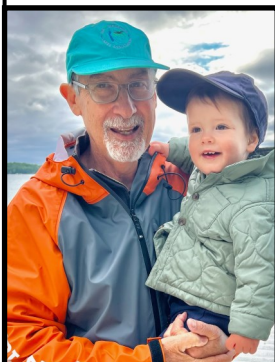


IT'S TIME TO JOIN
OR RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP!

ESLA JULY 2023 NEWSLETTER

President's Message

Bob Campbell



Moonrises, sunrises and mournful melodies

"When I'm feeling down and blue...."

A composer finishes the sentence: "I close my eyes and think of you."

But what if your inner psycho-sleuth demands you find blues-chasing inspiration in nature?

Living on the shores of ESLA waters (Skeg side of Skeg-mog Point), we've had oodles of varied moonrises, occasionally with boats, kayaks, paddleboards passing through the glow or, has happened this spring, a sunrise spotlight to the heavens; then there were five eagles feasting on the remains of perch or minnows left behind by ice anglers; and a dozen or so turkeys walking single file near the shore on late March ice; and a year ago, a

fawn that hopped on our patio and peered into the living room; and an early summer swarm of newborn catfish herded by mom (or dad, who can tell?) feet off the dock.

A few years back on an evening pontoon ride with grandsons, we encountered a baseball team (around nine) loons acting like lunatics in a circular, noisy, diving, surfacing boil that an online search suggested was an organized effort to corral baitfish for supper. Who knew?



But I now have a fresh, favorite blues chaser:

I close my eyes and think about the dead calm twilight a month ago after Ruth and I returned to dock from an evening with good friends on Elk Lake:

A loon bellowed to the

northeast, another responded in kind a short swim to the hard north, a pair chimed their melody a few hundred yards to the southeast, and a mournful loon tune rang out in the distance from the southeast

shore. A concert to remember from all corners of Skeg.

It's hard to feel down and blue when I think of that loony treat. Or gaze at ESLA member Liz Ammond's photo of 10-day-old baby loons with their mom who had just fed the nearest chick a fish.

Turn the page for a report on ESLA's decision to join its first legal action to protect our shared waters since formation in 1950.

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Lawsuit demands Burnette plant comply with U.S. & state rules to protect Elk Lake

by Bob Campbell



Recipients of ESLA’s email blasts learned in early June that ESLA has joined a federal lawsuit against Elk Rapids fruit processor Burnette Foods, Inc. for violating its state permit and threatening water quality, notably in Elk Lake.

ESLA’s and lawsuit partners — The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay, the Grand Traverse Baykeeper and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians — have grown tired of waiting years for a fix.

State regulators have long cited Burnette for violating its permit to spray liquid waste from its Elk Rapids plant onto land it owns which drains to a wetland, then Spencer Creek and eventually to Elk Lake in Elk Rapids Township.

From 2019-22, ESLA’s Lake Biologist Samantha Ogle documented with water sample analysis and photographs the brown-red discoloration and foam-laced surface of Spencer Creek near its outlet to Spencer Bay (see images). Among other concerns, her sampling revealed high e-coli levels. Ogle shared her findings with Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) regulators.

In July 2021 alone, state officials cited Burnette’s plant more than 50 times for waste-related violations. Last fall, the lawsuit partners formally issued a 90-day “notice of intent” to file a citizen suit under provisions of the federal Clean Water Act. To date, EGLE has not resolved the problem.

Our goal is simple: fix it now. We know Burnett is a significant local employer and critical servicer to fruit growers. But ESLA’s water protection mandate is clear — accountability to meet federal and state requirements to protect our waters is long overdue.

For a more detailed report, read the Traverse City Ticker story here: <https://www.traverseticker.com/news/watershed-center-gt-band-elk-skegemog-lakes-association-sue-burnette-foods-over-alleged-environmental-violations/>

Member support with dues or other financial assistance advances ESLA’s mission for critical research and response to issues and concerns like this.



ESLA's 2023 Environmental Projects

By Samantha Ogle, ESLA Biologist

Water Quality:

- For the fifth summer, ESLA continues monitoring and monthly water sampling for pollution parameters in Spencer Creek where it enters Elk Lake in Elk Rapids Township.
- Participating in the NOAA Phytoplankton Monitoring Network, which entails bi-monthly sampling and analysis looking for harmful algal blooms.
- Continuing with Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. There are over 20 years of data on TOM's website.
- Monitoring progress of Whitewater Township Park's project to expand its boat launch and parking. ESLA has advocated for a boat washing station to prevent transfer of invasive species.

