



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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Thank you for supporting the important programs on Higgins Lake. Other family members, who love the lake like you, can join as a non-voting member. It's not too late to add members or too early to pay your 2022 Dues!



Friday Night Lights photo by Ric Blamer

President's Message

Fall on Higgins Lake has arrived, leaving us with fond summer memories: sunrises and sunsets, family gatherings, boating, skiing and tubing, Fourth of July and fireworks, bonfires and smores, KanJam and Spikeball tournaments, swimming, kayaking down the Cut River, ball playing at Sunken Island, Cold Creek Club initiation, snorkeling at the sunken boat, and so much more.

Wonderful memories are shared generation to generation. Board members, committee members, and our valued volunteers work to preserve and protect Higgins Lake, so that warm memories may continue. Thank you everyone!

Charlene Cornell, President HLPOA

Dedicated to Preserving the Quality and Beauty of Higgins Lake.

Canada Geese Removal

With the COVID restrictions of last year removed, the relocation of geese from Higgins Lake was approved by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources-Wildlife Division and the Roscommon DNR office using a licensed relocation contractor. The initial roundup on June 10th was once again organized by HLSIO Board member John Ogren. Using GooseBusters LLC, the roundup resulted in the capture near Detroit Point of 11 adults and 20 goslings. The geese were located by one of six volunteer teams spotting geese for relocation. Following the roundup, there have been no further reports of broods on the lake, but there have been several reports of a group of 12 juveniles still with us. A further attempt to round up the juveniles on June 28th, when GooseBusters was available in the Higgins Lake area, failed when the geese could not be located. The relocation season ended on July 3 and the juveniles will probably be with us until the migration in the fall.

Call to Arms

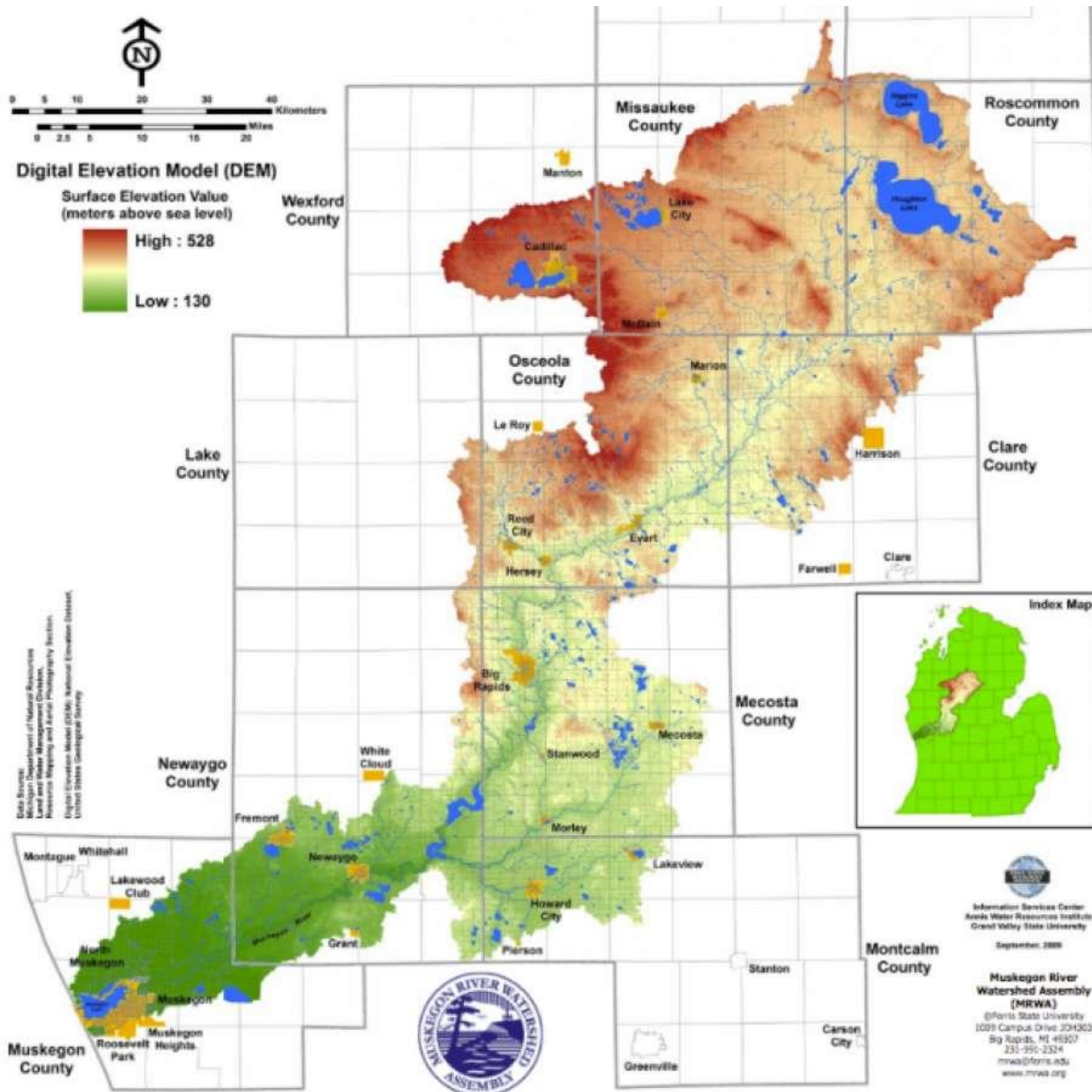
HLPOA has been involved in legal action against the AMVETS and its' commercial marina operation. Bill Carey, legal counsel for HLPOA, has asked:

