



Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

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To Protect, Preserve and Enhance the Quality of Higgins Lake and Its Surrounding Watershed

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SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS

Support local business that advertised in the 2018 HLPOA Membership Directory. Tell the business owners **THANK YOU** and we appreciate their support. This will help as we sell ads for the 2019 Directory.

The revenue from the 54 business that purchased advertising in the directory paid for the expense of the directory printing and the mailing for the annual meeting packet. There was even money left over making this a profitable project.

Special Thanks from the Board to Dianne Wagner for her service on the HLPOA Board.

President's Message

This newsletter conveys a great deal of good work the HLPOA is accomplishing. That's the good news. Now for the bad news; it saddens me to pass on information of the discovery of Starry Stonewort (SSW) in Higgins Lake. SSW algae is a destructive underwater plant. Apparently, DEQ Water Resources Division sent an email to DNR on August 9, 2018, reporting that their scuba team saw SSW in Higgins "a few weeks ago". Subsequent emails reported, "The south boat launch was loaded", and it was visible at the west launch and in depths around 30'. The accidental discovery by HLPOA members occurred on August 14, as we toured the launch sites. SSW was visible at the West and South State Park DNR launches. Our sense of urgency, based on good science and published material, heightened. Immediate contact with the DNR here and in Lansing was made. DNR answered that they will review and forwarded this [link about Starry Stonewort](#).

SSW is very fragile and is easily chewed up in shallow waters by prop wash and boat passage, said Eric Calabria, DEQ diver at Higgins. Figure 1 shows invasive species, the only vegetation in the lagoon according to the South State Park manager, taking hold from the mouth of the South State Park launch site and gradually moving out further along the path of the canal. We would like to see the DNR/DEQ take responsibility to pursue cleaning the lagoon and West launch, and committing to on-going assessment and eradicating the invasive species, while actively engaging in the prevention of additional populations.

Let DNR know your concerns. Email Anna Sylester, North Field Operations, sylvestera@michigan.gov or Ron Olson, Parks-Rec Chief, olsonr@michigan.gov

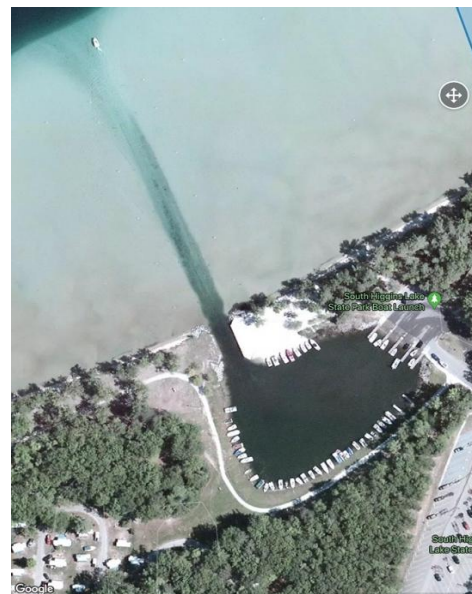
Your HLPOA will continue to work aggressively with DNR, DEQ, and HLF. Contact any board member or the office to assist in our efforts. Thanks!

Charlene Cornell, President HLPOA

DNR Fails To Prevent Spread Of Invasive Species In Higgins Lake

Starry Stonewort was discovered by divers from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) in Mid July 2018 during a scuba evaluation of DASH boat activities. The DASH boat (Diver Assisted Suction Harvester) boat is owned by the Higgins Lake

Figure 1 South State Park Boat Launch and Lagoon



Foundation and operates each summer on Higgins Lake to remove Eurasian Water Milfoil. The dive team from MDEQ returned a few weeks later and did a survey at 33 sites on Higgins Lake checking for the presence of Starry Stonewort. The plant was identified at six locations in Higgins Lake. Three of the locations are the DNR launch site at the West Launch, the DNR launch site at the South State Park and the channel exiting the south park lagoon. The launch site locations were classified as dense by the MDEQ divers, the highest on the lake. Starry stonewort was not found at the North State Park launch site. According to the MDEQ divers the launch site at the South Park, while under the stewardship of the DNR, is now so dense with Starry Stonewort and Eurasian Milfoil that there are no longer any native plants present.

