



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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Remember to pay your HLPOA dues by January 31, 2025. Thank you for your continued support.

President's Message



Welcome Fall! After a wonderful, waterland summer, we had kids in the water from June 28 to late August when they left for school, hardly missing a day. A special welcome to almost 50 new HLPOA member families. We are excited to welcome you and for the support you all give to the HLPOA efforts "to preserve and protect Higgins Lake...". As you'll see here, it has been another busy summer. Check out the website, hlpoa.org, too, for more information. We welcome you to lend some of your expertise and passion to our efforts as we are looking for everything from a new board member to committee help and occasional volunteers for special projects. Please note the special fundraising opportunity below. Thank you!

Enjoy reading of some of our efforts to enhance and to keep Higgins Lake a "water wonderland" for generations to come.

Charlene Cornell, President HLPOA

Dedicated to Preserving the Quality and Beauty of Higgins Lake

Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Data Collection at Higgins Lake Boat Accesses

Higgins Lake Property Owners Association (HLPOA) and Higgins Lake Foundation (HLF) work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to combat the aquatic invasive species (AIS) that already exist in Higgins Lake and to reduce the risk of additional AIS entering the lake. The existing AIS are Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM), starry stonewort (SSW) and zebra and quagga mussels. The DNR treat their three boat accesses with chemicals where needed to combat EWM and with Diver Assisted Suction Harvest (DASH) boat harvesting to control SSW. (There is no known treatment for zebra and quagga mussels.) In addition, they use signs and advertising programs such as "Clean, Drain and Dry" to make the public aware of AIS risks. They also provide cleaning stations at the accesses for the use of boat operators. The DNR makes only a limited effort to inspect boats for AIS at its thousand plus accesses around the state. Typically, their two conservation officers in Roscommon County allocate two hours a week to AIS inspections during the summer.

Higgins Lake Foundation takes on the extensive (and expensive) role of combatting EWM and SSW in the open waters of Higgins Lake with their DASH boat harvesting, now in its twelfth year. So far, this effort has proven adequate to keep EWM and SSW in check based on their annual harvest reports. In addition, this year their consultant, Dr. Luttenton, added monthly inspections for new AIS at the three DNR accesses as well as the other four most active boat access around the lake (Maplehurst Avenue, Kelly Beach, Townline Road and Gerrish Marina). Early detection of new AIS will help with control or possible eradication.

Since 2022, HLF and HLPOA worked together on interviews of boat operators at the DNR accesses and data collection involving all seven accesses mentioned above. The primary purpose of the interviews is to determine the relative risk of new AIS entry at the accesses based on the number of non-Higgins Lake boats arriving with visible weeds. From this work in 2023, we determined that 84% of the Higgins Lake risk is at the South State Park. As a result, the 2024 focus has been on the South State Park with interviews by HLF student workers. Collection of data on visible weeds on trailers after launch has also continued. This provides a comparison of relative usage between the accesses and a check of data consistency from previous years.

The interviews of operators and inspection of boats for visible aquatic weeds at the South State Park by the HLF students proved to be very effective this summer. Higgins Lake Foundation student employees, Tyler Cane and Megan Houserman, worked at the South State Park boat wash. The DNR provided a small workstation at the entry to the boat washes where the interviews and inspections took place. During the months of June/July, 394 boat operators were interviewed. About one of eight boats arrive with visible weeds, 13.7%. The boat operators were requested to wash or to allow the HLF students to wash their boats. Over 80% of the boat operators complied. Of the nine non-Higgins Lake boats that arrived with weeds, eight were washed which significantly reduced the 84% risk of new AIS entry while the HLF students were present.

In August thru Labor Day weekend, another 457 boat operators were interviewed and there was a surprisingly large reduction in the boats arriving with visible weeds, 4.2% versus the 13.7% in June and July. And only 1 of the 138 visiting boats arrived with weeds. Many of the boats that use the South State Park access are repeat users and the persistent weekly inspections by the HLF students seems to have improved the focus of operators on washing their boats. The HLF students worked 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM shifts on most of the busy Saturday and Sunday mornings. HLF plans to do even more next year by adding hours and possibly some additional shifts on holiday weekends. Let's hope that the improved focus on boat washing continues in 2025!

Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization's (HLSIO) year-end update

HLSIO had our trapping and relocation program reinstated after a two-year absence. We were able to take the only Common Merganser brood off the lake on June 20. Coupled with having a very low snail infection rate due to our program's past success, we saw a minimal uptick in Swimmer's Itch (SI) cases this summer.

Swimmer's Itch Solutions (SIS) published a peer reviewed paper this year which chronicles the success of their trapping and relocation of common merganser ducks as a solid solution for controlling SI on inland lakes.

HLSIO continued our water research study giving us even more data to analyze to tell us about SI on Higgins Lake and to better control SI in the future.

In addition, we did more research on the amount of time it takes parasites that infect ducklings to become viable. Now we have an even more accurate idea of how soon merganser broods need to be removed from the lake. This is extremely critical in keeping SI cases low. We anticipate another peer reviewed paper to be published on this subject matter soon.

In August, HLSIO held their summer fundraiser dinner once again at Witt's barn, catered by Fred's of Roscommon. As in the past, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves. Dr Blankespoor of SIS discussed their relocation paper and answered questions for the attendees. Once again, the Higgins Lake community demonstrated their generosity in making the fundraiser a success.

Although it may never be possible to prevent any cases of SI on Higgins Lake, HLSIO continues to work at keeping them to a minimum.



