



Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

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January 30, 2017

Ms. Teresa Sherwood, sherwoodt1@michigan.gov
State of Michigan, Department of Environmental Quality
Water Resources Division, Gaylord District Office
2100 West M-32
Gaylord, MI 49735-9282

Re: West Higgins Lake Boat Access Site

Dear Ms. Sherwood,

The Higgins Lake Property Owner's Association (HLPOA) represents more than 500 riparian property owners. Most reside and vote at Higgins Lake or other parts of the state of Michigan. We have a strong interest in the lake, including water quality and safety interests. Actions by the Michigan DEQ/DNR that negatively impact the lake affect all HLPOA members. Actions that benefit the lake benefit all HLPOA members. This letter supports and incorporates concerns expressed in letters of opposition on this matter filed by others.

The HLPOA has recently learned that the MDEQ/MDNR has again taken steps to expand access (pad expansion that will accommodate even larger boats) to Higgins Lake and perform maintenance at the West DNR Launch. This maintenance (pad replacement and fill) will negatively impact the water quality of the lake. This follows the recent permit authorization by the MDEQ for a major marina at a nearby site on the west shore of Higgins Lake. The MDEQ/MDNR ignored the concerns of HLPOA members and granted the marina permit. The HLPOA and affected property owners are currently challenging the granting of that permit in an administrative proceeding.

While we understand that Higgins Lake is a public lake, we have serious concerns that the MDEQ/MDNR are not properly considering the environmental and safety impacts of its decisions to continually expand public access to the lake using taxpayer money. The MDEQ/MDNR have previously been made aware of serious environmental and other concerns by lake residents at the West DNR Launch, including an increasing boat load on the lake. The HLPOA is opposed to the proposed permit in the absence of a showing that our concerns, including environmental and safety concerns, have been properly addressed.

The HLPOA has additional concerns about the timing and length of the comment period for this proposed permit. A 20 day comment period in the middle of winter when most residents are away from the lake does not provide reasonable notice or give affected property owners fair opportunity to provide comments. If the MDEQ/MDNR are serious about transparency and receiving meaningful input, they should revise the notice. Additionally, the concerns raised need to be discussed and resolved at a public meeting with adequate notice where affected persons can be present.

Brad Gibson
HLPOA President

Cc: MDNR Director, Mr. Keith Creagh, creaghk@michigan.gov
MDEQ Director, Ms. Heidi Grether, GretherH@michigan.gov

Dedicated to preserving the quality and beauty of Higgins Lake