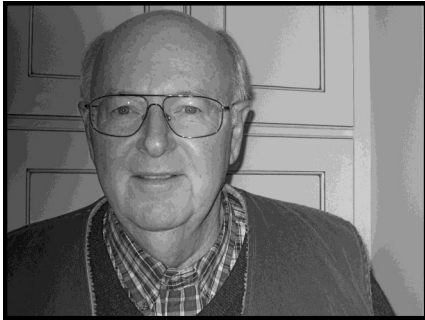




Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association Newsletter-January, 2012



Bob Kingon **President's Message**

Dear fellow Riparian,

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday and that your new year is off to great start. 2011 was a very productive year for ESLA as we took on many new projects and issues, many which benefitted members directly. We can all now visit the Village of Elk Rapids by boat and know we can find a slip. ESLA contributed \$5,000 to the Village for the installation of our new courtesy docks.

Because of concerns about the increasing sediment in Rapid River and its potential impact on the Torch Bayou, Torch River and Lake Skegemog, ESLA began a project on the Rapid River. We are conducting a variety of activities to identify sources of sediment and potential remediation. An update is provided on page 3.

Early in 2011, ESLA joined a coalition led by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (TOM) that seeks to improve the regulation of "fracking". While this process for extracting natural gas from shale has been used in our area for some time,

wells are now being drilled into much deeper shale formations with a substantially greater risk of adverse impacts to the environment. Coalition activities have already resulted in strengthening certain regulations. Thank you to those who contacted Michigan legislators at the behest of the coalition.

ESLA has made significant improvements to its website, www.elk-skegemog.org. Please visit the website and view the winning entries to ESLA's first annual photo contest. The best of the nature photos were used in the ESLA 2012 calendar. See page 8 for more details.

ESLA also weighed in on a number of issues that came to our attention, often by alert members:

- We wrote a letter to the Cherryland Electric Cooperative in an attempt to dissuade them from applying herbicides adjacent to surface waters and wetlands. Followed-up with letters to the editors of 3 newspapers alerting consumers to an opt-out phone number that Cherryland had not publicized.
- Appeared before the White-water Township Board in opposition to placing a water ski slalom course adjacent to the Battle Creek Natural Area. Followed-up with a letter to MDNR stressing potential impact on nesting loons.
- We wrote a letter to Elk Rapids Township in support of expanding onsite coverage for emergency fire and ambulance services

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to reduce response times. 24/7 coverage is now in place.

- Discussed Aarwood Bridge designs with the contract engineer and wrote a letter to MDEQ requesting improvements for handling water run-off from the paved surfaces.
- Met with the Elk Rapids Village Manager and wrote a letter requesting that pervious surfaces be used for the construction of proposed parking areas that are adjacent to wetlands that drain directly into Elk River.
- Requested that the Elk Rapids Golf Club conduct sampling of surface and ground waters for an herbicide that was applied by the Club in the spring and has since been recalled by the EPA.

President's Message Cont.

We have not yet prevailed on all of these issues, but our positions have been conveyed strongly and clearly. We of course conducted our weekly water quality monitoring of Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog throughout the summer. See Thom Yocum's report on page 6. And we maintained vigilance over the MDEQ and their monitoring of the Burnett Foods permit to dispose of cherry processing by-products on land surfaces adjacent to Elk Lake.

In 2011, ESLA strengthened our relationships with our Elk River Watershed partners. Under an umbrella agreement administered by the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Center (TWC), we shared resources and consultants with the Three Lakes Association (TLA) (Bellair, Clam and Torch) as they performed work on Grass River that was similar to our work on Rapid River. Another collaborative project is now being launched to place fish shelters in our lakes to increase fish habitat. See picture on this page. With TOM, TWC, TLA and others we hosted a meeting at Camp Hayo-Went-Ha in November for township and county officials from throughout the Elk River Watershed. The meeting was very successful and established connections that should benefit our moving ahead together with water quality initiatives.

Enclosed with this newsletter is the annual ESLA dues envelope. Our all-volunteer organization needs your support. We are much more effective when the preponderance of our riparians are ESLA members.

And while our bank accounts are healthy, we know there is the looming threat of Eurasian Water Milfoil that will require substantial resources to address successfully.



