



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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President's Message

Winter has arrived and with that, the end of another busy, successful year for HLPOA. Enjoy reading of our continued accomplishments and the ongoing challenges we face to protect, preserve and enhance our treasured Higgins Lake.

As 2019 arrives, please help with your continued support. Perhaps you could commit with two memberships for your property (with one vote) or maybe send extra contributions as indicated on your dues envelope mailed recently. The challenges are many and we remain dedicated to meeting them. Thank you for your support in the past and for your continued support as we go forth to keep Higgins beautiful and enjoyable for generations to come.

Dedicated to Preserving the Quality and Beauty of Higgins Lake,
Charlene Cornell, President HLPOA



Figure 1 Sunrise on Higgins Lake as winter begins to make its mark early this year. Taken on November 20th.

Starry Stonewort Update

As many are aware, it was recently determined that a potentially dangerous new invasive species was present in Higgins Lake. In our fall newsletter we provided an explanation of what this invasive plant is, where it was found and what we were asking the DNR / DEQ to do to help control its spread. Many of our members took an active part in contacting various people to advise them of our situation and ask them to assist our lake.

On November 20th a very important meeting was held with the DNR in which they unveiled their plan to deal with this threat. The HLPOA was encouraged that, to their credit, the DNR is intending to take steps to eliminate the Starry Stonewort cultures in their park launch areas and monitor and assess their success in doing so. The locations of concern that the DNR will be addressing are the navigational channels at the South Park, the North Park, the West Launch and the South Park Lagoon.

The following is the DNR work plan for 2019:

1. January: DNR/PRD will request a DEQ permit to dredge the entire South Higgins lagoon for navigational purposes.
2. February: DNR/PRD will request an AIS mechanical harvest permit from the DEQ.
3. May: Pending DEQ permit approval, the DNR and a select contractor will dredge, as appropriate, the three boating access sites prior to Memorial Day weekend.
4. June: An AIS survey at the three boating access sites will be conducted. Pending the results, a treatment plan for the management of the AIS will be developed. Any necessary DEQ permits will be requested.

5. July: Best management practices for AIS control will be initiated. This may include a multi-faceted approach involving algaecide/herbicide treatment followed by physical removal as needed.
6. August: A post-treatment AIS survey will be conducted.
7. September: Continuation of AIS control efforts will occur based on findings and best management practices.

The proposed dredging will be done in order to remove the plant and sediment from the locations where the dredging will take place. In addition, the DNR intends to continue sharing information with the HLPOA about efforts being made by the DNR at the boating access sites.

This is an important first step. The elimination of Starry Stonewort at the introduction sites still leaves us with other areas of the lake to control. We are working with the Higgins Lake Foundation to determine how best to harvest the plant, potentially with the DASH boat that they operate on Higgins Lake for just this purpose. Other systems available to control this plant are also being considered.

First Steps Taken for A Lakewide Sewer Project

On October 12, 2018 a joint public meeting was held at the Lyon Township Hall. Participating were Gerrish Township Supervisor Dave Udy, the Gerrish Township Board, Lyon Township Supervisor Ed Nellist, the Lyon Township Board and the supervisor from Beaver Creek Township, Kim VanNuck. The purpose of the meeting was to provide information about a feasibility study for a sanitary sewer for Higgins Lake.

Dave Johnson and John DeVol of Fleis & VandenBrink Engineering of Traverse City were present to provide information and answer questions from the public. In general, those present were very enthusiastic about this undertaking. John explained that an initial investment of \$2000 would be used by Fleis & VandenBrink to write a grant to fund a needs and feasibility study. This study will determine the alternatives and costs involved with this potential project. Once the study is concluded, the townships will be involved with the ultimate direction for this endeavor. The HLPOA congratulates the townships' leadership in beginning this enterprise.

Once the project is approved it will be put out for a competitive bid.

The Gerrish and Lyon Township boards have approved the \$2000 to begin the process. Fleis & VandenBrink is now working on approval of the Grant money.

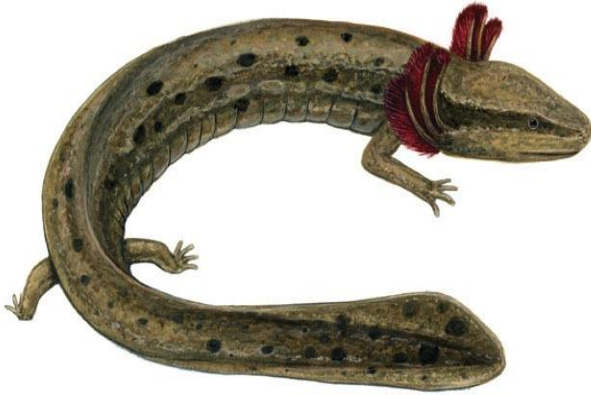
The HLPOA looks forward to watching the project progress.

