

TLA Quarterly

March 15, 2004

President's Letter

Warm greetings from snow covered northern Michigan. We have thus far accumulated 150 inches of snow and experienced a long, cold winter season. All winter activities have been fun but we are glad to see the sun rising earlier and setting later each day. Soon the ice will melt, docks will reappear on our pristine lakes and water activities will begin.

Please keep Saturday May 29th open for a Memorial Day golf outing sponsored by Three Lakes Association and Grass River Natural Area. We hope this will become an annual event to raise needed funds for the support of both organizations' activities. Hawks Eye Golf Club has graciously provided their facility for the event. A continental breakfast, box lunch, and an 18 hole, 4-person "scramble" followed by dinner is planned. Non-golfers are more than welcome to come for dinner and social activities. Expect more information and application forms for entry in the near future.

Three Lakes Association needs very much to expand its membership roles. Less than fifteen percent of riparian property owners around Torch, Clam, and Bellaire are members. It is very important that community and resort property owners are involved as well. What a boon it would be for our organization if each one of us encourages several friends and neighbors to join. Preservation, protection and improvement of the environmental quality of the Chain of Lakes watershed for all generations is our mission and that says it all. There is strength in numbers and membership is truly important.

Dick Garcia

Lake News:

GONE FISHIN'

About 50 people attended a meeting on February 18, 2004 at the Bellaire Conservation Club to discuss the concerns of area anglers regarding the walleye population in both Intermediate and Bellaire Lakes. Jim Ferguson (Antrim county Conservation District) chaired the meeting. His guests were Tom Rozich and Todd Kalish representing the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Fisheries Division.

Even though many fishermen at the meeting felt strongly that walleye fishing the last two years was not satisfactory, the DNR presented survey information that indicated both lakes are in good shape. Stocking programs will continue and some years will see better catches than others because of the natural population variations.

Other subjects discussed were the effect of longnose gar eating walleye fry, reduction in the smelt population, impact of zebra mussels, bass tournaments during the spawning season and adding fish structure to Lake Bellaire.

On February 26th, Ferguson and Kalish conducted another meeting specifically to address placing structure in Lake Bellaire. The pros and cons on types of structure to be used, based on DNR experience, were reviewed. There was agreement that we need more structure around our lake to offer cover for not only the young fish but also all fish. The DNR felt that felling hardwood trees along the shoreline would work plus bundled pines in deeper water. Of course, they would have to be placed deep enough to avoid any boat props or skiers coming into contact with the trees. Applications would need to be approved prior to any sinking of trees.

A follow-up meeting will be held in October to review the results of summer fishing, DNR studies and what action has been taken on placing fish structure in the lake.

Bob Bagley

COME ON IN, THE WATER'S FINE

TLA just received the results of a study conducted by Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council. The study monitored phosphorus levels in the Intermediate River, Bellaire, Clam and Torch Lakes from 1999 to 2003.

“TLA commissioned the study,” said Dick Garcia, TLA president. “It was part of our ongoing efforts to preserve the quality of the Chain of Lakes watershed.”

The report shows that total phosphorus levels for all of the lakes were low, less than 10 parts per billion, and stable over the 5-year period. The highest readings were taken in the Intermediate River where samples may have been affected by discharge from the Cedar River. However, the report concluded that none of the samples were considered high for river systems.

“Phosphorus is an important water quality indicator,” said Tim Hannert, TLA’s executive director. “Too much phosphorus can cause excessive plant growth and algae blooms. That’s not good for the fish or for us humans who enjoy fishing, swimming and boating in clear waters.”

While the report is positive, Three Lakes Association isn’t checking water quality monitoring off its To Do list.

“Each year more people use the area’s lakes and rivers and more land is developed. Eventually water quality will be affected and that won’t be good for users or for our economy,” said Hannert. “TLA is committed to staying ahead of the curve on water quality issues.”

