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# Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

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To Protect, Preserve and Enhance the Quality of Higgins Lake and Its Surrounding Watershed

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**335 MEMBERS!** In this issue: [Swimmer's Itch](#), [Gerrish Permit Update](#), [Conferences and Classes](#)

## Board News

- **New Board Member** - The HLPOA Board of Directors, at its March 20, 2017 meeting, appointed Mr. Fred Swinehart to the recent board vacancy created by the resignation of David Batchelor. Fred is a resident of Midland, Michigan and holds a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from the University of Michigan. He currently serves on the HLPOA's Environmental Committee and is the Managing Partner with SenX Technology LLC of Midland. Fred has been an ardent supporter and member of the HLPOA by virtue of his family's ownership of cottages on Pine Bluffs since the early 1950's. Welcome aboard, Fred!

### Elections Committee

- **Board Retreat** - In May, board members will be meeting in a daylong, off-site planning session to help focus the long-range strategic plans for the HLPOA. The session will be conducted by a professional facilitator, who is a supporter of the HLPOA and is graciously waiving her usual fee to help.

## Gerrish Township Board Rejects Request to Terminate Its Swimmer's Itch Program in 2017

- **Ken Dennings**

On February 28, HLPOA President Brad Gibson, in a joint communication with the presidents of the Higgins Lake Land Conservancy (HLLC) and the Higgins Lake Environmental and Economic Coalition (HLEEC), formally requested that the Gerrish Township Board end this year's Swimmer's Itch program that calls for the lethal take and harassment of merganser ducks and continued use of some two dozen artificial nest boxes currently located on the shores of Higgins Lake in Gerrish Township.

Consistent with the past two years, the Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization's (HLSIO) position on the lack of effectiveness of harassment and random lethal take of largely uninfected common mergansers is based on science and extensive data and experience from multiple Michigan inland lakes. The use of pyrotechnic shells as well as random shooting of male and female mergansers, and the placement of artificial nest boxes have not contributed to the reduction of Swimmer's Itch at Higgins Lake. In 2015 and 2016 the HLSIO's Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Control Program removed a total of 145 common mergansers after the Gerrish contractor, Northpoint Fisheries Management, had completed its work. Of the 145 birds removed from the lake, 133 were ducklings that would have remained on the lake propagating schistosome cercarial dermatitis the balance of each of those summers.

We fast forward to the monthly March 2017 meeting of the Gerrish Township Board and the effort of the newly elected supervisor, David Udy, in his attempt to pass a motion supporting the request of the lake organizations mentioned earlier. His motion read: "that the board not authorize any use of the third year of the US Fish and

## Website Update

For those who are interested in greater detail on the lake level history since the dam was reconstructed in 2007, there are two new charts added to our website. They can be found by clicking on the "Higgins Lake" tab at the top of the home page, then on "Environmental", then on "Lake Levels, Court Orders, Dam Management." The two new charts can be found by then scrolling down towards the bottom of the page. Each chart is accompanied by a brief write-up. The first of the two is entitled "Lake Level Attrition Chart" and has quite a bit of data on lake levels at certain times of the year, such as: when the dam was opened for the winter drawdown, how much drawdown was achieved, the ice-over and ice-out dates for the lake, whether or not the drawdown amount exceeded the amount allowed by the Court Order, etc. The other new chart, along with a series of graphs, entitled "Time Weighted Lake Level Analysis" shows the amount of time and the magnitude the lake was above the Legal (summer) Level during the prime summer recreational period from June 15 thru Sept 15, and the corresponding time and magnitude the lake was below during that period. Admittedly, these two charts are aimed more for folks looking for a "deep dive" into the history of the lake level since 2007, but with careful scrutiny, a wealth of information awaits your review.

**Website Committee**

Wildlife Service Permit MB56627B-2." His motion died and didn't even come to a vote because none of the other four members of the Gerrish Township Board would provide a second. Instead, Trustee Jim Lippert, supported by Trustee Mary Link, then offered the following motion: "that for 2017, Gerrish Township continues with the Federal Fish and Wildlife Special purpose permit MB56627B-2 authorizing the lethal take of common merganser ducks and destruction of nests as defined in the permit. It is not Gerrish Township's intent to remove SICON, LLC from Higgins Lake, but to join forces for a better Higgins Lake. The 2017 program, using Northpoint Fisheries as the contractor and contingent upon Northpoint Fisheries securing funding in the forms of grants and donations. This motion is in no way intended nor implies that Gerrish Township has any financial responsibilities for this project." This motion passed on a four to one vote, with Supervisor Udy casting the lone vote in opposition.