"As HLPOA begins to prepare for trial against the keyholing created by the AMVETS marina dock, it is seeking HLPOA members who are willing to testify in support of its' case. Specifically, HLPOA is looking for members who can speak with personal knowledge regarding the expansion of the AMVETS marina between 2012 and current. An HLPOA member will have supportive testimony if the member has personally witnessed the creation and growth of the marina at AMVETS Lodge. Members who are willing to testify should be advised that the current trial date is October 12th, 2021. If you are a member who is able and willing to assist in this matter, please email the HLPOA office and provide your name, contact number, and a brief description of your knowledge of the AMVETS marina operation."

All Things Creepy Crawly

We have an exciting monitoring program planned this year for our main surface water inlet and outlet to Higgins Lake. On the north end of the lake, our largest inflow of surface water into the Higgins Lake is from Big Creek. On the southeast corner of the lake, the Cut River discharges water from Higgins Lake into Marl Lake and beyond. Higgins Lake is the headwaters of the Muskegon River watershed so our water eventually flows into Lake Michigan. What we do in Higgins Lake can have an effect on water bodies downstream that are within the Muskegon River watershed so maintaining good water quality is important not only for Higgins Lake users but also for those downstream.

Being part of HLPOA provides the opportunity to also connect with others in the State that have our mutual concern for water quality and good data. Starting this summer, we are working with the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly (MRWA) (<https://mrwa.org/mrwa-home/>) to gather information on invertebrates in Big Creek and the Cut River. Invertebrates are animals without backbones, like insects and snails. The numbers and types of invertebrates in a stream provides information on the water quality, as some invertebrates cannot tolerate pollution as well as others. The MRWA is collecting invertebrate data throughout the watershed and are happy to have Higgins Lake added to the effort. Following the methods developed by the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) <https://micorps.net/>, a couple of our HLPOA environmental committee members trained with other MRWA volunteers on sampling for stream invertebrates and will



be sampling Big Creek and the Cut River in September. If you are interested in poking through stream sediments looking for bugs, please contact the HLPOA office.