Starting this spring TLA will sponsor the Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program (CLMP) in partnership with the Michigan Lake & Stream Associations, the DEQ and Michigan State University. CLMP helps volunteers monitor several indicators of water

quality and reliably track changes and trends. The volunteers will measure clarity and take water samples from Bellaire, Clam and Torch Lakes throughout spring and summer. CLMP will provide training, technical support, quality control and laboratory assistance.

“We would really welcome additional volunteers,” said Duane Drake, TLA board member and CLMP volunteer coordinator. “No experience is necessary. Michigan Lake & Stream is sponsoring a training workshop at Boyne Mountain on April 23rd,” Drake added. Contact Duane Drake at 533-8204 to volunteer for water quality monitoring.

Melynda Bagley

News From the Treasury Department

As the new Three Lakes Treasurer, I am more concerned with the financial liquidity of our organization than ever. Fortunately, the membership has contributed both financially and personally to make Three Lakes work. The programs that are discussed in this newsletter are possible only because of the dues and other contributions all of you make. We thank all those who have made this possible.

Last year we spent about \$4,000 more than we took in from regular dues. This was possible only because we have savings and an endowment income. During this same period, life members and other direct contributions to the Three Lakes Watershed Conservation Fund raised our endowment principal from \$23,685 to \$32,945. The improved stock market increased the value of our fund by more than 20% of the final investment. We could take this increase in our endowment as income for our organization. However, we have chosen to leave it alone because it appears to be our best long-term investment.

Here are a few suggestions that can help Three Lakes financially:

- Renew your membership and help us further by finding new members. We have a new membership brochure, and we will be making a push through our zone directors to increase our membership. Less than 15% of riparians are members of Three Lakes!
- Increase your Life Membership paid by an additional \$500 to match the new Life Membership level of \$1,000.
- Donate to a special project of interest to you, for example, water quality testing, gravel mining impacts on Meggison Creek, High School Summer Intern Program, or Carol Gray Norris Education Fund.
- Contribute up to \$400 per couple or \$200 for a single person directly to the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation (250 E. Front St., Suite 310, Traverse City, MI 49685). Half of this contribution can be deducted directly from your Michigan Income Tax and the full amount can still be taken as a Federal deduction. Thus, a contribution of \$400 will typically cost you only about \$150. Checks can be made out to the Foundation with a note that the donation is to be

added to the Three Lakes Watershed Conservation Foundation. See details at www.gtrcf.org (search for Three Lakes). You can even contribute on-line.

I'd like to thank all those who have generously supported Three Lakes in the past and encourage you to continue to donate your time, talents, and resources.

Norton Bretz

Vice-President's Letter

Three Lakes, in collaboration with Grass River Natural Area, Torch Lake Protection Alliance, and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, will offer two educational programs for this summer.

The first event this summer will be on **June 23rd** on the shores and waters of Lake Bellaire. This event will feature shoreline improvements that increase both the enjoyment and protection of the lake. We will have a wine and cheese snack, pontoon boat excursions to both 'helpful' and 'detracting' shoreline sites, and a demonstration of water quality sampling. Each family will receive a complementary native plant.

The second event will be on the South shore of Torch Lake on **August 18th**. This program will focus on surface and ground water quality and will feature hands-on activities. The surface water quality presentation will bring everyone up to date on this year's water quality projects and issues. The groundwater quality portion will update us on the TCE Plume from Mancelona.

These programs are open to anyone in the community. We hope you will invite friends and neighbors to have fun together learning about water quality and shoreline care.

Of special note is Grass River Natural Area's creation of the position of Education Coordinator. The job description includes program development as well as facilitating effective community educational outreach. Three Lakes and Torch Lake Protection Alliance are both supporting GRNA in their efforts and will be evaluating other ways we can collaborate in the coming years.

