

IT'S TIME TO
RENEW YOUR
MEMBERSHIP!

ESLA MAY 2022 NEWSLETTER

President's Message Our Field of Dreams



Bob Campbell

ESLA President

John Kinsella: "Well, good-night Ray."

Ray Kinsella: "Good-night."

John: "Hey...Dad? You wanna have a catch?"

John: "I'd like that. Is this heaven?"

Ray: "It's Iowa."

John: "Iowa? I could have sworn this was heaven."

My wife, Ruth, and I had a similar reaction in 2011 to what the John Kinsella character felt after he walked out of an Iowa cornfield to find the baseball park his son had built in the 1986 film "Field of Dreams." Our big smile came the first time we saw the two, east-facing acres on Skegemog Point.

We bought the property, tore down the vintage 1940 cottage and built a

home to accommodate us, and visits from our three adult children and their families. Most days, our assessment of our luck in landing on this heavenly spot hasn't much changed.

Sunrise morning and moonrise views over Skegemog Swamp often have us reaching for cameras. On some days, sunsets light up the swamp and hills above it like airport spotlights.

The stunners don't stop there. There's the mournful calls of loons, the sight of bald eagles chowing down on bait left on spring ice, the occasional mink scampering off the dock with a crayfish in its mouth, double rainbows melting into the water behind the pontoon, grandsons screeching as they leap from the dock onto a foam "Lily Pad."

So many dreams have come true here for us and, I'm sure, so many of you. But if heaven is static, unchanging, unthreatened, we're not quite there.

Since we arrived, the vacant lot to our north now has a large home, not unlike ours. The eight or so acres to our south is the construction site of what may be the largest modern castle on the 42 miles of shoreline between Torch Lake and the dam in Elk Rapids.

What's happening along our shores is hardly unique. As I note other significant, undeveloped parcels, it seems only a matter of time and opportunity before another castle is built.

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What can change is how we integrate development with smarter ways to — as ESLA's mantra suggests — *protect and preserve our precious resources*. Just maybe, our community of waterfront home, cottage, cabin and condo owners can coalesce to lessen the impact.

At stake in how our shorelines evolve are many of the qualities that drew us here.

The greatest threat, no contest, to the quality of our waters is loss of natural shorelines — that 30 to 40 feet either side of where water meets land. I didn't understand that in 2011. Since then, I've heard the same science-supported gospel from people I trust like Rob Karner, the highly-regarded lake biologist for Glen Lake, and Heather Hettinger, the DNR's top fisheries biologist in northwest Michigan.

Natural, healthy shorelines prevent shoreline erosion, filter pollutants and provide critical nurseries for fish, crustaceans, snails, larvae and many other critters, some visible only under a microscope. ESLA's waters often lose natural shorelines as

Continued on page 2

President's message (continued from pg. 1)

homes are built and owners — seeking to protect their investment — armor against wave erosion with riprap (large rocks or boulders). I'd guess most were unaware of alternatives. The harm can be compounded by removal of near-shore trees and other native vegetation. As advocates, we're not saying you shouldn't have a view, or access to the water for docks and hoists or launching kayaks, or even a small beach.

We understand the motivation for shoreline protection. Both Elk and Skegemog lakes are susceptible to a long wave "fetch" — the unobstructed distance wind can blow over water in a constant direction. More fetch leads to larger, damaging waves.

But there are lake-friendlier alternatives that allow shoreline protection, sometimes using rip-rap in combination with other materials. To learn more, follow this link <https://www.mishorelinepartnership.org>. You can also get help from ESLA's lake biologist Samantha Ogle at samantha@onelessconsulting.com. There's more things we encourage the ESLA community to consider. If you feel you must fertilize your lawn, don't apply or allow your contractor to apply product within 25' of the water. If you can't remember the last time your septic tank was pumped out, you're probably due. Leaky septic tanks can and do pollute our waters. Learn more at: <https://www.epa.gov/septic/how-your-septic-system-can-impact-nearby-water-sources>.

Finally, our membership last year grew and our members were more generous than ever with dues payments. The ESLA board this year raised recommended dues levels, which hadn't changed in about 20 years, to account for increasing costs of the many things (for examples check the story on **page 4** in this newsletter) we do to earn your trust. Support these initiatives at Supporter level for \$50, Sustainer at \$100, Silver at \$250, Gold at \$500 and Platinum at \$1,000.

