



## 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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### HLPOA Annual Meeting

was made possible by the many that contributed their time, not only on Saturday morning but leading up to the meeting day. Without their help the meeting could not have been the success that it was.

Generous Thanks go to:  
Ric Blamer, Susan Brooks, Martha Clapp, Ann Knaup, Karen Cornell, Chris Ogren, Marlo Peck, Susan Semack and Dianne Wagner.

### President's Message

Through your membership, contributions, and involvement, HLPOA has made great strides this summer as we strive to preserve, protect, and enhance Higgins Lake. We are making tremendous efforts on many fronts on behalf of riparians. Peruse this newsletter for details regarding:

-Contracting with Restorative Lake Sciences, LLC, for the most comprehensive study ever conducted on Higgins Lake

-Continuation of the Roscommon High School student water sampling program

-Meetings with County and Township law enforcement communities

-Hosting our State Senator, Curt VanderWall, for a visit and to speak at our Annual Meeting

-Two goose roundup days

This newsletter is full of many interesting articles. I hope you read them all and then consider how you could contribute your time, talent and treasure to help preserve this wonderful resource.



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

### Restorative Lake Sciences

At the June 10, 2019 Higgins Lake Property Owners Association board meeting, the board voted unanimously to enter into a contract with Restorative Lake Sciences (RLS). RLS will conduct a comprehensive and objective baseline study of Higgins Lake, including an invasive species management and ecosystem plan to be completed in 2019. The lake assessment will provide the current health and status of the lake and will allow for future management planning and implementation comparison. From this study, a database will be created that will show trends and changes in the lake should they occur.

### Why Restorative Lake Sciences?

-RLS is under the direction of Dr. Jennifer Jermalowicz-Jones PhD, Certified Professional Watershed Manager and Limnologist.

-Nearly all the staff holds at least a Master of Science degree in the Aquatic Sciences and has extensive experience with the restoration of inland lakes and working with state officials. Three of the scientists hold doctorate degrees in Aquatic Science.

-All the aquatic vegetation surveys and bottom hardness surveys utilize GPS technology and side-scan sonar technology to precisely determine the depth contours and weed bed sizes and locations. Maps will be made of the bottomland of Higgins Lake showing depth contours, weed bed sizes and locations.

-RLS has completed over 200 lake management plans and reports, and regularly publishes scientific articles in the lake management and research community. Combined, they have over 125 years of expertise in lake research and management. Staff members also teach at universities and actively conduct lake research to stay well informed of key new findings.

-Restorative Lake Sciences staff includes two certified Professional Watershed Managers, a Natural Shoreline Restoration Professional, two certified Stormwater Management Professionals, and two Soil Erosion Control officers. This qualifies them to properly study and manage any watershed and non-point source pollution issues that may be found in inland lakes. They work closely with the state and other key stakeholders to reduce the entry of pollutants and nutrients to the lake.

-RLS is the consultant on record for the management of over 80 lakes in Michigan. They have also worked in other states (IN, IL, PA, NY, CT, WI, CA, and FL).

### **THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE STUDY DONE ON HIGGINS LAKE**

The price for the study of Higgins Lake by Restorative Lake Sciences is \$25,000. This is a big expense for HLPOA but an absolute necessity given the challenges that Higgins Lake and other inland lakes are facing. This is the most comprehensive study done on Higgins Lake and will be available to the public on the HLPOA website for all interested parties to see and use.

As a sign of support and commitment for this study, members of the board and their families have contributed \$15,500 to begin the fund raising. Please join us by mailing your contribution to HLPOA, indicating on the memo line that it is for the Environmental Fund and mail to: HLPOA, P.O. Box 55, Roscommon, MI 48653.

