



Higgins Lake Property Owners AssociationSM

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President: Charlene Cornell, **Vice Pres:** Greg Semack, **Secretary:** Herb Weatherly, **Treasurer:** Bruce Carleton
Directors: Wayne Brooks, Jack Cornell, Curt DeVoe, Bob McKellar, John Ogren, Fred Swinehart, Herb Weatherly

Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

February 20, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes

ZOOM Virtual Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Charlene Cornell at 9:00 A.M.

Board Members Present: Charlene Cornell, Greg Semack, Bruce Carleton, Herb Weatherly, Bob McKellar, John Ogren, Fred Swinehart, Becky Gibson, Curt DeVoe, Jack Cornell, and Wayne Brooks.

Agenda: Charlene said that we will have the riparian and environmental committee reports after the Minutes are approved, as John and Fred may need to leave early. Becky asked to have Spongy Moth information added to new business. Charlene asked to also add a fundraiser to new business.

President's Comments: Charlene wished everyone to have a happy President's Day!

January Minutes: The January 16, 2023, Minutes were accepted as written.

Committee Reports:

Secretary/Office: None

Riparian Committee: John reported the following:

1. Riparian Committee Projects
 - Install PA 56 signs at the nine locations recommended by Roscommon County Police Department and Gerrish Township Police. Also, replace the Jacob's public notices signs at these locations where needed.
 - Inspect and photograph all road end locations to check the condition of Jacob's public notices and to assess whether the road ends are usable for boat launching purposes.
2. Update on meeting on January 24 with Jennifer Jermalowicz-Jones and Mike Solomon of Restorative Lake Sciences (RLS) about their preliminary 2022 report. RLS continues to maintain the accuracy of their measurements and will add footnotes and commentary revisions to explain the significant reductions in the reported areas of EWM (Eurasian Water Milfoil) and SSW (Starry Stonewort). RLS will also integrate the results of HLF (Higgins Lake Foundation) and MTT DASH (Diver Assisted Suction Harvester) boat 2022 harvest reports into the RLS final report. On Feb 15 Jennifer texted that progress on the revisions had been delayed but that she will work on the revision starting on Feb 20.

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3. Update on meeting with DNR on January 18 about AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) risks at the DNR Higgins Lake boat accesses. This was a joint meeting with HLF. The discussion focused primarily on dissatisfaction with the South State Park lagoon and lack of urgency with repair of boat wash systems. Plans for a more extensive data collection program for 2023 at all three accesses were discussed and DNR participation and comments were invited.

Environmental Committee: Fred reported the following:

Project to Monitor Water Flow Rates in the Cut River Moving Forward

Last month, the HLPOA Board discussed the purchase of a turbine flow meter to facilitate a monitoring project for the Cut River. Flow Data would be taken throughout the year from below the Dam at the lake outlet and perhaps also at the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) Bridge where an earlier MRWA project was conducted. The intent would be to establish a baseline data record for flow in the Cut for future considerations. HLPOA Board member Jack Cornell offered to fund the purchase, and delivery is expected in the next few weeks. Thank you, Jack!

A volunteer measuring crew will be organized soon and will be “in the water” after a training period with the new device. Professional assistance from Huron Pines has been offered to assist in this training and will assure that the methodology of data collection is well defined and done properly. The data will eventually be placed on our HLPOA website.

Testing for Pharmaceuticals in Some Higgins Lake Residents’ Drinking Water

We have been seeking volunteers to have their wells tested, at no cost, for Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products content. Letters of solicitation were sent out by the Central Michigan Public Health Department in January to about 20 owners of wells that had been previously shown to have high nitrate or nitrite content, which would indicate a high probability that they would also prove positive for PPCP (Pharmaceutical and Personal Care Products) content.

Several members have volunteered to take part in the program, and we thank them for their offers for participation. We still need four or five more candidates to proceed with the study. The locations that the Health Department suggests being prioritized for participation would be shallow wells along the following streets (in no particular order): Carlos, Chaney Point, Rising Fawn, Charlene, Hillsdale, and Robbins.

If persons can be found who would like to participate in this program from these areas, please have them contact the HLPOA office or Fred Swinehart directly.

2023 Student Environmental Monitoring Program for Higgins Lake

This project is planned to once again be a feature of the Roscommon Area Public High School’s STEM. (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) program. John Blizzard and members of the High School’s staff are meeting this month to organize the sixth year of the program. Funding to support continuation of this valuable program will be sought from several area benevolent organizations and interested individuals.

Testing for Synthetic Estrogen (“EE2”) in Higgins Lake

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I have been corresponding with Jim Wilkinson of the Grayling Office of USGS and Lisa Fogarty, the Chief Science Officer of the Upper Midwest Mid-West Group of USGS (United States Geological Survey) in Lansing. From a scientific point of view, a project to confirm the presence of the forever chemical, synthetic estrogen (“EE2”), in the surface waters of Higgins Lake is too obvious to pursue. Since the presence of PPCP has been established, then EE2 will be there as well. The only question might be how much!

