

TLA Quarterly

JULY 2011

President's Letter

By the time you are reading this TLA Newsletter, one of the threats to Torch Lake will have been addressed, i.e. the removal of pioneering colonies of Eurasian watermilfoil, an aggressive invasive aquatic plant. An article in this Newsletter describes the process of divers hand digging and then suction removing whole plants. The article also describes the process of obtaining a DEQ permit, and the assistance that we received that enabled us to utilize this new method for managing E. milfoil in Torch Lake.

Collaboration is an essential aspect of a new TLA project. In response to observations that parts of Grass River are gradually becoming shallower due to the accumulation of sediment, we joined forces with several organizations to investigate the sedimentation in Grass River. Another article in this Newsletter describes the scope and objectives of this project, which is expected to involve many volunteers, extra financial resources, and TLA leadership over the next few years. We especially appreciate our collaborative partners who are working with us to accomplish the goals of this project, including our 2011 Team of Summer Interns & volunteers, The Watershed Center, Tip of the Mitt, Friends of Clam Lake, Grass River Natural Area, property owners along Grass River and its three tributaries (Shanty, Cold, and Finch Creeks), two Conservation Districts, stream study experts from the Tribe of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians, and Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association who are conducting a parallel investigation of sedimentation in Rapid River along with the Friends of Rapid River.

In the past couple weeks you should have received TLA's 2010-2011 Membership Directory with over 500 names. Hopefully this Directory will help you stay in touch with your friends and neighbors who are also members of TLA. A special thank you goes to Todd Collins, our Membership Development Chairman and our fourteen Zone Directors, who help explain the benefits of membership and TLA programs & projects that help protect these precious lakes to prospective new members and existing members as they consider annually renewing their membership. And thank you Norton Bretz, Tina Fields, and Lori Brandt for maintaining our membership database that enables the printing of the Directory.

In response to a strong suggestion from a focus group panel of non-TLA Board members last March, we have launched a TLA Facebook page so people of all ages who prefer to keep up to date on activities aimed at protecting Torch, Clam, and Bellaire Lakes & watersheds via Facebook can easily do so on Facebook...just "search" for "Three Lakes Association. If you have an email address, but are not currently on Facebook, just Google search for the easy instructions.

Please take a few minutes during our July 21st Annual Meeting to say HELLO.

Sincerely,

Dean Branson, President

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The Mission of the Three Lakes Association is to provide leadership to preserve, protect, and improve the environmental quality of the Elk River Chain of Lakes, especially Torch Lake, Clam Lake, and Lake Bellaire, for all generations



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Founded 1966

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Grass River Sedimentation Study: Responding to a Threat

by Gary Knapp and Dean Branson

As part of long-term collaborative effort to answer questions about sources and remedies of human activity-related sediment in Grass River, TLA launched a new project in June. This project will initiate a process to objectively determine whether or not human practices are affecting the health of Grass River and its tributaries, and warrant corrective interventions.

Initially stream assessment experts from The Watershed Center, Tip of the Mitt, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Ottawa and Chippewa Tribe conducted a two-day hands-on training session for a dozen volunteers who are evaluating road-stream crossings, stream bank erosions sites areas of sand and silt build build-up caused by human practices, as well as identifying and cataloguing aquatic insects populations. Aquatic insects are biological indicators of stream health with respect to pollutants such as sediments. Since the results of these assessments are intended to become part of new computer models for Grass River, Shanty Creek, Cold Creek, and Finch Creek, scientifically proven methodologies are being used to document the findings. The trainees included volunteers from Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association who are using the same methodologies to assess sedimentation in Rapid River.

THANK YOU to the following volunteers who are helping with this study; Becky Norris, Trish Narwold, Norton Bretz, Fred Sittel (Friends of Clam Lake), Braden Ackerman, Jim Kelderhouse (Grass River Natural Area), and TLA's summer interns.

