



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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**SAVE THE DATE JULY 17, 2021
 HLPOA ANNUAL MEETING**

Thank you for being a member and supporting the important programs on Higgins Lake. DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR HLPOA MEMBERSHIP if you haven't already!

President's Message



As winter has peaked and we head toward spring, we look forward to another busy summer of HLPOA accomplishments including:

- two Environmental Committee programs with assistance from Roscommon High School Chemistry students;
- the Riparian Committee's continued collaboration with local law enforcement, township Supervisors, Marine Patrol, and Dispatch representatives along with the erosion survey follow up and continued riparian communications;
- a scheduled 2021 Annual Meeting July 17;
- the on-going Membership drive. Thanks to those of you who have already chosen to continue your support. Reminder to those who have yet to do so, and to all, please ask a friend or neighbor to join;
- email blasts and newsletters to keep us informed; updates and transparency posted at hlpoa.org;
- open election for an HLPOA Board of Directors position, please send your interest in serving on our board.
- working with DNR/Parks and Recreation Division regarding their launch sites.
- collaboration with Higgins Lake Land Conservancy and Higgins Lake Foundation on the Dewey Road culvert project.

Busy business for our mission to "preserve, protect, and enhance Higgins Lake and its surrounding watershed".

Dedicated to Preserving the Quality and Beauty of Higgins Lake.

Charlene Cornell, President HLPOA

Lakes in the Offseason, A Look Under the Ice

The air is brisk, snow is piling up in northern Michigan, and lakes are freezing over. Many think lakes are dormant during winter, but this is far from the truth. Lakes in winter are still very dynamic and support an abundance of life. Here are a few tidbits about lakes in the offseason that may peak your interest in learning more about lakes in the winter.

Did you know that algal blooms can occur under the ice?

Light easily penetrates clear ice, which can lead to algal blooms that are almost comparable to summer levels. This is especially true where lake ice develops without much snowfall. Conversely, when



there is an abundance of snow on the ice, light penetration is greatly reduced and algae levels can be very low to undetectable. Interestingly, some algae species can grow within and on the underside of the ice where they can absorb maximum light.

Did you know that in winter the water is warmest at the bottom of the lake?

During the fall months, most lakes in Michigan are fully mixed, meaning they have the same temperature and density from the top to the bottom. As the air cools, the surface water becomes colder than 39 degrees, which is the temperature where water is the most dense or heaviest. As the temperature decreases, the water becomes less dense, resulting in colder and less dense water sitting on top of the relatively warmer 39 degree water. Eventually ice, which is lighter than liquid water, forms and floats on the water's surface.

Did you know the causes of winter fish kills?

Winter fish kills ultimately result from a lack of oxygen under the ice, which occurs for several reasons. Ice does not allow oxygen from the atmosphere to enter the water and although photosynthesis can occur, it may not be enough to replenish the oxygen levels necessary to support fish, particularly in productive lakes. This is because bacteria, which can be very active in the winter, use up the oxygen as they decompose dead algae and plants from previous years. The combination of these factors leads to fish dying due to insufficient oxygen levels

Reprinted from Michigan State University professor Erick Elgin, Water Resource Educator

Short-Term Rentals Update

As an update to the article about short-term rentals in our previous newsletter, the Houghton Lake Resorter recently reported that Denton and Roscommon Townships on the southwest side of Houghton Lake in Roscommon County jointly developed short-term rental ordinances and are in the process of implementing them. The ordinances will establish maximum capacity, parking and other restrictions and impose an annual regulatory fee. Last year Lake Township on the west side of Houghton Lake adopted an ordinance prohibiting rentals under 29 days in length in R-1 zoned properties.

At Higgins Lake, neither Gerrish nor Lyon Townships have chosen to regulate short-term rentals. Instead, as we reported in the previous newsletter, the Gerrish Township Police Chief wrote to owners of properties being advertised for short-term rentals to encourage awareness of statutes and ordinances. Proper operation of ORV's and the prohibition of overnight mooring at road ends were mentioned as primary concerns. The objective of the communication was to prevent the need for further governmental interventions into short-term rentals. The Riparian Committee supports the approach taken by Gerrish Township and is actively encouraging Lyon Township to take similar action.

Gypsy Moths

January through April you can help reduce the population by removing and destroying egg masses. Each egg mass you destroy prevents 100-1,000 caterpillars from hatching. Egg masses are found on outdoor surfaces. Scrap egg masses carefully into a container of soapy water. Soak for 24 hours and discard.