Our printed newsletters are mailed to all waterfront parcel owners, not just members, because we believe we have a commitment to inform all riparians about key issues. Sadly, only about 40% of our nearly 1,500 riparians were members in 2021.

It bears repeating: ESLA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, board members are volunteers, we rely on contractors to control invasive species, investigate riparian water concerns, install and remove navigation safety buoys into the Torch River, advise riparians on

greenbelt/shoreline questions and potential water contamination issues, print and mail our newsletters at a cost of nearly \$4k each and monthly and maintain our website.

To join the ESLA community, send a check to Elk-Skegemog Lakes Assn., Box 8, Elk Rapids, MI. 49629 or go through the portal on our website, Elk-Skegemog.org.

ESLA Needs Your Email Contact to Keep You Informed



Help Us Delivery Timely Details on ESLA Events and News

Fewer than half of our 2021 members are signed up for our monthly emails. We send out timely reminders about events and news about our waters. If you aren't getting ESLA emails, send an email to ElkSkegemoglakes@gmail.com to sign up. Be sure to include your local address and a phone number. Don't worry, we won't share. We need your help, too, in recruitment, especially when new owners move in. Tell them about ESLA and our website elk-skegemog.org. If we have a name and parcel address, let us know and we'll drop off infor-

Membership Dues Update

By mid-March, ESLA's numbers and levels of dues payments were both well ahead of 2021.

Our February "Member Celebration Newsletter," which listed all dues-paying members in 2021, had an attached dues envelope for 2022. We didn't have a winter newsletter last year. At the deadline for this newsletter, we were updating all member data into new software that will improve our ability to track and acknowledge your payments.

We'll have a fresh and detailed report on membership and contribution levels for ESLA's annual meeting June 23. We're hoping your name is among the 2022 supporters.

Plan to Attend the 2022 ESLA Annual Meeting



June 23 (Thursday)

5:00 pm start

Elk Rapids Harbor Pavilion

For the second consecutive year, ESLA will hold its annual meeting at the Elk Rapids Harbor Pavilion. We'll start at 5 p.m. **Thursday, June 23.**

It'll be more like a pre-pandemic gathering — ESLA members will enjoy beer, wine, soft drinks and an assortment of appetizers and sweet things. You must be an ESLA member to vote (spouses or partners from the same household each have one vote) on candidates for ESLA's board and, possibly, other issues. This year, we'll focus on introducing and hearing from ESLA board members leading key initiatives.

Not a dues-paying member yet for 2022? That's easily corrected. Donate with a credit card or debit card through links on our website elk-skegemog.org or send a check to Elk-Skegemog Lakes Assn. at Box 8, Elk Rapids, MI. Our recommended dues are \$50 Supporter; \$100 Sustainer; \$250 Silver; \$500 Gold; and \$1,000 Platinum.

NO Mow May

<https://www.bhg.com/gardening/yard/no-mow-may/>

Tired of mowing your lawn? Here is an idea:

“The idea behind No Mow May is to leave your lawn alone for the month of May. This allows lawn flowers to bloom and feed hungry native bees emerging from hibernation when other flowers are scarce. Several studies done in areas of Wisconsin, Kentucky, and Massachusetts have shown that lawn flowers can support a high diversity of bees and other pollinators.”

“Lawns can grow pretty shaggy after a month of not mowing. When it's finally time to mow, the best strategy is to reduce the height of your grass in stages. Paul Koch, an associate professor and turf grass extension specialist at the University of Wisconsin, explains that "you never want to remove more than one-third of the green leafy tissue at any one time." Depending on how tall your grass has gotten, it could take a few weekends with the mower to get back to your usual lawn height.”

Water permit violation notice issued to Burnette Foods

State environmental regulators have ramped up their investigation of an Elk Rapids fruit processing plant's waste discharges onto its land that drains to Elk Lake. In late 2021, the state Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy issued a violation notice citing more than 50 occasions where Burnette Foods Inc. exceeded maximum volumes of fruit processing wastes.

ESLA first brought the issue to the state's attention in 2019 and has been carefully monitoring it since that time.

To learn more go to the ESLA webpage at: elk-skegemog.org and click on the link to read more.



