



Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association

January 2016



Ruth Bay—ESLA President

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Life, I have learned, is a succession of suns and seasons. It is warmth and wonder; cold and confusion. It is love. It is love lost. Life is a magnificent journey along roads that twist and turn, rise and fall and are often wide open. Life contains bumps and disappointments as well as deep excitement and fulfillment. It is not static; and in spite of all its uncertainties, it is an awesome journey.

Life is measured in moments and memories. Some moments are created for us – and some we create.

.....Rabbi Albert M. Lewis

In fall, I ponder the suns and seasons. The days are shorter; the moon and stars clearer; and all the senses are heightened to a bursting point. Preparation for a growing season was finished months ago and

we have enjoyed a bountiful harvest, the fruits of our labor. Now a new year is here and it is time to renew your membership in ESLA. Please be generous and continue to support ESLA—we depend totally on membership dues and donations to continue our programs to protect our unique and lovely lakes and watershed. It is easy to renew (or join)—simply go to the ESLA website at <http://www.elk-skegemog.org/membership/join-us/> and use a credit card to submit payment. Thank you for your continued support and interest in ESLA.

Much is heard and read, regarding Invasive Species, in our waters. ESLA's Environmental Team, under the knowledgeable and talented leadership of our director, Dale Claudepierre, has been very busy, for the past two summers, identifying two areas where Eurasian Water Milfoil existed. This spring, ESLA contracted with PLM to do the treatment, at Cottage Cove and Fabiano's (see the Intern's report in an accompanying posting).

Within 2 to 3 weeks, a positive change could be seen. By the end of summer, the treated areas were clear. They will continue to be monitored and next spring we will see what, if anything has developed. See the report written by the 2015 ESLA interns for an update on ESLA's efforts to treat the increasing invasion of Eurasian Water Milfoil in our lakes.

ESLA's volunteers are also involved in another program Adopt-A-Stream (see the pictures in the accompanying posting for "Bug"

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collection). This is in collaboration with the Watershed Grand Traverse. Volunteers are invited to study water quality through analysis of watershed life. The volunteers initially undergo a protocol training. Then, stream monitoring is done twice a year, in the spring and fall, by collecting samples of bugs and crustaceans from bottom sedimentation and vegetation along stream banks – anything that moves. The samples are then identified and counted. These results go into a data collection program managed by the Michigan Clean Water Corps in association with the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. This program is a wonderful opportunity for young folks and adults to learn about the local aquatic environment and have fun doing it. I encourage you to join this program next year.

Milton Township Kewadin Park Update

Submitted by Bob Kingon, Milton Twp Planning Board Member:

As reported in the last newsletter, Milton Township purchased two properties in 2014, one that is immediately west of the historic Milton Township Hall (3) acres on the north side of Cairn Highway. The other property includes 198 feet of frontage on Elk Lake directly across from the old Town Hall.

The Water's Edge Resort (directly across from the Market) has also become available, which has 200 feet of frontage just east of the recently purchased property. This property also abuts a 50-foot road end to the east, now owned by the Township. A purchase agreement for this property has been consummated, and the Township is working closely with the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) in adding this parcel to the Kewadin Park. If acquired, the Kewadin Park would have nearly 450 feet of frontage on Elk Lake. A grant application has been made to Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF) to provide the preponderance of funds required for the purchase. The Township will learn in December if the application is successful. The Township has also made presentations to the Elk Rapids Rotary, Rotary Charities and others to lay the foundation for raising matching funds that will be required by the MNRTF grant, if successful.

Meanwhile, Gosling Czuback Engineering Services (GCES) has provided the Township with phased options for development. The property on the north side of Cairn Highway will be primarily a parking area with substantial green space and enhanced storm water management. This area will also serve the Township Hall and allow for improved landscaping in front of the Hall and along the eastside of the building. A mid-block crosswalk will be installed to allow park users to safely cross Cairn Highway. The Lakeside portion of the Park will include restrooms, picnic areas, playground equipment, beach enhancements and a universal access kayak launch.

Latest update — Milton Township and the



Super size gull sighted in Skegemog Lake ???

Did you see a very large gull at the south end of Torch River in Lake Skegemog this summer? See picture above.

Well, maybe it really isn't a super large gull?

This past spring we had a very unusual visitor to our area. An American White Pelican was photographed on June 17, 2015 at the outlet of the Torch River to Lake Skegemog. Normally the migration pattern of this beautiful bird has been west of Lake Michigan on their trip to summer in the area around the Canadian border, but the Michigan DNR has reported they have become more common throughout the state of Michigan.

Submitted by Dale Claudepierre

Picture by Sherry Comer
(www.facebook.com/ComerCreations.com)

Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy have announced that Milton Twp. will receive a \$464,300 grant from the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to assist in the purchase of the Water's Edge Resort. The Township will be contributing \$199,000 and the Conservancy \$26,600 to the purchase. This will allow the creation of the Milton Township Beach public park.