Gypsy Moths are an invasive species introduced to North America. Gypsy Moth caterpillars feed on leaves of trees. Caterpillars' voracious appetites can defoliate trees and shrubs. One caterpillar can eat one square meter of foliage. They can strip all the leaves off of trees especially oaks. A bacterial insecticide is used to suppress the Gypsy Moth population.

Roscommon County uses a naturally occurring spray (Btk, *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki*) to suppress the gypsy moth. The 2021 Spray Map is posted. To view the map: <https://www.roscommoncounty.net/DocumentCenter/View/1606/3021-Spray-Blocks-Map>

Almeda Beach Association secretary Laura McKinley noticed that most of Almeda Beach was not included in the 2021 Spray Map area. Thankfully, Laura set in motion a plan for individual riparians to cover the costs of spraying their acreage. The actions of these neighbors substantially increased the spray area, adding more protection the Higgins Lake watershed.



[HLPOA Board Votes to Move Forward in the AMVETS Marina Litigation](#)

In 2016, AMVETS Lodge located at the northwest corner of the lake (106 Thorpe Avenue), applied to The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) for a marina permit. Despite the strong written objections, by HLPOA and the local property owners, the permit was granted. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT AMVETS IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE CAMP CURNALIA ORGANIZATION JUST NORTH OF THE AMVETS PROPERTY.

The permit allowed AMVETS to:
Seasonally place a dock 5 foot wide, 457 feet long, 22 slips for pontoon boat hoists, 6 jet ski hoists, 22 finger piers placed between pontoon boat hoists which shall be 3 feet wide. Seasonally place 8 freestanding V-hull boat hoists, 6 finger piers placed between V-hull boat hoists which shall be up to 3 feet wide.

The property is in Lyon Township and is zoned R-1 residential, as is the majority of the property surrounding Higgins Lake. Lyon Township was contacted and requested to enforce its R-1 single family zoning ordinance. They declined to do so, claiming its ordinance only applies to land up to the shoreline and that they couldn't regulate a marina on the bottomlands of Higgins Lake. However, to the contrary, the Michigan Supreme court has ruled that townships can do just that.

An administrative appeal was filed by Bill Carey to challenge the permit without bringing a lawsuit in Circuit Court which eventually led to a mediation process. The mediation process recently failed with AMVETS only willing to commit not to expand the future size of the marina.

With litigation in progress, AMVETS proceeded to install sections of the marina dock and rented 22 boat spaces and plans to expand to the full capacity allowed by the permit.

After careful consideration and the advice of counsel, the HLPOA board voted at its March 15 meeting to file a lawsuit in the Roscommon Circuit Court against AMVETS, to stop the operation and expansion of this illegal marina.

EGLE and Lyon Township will not enforce the law and protect the lake. We believe that this lawsuit is critical to the health and wellbeing of Higgins Lake and we believe it is our responsibility to do so. There is no question that if AMVETS is successful in creating and maintaining its marina, others on the lake may be expected to follow. It is important to note that the marina is not for guests of the AMVETS Lodge. It is for offsite users renting marina space from the AMVETS organization. Guests of the lodge are not allowed access to the marina dock.

Board members will make personal financial contributions to help fund this litigation and we will also make a special appeal to HLPOA members in the next few month when litigation costs begin to accumulate and we have a better idea of the total cost involved. We hope you will support this unwelcome but important action taken by the board.

What's in Your Bait Bucket?

Were you aware that the purchased bait you use for fishing and how you dispose of it can be harmful to the ecology of Higgins Lake and the surrounding area? Studies have shown that earthworms have changed the understory in forests, wax worms turn into moths that are forest pests, and live bait has been found to cause Golden Shinners to become infertile. Some purchased live bait causes disease in fish or gets in the food chain. The risk from using purchased live bait for fishing is low. The problem occurs with purchased live bait release when you are done fishing or when the bait water is tossed into the lake. Unused bait and water should be disposed of properly. It should not be put into the lake.

Unused bait should be composted or put in the trash. For more information go to:

https://www.maisrc.umn.edu/sites/maisrc.umn.edu/files/baitfish_-_mceachran.pdf

Big Creek Brook Trout Spawning Habitat Recovery

The project to remove the perched culvert where Dewey Road crosses Big Creek in Lyon Township is progressing according to schedule. The current culvert, which is too small and improperly placed, poses an impassable barrier to spawning trout, perch and other valuable aquatic species as they attempt to travel up stream. Its replacement will be wider and properly placed to allow unencumbered fish passage between the lake and several miles of good spawning habitat upstream from Dewey Road and into state forest lands to the west.