On June 15th, TLA met with owners of property along these streams to explain the objectives and expectations of this project. The meeting took place in the Grass River Natural Area cabin. This meeting served as an example of the project teams' commitment to transparency, public engagement and community inclusiveness. Principle concerns discussed included: the widening of the river and its varying depths, boat traffic and boat navigation, the lack of fish spawning, hydrology and stream flow concerns, human activity and its effect on aquatic habitat, flora, and fauna. Throughout the remainder of the summer months the team, including high school student interns, will feed data into the model. As the data analysis process moves forward a "baseline" will emerge and set the stage for the development of a Stream Assessment and eventually a Management Plan with recommendations. These recommendations could include the implementation of "best practices" and corrective actions, if corrective actions are deemed necessary by objective analysis.

New TLA Members

by Todd Collins

Our newest TLA members are: Bill and Debbie Hershey, Michael Crawford, Joseph and Mary Zang, Ruth and Robert Stow, Donald and Silvia Gill, Martie Conner and Jeff and Margie Manley. We are happy that you have decided to join us. Our current membership stands at 480.

Managing Eurasian Watermilfoil in Torch Lake

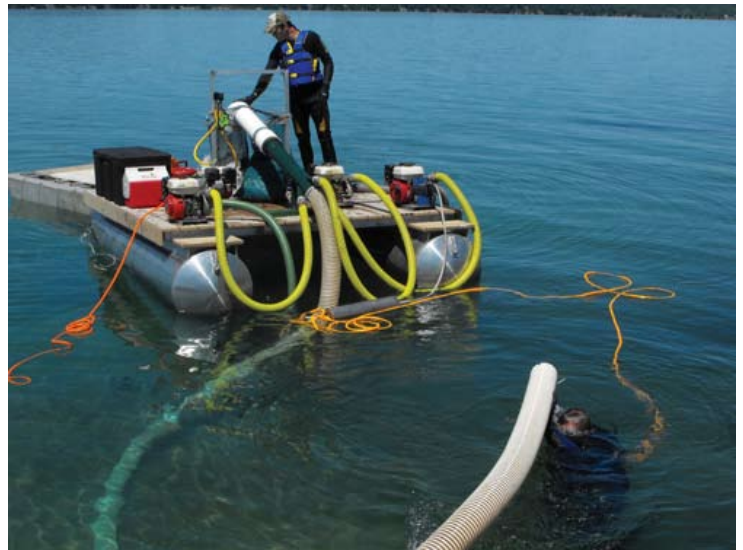
by Dean Branson and Norton Bretz

On June 28th and 29th, more than 90% of the aggressive, invasive aquatic weed, Eurasian watermilfoil was physically removed from two locations in Torch Lake. This removal was the culmination of a multi-step process starting in August 2010 when several floating fragments of E. milfoil were identified in the lake near Alden, and subsequently a few growing patches were discovered by Trish Narwold between Stony Point and Lone Tree Point just south of Clam River and in Alden Harbor. A dozen bags, each bag about the size of a bushel basket, filled with whole Eurasian watermilfoil plants were removed from Torch Lake during the two-day removal operation; nine bags from Alden Harbor and three bags from the Stony Point site. **GOOD RIDDANCE !**

Initially, TLA sought the advice of EnviroScience experts, supplier of weevils, on how to proceed and were advised that the area was too big for the use of a herbicide and too small for effective use of weevils. They suggested physically removing the whole plants and root stock by a suctioning technique. Furthermore, the individual who found the first floating fragments was the daughter of TLA Members and Alden residents Daniel and Diane Roketenetz, Lara, who just happens to be getting a PhD from the University of Akron on Eurasian watermilfoil. Needless-to-say, we took her warnings seriously, and TLA carefully mapped and sampled the outcrop south of Clam River and examined Alden Harbor. The Stony Point outcrop in Torch lake was relatively limited in area. Most of the plants were growing around large rocks on a sandy bottom in about 7 feet of water, 500 feet from the shore. This region was about 200 feet long by 100 feet wide but the plants were significantly different than native watermilfoil growing luxuriantly and almost reaching the surface. Judged from a distance and from their abundance it was easy to tell Eurasian from native watermilfoil. Unfortunately, it isn't so easy to tell the difference up close. One needs to count leaflets and compare structures as described in an earlier TLA Newsletter article.