Fish Shelter Update

With review by the DNR and DEQ, fifteen shelter locations, based upon a 1979 map used to locate past enhancements, have been approved for Elk Lake. ESLA has formed a committee of fishermen who have extensive knowledge about the Elk Lake fishery and they have identified the 15 most desirable locations.

Adam Jankowski is chairman of the Committee and members are Lou Sanford, Ken Krentz, Lee Welch and Rick McCaghy. We selected 15 potential sites .

The sites are in front of road ends at Bussa, Easley, Ringler and Hoopfer roads, the DNR boat launch off East Elk Lake Rd and in front of Shippey Lane in

Milton Township. In Whitewater Township we selected sites in front of road ends at Skegemog Point, Townline, Carns, Gay and Angell roads and also in front of the Whitewater Township Park and off Skegemog Point near Drake road. In Elk Rapids Township we selected a site North of Townline Rd., a site off Clearwater Point and a site in Spencer Bay.

Adam appeared before the Milton Township Board in November and the Whitewater Township Board in December to request use of their riparian bottomland by virtue of several road ends and parkland. The Boards graciously approved motions allowing our project.

Letters are currently being sent to riparians adjacent to the sites for their approval as required by MDNR and MDEQ. Pending approval by affected riparians we are on course to file our application by March 1, 2012 as planned. Then the hard work will begin locating supplies, construction and placement of the structures.

Anyone wanting additional information or willing to volunteer should contact Adam Jankowski at JANKONELK@CHARTER.NET

Rapid River Update

The environmental problem being addressed by this ongoing project is the amount of sand and sediment accumulating in Rapid River, particularly just east of Aarwood Bridge and west to where the River joins Torch River. This section of Rapid River has become noticeably wider, shallower, and warmer than it was twenty years ago. Aerial photos also show heavy deposition of sediment in Rugg Pond where the east branch of the River and Little Rapid River each flow into the Pond. Sedimentation is one of highest priority threats to lakes and streams in our EPA & DEQ-approved Watershed Protection Plan. Consequently this project is being conducted in collaboration with The Traverse Bay Watershed Center and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. A parallel project to investigate sedimentation is being conducted by the Three Lakes Association on Grass River using similar methodologies and expert guidance.

The following short-term goals for this project were accomplished in 2011:

- Conduct semiannual macroinvertebrate collections at an increasing number of sites.
 - Walk the river and identify major erosion sites.
 - Evaluate Road Crossings.
- Establish multiple ongoing data collection sites.

In 2011 we had over 20 volunteers (6 teams) that conducted macroinvertebrate collection and identification in June and October. We included 6 additional sites in 2011. Each team had a captain who had received training from The Watershed Center. The variety of species and number of each species is converted into a score that represents the relative health at that site on the River, compares sample sites to one another, and allows tracking of changes over time. Furthermore, data will be used by Michigan DEQ to identify sites that need further assessment and as supplemental data for statewide water resource management. Below are recent findings for different sites on Rapid River:

- —West of Aarwood Bridge – **Fair**
- —East of Aarwood Bridge – **Fair**

- —West of Freedom Park – **Good**
- —East of Freedom Park – **Fair/Poor**
- —East of Kellogg Bridge – **Fair**
- —East of Underhill Road – **Poor**
- —Seven Bridges – **Good**
- —Wood Road west of Rugg Pond – **Fair**
- —Wood Road northeast of Rugg Pond – **Poor**
- —Birch Street northeast of Rugg Pond – **Poor**

ESLA volunteers walked the length of Rapid River from Rugg Pond to Torch River. The length of this stretch by Valley Road is 8.1 miles, but walking the meandering River is probably twice that length or more. Our volunteers were also fishermen/women who enjoyed their sport at the same time as conducting our research. Other than road crossings, only two erosion sites were identified as caused by human intervention, both in the 7 Bridges area. Vegetation on the banks was very heavy throughout this stretch of the River. We will walk the length of the River east of Rugg Pond and the length of the Little Rapid River in 2012.