Update: The Elk Rapids Hydro Dam FERC Application



Several years ago Antrim County submitted an application to the Federal Regulatory Commission for renewal of the operating permit for the Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Powerhouse and Dam. Although the County has provided all applications and supporting materials on time and there were no properly submitted objections by interested parties, the approval is still forthcoming. In anticipation of eventual approval by FERC, the County also has been attempting to negotiate with Consumer Power regarding renewal of the power purchase agreement, which determines how much Consumer Power will pay for the energy produced by the ER Dam. This summer, the Antrim County Commissioners passed the following resolution

DECLARATION OF SUPPORT BY ANTRIM COUNTY FOR THE ELK RAPIDS HYDROELECTIC POWERHOUSE

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Powerhouse (ERHP) and Dam in the Village of Elk Rapids, Antrim County, Michigan, has provided valuable, renewable electricity, and a barrier for invasive species starting 1916 for the Village, the community of Antrim County, and the entire Elk Rapids Chain of Lakes; and

WHEREAS, ERHP is an important green energy producer that hosts educational tour and school groups on the topic of renewable energy in general and clean hydroelectricity in specific; and

WHEREAS, ERHP provides significant financial revenues to Antrim County and recreational venues for the community residents; and

WHEREAS, the ERHP hydroelectric facility provides enhanced fishing opportunities as well as major adjacent property value for the residents of the Village and those around Elk/Skegemog Lakes, and has done so for 99 years; and

WHEREAS, ERHP provides critical flood control and reservoir level control for the residents and property owners around Elk/Skegemog Lakes, and has done so for 99 years; and

WHEREAS, ERHP provides significant electric grid support and increases the reliability of the electric system in the immediate geographic area; and

WHEREAS, ERHP's continued, successful operation depends upon the sale of electric capacity and energy from its hydroelectric facility; and

WHEREAS, ERHP's Power Purchase Agreement ("PPA") with the Consumers Energy Company ("Consumers Energy") will expire in 2019; and (Continued on page 4)

ER Hydo Dam

WHEREAS, Consumers Energy has a legal obligation to abide by the requirements of the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (“PURPA”), 16 U.S.C. § 2601 *et seq.*, and the rules promulgated thereunder (18 CFR Part 292, *et seq.*), including its mandatory purchase obligations for Michigan’s small power production and cogeneration facilities; and

WHEREAS, ERHP is established as a “Qualifying Facility” of under 20 MW of capacity, subject to the PURPA requirements; and

WHEREAS, as of this date, Consumers Energy has refused to renegotiate or renew any of the expiring Qualifying Facility renewable Power Purchase Agreements at a fair and just rate; and

WHEREAS it is in the best interests of Antrim County and the Village of Elk Rapids and its residents that the ERHP hydroelectric facility remains operational and viable; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the County of Antrim, in the State of Michigan, memorializes its support for the ERHP hydroelectric facility and encourages Consumers Energy to negotiate this year in good faith for a new Power Purchase Agreement with ERHP in a timely manner and upon economically fair conditions for a term of 20 years or more.

ADOPTED, by full action of the duly elected Commissioners of Antrim County,

Michigan, at its regularly scheduled meeting held September ___, 2015.

ESLA Photo Contest



Got a great photo of our beautiful ESLA area? Share your favorite shots and enter the Annual ESLA Photo Contest. It’s free to join and open to all Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association (ESLA) members and their families. These contests create a historical photo archive of our rivers and lakes and their inhabitants. Photos will be used for promotional opportunities for ESLA, and will be included in our website Photo Galleries, becoming an important part of preserving and sharing our membership’s fondest memories of their time spent in this area. We hope everyone will participate!

Deadline: Photos must be submitted by May 31, 2016 in order to qualify. Judging will be in June, 2016. This gives members the opportunity to make submissions through the year and capture the seasons of our lake and lake living. Photos are used for promotional opportunities for ESLA. Remember, there are cash prizes to win and the addition of your photo to the ESLA Website Gallery. Please go to the ESLA website for details:

<http://www.elk-skegemog.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/ESLA-Photo-Entry-Form-2015.pdf>

We thank all who have submitted photos in the past and hope you continue to add to the photo archive on our website, capturing the beauty of nature, family, and friends in the place we call home.

Brown Crud or Golden Algae?

From *Garret Ellison, who covers business & environment for MLive/The Grand Rapids Press:*

TORCH LAKE, MI — It's murky brown, unpleasant to walk through and appearing in greater quantity along the sandy bottom of northern Michigan's prettiest lakes.

No, it's not leftovers from the big Independence Day sandbar party on Torch Lake.

University researchers, residents and an Antrim County environmental association have begun taking a closer look this year at the recent proliferation of golden brown algae in Torch Lake and other inland waters around Michigan's northern Lower Peninsula.

The non-toxic "crud" forming in crusty mats on nearshore lake bottoms is nothing new, but property owners say its presence has increased substantially in the last two years. It's an aesthetic nuisance that folks living around the pristine shorelines would rather do without.

"It's not like weeds growing up through the lake or noxious smells," said Greg Payne, president of the Torch Lake Protection Alliance. "But, it's not nice to walk in."