In preparation for our September invertebrate sampling, Scott Faulkner, Executive Director of the MRWA and Dr. Marty Holtgren, senior scientist, helped us identify the sections of Big Creek and the Cut River where we will sample for bugs. We developed cross section profiles of the streams along a 300 feet sampling length of stream and developed habitat assessments of each sampling length. We will sample 150 feet above and below the Dewey Road culvert in Big Creek. The 300 feet sampling length in the Cut River is adjacent to the island below the dam and before the County Road 100 culverts.

We will be using a net to sweep the water, along logs, and the leaf litter looking for invertebrates. Insects found will be preserved in alcohol for later species identification and to maintain a historical record of our sampling. Hopefully, we will see a lot of insects and ones that indicate good water quality. Some examples of insects that indicate good water quality include:

Dobson Fly



Clubtailed Dragonfly



Mayfly



Stonefly



Caddisfly



Midge



Maybe you have seen some of these insects around the lake or home. Pollution tolerant invertebrate species include damsel fly, true bug, sowbug, true flies, crayfish, snails, clams, and leaches. Sampling for all of the invertebrates in the stream, we will rank each species by its tolerance to pollution and count the number of each species to provide an overall water quality rating. We are hoping to see a wide variety of species and a large number of the pollution intolerant species. We are grateful for the assistance we have received from the MRWA and look forward to setting up a baseline of invertebrates in our main Higgins Lake streams. We will provide information on our collection effort in the HLPOA Winter Newsletter. By: Melanie Brown, Environmental Committee Member

HLSIO

Remarkably, we have experienced the second season in a row without Common Merganser broods on Higgins Lake. This is a tremendous difference from when we started in 2015. There is an assortment of reasons that might explain this. One is that we relocate birds over 50 miles from Higgins Lake. They may return to the relocation site to breed, not to Higgins Lake. In any case, a minimum amount of Common Merganser broods means a minimum amount of infected snails, and a minimum amount of infected snails means a minimum amount of Swimmer’s Itch cases. For a summary of the drop in snail infection, please review Swimmer’s Itch Control on Higgins Lake 2015-2020 chart below.



Table 1. The percentage of *Stagnicola emarginata* snails infected with swimmer’s itch at ten different locations on Higgins Lake (Roscommon County, MI) in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 and 2020. Data from July 2015 serve as a pre-program baseline, as the HLSIO initiated swimmer’s itch control efforts in 2015. The number in parenthesis indicates the total number of snails examined. Color of cell indicates infection level. ■ = Ideal (<0.24%), ■ = Tolerable (0.25-0.49%), ■ = Moderate (0.5-0.9%), ■ = Severe (1.0-1.9%), ■ = Epidemic (>2.0%)*

Control Program	Pre-program Baseline	All Common Merganser Broods Trapped and Relocated (Our program started in 2015)				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 5	Year 6	
Location	2015 July 10-17	2016 July 11-12	2017 July 10-11	2019 July 14-21	2020 July 8	
Dragonfly House	4.2% (167)	0.0% (200)	0.0% (222)	0.0% (108)	0.0% (120)	
Detroit Point	3.5% (200)	0.0% (200)	0.47% (214)	0.0% (144)	0.0% (220)	
Boat Club	0.5% (200)	0.0% (200)	0.0% (196)	0.0% (5)	0.0% (126)	
Sam-O-Set Park	2.0% (200)	0.5% (200)	0.0% (202)	0.48% (207)	0.0% (177)	
West Boat Launch	5.5% (200)	0.5% (200)	0.48% (210)	0.0% (149)	0.0% (292)	
North State Park	1.9% (155)	0.0% (200)	0.0% (225)	0.0% (199)	0.0% (260)	
Gerrish Township Park	6.2% (113)	1.0% (200)	0.40% (253)	0.0% (153)	0.0% (240)	
Kelly Beach	2.5% (122)	0.0% (200)	0.0% (208)	0.0% (15)	0.0% (200)	
Almeda Beach	0.5% (200)	1.0% (200)	0.0% (216)	0.0% (238)	0.0% (150)	
South State Park	3.5% (200)	2.0% (200)	0.0% (239)	0.0% (165)	0.0% (278)	
Lake-wide	2.9% (1757)	0.5% (2000)	0.14% (2185)	0.07% (1383)	< 0.05% (2063)	

*While these various levels and categories (ideal, tolerable, moderate, severe, epidemic) might seem arbitrary, they are based on decades of professional experience working on swimmer’s itch on numerous lakes in the USA.

