

# ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION MAY 2021 NEWSLETTER

## President's Message



**Mary Beth Kazanski**  
ESLA President

Spring is always such a wonderful time and for many of us the hope it brings is even greater this year. Covid vaccines have been developed and are being distributed at a brisk rate. And though we are not out of the woods just yet, we may even be able to enjoy a more “normal” summer.

This year brings a new and exciting project to our area. ESLA will begin working with Zero Gravity Aerial, a local environmental data collection company, to perform a drone photographic mapping of our shoreline. This allows us to better visualize our lakes looking more effectively for potential aquatic plant invasive species, shoreline erosion, and other concerns. Find out

more about this exciting program, as well as much more, inside.

For those who prefer a digital copy of this newsletter, it is also available on the website. We thank Kate Lett, our newest Board member, and Rick Kiehle of Garrison Digital Solutions for their work to keep the website up to date during these trying times and allow the site to be a primary tool to communicate with all riparians. Please check the website for details on our “Its a Shore Thing” lecture series and our annual meeting (June 25).

And if all of this wasn't exciting enough, we now have a Facebook page! You can access it by searching on Facebook or clicking the button on our website. “Like” us and follow us for updates on our work, items of interest, calls for assistance and more. Check it out!

Thank you to everyone for your patience and support this past year. Our membership stepped up to keep us going financially. The Board worked hard though physically distanced and kept their spirits up despite the video glitches and general pandemic chaos. Special thanks to Vice

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President Bob Campbell for his diligence and energy this year.

As always we invite those who have received this newsletter but are not yet members to join us in our efforts by clicking on the button found on the website. We have kept our membership fees down to make membership available to all. Help make Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association even better with your membership! For a more permanent and substantial contribution to the long range work of ESLA, please see the article inside regarding our ESLA Endowment at the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation.

Again, thank you for your trust and support.

## ESLA Board Hires Drone Lake Photography Specialist

By Bob Campbell and Jan Garvey

It's a bird; it's a plane it's SUPER---

Nope, if it's between mid-July and late August, and there's a boat with two or three people navigating ahead of the buzz from a pint-sized flying contraption, it's a drone and its operators. Their presence represents a major investment of the ESLA board to advance the present and future of the watershed.

At a special meeting in early April, the board voted to spend up to \$15,000 to hire Zero Gravity Aerial and its owner, Dennis Wiand, to conduct and create a comprehensive photographic record of our 42 miles of shorelines and near-shore waters.

The board expects it will help us find aquatic invasive plants like purple loosestrife and Eurasian water milfoil. ESLA conducts hunts for the invasives each year but it is very time-consuming, often requiring paddles in shallow, log-strewn areas with kayaks. The technology could help us spend more time, effort and member support money removing invasives, instead of finding them.

The drone also could help us locate a missing fish shelter or two and perhaps the buoy leading into the channel from Skegemog Lake to the mouth of the Torch River that broke free in a storm last summer. Additionally, and critically, the work should give us a deeper understanding of the overall state of our shorelines, including where small creeks, road ends or construction sites are dumping sediment or if there are algae blooms near those discharges. As a strategic aid to goal-setting, that's crucial.

Importantly, too, the comprehensive photographic record will provide a valuable record of the state of our shorelines in 2021 and become a key historical record for future comparison. We'll see where pipes enter the lake and take note. And we can get a better sense of the extent to which lawns extend to the water's edge without native plant and tree buffers from chemical treatments.

Wiand formerly owned a commercial automotive industry photography business in Detroit. He now lives on Long Lake west of Traverse City and started his commercial, drone-based photography enterprise in 2016. Since then, he's had excellent reviews from those who have hired him. Associations representing Long Lake, Lake Leelanau, Crystal Lake, Higgins Lake, Lake Charlevoix, Burt Lake and Portage Lake represent some of the 26 water bodies where Wiand's enterprise has worked.

Highly-regarded lake biologists like Rob Karner of the Glen Lake Association and Ron Reimink, who has worked with ESLA and many other lake associations on Swimmers Itch and other issues, have high praise for the benefits the drone imagery has brought them the last few years.

"It's the single biggest difference-maker we've had in the last few years," said Reimink, who worked with Wiand at Lime Lake (where he owns a cottage) and Little Traverse Lake, both in northern Leelanau County. One example is that having a baseline of shoreline greenbelts, for example, allows lake boards to set goals for improvement to reduce harmful sediment release into the lakes.

