and are doing very well in just three years. One big emphasis was profitability first – growth second.

The second keynote speaker was Stevie Ray, Stevie Ray’s Corporate Services, who is a comedian but also a motivational speaker and presented *Customer Service Worth Traveling For*. He emphasized that when resorts are selling their destination, they need to emphasize what is unique about their resort compared to others. Instead of listing amenities that most resorts have, ask the customer what they are interested in, and then explain why your offerings are unique. Stevie suggests that you sell with emotion, not facts. He pointed out that most customers buy on emotions and then justify with facts. So when we sell our resorts to our new guests, we need to give more emotion in the sales rather than facts. Always say yes to the customer, build excitement about your resort, and remember that laughter leads to agreement.

Looking at the 2012 vacationers, we learned that 55 percent want discounts, 33 percent plan to increase spending on vacations, 26 percent will book a less expensive destination, and 39 percent bring laptops on vacation. If you are interested in more information about travelers, check out www.destinationanalysts.com. They publish reports in January and July presenting their research on travel habits. One question we looked at was, “When did you use your mobile device for travel information?” In January 2011, 56.9 percent used it before they left home and 74.9 percent used it during a trip. In January 2012, the number increased to 63.3 percent used it before they left home, and 89.2 percent used it during

a trip. The reports on this website have a lot of miscellaneous information which may help you in your marketing.

Additional information shared during a break out session gave some more fun facts. High school seniors that are graduating in 2012 will not know life without the Internet. Also, 1/3 of all ladies between the ages of 18-34 will check their Facebook page before using the restroom in the mornings. Both of these facts are showing how important the Internet and social media has become.

Representatives of the DNR, the Bicycle Alliance of MN (BikeMN.org) and the MN Recreational Trail Users Association (MNTUA.org) led a discussion about the number of trails and byways throughout the state. There has been a lot of discussion between the associations regarding connecting some of the trails to make them continuous, well marked, and have consistent signage.

Finally, we were once again reminded how important it is to keep an eye on Google Places, Yelp, and Trip Advisor. It is important to keep your property up-to-date and address any comments that have been posted. More and more travelers are using their mobile phones when planning to travel, and your website needs to be simple and readable on their phone. Travelers also appreciate easy links to a calendar of events and places to eat.

It was worth the time to attend the conference, so plan to attend the EMT Conference in 2013.

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LEGISLATION

CMR Legislative Day on the Hill 2012

By Dave Thompson, CMR Legislative Committee

We have completed another successful Day on the Hill event. Our legislative committee spent many hours planning this year's event. We provided a deluxe motor coach bus starting a free pickup route in Park Rapids, Walker, Brainerd, and St. Cloud as it traveled to our destination, the State Capitol. We had 43 participants for our event, with several first timers.

The only hitch in our plans was a well-publicized winter storm that threatened blizzard conditions. Although some parts of our areas had lots of snow and road closings, our roads were clear for the bus and almost all participants were able to attend.

We stayed at the Hotel 340, which is the former University Athletic Club. Our accommodations were the best ever in a truly historic building. On Tuesday afternoon, we headed to the Capitol for our first meetings. Our first meeting was with John Edman of the Minnesota Office of Tourism.

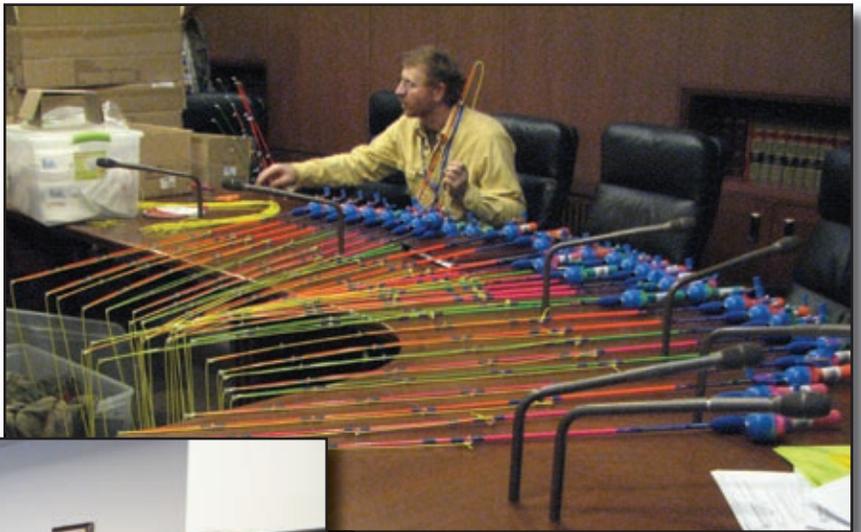
We then met with DNR Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Staff on the current status of aquatic invasive

plans and controls being implemented and where DNR is headed with new regulations. We met with all Senate and House leadership, starting with Speaker of the House Kurt Zellers, House Majority Leader Matt Dean, House Minority Leader Paul Thissen, Senate Minority Leader Tom Bakk and Senate Majority Leader David Senjem.