<https://events.anr.msu.edu/event.cfm?eventID=F4D2EAF33CAA7DFC5615BF77602EF1E2179F0AF6BCB74774D56023B921F8D6E8>

Fall 2024 Macro-Invertebrate Survey in the Cut River and Big Creek

This fall the macroinvertebrate sampling team once again surveyed Big Creek and Cut River for all types of macroinvertebrates (insects, spiders, crustaceans, mollusca, worms) and performed a habitat assessment of each stream. The team followed sampling and processing protocols provided by the Michigan Clean Water Corps (MiCorps) and the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly.

This is the fourth year of sampling headed by Melanie Brown. The Cut River had a large drop in water quality rating in 2024 compared to previous years due to the low abundance of macroinvertebrates in the samples processed. Green filamentous algae, that was first noticed a couple years ago, is now covering the Cut River bottom throughout the sampling location in the river, which may be altering the habitat that supports macroinvertebrates. Big Creek appears to be holding fairly steady with more than half the years in the good and very good level of water quality. To review the report, go to: <http://hlpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Fall-2024-Macro-Invertebrate-Survey-Results.pdf>

Special thanks to volunteers: Wayne and Susan Brooks, Rick Larobardiere, Dan Schaeffer, Candy Hendrickson, Linda Stevens, Jamie and Melanie Brown, and Duncan and Kathy Lawrence.

Testing for Oak Wilt

The deadly fungal disease, Oak Wilt, affecting oak trees is difficult to control. It is imperative to avoid pruning oaks between April and July and to immediately seal wounds during that time to prevent beetle access to these trees. Shared roots of infected trees can also infect healthy trees. It is now possible to confirm Oak Wilt using leaf samples. You can submit fresh and recently fallen leaves for accurate diagnosis. A trained arborist can then determine next steps to stop the spread of Oak Wilt. Infected wood should be burned buried, chipped on-site, or tarped for a year. For testing information and additional resources, go to:

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/new-research-puts-oak-wilt-testing-within-reach-of-homeowners>

Free Seminar about glacial lakes and glacial landscapes formed in the Roscommon area

Michigan State University Professor, Randall Schaetzl will be presenting latest research on Glacial Lake Roscommon and the glaciers that formed the landscapes around Houghton Lake. The talk will be held at Kirtland



HLPOA Dues for 2025

HLPOA dues for 2025 will be \$125.00. Please note, dues for 2025 are due by January 31, 2025.

Board of Directors – HLPOA Board Member Position Available

Currently there is an opening available on the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association (HLPOA) Board. If you have an interest in applying, please forward a short resume to: hlpoa0@gmail.com or mail directly to HLPOA, PO Box 55, Roscommon, MI 48653. For more information regarding the Board, please contact Election Committee Co-Chair, Robert McKellar. He can be reached at rlmckellar@msh-iplaw.com or 989-631-4551

The drawing will be held at noon on April 30, 2025. The winner will be called immediately and the winning ticket number will be posted on the HLPOA website. Also, an email will be sent to HLPOA members with the winning ticket number. If the winner is not fond of heights, the ticket may be given to a relative or friend.



One does not have to be a member of HLPOA to purchase raffle tickets. If you would like to purchase tickets along with your membership dues, please include the dollar amount of the raffle tickets in the memo section of your check.

While the excitement may be the Mackinac Bridge Tower Tour, let's not forget that the purpose of this raffle is to assist HLPOA in our mission statement "to protect, preserve, and enhance the quality of Higgins Lake and its surrounding watershed".

Special thank you – Sue Gelderbloom for technical support and The Bill Schmidt and Earl Townsend families.

FALL DONORS 2024

General Fund: Bob & Suzanne Bennett, James & Spring Clarke, Don Heys, Bob Hoffman, Terry Rye and Jennie Walker

Environmental Fund: Ed & Judy Brown, James & Spring Clarke, Higgins Lake Foundation, Terry Rye, Jennie Walker and Ana Vazquez

Legal Fund: James & Spring Clarke, David & Diana Drake, James & Victoria McCarthy, Terry Rye, Gail Wadell and Jennie Walker

In memory of Violet Rockwell: Jeffrey Wilson

Teresa Dennings sent a donation in memory of her husband, Ken Dennings: "He loved Higgins Lake very much".

2024-2025 HLPOA Board: President - Charlene Cornell, Vice President - Greg Semack, Secretary - Herb Weatherly, Treasurer - Bruce Carleton. Directors: Wayne Brooks, Becky Gibson, Curt DeVoe, Bob McKellar, John Ogren and Fred Swinehart. Administrative Assistant - Kathleen Barger.



Charlene Cornell presents \$2,000 check from HLPOA to Ron Bradley, Marine Patrol, Higgins Lake.

RAFFLE OPPORTUNITY

HLPOA is excited to announce a "once in a lifetime" opportunity. Raffle tickets for a Mackinac Bridge Tower Tour are now on sale. This one hour tour for 2 people is available next summer, May 1 to October 15, 2025. The Mackinac Bridge Authority requires that participants be at least 18 years old, 56" or taller, and be able to climb a 40 foot ladder. The towers stand 552 feet above the water and the views are spectacular.

Tickets are \$5.00 each or 5 tickets for \$20. A great give for birthdays or stocking stuffers! Make checks payable to HLPOA with "Raffle Tickets" in the memo section. Please include your phone number. Mail your payment to HLPOA, P. O. Box 55, Roscommon, MI 48653. (Unable to process credit card or on-line payments.) Your tickets will be sent to you via United States Mail.