



Members gather before the 58th Annual Meeting.

Annual Meeting

Comfortable weather and a feast of Italian cuisine greeted attendees at this year’s annual meeting held at the Shanty Creek Beach Club on the shore of Lake Bellaire. After the social hour, dinner and a short business meeting, members heard a presentation about riparian rights from Attorney Clifford Bloom of Grand Rapids.

Cliff is legal counsel for the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association and The Riparian Magazine and co-legal counsel for the Michigan Waterfront Alliance. He explained that common law cases dating back to the 1950’s established that riparian property

owners own the bottomlands adjacent to their property out to the center of the lake on most inland lakes in Michigan. Riparian’s also have the exclusive right to install and use docks, boat hoists, swim rafts and similar items along their water frontage and to permanently moor one or more watercraft on their bottomlands but these rights are subject to both reasonable use as defined by common law and to legislative limitations including local ordinances.

The meaning of “ownership” regarding bottomland was questioned. In most cases deeds and parcel descriptions do not mention bottomlands. Riparian parcel boundaries are typically described as “traversing” the shoreline of a particular lake. Cliff explained, if a lake were perfectly round every riparian would own a pie shaped piece of bottomland extending out to the center of the lake. Unfortunately, there are few perfectly round lakes in Michigan. In most cases, the courts draw a “thread” or center line for each lake,

which may be straight or gyrating, to which the bottomlands of various properties radiate. For irregularly shaped lakes or in bays and coves defining this center line “thread” is more of an art than a science. Few surveyors have experience to do bottomland surveys and even when they are well developed it simply becomes an opinion for the court to consider.

It seems fundamental that to own something it must have a common definition. In the case of bottomlands, there is less room for disagreement between riparian neighbors at the point where the ordinary high watermark intersects a recognized terrestrial parcel boundary. But the further out into the lake you get the more dependent the bottomland boundary becomes on the interpretation of lake geography. That means when riparian property owners dispute the placement of a dock, swim raft or boat mooring, the further from the shoreline the dispute lies, the more it will cost to resolve it.

Sneak peek

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Executive Director
Lois MacLean

President's Message

By Fred Sittel

This year we marked the 58th annual meeting of the Three Lakes Association. The board of directors thanks our members, volunteers, donors, and everyone who helped make this year a success. During the business portion of the meeting members elected officers and directors to new two-year terms. Several positions remain open and may be filled at any time to complete an open term. As a new board member, activities you become involved in are as much about what you feel is important to preserve our beautiful lakes as it is about current programs. Please consider joining us and contact Executive Director Lois MacLean or any current board member to volunteer!

As summer winds down our volunteers and board members remain active on-the-water testing tributaries for E-coli bacteria, monitoring water quality of the three lakes and Intermediate River, conducting GBA research in association with Dr. Jan Stevenson and engaging EGLE on general permit applications and on the renewal of the Bellaire WWTP permit. In late August, our summer interns updated the board on their findings of quagga and zebra mussels upstream of Torch Lake and will be presenting to their respective school boards in September.

TLA is focused on good stewardship of our waterways and on being good stewards of your memberships and donations by

leveraging every dollar to the maximum benefit of local water quality. We do that by engaging volunteers who perform lake monitoring, water sampling, special projects, invasive species identification and treatment and we communicate regularly with local and State government on zoning and permit applications. We partner with similarly focused regional organizations and with Michigan universities to gain a deeper understanding of issues facing our lakes. Every summer our volunteers work with area schools to engage our youth and assure the future of local water quality preservation. We keep members up to date on topics of interest and evolving threats with our Quarterly direct mail newsletter. Hard work by our members and volunteers makes protecting the lakes and the environment possible.

At TLA, we believe the most effective way to preserve water quality over the long term is by getting the community involved in hands-on projects working alongside academic researchers and water quality professionals. We are privileged to have a growing membership and people willing to get their feet wet. There are also other opportunities to get involved such as making a two-year commitment to serve on the board as a zone director and chairing a committee. Together, people are making the difference to preserve our water resources!

Look for the
Great Catch
Photo Contest
Photos and Winners
in the next newsletter

Recent Activities

Volunteer Lake Monitoring

TLA has been monitoring water quality in Bellaire, Clam, and Torch Lakes for over twenty years to determine long term trends and detect early warning signals. Monitoring consists of water clarity measurements and Chlorophyll-a samples every two weeks. Mid-lake phosphorous samples are taken in the Spring and Fall to keep an eye on nutrient levels. Our data is sent to the Watershed Council which publishes an annual report on the trophic status of each lake and water quality trends.