We had a fantastic evening meal. Our Government Affairs/Lobbyist Joel Carlson took us to Joseph's in St. Paul and then back to the hotel and social time with complementary drinks provided by the hotel as thanks for staying with them. Joel and his Professional Assistant Tami LeFavor, did a tremendous job of putting together this year's legislative packets. Tami set up 52 legislative meetings. The packets were filled with the bills we were either sponsoring or that we were opposing and tourism data sheets for each legislator to use for reference.

Day Two started off with DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr and Assistant Commissioner Bob Meier addressing legislative issues like proposed license fee increases, AIS licenses, inspections, and watercraft licenses.

Around noon on the second day, we had a box lunch served and then off again to afternoon meetings. This year as always we carried our much anticipated attention getter. Brightly colored kids' rod and reel combos with a big red and white bobber attached. One side of the bobber was the CMR logo and website and on the back our top issues. We receive many compliments on how much fun and upbeat our group is and how it's a pleasure to expect us each year. The bonus is that we are so identifiable



Ed Fussy, Pimushe Resort, prepares for fellow resorters.

that many other folks stop us and ask about our issues since we attract so much attention.

Former Resort Owner Terry Duhn (Hunt's Resort), our bus driver, picked us up on the Capitol steps at the end of the day. We headed back to our drop off points and the *Big Snow Storm* didn't hinder our return trip at all.

This year's attendees deserve a big *THANK YOU* from all resorters for their commitment and sacrifice of two full days and some personal expenses on behalf of all resorters statewide. The issues we work on affect every resort property in the state, not just small family resorts in northern Minnesota. The issues we covered with the legislature and administration were:

- Keeping Post Labor Day School Start (There are several bills in committee to remove this.);
- Criminal background checks for employees with access to guest rooms;
- Potential new watercraft license fee for non-motorized watercraft less than 10 feet (paddle boats, paddle boards, sail boards, kayaks, water-bugs, and other water toys);
- Vacation Home Rentals (There is a bill pending preventing any local unit of government from any restrictions on these rentals.);
- DNR Parks expanding into resort style lodging, and seasonal RV camping expansion;
- DNR Game and Fish License Fee Increases;
- DNR Game and Fish License sales during a government shut down; and
- Explore Minnesota Tourism Funding and support.

As in the CMR motto, *Resorters Helping Resorters*, the CMR provides this opportunity on behalf of all resorters in the state that benefit from our legislative effort. The CMR is open to any and all Minnesota resorters. Whether you are brand new to the industry or a seasoned veteran, the organization needs you and your participation to protect and enhance our tourism businesses. Resorters that are not CMR members please consider becoming a member of the CMR and be a participant with us next year!



Senator LeRoy Stumpf, Ed Becker, In-We-Go Resort and Steve Addler, Cedar Rapids Lodge

Here is a list of the attendees:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Jennifer Bateman</i> | <i>Two Inlets Resort</i> |
| <i>Sheila Blanford</i> | <i>Tamarac Resort</i> |
| <i>Mark Novotny</i> | <i>Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort</i> |
| <i>Andrew and Audra Sternke</i> | <i>Hyde-A-Way Bay Resort</i> |
| <i>Ed Becker</i> | <i>In-We-Go Resort</i> |
| <i>Ed and Joanne Fussy</i> | <i>Pimushe Resort</i> |
| <i>Corby and Gunner** Niemeyer</i> | <i>Niemeyer's Rugged River Resort</i> |
| <i>Bob and Lynn Scharenbroich**</i> | <i>Black Pine Beach Resort</i> |
| <i>Bill Byrne**</i> | <i>Lakeview Resort</i> |
| <i>Karen Senger</i> | <i>Cedar Point Resort</i> |
| <i>Kim Jamtgaard</i> | <i>Wildwood Resort</i> |
| <i>Al Ruzek</i> | <i>Sunset Cove Resort</i> |
| <i>Bill and Gail Heig**</i> | <i>Bowen Lodge</i> |