Suffice it to say, the majority of the Gerrish Board has simply rejected the posture and repeated requests of the HLSIO, HLPOA, HLLC and HLEEC. Once again the Gerrish Board decided to "go it alone" . . . while at the same time, other lake associations in northern Michigan are following the successful science-based comprehensive Swimmer's Itch control program initiated by the HLSIO at Higgins Lake. With the blessing of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Lake Leelanau, Crystal, Glen and Lime are all contracting this season to implement a "trap and removal" program similar to that used on Higgins the past two years. And the Michigan Legislature has stepped forward with funding for the first time to offset some of the expenses incurred to control this pesky parasite through a sound, science-based comprehensive program that incorporates education, research, and control.

### Breaking News - Important Update

**The US Fish and Wildlife Service has ordered that Gerrish Township can no longer use artificial nest boxes to attract common merganser ducks to Higgins Lake. The intent of their permit was not to allow placement of nest boxes to attract more common mergansers to Higgins Lake. Gerrish Township has been ordered to remove the nest boxes before the nesting season begins this spring.**  
*(Additional information can be viewed on the HLPOA website.)*

## Septic Tank Awareness

Spring is a time when many riparians check property for wear. Septic systems certainly need to be on the list.

Some recommended guidelines from the "Introduction to Lakes" course by the MSU Extension Services:

The landscape which makes up a watershed, including the people who live, work, and play within it, greatly impact the health and vitality of inland lakes. One step we can take to protect our water quality is to reduce household and landscaping water use to avoid overloading the septic system.

- Some indicators of septic system problems include: sewage backups, slow flushing, soggy ground, effluent on the ground, bad odors, and a crescent-shaped weed bed in the lake adjacent to the shore.
- It is recommended that septic systems should be pumped every 2-3 years.
- The Roscommon Area District Library has a helpful book for more information:

*Septic System Owners' Manual*  
by Lloyd Kahn (628.742 Kahn)

As noted in an informative article, "Aging Septic Systems Fouling Michigan Waters", *Detroit Free Press* by Keith Matheny, 01/16/17, "... **Michigan – the only state in the U.S. that doesn't regulate septic systems on a statewide basis** – septic systems are putting 280 million gallons per day of wastewater into the ground...A well-maintained system, with its tank pumped every three years or so, whose users are very disciplined about what flows into it, can have a drainage field that lasts and continues to work effectively for about 20 years." *Cont' p.4*

## The HLPOA Vision For Success

Three years ago, there was a vision by the newly seated 2014 HLPOA board. After years of frustration, could we finally find an effective way to rescue Higgins Lake from the grasp of swimmer's itch?

What if the HLPOA board could help create and initially fund a separate legal entity with a diverse board of committed, community leaders to help lead a focused effort, hire the most knowledgeable and experienced swimmer's itch experts in the world, build a large coalition of other Michigan lakes to pool talents, resources and influence, bring together other leading scientists across North America, finally gain financial support for these critical efforts from the Michigan legislature and partner with the MDNR/MDEQ and USFWS?

That vision has become a reality. The HLPOA board's vision led to the formation and initial funding of HLSIO, the hiring of the leading swimmer's itch scientists, SICON, LLC, the formation of the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership (MSIP) with it's 24 lakes working together, collaboration with scientists from Oakland University, University of New Mexico, University of Michigan and University of Alberta, a \$250,000 appropriation from the state of Michigan and a close working relationship and support from MDNR/MDEQ and USFWS.

Based on the methodology developed and successfully used on Glen Lake, HLPOA's vision added many new elements and created a comprehensive, collaborative, science-based, world-class-leading swimmer's itch program. The verified reduction of swimmer's itch on Higgins Lake in just two years and the growth of the broad-based MSIP program has been remarkable.

But this is only the beginning and much remains to be done. Your HLPOA board is committed to a comprehensive and coordinated, long-term vision for success. Your HLPOA board continues to need your strong support to maintain the momentum that began in the summer of 2014.

**Save the Date - HLPOA Annual Meeting - Saturday, July 15 at Roscommon High School**

**Attend, learn, have your voice heard and your vote counted!**

**Look for your Annual Meeting Packet to be mailed in June.**

**Septic - Cont' from p. 3**

"... Now, imagine all those rural, lakefront homes and cottages Up North, just off a lake or river, or above groundwater very closely tied to nearby surface water, with septic systems a half-century or more in age, rarely if ever maintained."

As riparians are aware, this is a frequent profile on our lake. The impact on Higgins Lake can't be underestimated. Septic system ordinances are currently being explored at both the state and local governmental levels.