The ESLA board was still working out details, including how and who will examine, analyze and compile the data from examination of the photographic record. Wiand takes notes on what he sees as he cruises the shallows. If he sees a dark patch in the water suggesting a potential invasive issue or an impact from sediment release, he'll mark it with its GPS location. He'll occasionally move the drone in for a closer look, too, when something looks interesting or concerning. That will help our data analysts in their follow-ups and aggregation of the numbers of specific findings



*Drone image showing Purple Loosestrife and Cladophora along shoreline*

Here's a deeper look at some of questions that came up before the board reached a decision.

**Q: Are there privacy issues with taking photographs of privately-owned shorelines?**

*A: There are no legal issues with taking photos over public waters. ESLA will make every attempt to post the dates and locations of the drone work on its website and or Facebook page. Wiand's drone pilot boat typically is about 100 feet ahead of the drone and he makes himself available to answer questions or concerns if residents notice him coming. He's said that it's rare that anyone asks him not to photograph their shoreline.*

**Q: Will ESLA use the photography to pursue legal action against property owners?**

*A: ESLA has no interest in confrontation with the riparians it represents. In some cases, we may encourage owners to consider alternatives. Under the terms of our contract, ESLA cannot share the photographic records with anyone, including law enforcement agencies, such as the state Department of Environmental Quality.*

**Q: Would ESLA be able to use the GPS details obtained from the Zero Gravity data to repeat a track at locations like creeks mouths or road ends that have been known to raise concerns?**

*A: Yes, this is an important advantage, especially when conditions warrant, such as after storms dump major rainfall amounts. One of our board members has interest in doing this with his equipment.*

## Help! We Need Somebody!

By BOB CAMPBELL, ESLA Vice President

Wanna help? We could use some! ESLA is looking for a few good women and men to lend a hand, a strong back, an appreciation for detail, some brainpower, or a particular skillset to help us keep the quality and sustainability of our waters and shorelines at the high level we expect and demand.

We often hear from friends on our waterways that they'd like to help but are only around for the warm weather months. Not a problem. Most of our work is from April through October. As the pandemic eases, we hope to stage more in-person activities.

Those of us who have joined the ESLA board agreed to dig in and get our fingers dirty, our brains, powers of debate and compromise stretched and our understanding of lake and shoreline science (some start with a lot, some a little) improved. There's always room at our table.

Consider some needs we'd like to fill from our membership pool. If you're interested in anything here, send an email to [elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com](mailto:elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com) :

@ Have experience writing grant applications for government, foundation or non-profit support? Nearby lake associations have unlocked some of this cash pool. So would we.

@ Have video production and/or editing skills. It was an idea born of the Covid-19 pandemic. We couldn't stage our normal "It's a Shore Thing" in-person gatherings at Twisted Fish, so we began recording Zoom interviews with people who bring insight and inspiration to issues facing our watershed and post them on our website [elk-skegemog.org](http://elk-skegemog.org). We get smoother with each production but someone or two (younger people seem to have these tools) skilled in this area would be a godsend, especially as we have unveiled a fresh website and new Facebook page.

@ This one seems fishy and likely won't happen until 2022, but we'll need folks handy with tools once we receive a state permit to build and deploy 4-5 fish shelters on the south end of Elk Lake. Currently, there's none south of the Narrows on the east shoreline or south of Whitewater Township Park on the west shore. Let us know, too, if you're interested in having one on your lake bottomland (minimum water depth 15 feet). It's best if your next door neighbor agrees.

@ ESLA Board: We have an open seat in Zone D (Skegemog Point and south side – Hoiles, Baggs and Lakeside Trail - of Skegemog Lake) and another in Zone E (Torch River, Bayou, lower Rapid River). Come on Torch River folks!

@ Help for the environmental quality committee. This could involve captaining your boat with our summer scientist, sifting through data, searching for invasive plants. Lots of needs.

@ Be a (no commission) salesperson for ESLA membership in your neighborhood. We can get you hand-outs and even a freebie ESLA bright yellow license plate, featuring the lovely Elkemog loon Lucy.

@ Join the ranks of ESLA admiralty! We've kept our basic annual dues at \$25, but last year most members paid \$50 or more and a record number were admirals (\$100) and above.

## Water Quality Monitoring

By Jan Garvey, ESLA Board Member

The Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council has coordinated and sponsored the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program for more than 20 years. Volunteers monitor 35 lakes spread throughout northwestern Michigan. Monitoring water quality does not ensure clean water, but rather provides valuable information to help protect and improve water quality in the lakes.