There are 16 road crossings; 7 west of Rugg Pond, 4 east of Rugg Pond and 5 on the Little Rapid River. Data was systematically collected at all crossings east of Rugg Pond except at Aarwood Bridge, which had been scheduled for replacement. Serious erosion was found at each of these 6 road crossings except at Rapid City Road/Freedom Park. Two of the road crossings each have two culverts both of which have multiple erosion sites. While not all of the other road crossings have been evaluated, the Wood Road crossing northeast of Rugg Pond was evaluated in July with evidence of very serious erosion and sediment deposition. The Kalkaska County Road Commission has since repaved both the north and south grades to the road crossing with curbing the length of both approaches and multiple water diverters well upland from the River. This appears to be an excellent approach to greatly reducing the amount of sand that will wash into the River.

We have established ongoing data collection sites along the stretch of the River(s). Our three Elk Rapids High School summer interns were especially helpful with this aspect of the project. They have created a report of their work and made presentations to the ESLA Board of Directors and the Elk

Rapid River Update (cont.)

Rapids School Board in December. The following occurred in 2011:

- A transducer was placed at the Rapid City Road crossing in June. It collects water level and temperature data every 30 minutes 24 hours a day.
- Four staff gauges installed - Freedom Park, Wood Road NW, Seeley Road, and 131 Bridge. We conduct periodic measurements at these sites that include water level, water velocity, suspended sediments, and dissolved oxygen.
- Temperature loggers have been installed at Hansen Road, Rice Road, Priest Road and west of Aarwood Bridge. These record temperatures every 30 minutes 24 hours a day.

The data from these instruments and our volunteer measurements are accumulated in computer files that are analyzed by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and our consultant at the College of Brockport (NY) who is supported by The Watershed Center. We will share more of these data with you in subsequent newsletters.

Preliminary conclusions from 2011 activities:

- We are just beginning and must be diligent in collecting systematic data over time.
- Macroinvertebrate data indicates that fish habitat is less than desired.
- There are not serious human causes of erosion (sand deposits) below Rugg Pond other than road crossings.
- We need to collaborate with townships, County Commissioners, and the Road Commission.

We are now preparing for presentations to township and County officials, and will continue data collection activities throughout 2012. Another 2012 goal is to submit applications for grants to further engage stream hydrology experts from Michigan State University to work with collaborators from the Tribe of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians, College of Brockport, The Watershed Center, Tip of the Mitt, and Three Lakes

ESLA Supports Road End Legislation

Recent court rulings involving lake access at road ends have established guidelines regulating placement of hoists or anchoring devices at road ends, along with prohibiting overnight mooring at road ends between midnight and sunrise. Michigan Senator Mike Kowall introduced S. B. 778 last fall that was voted out of the Judiciary Committee in November and will soon be considered by the full Senate.

The bill would amend Part 301 (Inland Lakes and Streams) of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to specify that, unless a recorded deed, recorded easement, or other recorded dedication expressly provided otherwise, a public road end could not be used for any of the following purposes: construction, installation, maintenance, or use of boat hoists or boat anchorage devices; mooring or docking of a vessel between midnight and sunrise; or any activity that obstructed ingress to or egress from an inland lake or stream. A public road end also could not be used for the construction, installation, maintenance, or use of a dock or wharf, other than a single seasonal public dock or wharf that was authorized by the local government unit that had jurisdiction over the public road.

ESLA will closely follow the progress of this legislation and will send an email alert to members to contact your legislators, as may be appropriate.

Julie Courtade leaving the ESLA Board

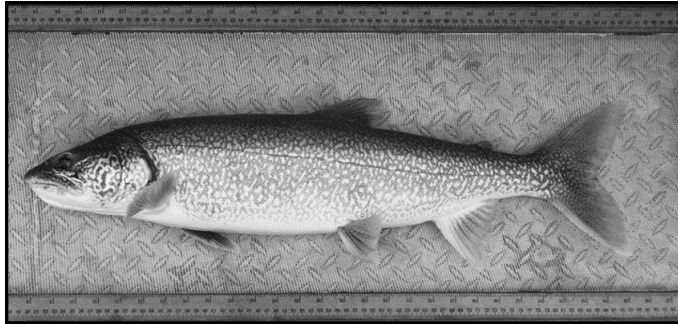
Julie Courtade has been a valuable and long serving member of the ESLA Board of Directors. Julie has provided many valuable insights and fresh approaches to issues facing ESLA. She has never hesitated to participate in ad hoc committees to launch new activities. She is moving from her home on Elk Lake to the Village of Elk Rapids. In addition to resigning from the ESLA Board, she is also leaving her position on the Whitewater Township Planning Commission. We will miss her presence on our Board and know she will be a valuable asset to the Elk Rapids community.