**HLSIO Summer Program for 2017**

The Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization (HLSIO) will continue it's close coordination with the HLPOA board in 2017. HLSIO will also continue to work closely with MSIP/MDNR/MDEQ/USFWS to further advance effective control, research, prevention and education programs to fight swimmer's itch.



SICON, LLC dissolved early this year and the two principles, Dr. Curt Blankespoor and Ron Reimink, each formed separate new entities to work on swimmer's itch. The MSIP, with the cooperation of MDNR/MDEQ/USFWS, recently was successful to ensure both contractors have the necessary swimmer's itch control and research permits for 2017. The HLSIO board, along with other MSIP lakes, have the opportunity to review competitive bids from both entities in 2017.

The 2017 HLSIO summer program will continue the science-based control and research programs focused on the proven effective method of trap and relocation of common mergansers. HLSIO continues to believe sound science and the use of innovative, new technologies is the critical foundation for success.

Just like the earlier, successful SICON/ Glen Lake program, swimmer's itch on Higgins Lake has been reduced more than 90% in just two years. But even with current state-of-the-art methods, it can't be eliminated from any lake. We must remain vigilant in addressing this critical problem and attempt to further reduce swimmer's itch on Higgins Lake as much as possible. In the mean time, HLSIO is supporting MSIP efforts to test existing preventive lotions and support development of even more effective and user friendly lotions to help prevent swimmer's itch.

Costs for the 2017 HLSIO summer program on Higgins Lake will be reduced this summer based on a shift to a focused, maintenance control program, competitive control program bids and multi-lake research elements shared and funded by MSIP.

The HLSIO board will be sending a detailed financial and program summary and funding request letter as soon as the 2017 summer program contractor has been selected and program details have been finalized. HLSIO appreciates the strong support of HLPOA members and will continue to provide leadership and coordination. HLSIO once again needs your support to continue to reduce swimmer's itch on Higgins Lake into the future.

**DNR West Launch Update**

The HLPOA board wants to thank members who responded to the request to contact the DNR/DEQ regarding concerns about this spring's maintenance schedule for the west launch, as well as other lake-wide policy issues. The HLPOA received a response to its letter from the DNR and is working with the Riparian Committee on a further response. We expect to have a more substantive update soon.

**Oak Wilt Alert in Effect**

The normal time-tested advice is to prevent oak wilt by **not** pruning or otherwise 'injuring' oaks from **April 15 to July 15**. Visit the **DNR website** for more information on the background, symptoms and prevention of oak wilt.

**While you were away . . .**

**The Silver Dollar Restaurant has new owners and plans to reopen soon.**

**The Kelly Beach Cafe is opening soon (former bakery building) next to East Higgins Lake Hardware.**

## Educational Opportunities on the Horizon

- **Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership Shoreline Educator Network (SEN) Training**  
**Cranbrook Institute of Science - Library, 39221 Woodward Avenue, Bloomfield Hills MI 48304**  
**April 11, 2017 Registration 8:30 - 9 AM; Workshop 9 AM - 4 PM.**

The Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership (MNSP), in partnership with Michigan State University Extension and Freshwater Forum of the Cranbrook Institute of Science, is offering a professional training for individuals interested in becoming part of the MNSP Shoreline Educator Network (SEN). Participants will learn about the benefits of natural shoreline landscaping, bio-engineering and erosion control. Participants will be given a Shoreline Homeowner Tool Kit, which includes everything needed to host natural shoreline workshops for homeowners.

Late Registration: \$75.00 ends April 7

Pre-registration is required. To register:

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/2017shorelineeducatortraining/>

- **Michigan Lake & Stream Associations 56th Annual Conference - April 21 - 22 at Crystal Mountain Lodge**  
**"Bridging the Resource Gaps Enhancing the Ability of Lakefront Communities to Prevent and Manage Aquatic Invasive Species"**

The conference will open on Friday, April 21st at 10:00 AM with keynote addresses by Jon Allan, Director of the Michigan Office of the Great Lakes, and Lisa Brush, Executive Director of the Michigan Stewardship Network, who will discuss state and local efforts to prevent and manage aquatic invasive species.

- ✦ Conference attendees are also encouraged to participate in open panel discussions dedicated to exploring issues related to Michigan's need to establish an equitable and sustainable system of public funding for aquatic invasive species management projects; and to learn about preventing and managing invasive species from regional water resource commissioners, and lake association leaders.
- ✦ For more information about the ML&SA 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, contact Scott Brown, Executive Director, at [sbrown@mllswa.org](mailto:sbrown@mllswa.org), or call 989-831-5100 Extension 105.
- ✦ **HLPOA Board member Charlene Cornell will be attending. HLPOA Board member Jim Vondale** will be a presenter. Jim Vondale (Higgins Lake), Ted Fisher (Crystal Lake) and Rob Karner (Glen Lake) will be presenting on "Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership, Working Together To Fight Swimmer's Itch" on April 22 at 2 and 4pm.