----- SPECIALIZING IN EDUCATION AND CONTROL -----

The Higgins Lake Swimmer’s Itch Organization (HLSIO) meets year around to coordinate the activities needed to continue our program each year. Here are some of the more significant projects

1. We coordinate to have all Common Merganser duck broods identified and relocated away from Higgins Lake. This ensures that the biggest spreaders of SI on Higgins Lake are not given the chance to start cycling.
2. We relocated Canada Geese away from Higgins Lake. This reduces the possibility of Canada Geese creating SI on Higgins Lake and also assures that their nutrient load is kept out of the lake.
3. We create and operate research projects that help determine the direction of future work to combat Swimmer's Itch.
4. We work within the community to raise money in order to be able to continue our scientific program to reduce SI on Higgins Lake. This is a necessary function in order to be able to keep Swimmer’s Itch from getting another foothold in our lake. The history of other lakes removing Common Mergansers and then stopping their program, shows that if yearly removal stops, the return of SI will likely recur.

For more information about Swimmer's Itch and HLSIO, please visit the HLSIO website: hlsio.org.

Replacing the Perched Culvert on Dewey Road



The original impetus for replacing the perched culvert where Big Creek crosses Dewey Road came from Mark Tonello's Final DNR Fisheries Report* of his scientific study of the fish population and stream morphology of Big Creek in 2019. The fish population data was taken between the Dewey Road perched culvert and the outlet of the creek into Higgins Lake. It is an important environmental work with clear recommendations on how to restore and remediate this cold-water fish nursery and fishery resource for Higgins Lake.

The study was done in the summer of 2018, and the stability of the stream's temperature in a good range for trout and similar cold-water species is very significant. It is important to note that several species of small trout were found, including brook trout, which are not planted by the DNR and some rainbow trout smaller than the ones planted in the lake by the DNR. This indicates that both brook trout and rainbow trout spawn successfully in Big Creek. They presumably migrate back into the lake when they

grow too large to remain comfortably in the creek itself. Many anecdotal tales of large brook trout caught off the mouth of Big Creek in past years tend to support this likely behavior.

The report states that a key to improving the productivity of this creek as a spawning habitat for cold-water fish is replacing the perched (i.e. raised) culvert on Dewey Road with a full stream width crossing allowing unhindered fish passage. This would substantially increase the amount of stream habitat available for spawning fish coming upstream from the lake.

Also noted was the fact that every small depression and protected area in the stream held trout. This suggests that some small projects by well-led volunteers could greatly improve the trout habitat. For example, several in-stream current deflectors, several over-stream shade structures, and perhaps some small stream bank stabilization projects would make a big difference in ambient fish populations.

HLPOA pursued this project with Lyon Township and obtained their permission to proceed, with no cost to the township. The Roscommon County Road Commission, in consultation with Huron Pines Conservancy's stream remediation experts, defined, engineered, obtained permits, and finally estimated the total cost for the project as \$37,500.

Huron Pines was selected as the fiduciary agency and Josh Leisen as their project manager. This amount was granted to Huron Pines by the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association, by the Higgins Lake Foundation, by the Higgins Lake Land Conservancy, by the Big Creek Lane Association, and by the Morley Foundation. The project was begun on August 26th, but an unknown 1 1/2" DTE natural gas line was discovered that precluded installing the new culvert at the proper depth. The customers serviced by this line will be supplied by rerouting gas from another supply main, and this line will be cut off and capped on either side of the creek. The project is planned to be completed yet in September in time for the spawning runs of brook trout, brown trout and other fall spawning cold-water fishes.

