

Higgins Lake Property Owners AssociationSM

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

President's Message

Greetings from Higgins Lake, where, yes, there is "No Swimming" and Swimmer's Itch is not the reason! Peruse this issue for more information regarding our work on this survey-identified, number one concern. In addition, read about our exciting collaboration with DNR Parks and Recreation Division, HLF, and Huron Pines piloting a boat wash program to eliminate the introduction of new aquatic invasive species. The Environmental Committee has great new information and plans. There is so much for you to enjoy.

Please contribute your time, talents, and treasure:

- consider making an effort to join the Board of Directors,
- volunteer to lend your time to a committee,
- use your talents to produce our newsletter,
- become a Ready Volunteer to help in the office on an "as needed" basis, or
- invite friends and neighbors to join.

Call 989-275-9181 or email hlpoa0@gmail.com to serve with us.

Dedicated to preserving the quality and beauty of Higgins Lake,

Charlene Cornell

Swimmer's Itch Update

2018 Swimmers Itch Program Key Developments and Planned Future Actions

The more than 98% reduction in the lake-wide Swimmer's Itch (SI) infection rate over three years in Higgins Lake measured by the snail infection rate in 2017 is great news for the entire Higgins Lake community. We are committed to continue this successful program in 2018. Your Higgins Lake Property Owners Association (HLPOA) and Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization (HLSIO) boards have been busy over the winter preparing for the 2018 spring and summer program season. Here are some of the key developments and planned future actions.

Merganser Control Program Permits for 2018 and Beyond

The HLSIO common merganser capture and relocation control and scientific collection programs have been operating for the past three years pursuant to permits issued by the Michigan DNR and US Fish and Wildlife

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Service (USFWS). All common merganser program permits in Michigan are expiring this spring and will need to be renewed. The Michigan DNR, working with Michigan Natural Resources Commission (NRC) and USFWS, has been developing a new permit system targeted specifically for common merganser control. Under the leadership of the 24 lake Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership (MISIP), representatives of the HLPOA and HLSIO boards have been working closely with the Michigan DNR and USFWS over the past year to provide data and other input to support the rule-making. After several meetings between the DNR and NRC, a new Michigan common merganser permit rule is in the final stages of development. The new permit rule will again include an option for trap and relocation of common merganser broods. This control method is being used on Higgins and other MISIP lakes because of its proven effectiveness. We will share the key details of the new permit rule after it is finalized in late February or early March.

2018 Higgins Lake SI Control Program

Once the 2018 and forward year common merganser control program permit rule details are finalized by the Michigan DNR and NRC, the HLSIO board will work to secure the necessary permit and hire a contractor. The costs of the HLSIO control program can then be determined and fundraising will begin. It is anticipated that 2018 control maintenance program costs will continue to be reduced from prior years. In addition, the HLSIO has been allocated \$22,000 by the second state legislative appropriation which will be used to supplement our 2018 fundraising. **Importantly, another \$24,000 allocation to HLSIO from the state appropriation was used in January to pay off the remaining 2016 SICON costs. So the good news is that HLSIO will be starting the 2018 program as anticipated with a zero balance.** We will need the continued support of the Higgins Lake community to help fund the 2018 program.

Preliminary Results of a 3-year Scientific Study (with controls) Looking at the Effectiveness of Alternative Swimmer's Itch Control Programs

In 2015 the HLPOA/HLSIO and its scientists made a commitment to let science and the results of scientific experiments lead the way in determining the most effective way to control swimmer's itch. As part of that commitment, the biologists at SICON designed a properly-controlled, multi-lake scientific study to evaluate the effectiveness of two different swimmer's itch control programs: 1) common merganser brood trapping/relocation, and 2) spring harassment/lethal take of common mergansers. It was a major scientific undertaking and federal and state permits were sought and granted to conduct the scientific study on multiple lakes. The multi-lake study involved five biologists working full-time from April to August over a 3-year period (2015-2017), and included comparing data from Higgins Lake to data collected at three other Michigan lakes. Briefly, the study made five comparisons:

1. Higgins Lake (Lyon township) - EXPERIMENTAL LAKE (common merganser trapping/relocation ONLY),
2. Higgins Lake (Gerrish township) - POSITIVE CONTROL LAKE (common merganser trapping/relocation AND harassment/lethal take),
3. Douglas Lake - NEGATIVE CONTROL LAKE (no trapping/relocation AND no harassment/lethal take),
4. Glen Lake - COMPARISON LAKE 1 (harassment ONLY), and
5. Lime Lake - COMPARISON LAKE 2 (common merganser trapping/relocation ONLY).