Aerial GBA Monitoring

TLA board member Art Hoadley made this year's first bi-annual survey flight of the Torch Lake and Lake Bellaire shorelines in early May. He has been keeping an eye on GBA in our lakes for over twelve years averaging more than 1000 pictures per flight. They help us understand both multi-year and seasonal growth trends and are being used by Dr. Jan Stevenson as part of his GBA research activities.



GBA Research

Our work with Dr. Jan Stevenson to find out why Golden Brown Algae has increased in abundance in Torch Lake continues this year. Shallow water samples were collected at six sites around Torch Lake in May and June as part of the twenty site survey project. Dr. Stevenson also sampled six deep water sites in May. He will be correlating his observations with TLA aerial photographs. At the request of the new Hayo-Went-Ha CEO, campers will have an opportunity to view our sampling work and ask questions about water quality projects. TLA research is being coordinated with a USGS study sponsored by Torch Lake Protection Alliance. In combination, these studies hope to identify whether human activities led to an increased abundance of benthic algae.



Summer Intern Program

This summer three students from area high schools are studying the density of invasive mussels upstream of Torch Lake. Carter Massey of Bellaire H.S. and Annabelle England and Addison Novath



of Kalkaska H.S., are being led by program manager and former TLA executive director Jeannie Williams. Along with their adult mentors and volunteer boat captains the interns are spending their Thursday mornings collecting samples along transects of Clam Lake, Grass River and Lake Bellaire. Zebra mussels were found to be present in each waterbody but only two small Quagga mussels were identified, both in Lake Bellaire. Zebra mussels in Lake Bellaire were found most abundant at a depth of around forty feet. Video of the sampling device approaching the bottom of the lake produced images similar to the mussel colonies seen in video of the deeper waters of Torch Lake collected last summer, confirming that much of the extent of the invasive mussel infestation in our lakes lies beyond observation by most lake users. The interns will also be evaluating a technique to compare the mussel colonization rate between lakes. Special crates containing ceramic tiles were placed in each of the waterbodies this Spring. The interns will be retrieving some of the tiles in August to learn how many mussel larvae have attached themselves to the tiles.

Eurasian Water Milfoil

The Invasive Plant team conducted its annual observations at fifteen sites in mid-July. In addition to direct observation from the surface, they are also using an underwater camera to confirm the presence of EWM. Treatment actions will take place in early September wherever necessary. Growth was light to modest for this time of year at previously treated sites which confirmed the effectiveness of last year's control strategies. TLA has joined forces with members of Torch Lake Protection Alliance to monitor and treat the known sites of invasive Eurasian Water Milfoil in Torch Lake.



Community Education



Our annual event in July was held at the Shanty Creek Beach Club pavilion and brought interested members of the public together in a relaxing atmosphere to learn about important issues affecting our lakes and the environment. Attendees learned about fish stocking and health issues impacting the local fishery from DNR fisheries biologist Heather Hettinger. Deana Jerdee, Executive director of Paddle Antrim, highlighted their organization's efforts to promote water safety and enjoyment and local volunteer Gary Westerfeld gave an update on efforts needed to protect oak trees from oak wilt which is threatening trees in our watershed. Attendees also heard an update on issues facing the Bellaire Waste Water Treatment Plant. TLA is following changes required by the State to bring the plant back into permit compliance. We are tracking the monthly discharge monitoring reports, paying close attention to limits on the phosphorus released and working with the enforcement division of the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy to make sure effluent quality limits will not be relaxed at permit renewal scheduled for October this year. The event also included our first silent auction that raised more than \$1800 in support of the Science Education Outreach Program (SEOP) which provides grants to local teachers for science based field trips and projects. Thank you to everyone who participated in the silent auction!

E. coli Monitoring

The first samples from Eastport and Wilkinson Creek for E. coli monitoring were collected in July by the sampling team of Trish Narwold and Bob Milliron. Additional samples will be collected from other tributaries later this summer. Director Emeritus Becky Norris is handling the



required paperwork and shuttling samples to the lab within the required six hour time window. If bacteria levels are sufficiently high they will be analyzed using molecular techniques to determine if the source is human.

Science Education Outreach Program



The goal of SEOP is to help cultivate stewardship of the environment in young people who are the next generation that will care for our watershed. Our goal is to work with science teachers in the school districts of Central Lake, Bellaire, Kalkaska, and Mancelona. This year we awarded grants to thirteen teachers, providing just under \$7000 for hands-on activities and field trips that encourage the future stewards of our lakes to love and appreciate our natural resources.

Grants and Funding

A \$1000 grant from Paddle Antrim's "Ripple Effect" grant program is helping to offset costs of our Golden Brown Algae research in Torch Lake. Local businessman Gordy Schafer made a \$3000 donation in the name of long time board member Todd Collins who passed away in July, to TLA's SEOP. The Gerrit Lee Wierda Memorial Fund helps to fund our internship program. The Dole Family Foundation helps to fund our water quality studies and granted funding to cover additional expenses related to this year's intern program. We sincerely appreciate the funding of our work to preserve and protect our waters!