*Marc Tonello's entire report is available on the HLPOA website under the Environmental Committee Tab/Tributary Creeks, Springs and Drains. http://hlpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/DNR-Big-Creek-Fishery_2019.pdf

Short-Term Rentals

The Michigan legislature is considering restricting the power of local government units to regulate short-term rentals (30 days or less) through zoning laws. Two identical bills, House Bill 4722 and Senate Bill 446, are working their way through the two legislative chambers, and it's too early to tell what the final bill or bills will be or what the effect might be on short-term rentals on and around Higgins Lake. Proponents of the bills appear to be trying to keep local government units from prohibiting short-term rentals or from imposing restrictions on short-term rentals that do not apply to other residential properties. Opponents of the bills say those restrictions will impact local government units' ability to inspect and regulate short-term rentals and that the bills more generally unduly limit local control.

Riparian, Overnight Mooring – PA 56

The local law enforcement groups approved the use of PA 56 signs to warn people about illegal mooring and make enforcement more predictable. So far, the Gerrish Police identified eight road ends for display of the signs and supervised the installation of the signs. Two additional locations are waiting on the approval of the Roscommon County Road Commission for the location of sign posts. The Gerrish Township police have made 4 PA 56 citations so far this summer. Lyon Township has not yet selected locations for the PA 56 signs, but we hope that will happen soon.

The law enforcement groups also approved a boat tagging system to more easily provide warnings to potential offenders. These tags have been distributed to township and county officers and are currently in use. HLPOA used some of your annual dues money to pay for the tags and the signs to expedite the process.

Your role, as HLPOA members, is to continue to report overnight mooring offenders to the non-emergency number at Central Dispatch, 989-275-0911. Along with that call, a photograph of the boat and its MC number is helpful if it can be taken without confrontation. Even if no immediate response from law enforcement is possible, the complaint will be recorded and help build a history for repeat offenders. You can make your call anonymously if you prefer.



Marina Litigation Update

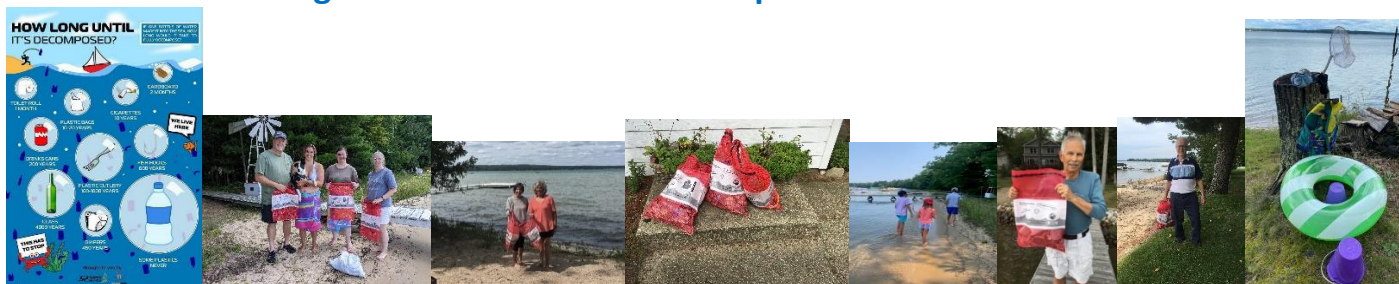
This summer there were 24 water craft moored at the AMVETS’ dock. The dock is being used for off-site users renting mooring space from the AMVET organization. The dock is NOT for lodge guests, but is a commercial marina located in a residential neighborhood zoned R-1. HLPOA believes that this activity is illegal and is currently litigating the matter. Trial is scheduled for October, 2021.