According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website, people spread Starry Stonewort through the movement of water-related equipment. Fragments can get tangled in trailers and motors, anchors and inside of watercraft, fabric, footwear, as well as scuba, fishing and hunting gear.” **Every watercraft that has been launched at West Launch and South State Park launch sites this summer has been a potential distributor of invasive species into Higgins Lake. A small fragment of Starry Stonewort can start a new population.** To get a visual perspective as to the seriousness of this situation look at the Google Earth picture (figure 1 on the front page) of the South Park launch site. Notice the dark color of the lagoon and the dark color showing the growth of plant life that is being dragged into the lake from the launch site lagoon.

Understanding the situation that Higgins Lake is facing, HLPOA asked the Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Department (DNRPRD) on August 17, 2018 to close the West Launch and the launch site at the South State Park until the situation could be evaluated and a plan of action implemented. The request was denied. Boats have continued to drag Starry Stonewort into Higgins Lake.

Starry Stonewort is the third invasive species to have been introduced into Higgins Lake. It is clear that the

DNR launch sites are the access points for invasive species into our lake as is evidenced by the high density of Starry Stonewort that was identified by the MDEQ divers. We suggest that the DNRPRD assume responsibility for the situation that they have created. HLPOA recommends closing the launch sites until the sites are completely cleared of all invasive species, followed by the removal of Starry Stonewort from the known locations in the lake. Given the continuing invasive species entry at the DNR launch sites, it should also be necessary to fund an annual invasive species assessment in Higgins Lake.

The State of Michigan website, updated December 2017 for the Status and Strategy for Starry Stonewort Management states **“Prevention of new colony establishment is the most cost effective approach to Starry Stonewort management”**. The State of Michigan is refusing to protect Higgins Lake by continuing to allow the launching of boats at their known infested launch sites since the middle of July when Starry Stonewort was first discovered. All of us are stakeholders, and all that love and care for Higgins Lake deserve an answer as to why this is being allowed to happen.

The mission statement of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Department “is to acquire, **protect and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan’s unique resources**, and to provide access to land and water based public recreation and educational opportunities”. Sadly, it is clear that unfettered access, and not preservation, is their primary concern.

Riparian Committee Report

The Riparian Committee has continued to work on riparian rights issues important to HLPOA members. The Introduction to Riparian Rights on Higgins Lake document was published on the HLPOA website in early June. It is a comprehensive analysis of statutory and case law relevant to riparian rights. The document can be found on www.hlpoa0.org.

Fifty eight HLPOA members attended the riparian rights meeting at the Lyon Twp Hall on August 18.

The meeting focused on a discussion of member riparian rights concerns, especially the lack of enforcement of common law rights. A meeting will be scheduled this fall with members of the HLPOA board, HLPOA members, Bill Carey and the Roscommon County Prosecutor and Sheriff, Chief Hill from Gerrish Township and the Supervisors of Lyon and Gerrish Township to discuss HLPOA member issues.



After HLPOA members expressed concerns about large, noisy, speeding boats on the lake, HLPOA board members and Riparian Committee members began meeting with the Roscommon County Sheriff's Department Marine Patrol Division to discuss ways to reduce the problem. Brian Duncan, head of the Marine Patrol, listened to our concerns and committed to address them with the support of Sheriff Stern.

The Sheriff's Department stepped up even stricter enforcement of the state noise law this summer and identified and tested a radar



gun that can be used on lakes with watercraft. We are pleased to announce the HLPOA contributed funds to the Sheriff's Department sufficient to purchase the new radar gun. Enforcement of the 55-mph state speed law using the radar gun will begin next spring and summer.

The HLPOA continued efforts to enhance our relationship with the Sheriff's Marine Patrol and invited Brian Duncan to attend our July Annual Meeting.

Brian's presentation was well-received, and members asked many questions.

Greg Semack is the new Chair of the HLPOA Riparian Committee replacing Jim Vondale.

Environmental Committee Report

The Roscommon High School student water sampling and analysis project for this summer at Higgins Lake has been a resounding success. About forty students from Chuck Schepke's Chemistry I and II classes have worked with John Blizzard of Raven Analytical Laboratory and Chuck to gather samples and analyze them personally.

They have received safety training and test method certification for generating EPA approval level data. The students collected the samples and did the chemical and biological analyses in Raven's facilities under the supervision of Chuck and John and other Raven personnel.

Four sampling cycles at a dozen or so sites around the lake will be completed during this program. Samples were taken soon after ice out in the spring, after Memorial Day weekend, after Independence Day, and after the Labor Day weekend. The idea being to see how population pressures during the summer season affect the lake's environmental health. The data will be summarized in report #4 which will be on the HLPOA website under the "Environmental" tab and "Water Sampling" subject headings.