This past fall, Dr. Curt Blankespoor and Dr. Randy DeJong (Swimmer's Itch Solutions, LLC) analyzed all the data, and the preliminary results paint a clear picture:

- **snail infection levels were significantly reduced** on the treatment lakes where common mergansers were trapped/relocated (Higgins Lake--**BOTH townships**) (Snail infection levels on Lime Lake also were reduced in 2016, but not enough snails were able to be collected from Lime Lake in 2017 to warrant statistical analyses),
- **snail infection levels significantly increased** on the treatment lake where common mergansers were harassed ONLY (Glen Lake), and
- **snail infection levels did not significantly change** on the treatment lake where common mergansers were not harassed or trapped/relocated (Douglas Lake).

A manuscript for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal is currently being prepared.

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Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership Activities

The MISIP lakes continue to work together to advance the state of the art in SI control, research, prevention and education. Five lakes, including Higgins Lake, will continue to participate in a pilot program in 2018 using trap and relocation of common Merganser broods to control SI. As noted above, the MISIP led the effort to work with the Michigan DNR and USFWS on common merganser permit rule-making. Please visit the MISIP website at misip.org for more information.

Jim Vondale

Litigation Update

On October 19, 2017, Judge Robert Bennet granted the HLPOA request to dismiss all claims made against the HLPOA by Marv Bolton with prejudice. These claims related to changes made to 2014 financial statements by the HLPOA Treasurer. As noted in the HLPOA's brief to the court, "Importantly, the Brick 2014 statements improved the financial strength of HLPOA. All members of HLPOA were better served by a net increase in value." The judgement of dismissal preserved the right of the HLPOA to pursue taxable costs against Mr. Bolton incurred by the HLPOA in the course of the litigation. Taxable costs do not include the more than \$15,000 in attorney fees paid by HLPOA members. On December 21, 2017, Judge Bennett allowed taxable costs of \$1434.91 which Mr. Bolton has paid. This matter is now closed.

Board News

Mike Burnside resigned his HLPOA board position in November, 2017. He was a newly elected board member at the July, 2017 Annual Meeting. We thank him and wish Mike well in his future endeavors.

If you are interested in filling this vacant seat or would like to chat with a board member about what it's like to be on the board, please contact Kathleen at the HLPOA office and a board member will contact you promptly. Phone the office: 989-275-9181 Or email: hlpoa0@gmail.com

Board of Directors Elections

Please note that the HLPOA is required to hold elections of Directors for the HLPOA Board during each Annual Meeting. If you have an interest in running for an HLPOA board seat, please forward a short resume to hlpoa0@gmail.com or mail directly to HLPOA, Box 55, Roscommon, MI 48653. Due date for all submissions is June 1, 2018. If you would like more information regarding the board, please contact any one of the current board members. Elections Chair, Robert McKellar, can be reached at rlmckellar@msh-iplaw.com or 989-631-4551.



Super Moon at Higgins Lake

Do you have a story to share?

Occasionally articles appear in the newsletter that share members' stories of their Higgins Lake experiences. Do you have a story of the first family member who arrived at the lake? Or the time you were ice fishing and caught a fish too big to fit through the hole? Do you have an interesting hobby associated with the lake? Or what story or photo would you like to share? When there is space, your experiences could be shared in the newsletter!

Send ideas, articles or photos to the attention of Wayne Brooks at: hlpoa0@gmail.com or HLPOA PO Box 55 Roscommon, MI 48653.

Environmental Committee

New Zealand Mud Snail Threat

This harmful invasive threat to Higgins Lake has been identified nearby. Its presence and possible means for its introduction to our lake have been much discussed at meetings with township officials, DNR personnel and users of the lake. Both the Upper Manistee and several branches of the Au Sable River have been found to harbor this invasive and harmful snail. The specific concern for Higgins Lake, where as yet these snails have not been identified, is the possibility of contamination from kayaks, canoes and waders that are used in these rivers and then returned for use in Higgins Lake. If untreated, all of these items could transport the eggs, larvae and possibly the snail itself into our lake where they will doubtless prosper.