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <i>Dana and Cindy Pitt</i> | <i>Bailey's Resort</i> |
| <i>Karen Gangelhoff-Bowley**</i> | <i>Stony Point Resort</i> |
| <i>Steve and Pat Addler</i> | <i>Cedar Rapids Lodge</i> |
| <i>Doug Carlson**</i> | <i>Steamboat Bay Resort</i> |
| <i>Jo Ann and Dave** Fallis</i> | <i>Finn N Feather Resort</i> |
| <i>Lee, Laura, Isaiah, and Samantha Nupson**</i> | <i>Oak Point Resort</i> |
| <i>Ben Thuringer</i> | <i>Madden's Resort, Manager VP</i> |
| <i>Chad and Tina Reuper**</i> | <i>Sandy Pines Resort</i> |
| <i>Marjean Velke**</i> | <i>Bowstring Shores Resort</i> |
| <i>Terry Duhn</i> | <i>Former Owner Hunt's Resort</i> |
| <i>Dave Thompson</i> | <i>Fisherman's Village Resort</i> |

*** Indicates first time attendee*

THANK YOU

Thanks also go to your CMR Board of Directors. This year we approved a very aggressive plan for the event. Because of the CMR Silent Auction we can provide all of these things free for attendees.

- FREE transportation from out-state to the Capitol
- FREE snacks and refreshments
- FREE Wednesday morning coffee and donuts
- FREE box Lunch
- FREE attendee legislative packets
- FREE special legislative CMR badge and neck lanyard
- FREE Crappie Year Pins

Our Lobbyist Joel Carlson generously paid for all of our evening meal at Joseph's.

LEGISLATION

Session Moves Toward Swift Ending

By Joel Carlson, Congress of Minnesota Resorts Lobbyist

Armed with the first budget surplus in nine years, the Minnesota legislature is set to complete its work before the end of April and head home to embark on a bruising campaign. The 2012 session has been littered with partisan battles over issues big and small, vetoes issued by DFL Governor Mark Dayton on many key Republican legislative initiatives, and a constant drumbeat of constitutional amendments to address policy issues that cannot obtain bi-partisan legislative approval.

To the surprise of many, the state budget has made a sharp turn-around after the divisive government shutdown of 2011. A portion of the \$2.1 billion of K-12 school aid shift has been repaid - something few thought possible just a few months ago. However, a projected budget deficit of slightly over \$1 billion is expected for the 2014/2015 fiscal years, something that could be erased by an improving economy. The budget solution of 2011 and the plans to address future budgets will be a central theme of the upcoming elections.

Governor Dayton has already announced his desire to close the budget gap with a tax increase on wealthy Minnesotans. This will be a central talking point for Republican candidates as they attempt to hold the majority in the legislature. Without having Dayton on the ballot in 2012, Republicans will attempt to build a campaign message around a desire to maintain a divided government as a balancing act to control the excesses of the administration.

New Legislative District Lines to Shake Up Elections

The 2012 election will see new legislative district boundaries for all 201 legislators. The new maps prepared by a special court panel have already produced substantial changes for incumbent legislators, including many that have been required to move to new homes to retain a chance to return to the legislature. The population growth and shifts have left rural Minnesota with reduced representation, a problem for citizens and businesses living outside the 11-county metropolitan area.

When the dust settled on the maps, 46 incumbents found themselves living in districts with each other. These match-ups have forced some legislators to seek election in other districts, run for other offices, or compete against their fellow party members for endorsements to be on the state primary ballot. The new lines also have produced a number of open legislative seats, meaning no incumbent currently represents them.

It's simply too early to tell if the new maps favor any party or number of incumbents. It's clear that there will be highly competitive races across much of Minnesota and that the fight to control the legislature will be intense, bitter and expensive.

To view the new district maps check out this web site: <http://www.mncourts.gov/?page=4469>

Resort Issue Get Attention

Several issues important to resorters have been given consideration this session and several are heading towards successful approval. CMR has lobbied this year to have greater control on the spread of aquatic invasive species (AIS), eliminate license requirement for paddle boats

and other craft under ten feet, maintain fishing license sales during a government shutdown and many others. Many of our issues are still being debated and we are hopeful for successful final passage.

We have also opposed several measures like repealing the Post Labor Day school start requirement and special and unfair treatment for vacation rental homes. We are hopeful that these measures do not make it to Governor Dayton's desk.

Too much time remains in the session to confidently predict any outcomes, but the legislative committee has been very active in getting our message out to legislators and we will be working to the last minute of session to obtain positive results.

Bonding Bill

House and Senate leaders have not yet set a target for the capital investment bonding bill, but they all predict that one will pass before the session ends. This legislation, which could be as high as \$700 million, funds projects across the state including DNR projects, trail connections, and local community building.

CMR has made its points clear to legislators that we are strongly opposed to the DNR securing additional state funding for projects that tend to directly compete with resorters. This unfair advantage can be a disservice to private business owners and DNR Commissioner Tom Landwer is very aware of our opposition. We hope that any bonding proposal related to state parks prohibits the DNR from directly competing with CMR members.

