



Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

AuSable River Center, 211 North Main Street
 Mailing Address: P. O. Box 55, Roscommon, MI 48653
 Website: www.hlpoa.org Email: hlpoa0@gmail.com
 Ph.: (989) 275-9181 Fax: (989) 275-9182
 Office Hours: M, W & Th from 9 am - 2:00 pm

To Protect, Preserve and Enhance the Quality of Higgins Lake and Its Surrounding Watershed

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President's Message



Winter has arrived and with a bang, frigid temps and days and days of snowfall. This has not caused a lapse in our HLPOA efforts to work for the betterment of Higgins Lake. From standing in the icy Cut River to measure the flow rate, to collaborating with neighbor lakes to convince the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to allow merganser duck relocation, to meeting with DNR regarding the introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) at their launch sites, and much more, board members and volunteers continue with our efforts.

A big "thank you" to those of you who have renewed this month. We look forward to the continued and much appreciated support from our Higgins Lake neighbors.

Charlene Cornell, President HLPOA

Dedicated to Preserving the Quality and Beauty of Higgins Lake

2023 Data Collection Project-DNR Accesses on Higgins Lake

During the 2023 summer season, HLPOA and the Higgins Lake Foundation (HLF) conducted a joint data gathering project at the three DNR boat accesses. The primary purpose of the project was to explore options to reduce the risk of new Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) entering the lake. Also, we want to minimize the risk of further spreading of the two AIS plants already in the lake; Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) and starry stonewort (SSW).

The data collection involved 449 Interviews of arriving boat operators, 2,166 inspections for visible weeds on parked boat trailers after boat launch and 210 inspections for visible weeds on boat/trailers leaving the accesses. Other boat accesses around the lake were also inspected to determine risks relative to the DNR accesses.

The data indicates that the risk for new AIS plant entry at DNR accesses is 75% at the South State Park, 21% at the North State Park and 4% at the West Access. The risk from other boat accesses is de minimis relative to the DNR accesses. The risk of spreading existing AIS plants within Higgins Lake is 85% from the South State Park lagoon and 15% combined from the other two accesses which use direct access launching. Also, the risk of spreading Higgins Lake AIS to other lakes is primarily from the South State Park where about 50% of departing boats and/or trailers carry visible weeds.

Recommended action steps follow:

- **South State Park:** Eliminate the lagoon and replace it with direct access launching. Add weekend inspections of arriving boats for visible weeds.
- **North State Park:** Add inspections of boats for visible weeds as part of the existing check for vehicle park registrations.
- **West Access:** Staff the existing hut during busy weekend periods to check for visible weeds.

Office hours: Monday – Friday 8:30 am – 4:30 (closed for lunch 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm)

Drop off water sample on Mondays or deliver to Central Michigan District Health Department, Gladwin Office, 103 North Bowery, Gladwin, Michigan during the week
Test for bacteria (\$20) Tests for nitrates and nitrites are not available at this time.

Higgins Lake Water Flow Testing



January 9, 2024, Fred Swinehart checking water flow leaving Higgins Lake into Cut River, Roscommon, Michigan

During the summer months of 2023, when populations around the lake were high, phosphorus levels in the Cut River averaged 0.4 mg/l and the summer water flows measured were at least 35 cubic feet per second. This resulted in at least 5 or 6 tons of phosphorus that went down the Cut River in the months from May through September of 2023.

<https://hlpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Flow-Rate-Measurement-in-the-Cut-River.pdf>

As Scott Faulkner of the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly says, “The phosphorous from Higgins Lake is the “bad news gift” that just keeps on giving to the Muskegon River.” An around-the-lake sanitary sewer would eliminate this serious source of pollution.



Lyon Township Approves Septic Ordinance

At the December 20, 2023 meeting, the Lyon Township Board unanimously passed Ordinance 64 titled the Private Wastewater Systems Ordinance which will take effect April 1, 2024.

The ordinance requires Township residents to connect to a public sewer system where available. If one is not available, they will be required to connect to a septic disposal system that is compliant with Central Michigan District Health Department regulations.

The ordinance uses a phase-in approach for registration and inspections based on location and age of the existing septic system. The plan is as follows:

If located within the Sewer Assessment District (SAD), systems that are 20 years or older are to be **REGISTERED** within 90 days of the effective date; 10 to 20 years old systems within 180 days, less than 10 year old systems within 365 days. **INSPECTIONS** for systems that are 20 years old or older are to be inspected within 270 days of the effective date; systems that are 10 to 20 years old to be inspected by January 1, 2025. If less than 10 years old, they are to be inspected by January 1, 2026.

If located outside the Sewer Assessment District (SAD), systems 20 years or older are to be **REGISTERED** within 180 days of the effective date, 10 to 20 years old with in 270 days; less than 10 years old within 365 days. **INSPECTIONS** for systems outside the SAD are to be done by January 1, 2026.

After an inspection, the septic tank(s) must be pumped and serviced by a Michigan licensed septage hauler. If a system has been pumped within three years prior to the

- DNR chemically treat the boat launches where needed for EWM and continue DASH boat harvesting of EWM and SSW while the lagoon is still in use.
- HLF will continue its DASH boat harvesting in the rest of the lake to keep EWM and SSW in check.