### **Our State Senator Curt VanderWall Visits Higgins Lake**

State Senator Curt VanderWall of the 35th Senate District, which includes Roscommon County, visited the Higgins Lake area on July 12 and 13, 2019. He is a member of the Environmental Quality Committee for the State of Michigan and recently sponsored Senate Resolution 67 recognizing June 30 - July 7, 2019 as Aquatic Invasive Species Awareness Week. Resolution 67 states that aquatic invasive species awareness is an important first step toward behavior changes to help prevent the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species. Increasing understanding and awareness of aquatic invasive species and their environmental and economic impacts is essential to taking preventative measures to stop the spread and introduction of aquatic invasive species.

State Senator Curt VanderWall toured the DNR Launch sites on Higgins Lake with HLPOA board members. Additionally, he spoke at the Higgins Lake Property

Owners Association Annual Meeting on July 13, 2019 about lake topics and general concerns members brought forward. He also entertained questions from the audience.

During the summer of 2018, the invasive species Starry Stonewort (SSW) was discovered at the South and West DNR Launch sites at Higgins Lake. Eurasian milfoil was also present at both sites. Efforts have been in place to control Eurasian milfoil. Senator VanderWall's visit was intended to evaluate the progress and status of the cleanup at these sites. HLPOA Board members will continue communication with Senator VanderWall.

The Senator's email address is:  
[SenCVanderWall@senate.michigan.gov](mailto:SenCVanderWall@senate.michigan.gov)

## Environmental Committee report to HLPOA members

The HLPOA, in coordination with Raven Labs and Roscommon High School Chemistry students, has completed 4 of the 5 cycles of sampling of near shore waters for 2019. The report is now posted on the HLPOA website: <http://hlpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Higgins-Lake-Report-Year-2-4.pdf>.

Most concerning results of the water testing are:

**High levels of total coliforms** - which indicates higher levels of bacteria

**Detectable levels of phosphorous** - which indicates **more** than sufficient phosphorous to support even higher populations of bacteria than have been observed.

**Non-detectable levels of nitrate and nitrite (nitrogen)** - currently bacteria is consuming all available nitrogen in the water. Any additional nitrogen such as lawn fertilizer, septic leakage, nitrogenous waste and urine into the watershed and lake would quickly increase the amount of bacteria and phytoplankton species, even above what has been observed this year.

For more information regarding the relationship of phosphorus and nitrogen compounds to bacterial and phytoplankton growth please read the "1998 Water Quality Sediment Study Fuslier report" on the HLPOA website: <http://hlpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/1998-Water-Quality-Sediment-Study-Fuslier.pdf>.

SO, YOU ASK WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

Simply put, any fertilizer use in the watershed is harmful to the water quality of Higgins Lake. Even fertilizer with "0" phosphorus will contain nitrogen which is harmful. Nitrogen is currently non-detectable because it is being totally consumed by bacteria. Any additional increase of nitrogen will increase the bacterial population. ***Skip the fertilizer and pump septic tanks regularly! It's better for a clean, clear lake.***



### Position of HLPOA concerning the lake level on Higgins Lake

The lake level for Higgins Lake was established at "5.37 ft. (or 1154.11 ft. above sea level), set by the Michigan Circuit Court in 1926." In 1982 the Circuit Court established a legal winter lake level, "not to exceed a decrease of more than 6 inches below the legal (summer) level." The Circuit Court directive for the control of the lake level "is to begin lowering it to the legal winter level on November 1st and restoring it to the legal (summer) level on April 15th or ice-out whichever occurs first." The flow of water through the Cut River Dam, also known as the Higgins Lake Control Structure (HLCS), is the controlling site for the lake level of Higgins Lake and is managed by the Roscommon County Board of Commissioners (RCBC). The Cut River Dam currently has a 4.75 ft. unregulated opening, open 24 hours a day, through which lake water flows.