Two ESLA volunteers, Dale Claudepierre and Dean Ginther have been monitoring our lakes for years. This year, John Spevacek, another ESLA volunteer, plans to get involved. Starting in May or early June, they start their weekly visits to the deepest part of the lake to perform water quality monitoring activities. After anchoring the boat, the monitor begins by measuring water clarity with a Secchi disc. The Secchi disc is a weighted disc, eight inches in diameter, which is painted black and white in alternating quarters. The monitor slowly lowers the Secchi disc over the shaded side of the boat and notes the depth where it disappears. The disc is lowered an additional two feet and then slowly raised until coming back into view. After noting the depth of reappearance, the average of the two depths is calculated and recorded. The deeper the Secchi disc depth, the clearer the water.

Every other week, the monitor collects a water sample that is used to measure chlorophyll-a concentrations. Measuring the amount of chlorophyll-a in a water sample provides a fairly accurate estimate of the amount of algae in the water. After determining the Secchi disc depth, the monitor collects the water sample in the same location. The water is filtered and the filtrate is stored in a freezer until the end of the season. All samples are then delivered to Tip of the Mitt and analyzed at the University of Michigan Bio-Station. A low level of chlorophyll-a indicates relatively low algae abundance and good to excellent water quality, while a high level of chlorophyll-a indicates dense algae growth and generally poor water quality.

Tip of the Mitt has suggested that we add Phosphorus sampling to our monitoring plan. Other lakes in the Elk River Chain of Lakes have been conducting this more frequent testing of phosphorus. We currently had been testing for phosphorus every three years as a part of the Comprehensive Water Quality Monitoring Program. Although we have not seen a poor trend in the phosphorus levels in our lakes, it is a good indicator for all lake water. Phosphorus is the nutrient most responsible for the pollution and premature aging of lakes in northern Michigan. The source of Phosphorus is mainly due to surface water run off and atmospheric deposition.

A comment from Dale Claudepierre:

" I have been the Water Quality Monitor for Lake Skegemog for the past 18 years and the trend that is most impressive is the water clarity. The data collected before my involvement indicated average seasonal clarity around 9 or 10 feet with a maximum of about 12 or 13 feet in June. By comparison the past two years average was around 16 feet and last June I could still see the Secchi disc when it hit the bottom in 24 feet of water! There are many factors involved in water clarity but the main contributor to the change has been the filtering effect of the invasive Zebra Mussels."

Data collected in the Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program has been entered into a comprehensive database and is available to view or download (in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet). The easiest way to find this data is to use the search function on the Tip of the Mitt website, searching for Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program.

# CLEAN BOATS CLEAN WATERS



## ESLA CO-SPONSORING 3 BOAT WASH DAYS

Bob Campbell, ESLA Vice President

ESLA will partner again this summer with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to offer three boat wash days at the newly paved DNR Baggs Road public boat launch and the Whitewater Township public ramp. Anyone launching or retrieving a watercraft will be offered a free hull and trailer high pressure spray washdown aimed to removing any invasive plant or animal species that may have been transported from the last waterway where the craft was used.

The boat wash schedule is:

- May 29 (Saturday), 12-4 p.m., DNR Baggs Road ramp on the south side of Skegemog Lake.
- June 27 (Sunday), 12-4 p.m. at the Whitewater Township Park, southwest shore of Elk Lake.
- August 28 (Saturday), 12-4 p.m., Baggs Road ramp.

This year's events were selected because the ramps will host state-registered bass fishing tournaments those days. Most tournament sponsors encourage members to follow state law requiring boaters to clean, drain and dry between launches to insure they are not transporting invasive species on hulls or trailers or in bilge water or bait tanks. Still, the events offer an important reminder.

The mobile, high-pressure tank and trailer is on extended loan from the U.S. Forest Service to Tip of the Mitt and will be operated by TOM seasonal employees at lakes throughout northwest lower Michigan. ESLA will have at least two volunteers on site at each local event to greet boaters and offer free literature on the importance of boat wash downs to control invasive species. Board member Linda Slopsema, who this year takes over the ESLA boat wash program from Vice President Bob Campbell, said ESLA could still use some volunteers. She can be reached at 517-614-4887. Slopsema said ESLA is in the process of updating all public boat launches on Elk and Skegemog Lakes and the Elk and Torch rivers with new signage courtesy of the state Dept. of Environmental Quality.

