

ESLA SPRING 2020 NEWSLETTER

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President's Message



Mary Beth Kazanski
ESLA President

As our lives turn upside down in dealing with the novel coronavirus, it is so odd to look out over the water as if nothing has changed. The ice is off the lake. Our feathered friends have returned. The trees are beginning to leaf out. How could this be when so much confusion, fear and suffering runs rampant? But so it is.

Our Board has instituted virtual meetings so that we may continue to address issues. Among those issues, of course, is a plan for ESLA's work on swimmer's itch. Over the past year much information has been gathered, but as is often the case, many questions have surfaced. It is the Board's opinion, that with

our current knowledge, trapping mergansers this year is not justified. Though some lakes have had success, many have not despite trapping efforts. In addition, evidence of significant impact from migrating birds has been found in our waters.

These birds are protected by international treaties and could not be trapped. You will find details inside that we used to come to our decision. (We hope you find the remaining articles helpful as well.)

Note, this doesn't mean that we are abandoning efforts to study this issue. In the coming weeks we will be working out details of followup studies to gather more information and monitor our situation. You can help.

Inside you will find information on what you can do to reduce your risk of swimmer's itch. We also hope to post this information on our website (www.elk-skegemog.org) but in the meantime you will have it to review and consider for this season. If you try any of these techniques please report your experience to www.swimmersitch.ca as well as any cases of swimmer's itch you experience. Your reports will help researchers track our local experience and better define strategies that will help others.

In these times of social distancing, there will likely be changes to our It's A Shore Thing lecture series as well as our annual meeting. If such distancing is continued well into the summer we are hoping to still be able to provide these valuable gatherings but perhaps with a modern twist. Again, check our website as time goes by to see if we have needed to make these events virtual, and if so, how to participate. Believe me, if the Board can figure out how to have a virtual meeting, you will be able to figure out how to join us for these events.

(continued on pg. 3)

Swimmer's Itch Update

By Jan Garvey

Swimmer's Itch, and the dilemma ESLA's board has faced amid growing SI concerns from our members has been an enormous challenge. As we have learned from Covid-19, simple solutions are elusive.

Consider the unknowns: Why do some people get SI, while others do not? Why do some lakes have success reducing infections by removing Common Mergansers, while others do not? Why does Elk Lake have the highest level of cercariae (the 'worms' that cause the SI rash) of any lake in northern Michigan, but has relatively few Common Mergansers, a critical link in the SI life cycle?

In 2018 and 2019, ESLA hired Ron Reimink, founder and owner of Freshwater Solutions, LLC (FWS) to collect data as complaints from our riparians were increasing. Reimink's expertise and experience working with lake associations to combat SI and our interest in establishing a database to better understand the problem and potential solutions drove the board's decision. In 2018, data gathering was required to apply for a permit from the State to trap and relocate Common Mergansers.

In 2019, we also contracted with Curt Blankenspoor of Swimmer's Itch Solutions (SIS) to trap and relocate Common Merganser broods. Two lakes, Higgins and Crystal, had reported significant success reducing SI with this method. Blankenspoor successfully removed four broods from Elk Lake last summer and said the benefits of his work would be apparent this summer or next year.

What we learned

Freshwater Solutions concluded that its assessment of three lakes in northern Michigan definitively showed that migrating ducks, previously thought to be inconsequential, were part of the problem. It's still unclear to what degree. Also, Reimink found that a new snail species was contributing to SI. The SI life cycle in northern Michigan previously had been linked only to Common Mergansers and the *T. stagnicola* snail. Based on his findings last summer, Reimink concluded there was a new contributor, tiny SI-causing worms that used *Helisoma* snails and Canada geese as their hosts. FWS also found significantly more *Helisoma* snails in some northern Michigan lakes in 2019 than in 2018.

Meanwhile, Blankenspoor last summer attached tracking devices to the Common Mergansers he trapped to help locate trees where the hens make their nests with the thought the holes they used could be blocked. While this method had technical success, it was not practical to implement as it was time-consuming and expensive. In addition, SIS banded six female Common Mergansers and moved them to state-approved sites on Lake Michigan, Lake Huron and two dam impoundments. At least three of the hens died and the signal was lost on a fourth. One hen from Elk Lake that was relocated to Suttons Bay made its way back to Elk Lake. SIS determined that the hens stayed with their broods and moved many miles from their relocation release sites.