The Lyon Township Board has approved this project on the condition that township funding for the project will not be required. Higgins Lake Foundation, Higgins Lake Land Conservancy, and Higgins Lake Property Owners Association have already committed considerable funds in support, but additional funds may be required to complete the work. The Huron Pines Conservancy is the designated Project Manager, and is the fiduciary agency for obtaining and dispersing funds as required.

The Roscommon County Road Commission is doing the engineering, obtaining EGLE permits, and doing the final construction work. Roger Saxton at the Roscommon County Road Commission has provided an estimated schedule timeline for what he hopes will be the project's progress for the next few months.

- March: On-site review with EGLE representative.
- April: Engineering and Final Cost Estimate. Stakeholder approvals, EGLE Permit Request.
- May: EGLE Permit Approval. Obtain bids for materials and outside labor. Order materials.
- June: Receive replacement culvert and other materials.
- July: Construction in lowest flow month for the creek. Completion in two or three weeks.
- September: Admire the new culvert and take pictures with our donors!!



Big Creek January 2021

The Roscommon County Road Commission will be submitting invoices directly to The Huron Pines Conservancy, so all future donations should go to HLPOA, indicating Environmental Fund in the memo section. Until the engineering and stakeholder approvals are in hand (April?) the final cost will not be accurately known, but will likely be somewhat in addition to the \$30,000 we have already committed.

So, things are moving ahead in a good way. We still have some funding to secure, but we should have something good to celebrate yet in 2021!

Fred Swinehart, Environmental Committee

Sewer Update – Meetings between the townships are ongoing. Approval of Articles of Incorporation for the Utility Authority are anticipated in April. Once Articles of Incorporation are in place, grants will be sought. Public hearings are being planned for late summer. Watch for Township notices (gerrishtownship.org, lyontownship.org), HLPOA Blasts, or our website (hlpoa.org) for updates.

DNR AIS Control Plan for Higgins Lake Boating Access Sites *Updated October 14, 2020*

This plan was developed to supplement ongoing management activities at each DNR boating access site (BAS) on Higgins Lake, specifically:

- The navigational channel at North Higgins Lake State Park,
- The navigational channel and lagoon at South Higgins Lake State Park, and
- The navigational channel at the west launch.

These sites are maintained and managed by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources – Parks and Recreation Division (DNR/PRD).

FY2021 GOALS

- ❖ Request internal PRD 2021 funding for:
 - Chemical control of aquatic invasive plants. Approved aquatic herbicide targeted for Eurasian watermilfoil would be applied at all three access sites, in coordination with the DNR/PRD AIS biologist. A plan could include the first treatment in late spring/early summer depending on weather conditions (i.e., how long winter lasts) and plant growth. Subsequent treatments will be considered in late summer pending results of both mechanical and chemical efforts and funding availability.
 - Mechanical control of aquatic invasive plants. Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting (DASH) for Eurasian watermilfoil and starry stonewort would occur in mid-summer.
- ❖ The DNR/PRD AIS biologist will provide training to park staff about relevant invasive species topics, identification, and resources. Staff will engage with park users and provide outreach about AIS and decontamination options at each DNR/PRD boating access site on Higgins Lake.
- ❖ Request support from Conservation Officers to perform AIS inspections and boater contacts at all Higgins Lake DNR sites using funding from DNR/PRD or a statewide GLRI grant.
- ❖ Seek volunteers to assist with outreach during peak boat launch times. This may include the promotion of Clean Boats, Clean Waters or the Clean Drain Dry Initiative.
- ❖ Continue communication with the HLPOA and HLF. Host a fall meeting with interested stakeholder organizations. DNR/PRD will provide updates to HLF and HLPOA any time significant benchmarks are achieved throughout the year or as information is requested.
- ❖ Maintain CD3 and boat washing stations.

NOTE: As a result of the State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a statewide spending and hiring freeze ([Executive Directive 2020-03](#) and [Executive Directive 2020-04](#), respectively) have been enacted and will continue in FY2021. These may cause significant but understandable delays in the timeline for the above goals. The approval for internal DNR/PRD funding to accomplish the items listed in the first goal may be delayed. The plan will be adjusted accordingly.

