

ESLA Nov. 2023 NEWSLETTER



Is my motivation to — as ESLA’s drumbeat repeats — Preserve and Protect Our Precious Waters self-serving?

You betcha!

My license plate is 1 F1SH. It used to be I F1SH, but someone grabbed it when I was late renewing. Why so fishy? My wish — as Seuss might say — is for fish to flourish! Selfishly, I want grandsons (no girls yet) Max, Beau, Jack and August, and all your kids and grandkids — to catch a few, too.

On Nov. 8, ESLA’s “Fish Guy” Ken Krentz and I watched a DNR hatchery truck technician pump 1,673 skinny “baby” (about 10” long) Great Lakes Muskellunge into Lake Skegemog. “Skeg” has produced a few toothy muskies topping 50 lbs. over the years and has room for more, especially in its undeveloped, protected forever perfect habitat from the Torch River mouth to the lake’s southeast corner.

ESLA’s advocacy with DNR fisheries biologist Heather Hettinger for improved fishing on our waters helped bring this fishy gift to our waters. But you

President’s Message

Bob Campbell

don’t just plop fish into our waters and hope for the best.

ESLA’s stated mission is “preserving and protecting our precious resources.” To that end, we must treasure natural shorelines. The zones on either side of where waves lap ashore is where magical things happen in preserved or restored shoreline ecosystems. They are nurseries for fish, crustaceans, butterflies, birds, bugs and native plants that thrive in and near the water’s edge. They’re part of a web sustaining clean, productive lakes.

When we cut every tree, rake near-shore waters, smother every patch of cattail with fill or try to make expansive beaches or lawns where there were none, it leads to erosion and loss of habitat and our shared waters suffer.

Bonus question: What do lawns stretching from patios to shorelines bring? Yes, mega-pooing geese. Honk that!

Many of you, like me, want a patch of lawn (please, no fertilizer within at least 25’ of the water) for play. Or a beach — small please — for entry and exit for swimming or wading. And we need access to docks and boats. But ESLA also must educate and advocate — backed by science — for water quality.

Inside find:

Updates on fish, our biologist’s busy summer, Torch Lake’s new monitoring plan, still time to renew ESLA dues for ’23, why we need your emails, our growing list of business supporters.

That’s why ESLA’s vice president George Seifried has organized a Dec. 6 seminar with the help of Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to talk to local government officials about two critical issues: shoreline and septic policies. We’re hoping it helps convince leaders to adopt policies that best protect our waters.

The meeting is by-invitation -only, but it will be videotaped and added to ESLA’s You Tube Channel for your viewing.

Most waterfront property owners on Elk, Skegemog and the Torch River rely on septic tanks and fields to process household wastewater. But tanks and fields can fail and human pathogen-contaminated

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wastewater can leak slowly through groundwater into surface waters.

Among townships in ESLA's geography, only Milton requires a septic inspection upon sale. Elk Rapids Village, has one, too. Notably, Torch Lake Township along the east shore of Torch Lake, recently adopted tougher septic regulations, as well. Sadly, Michigan is the only state that puts the burden of whether septic systems should be inspected periodically or upon property sale on local officials.

Milton Township also has the strongest shoreline protection regulations among our local governments. Policies help, but in their absence it's critical our ESLA riparians — that's you — embrace shoreline protection and enhancement.

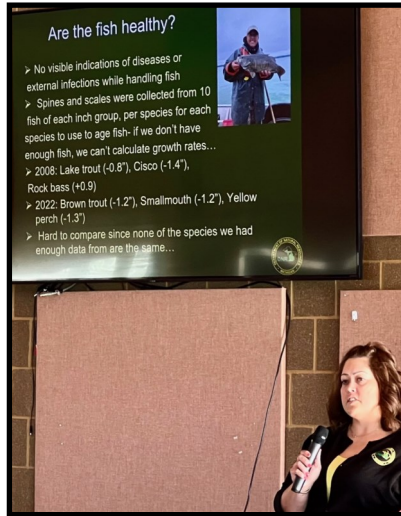
Along ESLA waters, Kalkaska County is the only county requiring septic inspections upon sale of a property. Isn't such a requirement a reassurance to new owners that their new wastewater systems work properly and don't threaten our waters?

Statewide septic regulations will be debated in Michigan's Legislature next year. We're hoping something comes of it. And we'll report in ESLA's next newsletter — in early spring — whether the December meeting was a catalyst for change.