## The Life and Times of the Hex Mayfly

By Ken Krentz, ESLA Board Member

Every summer from late June to early July we have a hatch of the biggest mayflies on Elk Lake, Skegemog Lake, and the Rapid River. The *Hexagenia Limbata*, or Hex fly, is also called giant mayfly, Michigan mayfly, or just fish fly. While there are hundreds of species of mayflies with adults as small as ¼” long, the Hex is the largest with a body as long as 1 ½”,

and the Elk River bridge, where passing car lights attract them.

It was observed by many on Elk and Skegemog that there was an unusually small or non-existent Hex hatch in 2020. The MDNR has received reports of similar occurrences

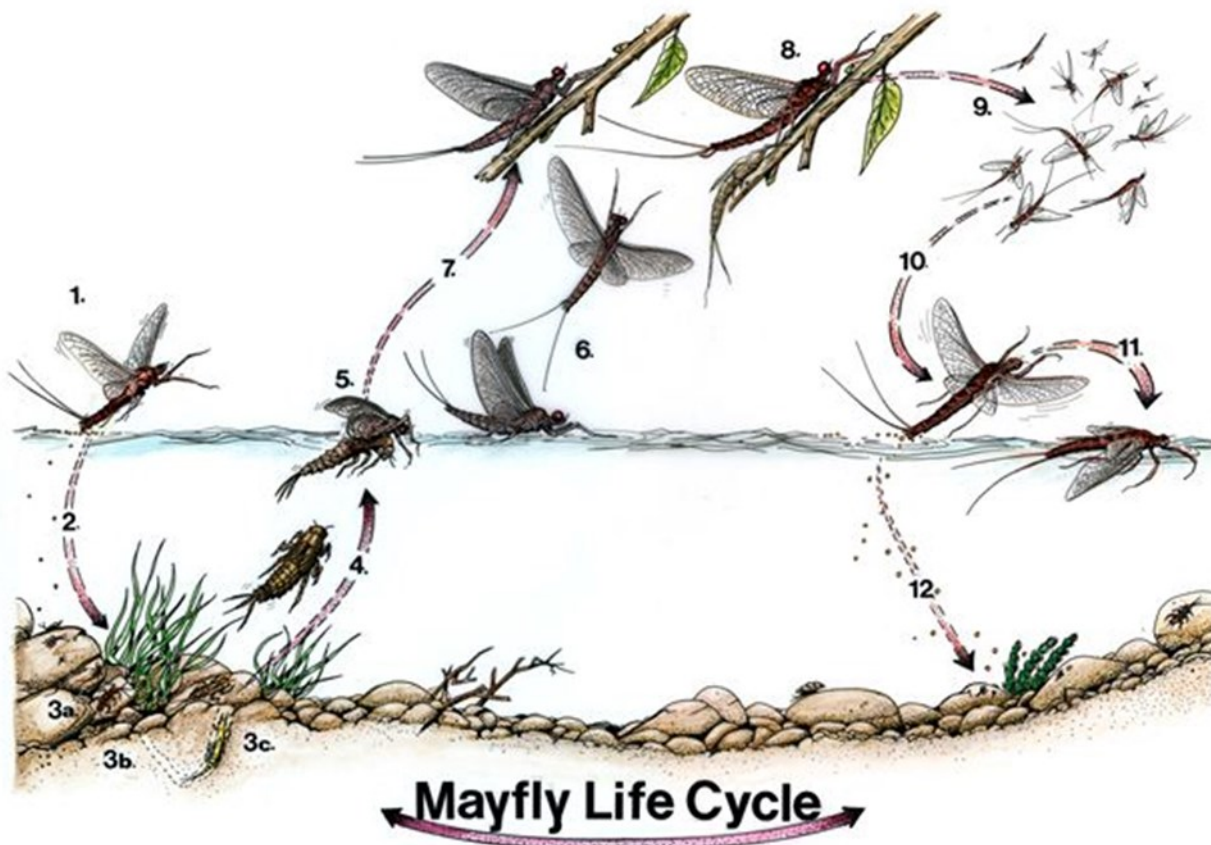


Image from Dave Whitlock's Guide to Aquatic Trout Foods

and overall length of the adult with tails is up to 3”. They are found all over the US and Canada but most common in the Great Lakes region. The adult flies cling to just about anything near shore; trees, shrubs, buildings, boats, docks, hoists, etc. They are attracted to lights and hordes are seen around outdoor lights, street-lights, and bridges, like the Torch River bridge

around the state. They report that normally there are a few lakes each year in the northern Lower Peninsula where this occurs, but it was more widespread in 2020. Typically, the hatch returns to normal the following year. Additionally, many hatches of Hex flies and other mayflies that emerge from spring through fall, were later than normal in 2020.

