

The Gerrish Township swimmer's itch informational meeting was held last night, December 21, 2015. Following are the closing comments made at the meeting on behalf of the HLSIO:

I'm Ken Dennings, Vice President of the Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization (HLSIO). We are a non-profit organization consisting of diverse and experienced leaders in business, government and local associations within the Higgins Lake community. Formed in January of this year (2015), our sole function is to combat Swimmer's Itch. The HLSIO represents the concerns of nearly 500 individuals, families and organizations who contributed in excess of \$240,000 this year toward implementation of a successful science-based SI control program by SICON at Higgins Lake.

The HLSIO has also become a moving force in the creation of the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership (MSIP) - an organization consisting of other lakes in northern Michigan that also face the need to stem the SI health menace and negative impact on the local economies of the surrounding communities.

I'm not a scientist, I'm a facilitator. Thus, the meeting here tonight provides another opportunity to communicate HLSIO's concern with the elected officials of Gerrish Township with respect to the potential conflict in the coming year over the two SI control programs sponsored by our respective organizations.

We need resolve, and I'm here again tonight as I have been in the past several months ... seeking support from the Gerrish Township Board to alter the timing of its control program, such that the Gerrish sponsored harassment and lethal harvest of mergansers would occur after July 31st. In simple terms, the science-based SI control program, sponsored by HLSIO and administered by SICON, would be carried out from ice-out through July 31st and then Northpoint Fisheries Management could initiate Gerrish's Special Purpose – Miscellaneous permit commencing August 1st. This approach would maximize the combined efforts of both contractors to control this invasive parasite.

However, I'll close my remarks by stating that if, in the final analysis, the Gerrish Board elects not to amend its permit dates as requested by the HLSIO, or chooses to expand its control program, or both, then I ask that you agree to HLSIO's previously recommended solution; and that is to submit both Swimmer's Itch control proposals to a science-based independent panel of experts in an effort to resolve differences and work cooperatively toward implementation of a unified approach for dealing with the critical problem of SI in the coming years.