In addition Eurasian watermilfoil was observed in Alden Harbor. TLA had used herbicide to reduce Eurasian watermilfoil in both Alden Harbor and Butch's Marina in 2004, but as with most of these efforts, the eradication was only partly successful. However, until now the Alden plants had not been numerous. We have also been watching the efforts of the Six Mile Lake Association to use weevils to reduce the levels of Eurasian watermilfoil in that lake. Of course, Six Mile Lake is upstream, and one would expect that the lakes between Bellaire and Six Mile to be prime territory for this invader. As of now, Eurasian watermilfoil has not been identified in either Lake Bellaire or Clam Lake. But we need our lake residents to be on the alert.

On the advice of EnviroScience, TLA contacted Aquacleaner, a small firm in Adrian, Michigan, and requested a bid for the Eurasian watermilfoil removal from Stony Point and Alden Harbor. This bid was \$6,500, and we subsequently learned that a DEQ permit would be required that cost \$500. TLA's board recommended proceeding as soon as possible and seeking assistance from other interested parties: Helena Township, TLPA, private donations, and foundations. Fortunately, all of these sources have contributed to the cost of the project. TLA would like to thank Helena Township for their \$2,000 financial assistance, and Torch Lake Protection Alliance for their \$2,000 financial assistance and for sponsoring Lara Roketenetz, and a family foundation for their encouragement and \$1,500 financial assistance.



Divers from Aquacleaner working with suction apparatus in Torch Lake

However, the DEQ permit required contact with property owners adjacent to the sites, a 20 day public comment period, and some mild restrictions on the methods by which the suctioning could be carried out. In addition, TLA sought and received the permission of over 25 riparians near the affected areas. The permit was finally issued at the end of May, and we attempted to schedule two days of flawless weather during which to carry out the work. Did we mention that divers actually remove the plants whole and suction up the parts? They work from a small barge and need to be able to see what they are doing and not be rocked by big waves.

The photograph shown here occurred on the day we chose for the Stony Point site. The day before when Alden Harbor was cleaned was not nearly so pretty. We had strong SE winds blowing waves into the harbor and rain most of the day. Nevertheless, the divers persisted and spent a very full day in difficult conditions to accomplish their task. The team was fortunate that the next day on the Stony Point site was sunny and calm. They could easily see what to do and TLA volunteers could easily net floating debris. Lara and her parents even tried to capture a few weevils from the Torch Lake Eurasian watermilfoil for her PhD Thesis research. Former TLA Executive Director and sheep farmer, Tim Hannert, now has several bags of milfoil mulch for his vegetable garden.

Are we rid of Eurasian watermilfoil forever? Not a chance. These plants are extremely resilient and will certainly come back. The real question is: How much time does this buy us? We don't know, so..... the next steps in this ongoing war are to (1) continue surveillance for evidence of suspicious aquatic plants or floating fragments and (2) develop a strategy to keep the level of these invasive aquatic plants at a minimum, and (3) encourage the State of Michigan to adopt strong legislation to clean boats and boat trailers before launching Michigan's inland lakes. Based on the experiences in other nearby lakes, Eurasian watermilfoil can become a very expensive threat to manage. From a retrospective inspection we already know that we missed some patches in both Alden Harbor and the Stony Point and Aquacleaner has promised that they will return later in the summer to do another spot cleanup for us. If you see evidence of suspicious aquatic plants or floating fragment, please call TLA office (231-533-4852), or send us an email: info@3lakes.com.

2011 Summer Interns

by Dean Branson and Gary Knapp

This is TLA's eighth year to conduct a High School Summer Internship program. TLA Summer Internship program involves students with an interest in environmental science from area high schools and who apply for and are accepted into the internship program. These students agree to spend 60 hours of community service time working with TLA volunteers on a specific water quality-related project during the summer, and write & present a report at the end of the summer. The following four students responded to our call for applications and were accepted into the program:

- Roger Barber, Kalkaska High School
- Erik Youmans, Central Lake High School
- Carrick Conway, Central Lake High School
- David Witt, Ellsworth High School

This year's summer interns are participating in the Grass River Sedimentation project. A separate article in this Newsletter "Grass River: Responding to the Sedimentation Threat", describes the overall scope and objectives of this collaborative project. Since most of the human activity-related sources of sediment in Grass River comes from its three tributaries...Shanty, Cold, and Finch Creeks...most of the intern's and advisor's time so far has been spent collecting aquatic insects from four sites and walking the 2.75 miles of Shanty Creek stream banks looking for and documenting obvious sources of human activity-related sediment, such as road-stream crossings and storm water-development erosion sites. The aquatic insect surveillance is standard biological methodology for determining the presence of pollutants in streams, such as too much sediment. As part of the Watershed Center's ongoing "Adopt-A-Stream" program, interns will be working with Maureen McManus to classify the collected aquatic insects into families of tolerant and intolerant species.