Our lakes will buzz with projects led by or partnering with ESLA this summer. Those involved include ESLA's Lake Biologist, Samantha Ogle; ESLA contractors removing aquatic and shoreline invasive species; staff and students from the Great Lakes Water Studies Institute at Northwestern Michigan College; the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources and others. Here's a quick look:

- Zero Gravity Aerial will finish its drone survey of shoreline and shoals that was mostly completed in 2021. You may see ZGA owner Dennis Wiand flying his drone above his Boston Whaler.
- Ogle will be paddling her kayak following up points of interest from the 2021 drone survey.
- Eurasian Water Milfoil and Purple Loosestrife will be treated by ESLA's contractors PLM Lake and Land Management Corp. and CAKE CISMA (Charlevoix Antrim Kalkaska Emmett Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area). Ogle may visit you to request a signature for a "Consent to Treat" form for land-based invasives like Purple Loosestrife and Yellow Iris.
- Institute director Hans VanSumeren and his students from NMC will use high-tech sonar and a remote-operated-vehicle (ROV) to probe deep waters in Elk Lake. Goals: Are worrisome quagga mussels present? Does evidence suggest deep-water lake trout spawning sites? What's the health of the benthic community where the tiny bottom-dwelling critters critical to the food chain reside?
- Waterfront owners — lots, we hope — will be creating, maintaining or improving healthy shorelines. ESLA board member Deanna Seifried and Ogle can make recommendations and suggest resources and contractors to help.
- ESLA will sample lake waters and tributaries to learn more about sources of E. coli and other contaminants. Spencer Creek near Elk Rapids will be one focus. Last November the State issued a major permit violation notice to Burnette Foods, Inc. related to the firm's fruit processing waste discharges on its property that drains to Spencer Creek. For details, check ESLA's homepage, <https://www.elk-skegemog.org>.
- The DNR will conduct its first fish survey of Elk Lake in 20 years. Surveys provide critical insight to the health of gamefish and forage species populations. Survey stages will be in early June, late June-early July and late summer.
- Unfortunately, worker shortage kept the DNR from fin-clipping (for ID purposes) Brown Trout planted in Elk Lake this spring. Interested in helping (by fishing) assess the whereabouts of the 135,000 trout planted in Elk Lake since 2018? Contact Ken Krentz, ESLA's fish guy, through ElkSkegemolakes@gmail.com.
- ESLA is co-sponsoring four boat washes at the DNR Baggs Road ramp on Skegemog and the Whitewater Township Park ramp on southwest Elk. Dates still to be set. Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (TOM) provides a mobile boat washing unit and operators. ESLA volunteers (email ElkSkegemoglakes@gmail.com to help) pass out literature and explain why it's critical to follow state law requiring trailer boaters to "Clean, Drain and Dry" before moving a trailered boat from one lake to another.
- ESLA expands its involvement in the Adopt-A-Stream Program through the Grand Traverse Watershed Center. As usual, we'll do work on the Rapid River and — new this year — Spencer Creek. Participation in the program following state protocols means sampling done by ESLA in local streams qualifies to be added to a State of Michigan database.



Become An ESLA Champion and/or Legend

By Dean Ginther



In the February newsletter, the call went out to find the first ESLA Champion and the first ESLA Legend. That call was answered. We now have our first 2022 ESLA Champion and the first ever ESLA Legend. The path has been established for other ESLA members to follow. Will you join the elite group of ESLA Champions and/or ESLA Legends this year 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 upon their death 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 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.

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.

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.

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.

2021 Drone Survey

by Samantha Ogle, ESLA Lake Biologist

ESLA contracted with Zero Gravity Aerial (ZGA) last summer to conduct a drone imagery survey of its 42 miles of shorelines and near-shore waters. Video and still photography were recorded at different heights — one lower elevation of the shorelines, and one from a higher elevation from shoreline to the natural drop-offs. The goal was to learn more about our shorelines and near-shore areas with greater precision than past surveys done using kayaks or boats. Preserving natural shorelines and shallows is the most critical factor in maintaining the high quality of our waters and the ecosystem and life it supports.

ESLA's board will set goals to encourage and, possibly, incentivize waterfront property owners to improve their shorelines and, where possible, employ the least harmful shoreline protection options. Using this footage helps us better understand the current state of our lakes and have a point-in-time comparison for future surveys. This technology, which only recently became available, allows us to view our lakes from above, providing a new level of insight. If we had this technology 20, 10 or even 5 years ago, we would have seen a dramatic difference in our shoreline development, the presence of golden-brown algae and other concerns.