MDNR fisheries biologists make amazing discovery in Elk Lake

"Five years ago, we were doing a large lake survey on Elk Lake, and pulled in some lake trout and they just looked different, like something special" said Jory Jonas, a research biologist with the Charlevoix Fisheries Research Station. The fish the DNR had netted seemed more bullet shaped with the dorsal fin set further back on the body and they had a different coloration. These observations led Jonas to have genetic analysis performed on samples from 25 fish. The results showed these lake trout had more similarities to Lake Superior genotypes than to current hatchery brood stock or to lake trout stocked in Elk Lake during the 1980's. They had other unusual traits as well. When water temperatures drop to 46-52 Degrees F in the fall, it's spawning time for lake trout. Typically, lake trout prefer shallow rocky bars to drop their eggs that hatch in four to five months and require oxygen rich water. The Elk Lake fish laden with eggs, however, are in 100 feet or more of water along the western side in the lake's central basin, leading to speculation that they may be related to one of the deepwater forms that used to exist in Lake Michigan. It's believed that their Lake Michigan counterparts succumbed to over fishing and the sea lamprey and became extinct in the 1950's.

"Any lake trout that you catch in Lake Michigan today, with the rare exception, is from a hatchery," said Jonas. Since Elk Lake was dammed off from the Grand Traverse Bay starting as early as the 1860's, and fish passage was all but eliminated by the turn of the century, these trout may have remained genetically isolated for over 100 years.

With help from Laura Mathews, a Central Michigan University biology student working on a Masters degree, Jonas embarked on an extensive study of the lake trout in Elk Lake this fall. "How do eggs survive in up to 180 feet of water on a clay bottom, where does the oxygen come from?" questioned Jonas. However, studying fish in very deep water is a difficult task. Current DNR long-term



temperature monitors in Elk Lake are located in water that is too shallow. Capturing fish with nets in water this deep is also difficult. The researchers want to avail themselves of underwater robotic technology being used to capture fish in

the Great Lakes and plan to start bottom mapping with high tech sonar equipment that can differentiate bottom substrates starting next summer. So far 130 fish have been tagged and released. Subsequent net drops were successful

but only two tagged fish have been recaptured. If you catch a tagged lake trout, the DNR would like you to send the date, location of capture, length of the fish and the tag (if kept) or tag number (if released) to the Charlevoix Great Lakes Station or report the information on the following website; <http://www.michigandnr.com/taggedfish/> For additional information, fishermen may call (231) 547-2914.

Great Lakes fisheries managers believe there used to be six to nine different strains of lake trout in Lake Michigan that disappeared in the 1950's. The strains that have been planted since have struggled to reestablish themselves due to reproductive issues such as poor egg hatching and poor survival of fry. "A lot of fingers get pointed at alewives, round gobies and rusty crayfish eating lake trout fry", Jonas said. "Bottom line is, we don't know why they are having these issues." Fisheries managers had been traveling to other States where historic Lake Michigan strains were exported in the past to look for reproductively successful populations and now they may have found one in their own back yard. Jonas recently submitted 50 additional samples from Elk Lake to a geneticist to be compared to scale samples from Lake Michigan genotypes. If sufficient similarities exist it may lead to an attempt to create a hatchery brood stock. "If that is successful, it would reintroduce genetic diversity that we can't find anymore," said Jonas.

Submitted by Fred Sittle

SUMMER 2011 LAKE MONITORING

This past summer, ESLA maintained a program of water quality monitoring geared to our particular lakes and their water chemistry. In addition to the many hours devoted to the study of the Rapid River, we carried out three programs that have been in place for varying numbers of years.