In the meantime, consider how you can be part of the solution: periodically inspect and pump your septic tank and consider enhancing your natural shoreline. Email ElkSkegemogLakes@gmail.com and we'll set up a free shoreline analysis.

Did You Miss Any “It’s a Shore Thing” Events? They’re Online

Attendance of Shore Thing events has never been greater and - with the work of our administrative assistant Michael Ogle - we're now offering members the opportunity to watch the presentations on ESLA's YouTube Channel. You can click on this <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBs3iYFHhgr90PxLihn2HEw> or just google Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association and select YouTube.



August Shore Thing - Heather Hettinger: DNR fisheries biologist



Overview of Past Results and Alternative Hypotheses for Golden Brown Algal “Blooms”

- Dreissenid Mussels Enrich Sediments
- Changing Light Conditions
- Runoff from Big Storms Enrich Surface Water
- Disease Killed Grazers Allowing Algae to Grow
- Non-native Invasive Algal Species
- “Algae in the News and on Your Mind”
- Climate Change & A Warmer Lake
- Groundwater Contamination

KEY QUESTION:
WHAT HAS CHANGED TO CAUSE GBA?

September Shore Thing
Jan Stevenson: Golden Brown Algae

See these and more at: <https://www.elk-skegemog.org/> and on Youtube

A Fish Story: The Good, the Worrisome, the Future

By Ken “ESLA’S Fish Guy” Krentz and Bob Campbell, ESLA President

To an engaged Aug. 10 Shore Thing meeting, about 50 ESLA members learned from DNR Fisheries Biologist Heather Hettinger that her agency’s summer 2022 fish survey in Elk Lake revealed good, as well as concerning, results. You can watch the presentation by going to ESLA’s You Tube page at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wcLwSQM-f40&t=268s>

The good news:

Over several weeks of surveys with different methodologies, DNR crews counted more than 6,200 fish of 30 different species. More than 60% were rock bass - not exciting, but lots of fun for youngsters to catch and decent to eat.

The forage base – the minnows bigger fish eat – was abundant and included many species.

No diseases or otherwise unhealthy fish were collected.

The worrisome news:

The survey found many quagga mussels in Elk. That wasn’t surprising, as a crew of students and staff from Northwest Michigan College’s Great Lakes Water Studies Institute also found quaggas in 2022 during ESLA-instigated research of Elk’s depths. Quaggas are the most concerning invasive critter in ESLA waters. Quaggas, like their smaller cousins - zebra mussels - arrived in U.S. waters in the ballast of ocean-going ships. They generally are found in deeper water and are voracious plankton eaters. Plankton is the critical first link on the aquatic food chain. The Center for Invasive Species Research at the University of California Riverside, reports that quaggas originated in Ukraine’s Dnieper River, while zebras were first found in the lakes of southeast Russia.

Another invasive, round gobies, have also settled in our waters, the survey showed. They are problematic because they feed on the eggs in fish spawning nests. But native fish species, like small-mouth and lake trout find gobies yummy. Tradeoffs.

What’s next for Elk and Skegemog:

2023 was the fourth of the DNR’s six-year Brown Trout planting commitment to Elk Lake. More than 200,000 browns have been planted so far, but few have been caught or netted during the survey. Hettinger said she isn’t giving up. She’s exploring less migratory strains and possibly planting in different locations. She’s also pushing to make sure future plantings are fin-clipped, allowing identification of when and where the fish was caught. A top theory is that many browns planted at Elk’s Whitewater Park swam upstream through Lake Skegemog and the Torch River into Torch Lake.

MUSKIES, Oh My! Responding to questions from ESLA members at the Shore Thing, Hettinger revealed that Lake Skegemog would get a planting of about 2,000 juvenile Great Lakes Musklunge this fall (*editor’s note: the planting was completed on Nov. 8*). Skegemog has superb muskie habitat and once claimed the state record. The planted fish averaged about 10” and start chowing down on minnows and young perch. Few lakes qualify for muskie plants. Hettinger expects Skegemog will get its batch of young muskie plants this fall.

Help Hettinger and the DNR help our Lakes: Heather asks you to report your fishing results to her at hettinger@michigan.gov. Don’t worry, she won’t reveal your secret spots to the public.

ESLA'S LAKE BIOLOGIST'S YEAR IN PROJECTS

By Samantha Ogle, ESLA Biologist

This was an exciting, busy summer on and along the lakes with about 20 different projects that I, board members, and other volunteers completed. New projects included plankton sampling and biology boat tours for members. Ongoing projects included invasive species management and shoreline consultations. Here's a look:

Water Quality:

Spencer Creek – ongoing regular sampling for various parameters and macroinvertebrate sampling with the Adopt-A-Stream Program.

