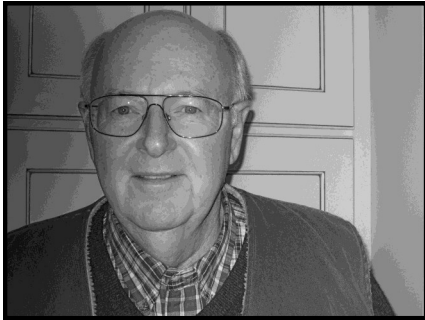




# Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association Newsletter-July, 2011



## Bob Kingon— President's Message

Sitting at my laptop, I am reflecting on what I have learned during my first year as President of ESLA.

**First** is the importance of having over 20 Officers and Directors who are committed and active in pursuing the goals of our organization. Last fall, the idea was hatched to sponsor a photo contest for ESLA members. An ad hoc committee of Directors was formed, who within a period of just a few weeks created the contest with all the details fully worked out. Another example of working together effectively is the effort of the Communications Committee in redesigning the ESLA website to include features such as hot button issues, a gallery of area photographs and allowing members to pay their dues online; as well as making the website generally more attractive and accessible. Please visit the website [www.elk-skegemog.org](http://www.elk-skegemog.org) and sign you and your young folks up in our photo contest.

As you may know, our ESLA con-

stituents are divided into Zones. Zone A includes all of Elk Rapids Township, including the Village. Zone B includes Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog riparian owners in Milton Township. Zone C includes Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog frontage in Whitewater Township in Grand Traverse County. Zone D includes Lake Skegemog owners in Clearwater Township in Kalkaska County. Zone E are all riparian owners on Torch and Rapid Rivers. Likewise, our Directors are elected by Zone with a Captain designated for each Zone; see page 7 for the names of Directors by Zone. The Captains are your first point of contact when you have an issue that concerns you. In recent weeks, our Zone Captains have responded to your issues regarding Chladophora growth, tree cutting in greenbelts, erosion issues at road ends and on private properties, swimmers itch, lake levels, boat noise, and a proposed water ski slalom course adjacent to the Battle Creek Natural Area on Elk Lake.

**Second** is the vastness of our Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL) watershed. Five hundred square miles covers a lot of territory with water accumulating in numerous streams, rivers, small and large lakes and **all** flowing into our more immediate Elk-Skegemog watershed. Some of you have questioned me as to why ESLA is concerned about Rapid River. The

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message	1-2
Lake Levels	2
No Wake Zones	3
ESLA Membership	3
Water Quality/Interns	4
Go Green—Newsletter	5
Eurasian Water Milfoil	5
Swimmer's Itch	6
ESLA Officers	7
ELSA Annual Meeting	8

Rapid River is a significant sub-watershed, stretching from Kalkaska to Mancelona, that contributes to our immediate Elk-Skegemog watershed. Because we are now seeing some of the effects of sedimentation moving from Rapid River into the Torch Bayou and Torch River, we wish to determine what remediation efforts on the Rapid River may be feasible.

**Third** is the importance of our partners. We have long worked with the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (TOM), which performs most of our annual water quality monitoring. And we have strengthened our relationship with The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay (TWC), which is now offering more extensive services to the ERCOL lake associations.

## President's Message Cont.

TOM and TWC are both providing leadership on our efforts on Rapid River and Grass River. We have also developed closer ties to the Three Lakes Association (Torch, Clam and Bellaire) and the Torch Lake Protection Alliance. In addition to the river projects, we are collaborating on a number of important issues, such as Eurasian Water Milfoil. There are a number of other area organizations share interests, such as the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy and the Skegemog Wilderness Area. We are dues paying members of two statewide organizations, the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association and the Michigan Waterfront Alliance. Both of these groups are active in Lansing working on our behalf and keeping us informed of legislative and administrative issues.