### Additionally:

The Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership (MSIP), co-chaired by HLPOA Director, Jim Vondale, has invited participating representatives of the 24 member lakes to meet in a separate conference room at Crystal Mountain Lodge on April 22 during the ML&SA Annual Conference. Discussions will include:

- ✦ MSIP's vision, mission and objectives focused on control, research, prevention and education.
- ✦ A review of MSIP's new website, [misip.org](http://misip.org), which is now available but still under development.
- ✦ The MSIP approach of lake associations funding swimmer's itch control programs and MSIP funding cutting edge scientific research to advance control, research, prevention and education.
- ✦ Development and use of cost-effective qPCR dna-based water sampling to monitor/measure swimmer's itch infection in a lake.
- ✦ Glen Lake research using drones to find and seal common merganser nests as a limiting factor in common merganser broods.
- ✦ The growing body of evidence that harassment and lethal take of common mergansers is not effective in addressing swimmer's itch on lakes in Michigan.

- ◆ The growing body of evidence that capture and relocation of common mergansers is the most effective way to significantly reduce swimmer's itch on Michigan Lakes.
  - ◆ An update on MSIP efforts to obtain additional state funding for swimmer's itch research and control efforts on Michigan lakes.
  - ◆ Development of low-cost and highly-effective common merganser control programs using trap and relocation that will increase availability on more Michigan lakes including training of lake association members.
  - ◆ A longer-term solution to end swimmer's itch by bringing together leading scientists in a multi-disciplinary approach using new technology and science.
  - ◆ Working together with the MDNR, MDEQ and USFWS on future control and research permits focused on trap and relocation of common mergansers to quickly and effectively significantly reduce swimmer's itch.
  - ◆ Formation of a technical committee of biologists and other scientists from MSIP member lake associations to advise the eight member MSIP steering committee on technical issues, including selecting and prioritizing research projects.
- **Boater's Safety Class May 7, 9am - 3pm at Spicer's Boat City**  
Sponsored by Spicer's and the Roscommon County Sheriff's Office. Recommended for all boat operators, it is required for children between the ages of 12 - 16. Additionally, anyone born after December 31, 1978 needs a boater safety certificate in order to operate a personal watercraft. Call Spicer's at 989-366-8400 to register. New personal watercraft laws are in effect. Contact the sheriff's office at 989-275-5101 for details.
  - **Greenbelt Seminar and Native Plant Sale, June 2, 10 am RAM Center**  
- Higgins Lake Foundation
  - **"You and Your Life on the Lake", June 24, 9am - 3pm RAM Center**  
Presented by the MSU Extension Services and the HLF

## Directory Info Reminder

**If you were in the 2016 Directory, your entry will be the same.** (Please see your entry and contact us for changes.)

If you are new to the HLPOA, your information will be included **unless you contact us. You may choose to share none, some or all of your contact information.**

We try our best to publish accurate member information. Please direct corrections, changes or requests by **May 1.** Email or mail the **Communication Committee - Charlene Cornell 49 S. Franklin St., Chargin Falls, OH 44022 [hlpoamemberdirectory@gmail.com](mailto:hlpoamemberdirectory@gmail.com)**

## Sincere Thanks

The following have generously donated funds to support the HLPOA in its endeavors:

**General Fund** - Vicki Bertrand, Martha Clapp, Gary & Rita Gregoricka, Robert McKellar, Maureen Richardson and Craig Trogan.

**Environmental Fund** - Ed & Judy Brown, Steven & Cynthia Popp and Craig Trogan.

**Legal Fund** - Steven & Cynthia Popp and Joe & Dianne Servinski

### Thank you to members who have volunteered! Help needed soon:

A large mailing will be prepared to send out the Annual Meeting Packets. If you will be around in late May, can you help? Call the HLPOA office at 989-275-9181. Office Hours: M,W & Th from 9 am - 2:00 pm. Or email [hlpoa0@gmail.com](mailto:hlpoa0@gmail.com). We will keep a list of volunteers and let you know the details when finalized.

**2016 - 2017 HLPOA Board:** President - Brad Gibson, Vice President - Charlene Cornell, Secretary - Herb Weatherly, Treasurer - Chuck Brick. Directors: Bill Case, Ken Dennings, Bob Hoffman, Bob McKellar, Fred Swinehart, Jim Vondale, Dianne Wagner. Administrative Assistant - Kathleen Barger



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