

Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

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

Litigation Committee Update

BOLTON SUIT -- COURT RULES HLPOA IN FULL COMPLIANCE

The Marvin Bolton lawsuit against HLPOA has been dismissed by order of the 34th Circuit Court. In a ruling handed down on October 19, 2017 Judge Robert Bennett dismissed all claims against HLPOA that had been brought by former HLPOA Treasurer, Marvin Bolton. The court has also ordered Mr. Bolton to pay HLPOA the taxable costs it incurred to defend the lawsuit. The Court specifically ruled that HLPOA had fully complied with the disclosure and inspection requirements of the Michigan Nonprofit Corporation Act when it granted Mr. Bolton the right to review and copy certain 2014 and 2015 financial records.

Bill Carey,
HLPOA Legal Counsel

Membership Renewal Due

This has been a year of much activity and focus for HLPOA. Committees have been energized in their efforts and reached out in exchanges of information and ideas with organizations locally and across northern Michigan. Your memberships and contributions helped fund a number of efforts and accomplishments toward our mission. Please join us for another successful year by renewing your membership today!

Hint: Have a new neighbor? Tell them about HLPOA and call the office to have information sent to them.

Dear HLPOA Member,

Hello Friends. Thanks to All for a very productive year for HLPOA. As you peruse this newsletter, take note of all the committee accomplishments which could not have been achieved without the support from friends and neighbors like you. Sincere thanks!

Riparian Committee: regarding our fall meetings with DNR Parks and Recreation, where we invited HLEEC, HLF, HLLC and Huron Pines, along with both township supervisors and the county Sheriff/Marine division.

Environmental Committee: implementing a two-phase proposal focused on determining the health of the lake and the formation of a "Higgins Lake Data Portal" to incorporate all certifiable public data.

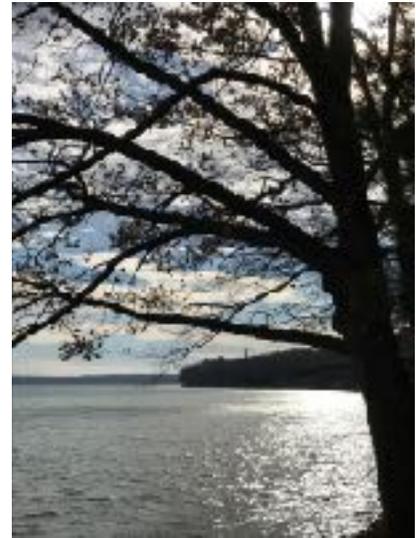
Swimmers Itch, HLSIO: very positive 2017 Annual Report, and information on 2018 permitting and state appropriations.

Litigation: a dismissal by Judge Bennett of all claims made by Marv Bolton against HLPOA and settlement of the Springstead case without a retraction or monetary payment.

It is through your membership, contributions and involvement that we are able to make such tremendous strides toward our mission "To protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Higgins Lake and its surrounding watershed." Please join for 2018, return your remit envelope now, make a contribution, and invite your friends and neighbors, too.

Dedicated to preserving the quality and beauty of Higgins Lake,

Charlene Cornell, President, HLPOA



*December 1, 2017
A balmy winter day!*

Riparian Committee

On October 17, members of the HLPOA board and Riparian Committee held the third in a series of meetings with the DNR. This meeting included representatives of the other major lake organizations (HLF, HLLC, MWA and HLEEC) and DNR Parks and Recreation Chief, Ron Olson. The focus of the meeting was working together on aquatic species risks from DNR launches, the West Launch maintenance, boat capacity/noise/speed and wake boats. Significant progress was made on all issues including the HLPOA goal of staffed, mandatory boat washes, on property, at all three DNR launch sites on Higgins Lake. Our next joint meeting was December 5. Report may be found in this newsletter issue.

The HLPOA also had a very productive meeting with the Roscommon County Sheriff's Department Marine Division on October 16 to discuss ways to work together to support enforcement of noise and speed laws. A copy of HLPOA's October 16 meeting presentation can be found on hlpoa.org under Riparian Committee.