Invasive Species:

- Continued removal and treatment of Purple Loosestrife and Eurasian Watermilfoil, two invasive plant species that we have made great strides at minimizing on our waters.
- Installing new invasive species signs at three boat launches: Baggs Road, Torch River Drive and East Elk Lake Drive. The signs encourage boaters to "Clean, Drain, Dry" — as state law requires.
- Sponsoring four Boat Washing Events with Tip of the Mitt to encourage boaters to "Clean, Drain, Dry" before entering our waters. The final dates are July 5 and August 5 from 9:30 am – 1:30 pm at the Baggs Road DNR launch.

Healthy Shorelines:

- First Greenbelt Workshop held in May and led by Samantha. Four local professionals discussed strategies and took questions on the critical areas between the water and lawns.
- Offering free shoreline consultations for the second year to ESLA members. About 30 property owners have taken advantage to benefit their shorelines and all ESLA waters.
- Conducting survey at each road end stopping at ESLA waters. We're looking for signs of erosion, whether shoreline is protected by vegetation or used as a boat/canoe/kayak launch. If you live near a road end and would like to help with the survey, email samantha@onelessconsulting.com

Adopt-A-Stream

- Continuing participation in this Watershed Center of Grand Traverse Bay program. We monitor Spencer Creek and the Rapid River for macroinvertebrates, a key water quality indicator.

Discovery Boat Tours

- For the first time, ESLA is working with the Elk Rapids Marina on Elk Lake to host a small number of 2-hour pontoon tours focusing on lake biology facts and concerns, as well as lake history. Details still being finalized. If interested email elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com.

NMC Water Studies returns

- Staff and students from Northwestern Michigan College's Great Lakes Water Studies Institute have accepted ESLA's offer to return in July with sophisticated deep water exploration equipment and deploy for the first time their remote-operated vehicle that can photograph and possibly collect some bottom samples. Last year, the program led by its noted director confirmed the presence of invasive quagga mussels in Elk Lake for the first time.

It Starts with the Plankton

ESLA Seeks Food Chain Answers

To know why trout or bass or perch or bluegills are longer, shorter, fatter, skinnier, fewer or more abundant, you must understand the food chain in ESLA waters.

It starts with the tiny (stuff you need a microscope to see) plant and animal life.

That's why ESLA this year has invested some of your much-appreciated dues support in a first-time (and expected continuing) study of plankton.

ESLA pursued the research after questions arose about the impact that invasive quagga and zebra mussels — voracious plankton feeders — are having on plankton abundance and, consequently, the entire food chain. Quaggas were confirmed for the first time in Elk Lake last summer when staff and students from Northwestern Michigan College's Great Lakes Water Studies Institute, probing Elk's depths with their sophisticated sonar at the urging of ESLA, found a large bed of quaggas.

That helped lead to this summer's research being conducted by the ESLA board's "Fish Guy" Ken Krentz and ESLA's lake biologist Samantha Ogle. They're collecting and having a local lab analyze the relative abundance of phytoplankton (microscopic plant life) and zooplank-

ton (microscopic animal life). Zooplankton are the food that small fish, like minnows, as well as other tiny organisms eat. They, in turn, get eaten by larger fish and other animals. As a result, the abundance of plankton determines faster or slower growth rates and numbers of our prized game fish.

ESLA's study entails collecting samples from various locations in ESLA waters and analyzing them in a laboratory under a microscope. A fine mesh conical net is lowered through the water column, then retrieved to filter and collect the plankton.

On May 24, the first of three scheduled collections occurred. Ken and Sam got samples from 10 locations on Elk Lake, Lake Skegemog, and the Torch River. Water depths ranged from shallow to 120 feet. They will repeat sampling in midsummer and again in early fall. This year's

analysis is just a start — a baseline for comparisons to other lakes and future plankton collection and analysis in ESLA waters.

ESLA may have initial results to share regarding the research later this summer. We'll report via email blasts and, possibly, at our Shore Thing at 5 p.m. Sept. 21 at the Elk Rapids Harbor Pavilion.



Samantha Ogle ESLA Lake Biologist



Become An ESLA Champion and/or Legend

By Dean Ginther



Will you join the elite group of ESLA Champions and/or ESLA Legends and help to secure ESLA's financial future?