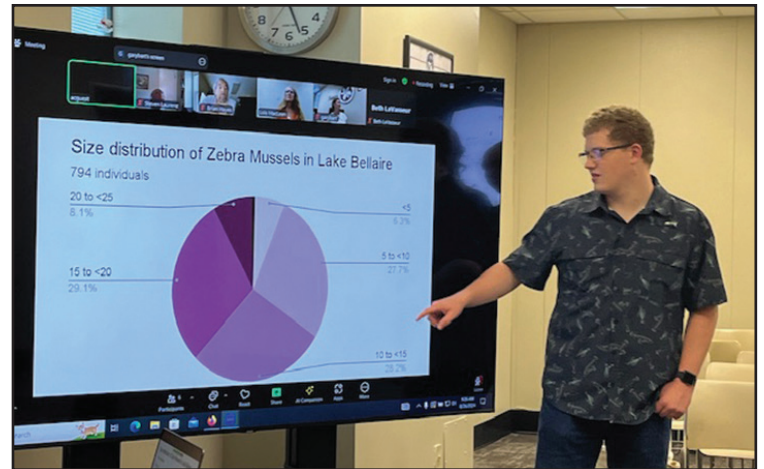
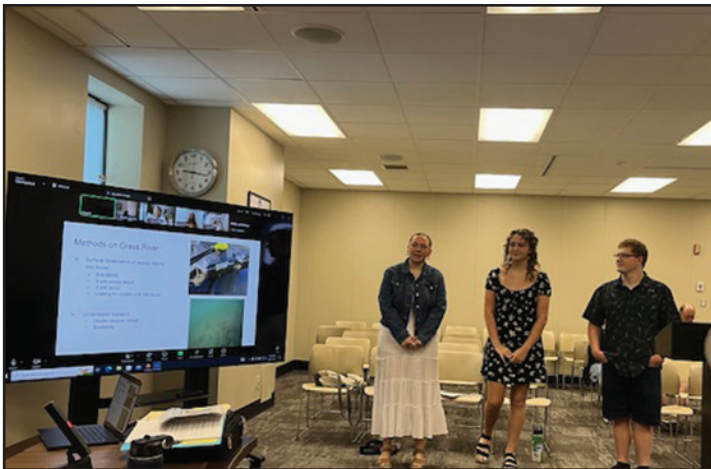


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In early September Dr. Jan Stevenson completed his Three Lakes Association sponsored in-water “bowl” experiments in Torch Lake to investigate the impact nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen have on Golden Brown Algae (GBA) development. Groups of four bowls containing three different nutrient treatments and a control with no treatment were placed on the bottom of the lake in shallow water for a three-week period during which the growth of GBA was monitored. An exciting feature of this experiment will be specialized laboratory chemical analysis to find out if increasing phosphorus availability reduces calcium accumulation in the mats of GBA which develop in the bowls. Calcium is in great abundance in Torch Lake and may be a factor in forming the durable mats of GBA which make the algae’s natural golden brown color so noticeable above lighter colored bottom sediment. This experiment is part of three separate GBA research projects sponsored by Three Lakes Association which are taking place over a three-year period to find out what might have caused the recent appearance of GBA in our lakes.



During the August board meeting TLA high school interns presented findings from their summer research project. Addison Novath and Annabelle England from Kalkaska H.S. and Carter Massey from Bellaire H.S. were tasked to answer a question raised during last year’s investigation into the extent and nature of invasive mussels in Torch Lake – have quagga mussels also infested the upstream waters of Clam Lake, Grass River and Lake Bellaire? The good news is the team was only able to find a few quagga mussels in Lake Bellaire samples and none elsewhere. However, samples from various depths in Lake Bellaire contained almost 800 zebra mussels ranging from just under 25 mm to less than 5 mm. One of the more striking findings was qualitative. Underwater video from depths of around 40 feet revealed colonies of zebra mussels in Lake Bellaire that looked similar to colonies of quagga mussels seen in video from the depths of Torch Lake last year. The physiology of quagga mussels is known to enable them to thrive in soft sediments while zebra mussels are most often encountered clinging to hard substrates like rocks, wood and dock pilings in shallow water. Evidence that zebra mussels also colonize large areas of soft bottom sediments in deeper water means their overall impact on lake water chemistry may be greater than we currently believe.

Our members and donors make the important work of TLA possible. Thank you for your commitment to water protection!

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The mission of the Association is to provide leadership to preserve, protect, and improve the environmental quality of the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed for all generations with emphasis on Lake Bellaire, Clam Lake, Torch Lake and their tributaries.

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