The funding to support this program is shared between the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association, the Higgins Lake Foundation, the Roscommon Rotary Club, and the Raven Analytical Laboratory. The data collected by the students has been organized by them and was presented to the funding organizations and also at the fall scientific meeting of the Midland Chapter of the American Chemical Society.

This program is planned to continue into the future, but will depend upon securing funding in support of expenses. Contributions from HLPOA members should be directed to the Environmental Fund and specified for the Student Water Testing Program. The ideal time to do this is when you renew your membership for 2019! Your generosity will be much appreciated by all of us on the lake, and in particular, by the students who are getting a fine scientific educational experience that they will value the rest of their lives.

Report from Higgins Lake Swimmers Itch Organization

2018 was another successful year in the fight against swimmer's itch (SI) on Higgins Lake and across Michigan. But we can't let up now. We need to drive swimmers itch from our lake permanently and have no more SI reports. We will need new tools and technologies to meet this objective. Our work with the 31 lake Michigan Swimmers Itch Partnership (MISIP) is providing the foundation to share information and work together on this critical problem. And the State of Michigan continues to help the MISIP and Higgins Lake with a third appropriation in three years totaling \$750,000.

The HLPOA/HLSIO continue to provide strong leadership on SI as one of the co-chairs of the MISIP. And having a strong HLSIO board dedicated to the sole issue of SI keeps us focused on making continuous progress in fighting SI. Under the new DNR rules, HLPOA is the permit holder for common merganser trap and relocation permits. We have excellent cooperation and coordination between HLPOA and HLSIO in the fight against SI.

Based on reports to our website and review of social media, we continue to see that most people using Higgins Lake are not getting SI. Given the long, warm summer in 2018, that's great news. Most of those reporting cases of SI said they were minor cases.

HLPOA/HLSIO and MISIP had a number of significant achievements in 2018 including:

- A third \$250,000 state appropriation.
- A further reduction in common merganser broods on Higgins Lake to the lowest level in four years - only two broods totaling 18 ducks.
- Development of a new DNR common merganser trap and relocation permit protocol. HLPOA applied for and was granted a DNR/ USFWS permit good for three years.
- Dr. Curt Blankespoor trained three high school teachers, including Chuck Schepke of Roscommon High School, to take over responsibility of trap and relocation on Higgins and Crystal Lakes going forward allowing us to substantially reduce control costs even further. Our goal is to train more teams to make trap and relocation available and affordable to all Michigan lakes.

- Two more common merganser nests located and sealed on Higgins Lake.
- A groundbreaking research project funded by Bill Demmer and Bob Hoffman on Higgins Lake using highly accurate state-of-the-art geo locators attached to common merganser hens allowed us to track movement and will help locate more natural nests that can be sealed.
- Advancements in qPCR, a DNA-based technology used to identify SI-causing parasites in lake water that can lead to even more effective control strategies and methods.
- Five lakes worked together on SI in 2018, Higgins, Crystal, Leelanau, Glen and Lime.
- Seven new lakes, including Walloon, Long, Elk, and Platte Lakes, are conducting assessments of SI infection required for permits in 2019.
- The addition of 2 more DNR-approved common merganser relocation sites with 5 more to be added. The relocation sites must meet strict guidelines to help ensure they will not spread SI and survivability of ducks is maintained.
- The MISIP lakes met with SI experts from across North America and Canada in Traverse City to plan future SI research needed to reach our goal of no more SI reports on Michigan lakes.
- Progress is being made by a Lake Leelanau biologist on a highly effective preventive cream that is hoped to be available for purchase next year.

To help further reduce SI on Higgins Lake going forward, we are planning two new fall programs. We need your help to make them a success.

- First, we are adding a low-cost fall harassment program using pyrotechnic "bird bangers" to chase ducks from the lake. We are concerned that our reduced level of SI infection on Higgins Lake is largely caused by fall fly-through ducks heading south for the winter that have become infected on other lakes. Snails that become infected by fall fly-throughs will cause SI during the following late spring and summer.
- We need at least 25 volunteers from locations around the lake and on the island and will equip them with "bird bangers" and ammunition at no charge. You can help protect your frontage from SI-causing ducks and help convince the fall fly-

thoughts to move on more quickly in their trip south. Please contact Greg Semack to volunteer.

- We need to learn more about the SI infection level of various species of fall-fly through ducks. We also may need to make the case to the DNR that we need permits for other duck species to further reduce SI. We are working with Crystal Lake, Dr. Curt Blankespoor and Dr. Sara Brandt, a recognized expert from the University of New Mexico in parasites that cause SI, on a fall hunting program to lethally take and necropsy a variety of duck species. Again, we need volunteer, licensed duck hunters to participate with us in this program. Please contact Greg Semack to volunteer for this program during the hunting season in October.