Hex mayflies are some of the larger aquatic macroinvertebrates that spend almost their entire life underwater burrowed in the bottom. The primary habitat requirement for these bugs is good water quality, followed by a soft bottom substrate in the shoreline shallows. The best nearshore underwater habitat is silt, muck, loose sand or soil, organic matter, and woody debris. Mayflies are near the bottom of the food chain, especially their underwater nymph stage. Their populations are a significant food source for fish like minnows, suckers, perch, bass, trout, and whitefish. Mayfly nymphs feed on microorganisms and compete with invasives like zebra mussels for food.

Following is the life cycle of the Hex mayfly. After the adult female releases her eggs in less than 10 feet of water near the shore, the eggs settle in the bottom and hatch into larvae (nymphs). The nymphs burrow into the soft bottom and make a tunnel where they spend most of their time eating microorganisms and grow up to 1 ½" long over 1-3 years. Most other mayfly species live among the rocks, vegetation, and wood on the bottom and do not burrow. Nymphs are shades of brown and yellow with gray feathery gills along their sides, and 3 tails. These are the "wrigglers" fishermen buy at bait shops for panfish bait, mostly for ice fishing. When the time is right in late June and early July, nymphs leave the bottom and slowly swim to the surface to emerge. This occurs from dusk to mid night on warm, calm, muggy, early summer nights. At this stage they are preyed on heavily by fish, and that is why fishermen will tell you it's difficult to catch bass and perch during this time period. The fish gorge themselves on nymphs and mostly ignore other food. When

*The DNR has made a fishing rule change starting Spring, 2021. It applies to the Torch River from the Crystal Beach Rd. bridge downstream to Skegemog Lake, and the Rapid River from Aarwood Rd. bridge downstream to Torch River. These sections of rivers are now closed to fishing from May 1 to June 15. This has been done to protect the muskellunge during their spawning period in these waters. Historically, these stream sections have been classified as a Type 4 trout and salmon stream meaning they are open to fishing all year for trout and salmon. General Fishing Regulations have applied to all other species. See the 2021 Michigan Fishing Guide available in print at all license dealers, or digital at [Michigan.gov/DNRDigests](https://Michigan.gov/DNRDigests).*

the nymph breaks the water surface their exoskeleton splits open and the adult fly called a "dun" emerges. After a short struggle to escape the nymphal shuck and dry its wings, the dun flies away to land on anything near shore. You will find huge mats of floating nymphal shucks on the water the next day. Look closely and you'll see the nymph shape and size.

The dun has no functional mouth parts and can no longer eat. After perching in the trees, or on your boat or hoist, for 1-3 days, it molts again and becomes what's called a "spinner" with 2 long tails and flies away to mate midair. Left behind is a thin clear skin the entire shape of the spinner with a split down the center of the back. The next rainstorm or wind will clear these away. That evening, the spinners fly over the water nearshore to mate. Sometimes the hordes of spinners are so huge, thousands of bugs, you can hear the wings humming and see the sky darken, especially over narrow river channels like the Rapid. The adult females with a small yellow egg sac attached to their tail then fly low over the water dipping their tails in the water to release eggs, eventually landing on the water and dying within a short time. The males also land on the surface and die shortly after mating. This is called the "spinner fall". Fish feed heavily on floating

spinners as well as emergers. The next morning you will see floating dead spinners with wings splayed out flat on the surface, again sometimes clustered in huge floating mats. Their life cycle is now complete; 1-3 years on the water bottom, then 1-3 days as a flying adult.

At this time there is no known cause among the list of potentials for the unusually small

hatch in 2020. Mayflies are an indicator species, kind of like a canary in a coal mine, giving us a clue as to the environmental conditions.

ESLA has monitored the water quality of Elk and Skegemog for many years and no degradation has been identified leading to this occurrence. There has been some degradation of the natural shoreline habitat over recent years due to residential development. However, that change has been continuous and is not presumed to have caused the lack of bugs we suddenly experienced in 2020. Armoring shorelines with metal or rock walls degrades their habitat. Any hardening of the bottom nearshore takes away their burrowing capability. Severe weather conditions like thunderstorms, wind, and rain 1-3 years ago could have minimized breeding and hatch success back then, thus fewer mature nymphs to hatch in 2020. ESLA will continue to monitor the mayfly hatches on our waters, and around Michigan. Let's hope 2020 was just a single year occurrence like occasionally happens everywhere.