Research on Elk and Skegemog Lakes in 2019 supported similar findings in 2018 — our lakes have some of the highest cercariae levels among northern Michigan lakes, even though we do not have

large numbers of Common Mergansers. Some experts believe that only one or two broods of Common Mergansers could cause the numbers of SI infections on our lakes, while others believe the high cercariae numbers suggest other waterfowl are likely a vector.

Our 2019 research showed twice as many geese on our lakes in 2019 as 2018. This could be significant, considering Reimink's findings linking a new snail and Canada geese to SI. In 2018, few *Helisoma* snails were found in Elk and Skegemog, and none were infected with the SI larvae. In 2019, we did not collect snails, but the DNA analysis showed most of the cercariae coming from both *T. stagnicola* snails (with Common Mergansers co-host) and *Helisoma* snails (Canada Geese co-host). Although more water samples showed cercariae from *T. stagnicola*, the count of the 'worms in the water' showed more from the *Helisoma* snail.

Where ESLA's SI strategy is headed?

ESLA's budget cannot sustain perpetually spending for the same services it hired two contractors to perform in 2019. Consider, too, that in 2019 we were reimbursed about \$8,000 from the Michigan Swimmers Itch Partnership for our contractor costs. That money, from a state grant, is no longer available.

The board, meeting from their homes via Zoom, overwhelming voted April 17 not to trap mergansers this summer. In a separate vote, the board voted to continue discussions on research with FWS to better understand issues such as the roles of migratory birds and resident geese, as well as risk reduction strategies for riparians. (See separate newsletter article.)

At its next meeting May 21, the ESLA board expects to finalize its 2020 approach following further discussions with Reimink, as well as other lake associations within the Elk Rivers chain of lakes.

President's Message (Continued from pg. 1)

Please note, the annual meeting is currently scheduled for THURSDAY, June 25 — more details will be coming on the ESLA website and via email soon.

Thanks to you (and your parents and grandparents) ESLA has been providing education, riparian collaboration, water monitoring and other services for nearly 70 years. We can continue to protect our beautiful inland lakes and watershed only with your ongoing support. If you have not made a contribution this year, you can use the enclosed dues envelope to return a check (**please include your email address**) or you can go to the ESLA website (<https://elk-skegemog.org>) and click on the blue icon to contribute on-line.

Riparians are Key to Healthy Green Shorelines

By Sue McCraven

Living on two beautiful inland lakes in Northern Michigan, Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog waterfront landowners, or riparians, experience nature's glory every day. As riparians, we have ringside seats to stunning sunrises, fiery sunsets, and mesmerizing starry nights. We enjoy a myriad of outdoor opportunities for ourselves and our families, including swimming, boating, fishing, and watching furious storm clouds roll in over the horizon.

As shoreline homeowners on these lakes, surely we have many reasons to be grateful for the natural bounty at our doorstep. But do we also understand the serious and inherent responsibility we have to protect water quality? Do we recognize the importance of green shorelines to keeping the lake healthy? These are a crucial questions for us. Why? Because today we are facing some bad news: Our lakes are in trouble.

Why are Inland Lakes in Trouble?

The National Lakes Assessment reports that Michigan's inland lakeshores are losing too much natural vegetation and need better care. The Michigan Shoreland Stewards Program, an initiative of the Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership (MNSP), reports:

"The results of the assessment show the loss of lakeshore habitat is the biggest threat to the overall health of Michigan's inland lakes. Fifty percent (50%) of Michigan inland lakes have shoreline and nearshore habitat in poor condition..."

Right now, Michigan's inland lakes are under serious threat. Why? Just look around at the property development that surrounds the lake. Is the lake bordered mostly by healthy native vegetation? Or do we see many homes on mostly cleared lots?

Lakeshore development has led to the destruction and removal of native plants and trees along the shoreline. Michigan Shoreland Stewards explains that development has caused cumulative adverse effects on our inland lakes:

"Native plants are replaced with expansive lawns up to the water's edge, excessive impervious surfaces (paved driveways and rooftops) and houses (are) built too close to the lake and too large for the lot. Seawalls and lake level control structures are installed and nearshore aquatic plants and woody habitat (trees and branches) are removed. Overdeveloped lakeshores cannot support fish, wildlife, or clean water."

