

# Glacial Lake Roscommon may have been twice the size of county

By Thomas Reznich

Higgins Lake, Houghton Lake and Lake St. Helen were all just deep

spots in a much larger "Glacial Lake Roscommon" according to research being conducted by a team of scientists

from Michigan State University, the University of Cincinnati, University of Illinois and North Dakota State Univer-

sity.

Dr. Randall J. Schaetzl, a professor in the department of geography at MSU, who conducted core sampling in Lake St. Helen to study and age sediment in the lake last winter, said that the extensive glacial lake may have been created as the last ice sheet (glacier) which covered most of Michigan, receded about 24,000 years ago.

Schaetzl, who spoke to county residents at the Roscommon County Road Commission building July 2, said that research on the glacial lake, which was discovered two years ago, indicates the ice sheet retreated from the area about 7,000 years before what had previously been thought. "We're rewriting the glacial history of central Michigan," said Schaetzl.

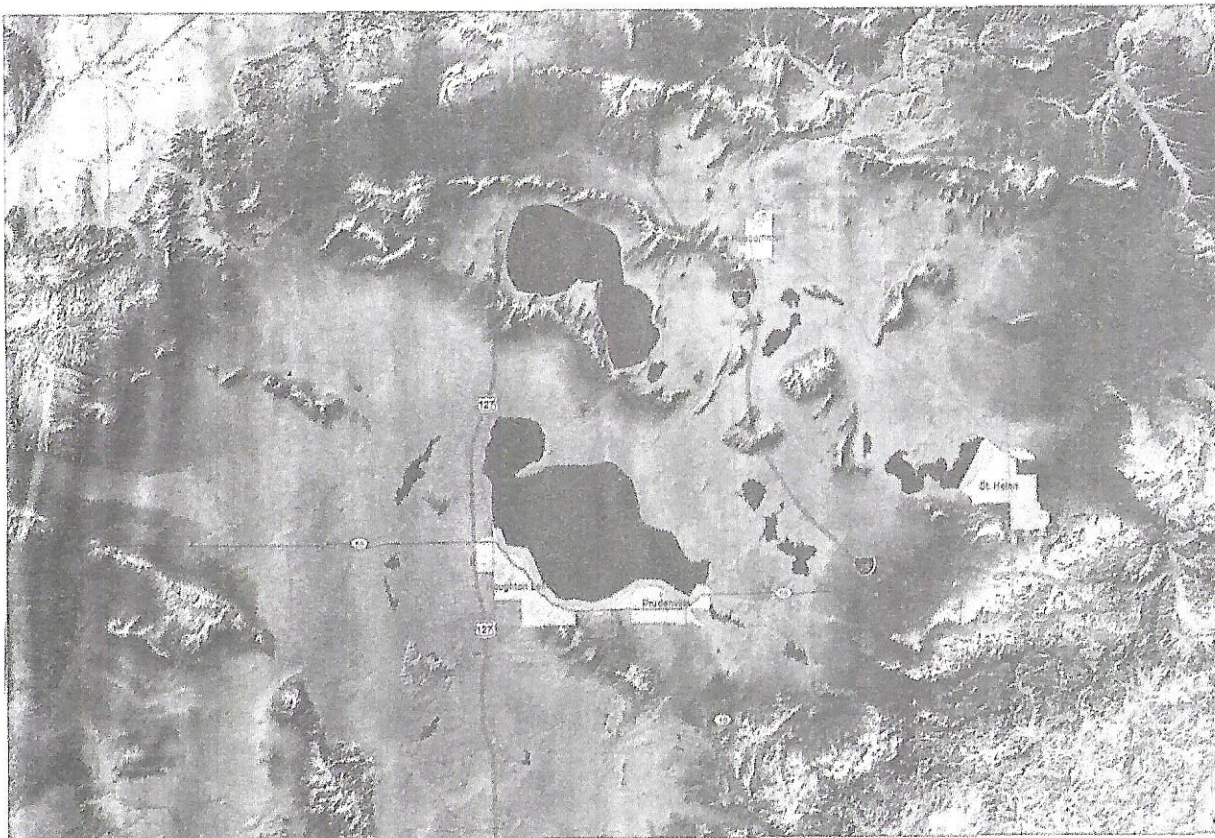
He said it is thought that Glacial Lake Roscommon was formed when lobes of the glacier were steered around the central highland in northern lower Michigan by the underlying geological formations, creating an open area for glacial melt water to collect.

Schaetzl said the glacier left deposits of sand and gravel (aggregate) in the area, some of which are 900 feet thick. He also noted that Michigan is the top aggregate producing state in the U.S., and said that members of the aggregate industry are especially interested in the research the team is conducting.

One of the clearest indications that the expansive glacial lake existed is the Cottage Grove Delta, a fan-shaped sand formation adjacent to the current North Shore of Higgins Lake, which he said is positive proof of the glacial lake's existence.

Schaetzl said cores taken in Lake St. Helen last winter were between 16,000 and 17,000 years old. He said that further core sampling to be conducted next winter in some of the shallow lakes which currently exist in the area could produce samples that are much older.

He explained that along with the age of the glacial lake, the sediment cores can show what types of plants were in the area at the time the sediments collected at the bottom of the lake.



## GLACIAL LAKE ROSCOMMON

A map shows what Dr. Randall J. Schaetzl of Michigan State University said is "one possible extent of Glacial Lake Roscommon." Schaetzl said the extent of the lake, which existed about 24,000 years ago, varied over its 7,000 year lifespan, and that at some points in its history, may have covered about twice the area of Roscommon County.