

# Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization

2373 S I-75 Business Loop  
Grayling, MI 49738



January 12, 2016

## Gerrish Twp Board Action

In a very disappointing action and after separate public information meetings on December 21st and January 9th the Gerrish Township Board unanimously passed a motion at tonight's monthly meeting to continue with the US F&WS special purpose permit in 2016 to lethally take common merganser ducks. The motion offered by Trustee Jim Lippert read as follows:

"I motion that for 2016, Gerrish Township continues with the Federal Fish and Wildlife special purpose permit authorizing the lethal take of common merganser ducks and destruction of nests as defined in the permit.

Gerrish Township will consider a mitigation process of both Swimmer's Itch Comprehensive programs in 2017, allowing for two years of data to be compiled for Higgins Lake. This will ensure that a mitigation panel has sufficient data of the SI problem on Higgins Lake, for the development of a successful program. It is not Gerrish Township's intent to remove SIcon, LLC from Higgins Lake, but to join forces for a better Higgins Lake.

The 2016 program, using North Point Fisheries as the contractor is contingent upon securing funding in the forms of grants, donations and in kind services."

In other words the Gerrish Board unanimously rejected the HLSIO's offer to engage a panel of experts to resolve the differences in the two swimmer's itch programs this year. Unfortunately, the Gerrish Board action will further delay resolve of the swimmer's itch problem at Higgins Lake because SICON will again be faced with aggressive hunters and possible harassment of mergansers should Gerrish Township apply for and acquire a 2016 permit from the local DNR office allowing harassment beginning with ice-out. This would again negatively impact on SICON's ability to monitor local nesting birds and prevent brood hatches by sealing nests and oiling eggs. When questioned during the public meeting Supervisor Homola indicated he had already been in contact with the US F & WS about expanding his allowable lethal take of common mergansers in 2016.

It's obvious the Gerrish Township Board failed to understand (after two very informative public swimmer's itch sessions) that the two control programs as currently timed and structured are simply not compatible. Rest assured, and in spite of these difficulties,

SICON will again be at Higgins Lake carrying out the 2nd year of its' three year science-based comprehensive swimmer's itch control program commencing with ice-out.

Ken Dennings,  
Vice President HLSIO