Thank you to the following volunteer advisors who have been working with these interns; Becky Norris, Fred Sittel, Trish



Gary Knapp, David Witt, and Erik Youmans collecting aquatic insects in Cold Creek

Narwold, Norton Bretz, Gary Knapp, and Dean Branson. We are also very pleased that two college-level interns are also mentoring interns this summer. Braden Ackerman is an engineering student at the U of M was a TLA intern from Elk Rapids High School in 2008 and 2009. Braden is working with the Watershed Center as part of the Grass and Rapid Rivers Sedimentation project. Jim Kelderhouse is an environmental science student at NMC's Water Studies Institute. Jim is an intern with Grass River Natural Area, which is an active partner in this project to address the sedimentation threats to Grass River.

The Grand Traverse Community Foundation awarded TLA an \$1,100 grant to help support this year's summer internship program. These funds will help provide scholarships to those interns who successfully complete this internship.

Star Buoy Signs

by Bob Bagley

In 1997 the Three Lakes Association worked with the DNR and the Sheriff's Departments of Antrim and Kalkaska counties to develop the Star Buoy program. Signs describing the program were placed at 18 DNR and private marina launch sites. TLA donated the signs and covered the expense of installation. Jinks Ross and Larry Fields were the project coordinators for TLA.

Over the years signs have been damaged or stolen and some of the boating rules and regulations have changed. This summer, TLA made the corrections to existing signs and replaced the missing and damaged ones at all locations. Bob Bagley, TLA Past President, and Chairman of the Water Safety Committee, was in charge of this 2011 project. Good work Bob!!



Star Buoy sign at the DNR boat launch site at the north end of Torch Lake
(l to r) Chris Avery, Alan Falquet, Bob Bagley, Jim Patin.

Former TLA Intern, an Expert in Fisheries Management

by *Brianne Lunn*

Brianne Lunn was at TLA High School summer intern in the first two years 2003 and 2004 working with Tim Hannert, Norton Bretz, and Trish Narwold. Except for her occasional summer employment at Dockside, we haven't seen her much since then. In 2010 Brianne was one of two students in Michigan to receive the Janice Lee Fenske Memorial Award created to recognize undergraduate and graduate students for their achievements in the field of fisheries or wildlife management. Brianne's parents still live in Bellaire.

It isn't very often that the aspirations of high school students remain the same as they continue through life, but for one former TLA summer intern, me, Brianne Lunn (Bellaire High School class of 2005), they have. I served as a TLA intern for two summers in 2003 and 2004. I helped monitor E. coli levels at local beaches and Cladophora outbreaks along the lake shorelines. The summer internships were my first exposure to aquatic research, a passion that has only strengthened with time.

I pursued a BSc in Fisheries and Wildlife Management at Lake Superior State University (LSSU). With previous practical research experience from the TLA internships, I was given the opportunity to spend two summers during my undergraduate career in Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, Canada. Along with my mentor, Dr. Geoff Steinhart, I researched the effects of offspring reduction on the nest abandonment rates of smallmouth bass. We braved the cold water to find nesting male smallmouth bass that were then caught, weighed and measured. Samples of the fish's scales were taken so they would be able to estimate the age of the fish. Different percentages (0, 25, 50 or 75%) of the offspring were removed from the nest to observe if a loss of offspring would induce abandonment by the male guarding the nest. My supervisor and I compared characteristics of male bass that remained on their nest to guard their offspring and those who abandoned their nests. We found that bass that abandoned their nests were smaller, younger and had fewer offspring left in their nests than bass that remained guarding their nests. Our research resulted in two peer-reviewed publications in different professional journals (Transactions of the American Fisheries Society and Fisheries Management and Ecology), a real accomplishment for an undergraduate student.