**Fourth**, but not least, is the involvement of you our riparian constituents. While only about 40% of our riparians are actually dues paying members each year, each of you plays a critical role in protecting the quality of our Lakes and Rivers. One of our primary roles is to keep you informed about issues that are of mutual concern. So, we do not restrict our newsletters only to dues paying members, but send them to all riparian landowners on Elk and Skegemog Lakes and on Elk, Torch and Rapid Rivers. It is your awareness and support that allows us to be responsive to your interests and take actions that benefit us all. In that regard, ESLA provided \$5,000 in May to the Village of Elk Rapids toward construction of the new courtesy docks in the upper harbor.

I hope to see many of you at our **annual meeting, Saturday July 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10am** at the Elk Rapids High School. Joe Kaplan, a loon researcher, will be our featured speaker.

### Lake Levels

A number of ESLA riparians have been contacting our Directors regarding high water levels in Elk Lake. Most are aware that the lake level in Elk Lake is governed by a court order issued in 1973. It specifies that the Lake level, as measured at the

Elk Rapids dam, is to be 590.8' by April 15<sup>th</sup> each year and dropped to 590.2' by November 1<sup>st</sup>. Mark Stone is the Antrim County Drain Commissioner and is responsible for overseeing the court mandated lake levels for both Elk Lake and Intermediate Lake. For details about dam operations and Mark's responsibilities visit this website - [http://www.michiganmapsonline.com/website/antrimdrain/antrimdrain\\_body.html](http://www.michiganmapsonline.com/website/antrimdrain/antrimdrain_body.html)

The level at ER dam is monitored daily by the operators of the dam and the process is highly automated. But, as Mark says, "the water level is always on the way up or on the way down." After a heavy rainfall, the Lake may rise as much as 2 inches, but that level can be brought down within 24 hours by opening the dam gates. Wind also moves a tremendous amount of water, so that those riparians on the windward shore on a given day may have the perception that the water level of the entire Lake is high.

The levels of Intermediate Lake are also mandated by court order. The dam which controls the water level is located in Bellaire. The land around Intermediate Lake is also sloped relatively steeply to the Lake. These factors make regulating Intermediate Lake much more difficult than Elk Lake. After a period of heavy rainfall the Lake may rise as much as 5 inches, which may take weeks to return to the mandated level. To draw down the level more quickly would leave the riparians on Intermediate River high and dry. Cedar River also enters Intermediate River just north of the dam, for a further complication. The electronic gates at the Bellaire dam need to be manually engaged, and there is no operator onsite.

None of the levels of other lakes in our watershed are mandated. If Torch Lake riparians become concerned about high levels, opening gates at the Elk Rapids dam would not alleviate their high level. This is because the Torch River Bridge at the south end of the Lake acts as a "choke point" which controls/limits the amount of water that flows from Torch Lake. High lake levels in Torch Lake do result in "bankfull" conditions in Torch River.

## No Wake Zones

Under the Marine Safety Act, Part 801, Section 324.80146 of the Natural Resources & Environmental Protection Act of 1994, an operator of a vessel (boat and personal watercraft) must operate same at a speed slow enough to cause a minimal wake or wash in areas of a “NO WAKE” restriction. In our local watershed, “NO WAKE” areas include not only the Elk River, Rapid River and Torch River,



but also on Elk and Skegemog Lakes within 100 feet of shore, a dock, swim platform or anchored/moored boat. Although the Marine Division of the Antrim County Sheriff’s Office is the primary marine enforcement agency, DNRE conservation officers can also issue marine violation citations. Marine violators can be reported to the Antrim County Sheriff’s Office at 231-357-1286. The Michigan DNRE has available a Handbook of Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities that can be obtained from the Michigan DNRE at P.O. Box 30028, Lansing, MI 48909-9727.

## ELSA Membership

We have 1,478 riparian landowners on Elk and Skegemog Lakes and Elk, Torch and Rapid Rivers. To date, we have 536 who have paid 2011 dues. In addition, 15 individuals/organizations (non-riparians) have paid dues. Since this is the first year that Rapid River riparians have been included as potential members, they are omitted from the following analyses.