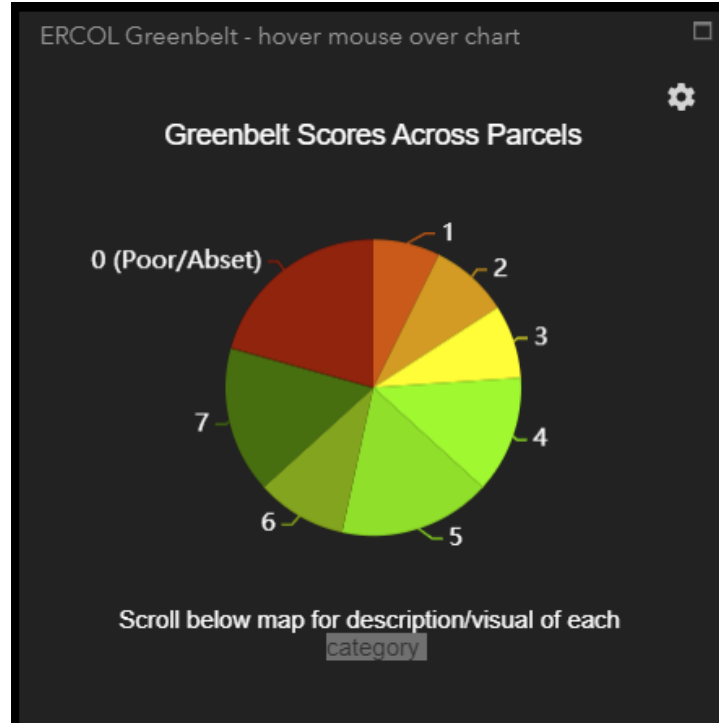
"A landscaping approach that has expansive lawns, with few trees, shrubs and wildflowers and few to no aquatic plants or logs in the water is typical of an urban, park-like landscape. Often lakefront property owners bring with them this traditional (high-impact) landscaping idea. Unfortunately, this landscaping approach causes many problems for the lake."

Elimination of Natural Shorelines: Cumulative Adverse Affects

When natural habitat is eliminated due to riparian development, serious problems result: Pathways for storm water and pollution runoff are created, especially on sloping lots Shorelines are left without natural protection from erosion

Right — Elk River Chain of Lakes Shoreline Survey 2016 - 2017 of 1078 properties. Rating range from 1 (poor) to 7 (best) with each slice of the pie chart representing the proportion of the total properties with that rating. To locate your specific lakefront property on the interactive map, see <https://www.freshwatercenter.org/ercolss.html#> Riparians can contact Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to obtain their I.D.

Without shoreline shade trees, more sunlight heats the water, decreasing oxygen levels
Undesirable algal growth is stimulated
As native vegetation is removed, the habitat for animals, birds, amphibians, and fish is lost



Let's take a moment to think about how a cleared lakeside view, devoid of native vegetation, could be harming lake water quality. Do we believe a sterile, shadeless, and pedestrian landscape of fertilized grass and a pile of boulders at the shore to be property enhancement? How does our home landscaping affect the water quality in Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog? Especially in light of recent inland lake surveys, these are important questions to ask ourselves.

"Trees, shrubs, and grasses are critical components of a healthy shoreline and a healthy lake. Even converting part of your shoreline into a green belt can help retain the ecological functionality of your property and create beautiful landscapes." — Heather Smith, Grand Traverse BAYKEEPER, Watershed Center, GTB

The Good News: Riparians Can Help!

There is so much that Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog riparians can do to help expand green shorelines. Planning a green shoreline on your property can be creative, fun, and beautiful — and needn't eliminate your view of the lake. A healthy shoreline landscaping can improve the aesthetics of your property with a diversity of plants and designs.

For example, rather than cutting down native trees along the shore, consider hiring professional tree trimmers to thin branches to open up the view as desired. In this way, the expansive roots of mature trees can continue to serve the lake and us by filtering surface pollutants and preventing erosion during storms.