After completing my degree at LSSU in 2009 I decided to further my education at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and I am currently finishing my master's degree in aquatic ecology. My field site (which is fly-in access only) is located 300 km northwest of Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories of Canada near the Diavik Diamond Mine. Throughout the past two summers, I have placed several types of colonization boxes into the streams to catch the aquatic insect that live there. Each box is only open to one type of colonization (upstream, downstream, aerial or vertical migration) and was left in the streams for five weeks. I will be comparing what species of insects use each type of box and will also compare the colonization rates to different streams around the globe. On a broader scale, I will determine the species composition and abundance of insects in my study area, as little research has been performed in the barren land tundra region. My research will



Brianne Lunn with Lake Trout in Northern Canada

provide important baseline information for the southern Arctic, a region expected to undergo major changes in the next 100 years.

In the future, I plan to continue my education by pursuing a PhD in aquatic ecology and hope to become a university professor. I credit my early interest in scientific research to the TLA. I am grateful for the opportunity to have been a TLA summer intern and sincerely believe that my participation in the program was the first steps to my career as an aquatic researcher.

45 Years – TLA Keeps on Counting

by *Tina Norris*

The July 21st Three Lakes Association Annual Meeting at Shanty Creek is a special one celebrating 45 years of stewardship of our three lakes. We hope for a large turn out and guarantee you'll enjoy our speaker and a chance to walk down memory lane.

Events planned for the evening include a slideshow highlighting TLA's 45 years, honor roll of TLA volunteers throughout the years, and a special speaker, Rod Stokes, Director of Michigan DNR.

It's not too late to register for the annual meeting and dinner. Please call Becky Norris, at 599-2894 to reserve your seats. Checks may be mailed to Becky at 4016 US 31, Kewadin, MI 49648 or may be presented at registration on July 21st.

To Frack or Not to Frack...

by Becky Norris, Tina Norris and Dean Branson

The first Joint TLA/GRNA/TLPA/FOCL Educational Event of the summer took place at Alden Depot June 22 at 4 PM with the topic *Fracking*. A panel of three experts, Rick Henderson from DEQ's Office of Geological Survey, Anne Zukowski, representative of *Don't Frack Michigan*, and Dr. Grenetta Thomassey from Tip of the Mitt discussed the topic and took questions from the audience. In case you have not found fracking in your Funk and Wagnalls or have been out of the state this past year, fracking refers to the process used by oil and gas companies to "fracture" shale and release natural gas for commercial uses. Fracking is needed to release gas from newly discovered shale deposits deep (9,000 ft) under our area. The drilling, the process, the regulation, and the potential for ecological contamination have all been subjects of intense debate recently. Judging from the attendance, about 140, our community is interested.

Rick Henderson described Michigan's current fracking rules as "adequate" to protect health and the environment, and admitted that disclosure of fracking chemicals would be on his short list of possible regulatory improvements. Rick emphasized Michigan's proactive rules on enclosing gas well bores with protective casings and cited the state's good record on drilling integrity and environmental safety.

Grenetta Thomassey was ill, but another Tip of the Mitt representative, Maureen Stine, read a statement she wrote and

answered questions. The main thrust of these remarks was that Michigan still had to make improvements in fracking regulations. In December 2010 Tip of the Mitt has circulated a statement to area environmental groups listing these improvements and TLA has signed on. The improvements include making public a list of fracking chemicals for each drill site, the use of Michigan's Water Withdrawal Regulations to cover fracking (until a few months ago oil companies had a waiver on this), reporting of flowback volumes and composition, micro-seismic monitoring, financial assurances to cover cleanup, Best Management Practices, and a response to the pending *US EPA Hydraulic Fracturing Study* due in the next year.

Anne Zukowski of *Don't Frack Michigan* advocated a total ban on fracking in the state. This position results from a study of the environmental damage caused by fracking in other states, the substantially increased use of water resources and concomitant need for disposing of contaminated water in deep well fracking compared to the shallow well fracking, the increased number of drill bores per site needed by this new technique, and the potential for fracking chemicals to contaminate groundwater in an area well known for its pristine waters.