The alliance has helped the Three Lakes Association fund a pilot study with Michigan State University hydrology and zoology experts to try and discover what's fueling the bloom in brown benthic algae — which started getting attention in 2014 and has gotten noticeably worse this year.

The working hypothesis is that groundwater nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus are seeping into the lakes from a yet-undetermined source or sources — although there are a few suspected culprits, university researchers say.

Theories include changes based on invasive mussels, heavy ice cover the past two winters, residential and agricultural runoff and outdated septic systems. Whatever conclusion the data supports will inform a future management plan.

"My favorite hypothesis is probably septic tanks leaking nutrients through the groundwater," said R. Jan Stevenson, co-director of the MSU zoology department.

Nonetheless, "we're not excluding any idea."

Michigan State researchers have been analyzing water samples collected by Three Lakes Association members. Aerial and lake-level surveys show the algae is pervasive on both sides and along the northern shoals of Torch Lake, but absent from the lake's famous south end sandbar near the Torch River entrance.

Golden brown benthic algae on the bottom of Elk Lake. Michigan State University and the Three Lakes Association are researching the source of the freshwater algae that's appearing in greater quantity in northern Michigan lakes. *Courtesy | Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council/Dan Myers*

The algae mats are generally found in water between four and 15 feet deep.

Although Torch is receiving the most attention, Three Lakes Association members say the brown algae has been spotted by air in Lake Charlevoix, Lake Bellaire, Elk Lake, Walloon Lake and Grand Traverse Bay.

Brown Crud or Golden Algae?

A two-year Lake Charlevoix monitoring project by the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council recently found that nearly 10,000 pounds of algae-fueling phosphorus and 12 million pounds of sediments are hitting Lake Charlevoix annually from tributaries like the Jordan River, Boyne River and Higgins Creek.

“From the air, it looks as though this is fairly widespread,” said Becky Norris, who chairs the association’s water quality committee. Norris said Torch Lake sampling during initial study preparations this spring didn’t find much algae, but now, in October, “there’s a ton of it.” “The nice weather and sunshine has caused it to flourish,” she said.

The algae has turned the Caribbean blue of Torch Lake water an off-green color.

Norris cautioned that more data is needed before conclusions on the source can be reliably made, but she said many local residential septic systems are past their typical 20-year lifespan. The closest municipal sewer systems are in Elk Rapids and Bellaire and both drain away from Torch. There are also some shared septic drainage fields used by various residential developments around the lake.

“It’s possible the ground has reached a saturation point and simply can’t hold any more of the nutrients that get delivered through the septic distribution fields,” she said. “But we don’t have any data that says that.” “We want to be careful not to sound the alarm for no reason.”

Payne, who has been visiting the area for decades and living on Torch Lake the last five years, said the septic theory is compelling but doesn’t think it tells the whole story. The algae seems to have nearly doubled this year, he said. “With the significance of change this year, in my mind, it has to be more than concentration of runoff and septic systems,” he said.

Also see: <http://3lakes.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/TLA-News-Oct-2015.pdf>

Microplastics Threat

Microplastics are tiny (less than 5mm) particles of plastic which can enter aquatic environments directly via cleaning and cosmetic products or indirectly via the breakdown of larger pieces of plastic. When these particles are ingested by fish or other wildlife they can obstruct or damage internal metabolic processes and cause increased stress. Microplastics are considered an increasing threat to aquatic organisms.

Until recently, much of the research regarding the distribution of microplastics was conducted in the oceans. More recently, research has been directed to freshwater environments. Professor Sherri Mason (SUNY) conducted the first survey of plastic pollution, including microplastics, in the Great Lakes in 2012. She and the research team she worked with found an average of 17,000 plastic bits per square kilometer in Lake Michigan, with lower concentrations in Lakes Huron and Superior. This October, she addressed the Freshwater Summit held in Traverse City on October 30th.

Currently, conventional water treatment plants cannot filter out these microbeads once they enter the water. In February of this year, State Senator Steven Bieda (D-Macomb County) introduced SB 0158, which would ban the sale of any personal care products containing plastic microbeads in Michigan. This legislation was reintroduced after failing to pass during the last legislative session. Like last year, no action has been taken by the Senate to review and approve this legislation. Other States, such as Illinois, Indiana, and New Jersey already have passed bans.

Manufacturers like Proctor & Gamble, Unilever, Colgate-Palmolive, Johnson & Johnson, The Body Shop, and L’Oreal have all made commitments to eventually phase out the use of microbeads in their products. In the meantime, what can you do? Don’t purchase or use personal care products such as facial scrubs, soaps, and toothpaste which contain microbeads. Liquid soaps containing microbeads are fairly obvious -- they look like tiny suspended dots in the bottle -- but consumers can check other product labels for polyethylene or polypropylene as an indication whether the beads are present.

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Save the Date
June 18

ESLA's 2016 Annual Meeting will be June 18th at the Historic Elk Rapids Town Hall Association. Author, adventurer & speaker, Loreen Niewenhuis has been confirmed. She will speak on her 'Great Lakes ISLAND Adventure' for our group. Cash bar at 6:00pm – short business meeting about 6:45 –speaker at 7:00.