One major positive we have learned from the survey is that ESLA waterfront owners, at a far higher rate than riparians on other northern Michigan lakes surveyed by the same drone operator, are using lake water to irrigate their properties. This helps because nutrients in lake water lessen or eliminate a need to add fertilizer, which may wash into our lakes in heavy rainstorms and cause problems.

The survey also showed, not surprisingly, that even as ever larger homes are built on our shores each year, we still have a vast amount of natural shoreline, both publicly and privately owned. A natural shoreline is one without any rip rap (boulders) or seawalls. Elk Lake alone has 199 parcels with natural shorelines. Some publicly-owned or protected properties, especially on Skegemog Lake and the southern half of Elk Lake, stretch for hundreds of yards and even miles.

Using the drone footage, I have identified areas with invasive species not previously detected — like purple loosestrife. As I examine more footage, it's possible other invasives like yellow flag iris or Eurasian water milfoil will be revealed. I used the purple loosestrife observation as a guide for a decision on the permit application to treat invasive species in 2022, and I plan to visit any locations that were flagged with something of note — like a foreign object in the water. The footage also helps me look for Cladophora, or other detectable algal growth that warrants further investigation. It has given me a greater understanding of the entirety of our waters, instead of a handful of areas.

One important note is that we are not using this footage to grade, judge or pinpoint individual properties. Under our contract with Zero Gravity Aerial, the footage will never be shared with anyone outside our organization — including any public or law enforcement agencies. This new tool helps us better understand the overall health of ESLA waters and encourage best practices. If you are interested in taking a short survey that provides great feedback and information on what you can do for your property, check out: www.mishorelandstewards.org. Make sure to add ESLA as your lake association when taking the survey!

As the lake biologist of your lake association, I am proud to be a part of this advancing technology to improve the water that you care so deeply about. I am working with the Healthy Shorelines Committee, and we are happy to offer support if you have any questions or would like advice on how to better your shoreline and lessen your impact on the lake. Contact me through my email at: samantha@onelessconsulting.com

2021 Drone Survey (continued from pg. 6)

Selected Images from Drone Survey



Golden Brown Algae growth on the east side of Elk Lake



Natural Area just south of Kewadin, this is protected by the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy.

Tips for Shooting Great Sunset Photos – Part 1

by Dean W. Ginther, Newsletter Editor and Photographer

In this article, and those that may follow, I will share some of my knowledge and experience regarding how to take better than average, and maybe even great, photos of sunsets. Since I am not a “morning person”, I will focus on sunsets rather than sunrises, but much of what I will discuss applies to both. Also, for the purposes of this discussion, I will group phones into the generic category of “cameras.”

I’ll start with the obvious. The sun is really, really bright. Our sun is not the brightest star in the universe by any means but it is the brightest object in our sky. As you know, it is so bright that you can easily damage your retina if you stare at it. And looking through a camera viewfinder/lens won’t protect your eyes from damage unless the lens is covered with a very dark filter.

Now I am not indicating that it is impossible to take a picture of the sun before sunset. You can safely look at the image on the LCD screen of your phone or camera and take the picture. But the resulting image of the sun usually will be washed-out and flat (see image 1), with few details.

Why will most images of the full sun be washed-out? That has to do with the sensor in your camera and how light is metered by your camera’s computer. The sensor in your camera has a fixed range of sensitivity. The

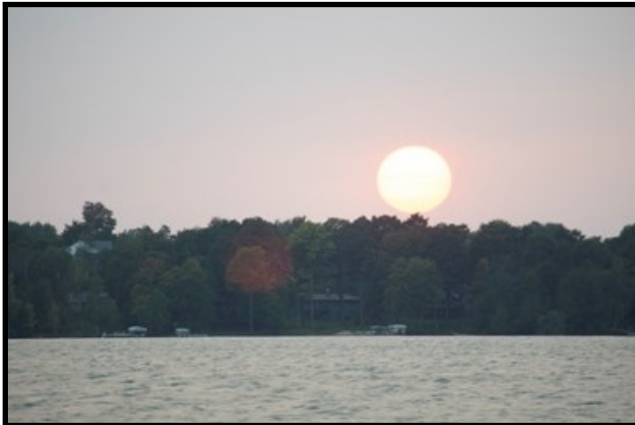


Image 1 : A blown-out sunset with lens flare

camera sensor transmits the luminosity (the lights and darks) of the scene and the computer computationally “averages” that digital information to try to reproduce what your eye perceives. But there is a limit to what the sensor can record with fidelity. If you take a picture of the direct sun the camera will produce a gray/white circle to represent the sun because the camera sensor cannot record the extreme brightness levels. Photographers say that the sun is “blown-out,” which means there is no detail in the highlights. In addition, the bright sunlight often will reflect within the lens elements and produce a distracting lens flare.