Each summer for twenty years now, ESLA volunteers monitor our lakes for surface water temperature, Secchi disk depths and chlorophyll-a measures. The surface water temperature gives us an indication of how warmer water might be affecting algal growth. Warmer temps are a distinct aid to faster, more abundant algal growth. Secchi disk depths indicate how quickly light is filtered out of the water. This filtering can be due to more algae, but in our lakes it is also increased each summer by calcium carbonate precipitation in warmer waters. Thus, warm waters give us two factors to separate. Unfortunately, the chlorophyll-a results are typically not returned to us until later in January.

So, what do we know at present? The surface waters of both lakes were very close to last year's record temps. Lake Skegemog reached 25 C for four consecutive weeks in July and August. It was at 25+C for five weeks last year, with a record high of 26 C for one week. Elk Lake reached 25+ C for four weeks this year, with a high of 27 C for one week in July. The 27 C is a new record for Elk Lake. Last year saw six consecutive weeks of 25+ C, with a high of 26 C for two weeks. Certainly, this year we saw prime conditions for increased algal growth.

Comparing Secchi disk readings is interesting. Both lakes are quite similar here as well. It should be pointed out that the sites for readings in each lake remain the same from year to year. Lake Skegemog had Secchi depths reach a low of 8.5 ft. by August 22. Elk Lake reached its low of 14.5 ft. for two weeks in July, the increased slightly to 16 ft. three weeks, only to decrease to 14.5 ft. by Aug. 25. Both lakes were fairly typical in Secchi readings. Late August always has the 'cloudiest' water due to both algal growth and greatest calcium carbonate precipitation during the warmest water periods.

Algal (Brown Crud) Sampling

Sampling was conducted this summer at near shore waters on both east and west sides of Elk Lake for types of algae that are present. The samples are sent to a consultant for examination and identification by genera of algae. This year we had approximately similar results to last year, both in percentages of types and quantities of algae. Fortunately, blue-green algae, which are usually the most noxious genera, did not increase in type or percentage of the sample. In fact, one genera *Jaaginema*, actually decreased. While the algal deposits in late summer didn't decrease, at least there were no noxious varieties showing up in our sampling. We will continue this monitoring for at least one more year. It should also be noted that many other northern Michigan inland lakes, similar chemically to ours, have shown similar algal deposits the last few years. I know of no studies that have done similar sampling to ours for comparison.

E. coli Testing

The third monitoring that occurred this past summer was for the presence of *E. coli* in near shore waters. This bacteria is an indication of fecal contamination. Our samples are sent to the same lab that tests area public swimming beaches once per week. This year, as last year, identified no public health concerns. The results of any initially 'suspicious' areas always re-tested in within safe, expected parameters. Four 'suspicious' areas were examined, all on the west shore. This is probably due to generally decreased wave/wind action on that side of the lake. This type of monitoring will continue in 2012, although the exact format has not been determined.

All in all, the lake monitoring from summer 2011 indicated a continuation of sound, healthy lakes!

Submitted by Thom Yocum and Dale Claudepierre

Reminder—Sign up for electronic delivery of the ESLA Newsletter at <http://www.elk-skegemog.org>. This will save ESLA considerable printing/mailling costs, reduce paper use, and insure more rapid delivery to you.

ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION

Sept 1, 2010 — August 31, 2012

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ESLA WEB SITE: WWW.ELK-SKEGEMOG.ORG

2012 Dues Envelope Enclosed—ESLA depends totally on membership dues to continue the many projects and activates described in this newsletter. Please provide your generous support. Want to get more involved? ESLA needs volunteers—Contact Bob Kingon (rjkingon@prodigy.net)

ESLA
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Elk Rapids, MI 49629

Our first annual ESLA Photo Contest was a great success. Please check out the ESLA website, www.elk-skegemog.org (News and Events, Photo Contest), to view 2011 photo entries as well as the prize winners.

In addition, all entries were considered for our first ESLA calendar that went on sale for \$10.00 in late November. Our website home page lists the Elk Rapids businesses that carry the calendars.

Our thanks go to Dana Vannoy, professional photographer, for helping judge this year's entries. We plan to build on this success and make this an annual event. Keep your cameras at the ready and look for more details on our second annual Photo Contest in the spring newsletter.

ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION

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