Of the 1,278 riparian landowners (less Rapid River), 272 have never paid dues during the decade ending in 2011. There are 257 riparians who have paid dues every year during the last decade. There are 297 who paid dues in six or more years, but who missed one or more years. The remaining 452 riparians paid dues at least once during the last decade, but no more than 5 years of the last 10.

While the number of properties remains relatively constant, the actual owners turnover at a rate of 2 – 5% per year. So, someone who purchased property in 2003 may have paid dues every year since. Or, someone who purchased property last year has had only one or two opportunities to become members. There are clearly two core groups – one who submits dues every year and a second who have never been members of ESLA. The remainder of us tends to be inconsistent in remitting dues. The highest number of members during a single year in the last decade was 721. See the table below for additional information.

If you value the contribution that ESLA is making toward preserving the quality of our Lakes and Rivers and the services we provide, encourage your neighbors to also become members.

Water Body	Number of Riparian Landowners	Number who have paid 2011 Dues as of July 1, 2011	Percent of Landowners Who are Members
Elk Lake and River	923	407	44.1%
Lake Skegemog	199	80	40.2%
Torch River	156	36	23.1%
Rapid River	200	13	6.5%
<b>Total</b>	1,478	536	36.3%

## Updates from Thomas Yocum, Water Quality and Summer Intern Coordinator

### Summer Water Quality

This summer ESLA volunteers and high school interns will be focusing most of our efforts on the Rapid River. We are locating and quantifying erosion sites that contribute to the serious sedimentation problems building at the mouth of Rapid River as it enters Torch River. In order to determine the best method for dealing with the sedimentation and procure grant money for implementation, we need to determine the processes that are occurring along the river.

Our first project was to do a macro-invertebrate sampling at ten sites along the river. Macro-invertebrates are usually referred to as 'bugs'. These aquatic insects can give a rough measure of the quality of the river at each site. The information gained, the types of bugs and the numbers found, were sent to The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay (TWC) for analysis. The TWC participates in a state-wide network for such information. Additionally, TWC and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council are supplying technical assistance to ESLA, making this a truly cooperative effort. ESLA also is coordinating the sharing of equipment with Three Lakes Association as they conduct a similar watershed effort aimed at Grass River and its tributaries.

Our next effort is focused on documenting erosion issues at all road crossings over the Rapid River and its tributaries. This will consist of recording photos and standardized measurements of these crossings. At the same time, flow measurements at the sites are recorded. This information will be passed on to Kalkaska County Road Commission and Kalkaska Water and Soil Conservation district for improvements where needed.

Finally, we will walk/float the entire river in order to record erosion sites that are not observable from the road crossings. This information will also be shared with appropriate agencies. This work will, most likely, extend into autumn and beyond.

Our regular water quality monitoring in the lakes will continue. We measure surface water temperatures, Secchi disk readings for water clarity and chlorophyll-a amounts to indicate relative abundance of algae in the open waters. This year we are also continuing to monitor E. coli at sites along the shores.

### High School Interns

Three Elk Rapids High School students are assisting ESLA with water quality monitoring efforts. The interns, seniors Donnie Fedrigan, Jr. and Mackenzie Wolfgram, and junior Alyssa Veliquette, will participate in the most widely varied work to date. In addition to the usual water quality monitoring in the lakes, they will be assisting us with our river studies this summer.

The river studies will involve stream widths, depths, flows and other measurements. We expect these young students to be of great assistance and expertise. Earlier this year, Mackenzie proved to be of great help with his eyes and quickness as we did our bug collection in the upper reaches of Rapid River. The interns are pictured below (L-R Donnie Fedrigan, Jr., Alyssa Veliquette and Mackenzie Wolfgram) as they collect a water sample for chlorophyll-a measurements.



## Go Green with ESLA Newsletter

The Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association newsletter is "going green". The ESLA officers are aiming ultimately to produce a "paperless" Newsletter. The largest expense in the ESLA budget, thousands of dollars each year, is the printing and mailing of our Newsletter. This expense could be significantly reduced if ESLA members elected to receive the Newsletter electronically. To receive the Newsletter electronically, you need to have a computer connected to the Internet and an email address.