Prosecutor/Law Enforcement/HLPOA Meeting

On August 18th the Riparian Committee held a meeting for our members to discuss issues and concerns that developed over this past season. Many people indicated that they felt we needed to have better communication with local law enforcement in order to address some repetitive concerns. On November 2nd a meeting took place with representatives of Gerrish Township, Lyon Township and Roscommon County, including Roscommon County Sheriff Ed Stern, Gerrish Township Police Chief Brian Hill, Officer Patchen, Prosecutor Mary Beebe, Bill Carey and HLPOA members Greg Semack, Jim Vondale and Charlene Cornell. Many of the issues raised in our August 18th meeting were discussed. The intention being that we would seek to work together to find common solutions. Some of the topics discussed included illegal mooring, reporting of violations, excessively loud and fast boats and road end activity. The meeting was very positive and the communication brought forth many ideas of how best to handle these situations in the future. Another meeting is scheduled in January with the hope of continuing these discussions and coming to conclusions by next summer that will be beneficial to all parties and give better definition to riparian concerns.

The Riparian Committee is also planning to review the Riparian Rights document in the next few months to determine if any areas need to be updated or revised. The HLPOA has received many positive comments from our members who have used this document to better understand riparian law and how it applies to their individual areas of concern. We suggest that any members who have not yet had a chance to read this document check it out at www.hlpoa.org, select Riparian Committee, select Riparian Rights.

HIGGINS LAKE MUDPUPPY



When kayaking on the north side of Higgins Lake with my wife this past summer we came across an unusual looking animal sticking its head above the water then retreating to the bottom of the lake. We watched it as it would crawl and occasionally use its tail and body to propel itself along the bottom.

Being concerned about invasive species, especially a new one, I sought out Fred Swinehart, HLPOA board member and resident fish expert. He immediately identified the amphibious creature as a mudpuppy, and said that this is a good thing. Upon further research I found that he was right. Mudpuppies, commonly known as water dogs, are Michigan's largest fully aquatic salamander. They remain aquatic their entire life, keeping their external gills that most salamanders lose over time as they become adults. This makes the mudpuppy a more primitive salamander in the evolutionary tree. Preferring very cool water with high oxygen levels, these salamanders act as an early warning sign for environmental problems. Mudpuppies are often referred to as 'bio-indicators' because they are sensitive to pollutants and water quality. Their diet is mostly crayfish, insect larvae, snails and small fish. There is no evidence that they impact fish populations and they more likely benefit them by helping to control nonnative species. If you catch one while fishing, even though they are slimy, remove the hook and return them to the water.

OTHER INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT MUDPUPPIES

*Mudpuppies are not poisonous

- *Mudpuppies mate in late fall but the females do not lay eggs until the following spring
- *Mudpuppies have no scales and their skin is very slimy
- *Females lay 50-100 eggs in cavities or under rocks
- *Eggs hatch 1-2 months after being laid
- *Mudpuppies can live for more than 20 years

THANK YOU HLPOA MEMBERS!

As 2018 comes to an end, the HLPOA would like to thank you for your support. The HLPOA board is already planning an active agenda for the upcoming year. We know that you understand the important work that our organization has done and continues to do. There are issues, challenges and threats to Higgins Lake that were not present years ago and the importance of having a strong and visible organization representing the riparians on Higgins Lake both locally and at the state level is essential.

Highlights of our 2018 activities include the publishing of our Riparian Rights document to our website (www.hlpoa.org), working to establish boat washes at DNR launch sites, purchase of a radar gun for the marine patrol, our water quality project with local students and continuing our effort to combat Swimmer's Itch, working with DNR to remove Starry Stonewort at launch sites, instrumental in bringing CD3 kiosks to Higgins Lake to assist in preventing aquatic invasive species.

It is with your help that we intend to continue these activities. The primary source of funding for HLPOA activities is supported by the \$90.00 annual dues and the extra donations many people choose to include. If you would like to make an extra contribution, you may designate its use on the dues renewal envelope recently mailed to you. The New Year is rapidly approaching and we ask that your membership be renewed between now and the end of January. Once again, thank you for your support in 2018. We look forward to having you on board again for the coming year.

AMVETS Lawsuit Filed

On October 3, 2018 a lawsuit was filed against the AMVETS Lodge at Higgins Lake. The Plaintiffs are the Northwest Lakeshore Property Owners Association and Higgins Lake Property Owners Association. The Defendant is AMVETS Department of Michigan DBA AMVETS Lodge. The lawsuit is the result of failed attempts by the Plaintiffs to negotiate a settlement with the Defendants. The case concerns the operations of a commercial venue in an R-1 (Residential) land use zone and the operation of a multi-family marina in an R-1 land use zone.

HLPOA will keep the membership updated as the case progresses.