Cutting down trees and removing native vegetation is especially damaging on sloped lots. On mostly barren sloped sites, runoff pollution from roads, cars, animal waste, fertilizer, and stormwater can flow straight into the lake.



A lovely greenbelt adds interest to your landscaping while allowing for mowed grass further upland. Green shorelines needn't block your view, and they provide habitat for birds, animals, fish and amphibians. Best of all: a green belt is critical to keeping the lake healthy! Courtesy: Heather Smith, Grand Traverse BAYKEEPER, Watershed

Could We Envision This?

Instead, could we envision a more green and natural shoreline, with a lake vista framed by an Eastern White Pine or a lovely White Paper Birch to add interest and character to our shoreline and to our views?

And don't forget the slinky Mink, stalking Great Blue Heron, or crafty Belted Kingfisher canvassing the shallows for lunch! All the glorious shoreline diversity of mammals, birds, fish, and amphibians need a green lakeshore environment to live. Let's ponder how we may be robbing ourselves, our families, our neighbors, and nature itself when we insist on maintenance-intensive lawns and hard shorelines.

Lists of native trees, shrubs, and flowers are exciting and fun to explore: there's Red Osier Dogwood, Highbush Cranberry, Blue Flag Iris, swaying grasses and more. There are many healthy and beautiful landscaping plans out there! And a big benefit for riparians are our wonderful local agencies and organizations that offer greenbelt design guidance and information.

There's Help Available

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council and The Watershed Center of Grand Traverse Bay both offer professional guidance to help you plan a green shoreline. Michigan Shoreland Stewards website has photos of native plants, planting zones, and options for finding locations to purchase these spe-

cies. Conservation Districts, nurseries, and state guidebooks are also available with suggestions for planting designs.

Jennifer Buchanan, Watershed Protection Director, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council:

“The Michigan Shoreland Stewards program is a great online resource for riparians to self-assess how well they are practicing good stewardship of their lake. We encourage all riparians to register and take the online survey. The site includes a lot of great information on how to improve your stewardship practices and why those actions matter for the health of the lake.”

We Can Do This!

As lakeshore property owners, each of us can make small changes to improve and protect the health of Elk Lake and Lake Skegemog. It's our responsibility to protect the lake and repair some of our unhealthy shorelines! We can do it!

Julia Kirkwood, Nonpoint Source Program, Water Resources Division,
Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy:

“Often a riparian's first reaction to creating a green shoreline is: ‘Well, I have a small lot and very little space. I can't do this!’ To counter this immediate reaction, I always say in my presentations: **‘Not everyone can do everything. but everyone can do something!’**”

Sources for Native Plants

Grand Traverse Conservation District, 1450 Cass Rd. 231 941-0960 www.natureiscalling.org
Antrim Conservation District. www.antrimcd.com
Four Seasons Nursery, 7557 E. Harry's Rd. TC 231 932-7400
Pine Hill Nursery, 1126 Carver Rd. TC 231 267-5972
Barker Creek Nursery, 7048 M-72. Williamsburg. 231 267-5972

Shoreline Information & Resources

The National Lakes Assessment www.epa.org
The Michigan Shoreline Stewards www.mishorelandsstewards.org
<http://www.mishorelandsstewards.org>
Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership (MNSP). www.mishorelinepartnership.org MI Shoreland Stewards Program Guide; List of Native Plants Appropriate for Each Planting Zone
The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay. www.gtbay.org. 231 935-1514 Up North Shoreline
Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council www.watershedcouncil.org 231 347-1181 Waterfront Landscapes — Designing Shoreline Greenbelts for Beauty and Water Quality; Designing a Shoreline Greenbelt; Property Owner's Permit Guide; Protect Your Lake Improve Your Shoreline Sensible Shoreline Development — A Guide for Shoreline Homeowners; Living with The Lakes — Understanding the Impacts of Vegetation Removal and Beach Maintenance; A Homeowner's Guide to Watershed Protection; Natural Shorelines for Inland Lakes;
Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association (ESLA) www.elk-skegemog.org Best Practices for Riparian Property Owners
U.S.Fish & Wildlife Service, Division of Environmental Contaminants; www.contaminants.fws.gov
Homeowner's Guide to Protecting Frogs — Lawn & Garden Center
Michigan State Extension www.expert.msue.msu.edu
Van Buren Conservation District” www.vanburencd.org. 269 657-4030; Landscaping for Water Quality
Northern Michigan Native Plan Nursery www.msue.anr.msu.edu/county/info
Leelanau County www.leelanau.cc. Choosing Plants, Shrubs & Trees for your Shoreline

Here Come the Loons

Submitted by Jill Packer, Area loon Ranger for Torch River Bayou.