However, from a scientific perspective, two avenues of research would logically be open for examination. One would be the extent of EE2 contamination in the Muskegon River Watershed taken as a whole, much as in the recent EGLE (MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy) testing for PFAS chemicals contamination there. The second would be the extent of bioaccumulation of EE2 in fish. It is well known that EE2 accumulation strongly diminishes fertility and resistance to disease for rainbow trout, for example. This could be a “canary in the coal mine” study that might extrapolate to human health. Resulting, for example, in published exposure limitations similar to the recent Health Department restrictions on the amounts of fish that can be consumed safely by humans from Higgins Lake waters.

These are big questions, but our conversations continue. I will be discussing these topics also with the scientists at MRWA (Muskegon Watershed Assembly), and with our friends at MSU (Michigan State University). I hope to bring them proactively into this conversation.

How do all of these findings impact us on Higgins Lake?

Already there have been great advances made in the science of sequestration or destruction of the dangerous PFAS family of chemicals. Unsurprisingly, these methods often require strong catalysts and activation by UV light or other high-energy sources. Similar solutions will likely emerge to treat other forever chemicals in time, given the recognition by the public of their danger to animal and human health. None of these solutions will ever be economically applicable to distributed septic systems. The only place for them to be actually realized will be in treating concentrated effluents from centralized sanitary sewage treatment installations.

We need a sanitary sewage treatment system such as the one proposed one the GLUA (Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority) to have any hope of getting ahead of these now known dangerous problems that exist in our local environment.

Treasurer’s Report: The January 31, 2023, financials were presented. Bruce stated that the numbers are typical for this time of year, with income heavier and expenses spread throughout the year. Bruce added there is 1 typo on the Statement of Income, which will be corrected.

Membership & Communication: Wayne reported that to-date, we are 12 members short vs one year ago. Reminder postcards will be mailed this week to those who have not yet renewed. Wayne also reported that directory advertising sales have been positive.

Becky informed us that the Winter newsletter has been forwarded to members. Charlene added that the email blast was well received, regarding the data collection of freeze/thaw dates of Higgins Lake.

PAC: Greg reported that the county commissioners are looking at the dams on each county lake (Houghton, Higgins, and St Helen) and are in the process of determining if there are to be Special Assessment Districts for each lake to be set up to repair or rebuild the current dams. Questions about the current operation and oversight are still being worked through by the County Commissioners. There appears to be work necessary on

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the Higgins Lake dam to bring it back to its original condition. The recall effort for Gerrish Township did not reach the required signature threshold so there will be no recall election in the near future for Gerrish Township.

HLSIO: Greg reported that the DNR meeting on January 30th with Barb Avers, Wildlife Specialist, confirmed that there was not going to be any merganser relocation allowed again for 2023, similarly as in 2022, due to the fact that Avian Flu is still an issue. There was much discussion at this meeting which also included DNR veterinarian Megan Moriarity and Barb's immediate supervisor, Sara Thompson about the reasons behind the suspension of the program but the DNR had no recommendations from other agencies to share with us that substantiated this suspension. Most of their argument was based on decreasing DNR liability by allowing the relocation program and their belief that the swimmers Itch problem was not significant when compared to the potential risk of spreading Avian Flu.

The HLSIO will discuss this situation with Crystal Lake and see if we might try to pursue some further course of action. We are also asking the DNR, once again, to allow us to do research using the anti-parasitic drug praziquantel to treat merganser ducks. A proposal has been made by Drs. Dejong and Blankespoor to revisit that option. HLSIO has also agreed to continue our research collecting data from SI incidents in Higgins Lake over the course of the swimming season in 2023 to add to our data gathered in 2022.

Ongoing Business: Curt reported that Dave Udy convinced the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) Land Committee to reverse its earlier decision to deny GLUA's (Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority) request to transfer the DNR property designated as the preferred location for GLUA's wastewater treatment plant. The DNR committee has recommended that the DNR Director approve the transfer of that land. Curt said this puts the sewer plan back on track, still subject to the DNR Director's approval as well as getting greater than 50% approval in Lyon Township.

Regarding the Camp Grayling expansion, Becky sent an email blast to our members, providing the deadline to provide comments. Thank you, Becky!

Charlene informed us that the Roscommon County Commissioners meeting is available by Zoom on alternate Wednesdays, work session at 9:00 A.M. Check their website.

New Business: Becky informed us of the March 18th deadline, for areas to be sprayed for Spangy Moth (previously called Gypsy Moth). She will prepare an email blast for this information to be forwarded to our members.

Charlene asked for assistance with fundraiser ideas. Bruce suggested a fundraiser that would highlight environmental issues, where we could get wide-spread support. Becky suggested we do this to "kick-off" the summer, such as with the environment, wash-your-boat, or riparian rights. Jack added to highlight a purpose with a passion. Charlene has volunteers that will assist with this endeavor.

Adjournment: Greg moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Herb. Motion approved. The meeting adjourned at 10:02 A.M.

The next meeting will be March 20, 2023, at 9:00 A.M.

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