At the suggestion of the DEQ, we have investigated the use of a DuPont product, Virkon Aquatic, which is mixed with water to form a cleaning and disinfecting solution. The solution is EPA registered for the disinfection of all sorts of equipment used in water service. The solution is non-irritating to the skin and eyes. It is fast acting with 10 minutes being the maximum contact time required. The ingredients degrade quickly in the environment. According to Du Pont, there are no known significant environmental effects caused by the ingredients of Virkon Aquatic.

We will be working with the DNR, the Townships, and our members to determine how to effectively use this product, or others that might exist, to protect our lake from invasive biological species like the Mud Snail and portable fish pathogens from rivers or other lakes that threaten our Higgins Lake environment.

Seasonal Variation in Nutrient and Biological Loading

Higgins Lake is no longer a pristine body of water surrounded by miles of unbroken forest land, but in fact is now supporting a very considerable human population within its rather small watershed. The surrounding riparian and other user population is low in the winter, increasing gradually to peak in the July and August time frame and then drops back to the level of permanent residents within the watershed through the winter.

Most of the historical environmental data taken through the years at the lake has been more of a snapshot in time and doesn't provide any seasonal trend lines for nutrient and biological loading. Working with the scientists from the Inland Lakes Science Center of the US Geological Survey, a sampling and analysis protocol to span the seasons from ice out to fall was recommended.

As a result, four separate projects have been defined. They will follow the same sampling and analysis protocol, but will take place at different times: Project I will be right after ice out. Project II will be soon after Memorial Day. Project III will be soon after the 4th of July. Project IV will be soon after Labor Day. About \$2,500 will be required for each project, and fund raising efforts will be organized to support the work.

To effect this project, we have begun working with the Roscommon High School to involve Jr. and Sr. Chemistry students in the program. They will be trained and supervised by water science experts from various organizations. Scientists from the USGS, the Michigan Health Department, and Raven Analytical Labs in Roscommon will all be participating in support. As a part of their assignment, they will prepare a final report on the results of their work, and be invited to present their findings at the Annual Meeting of the Midland Chapter of the American Chemical Society.

Fred Swinehart



Keep in touch by checking the HLPOA's:

Website - Visit the HLPOA website at hlpoa.org to find Board Meeting Minutes, financial information, Annual Meeting reports, committee updates, contact information, past newsletters and links to sites of interest to riparians.

Facebook - Like HLPOA on Facebook to receive updates.



Higgins Lake Ice Data

I recently asked longtime member and board member, Herb Weatherly how he came to keep track of “ice in, ice out” dates. Here’s the answer! LB

Keeping track of when the lake freezes and thaws has become a hobby of mine. I think it started, back in the later part of 2005 when my neighbor and I were talking and speculating on when the lake might freeze. The neighbor (Bob Deland) said he had a habit of writing it down on his calendar when it happened, which seemed like a good idea, so I started writing it down too. A year or two later I was telling someone when I thought the lake had frozen and they corrected me, as they said where they lived (the north end of the

Higgins	Lake	Ice	Data
Freeze	Thaw		Snow Total
1/19/06	4/2/06		45 1/4
1/14/07	4/1/07		44 3/4
1/3/08	4/19/08		52 7/8
12/17/08	4/19/09		79 1/4
1/7/10	4/1/10		22
12/21/10	4/19/11		60 5/8
1/14/12	3/21/12		46 1/8
1/21/13	4/30/13		44 7/8
12/16/13	4/26/14		54 3/4
1/10/15	4/21/15		29 3/4
1/19/16	3/30/15		49 1/2
1/7/17	4/9/17		46 1/4
12/27/17			

lake) it wasn't completely frozen until a couple of days later. So now I realized that the direction of the wind and the depth of the lake changed when the lake would completely freeze or thaw each year so now my hobby had to become a little more scientific.

I decided my definition of the lake being frozen would be when there is ice shore to shore and it doesn't get broken up by the wind. The definition of the lake being thawed would be when there is no longer ice on the water (might be some pushed up on the beach though). I also realized that in order to be sure the whole lake was either frozen or thawed I had to make calls to friends around the lake and ask how the lake looked from their vantage point and even get into the car and drive around to different areas of the lake so as to be sure of the conditions. I also decided to put a chart into my computer to keep track of the dates.