In 1987, the Common Loon was categorized as “Threatened” on Michigan’s Endangered Species list. That being said the DNR prohibits the “taking” defined as “to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct”. (Act 451 of 1994, Part 324:36501)

The Michigan Loon Preservation Association has put together basic guidelines for helping the loons achieve nesting success on a lake. (Taken from a newsletter from Joanne Williams, State Coordinator MPLA)

- A) When a pair of loons has come to share the lake for the summer and will soon nest, the MLPA advises:
 - 1) Observe the loons from a distance and avoid the nesting area. Disturbance can cause the loons to stay away from the nest or even abandon it.
 - 2) If a loon acts disturbed when you near it - calling and splashing - it is trying to tell you to move out of its territory. Please do so!
 - 3) Never leave fishing lines unattended and stop fishing if the loons are feeding in the area. Never throw tangled line into the lake.
- B) When a pair of loons has successfully hatched their chick(s), they will raise them to fledging (8-12 weeks). We can help them to be successful;
 - 1) Watch the loons only from a distance of several hundred yards.
 - 2) Do not disturb or chase the family. This can exhaust the chicks or the adults may abandon the chicks and they may die.
 - 3) Do not fish in areas where the loons are feeding to avoid them becoming tangled in your fish line.
- C) Keeping these few important things in mind, we can enjoy watching the young loons grow and help protect them until they are ready to leave the lake in the autumn. The survival of the young birds helps to ensure that there will be loons for future generations to watch and listen to.

Did You Know:

- 1) Our loons return around the first week of April each year.
- 2) Some loons are banded. Look for a colored band on the right leg and a silver band on the left leg.
- 3) Male and female loons take turns sitting on an active nest. They are equally active in chick rearing. They usually have 2 eggs. If they lose their nest, they may have a second nesting. They only have 2 chances at nesting. When a chick is born, it is in the water within 12-24 hours. It does not get back on the nest. As soon as chicks are born the nest is abandon.
- 4) Loons are very large birds. They are able to dive very deep and stay under water for a long time. They cannot walk on land like a duck.
- 5) One of the biggest threats to our loons is us (humans). People get to close. We want that perfect picture. We kayak right up to the nests, we chase them down in the water, when they squawk, flap their wings or go upright they are feeling threatened. If a loon feels threatened it will abandon its nest and leave the eggs. If it has chicks it will abandon them as well. Stay back and give them a chance to nest and raise their chicks.

Help us to keep the loons returning each year. Help us to protect our precious and beautiful Common Loons.

Swimmer's Itch — No Magic Fixes but

By Bob Campbell

Here are some suggestions. Just as we're eager to have an effective vaccine for Covid-19, riparians on dozens of northern Michigan lakes want a foolproof way to eliminate the risk of Swimmer's Itch. Yet, we've learned in the past year that the once apparent magic bullet — trapping and relocating Common Merganser hens and broods — doesn't solve the problem. The good news is that there's simple, low cost ways to lessen the risk.

For Ron Reimink, founder of Freshwater Solutions, LLC, which conducted research for ESLA last summer, this fight is personal: Reimink has two granddaughters (pictured) who like to swim in front of his cottage on Lime Lake in Leelanau County. Last summer, his research convinced him the girls can safely swim again this summer. His findings led to these suggestions:



Picture above: Ron Reimink paid \$25 apiece for two suits for his granddaughters. Cost: \$20-\$100 per suit.

Avoid swimming in the morning. The later in the day you swim, the fewer “worms” – i.e. the larvae of the schistosomes – will be found in the water. The worms emerge from snails in early morning and as the day progresses most die, are eaten by tiny predators or are blown offshore.

COST: Free.