Did you know?

- Michigan's Invasive Species Program is a joint effort of Michigan's Quality of Life (QOL) departments: Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), Environmental Quality (DEQ) and Natural Resources (DNR).
- These departments share responsibility for: invasive species policy, legislation, regulation, education, monitoring, assessment, management, control and working collaboratively to implement Michigan's Aquatic Invasive Species State Management Plan.
- The Michigan Invasive Species Grant Program has funded projects with approximately \$3.6 million annually since the program's inception in 2014.
- For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/invasives.

How HLPOA Runs.....With Your Help

As the scope of your Higgins Lake Property Owners Association continues to expand, involvement by the members becomes more essential. HLPOA is more than the 11 members of the board that are elected by the membership. Board members have the responsibility of being the head of specific committees. The committees are chaired by a board member and may consist of one or two additional board members, but the committees are primarily composed of HLPOA members-at-large. This is where the involvement of the membership becomes important. It is in these committees that the real work of the HLPOA occurs. This is where the new ideas are discussed, programs and projects are created and plans are made to implement them.

It is a misconception that one needs to physically live year-round at Higgins Lake to participate in HLPOA either on the board or at a committee level. Many board and committee members have homes in other parts of the state or country. Board meetings and committee meetings are able to be held and participated in remotely, without physically being in a common meeting site. This is done by using our toll free conference calling system. Members simply dial into a specific phone number and the meeting is able to be held over the phone involving all of the participants. Likewise, board members unable to attend monthly board meetings may participate remotely.

HLPOA has an ambitious slate of programs for the upcoming year and we can use your help. Some of the upcoming projects that committees have developed include water testing at various sites around the lake, stepping up the prevention of aquatic invasive species through the boat wash program initiated by HLPOA in 2017 and bringing together all the major Higgins Lake Associations to work together with DNR Parks and Recreation to provide mandatory, staffed boat washes on the property of all three DNR launch sites. Meetings with local marine law enforcement to control noise and speed on Higgins Lake have already begun, and will continue to do so going into next boating season.

You can help:

- with membership development. It is with membership dues that programs are funded. Perhaps you have ideas to help us grow.
- to write grants with the help of the United States Geological Survey and other sources to fund programs in specific areas.
- by sharing a specific skill or interest that pertains to our efforts. Science background? Accounting? Fund raising organizer? Graphic arts experience? Web managing?
- by sharing what interests you!

The bottom line is that there are plenty of opportunities to do great things for Higgins Lake. The lake needs us. It gives us so much.... If you want to find out more information about any of the committees, have a specific skill or interest to share, or just want to help in anyway email hlpoaO@gmail.com or call (989) 275-9181

Wayne Brooks - Communications Committee

Hint: Check out your HLPOA Directory for committee listings that may interest you.

Swimmer's Itch (SI) Update

2017 Annual Report from Swimmer's Itch Solutions

The 2017 Annual Report for the Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Program, managed by the Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization (HLSIO) board and conducted by Dr. Curt Blankespoor and Dr. Randy De Jong from Swimmer's Itch Solutions (SIS) was published on October 24, 2017. It is available on the HLPOA website, hlpoa.org. This year's program included the capture and relocation of 4 Common Merganser broods totaling 56 birds, the lethal take under Dr. Blankespoor's Scientific Collector's Permit, of 5 hens for use in a scientific study (4 of which were actively breeding), 8 lake-wide bird surveys, an objective assessment of the snail infection rate analyzing 8,353 snails and continued education of the Higgins Lake community about the causes and solutions of SI. Over three years, a total of 206 Common Mergansers were removed from Higgins Lake by SICON/SIS after the Gerrish/Northpoint Fisheries program had completed its work. The SICON/SIS teams had a 100% success rate for brood removal leaving Higgins Lake essentially free of Common Mergansers during the past three summers. Flightless brood ducks that remain on the lake all summer and become highly infected are the primary source of SI infection on a lake so their removal is key to reducing SI on a lake. In 2015, Higgins Lake had an "epidemic" snail infection rate of 3.01%. During the summer of 2017, only 4 snails out of 8,353 were found to be infected with SI, for a rate of 0.05%. This is a more than 98% reduction in the measured rate of SI infection over 3 years on Higgins Lake. These excellent results were similar to past results achieved by SICON on other lakes using trap and relocation of Common Mergansers. We are committed to maintain or further reduce the SI infection in Higgins Lake going forward. Contributions to HLSIO to support next year's SI program should be sent to HLSIO, PO Drawer 665, Grayling, Michigan, 49738. HLSIO is a 501(c)(3) organization and your contributions are tax deductible.