Vikings Stadium – Maybe.....

By far, the most discussed issue is the plan to build a stadium for the Minnesota Vikings. A plan released on March 2nd has been received coldly by many legislators, the City of Minneapolis and charitable gaming interests that are being asked to pay the state's share of the new facility. It will take a big push from labor and business to get this issue resolved during the 2012 session. More is written about the stadium than the team on the field itself. After 10 years of asking for a taxpayer supported facility, we have lost sight of the players and the game because we are so focused on getting a new building for them to play in before 2016. This will be a hard bill to pass, and even with a quality team on the field passing a stadium bill is an uphill climb.

Day on the Hill Lesson – It's a Big State!

Thanks to each of you that made the trip to St. Paul and help us lobby legislators and the administration on the CMR Day on the Hill. It was a highly successful day and a half – and taught me a valuable lesson. Minnesota is a big state – and we have members located across Minnesota that are active and willing to help with their legislators. I was happy to learn of the number of resorts in operation south of Interstate 94! We need to engage these Minnesota resorts to help CMR and get their legislators active on resort issues.

Summer Fun!!

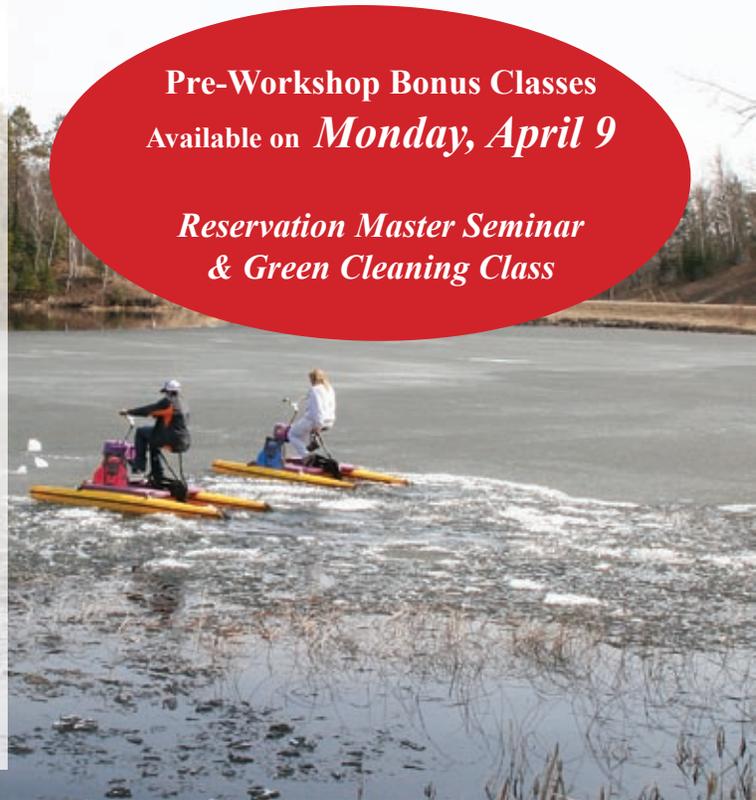
I'm hoping everyone has a successful season filled with great weather, lots of fish, and full cabins. By the time the fall conference rolls around, we'll have new candidates to meet and issues to develop for the 2013 session. Don't hesitate to invite legislators to a resort tour and remind them how important a strong tourism and vibrant resorts are to our economy!

Join Us for the Congress of Minnesota Resort Spring Workshop

Tuesday April 10, 2012 at Horseshoe Bay Resort, Walker MN

Schedule

| | |
|-------------|--|
| 7:30- 8:30 | Registration |
| 8:30-9:00 | Welcome & Introductions - Mark Novotny, President |
| 9:00-10:00 | Photography 101 - Paul Stafford, EMT Photojournalist |
| 10:00-10:15 | Break |
| 10:15-11:15 | Holding on to Your Assets- Diane Rook-Johnson, Lemieux Johnson Financial Group |
| 11:15-11:30 | CMR Marketing- Jim Eickhorst |
| 11:30-12:00 | Crackerbarrel- Jennifer Bateman, Two Inlets Resort |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch |
| 1:00-2:00 | Greening Up Your Resort- Merv Eisel, Central Lakes College |
| 2:00-2:30 | Legislative Update- Ed Becker |
| 2:30-2:45 | Break |
| 2:45-3:45 | Mobile emarketing- Ryan Pesch, U of M Extension |
| 3:45-4:00 | Explore MN Tourism Update- Dave Bergman |
| 4:00-4:30 | Crackerbarrel- Su Ugstad, Balsam Bay Resort |
| 4:30-4:45 | Closing & Drawing |
| 5:00 | No Board Meeting |



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