Report from Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization

The Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership (MISIP) of 31 Michigan lakes held its Fall Conference in Traverse City on November 3, 2018. The focus of the conference was a review of SI infection assessments, control programs and research conducted on lakes throughout Michigan and Wisconsin in 2018. Participants/attendees included lake association and Michigan DNR representatives along with SI experts from North America and Canada. Dr. Sam Loker from the University of New Mexico gave a presentation summarizing his recent World Health Organization conference presentation.

Dr. Curt Blankespoor and Dr. Randy DeJong of Swimmer's Itch Solutions have been working for many years with us here at Higgins Lake. Their presentations included reports about 2018 SI control programs and research. They reported that progress has been made to not only quantify SI-causing parasites in lake water samples, but also to differentiate the source of the parasites among the possible adult host species (e.g., common mergansers, mallards, Canada geese, and even muskrats) using state of the art DNA-based technologies. Their research, tracking the movements and nesting patterns of Common Mergansers with precise GPS tagging units, is yielding new information certain to help shape future control strategies and programs.

While the data collected on a few other Michigan lakes are showing SI infection sources from birds other than Common Mergansers, their investigations on Higgins Lake continue to point to Common Mergansers as the only current adult SI host on our lake. They will

continue to be vigilant, monitoring the situation in case this changes. For now, their control programs will continue to focus on Common Mergansers.

Environmental Report

The Roscommon High School student water sampling and analysis project for this summer at Higgins Lake has been a resounding success. Chuck Schepke, his Chemistry I and II students and John Blizzard of Raven Analytical Laboratory have worked to gather and analyze these samples. The students' 2018 data is summarized in report #4 which is on the HLPOA website under the "Environmental" tab and "Water Sampling" subject headings. These data will provide a baseline against which future results from this program may be compared.

One troubling observation by many riparian owners is the increasing evidence of algae growth in the near shore waters of the lake. Some situations have come to our attention, particularly on the west side of the lower lake, which are indeed very extreme. Lake bottom visibility at dock side as low as six or eight inches in some cases have been observed. We plan to add a study of this problem to the High School student sampling program. We will be seeking advice and support from several sources with extensive credentials in the scientific study of phytoplankton (algae) growth and control.

The funding to support the 2018 program was shared between the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association, the Higgins Lake Foundation, the Roscommon Rotary Club, and the Raven Analytical Laboratory. We are requesting their continuing support for the students in 2019.

Contributions from HLPOA members should be directed to the Environmental Fund and specified for Student Water Science Programs. Your generosity will be greatly appreciated by all of us on the lake, and in particular, by the students who are getting a fine scientific experience that they will value the rest of their lives. The ideal time to do this is when you renew your membership for 2019!

SPECIAL THANKS AND FAREWELL

The HLPOA is missing a couple key people. Jim and Carol Vondale have sold their house at Higgins Lake and are looking forward to spending more time in their Chicago home and with their family. Jim has been a past president of the HLPOA and has been the principle driver of many HLPOA activities. Jim's work with Swimmer's Itch has resulted in the near elimination of the Swimmer's Itch problem at Higgins Lake and he has gone further to the development of a 31 lake consortium to battle the problem in many other lakes in Northern Michigan. More recently, as an HLPOA Board member, Jim began the initiative with the DNR that led to the Higgins Lake Pilot boat wash program that took place this past summer, and he was the primary author of the Introduction to Riparian Rights document that is now published on our website.

Carol's work for the HLPOA was also extensive as she was an essential contributor to our most recent organization bylaws and was frequently involved in many notable behind the scenes activities.

We wish them luck in all their future endeavors and thank them for all their efforts spent on behalf of the Higgins Lake community.

SPECIAL THANKS:

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

General Fund: Bruce Carlton, Henry Leopold, John Ogren, Mark Lutz, Greg Semack

Legal Fund: Jim and Carol Vondale

HLPOA OFFICE RELOCATION JANUARY 1, 2019

On January 1, the HLPOA office will relocate to the AuSable River Center, 211 N. Main St., Roscommon, MI. Our mailing address, P. O. Box 55, remains the same along with the telephone number, 989-275-9181.

SPECIAL OFFICE NEED

The HLPOA office is in need of a new laser color printer. The cost is approximately \$500. If you are able to help us obtain a new one, we would be most grateful.

OPEN BOARD POSITION

Did you ever think you would like to serve on the HLPOA board? There is a board position open waiting for you. This is a great opportunity to become involved in working for the good of Higgins Lake. If you are interested contact a HLPOA board member or send a biography about yourself to hlpoa0@gmail.com.

HLPOA Board:

President: Charlene Cornell, Vice President: Greg Semack, Secretary: Herb Weatherly, Treasurer: Bruce Carleton, Wayne Brooks, Brad Gibson, Mark Lutz, Bob McKellar, John Ogren, Fred Swinehart

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR HLPOA 2019 MEMBERSHIP.
THANKS TO THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY DONE SO.**