The question period would still be going on if Bob Bagley, TLA's master of ceremonies, had not adjourned the discussion in favor of wine and appetizers. Keep your eye out for more newspaper and public discussion on *fracking*.



Golfer Vic Zucco on the 9th hole of Schuss Golf Course

2011 GRNA/TLA Golf Tournament

by Bob Bagley and Todd Collins

Very strong community support for TLA and GRNA was shown by 52 local businesses that cosponsored this year's Golf Tournament on June 27th at the Schuss Golf Course. This was the 8th Annual TLA/GRNA Charity Golf Tournament. 56 golfers enjoyed a good day of golfing, including Vic Zucco (pictured here on the 9th hole) and 52 local businesses cosponsored the event. The event included a terrific pork loin supper and helped raise \$9,000 (net) for TLA's and GRNA's environmental education programs (about \$4,500 for each organization).

Congratulations to the winners:

Men's Lo Gross:

Bob Barron, Larry Rager, Tom Miller and Jack Bork

Men's Lo Net:

Ken Salo, Jerry Walsworth, Ken Munger and Joe Bostater

Co-Ed Lo Gross:

Glen, Pat and Matt Knudstrup

Co-Ed Lo Net:

Suzie Davies, Jeannie Reeves, Ron Blackburn and Rich Hannan

To all those who joined us for golf and dinner, thank you for supporting these two organizations. See you next year! And a special thank you to TLA's Golf Committee: Todd Collins, Gary Knapp, Bob Bagley, and Alan Hickman.

Summit of Lake Associations

By Tina Fields, Becky Norris, and Dean Branson

Representatives from 18 different lake associations attended the 7th Annual Summit of Lake Associations in Petoskey on June 13th, which was hosted and organized by Tip of the Mitt. Tina Fields, Becky Norris, and Dean Branson attended as representatives of Three Lakes Association.

Grenetta Thomassey, Policy Director for Tip of the Mitt, summarized her environmental policy-related initiatives eight months where Tip of the Mitt is playing a leadership role. These initiatives include the following...

- Developing a township-by-township analysis of water quality-related regulatory gaps for the five counties in Tip of the Mitt's service area. This analysis based on objective criteria for effective ordinances for managing storm water, protecting shorelines, and evaluating septic systems. TLA and Elk-Skegemog Lakes Association (ESLA) helped pay for the printing of the Gaps Analysis Report for Antrim County. This is a useful blueprint for townships interested in developing/improving water quality-related ordinances.

- Forming an effective alliance for improving the State of Michigan's rules for the use of hydrologic fractionation (aka fracking) of deep formations with potential to yield natural gas. TLA is an active participant in this alliance. Gary Knapp is TLA's representative. Tip of the Mitt's Website contains a lot of useful information about fracking and shortfalls of current regulations.

- Collaborating with The Watershed Center to establish network of organizations interested in protecting the Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL), including TLA, ESLA, Friends of Clam Lake, Friends of Rapid River, units of local government, and District Conservation. Activities of this informal group include the coordination of specific projects, including the current investigations of sedimentation in Grass and Rapid Rivers, which are being conducted under the auspices of the ERCOL-Watershed Protection Implementation Team.

James Clift, Policy Director of the Michigan Environmental Council, responded to a series of interview questions, which gave the audience an understanding of the status of several environmental issues in the State. James described the special challenges associated with a significant number of new legislators in Lansing due to term limits. He also provided an update various initiatives to protect the Great Lakes from Asian Carp.

It is always interesting to hear about each lake association's issues and their approaches for dealing with their issues. The Higgins Lake Home Owners Association discussed their recent efforts to respond to Eurasian watermilfoil, which are remarkably similar to our efforts. In fact, they have purchased a suctioning barge and pumps from Aquacleaner to remove Eurasian watermilfoil by volunteers.

membership counts!

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* * * * *

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The Mission of the Three Lakes Association is to provide leadership to preserve, protect, and improve the environmental quality of the chain of lakes watershed for all generations.

July 2011 Issue of the TLA Quarterly

THREE LAKES
ASSOCIATION