Next time you experience Hex mayflies hatching and clinging to everything on your property, be assured they are telling us the water quality remains good. If they are a nuisance, just shoe them away to perch elsewhere. Don't fret, they are harmless. Remember, they have no mouthparts and can't bite. Their remaining molted shucks and the dead spinners will just wash or blow away. And those floating clusters of nymph shucks and dead spinners will degrade and become food or natural fertilizer for the next generation. So, on warm, muggy, windless nights in late June to early July,

## Elk Skegemog Lakes Association Endowment Fund

By Dean Ginther, Chairperson ESLA Financial Committee

In 1999 the ESLA Board of Directors established the Elk Skegemog Lakes Endowment Fund (ESLEF) in cooperation with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation (GTRCF). The Elk Skegemog Lakes Endowment Fund is a GTRCF environmentally themed fund designated to support the mission of the Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association.

The endowment Fund principal is held in perpetuity and grows, depending on GTRCF investment returns, while the annual interest from the Fund can be either distributed or reinvested by the ESLA Board. The endowment Fund is the only ESLA financial fund which is permanent – all other funds are based on yearly contributions from member dues, which vary from year to year. In the past, for an example, interest gained from the endowment Fund has allowed ESLA to support high school and college summer interns conducting on-going research, water monitoring, and invasive species identification and treatment. Giving to the endowment Fund through the GTRCF supports both the wider community mission of the GTRCF as well as the ESLA mission and programs for the preservation and protection of our lakes, rivers, and watershed. All gifts to the endowment are forever gifts, since the principal is never depleted.

Contributions to the Elk-Skegemog Lakes fund can be made on-line at: <https://www.gtrcf.org/give/give.html>. From the homepage do a search for Elk-Skegemog. The GTRCF can accept gifts in the form of cash, stocks and bonds, and legacy gifts such as a deferred or planned gift, an estate, trust, or a will bequest, as well as other options. GTRCF will work with your financial advisor and can provide a variety of resources to support gift giving considerations and details. Note that the fund selected should be the Elk-Skegemog Lakes endowment. Dean Ginther, head of the ESLA Finance Committee or Phil Spagenberg, ESLA Treasurer, also are available to answer any questions regarding contributions to the Endowment Fund.

Contribution to the Endowment Fund is not a substitute for ESLA annual dues. ESLA membership should be made at: <https://www.elk-skegemog.org> or by returning the pre-addressed dues envelope from the December Newsletter.

## Blue Green Algae In Northern Michigan

by Mary Beth Kazanski, ELSA President

Living in this area you may have heard of Golden Brown Algae (GBA), a seemingly harmless algae increasing in our waters discoloring our famous blue lakes. But there is another “algae” of concern that has been found in some spots along the Elk River chain of lakes. Blue green algae is part of Harmful Algal Blooms (HAB) that you may hear about. These can be much more serious than GBA.

Blue green algae is actually a bacteria. Cyanobacteria are naturally occurring in fresh or salt water and can sometimes produce a toxin harmful to people and dogs. Its growth is fueled by the warmer waters of late summer and early fall especially in areas where the water is less likely to be stirred up by waves and wind. It is fed by excessive nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus (think fertilizer and septic leaks). It can appear as a slimy floating blue-green mat but can also be bright green, brown or even red color. Not all will produce toxins but you cannot tell by looking at it as to whether it is harmful or not. Dogs are at risk because they will jump into any type of water, drink it or even lick it off their wet fur.

If you think you see a HAB, stay out of the water. If you come in contact with it you should rinse your skin off with tap water. This is also necessary for your dog if it gets into it. If you are not sure if the dog drank any, contact your veterinarian. Exposure to high levels of toxin can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea; skin, eye or throat irritation; allergic reactions or breathing difficulties. If you are experiencing symptoms contact your healthcare provider or Poison Control (800-222-1222).



You can report a Harmful Algal Bloom to EGLE by calling 800-662-9278 or sending an email to [AlgaeBloom@Michigan.gov](mailto:AlgaeBloom@Michigan.gov)

There is much more information available on the following websites:

<https://www.cdc.gov/habs/general.html>

[https://www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/cyanobacteria\\_faq.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/habs/pdf/cyanobacteria_faq.pdf)

[https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3313\\_3681\\_3686\\_3728-383630--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3313_3681_3686_3728-383630--,00.html)

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/blue-green-algae>

<https://www.dhd10.org/algae-blooms/>

[https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3313\\_3681\\_3686\\_3728-383630--,00.html](https://www.michigan.gov/egle/0,9429,7-135-3313_3681_3686_3728-383630--,00.html)