We believe that this lawsuit is critical to the future of Higgins Lake. It is our responsibility to protect Higgins Lake from marina development in residential areas. Please consider contributing to HLPOA’s legal fund. Send your contribution to: HLPOA, PO Box 55, Roscommon, MI 48653. (Include “legal fund” on the check memo line.)

Proposed Sewer Update

The Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority (GLUA) held an informational meeting at Roscommon High School on August 27th. The presentation was well received. The GLUA Board meets at the Gerrish Township Hall. The meetings are open to the public. If you, neighbors, or friends want more information please attend one of these meetings or go to one of the Township websites and follow the link to the GLUA. It is important accurate information is shared and your voice is heard. Unfortunately, much misinformation is generated via social media. Expect to hear of additional community meetings in the coming weeks.

Trash Bash – Muskegon River Watershed Cleanup



HLPOA Board members with their families, friends, and neighbors participated in the Annual Muskegon River Watershed Cleanup. Higgins Lake is the headwaters of the Muskegon River Watershed, and this was our first try at joining their annual August cleanup. We want to do our best to avoid sending trash downstream from Higgins Lake.

Most of the Muskegon River Watershed is comprised of many miles of streams which are often heavily travelled by canoe, kayak and inner tube users. Often these users leave behind a considerable trail of debris and trash. Michigan River Watershed Assembly's (MRWA) experience over the years is that many, many pounds of cans, plastic bags and other bits of trash are collected by their volunteers each year as they police their rivers and streams in this late August cleanup activity.

In comparison to our downstream counterparts, the amount of trash that we found on the shores of Higgins Lake this August was small, as it was obvious most riparians do an excellent job of maintaining their own beach. Plus, the physical challenge of climbing over or going around the docks along the shore is prohibitively difficult for our volunteers. A huge thanks to all who helped! Special Recognition to The Comstock Family, The Browns, The Schaeffers, Higgins Lake Boat Club, The Jim Frye family and Marilyn Cornell.

This is Higgins Lake by Austin Kramer

(Mike and Dixie Valko's, HLPOA members, grandson when he was in fifth grade.)

This is the lake, where people relax while they sit on the water, and laugh, and swim.

This is the lake, where you can cool down after a hot day or just feel the nice cool water on you.

This is the lake, where entertainment happens every second and activities are endless.

This is the lake where interesting treasures are everywhere and the amount of joy is overwhelming.

This is the lake, where you leave the real world behind and your imagination takes over .

Where work turns to play and stress goes away. This is HIGGINS LAKE!

PLEASE SUPPORT THE BUSINESSES THAT SO GENEROUSLY ADVERTISED IN THE 2021 MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY. TELL THEM YOU SAW THEIR AD!

Directory Corrections:

Please make the following corrections to your HLPOA Directory
Advantage Mortgage Company, Doug 989-275-1515
5th Street Market, 989-275-1515

Thank You to our generous donors

General Fund: Evelyn Dinu, Lucey Douglas & Megan Lucey-Yax, Paul & Kate Duhaime, Tom Hoffmeyer, Mark Dupuie & Elizabeth Jones, Dave & Karen Jordan, Daniel & Mary Okeefe, Sandra Olson, Wayne Schoeppach, Jay & Bev Trucks

Environmental Fund: Big Creek Lane Association, James Clarke, Dean & Karyn Elson, Higgins Lake Foundation, Douglas Lucey & Megan Lucey-Yax, Mark Janulis & Robin Bonaguro, Marl Dupuie & Elizabeth Jones, John Grein & Liz Bretl, Dave & Karen Jordan, Brian Lamerson & Sandra Kneller, Morley Family Cottage, Sandra Olson, Anneke Swinehart, Fred Swinehart, Mary Louise Warne

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Thank You to our special helpers who donated their time: Allison Theisen, Ellen and Henry Berglund

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