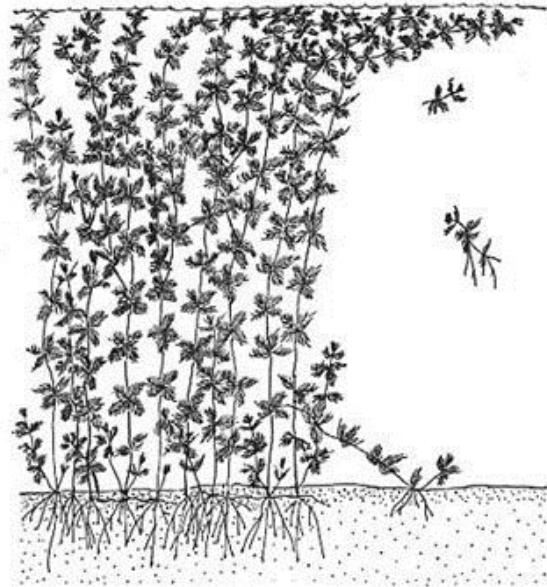
ESLA would like to set an example within our organization and reduce our footprint on the environment. We are giving readers the option to receive the ESLA newsletter exclusively through email, stopping paper mail distribution. Not only is this good for the environment and reduces postage expenses for the organization, but readers will receive the Newsletter one to two weeks sooner than via postal mail. In addition, the Newsletter will include color photographs. In addition, the Newsletter will always be delivered to your "electronic" doorstep—no more worrying about postal forwarding addresses.

America is shifting to a "green culture" where millions of citizens are embracing the fact that environmental responsibility is everyone's responsibility. To help, you can sign up to receive the ESLA newsletter by email. Signup on our website by clicking on the rectangular orange "Newsletter Signup" button in the right of the homepage. You will be asked to provide your email address, name, and address. A confirmation email will be sent to the email address you provide requesting that you confirm the request. It's that easy. Please note that ESLA members currently receiving the Newsletter via postal mail will continue to do so unless they select the option to receive the Newsletter via email.



visit the website [www.elk-skegemog.org](http://www.elk-skegemog.org) and sign you and your young folks up in our ESLA photo contest.

## Eurasian Water Milfoil Update



As reported in the May issue of the ESLA newsletter, a pioneer bed of Eurasian Water milfoil (EWM) was discovered last fall in Torch Lake. The Three Lakes Association (TLA) harvested the EWM bed during the week of June 27<sup>th</sup>. Divers removed the plants and roots, suctioning them to the surface to be contained for later disposal. TLA members surrounded the area in kayaks to pick up any stray fragments that were dislodged in the harvesting process.

Again, we wish to urge ESLA riparians to look for signs of EWM (see May newsletter – [www.elk-skegemog.org](http://www.elk-skegemog.org)). If we are able to identify pioneer beds early, as they have in Torch Lake, then eradication may be possible without the use of chemicals or the introduction of weevils, two methods of control that are much less certain and much more expensive. The most likely areas that may be infested are in the vicinity of boat ramps and along shorelines and riverbeds that experience less wave action. The Torch Bayou, Torch River and Lake Skegemog may be the first areas susceptible to infestation.



## Tip of the Mitt—What is Swimmer’s Itch



Swimmer’s Itch is a skin irritation that is caused by a larval form of certain flatworms from the *Schistosomidae* family. It is a fairly common occurrence on many of the lakes in

our area. Schistosome flatworms are parasites with a complex life cycle (usually involving certain species of snails and waterfowl). Even though the Schistosome species found in Northern Michigan are not parasites of humans, their larvae do burrow into human skin seeking to complete their life cycle. The larvae are only 1/32 of an inch long and generally invisible to the naked eye. Since humans are not the proper host, the larvae soon die. The itching sensation is caused by an allergic reaction many people develop to the dead larvae under the skin. Many species of parasitic flatworms are naturally occurring in almost all lakes. However, not all larval species cause Swimmer’s Itch. The life cycle and host requirements of those species responsible for Swimmer’s Itch differ widely, and the ecology of most is poorly understood. Swimmer’s Itch has probably been around as long as human beings. It is known to occur in at least 30 states as well as Canada, Europe, Africa, and Asia. In the United States, the problem appears to be concentrated in the Midwest region.