I enjoy doing it so I've kept it up. As you can see from my chart the earliest I have seen it freeze is December 16 and the latest is January 19. The earliest thaw was March 21 and the latest was April 30. Enjoy! *(Current ice in/out data and lake level data can be found on HLPOA website under the “Lake Levels Charts & Data” tab.)*

Herb Weatherly

Boat Wash Update

Although boating season is five months away, meetings to develop a staffed boat wash at the three DNR launch sites on Higgins Lake continue to be held.

The committee working on this project consists of representatives from DNR Parks and Recreation Department, Higgins Lake Foundation, Huron Pines, and Higgins Lake Property Owners Association. Meetings have been held every two weeks and progress has been made. Topics being worked on include signage, staffing, fiduciary search, amending permits for water usage, public relations and education, and more. As you can see, there is a great deal of work to be done before the boating season.

The South State Park boat wash will be staffed this summer. Both the North State Park and the West Launch will have staff directing boaters to use the existing North Park boat wash located on West Higgins Lake Drive. It is projected by 2019, boat washes will be located in the North State Park and at the West Launch.

Wayne Brooks

Membership Renewal

Thank you to the many members who have already renewed their memberships for 2018. The annual membership of \$90, due each year by January 31 is, by far, the income that funds the HLPOA activities. So many of you have generously donated to specific funds. Your contributions are gratefully acknowledged on the last page of this newsletter.

Haven't had a chance to renew yet? If the HLPOA Membership envelope mailed to you in December has hidden itself, (they are masters of disguise!), a membership form can be found on the HLPOA website.

Website instructions:

- Visit hlpoa.org
- Click on “**Members News & Info**” tab
- Scroll down page to “**Membership Application**”
- Open page and print

Or, a new envelope may be sent to you by contacting Kathleen at the HLPOA office.

Phone: 989-275-9181

Email: hlpoa0@gmail.com

Complete envelope or printed form, enclose a check for dues and, if desired, donations, and mail to:

HLPOA

PO Box 55

Roscommon, MI 48653

Membership News

Your Higgins Lake Property Owners Association is run by volunteers, some who live at Higgins Lake full-time, and others who are still part-timers. No matter which group you fall into, there is a place for you as a volunteer for HLPOA. This winter we have members who are in Florida, Hawaii and the Caribbean who serve on the board or committees. They are still able to participate by phone conferencing and e-mail. **No matter what your situation is, participation is not limited by season or distance.**

As riparians we have had, or continue to have, jobs and careers in a vast range of fields. You may have skills or experience that you would like to share. You may just want to become involved in HLPOA because it does so much good. Becoming involved in HLPOA is an opportunity for its members to continue its success and progress. At the very least, this is a way to meet other HLPOA members and develop friendships. I have found that the people who are on the board and on committees are all great, interesting, friendly people, having fun at what they are doing. After all, how can you not be having fun when you are working for the good of Higgins Lake?

Think about becoming involved. This summer when you, your family or friends walk or go swim in Higgins Lake and emerge without Swimmers Itch, feel proud about belonging to HLPOA!

Wayne Brooks



Looking for seaworthy volunteer to serve on the HLPOA Board.


Join the Board and share your ideas, talents and enthusiasm with like-minded lake-lovers!

No pirates need apply. (Swashbucklers welcome!)



WANTED REWARD

Enthusiastic members to serve on committees such as environmental, communication or riparian. **Rewards abound** - camaraderie, serving our beautiful lake, and snacks!



Only here seasonally? You can help! Be on call to help with one-time envelope stuffing or mailings. Serve on a committee and call in from your tropical, remote location! (You'll feel great when we tell you how cold it is here!)

Contact the HLPOA office.
 Phone: 989-275-9181
 Email: hlpoa0@gmail.com

Of Interest - “The Steadily Increasing High Cost of Michigan’s Failure to Adequately Fund Exotic Aquatic Invasive Prevention and Management”

Reprinted with permission from the January 14, 2018 article by
Scott Brown, Executive Director of Michigan Lakes & Streams Association

Recent detections of invasive *Didymosphenia geminata*, commonly known as didymo or rock snot, New Zealand mudsnails (*Potamopyrgus antipodarum*), and red swamp crayfish (*Procambarus clarkii*) represent only the latest successful introductions of an increasing array of exotic aquatic invasive species that are acting to rapidly diminishing the economic, ecological and recreational value of Michigan’s freshwater resources. Nearly a century after the first introductions of aquatic invasive species within the waters of Michigan, we have now entered an era marked by increasing difficulty to identify a single lake, stream, or wetland that is currently not hosting one or more exotic aquatic invasive species. Thousands of once pristine freshwater resources within our state have become living examples of the often extraordinary ability of certain exotic aquatic invasive plant and animal species to degrade or destroy the natural ability of our lakes, streams, and wetlands to support and sustain the myriad of native fish, plants and other important water-borne creatures that exist at the very heart of what most of us view as “Pure Michigan”.