Avoid swimming when there's a direct onshore wind. That means when the waves are lapping onto your beach. The tiny worms, mostly found in the top inch or so of the water, will be blown toward your shoreline when this happens. *COST: Free.*

Avoid swimming, wading, or playing in water closest to the shoreline. Lab analysis of Reimink's water samples showed the larvae concentrated in the two feet of water nearest shore, especially during an onshore wind. For little ones, consider filling a small pool near the lake with well water. *COST: Free or about \$10 if you buy a tike pool.*

Wear a rash guard: Google “rash guard” and you'll find hundreds of examples of this clothing first developed for Australian surfers, and made from combinations of polyester, nylon, lycra or spandex. Ideally, look for one-piece, full body rash guards with SPF 50 (for sunburn protection) Some specifically say they protect against jellyfish stings and other tiny biting, boring critters.

(Continued on next page)

Other ideas — inventors/entrepreneurs

wanted: Reimink says you won't find any of these at your hardware store and probably not on Amazon or eBay, either. He did some experimentation and had good results on the first three.

Surface water rake. Reimink designed one for himself. The hard-to-find part came from China — 20 micron netting. You rake the top few inches of water containing the SSI-causing larvae. The wider the rake, the faster this works.

Worm smasher: A takeoff on motorized pool cleaners with a suction device powered by a small pump. When the fragile worms go through the pump, they're broken apart and fall harmlessly to the bottom. Like the rake, this needs an engineer to perfect the idea.

Baffle: This would be a super lightweight version of containment booms used for oil spills. The idea would be to prevent the worms from entering a swim area inside a baffled off area. Lots of potential; none on the market.

Topical creams: Check the reviews for products such as "Swimmer's Itch Guard" and you'll find some people swear by it and others swear at it after spending \$20+.

Anecdotally, one Elk Lake summer resident says a vigorous toweling off immediately after getting out of the water has kept him SI-free the last few summers. Thanks, CV!

Interested in more on the subject?

The Glen Lake Association's aquatic biologist Rob Karner interviewed Reimink for a 24-minute video, which offers details on strategies presented above. We'll post a link on the ESLA website elk-skegemog.org or you can find it at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCGikUkpUSI&t=5s>.

Tell us what worked and what didn't

If you try any of these suggestions, please report your experience — infected or not — for each day you go in the water to www.swimmersitch.ca ESLA will have access to our entries in the database and will report what was learned in the next newsletter.

Reducing the Spread of Invasives

ESLA plans to collaborate with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (TOM) on three dates this summer to offer trailer boaters launching or retrieving their craft free washdowns to reduce the potential spread of invasive aquatic species.

TOM, which advocates for water quality in Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan and Emmett counties and the Great Lakes, was granted use of a portable boat washing unit this year by the U.S. Forest Service. TOM has hired seasonal employees to work Fridays through Sundays on the project.



Ashley Soltysiak, TOM's new policy and program coordinator, said the goal of the boat washing effort is mainly to educate boaters on the need to clean their hulls and trailers and discharge bilge water or bait tanks between outings on different lakes.

The concern is that non-native animals, like zebra mussels, or invasive plants, like Eurasian milfoil or curly-leaf pondweed, can be transferred from one lake, bay or river to another. Aquatic invasives have severely disrupted food chains and habitats in Michigan's inland and Great Lakes.

"I think we'll have a bigger impact with educating people on how to do it, than the actual washing of boats," Soltysiak said. The wash unit has a tank to collect wastewater which will be disposed of at designated wastewater facilities.

ESLA also plans to continue its association with the statewide Aquatic Invasive Species Landing Blitz, which is coordinated by the state Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy. Currently, the project is scheduled for June 26-July 5. Last year, ESLA volunteers passed out literature and materials such as wipe down towels to about 90 boaters on our lakes.

At both events, ESLA volunteers will follow the best guidance for social distancing and other precautions from medical and public health professionals at the time of the events to protect themselves and boaters because of the coronavirus pandemic. At deadline time for this article in early May, TOM's boat washing and the Landing Blitz still were planned, but things could change.

We urge any ESLA member or non-member to join this effort. People who like to fish and boat have a huge stake in this effort.

"Last year, nearly all of our volunteers were ESLA board members," said ESLA Vice President Bob Campbell, who coordinates the association's effort. "We'd like to have others who care about the quality of our waters join us."