New this year: Plankton Sampling – we completed three sampling events for 2023. With the help of board member Ken Krentz and his boat, we collected samples in May, August and October. This should give us a baseline for comparison over the years. Plankton is the critical first step in the food chain in our lakes. A major concern is its depletion due to the invasive zebra and quagga mussels, which voraciously filter plankton as their food.

NOAA Harmful Algal Bloom Sampling – we continue to sample one site every two weeks, until ice forms on Elk Lake. The concern would be if we find any of five types of potentially harmful phytoplankton. Fortunately, we found none.



Samantha holds the plankton net and sample bottle.



Algae Identification – waterfront owners in different areas called me with concerns about funky growth in the water. All sites were deemed safe!

Invasive Species:

Purple Loosestrife – we dug plants at over 20 sites, no chemical treatment was used this year. Conducted surveys along 4 different sections of Elk Lake, Lake

Purple Loosestrife growing within cattails, both the flowered and non-flowered low growing plants are purple loosestrife!

Skegemog and the Torch River.

Eurasian Watermilfoil – Opted to not chemically treat site in the Torch River Bayou due to ecology of the site. We plan to treat in 2024. I snorkeled the area and determined there was minimal risk for boat props hitting and spreading this invasive in 2023.

Curly Leaf Pondweed – new identification found this year in Elk Lake; we plan to treat in early spring 2024 when the plant is growing.

Yellow Flag Iris – Dug out at plants at five locations.

Clean Boats Clean Waters Grant – ESLA was awarded grant funding to purchase aquatic invasive species signs/tools for boat and trailer cleaning at three locations: Baggs Road DNR Launch on Skegemog, Aarwood Trail DNR Launch on the Torch Rive, and East Elk Lake Drive DNR Launch.



George Seifried (ESLA Vice President), Michael and Samantha Ogle install sign at the Baggs Road Launch on Skegemog.

Boat Washes

Conducted four washes this year with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. At three of the four washes, we found invasive species in the wash mat and at the last event, 11 boaters told us they had already washed their boat — we hope that means our outreach is working!

Healthy Shorelines:

Consultations – I completed 21 (and counting) shoreline consultations, all with great success. Two consults were at undeveloped lots. The new owners plan to build homes and (congrats to them) want to make sure they're having minimal negative impact on the lake and shoreline during construction.

New this year: Road End Surveys – ESLA started conducting road end surveys twice a year looking for invasive species, erosion and signs of activity.

New this year: Greenbelt Workshop – we held one, well-attended workshop in May in Milton Township. This was a part of the Environmental Committee's five-year plan for Healthy Shorelines using the drone survey completed in 2021 as a tool for improving suggestions. Thanks to speakers Terry Bertrand of Barker Creek Nursery, David Spieser of Habitat Landscape (both ESLA business supporters) and Nathan Griswold of Inhabitect. In 2024, we will focus on hardening of the shoreline – rip rap, seawalls, erosion concerns.

Other Programs:

Adopt-A-Stream – ESLA has two sites with this program through the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Center. We sample for macroinvertebrates in the spring and fall of each year.

New this year: Discovery Boat Tours – We conducted four, two-hour tours. I discussed lake biology with a plankton show-and-tell, and addressed concerns about shoreline hardening, invasive species, fish and swimmer's itch. An ESLA board member joined each trip and gave background on the tours and the ESLA's work. Special thanks to Captain Teddy Shaw, who piloted the pontoon, and the Elk Rapids Marina on Elk Lake. which provided free use of a rental pontoon.

ESLA'S LAKE BIOLOGIST continued from pg. 5



ESLA board members, Bob Reider and Ken Krentz along with Michael Ogle conduct macroinvertebrate sampling in the Rapid River.



Samantha and ESLA Champion supporters on the inaugural tour.

Help Us Stop Elk River Buoy Vandalism

A dedicated team of ESLA volunteers and a paid contractor spend many hours each year maintaining the buoys that many boaters rely upon to navigate into and through the Torch River from Lake Skegemog. The many stumps in this area can lead to bent props or worse — lower unit repair or replacement.

Last spring, ESLA updated its permit with the Department of Natural Resources to maintain 20 navigational buoys and a large no-wake sign. The large buoys are pulled every year in late fall and replaced by small “winter buoys.” The large buoys are deployed in May.