Common Merganser Control Permits for 2018 and Beyond

All Common Merganser Control Permits in Michigan, including SIS/HLPOA/HLSIO permits on Higgins Lake, have expired. The HLPOA board, HLSIO board and the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership (MISIP) have continued to work with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and the US Fish and Wildlife Division over the past year as they develop and implement a new Common Merganser control permit program. The MDNR published its draft Common Merganser Control Policy and Procedures (Draft Proposal) on October 26, 2017 requesting comments by November 9, 2017. The MDNR draft contained proposed procedures and requirements for obtaining Common Merganser permits, including essential trap and relocation permits, beginning in 2018. Both the MISIP and HLSIO filed comments which can be found on the hlpoa.org website. The MDNR plans to publish its final rule on January 29, 2018. The MDNR recognized the effectiveness of trap and relocation of Common Mergansers and included it in its Draft Proposal. We are optimistic that the HLSIO will receive the necessary permits and its Swimmer's Itch Program will continue next year.

Future State Appropriations

Over the past two years, the Michigan Legislature has appropriated \$500,000 for the fight against SI. This support from the state of Michigan has been essential to the operation of the MISIP, a partnership of 24 lakes working together to fight SI. It also has helped lessen the significant financial burden of the Higgins Lake community as we led the recent efforts to develop and implement a broad-based and effective SI state-wide program. The key to this legislative support was the work of John Lindley from Public Affairs Associates in Lansing who is the HLPOA/HLPAC lobbyist. John works with HLPOA/HLPAC on a variety of legislative issues. John is on "loan" to four MISIP lake organizations, including HLSIO, who are paying for his services. So HLPOA members are getting the benefit of John's excellent work at no cost to HLPOA members. We understand the 2018 state budget will be challenging, but we remain optimistic that our state-wide fight against SI will continue to receive the support of the Michigan legislature. We will begin our 2018 state budget efforts on December 1. Recent meetings with our Michigan Senate supporters show they were pleased with our excellent progress in fighting SI and they remain committed to helping us obtain financial support from the state in 2018.

Jim Vondale

Hint: Visit the website, hlpoa.org, for updates, detailed reports, documents, past newsletters, Board Minutes, and data.

Environmental Committee

The Environmental Committee has been approved by the HLPOA Board to proceed with a major program for 2018. It will be comprised of two major activities.

One will be the acquisition of current environmental data from multiple places around the lake, using sampling techniques similar to the ones used in the 1995-1998 work by Minnerick of the US Geological Survey supported by the Higgins Lake Foundation, and others at that time. In this study both surface waters and underground flows were sampled using some special devices which will be used in this study as well. The actual sample gathering is envisioned to be carried out by well-trained and closely supervised high school students from the local area. They will be trained to do the analyses themselves according to rigorous US Department of Health and US Geological Survey standards and methods with full validation and support from these regulating bodies. The data collection activity is envisioned to begin in April or May and continue around Memorial Day, 4th of July, and after Labor Day.

The second effort will be to begin the construction and population of a new technology graph database, “The Higgins Lake Data Portal”, which will serve as a continuing public source for environmental data on Higgins Lake. This database will incorporate all relevant prior certifiable data from previous studies of the lake, both those funded by HLF and by others. A key reference for the level of quality that would pass muster for inclusion in the portal would be that such as evidenced in the above mentioned USGS work by Minnerick. A demonstration prototype of the Portal is envisioned for viewing late in the first quarter or early in the second quarter of 2018.