Ray Ludwa

Executive Director's Corner

Summer Intern Program:

Plans are being made to work with 4-6 high school students conducting a shoreline Cladophora and Eurasian water milfoil survey for Torch, Clam, and Bellaire Lakes. Cladophora is green algae that grows on rocks and indicates high levels of the nutrient phosphorus. Eurasian water milfoil is an invasive aquatic nuisance species. Flotillas of

canoes, kayaks, rowing shells, and fishing boats will be traveling around the lakeshores identifying areas of concern. The last survey was done in 1990 and located many 'areas of concern. Data from this project will be used by the Water Quality Committee to contact property owners about possible nutrient sources (septage, fertilizer runoff, etc.) This program will require much preparation, and many volunteers to supervise the students. We expect the program will run six hours each week for 10 weeks. If you know of anyone interested in paddling around the lakes with a fine bunch of kids looking for green slime and/or have extra kayaks and canoes for the TLA Armada, please call Tim Hannert at 533-6550.

TCE Plume Quarterly Report:

In November 2003, the MDEQ completed a third round of groundwater sampling from several monitoring wells in the area. In general, TCE concentrations were similar to those reported during earlier investigations with the following exception: Monitoring Wells 36S and 67 have increased each of the last two sampling events (Aug. and Nov.) MW - 36S is located on the Wickes Manufacturing Plume Site and MW-67 is located southeast of Schuss Mt, near the golf course. Conclusions are difficult to draw but it appears the plume continues its northwesterly march. The fourth round of samples will be taken April 2004. Further details regarding the sampling results are available in Technical Memorandum No. 3 (MACTEC, January, 2004). This document and others related to this project are available for review at the Bellaire library.

Michigan Lake and Stream Association Annual Conference:

The 43rd annual conference of the MLSA will be held April 23 – 25 at Boyne Mt Resort, Boyne Falls, MI. Some topics to be presented are; "Working with your local governments", "Aquatic nuisance species, what's here and what's coming", "Zoning and planning for the future of lakes and streams", "Top threats to loons and riparians", "Herbicides and weed control", "Fish in our inland lakes", "Marine safety", "Aquatic plant management", and others too numerous to mention. Our lake monitoring volunteers will be receiving their training and equipment checkout on Friday the 23rd. There is no charge for the CLMP volunteers, but they need to register to attend. Those wishing to attend the other sessions will be supported by TLA. The pre-registration fee (before April 14) for the full conference (3 days) is \$65. At the door it will cost \$75. Single day attendance is \$35 (prior to April 14), \$40 at the door. I have registration forms and schedules for those planning on attending. I'm hoping for more TLA representation this year. This is a valuable conference and we should take advantage of it.

Membership Directory:

Plans are being made to publish a membership directory and information booklet. The PR and Membership Committees will work with Lori and Tina to produce this document by June 1, 2004. If you wish your name listed, dues must be paid or renewed by April 30, 2004. If you do not want your name listed please let us know by April 30.

Three Lakes Water Quality Model:

The predictive model grant request to the Department of Environmental Quality is in the final stages. A Water Quality Model PowerPoint presentation was shown to the staff of Northwest Michigan College Water Studies Institute, the Antrim County Planners, and the TLA Board of Directors for their critical input prior to our eight township presentations. We presently have letters of strong support from NMC-WSI, and the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Center. This year's grant application package does not have a limit on the amount requested so we are asking for \$61,623 to pay Great Lakes Environmental Center for Phase 1 of the model development. The anticipated township contributions of \$1,000 each will support a cadre of summer interns working specifically on the WQ Model. Dean Branson has eagerly accepted the immense job of Program Manager for this vital project. He will need strong support and many volunteers to help supervise the interns and their fieldwork. If you would like to help in any way, please contact Dean Branson at 544-2700.

Great Lakes Aquatic Habitat Network and Fund:

I'm preparing a grant request for \$3,500 from GLAHNF to purchase a laptop computer and a light projector to facilitate our Water Quality Model presentations. If the DEQ grant is awarded we will have need for a dedicated system to enhance our communications with the townships and other organizations. If the DEQ grant is not awarded we still have need for such a system for educational programs and PR projects.

Sap Alert:

The maples are sharing their sweet bounty again. I will have bottled three gallons of golden brown nectar by the time you receive this newsletter. Couple the sugarin' season with early migrating birds and the 'hope' of spring becomes the reality of new life.

Looking forward to the safe return of the 'snowbirds'.

Tim Hannert