<https://conserve.torch.org/hab/>

**Free Online Invasive Species Identification Class Available**

The Michigan Sea Grant and MSU extension are offering a free online course for paddlers to learn about invasive species. It is part of their MI Paddler Stewards program. From their website:

This online program consists of 5 units including MI Watch List species overview, Michigan Clean Boats, Clean Waters, proper cleaning methods for you craft, how to report an invasive species using the MISIN app, and additional resources. The course is self-paced and takes around 3 hours total to complete. The course is designed so the user has the ability to pause and pick up where they left off later. When you register for the free course you will be mailed a toolkit which includes a dry bag, bucket hat, stickers and more! Please follow the steps below to register for the course now through December 31, 2021.

More information at:  
<https://www.michiganseagrant.org/educational-programs/mi-paddler-stewards/>

**Milton Township Sewer Line Extension Feasibility Study**

Milton Twp. is considering conducting a feasibility study for the possible extension of a sewer line to residents on the northeast side of Elk Lake. Robin Sims has been leading the effort to provide support for this study. Please contact her if you would like more information and/or wish to sign the petition of support.

Robin Sims  
 5173045989  
[robinsims47@gmail.com](mailto:robinsims47@gmail.com)

**It's A Shore Thing 2021  
 Fourth Friday of Month: April thru September**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>PROGRAM &amp; SPEAKER</u>	<u>VENUE</u>
Late April	Meet your local Conservation Officer Andrea Albert	ESLA website
Friday, May 26	Rugg Pond Update Mark Randolph	Rugg Pond
ESLA Annual Meeting Friday, June 25	Zero Gravity Aerial Dennis Wiand	Elk Rapids Pavilion
Friday, July 23	Tour of Elk River Dam Mark Stone	Elk Rapids Dam
Friday, August 27	Healthy Lakeshores Heidi Shaffer	Kewadin Park

## Promoting Lakeshore Buffer Strips Healthy Lakes Landscaping

By Deanna Seifried, ESLA Board Member

When waterfront property owners take steps to protect their lake's water quality, they also protect their investment.

One of our best resources for understanding the importance of a healthy shoreline is the Michigan Shoreline survey which helps the lakeshore owner to analyze their shoreline. After taking the survey, suggestions are given for improvements to your shoreline. <https://www.mishorelandstewards.org>



This article mainly focuses on the steps for creating a buffer on lakefront property which has a green lawn down to the lakeshore. There are basically five ways to start the process of creating a healthy lakeshore.

1. Contact your county's conservation district for advice.
  - a. Antrim County residents-[heidi.shaffer@macd.org](mailto:heidi.shaffer@macd.org) or [kyle.williams@macd.org](mailto:kyle.williams@macd.org)
  - b. Grand Traverse County residents- Steve Largent [slargent@gtcd.org](mailto:slargent@gtcd.org),
  - c. Kalkaska County residents- Renee Penny, [renee.penny@macd.org](mailto:renee.penny@macd.org)
2. Work with local landscapers to install a buffer of native plants and trees. Antrim County's Conservation website has a list of experienced lakeshore landscapers.
3. Don't mow the last 10 feet of your lawn adjacent to the lake especially if that area is already a bit wet with mucky soils. The resulting plant growth can be quite beautiful.
4. Contact your ESLA Shoreline Steward, Deanna Seifried, at [elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com](mailto:elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com) for advice.
5. Install your own buffer. Do it in stages; don't bite off more than you can chew. Begin by staking out at least a 10' wide area next to the lake parallel to the shoreline. Then Identify the soil type – sandy or mucky/wet or dry/acidic or basic. A soil sample can be taken to McGough's in Traverse City (fee \$22) or your county's MSU Extension office, or online <https://shop.msu.edu/search?type=product&options%5Bprefix%5D=last&q=soil+test>. Decide the method to be used to remove the grass. For rest of detailed instructions regarding removal of the grass, selection of native plants and maintenance of the newly installed buffer, go to ESLA website, click on Environmental.

## Torch Lake sees growth of 'oozy, yucky, mucky' golden brown algae

From the Detroit Free Press

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2020/09/07/michigan-torch-lake-golden-brown-algae-outbreak-oozy-yucky-mucky/5737051002/>

*Central Lake, Mich.* — A northern Michigan lake that's famous for its turquoise waters is facing an outbreak of brown algae that's left its sandy bottom covered with mushy, squishy mats. Rick Welsh, a part-time lakeshore resident, said the golden brown algae was first noticed about a decade ago, but now grows in thick mats and sticks to the otherwise sugar-sand bottom of the lake in Antrim County's Torch Lake. "It's oozy, yucky and mucky," Welsh told the Traverse City Record-Eagle. "It easily comes up when disturbed." Welsh, a member for the Torch Lake Protection Alliance, said that there are investigations into the algae with results due in the fall.



