

Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization

2373 S I-75 Business Loop
Grayling, MI 49738



May 15, 2016

Dear HLSIO Supporters,

As we begin the second year of our three year science-based Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Control Program, we will start by reflecting on the significant progress we've made over the past year and a half. We want to emphasize that our Comprehensive Program is primarily focused on control to quickly reduce the level of SI in Higgins Lake within three years. However, we also are working the other two elements of our program, prevention and research. Our progress would not have been possible without the support of hundreds of you who put your confidence in the HLSIO board, and SICON, to create a state of the art, broad-based and sustainable program to fight Swimmer's Itch. We chose to hire the most knowledgeable and experienced SI control firm available, SICON, and to base our program on sound science, the collection and proper interpretation of data and collaboration with other lake associations and other experts in the field to accomplish our objectives. There is too much to include all of our progress in this first update of 2016, but here are some highlights.

1) Posted on the HLPOA website is SICON's first update of the 2016 season describing their program for this year and addressing some of your questions. We are very optimistic that the success of last year's program, promptly removing all of the many broods from the lake, will show a measurable decrease of SI in Higgins Lake this year. Based on SICON's decades of experience conducting Control Programs, the greatest decrease will occur next year.

2) An important principle of our program has been to provide an objective measure of our progress in reducing SI. Beginning this year, we will have three. SICON will once again collect thousands of snails from Higgins Lake using its snail shedding technique to measure the lake wide infection rate that can be compared with last year's approximately 3% reading. In addition, SICON is teaming up with Dr. Peter Hanington, Canada's leading SI expert, who will be independently evaluating water samples using DNA-based techniques they have developed to measure SI infection. Finally, Dr. Tom Raffel and his Oakland University team will be working on Higgins Lake again this year as well as 14 other northern Michigan lakes to also use DNA-based techniques to measure SI infection from four sites on the lake. Sites for each study will be chosen in both Lyon and Gerrish Township which should help objectively answer the question about the effectiveness of the Gerrish harassment program.

3) Higgins Lake, through its HLSIO program using SICON, is the recognized leader in the fight against SI. The HLSIO board remains committed to continuing to lead this critical effort by bringing together other affected lake associations and the foremost experts on SI and related diseases. From June 20-24, SICON is hosting a meeting at Dragonfly House of the top experts from North America working on SI and Schistosomiasis, a related parasitic disease that afflicts over 200 million people worldwide. Collaboration and leveraging the work of experts working on SI and related diseases is a key to success. We need to look at all aspects of the SI cycle and expand our short term focus on controlling SI in Higgins Lake to prevention and research. On June 22 the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership (MSIP) will hold its next meeting at the Roscommon High School Auditorium. The morning will feature a meeting of the approximately 20 lake association members

of the MSIP to discuss important SI-related issues and share information about what the various lakes are doing to address this problem. The afternoon is open to the public and will feature a panel discussion of these experts from approximately 1-4 pm. An agenda for this meeting will be released shortly and anyone interested is encouraged to attend the afternoon session. We expect media will attend the meeting and it will provide an opportunity to send a positive message about our actions to address this critical problem and our progress toward a solution on Higgins Lake.

4) SICON will be working on four northern Michigan Lakes this summer including Crystal Lake, Lake Leelanau and Lime Lake in addition to Higgins Lake. That will speed up the learning and sharing of information that is vital to making more efficient progress toward our goals.

5) MSIP will be working with a 501(c)(3) partner beginning this year, the Leelanau Center for Education (LCE) in Glen Arbor, who will help us coordinate the work of the Partnership of lakes and obtain and administer grants. This will provide MSIP with a sound foundation for our long term effort to find a solution to SI.

6) The HLPOA/MSIP-initiated effort that began last December to obtain funding from the state of Michigan for SI is in its final stages. The House and Senate have passed their budgets and a Conference Committee will be meeting shortly to reconcile the two bills before sending an agreed bill to the Governor for signature. We are cautiously optimistic the \$250,000 appropriation for SI will be included. If we are successful, the funds will be available around October 1 and eligible lake associations will be able to apply for funding. We believe HLSIO should be eligible for some of the funds, but we do not know the amount. Even if we are successful, most of the funding for our program will still have to come from private donations. Support for this appropriation from the many MSIP lake associations across the state was critical to this effort. HLPOA's lobbying firm, Public Affairs Associates and John Lindley from the firm, led the effort.

7) Last year's sold-out HLSIO fundraiser hosted by Fred's Restaurant and Jim and Laura Witt raised approximately \$13,000. This year's fundraiser has already been scheduled for August 25th. More information and tickets will be available later this year.

We have strong HLSIO leadership representing a cross section of local government leaders, business leaders and association leaders, a strong organization and a great plan. We are continuing to build a broad-based, long term SI effort using sound science and data in collaboration with lake associations throughout the state, government leaders and regulators, leading experts and a 501(c)(3) partner. But we need continued funding from you to maintain this momentum. In 2015, we raised the \$245,000 necessary to fully fund our HLSIO program. So far, we have received 246 contributions totaling \$45,000 toward our goal of \$245,000 for 2016. We are ahead of last year, but still have a long ways to go.

Please send your tax deductible donations to:

HLSIO
2373 I-75 Business Loop
Grayling, MI 49738

Thank you,

HLSIO Board:

Bill Carey Neal Cooley Ken Dennings Dale McDonald Ed Nellist Bob Schneider Jim Vondale