Buoys break loose occasionally in high winds or storms. ESLA has worked hard in recent years to improve the connection from buoys to anchors. Still, many buoys have come loose requiring many hours to locate and return them from stump fields and cattails. Each time, they're redeployed, mooring lines and hardware is upgraded. Still, the buoys are coming loose.

ESLA's board has concluded that human mischief is at play. This navigational safety program is funded and maintained with your annual ESLA dues. We ask for your help, if you see something, let us know. Take a cell phone photo of the buoy vandal and call your ESLA Zone Captain or any Board Member – contact info is available in this newsletter.

Support for Torch Lake Study

Editor's Note: ESLA President Bob Campbell and Board member John Spevacek recently met with Dan Sajkowski, president of the Torch Lake Protection Alliance. The discussion was at Sajkowski's initiative to explain a bold initiative to bring a promising new water quality assessment and protection initiative to Torch Lake. TLPA and Torch Conservation Center are leading and managing the project with TLPA in charge of fundraising. In addition, scientific data will be shared among TLPA, TCC and Three Lakes Association (Torch, Clam and Bellaire) throughout



Aerial view of Torch Lake showing Golden Brown Algae Distribution along shoreline

the 3-year study. Campbell thought the project was so compelling in its potential for our lakes, he invited Sajkowski to write the following article. In turn, Sajkowski invited ESLA to be represented at future meetings of the Torch Lake study group. ESLA will explore options to add complementary monitoring in our waters.

By Dan Sajkowski

Does change in the quality of water in Torch Lake matter to Skegemog and Elk Lake? Absolutely! Not only does the water from Torch flow to lakes ESLA represents, but Torch and Elk Lakes are both oligotrophic (low nutrient level, deep, clear) and behave similarly. By sharing what follows I

hope you'll better understand why our work has begun on Torch Lake, the connectivity of our waters and their associated health, and that this knowledge compels you to want to learn more.

Moreover, we invite ESLA and its members to consider supporting this work.

TLPA and TCC are working with the U.S. Geological Survey, a science bureau within the U.S. Dept. of the Interior, to bring major change to how Torch Lake's water quality is monitored. This study would not be possible without the generosity of individuals, businesses, and foundations in the Torch Lake community, allowing us to benefit from a 30% cost-share U.S.G.S. can offer to qualified projects.

The U.S.G.S. team is led by Dr. Dale Robertson, a respected and long-time hydrologist. The study also includes Dr. Geoff Schladow, head of Lake Tahoe research at the University of California-Davis. It is the most comprehensive examination of Torch Lake ever undertaken.

The project will measure water quality in 12 sites in the open water and near shore waters from April through November. Golden Brown Benthic algae samples will be taken from those same sites by Michigan State University's Dr. Jan Stevenson, who addressed an ESLA "Shore Thing" in September.

Flow rates at Clam and Torch Rivers are being measured continuously. When combined with other measurements, like atmospheric deposition and ground water the data will lead to nutrient balances and a mathematical model of Torch Lake that can inform future actions to sustain Torch Lake (and, potentially Elk Lake).

The measurements above will take place over three years. The first year will be complete at the end of 2023. Some of you may be familiar with benchmarking. Lake Tahoe's monitoring approach is much more comprehensive than has historically been done on Torch or similar Michigan lakes. This may reveal long-term trends in lake health by studying data gathered from open water and shorelines stretching back decades.

It is notable that shoreline property owners on Lake Tahoe moved from septic system to community wastewater treatment decades ago.

Findings on Torch Lake, along with the monitoring process results, will be directly applicable to Elk and Skegemog Lakes because all of these lakes have GBA, but more importantly because of the importance of getting the monitoring of the lakes, including Elk and Skegemog, right in the future.

Environmental pressures, including development, are increasing every year and our diligence in protecting these lakes must, too. TLPA looks forward to sharing results and working with ESLA and its members.

If interested in more details or potentially contributing to this project, contact Sajkowski at tlpa@torchlake.com. The Keep Torch Lake Blue Campaign is currently in the quiet phase and only soliciting gifts of \$10,000 or more at this time. TLPA is grateful to the generous donors who have helped us reach 78% of our goal in just over a year of fundraising.

If you have interest in ESLA pursuing a project similar to that described here, write to ElkSkegemogLakes@gmail.com.