Officials with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, have said it appears to be a non-harmful form

of algae. Torch Lake has the second largest surface area of any inland Michigan lake, but its depth — up to 300 feet — makes it easily the state's most voluminous. Studies of the algae blooms have been ongoing since at least 2015, according to the Three Lakes Association, a non-profit corporation focused on the water quality of the Chain of Lakes Watershed in Antrim County. At least one study done of benthic golden algal bloom in Torch Lake for the association, which includes Lake Bellaire, Clam Lake and Torch Lake, found human marker Ace-K in groundwater samples in 2018.

Acesulfame potassium, or Ace-K, in water samples from lake water and groundwater in 2018 suggested groundwater enriched with compounds from septic drainfields was entering the lake. Ace-K, a man-made product, is a sugar substitute 200 times sweeter than sugar and is not utilized by the body, the report said, but eliminated in urine. It is found in such foods as sodas and fruit juices; dairy products including ice cream; baked goods; jams and jellies; table top sweeteners, toothpastes; gum; and salad dressings.

The Torch Lake Protection Association this year contracted with Environmental Consulting & Technology, Inc. to monitor changes to the lakes, determine the sources of nutrients feeding the algae and propose courses of action. In the meantime, the association has launched a "Keep Torch Blue" campaign, discouraging the use of fertilizers and encouraging the maintenance and care of septic systems, two of the primary suspects in the feeding of golden brown algae.

Similar algal blooms, to varying degrees, are now found in many lakes (editor's note—including Elk Lake) in northwest Michigan, according to experts consulted by the Three Lakes Association.

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## ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION BOARD MEMBERS

September 2020

Contact: [elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com](mailto:elkskegemoglakes@gmail.com).

<u>Officers</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Mary Beth Kazanski Pres	9501 Shellway Dr. NW Rapid City	609-577-3814
Bob Campbell V.P.	8886 Skegemog Pt Rd Williamsburg	313-806-4060
Don Bonato Rec. Sec.	8781 Skegemog Pt Rd. Williamsburg	517-290-8668
Nancy Schreiber Corr. Sec.	14016 Fairmont Rd. Rapid City	954-240-2954
Phil Spangenberg Treasurer	8991 Skegemog Pt. Rd Williamsburg	586-215-7878

### ZONE A

George Seifried Captain	734 Ames St. Ell Rapids 49629	937-271-3316
Deanna Seifried	734 Ames St. Ell Rapids 49629	937-602-2295
Steve Francis	11101 Mates Rd. Williamsburg 40690	231-350-0687

### ZONE B

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Ken Krentz	13997 Ringler Rd. Rapid City	231-322-4144
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Pat Pierce	9500 Larsen Rd Williamsburg	231-492-8042

### ZONE D

Bob Campbell	8886 Skegemog Pt Rd Williamsburg	313-806-4060
Don Bonato	8781 Skegemog Pt Rd. Williamsburg	517-290-8668
Phil Spangenberg	8991 Skegemog Pt. Rd. Williamsburg	586-215-7878
Kate Lett		

### ZONE E

Mary Beth Kazanski	9501 Shellway Dr. NW Rapid City	609-577-3814
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### AT LARGE APPOINTED DIRECTORS

Dean Ginther Newsletter Editor	11228 Shippey Ln. Rapid City	231-676-2928
Brenda Miller Membership	209 Traverse St. Elk Rapids	231-499-0134

ESLA Web site: <http://elk-skegemog.org>

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

### **Buoys, Rafts, Markers — Michigan DNR Update**

The only objects allowed on the surface of a public body of water without a permit are as follows:

1. A mooring buoy that meets the uniform system of marking and is solely used to anchor a vessel.
2. An anchored raft that is not causing a navigational hazard.

The DNR does not permit distance buoys or markers because they do not fall under the U.S Aids to Navigation System. To better understand the U.S Aids to Navigation System (ATON), lateral and non-lateral markers, please reference: The Michigan Boating Laws and Responsibilities Handbook Pgs. 12-15.

**Buoys or beacons placed in the waters of this state without a permit are considered illegally placed.**