While we continue to be for the commendable efforts of the Governor and state legislature in appropriating resources to fund the creation of the Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program (MISGP), an initiative focused on preventing and managing terrestrial and aquatic invasive species, we would suggest that the steadily increasing scale and severity of the exotic aquatic invasive species fueled ecological crisis occurring in many of our lakes, streams, and wetlands represents a “clear and present danger” to our “blue” economy and to Michigan’s future. Accordingly, we believe that is time for Governor Snyder and our state legislature to finally recognize the severity of Michigan’s exotic aquatic invasive species problem and to significantly increase our state’s investment in exotic aquatic invasive species management initiatives designed to protect the health and future viability of Michigan’s most valuable resources – our inland lakes, streams and wetlands.

The importance of increasing public investment in aquatic invasive species management efforts designed to preserve and protect our immensely valuable inland freshwater ecosystems from an unprecedented and often devastating onslaught of exotic aquatic invasive species cannot be overstated. Our lakes and streams and their associated natural resources such as wetlands represent an important component of Michigan’s ecological, recreational and economic future. Inland lake shoreline property alone, whose immense value is directly related to the presence of healthy aquatic ecosystems, has been conservatively valued at 200 billion dollars, generating 3.5 billion dollars in annual property tax assessments that goes to support hundreds of local units of government, public safety agencies and public school systems. Moreover, water-borne recreational opportunities that directly or in-directly contribute billions of dollars in economic activity to Michigan’s economy like fishing, boating and waterfowl hunting are also dependent upon our ability to protect and maintain the ecological health of our lakes, streams and wetlands. Given their immense economic, ecological and recreational value, we would suggest that the increasing threat posed by aquatic invasive species to the health and viability of our inland lakes, streams and wetlands poses a clear and present danger to Michigan’s economy and to the viability of our future.

Yet, nearly 100 years since the first introductions of aquatic invasive species within Michigan waters, our legislature has failed to enact either adequate levels of funding and/or an effective and sustainable aquatic invasive species management funding mechanism. We define “adequate” funding for the effective management of the aquatic invasive species crisis as the appropriation of state resources necessary to develop, implement and sustain long term research, programs and initiatives designed to: 1) improve the ability of our public and private resource managers and policy makers to predict the likelihood and potential impacts of exotic aquatic invasive species; 2) survey the distribution and ecological impacts of exotic aquatic invasive species currently hosted by our lakes, streams and wetlands; 3) protect Michigan’s freshwater resources from further contamination by exotic invasive species; 4) enable science-based research focused on improving technologies and methods for controlling exotic aquatic invasive species; 5) manage and control the impacts of exotic aquatic invasive species currently residing in our lakes, streams and wetlands.

While Michigan Lake and Stream Associations recognizes that the vast number of inland lakes, streams and wetlands currently hosting one or more often highly aggressive and rapidly propagating exotic aquatic invasive species presents an enormous natural resource management challenge, we would again strongly suggest to our Governor and to our state legislators that failure to adequately fund the management of this on-going ecological crisis places Michigan at high risk of losing one of the components vital to a viable and prosperous future – high quality inland lakes, streams and wetlands.

Visit the ML&SA at masa.org for further exploration.

Thanks to Ric Blamer for working his computer magic by creating an application to help with membership record keeping. Just the latest of all the expert help he's provided to keep the HLPOA up and running!

A huge, hearty **THANK YOU to Linda Brick** who took on the task of producing the HLPOA newsletter every other month when it was reintroduced in December, 2016. She has been instrumental in helping the board and committees communicate with members, providing timely information on work being done on behalf of the HLPOA. Her many dedicated hours have made us all look like writers. As Linda steps down as newsletter producer, we all express our gratitude and appreciation. You will be missed, Linda. Thank you. *You're welcome. Four grandkids under 3 -years-old are keeping me too busy! LB*



Thank you to these members for their generous donations since the December newsletter.

To the General Fund

- Frank Argona
- William & Katherine Beuerle
- Moody & Lowell Butman
- Bill & Lorraine Cheek
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Donations received as of 1/31/18

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