In 2010 the RCBC hired the Spicer Group, an engineering firm, to conduct a thorough engineering analysis of the HLCS and to prepare a report and recommendation of said structure. Spicer group was also asked by the Roscommon County Board of Commissioners to provide their recommendations for modifying the dam and the way that it should be operated to better maintain the legal lake level throughout the summer. Their recommendations, which included the addition of a restrictor plate in the unregulated opening, have been proposed to assist in attaining the court ordered legal summer lake level.

On May 21, 2019 a lawsuit was filed by the Citizens for Higgins Lake Legal Levels (CHLLL) against the Roscommon County Board of Commissioners (RCBC). CHLLL's Motion argues that the County, the entity responsible for maintaining the legal lake levels, has failed to maintain the legal summer lake level in a manner consistent with the existing court order.

The position that HLPOA has taken on this issue is in line with the resolution approved by the HLPOA Board on October 15, 2018. <http://hlpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HLPOA-Resolution-Adopting-Spicer-Group-Recommendations.pdf> The HLPOA Board submitted the Resolution to the County Board of Commissioners. On June 11, 2019 the HLPOA Board filed a Motion to Intervene in order to maintain the ability to become a party to this suit so that the interests of the majority of our members may be heard in this matter, should it be necessary. Other than the filing of the Motion to Intervene HLPOA is not a party to this lawsuit

As of our print date, the next court date on this matter is October 21, 2019 at 1:00 in the Roscommon County Circuit Courtroom.

### AMVETS Lawsuit

As of our print date for the Fall HLPOA newsletter, there is no update regarding the lawsuit between HLPOA/NLPOA and the AMVETS. We will update our website [www.hlpoa.org](http://www.hlpoa.org) when we have any information or developments.

### LOON Sanctuary

Higgins Lake Land Conservancy Acquires Property for a Loon Preservation Site

The Higgins Lake Land Conservancy has recently finished negotiations to buy and maintain property on Treasure Island that will be forever preserved and used as a loon sanctuary. The property is located on the southwestern quadrant of the island and has 725 feet of lakefront property. This parcel of land will be called the "Higgins Lake Land Conservancy Loon Preserve." A sign will be erected on the site to remind boaters of the site and the importance of not disturbing these beautiful birds.

## HIGGINS LAKE LAND CONSERVANCY



## LOON PRESERVE

Over the years, many patrons of Higgins Lake have appreciated the resurgence of these graceful divers with a haunting call. Island habitat on clean lakes is prime location for loons to mate and nest. We hope to encourage the revival of these birds on the lake by preserving land that is uninhabited.

The Higgins Lake Land Conservancy was established in July of 2007 to encourage preservation of this pristine lake and the surrounding areas for future generations. Landowners can play an important role by talking to a HLLC Board member about possible dedication of land around Higgins Lake for conservation. The Conservancy can also be supported through donations. More information about the Conservancy and the Loon Preserve is available at [higginslakelandconservancy.com](http://higginslakelandconservancy.com).

### Higgins Lake Sewer Update

Fleis & Vandenbrink, an engineering firm located in Traverse City, is conducting a sewer feasibility study for Higgins Lake. For information, updates and upcoming dates for public hearing on the study, go to the Gerrish or Lyon Township websites. The information is the same on both web sites. Go to <http://lyontownship.org/feasibility-study>

You can also follow these instructions to get the information: [gerrishtownship.org](http://gerrishtownship.org) Scroll to the bottom of the page and click on "For the Lyon Township-Gerrish Township sewer feasibility study update, click HERE" or [lyontownship.org](http://lyontownship.org) select "Feasibility Study" on the left-hand side of the page.

### Riparian Committee Update

The Riparian Committee acts as both a study group and a resource, making recommendations to the HLPOA board on the wide range of riparian issues affecting Higgins Lake. The committee is composed of four board members and four members at large.