If no clouds are present, it often will be best to turn your back to the sun and find some interesting ob-

ject which is reflecting the soft golden light that the sun produces when it is near the horizon.

Photographers love this “golden” hour before sunset or after sunrise. It is a great time to take pictures of reflected light from flowers, trees, mountains, water and clouds (see image 2), and portraits.

Now, for the exceptions. If there is cloud cover at or near



Image 2: golden hour sunrise looking west (reflected light) over Elk Lake.

the horizon, images containing the full sun can be dramatic (see images 3 and 4). Also, if the sun is partially obscured by clouds on the horizon, this can produce a lovely image, sometimes with a starburst effect (see image 5). Likewise, if there is a heavy fog present, the image can be pleasing. And, if your camera has exposure compensation or a neutral density filter, this can reduce the over exposure from direct sunlight.

Next installment - Composition tips and catching that great image as the sun moves further below the horizon..



Image 3—Elk Lake; the low sun is still above the horizon behind clouds producing a dramatic sunset

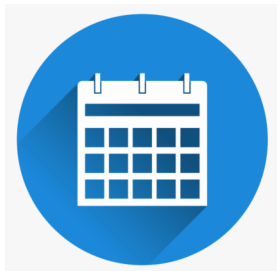


Image 4 (above)—Elk Lake sunset as the sun meets the horizon

Post your sunset pictures on the ESLA Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/elkskegemo-glakes> and like our Facebook homepage.

Image 5— right, Elk Lake; the sun is captured between low clouds and the horizon producing a starburst effect in the lens





ESLA Calendar

Board meetings (10 a.m., Elk Rapids Old Council Chamber Meeting Room): July 21; Sept. 15; Dec. 1 (by Zoom)

Annual Member Meeting at Elk Rapids Harbor Pavilion, June 23.

Doors open at 5 p.m. and social hour with appetizers, beer, wine, soft drinks until 6 p.m. Focus on meeting the board, learning about projects that are underway and volunteer opportunities

“It’s a Shore Thing” Social-Educational Events at Twisted Fish Gallery

(If you are unable to attend, you can see a video of the recorded session on the ESLA webpage)

The popular Shore Things are on fourth Fridays from April through September. Doors open at 5 p.m. with gallery strolls, socializing, appetizers, wine and soft drinks. Invited guest speaker program at 6 p.m. Make sure we have your email to get updates. .

July 22: It’s a Drone Thing — ESLA project leaders will explain findings of the drone imagery survey conducted on our shorelines and nearshore waters last year and how they’ll help ESLA set water quality goals, suggest improvements for healthy shorelines to waterfront owners, and provide a baseline moving forward.

August 26: It’s a Deep Thing — Hans VanSumeren, director of the Great Lakes Water Studies Institute at Northwestern Michigan College, will explain the results of the Elk Lake Deep Water study his students will complete later this spring. It may offer insights into concerns that the ecosystem-altering quagga mussels have gained a foothold and other questions.

Sept. 23: It’s a Hydrology Thing — Mark Stone, Antrim County Director of Dams, will explain findings of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers study, supported by grants from Antrim County and in-kind support from the Intermediate Lake Association. The study is building a mathematical model of the hydrology and hydraulics of the chain of lakes to use as a tool to evaluate flood scenarios and potential solutions to the increasing frequency of multi-day, intense rainstorms.

ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

January 2022

Contact: elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com.

<u>Officers</u>		<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>
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ESLA
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Elk Rapids, MI 49629



Don't forget to renew your dues for 2022.

Go to: <https://www.elk-skegemog.org/> and click on the "join ESLA button. Note the new dues levels.

You also can send a check to:

Elk-Skegemog Lakes Assn., PO Box 8, Elk Rapids, MI.,
49629
(2022 dues in the memo field).

Thanks.