The boat wash dates are:

- Sunday, June 28, 2-6 p.m. Baggs Road DNR ramp.
- Saturday, Aug. 8, 10-2 p.m. Elk Rapids municipal harbor boat launch.
- Saturday, Aug. 29, 6-10 a.m. White-water Township Park ramp, southwest side of Elk Lake. ESLA members interested in volunteering for either the boat wash or the education effort or both should contact Campbell at bobplus4@gmail.com.

MDNR FISH STOCKING

by Ken Krentz

This spring the Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources began a trout stocking plan covering the next six years for Elk Lake. This will supplement three previous plants done over the last two years described below. 40,000 brown trout were released on April 24. These fish are 6-8" long and should grow to 15"+ by next spring. The DNR's plan is to stock this quantity each spring, year 2020 through 2025.

In the spring of 2018, 7700 rainbow trout averaging 8" long were released at the Elk Rapids upper harbor. These fish should be 20"+ long this spring. They have clipped adipose fins and a coded wire tag (CWT) embedded in their heads for later identification. The CWT's are fine wire about the size of this letter "i" and are not externally visible. The CWT is so small it is very difficult to find without the DNR's electronic reader. Therefore, the DNR requests fisherman return the fish heads for dissection and electronic reading. If you catch and keep a rainbow with a clipped adipose fin, please save the head for the DNR. Write your name, address, date, fish length and weight on a piece of paper and freeze it in a plastic bag of water along with the fish head. Then call our area DNR biologist, Heather Hettinger, 231-922-6056, and she will arrange pick up from you.

In December, 2018 40,000 brown trout were released at the Whitewater Twp. Park. These fish were 4" long and should have grown to 15"+ this spring. They do not have clipped fins or CWT's or any other ID. No brown trout planted from this time forward will have clipped fins or ID's. In April, 2019 19,500 brown trout were released at Whitewater Twp. Park. These fish were 5-8" long and some may reach 15" in 2020. Altogether 99,500 browns and 7700 rainbows have been released in the last two years.

DNR fisherman creel survey forms are going to be supplied at DNR boat launch sites. Please fill out and return to the address given on the form at the end of your fishing season. These surveys are for all species of fish. DNR creel clerks will also be monitoring fisherman on the lake. Please participate and report out your fishing experience and success to the DNR for their continued active fish management. And if you catch and keep a rainbow with a clipped adipose fin, please report it to the DNR for their monitoring.

Riparians Needed for Local Commissions

By Bob Campbell

Supervisor Ron Popp is desperate to find riparians willing to serve on Whitewater Township's advisory commissions that often take critical first steps toward change that can enhance or harm the waters or waterfront properties of Elk and Skegemog lakes.

Popp said commissions make smarter decisions when they are comprised of voters representing the diversity of property ownership (riparians, other residential, commercial, agricultural and recreational). But riparians, those of us living on the waterfront, are often reluctant to help. Despite the many riparians in Whitewater, none have served on the Planning Commission in at least five years.

Popp isn't alone among the elected officials seeking broad representation on advisory commissions in the four townships — Whitewater, Milton, Clearwater and Elk Rapids — plus the village of Elk Rapids that border Elk and Skegemog lakes and the Torch River and its bayou.

What issues of special interest to riparians might the commissions tackle?

- For planning commissions, recommendations to elected boards may include: minimum distance a septic field must be from a lake; encouraging practices to stabilize shorelines; allowing unrestricted short term rentals or banning the practice; restricting use of residential zoned waterfront for private marinas, beaches or parks for off-water subdivisions.
- Parks and recreation commissions make recommendations on priorities such as boat launches, ball fields, tennis or pickleball courts, picnic grounds and hiking/cross-country ski trails.
- Boards of review listen to appeals from citizens who feel their property is overvalued, resulting in unfairly high tax bills. Their broader responsibility is to ensure fairness in the distribution of the assessment load within different property classifications.
- If there's no riparians on such panels, questions unique to waterfront owners may not be addressed. In Whitewater, planning commissioners are paid \$70 per meeting, while parks and recreation and board of review members get \$50 per meeting.

“It's allowed me to meld my different interests, especially environmental. It's not political, everyone is very thoughtful and we usually have give and take that results in consensus.”