ESLA Business Supporters 2023

ESLA's 2023 TOP BUSINESS SUPPORTER

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

BUSINESS PATRON SUPPORTERS \$500

Barker Creek Nursery and Landscaping 231-267-5972 barkercreek.net

NorthShore Dock LLC 231-313-2627 northshoredock.com

Re-Max Elk Rapids – Don Fedrigon 231-264-5400 donfedrigon.com

Rex Terrace Homeowners' Association

BUSINESS SUSTAINER \$250

Blackmore Property Maintenance 231-264-9404 blackmorepropertymaintenance.net

Bokhara Pet Resort 231-254-5855 bokhara.com

Caldwell Banker Camille Campbell 231-944-9385 camilleycampbell.com

Habitat Landscape LLC 231-622-2688 habitat-landscape.com

Raymond James "Rocky" Paige 248-277-8875 raymondjames.com/rockypaige

Exit Northern Shores Realty Scott Moore 231-883-8977 northernexit.com

BUSINESS BACKER \$100 - \$150

All Smiles Family Dentistry 231-264-6300

Century 21 Northland Kellie Sergent 231-499-1814 c21northland.com

Century 21 Northland Wayne Toteff 231-392-6259 century21northland.com

Coach's Angle Charter Fred Fields 260-519-1168 coachscharters.com

Elk Rapids Golf Club 231-264-8891 golfelkrapids.com

Fish With Jim Outfitters 231-252-1277 fishwithjimoutfitters.com

Great Lakes Cottage Watch 231-633-7378 glcottagewatch.com

Gretel Cottages LLC 231-709-0047

Lakeside Properties Real Estate 231-254-5000 lakesidepropertiesrealestate.com

Riverwalk Grill Restaurant 231-264-0377 riverwalkelkrapids.com

Short's Brewing Company 231-498-2300 shortsbrewing.com

Stoney Cabin Toys 231-498-5744 stoneycabintoy.com

Village Market 231-264-5629 villmkt.com

ESLA board member Nancy Schreiber graciously manages our "Business Supporter" program. To join this listing on our website and in our newsletters mailed to 1,500 riparians and supporters, contact Nancy by mail at P.O. Box 630, Elk Rapids, MI 49629, phone at 954-240-2954 or email at ElkSkegemogLakes@gmail.com.

ESLA Board and Support Nov. 2023

<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
Linda Slopsema	Rec. Sec.	9693 Miami Beach Rd Williamsburg	517-614-4887
Nancy Schreiber	Corr. Sec.	Box 630 Elk Rapids MI 49629	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	Legal	11101 Mattes Rd. Williamsburg 40690	231-350-0687
Bob McCririe	ER Marina Liaison	8803 Cairn Hwy Elk Rapids 49629	810-923-9075
Nancy Schreiber	Finance	Box 630 Elk Rapids MI 49629	954-240-2954

ZONE B

Ruth Bay	Shore Things	11393 Center Rd TC 49686	231-947-1619
Dale Claudepierre		13952 Betty Lane. Rapid City	248-644-7614
Dean Ginther	Newsletter	11228 Shippey Ln. Rapid City	231-676-2928
Andy Hogarth		11942 E Elk Lake Trail Rapid City	517-388-2238
Ken Krentz	Fisheries	13997 Ringler Rd. Rapid City	231-322-4144
John Spevacek	Water quality	13850 Wabigama Dr. Rapid City	860-614-7945

ZONE C

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
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	Biologist		231-492-9630
Michael Ogle	Admin		810-813-3397

Contact: elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com.

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

Remain a Member in Good Standing — Pay by 12/31/23

If you're unsure of your 2023 membership status, email ElkSkegemogLakes@gmail.com and we'll check and let you know. To pay, mail a check to Elk-Skegemog Lakes Assn., Box 8, Elk Rapids or go on our website Elk-Skegemog.org to pay with a credit or debit card.

Recommended dues are \$50 basic, \$100 sustainer, \$250 diamond, \$500 gold, \$1,000 or more platinum. All 2023 members will be listed by name in our next newsletter.

We Need Your Emails to Keep You Informed

ESLA has more than doubled the number of member and riparian emails in recent years because it's a critical way to update members on news about our lakes and association's work.

Still, we don't have emails for hundreds of those getting this newsletter. Having emails allowed us to let you know quickly when one of our scheduled "Shore Thing" speakers had to cancel on short notice. And also let you know when we rescheduled her presentation.

It's easy to get on the list: Send an email to ElkSkegemogLakes@gmail.com.