Higgins Lake Swimmers Itch Organization (HLSIO) – Plans are underway for HLSIO's Fundraising Dinner in August 2021. We will keep you updated when more details become available or check their website (hlsio.org).

Board News:

Political Action Committee (PAC) – Welcomes Bob McKellar as new committee member.

Election Committee – Election of Directors for the HLPOA Board are held during each Annual Meeting of the Members. If you have an interest in running for a position on the HLPOA Board, please forward a short resume to hlpoa0@gmail.com or mail directly to HLPOA, PO Box 55,

Roscommon, MI 48653. Due date for all submissions is May 15, 2021. If you would like more information regarding the Board, please contact Elections Committee Co-Chair, Robert McKellar. He can be reached at rlmckellar@msh-iplaw.com or 989-631-4551. The committee has sought and continues to seek, applicants to fill positions on the Board during 2021. Incumbents seeking re-election this year (2021) are Jack Cornell, Bob McKellar and John Ogren.

Boat Ride with Bonnie

I was 5, and Bonnie, whose cottage was three doors down, was 8. I admired her enormously and made mental notes of everything she did and said, to hopefully impress other kids with later. She was a

particularly sophisticated and mature young girl. Even her naturally wavy hair fell into a style that was too old for her. Fortunately for me, there weren't any kids her age along our stretch of beach, so she would occasionally find time to be with me.

This day we stood in front of her cottage while her parents explained in no uncertain terms that they and Bonnie's older sister were going into Roscommon and would return in 45 minutes. This would be a test for Bonnie being left alone, that they were going to trust her to be grown up enough to behave responsibly. Bonnie shrugged them off in a way that I would try later on my parents who were not having it.

No sooner had their big green Buick rounded the corner and disappeared, Bonnie looked at me and asked, "Do you want to go for a boat ride?" I was incredulous, even at my young age, but I could not get myself to ask Bonnie what she was thinking. Had she not heard her parents' warnings? The question would just not form in my mouth, so I had no choice but to say yes, as long as we didn't go to the drop off for which I had great unreasonable fear.

Already in our bathing suits, mine a hand-me-down of Bonnie's, we tip-toed bouncing through the rough water up to our armpits with dry arms up out of the water. Their moored wooden boat bobbed furiously above us in the choppy lake. (This exercise was particularly difficult for me because my older sister had recently convinced me that the ridges in the lake sand were caused by the minnows sleeping there, and I didn't want to step on them.) Bonnie boosted me up and into the boat, and I found my place on the varnished board that served as the front seat. An exhausted Bonnie finally joined me after the ordeal of unhooking the boat, bouncing to the back and climbing in.

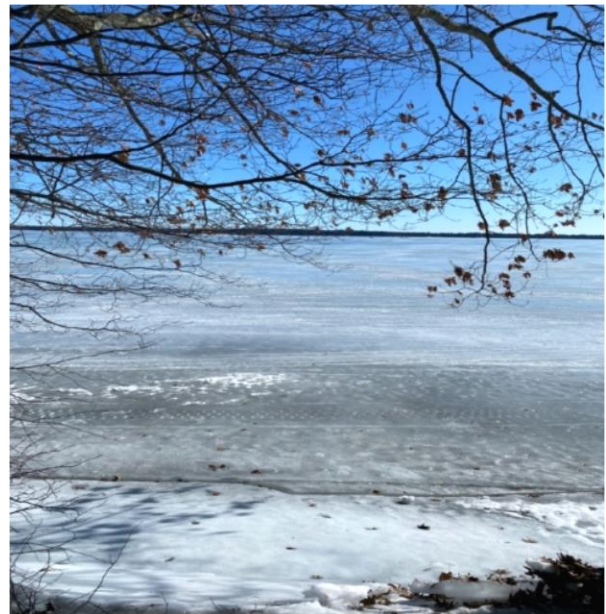
That's about when I discovered that I could fly up off the seat with the crest of each wave and come back down on the trough without it hurting. I remember looking at my suntanned feet up higher and higher in the wind on each uplift. Entertained as I was, I failed to notice that Bonnie was growing more and more frantic trying to get the motor started, pulling and pulling the rope, as we floated quickly backward toward Cheney Point.

