

Dear HLPOA Members and Friends,

This note will update you on our progress to address the important problem of Swimmer's Itch on Higgins Lake.

On December 4th, Ken Dennings and Jim Vondale held four meetings in the Lansing area to build bridges, educate important contacts about the serious SI problems at Higgins Lake and obtain assistance. Our first meeting was with Barb Avers, Wildlife Specialist with the DNR, at the Rose Lake Research Center in East Lansing. Barb has been attending the Higgins Lake Task Force meetings and had a good background on the problem. She is a key person in the permitting process that will be needed for our efforts. We shared details and a copy of the proposed Higgins Lake Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Control Program and requested her assistance. We also discussed the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership of 10 lakes that is working on the problem. Barb was very supportive of our efforts and will continue to work with us going forward.

Our second meeting was with Pete Butchko and Tim Wilson of USDA APHIS in Okemos. They described their role as assisting when animals cause problems. We had several phone conversations with Pete prior to the meeting. Wayne Swallow from Lake Leelanau had suggested the contact with USDA because they can be an ally in our efforts. We shared a copy of the proposed Higgins Lake Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Control Program with Pete and Tim and asked for their input. We also shared information about the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership. They were very supportive of our efforts and will be strong allies in our efforts going forward. They also are involved in recommendations for the permitting process for trap and release of Mergansers, locating and removing nests, harassment and depredation of Mergansers that will be necessary for the Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Control Program whose proposed elements will be conducted by the Blankespoors as well as through the Joint Gerrish/Lyon Twp Task Force.

Our final two meetings were at the offices of our lobbying firm, Public Affairs Associates, in Lansing. We met with representatives of the Michigan Chamber and Realtors Association. We wanted to educate them about the serious SI problem at Higgins Lake and in Michigan. We know that swimmer's itch is impacting local businesses and the real estate market. A key part of our two hour discussion was our proposal to conduct a study of the economic impact of SI in Michigan. We all have anecdotal information

about the economic impact, but we believe a comprehensive economic impact analysis conducted by an experienced firm would be a valuable tool to assist legislators and regulators in helping us address the problem. We agreed to set up a meeting with the well-respected firm of Anderson Economic Consulting in Lansing to review the proposed study. Our lobbying firm representatives suggested if we are able to reach agreement on a study, we could approach the Michigan Chamber and Realtors Association for funding support. We will be scheduling that meeting shortly.

We believe all of our meetings were very productive and we have made good progress reaching out to key individuals and organizations that can assist us. We have additional contacts we will be making and follow up from our meetings. Much work remains to be done.

On Friday, December 5, Ken Dennings, Jim Vondale and Chuck Brick met with Ed Nellist, Frank Homola and others from the local Township boards to review the status of all of our efforts and to ensure we are all on the same page. The meeting was very productive as well and it is clear we are continuing to get strong support, commitment and action on this important problem from our local elected officials. The Swimmer's Itch Task Force will be meeting again on December 16 and a key item on the agenda is review of the proposed Higgins Lake Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Control Program.

Ken Dennings will be the Chair of a new Swimmer's Itch Committee of the HLPOA board and Jim Vondale will be ex officio member consistent with our bylaws. The objective of forming this new committee is to ensure that we have a clear focus on the problem and direct communication and leadership by the Board. Ken and I will be seeking volunteers from our HLPOA Members to join us on this new committee.

Preliminary results of our recent survey show that swimmer's itch is a top priority of our Members and we need to take decisive action (note: we plan to share a summary of the full survey results in the near term). We believe our Members can provide strong support for our efforts and this will provide an opportunity to directly participate. We will be soliciting Member involvement in our other board committees as well.

We are working with Wayne Swallow of Lake Leelanau and others through the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership to develop a survey that will enable prompt reporting of cases of swimmer's itch on our 10 lake members. We also are including questions that will facilitate gathering of data about the scope of the current and past problems on the

lakes as well as the economic impact. We recognize that reporting of incidents is not a good measure of the problem since many people have limited their use of the lakes because of the swimmer's itch problem.

We will continue to keep you advised of our progress on swimmer's itch.

Sincerely,

Ken Dennings, Jim Vondale, Chuck Brick