Your support for the Environmental Committee Program begins right away with your 2018 HLPOA membership and consideration of a donation to the Environmental Fund when joining.

Fred Swinehart

HLPOA Meets with DNR

On December 5, 2017 members of HLPOA met with members of the DNR Parks and Recreational Department and Higgins Lake Foundation. The purpose of these meetings has been to find ways to protect Higgins Lake from invasive species.

Higgins Lake has already been “attacked” twice, by Eurasian Water Milfoil and Zebra Mussels (read accompanying article on “Why Use a Boat Wash”). Anyone who has used Higgins Lake recognizes what a negative effect these two invasives have had on the lake. HLPOA believes the best way to protect the lake is by being proactive. Once an invasive gets a foothold, they are here forever. It is much cheaper to spend money keeping them out than spending exponentially more time and resources trying to rid them later.

The currently accepted way to prevent invasives from entering a lake is by implementing a staffed boat wash program, where boats are washed with hot water before entering the lake. We feel having staff at the site is an important feature of the program. This is the starting point that began our discussion in August with DNRPRD. The latest meeting and the previous one included Ron Olsen, Chief of the DNRPRD. At the previous meeting, Ron committed that his department will work to establish boat washes at the three DNR launch sites and also committed money to help fund staffing of the sites. He also said he wants to make the mandatory boat wash program at Higgins Lake a prototype for other lakes in Michigan.

At the meeting on December 5, the momentum of this project continued to grow. Ron reiterated his support for the mandatory boat wash program. Ron and other DNR employees made comments about the project such as, “Higgins Lake is a priority”, “Want to go all in”, “A learning experience”, “Higgins Lake is a pilot program for other lakes” and so on. The DNR money for the project was again confirmed by Ron.

The plan is to have the South Park be a staffed boat wash site at the beginning of the 2018 boating season. Projection for staffing at the North State Park and the West Launch site is 2019. The current boat wash located off site near the North State Park will continue to operate, unstaffed, in 2018.

There is a lot of work to be done and we will continue to keep our members updated via newsletters and the website.

Wayne Brooks & Charlene Cornell

Why Use a Boat Wash?

The State of Michigan recognizes the importance of preventing the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) into the lakes and streams of Michigan. In fact they have added an AIS specialist to the staff of the DNR. For further proof of the seriousness of this issue GOOGLE State of Michigan Aquatic Invasive Species and see how many links are displayed.

Higgins Lake has already been hit at least twice by Aquatic Invasive Species; Eurasian Water Milfoil and Zebra Mussels. The next wave is knocking at the door. They are already in the state at other lakes, streams and rivers. Without immediate steps to stop this invasion the results to our lake will be devastating.

The only way that AIS will stay out of Higgins Lake is if we stop them. It has been shown that invasive species of plants and animals stick to recreational boats, trailers and even kayaks. Adult or larval stages of species may attach themselves to boat hulls, survive in live wells or latch onto fishing and recreational gear to be “hitch hiked” from one body of water to another.

Below are a few of Aquatic Invasive Species that are already in Michigan and very close to Higgins Lake

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS)

Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia is a serious and fatal disease of fish. It has the potential to devastate entire fish populations. VHS is caused by the Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus. It causes fish to bleed internally. Fish with VHS may have hemorrhages on the eyes, gills, body or at the base of the fins. The virus is spread by objects that come in contact with infected fish. These objects could be nets, buckets and footwear to name a few. Boats and trailers can spread the virus to other locations by having contact with water that the virus is in. VHS can be killed by washing boats and trailers with heated water between 104 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

VHS IS PRESENT IN MICHIGAN LAKES - AS CLOSE AS BUDD LAKE IN CLARE COUNTY

Quagga Mussels

Quagga Mussels are the first cousin of Zebra Mussels only more prolific. They are filter feeders that feed on phytoplankton and tiny zooplankton disrupting the food chain that small fish depend on. A disturbing feature is that instead of latching on to stony substrates as Zebra Mussels do, the Quagga Mussels attach themselves to sand. As we all know the wonderful sandy bottom of Higgins Lake is one of the features that we love. Quagga Mussels could literally cover the bottom of Higgins Lake in a wall to wall carpet of these invaders.