Over the past year, the committee established a practice of inviting members of the County and

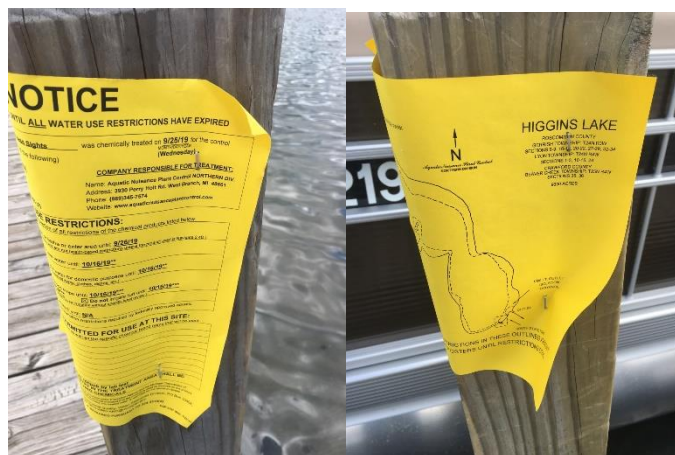


Township law enforcement communities to meet and discuss enforcement issues directly related to waterfront usage and activities. The meetings are attended by representatives of the Roscommon County Sheriff, Marine Patrol, Prosecuting Attorney, Gerrish Township police and Gerrish and Lyon Township supervisors or their representatives. Meetings are scheduled at seasonal times to prepare for coordinating best practices: in early May in preparation for the summer season and a wrap-up meeting in September.

The most recent meeting was on September 10, 2019. One of the issues discussed was road end enforcement of illegal overnight mooring during the past season. While there were only a few of these issues reported during the summer, some were repetitive in nature. Riparians are encouraged to report offenders to the County Central Dispatch at 989-275-0911 rather than attempt to intervene directly. The MC number for the vessel should be reported if it can be seen from a safe distance. Unoccupied boats cannot legally be anchored at road ends anytime during the day. Overnight mooring restrictions under PA 56 begin at 10 PM and should be reported after that time. Gerrish Township police issued two citations for illegal overnight mooring this summer.

At the September 10 meeting, issues related to the increasing number of properties being rented around the lake were also discussed. Renters are often not aware of Lake regulations and can cause problems for neighbors and at road ends. Rental issues are receiving widespread attention across the state and locally.

More information on the Riparian Committee is available on the HLPOA web site through the monthly minutes of the HLPOA board. John Ogren is the Chairman of the committee and can be contacted at [djogren@aol.com](mailto:djogren@aol.com).



### DNR ADDS CHEMICALS

On September 25, 2019, Michigan Department of Environment Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), formerly DEQ, permitted the DNR to treat the three DNR Launch Sites, South State Park, North State Park, and West Access Site, with the chemical Navigate (Butoxyethyl Ester of 2,4 D) on the advice of the DNR biologist. We have attempted to work with EGLE and DNR on an invasive species management plan and control at these sites.

### HLPOA Website

The HLPOA Board utilizes our website, <http://hlpoa.org>, to inform all website visitors of HLPOA's involvement on behalf of our membership and the greater Higgins Lake community. There is a wealth of information that awaits the curious visitor to the HLPOA's comprehensive and informative website! The website serves as a repository for HLPOA information on the following linked topics:

[Member News and Information](#)

[President's Corner](#)

[Board Minutes and Financials](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Lake Level Charts and Data](#)

[Lake Level Court Orders](#)

[Environmental Committee](#)

[Swimmer's Itch](#)

[Aquatic Invasive Species \(AIS\)](#)

[Riparian Committee](#)

[Legal Affairs](#)

[Legislation Affecting Higgins Lake](#)

[HLPOA Bylaws, Articles of Association and Articles of Incorporation](#)

[HLPOA Board Policies and Resolutions](#)

[Membership Surveys](#)

[HLPOA Board Contact and Committee Information](#)

### Goose Busters on Higgins Lake

For the second successive year, the Goose Busters with the help of HLPOA members, conducted a successful roundup of geese on Higgins Lake. The roundup this year resulted in the capture of four broods of gosling and parents plus 15 juveniles for a total of 45 geese removed from Higgins Lake. The roundups took place on June 11 & 28, 2019.