Donors who give \$5000 or more in a single year will be recognized as "ESLA Champions." And donors who pledge a legacy gift of \$25,000 or more will be recognized as "ESLA Legends." Champions and Legends will receive special recognition at events and in our publications. Non-dues donations of smaller amounts also will be accepted and greatly appreciated. Any donations can be directed to one, or any combination, of the following:

The Strategic Environmental Fund, a new fund professionally managed by the ESLA Financial Committee and overseen by the ESLA Board. The fund will accept gifts designated as restricted for this purpose. Proceeds in the fund will be tapped to address significant, often unanticipated, challenges to ESLA's mission to "preserve and protect our precious resources." The ESLA Board may seed the fund with an infusion from existing reserves.

The Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association Fund, an endowment managed by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation. Donations to the fund are held in perpetuity and generate yearly income based on a three-year average of the account balance (currently about \$152,000). To contribute, go to <https://www.gtrcf.org/give/our-funds.html/42/> or contact ESLA at ElkSkegemoglakes@gmail.com for help.

ESLA also will accept unrestricted gifts that — at its discretion — the ESLA Board may designate to cover immediate financial needs or to enhance the Strategic Fund or the Endowment Fund.

If you make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA to the Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association or the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation, then your taxable income from your IRA will be reduced. Beginning in the year you turn 70 1/2 (if you have not previously applied your QCD), you can use your donation to ESLA to satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution. The tax benefit does not depend on itemizing and you can make a QCD anytime during 2023. For additional details regarding a QCD, see <https://www.fidelity.com/building-savings/learn-about-iras/required-minimum-distributions/qcds> and consult a qualified financial advisor.

Questions? Contact Dean Ginther, who spearheaded the ad hoc committee that developed these alternatives, at 231-676-2928 or at ElkSkegemoglakes@gmail.com. Thanks for your generous support.

LON BARGY LAUDED FOR WATER QUALITY, OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS



ESLA and the Rotary Club of Elk Rapids admit to some chicanery in convincing retired Milton Township Supervisor Lon Bargy to attend

ESLA'S May 24 Shore Thing event at the ER Harbor Pavilion.

He was pleasantly surprised, as was a cheering audience, when both organizations honored Bargy for his outstanding service and achievements during 37 years as supervisor.

Bargy was presented ESLA's first "President's Award" for his leadership and courage that led to the township's adoption of critical water quality regulations for septic inspections and shoreline greenbelt protection. The award read, in part, "His personal initiative led to effective partnerships with other organizations that benefited residents and riparians in Milton Township, as well as riparians and visitors to the entire ESLA watershed."

Minutes later, Bargy learned he had been named a "Paul Harris Fellow" of the Rotary. The award recognizes those who best represent the Rotary ideal of "Service Above Self." That award highlights Bargy's leadership as supervisor, 33 years as a township firefighter, projects including development of a multi-sport 49-acre park and purchase and development of 480 feet of Elk Lake waterfront for a township park.

At the same ESLA meeting, featured speaker Glen Chown, executive director of the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, commended Bargy's partnership with GTRLC on various sensitive property acquisitions, including the 390-acre Maplehurst Natural Area.

THREE 'SHORE THING' EVENTS REMAIN FOR '23



ESLA's April-September Shore Thing events are hugely popular with our members. We averaged about 100 members at our April and May events. Get these on your calendar

and RSVP to elk-skegemoglakes@gmail.com to help us plan. All begin at 5 p.m. at the Elk Rapids Harbor Pavilion on East Bay.

July 27 Thursday 5 p.m. @ ER Harbor Pavilion: ESLA's favorite DNR fisheries biologist **Heather Hettinger** will discuss the findings of last summer's first fish survey on Elk Lake in more than a decade. ESLA's "Fish Guy" Ken Krentz will emcee. Our lake association's advocacy for the survey was a key factor in bringing DNR boats, nets and specialists to our waters for the sampling. Spoiler alert: There'll be good news and worrisome news.

August 25 Friday 5 p.m. @ ER Harbor Pavilion: Leslie Meyers, Antrim County's new Operator of Dams, will discuss how she's following in predecessor Mark Stone's path to better understand the risks and potential fixes to prevent damage from more frequent high-volume rainstorms. The phenomenon has revealed potential vulnerabilities for our shorelines and the dams in the Elk River Chain of Lakes. ESLA this year helped fund a follow-up to the studies specifically focused on the Elk River and Torch Lake outlet into the Torch River. ESLA Vice President George Seifried will emcee.