QUAGGA MUSSELS HAVE ALREADY BEEN REPORTED IN 15 COUNTIES IN MICHIGAN

New Zealand Mud Snails (NZMS)

New Zealand Mud Snails are about 1/8 inch long and can be difficult to see. They are very prolific, and can reach concentration of 500,000 per yard. NZMS can out compete and displace other macro invertebrates that are essential for the nutrition of many fish species. They have no nutrient value and can wipe out the fish population in bodies of water where they are present.

The Mud Snails are very resilient. A snail can live for 24 hours without water. They can be transported by boat and trailer but uniquely they can survive for up to 50 days on a damp surface such as waders. This gives them ample time to be transferred from one body of water to another. The Mud Snails have also been found being transported on kayaks and other recreational gear.

THE NEW ZEELAND MUD SNAIL HAS BEEN FOUND IN THE EAST BRANCH OF THE AUSABLE R.

As you can see we have a lot of work to do in getting boat washes at access sites on Higgins Lake. Time is of the essence. Glen Lake and Crystal Lake have been washing boats for over 10 years. It is time for us to catch up.

Wayne Brooks

Treasurer Announced Resignation

Chuck Brick announced his resignation from the HLPOA board on 11-16-2017. He joined the board in 2014 along with a number of other new board members. Chuck did not have bookkeeping or accounting experience, however he stepped in and learned the treasurer's job and ran the financial system for the organization, with much appreciated help from Jack Cornell, a prior treasurer.

Chuck was a leader on the board, and was always willing to help. In addition to serving as treasurer he maintained the HLPOA website, and served on a number of committees. These included Communication and Membership Committee, Executive Committee, Riparian Committee, Finance Committee, Local Government Meetings Committee, and in his spare time he was the Higgins Lake PAC treasurer.

Thank you from all of the HLPOA members and the HLPOA Board of Directors for all that you did. We will miss you and wish you all of the best.

Welcome to the Board, Greg Semack

Greg retired in November 2016 after being a serial entrepreneur. At the start of his career, he fully expected to take the traditional route of being an astronaut, cowboy, or fireman. Instead he found himself working a sales job after college. It was a great experience but he soon decided to go into business for himself. Over many years he owned and operated a series of small businesses -- an instant printing company with multiple locations, a package shipping business, and finally, a small motel in Hillsdale, MI.

Greg has been a lifelong Higgins Lake visitor and a homeowner since 1976. He enjoys sailing and trolling the coastline during cheese and cracker cruises on his pontoon boat with family and friends.

Greg is married to Susan (who in 1986 was named by National Geographic as the 6TH most beautiful bride in the world) and they have one daughter. When the weather is nice and he can peel himself away from the Lake, he'll probably be riding his Harley. Greg's motorcycle trips include visits to both coasts and many places in between.

Greg and Susan's "downstate" home is in Farmington Hills.

Sincere Thanks

Since the October newsletter, the following have generously donated funds to support the HLPOA in its endeavors:

General Fund

Brad & Becky Gibson
Fred Swinehart
Herb Weatherly

Environmental Fund

Robert McKellar
Fred Swinehart

Legal Fund

Robert McKellar
Gregory Douglas

Take a moment and renew today!

Please join us for another successful year by mailing the renewal envelope you recently received today! Annual memberships are valid January 1 - December 31.



Lost the envelope or have any questions about the renewal process? Please don't hesitate to contact our HLPOA administrative assistant, Kathleen, at 989-275-9181.

2017 - 2018 HLPOA Board: President - Charlene Cornell, Vice President -Brad Gibson, Secretary - Herb Weatherly, Treasurer - Greg Semack. Directors: Wayne Brooks, Bob Hoffman, Bob McKellar, Fred Swinehart, Jim Vondale, Dianne Wagner. Administrative Assistant - Kathleen Barger



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