When we neared the drop-off, I turned to ask where we were going, and that's when I saw Bonnie had turned a deep shade of pea green. Literally, she was green. Shocked, I gave up my game and crawled to the back of the boat to see what was wrong. That's when I realized Bonnie was distraught, tearful, and fervently praying. I joined in the prayer, and the boat suddenly started. It just wasn't our day to die.

Instantly, Bonnie regained her composure and took on the look of an experienced boater. Her new-found poise and pride diminished considerably though as we headed back to our beach and saw her parents and sister standing fully dressed in the hot, white sand. As we neared them, I saw her mother's knees buckle and her husband grab her before she fell. I noticed that they seemed particularly upset that I was onboard. Bonnie headed to her buoy, but her father ordered the boat to shore immediately. I heard her mother admonish her dad to not yell at Bonnie, and she begged him to just be thankful we were alive.

As they marched Bonnie back up to their cottage. I skipped along the wet sand looking for someone else to play with.

Submitted by Sally Voorheis, a lifelong resident of Higgins Lake



Membership:

**TOP TEN REASONS TO BE A MEMBER OF HLPOA
(and counting)**

1. Initiated the scientific control of Swimmers Itch program.
2. Have organized and oversee a water testing program for bacteria and nutrient loading at numerous sites around the lake since 2018. This is made possible by financial contributions from members and local organizations.
3. Meet and work with the Roscommon Sheriff Department, Marine Patrol, and Roscommon County Prosecutor’s office to address lake and on shore issues affecting riparians, including control of excessive speed, loud boats, illegal boat mooring and road end violations.
4. Involved with Aquatic Invasive Species prevention and boat wash program on the lake.
5. Organize Goose Removal program.
6. Lobbyist on retainer in Lansing working for HLPOA so that our voice is heard by regulator departments and legislators on issues which affect Higgins Lake.
7. Working on Big Creek and Little Creek Remediation to replace culverts which prevent upstream spawning for perch and trout moving from the lake upstream.
8. Other problems on Big Creek that are being addressed include bank erosion, septic effluent leaching and leaf and stick pollution from surrounding areas which are being deposited into Higgins Lake.
9. Funding, with significant support from the membership, the hiring of Restorative Lake

Sciences to compile a complete mapping of the bottom land of Higgins Lake. This shows the location of Aquatic Invasive Species in the lake and has created a baseline from which future monitoring will be done.

10. Involved with litigation to prevent and control illegal marinas on Higgins Lake.
11. Support the lake wide sanitary sewer system.
12. Working with Lyon and Gerrish Townships to notify owners of Shor-term Rentals the laws concerning noise, overnight mooring and road end usage.

Thank you for being a member and supporting these important programs on Higgins Lake.

If you have forgotten or just didn’t get around to it please consider mailing your annual membership dues of \$100.00 to: HLPOA, P.O. Box 55, Roscommon, MI

Thank You to our generous donors

General Fund: Gary and Nancy Cronenwett, Barry Hoffman, Duane Lach, Denise Craig and Donna Vance, Dan and Jill Richardson, Greg and Susan Semack, Doug and Alison Theisen, Wayne and Sue Wendorf

Environmental Fund: Joan Cook, Stuart Colie and Mariah Frye, Betty Taylor Hall, Duane Lach, Denise Craig and Donna Vance, John Magley, John Ogren, Park 24, Paul and Eve Ryznar, Dr. Fred Stoye, Jr., and Deborah, Doug and Alison Theisen

Legal Fund: Joan Cook, Duane Lach, Denise Craig and Donna Vance, Bob McKellar, Doug and Alison Theisen

In memory of Dr. Robert Weber: Thomas and Jacqueline Obrien



A few maps are still available for purchase. Order your 1936-1937 Map of Higgins Lake. (Map only, mat and frame not included)

Looking for a great gift or addition to your lake decor?

Exclusive to Higgins Lake 2021 Property Owners Association members...Vintage 1930’s map of Higgins Lake suitable for framing.

Please submit \$50.00 to further support our organization and receive your 14” x 11” print. Make Checks payable to HLPOA.

Number of Prints requested ___ x \$50.00 = Total for prints _____ Send Prints to: _____

2019-2020 HLPOA Board: President - Charlene Cornell, Vice President - Greg Semack, Secretary - Herb Weatherly, Treasurer - Bruce Carleton. Directors: Wayne Brooks, Jack Cornell, Becky Gibson, Mark Lutz, Bob McKellar, John Ogren and Fred Swinehart. Administrative Assistant - Kathleen Barger.