Details on the September Shore Thing on bottom of facing page.

“Keep it Blue: Celebrate Water.”

Elk, Torch Lakes Garden Walk July 18

By Deanna Seifried



Need ideas on protecting our shared waters while also enhancing your shoreline appearance? The Elk Rapids Garden Club hosts its biennial Garden Walk from 10-4 on July 18. The theme is *“Keep it Blue: Celebrate Water.”*

You’ll see three gardens on Torch Lake and one on Elk Lake, a unique display of mature plantings in an off-water garden, and a community garden in the village of Elk Rapids. All six gardens showcase stewardship and celebrate water quality preservation.

Samantha Ogle, ESLA’s lake biologist, and Terry Bertrand, Barker Creek’s certified shoreline professional, will answer questions at the Elk Lake garden. More lakeshore landscape professionals will answer questions and share tips at other gardens.

For details and ticket information go to ElkRapidsGardenClub.com for more information or email Garden-walk@elkrapidsgardenclub.com.

Three Shore Things for ‘23 (continued)

September 21 Thursday 5 p.m. Shore Thing @ Harbor Pavilion: Jan Stevenson, a retired Michigan State University researcher and the top expert on the Golden Brown Algae (aka Brown Crud) will join the meeting via zoom to share his insights. Fred Sittel, president of Three Lakes Association (Torch, Clam and Bellaire) also has agreed to join us to discuss his perspective.

Have a Shore Thing speaker or subject suggestion? Email: elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com.

DNR plants 40,000 Brown Trout in Elk Lake total trout plants since 2018 total nearly 300,000



On April 20, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources released 40,000 brown trout at the Whitewater Twp. boat launch on the southwest side of Elk Lake. The fish were 6"-8" long and should grow to legal size of 15" by next spring. They do not have clipped fins or any other identification features. The DNR has now planted 290,700 brown and rainbow trout since 2018.

In the spring of 2020, the DNR began a plan to stock brown trout in Elk Lake for six straight years. That would mean 40,000 more brown trout plants in 2024 and again in 2025. This supplements three plants in 2018 and 2019. ESLA had strongly advocated the plants because trout fishing had declined since the DNR last stocked Elk in 2008. This data also is on the DNR database <https://www.dnr.state.mi.us/fishstock/>. State trout plants have been made in both Grand Traverse and Antrim counties. Elk Lake's population of lake trout reproduce naturally.

None of the rainbows planted in 2018 with clipped adipose fins have been reported, though anglers have caught rainbows. If you catch one with a clipped adipose fin, freeze the head in a plastic bag with water and your name, address, date, fish length, and weight. Call DNR biologist, Heather Hettinger, 231-922-6056, for pickup.

So far, these plantings have been less than successful. Few planted trout have been caught in Elk or Skegemog. Some suspect most of the trout migrated to Torch Lake where brown trout catches have improved. See the table on page 9 for the DNR trout planting in Elk Lake since 2018 (courtesy of Ken Krentz).

DNR TROUT PLANTING - ELK LAKE					
					Since 2018
DATE	WHERE	SPECIES	AVG LENGTH	QUANTITY	CLIP/TAG
3/28/2018	Elk Rapids Upper Harbor	Rainbow trout	7.91"	7,700	clipped adipose fin & CWT*
12/19/2018	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	4.09"	40,000	none
4/4/2019	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	7.28"	10,000	none
4/29/2019	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	5.08"	20,000	none
4/24/2020	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	4.62"	35,000	none
5/14/2020	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	5.53"	9,000	none
5/29/2020	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	7.95"	9,000	none
4/7/2021	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	4.61"	29,000	none
4/18/2022	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	6-8"	27,000	none
5/5/2022	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	6-8"	12,000	none
4/20/2023	Whitewater Twp Park	Brown trout	6-8"	40,000	none
2024 plan		Brown trout	6-8"	40,000	plan to clip adipose fin
2025 plan		Brown trout	6-8"	40,000	plan to clip adipose fin

* Coded Wire Tag in head. Not visible. If caught and kept, please keep head for DNR Biologist, Heather Hettinger, 231-922-6056. Write name, address, date, fish length and weight on a paper and freeze in a plastic bag of water with head, and call biologist.