The HLPOA and HLSIO boards greatly appreciate the strong support you have given us in the fight against SI over the past 4 years. We are working hard to continue to earn your confidence and support. We could not have made such great progress without you. Together we can continue to make steady progress and achieve our goal of no more reports of SI.

Virkon Update

After considering questions and concerns regarding Virkon, the HLPOA Board decided it will not market or sell the product.

Goosebusters

After learning about a USDA/DNR program to relocate Canada Geese from Higgins Lake and other areas of Michigan, the HLPOA and HLSIO boards worked together to qualify for the program. A necessary Resolution supporting the Canada Geese roundup was secured from the Roscommon County Commission in April and the application was filed in May. Once the application was approved, Goosebusters, a licensed and trained goose removal company was retained for the job.

It took two visits, but 53 Canada Geese were relocated from the lake by Goosebusters. We were unable to remove approximately 7 geese. But, all things considered, it was a very successful program.

We learned a lot from this first-year program which should make future programs easier and even more effective. We have a better understanding of Canada Geese movements on the lake, including times when groups of geese would come together and then separate again. Last minute notice and cancellations by the contractor due to USDA relocation rules also complicated the effort.

We want to thank the many HLPOA board member and general member volunteers who helped with geese sightings and during the two roundups. It was a great team effort.

Sincere Thanks

The following have generously donated funds to support the HLPOA in its endeavors:

General Fund

Anderson Robert & Eloise
 Audas Sedric
 Fitzgerald Francis & Cathy
 Gross, Thomas
 Janulis Mark & Bonaguro Robin
 Kuney Kevin & Miasiaszek Suzanne,
 Lamerson Brian & Kneller Sandra
 Larson Carol & Greg
 Menoutes George
 Miller Diane Curry
 Olson Sandra
 Spisak Ron & Michelle
 Trucks Jay & Bev
 Woods Samuel & Lila

Environmental Fund

Butcher Pat & Megan
 Fitzgerald Francis & Cathy
 Lamerson Brian & Kneller Sandra
 Novello Michael & Mary
 Olson Sandra
 Silliman, Henry & Marion
 Spisak Ron & Michelle

Legal Fund

Anderson David & Kristen
 Fitzgerald Francis & Cathy
 Lamerson Brian & Kneller Sandra
 Smith Carolyn & Throop Heather & Ric
 Spisak Ron & Michelle
 Trautz Jason & Karen

Opportunities to share input on North and South Higgins Lake state parks' management plans
Public invited to Sept. 24 meeting; all feedback due Oct. 5



Figure 2 Photo Courtesy of Eagle Eye Aerial Imaging, LLC

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is seeking public input on draft general management plans to guide the future of North Higgins Lake and South Higgins Lake state parks in the northern Lower Peninsula.

The DNR will host a public meeting Monday, Sept. 24, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center, 104 Conservation Drive, in Roscommon.

Additionally, a copy of each of the draft plans will be available for review Monday, September 17, 2018, at michigan.gov/parkmanagementplans



When finalized, the plans will guide the future of the parks and define a long-range (10- to 20-year) planning and management strategy that will assist the DNR in meeting its responsibilities to 1) protect and preserve the sites' natural and cultural resources, and 2) provide access to land- and water-based public recreation and educational opportunities.

Help Wanted
What Can You Do?

- Invite your friends and neighbors to join HLPOA. Dues provide funding and voices provide valuable input.
- Volunteer – the more hands, the easier the tasks. The more minds, the richer the ideas. You do not need to be a full-time resident to help. In this age of electronics, even board members can attend meetings from afar.
- Sometimes volunteers are needed for one-time tasks. Can you be “on-call”?
- Do you have an area of special interest? Environmental? Legal? PAC? Join a committee or donate to a fund.
- Do you have an area of expertise? Computer whiz? Graphics? Social Media? Right now, we could especially use a social media manager!
- Provide your email address to the HLPOA to reduce mailing costs. We do not share email addresses.

Contact the HLPOA office 989-275-9181 or hlpoa0@gmail.com

HLPOA Board: President, Charlene Cornell; Vice President, Greg Semack; Secretary, Herb Weatherly; Treasurer, Bruce Carleton. **Directors:** Wayne Brooks, Brad Gibson, Marc Lutz, Bob McKellar, John Ogren, Fred Swinehart, Jim Vondale.