The roundup was sponsored by the Higgins Lake Swimmers Itch Organization. Merganser ducks are the primary source of swimmers itch in Higgins Lake. Geese are also a known source of swimmers itch depending on the presence of certain snail species which have been identified in Higgins Lake.

The goose relocation program is authorized by the US Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Division working in concert with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and approved more locally by a resolution of the Roscommon County Commissioners.

Goose Busters is a commercial organization located in Holly, MI that is licensed by the DNR to do roundups in Michigan. The DNR designates release locations for the

geese on a daily basis. The geese from Higgins Lake were released this year at locations south of Midland for the initial roundup and in the Grand Rapids area for the second roundup.

### Interesting Books Available

These are a few books available at the Roscommon Public Library or available for purchase on-line that may be of interest:

Septic System Owners' Manual by Lloyd Kahn

The Early History of Roscommon County by W.E. Tudor

Also available at the HLPOA Office,

The Death and Life of the Great Lakes by Dan Egan

**Be sure to visit the HLPOA website at**  
[www.hlpoa.org](http://www.hlpoa.org) **for all the current information**  
**about Higgins Lake**  
**Contact the HLPOA office 989-275-9181 or**  
**hlpoa0@gmail.com**

### Sincere Thanks to Donors:

Larry & Judy Beckert, Jim & Carole Bell, Bob & Suzanne Bennett, Gary & Linda Berger, Randy Bierlein, Robin Bonaguro, Joseph & Debra Brooks, Wayne & Susan Brooks, Mike Burnside, Pat & Megan Butcher, Tim & Sharon Caldwell, Bruce Carleton, James Clarke, Charlene Cornell, Ken Dennings, Nick & Martha Dewey, Glenn & Jane Fausz, Francis & Cathy Fitzgerald, Robert Frye, Lois Gartner, Emily & Frank Gobright, Timothy & Jaclyn Grocki, David & Kay Gugala, Randon & Patricia Haight, Betty Hall, David & Mary Hall, Terrilee Henne, Higgins Lake West Association, Dennis & Loretta Hill, Huntington Shores Association, Kelly Hutfilz, Mark Janulis, Joe and Nancy Kane, Kevin Kessler, Jim Kirby, Keith & Tomla Kleinsmith, Sandra Kneller, Carol Kugler, Raymond Kusisto, Todd & Stacie Kwaiser, Brian Lamerson, Richard & Carol Larbardiere, Paul Lobert, Mark Lutz, Gail Lynch, Catherine Markland, David Marquardt, Kevin McElgunn, George McIntosh, Don & Bev Moore, Morley Family Cottage, David Morley, Brad & Linda Murphy, Mark & Gail O'Brien, John & Chris Ogren, Sandra Olson, Jolene Peacock, Gary & Paula Pritchard, Nick & Heather Ritts, John & Joann Rogowski, Arthur Schauer, James & Judy Shepard, Ron & Chris Spisak, Joseph M Stowell, Tom & Julie Tabor, Thomas & Carol Thomson, Julie Townsend Dunn, Earl & Nancy Townsend, Gary & Kathleen Trock, John & Sue Vandenberg, Sally Voorheis, Suzanne Voss, Bob & Dianne Wagner, Dirk & Lisa Waltz, Herb Weatherly, Tracy Weber, Wayne & Sue Wendorf, Richard Wright

Oops, we misspelled a donor's name in the spring letter, it should have been Robert & Mary Louise Warne

**HLPOA Board:** President, Charlene Cornell; Vice President, Greg Semack; Secretary, Herb Weatherly; Treasurer, Bruce Carleton. **Directors:** Wayne Brooks, Mark Lutz, Becky Gibson, Bob McKellar, John Ogren, Fred Swinehart, Chuck Brick.