*Bob Kingon
Milton Twp
Commission
Member*

- In Milton Township, former Elk Skegemog Lakes Association president and current Zone of Appeals member Bob Kingon, who lives on the east side of Elk Lake, sits on three different township commissions — planning, parks and recreation and the board of review.

To offer your service, contact:

Clearwater Township Supervisor Mike Gaylord clerk@clearwatertwp.com

Elk Rapids Village President James Janisse jjanisse@elkrapids.org

Elk Rapids Township Supervisor Dorance Amos damos@elkrapids.com

Milton Township Supervisor Lon Bargy suplbargy@hotmail.com

Whitewater Township Supervisor Ron Popp: supervisor@whitewatertownship.org

UP THE TORCH WITHOUT A TORCH

By Pat Pierce

Have you ever had to boat home on the Torch River in darkness? Maybe you were held up from visiting friends, a late return from a restaurant, heavy river boat traffic or time simply slipped by, it can happen to anyone. With its bends, narrow old channel,

the night. You might be surprised to know that there is enough business on the river that someone actually offers this service.

However there is a simple precaution you can take to prepare for this unpredictable nightmare. The tracking fea-

as well as the existing stump attached reflectors a little more upstream which are lined along the south side of the river's big bend. The buoys are wrapped with a hi-grade reflective tape but require a direct beam of light to light up as do the reflectors.



Above: Pat Pierce towing Torch River No Wake Zone Sign into place

stumps and shallow edge waters the Torch River is a very different place after dark and navigating it at night could be a very frustrating endeavor even for boaters familiar with the river. A particularly tricky part of the river is near its mouth at Lake Skegemog. Getting caught after dark in the stumps near this area is not unusual and it can be expensive to pay someone to pull you out in the middle of

ture on a good GPS should allow you to backtrack and stay in the river's old channel after dark but a simple flashlight would also be helpful. A 100,00 candle watt or larger light would of course do very well, but a smaller flashlight will work too and fit in your glovebox.

A flashlight will also allow you to clearly see the ESLA marking buoys at the river's mouth near Lake Skegemog

Don't count on your boat's bow and stern lights to sufficiently light up reflectors or reflective tape, more directly aimed light is needed to see the way ahead.

So, as well as the usual items you may be required to have aboard your boat like lifejackets, fire extinguishers, flares, whistles, safety flags you might want to toss in a flashlight.

Antrim County Conservation District — Protecting Our Lakes and Shorelines

Contributed by Heidi Shaffer

Stormwater: pollution

Precipitation that runs over the ground's surface picking up sediment, fertilizers and other pollutants carrying them directly into the Elk River Chain of Lakes.

Sediment: covers fish spawning beds, coats the lake bottoms with squishy dirt, carries other pollutants into the water

Fertilizers: plant food – algae loves fertilizer



Other pollutants: petroleum products, automotive fluids



Golden brown algae and general slime near the lakeshore



Footings drains dumping directly into the lake – increases flood concerns



Strategically plan landscaping to protect the lake. Minimize lawn size. Plant buffers/flower gardens between the lawn and the lake, especially if you fertilize.

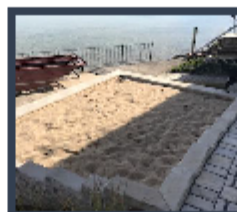
Control and capture runoff water.

Creating a beautiful lake-friendly landscape is easy. Consult with the Antrim Conservation District. We will do the math for you depending on your soil types, slopes and impermeable surfaces. We will work with you and your landscaper to develop responsible landscaping that captures and filters storm water runoff – before it reaches the Elk River Chain of Lakes.

Protect Water Quality & Property Investment



Contained beaches



Landscaping for Healthy Lakes



Buffer Strip (flower garden) between the lawn and the lake



Permeable pavers instead of concrete for pathways and patios



Dry riverbed used to strategically route water

ANTRIM
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

231-533-8363 ext. 3 or 6

ELK-SKEGEMOG LAKES ASSOCIATION

July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020

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ESLA
P.O. Box 8
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WE WANT YOU!

Mark your calendar. The ESLA annual meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, June 25**. Will it be the first virtual annual meeting? More details will be forthcoming via email and on the ESLA website at:

<https://elk-skegemog.org/>

to be a member of the Elk Skegemog Lakes Association.