### What are the symptoms?

Not all people are sensitive to Swimmer’s Itch. Some who are exposed to the larvae never develop the itch. Those who are sensitive may feel a dull prickly sensation as the larvae burrow into the skin. This may occur either while swimming or immediately after leaving the water. At each point of entry a small red spot may appear and begin to itch. Symptoms include intermittent periods of itching that will continue for several days. Many suffering from cercarial dermatitis (Swimmer’s Itch) experience the most severe itching early in the morning. After approximately

24 hours, the reddened areas reach their largest size. The itchy, reddened, and raised areas are often confused with bites from chiggers or mosquitoes and the symptoms may be misdiagnosed as those resulting from poison ivy or stinging nettles. Chigger bites are usually located at points where clothing contacts the skin such as wrists, waist, ankles, etc. Itching is limited to points of cercarial entry and will not spread and will never develop into water blisters. Swimmer’s itch, although extremely annoying and uncomfortable, is not a communicable or fatal condition. Over-the-counter drugs are available to reduce the symptoms of swimmer’s itch. Antihistamines can be used to help relieve the itching while topical steroid creams may help to reduce the swelling. Before taking any of these drugs, however, consult your physician or dermatologist for advice.

### Our Recommendations

There are several means by which you can significantly reduce your chances of contracting the Swimmer’s Itch parasite. Maintain a healthy greenbelt along your shoreline property with a variety of native plants (including trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants) to prevent waterfowl from congregating on your property. Shading of near-shore areas as a result of a shoreline greenbelt will also help reduce the amount of bottom-dwelling algae growth, which is a primary food source for the types of snails that are commonly hosts in the schistosome cycle. Since itch-causing larvae usually live in the shallows near shore, it is best to avoid this area as much as possible. This is especially important when the wind is blowing toward the shore. ▫ Towel off thoroughly as soon as you leave the water, and at frequent intervals. The fragile *Cercaria* of some species can sometimes be rubbed off before they fully penetrate the skin. Do not feed waterfowl! Feeding waterfowl may aggravate the problem by concentrating potential hosts in a limited area. For more information, see: [www.watershedcouncil.org/learn/swimmers-itch](http://www.watershedcouncil.org/learn/swimmers-itch)

## ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION

Sept 1, 2010 — August 31, 2012

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**ESLA WEB SITE: [WWW.ELK-SKEGEMOG.ORG](http://WWW.ELK-SKEGEMOG.ORG)**

2011 ESLA Annual Meeting

*Saturday July 23rd at 10 AM  
Elk Rapids High School  
Auditorium*

*Sharing the commons: "A  
natural history of loons in  
Michigan."*

*Joseph Kaplan from Common  
Coast Research & Conservation*

*Joe Kaplan has spent seventeen  
seasons studying the population  
dynamics of the common loon  
and is a renowned expert in this  
field. He is an excellent speaker  
with a slide presentation that  
displays the natural beauty and  
uniqueness of his subject. His  
audience will learn nearly all  
there is to know about common  
loons.*

**2011 Board Meeting  
Dates (10 am in the ER  
Government Center Annex):**

May 12  
July 14  
September 15  
December 15

ESLA

P.O. Box 8

Elk Rapids, MI 49629

## ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION

### OFFICERS

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Vacant (needed)	Vice Pres		
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Lou Ann McKimmy	Corr. Sec	231-264-5653	<a href="mailto:mama7@chartermi.net">mama7@chartermi.net</a>
Robert Stibbs	Treas.	231-218-5391	<a href="mailto:stibbs@omico.net">stibbs@omico.net</a>

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