ESLA Business Supporters 2023

Top Business Supporter –

Elk Rapids Marina on Elk Lake - 231-264-9500 Elkrapidsmarina.com

Patron –

Barker Creek Nursery and Landscaping – 231-267-5972 Barkercreek.net
NorthShore Dock – 231-313-2627 Northshoredock.com

Sustainer –

Bokhara Pet Resort – 231-254-5855 Bokhara.com
Exit Northern Shore Realty/Scott Moore – 231-883-8977 Northernexit.com
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Paige Wealth Management – 248-277-8875 Raymondjames.com/rockypaige
Short’s Brewing Co. – 231-498-2300 Shortsbrewing.com

Backer –

All Smiles Family Dentistry – 231-264-6300
Century 21 Realty/Wayne Toteff – 231- 392-6259 waynetoteff.realtor
Coach’s Angle Charter with Fred Fields – 260-519-1168 Coachscharter.com
Fish with Jim Outfitters – 231-252-1277 Fishwithjimoutfitters.com
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Village Market – 231-264-5629 Villmkt.com

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Great Lakes Cottage Watch

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Miners North Jewelers

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Elk Rapids Skin & Laser Clinic

Lakeside Prop. Real Estate

Michigan Lake Products

RE/MAX Elk Rapids –
Don Fedrigon

Chemical Control Company

Hessco Real Estate Trust

Sutherin Properties LLC

ESLA’s business supporters have shown their love for our lakes and watershed with donations ranging from \$100 to nearly \$5,000. Those funds help ESLA achieve its mission to protect and preserve our shared waters. We suggest you visit these businesses and express your appreciation. To become a business supporter contact Nancy Covington Schreiber at elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com.

ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

June 2023

Contact: elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com.

<u>Officers</u>		<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Bob Campbell	President	8886 Skegemog Pt Rd Williamsburg	313-806-4060
George Seifried	V.P.	734 Ames St. Elk Rapids 49629	937-271-3316
Don Bonato	Rec. Sec.	8781 Skegemog Pt Rd. Williamsburg	517-290-8668
Nancy Schreiber	Corr. Sec.	14016 Fairmont Rd. Rapid City	954-240-2954
Phil Spangenberg	Treasurer	8991 Skegemog Pt. Rd Williamsburg	586-215-7878

ZONE A

George Seifried	Zone Capt.	734 Ames St. Elk Rapids 49629	937-271-3316
Deanna Seifried	Membership	734 Ames St. Elk Rapids 49629	937-602-2295
Steve Francis		11101 Mattes Rd. Williamsburg 40690	231-350-0687
Bob McCririe	ER Marina	8803 Cairn Hwy Elk Rapids 49629	810-923-9075

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Ruth Bay		11393 Center Rd TC 49686	231-947-1619
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Dean Ginther	Newsletter	11228 Shippey Ln. Rapid City	231-676-2928
Andy Hogarth		11942 E Elk Lake Trail Rapid City	5 17-388-2238
Ken Krentz	Fisheries	13997 Ringler Rd. Rapid City	231-322-4144
Nancy Schreiber	Finance	14016 Fairmont Rd. Rapid City	954-240-2954
John Spevacek	Water quality	13850 Wabigama Dr. Rapid City	860-614-7945

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Jan Garvey	Environment	9525 Palaestrum Rd Williamsburg	989-859-6216
Linda Slopsema		9693 Miami Beach Rd Williamsburg	517-614-4887

ZONE D

Bob Campbell	Zone Capt.	8886 Skegemog Pt Rd Williamsburg	313-806-4060
Don Bonato		8781 Skegemog Pt Rd. Williamsburg	517-290-8668
Phil Spangenberg		8991 Skegemog Pt. Rd. Williamsburg	586-215-7878
Bob Reider		9435 Fairview, Williamsburg	248-320-6952

ZONE E

Mary Beth Kazanski	Zone Capt.	9501 Shellway Dr. NW Rapid City	609-577-3814
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SUPPORT

Samantha Ogle			231-492-9630
Michael Ogle			810-813-3397
Dean Ginther	Newsletter Editor		231-676-2928

ESLA
P.O. Box 8
Elk Rapids, MI 49629



Bob Kingon and Pat Pierce are retiring from the ESLA Board. The ESLA Board thanks them both for their impactful work.

Bob brought historical context, wisdom and mentorship to many who followed him as president and other ESLA leadership positions during 25 years on the board.

Pat has been ESLA's longtime keeper of the Skegemog-to-Torch River buoys helping boaters find safe passage. He has spent long workshop hours finding ways to keep the buoys moored.