The full study is posted on the HLPOA web site and has been shared with the DNR. A meeting is scheduled with the DNR in late January to discuss the report and, hopefully, agree on action steps. Further data collection will continue in 2024 to monitor AIS risks. <https://hlpoa.org/higgins-lake/environmental-lake-level/water-quality/>

Life is About Testing the Waters

Roscommon High School Chemistry students completed their sixth year of Higgins Lake Water analysis. This is a multi-year evaluation of the chemistry of the Lake and any changes over time. The testing began as a project in concert with the Roscommon High School chemistry students and their teacher. Raven personnel trained students with all the procedures and testing protocols necessary to complete this study. This would not be possible and a success without being generously supported by: Higgins Lake Foundation, Higgins Lake Property Owners Association, Roscommon Rotary Club, John Ogren, Fred Swinehart, Kevin Kessler, and Anthony Blizzard.

To view the Report for 2023 go to: <http://hlpoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Higgins-Lake-report-September-2023-1.pdf>



Roscommon High School Chemistry Students: Jason Beckwith, Rielly Chever, Matt Coffey, Bo Collins, Gabby Gray, Logan Hasting, Andre Janisse, Josh Mayes, Isbell McCourt, Jazmine Rees, Corbin Tyler, Jacob Ziebell

Have you had your drinking water tested recently?

Residents of Higgins Lake are part of the millions of Michiganders that depend on private wells for their drinking water. Drinking water is not generally monitored after initial well construction and inspection. The responsibility of care, proper maintenance, and

frequent testing for this drinking water source from private wells falls on the homeowner. Many contaminants both natural and man-made lack taste, smell, or color and can harm our health. Some of these contaminants can cause long term health problems especially for pregnant persons, infants and young children. EGLE and Health Departments encourage homeowners to maintain private residential wells through routine inspection, water testing, and reporting water quality concerns. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) recommends every year wells be test for Coliform Bacteria and *E.Coli*, nitrates, and nitrites, as well as, every three to five years arsenic, copper, and lead.

For more information on contamination, Coliform Bacteria, nitrates and nitrites in drinking water go to: <https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/safety-injury-prev/environmental-health/topics/care-for-miwell/contamination>

To find out more about what is in your drinking water, contact one of the water testing sites below. HLPOA continues to collect data of old wells with high levels of nitrates and nitrites. The results are private information, but if you would like to share your results please contact our Environmental Committee, Fred Swinehart, hlpoa0@gmail.com

Water Testing:

Raven Analytical Lab
104 North First Street
Roscommon, MI 48653
989-275-4790

Lobby open 24 hours to pick up sampling bottles
Water testing Monday through Thursday 9:00 am – 3:00 pm
Tests for bacteria, nitrates, nitrites (\$40)

Central Michigan District Health Department –
Roscommon County
200 Grand Avenue, Suite A
Prudenville, MI 48651
989-366-9166
Tests only for bacteria at this time

evaluation and documentation concerning this prior pumping has been provided to the Supervising Authority prior to the inspection, the septic tank(s) will not need to be pumped as a part of the inspection under this Ordinance. Contact the Lyon Township Office for more information, or questions as they relate to your specific situation.

Permission Granted to Relocate Merganser Ducks

The Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization (HLSIO) is already on its way to a Happy New Year. Early in January we received word that the suspension of our highly successful common merganser duck relocation program has ended. In the summer of 2024, we will once again be able to remove any broods of merganser ducks and relocate them to areas where the *Stagnicola* snails are not present.

The system of removing broods of merganser ducks was implemented in 2015 and has greatly reduced the incident of Swimmer's Itch on Higgins Lake. The program had been suspended by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for the last two years due to concerns about the spread of Avian Flu. Although there is still evidence of the flu in bird populations, the DNR no longer considers it to be reason enough to stop our program from moving a relatively small number of wild birds from one wild bird location to another wild bird location. Additionally, merganser duck behavior is typically not conducive to spreading the disease to other birds.

We were, however, unable to obtain a permit to relocate Canada Geese. Goose Busters will be hired again to disrupt nesting sites in the spring. To deter Canada Geese from leaving the lake and exploring your lakefront, consider a change of landscape along the shoreline. Michigan Shoreland Stewards Program encourages inland lake property owners to use natural landscaping techniques for erosion control and natural habitat. Manicured lawns directly to the lake provide easy access for geese to wander on to your lakefront property. For additional information on becoming a Michigan Shoreland Steward and creating natural shorelines go to: <https://www.mishorelandstewards.org>

Trim Oak Trees Now

The time to trim oak trees around Higgins Lake is NOW. Oak trees are at high risk of spreading Oak Wilt during April through July. This is due to the high number of flying

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beetles spreading the fungal spores during the summer months. Oak Wilt is a fungus that moves from tree to tree. Red oaks are more vulnerable and can die within weeks of being infected. White oaks can be affected also. To report Oak Wilt infections, go to: <http://www.michigan.gov/ForestHealth>

Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority (GLUA)

Please continue your support of the GLUA. Watch for email Blasts regarding needs for acquiring funds through your state representative and/or state senator.

Higgins Lake Property Owner's Association Dues 2024

For those of you who have recently joined HLPOA or renewed your membership, thank you. Your Board members continue to attend local meetings, Roscommon County meetings, participate in State-wide lake organization programs, meet with Roscommon leaders, and organize projects to study and enhance the quality of the lake throughout the year. Please check our website for updates and watch for our quarterly newsletters, as well as, timely email Blasts for HLPOA activities. May 1, 2024 is the last day for dues to be received in order to be in this year's HLPOA Membership Directory.

Please support Higgins Lake Property Owners Association if you have not already done so, with your paid membership for 2024. The membership form is on our website www.hlpoa.org. Please note: dues this year are \$115.00.

Save the Date – July 6, 2024!



Plans are in motion for our Second Annual "For the Love of the Lake, Sips, Chips & Dips". Watch for email Blasts for further information.