



Torch Lake - A Lake in Crisis

For the past decade we have all seen and felt brown algae in our beautiful lake with seemingly increasing amounts each year. We are working to change that beginning with this year.

As we noted in our Winter Newsletter, we are departing from historical approaches to understand the challenge of golden brown algae (GBA). Following our TLPA 2020 study we have engaged with U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) to lead our efforts. In collaboration with the USGS, we reviewed a study they led on Silver Lake in 2014. We were impressed with its quality which included projections of that lake's health based on modelling and also recommended mitigation actions.

We established contact with the authors of the report in July of 2021. We shared our story of Torch Lake and asked if we could learn more about their work. We also had several video conference calls with the USGS "Team". We found them to be professional, with extensive knowledge and experience. They answered all our questions and shared a great deal with us on not only the Silver Lake study, but others they have done and how they may relate to our situation.

In December, 2021 we established a "Letter of intent" to work with USGS for an extensive Torch Lake study with an opportunity to start in 2022. Since then, we have been working toward a collaborative effort with Three Lakes Association (TLA) and Torch Conservation Center (TCC) to initiate a project of substantial scope and significance.

Frankly, we all recognize this problem is complicated, and despite a lot of hard work by brilliant people, including the collection of a lot of scientific data, the causal factors leading to the formation and proliferation of Golden-Brown Algae in Torch Lake have not been established. Motivated by this realization, we have worked with the USGS team to assemble and lead a working group consisting of representatives from TCC, TLA and TLPA, Dr. Jan Stevenson, Dr. Geoff Schladow (Lake Tahoe expertise) and local representatives from Tip of the Mitt, DNR, and EGLE. This team will study the GBA issue and prioritize hypotheses for its cause so that we might more quickly focus our collective efforts. It will also recommend actions that can be taken to reduce it and a program to track and monitor the health of the lake going forward. The first working group meeting will be held on June 10. We will video the meeting and make it available on YouTube to the Membership. Working with USGS, in cooperation with Antrim County, we believe our project can qualify for cost sharing of 25% to 50% from the federal government.

A steering committee with representatives from TCC, TLA and TLPA has worked in preparation for this meeting. To ensure we maximize the value of the past work done on Torch Lake, and related work on other lakes around the country, the committee has gathered reports and data from reliable sources and put them in a work book for the team of external experts to study and refer to as they gather in June. This way, everyone will be grounded with the historical knowledge as we plan the future. And outcome of the meeting will build on a decade of work by Dr. Jan Stevenson of MSU during which he developed a number of hypotheses for possible causes of GBA. These will be examined and prioritized. In this way the effort builds on the best of the past while bring even more expertise to bear. A brief summary of this meeting will be presented at the GEM Meeting on June 11. Our U.S. Geological Survey Team Leader, Dr. Dale Robertson, will be the guest speaker at the GEM event. (We had originally planned to have Dr. Ann St Amand speak, but due to circumstances beyond her control, she had to cancel. We look forward to having Dr. Ann St Amand speak at a future event). We asked Dr. Robertson to step in and he has graciously accepted.

The **costs** of this USGS lead **Long-Term Monitoring and Assessment Program, even with cost sharing from the government, far exceed** the resources of TLPA. While we are collaborating with TCC and TLA, we will need to rely on additional funds from our memberships. Every donation counts, and if you wish to make a major gift to support our efforts, we'd love to hear from you (**TLPA.CO**). If you have questions or want more details, please contact Tom Joseph by email at torchlaketomj@gmail.com **or** call at 248-909-4941. **We all know Torch Lake is worth it!**

RV Park at Torch River Update

On January 24, the Milton Township Planning Commission (PC) took their vote regarding a 70-site RV Park Special Use Permit (SUP) for a 10-acre site located between Torch River Rd and Miller Rd. The vote was a unanimous rejection of the SUP. This is the second time an SUP for the park has been rejected. The initial request was for an 80-site park that the PC unanimously rejected on July 13, 2021.

The RV Park was not in compliance with township zoning ordinances. Of major concern to the PC was the impact on the topography of the area to accommodate the park. The proposed area is on a ridge line with numerous steep slopes that are a potential hazard. Significant changes to the property have been made over the last couple years without an SUP. Trees and vegetation have been removed and major changes to the topography were made to create potential camp sites. A second road access off Miller Rd was created. These modifications should not have been allowed nor should they have occurred. All these changes resulted in major water runoffs and sediment from heavy rains on August 10, 2021, which flowed onto a neighbor's property and across Torch River Rd into state and privately-owned wetlands. This prompted a lawsuit by a property owner and an EGLE violation to the developer. This was the second runoff, the first having occurred in July 2020.

The developer has filed suit in Circuit Court to have the 80-site PC rejection overturned and has filed suit over the PC rejection of his 70-site plan. The court hearing on the 80-site plan was held on April 18, 2022. The Court ruled in favor of the Planning Commission and their SUP rejection stands.

A neighbor to the proposed park was awarded a settlement from the developer over environmental damages caused to his property over the last several years. Torch, Elk, Skegemog Alliance (TESA) is in remediation discussions with the developer and Antrim County Conservation District on what further work or restoration is required at the proposed RV site.

Also, Dr. Chris Grobbel, from Grobbel Environmental Assoc., has been retained by a group of residents to assist in

preparing a Milton Township Zoning Ordinance change that would remove RV parks from village zoning. Dr Grobbel is an expert in the field and will lead the group in pursuing these modifications with the township officials.

If you are interested in supporting TESA financially, you can donate as follows:

DONATE SECURELY ONLINE:

Go to tesa.org and enter TESA in File Number Box on the website form. This payment method is secure. Credit card or bank account debit. OR

Go to www.tlpa.co. (Legal Defense Fund). Check or Credit Card

DONATE BY MAIL:

Make check out to Olson, Bzdok & Howard, P.C. (Write TESA in memo line).

Mail to: Olson, Bzdok & Howard, P.C.

420 East Front St.

Traverse City, MI 49686

Tracking is advised for large checks.

NEED HELP? CALL:

If you need help making your donation or wish to contribute by phone, call 231-946-0044.

DNR Boat Ramp at Torch River

We reported over a year ago that the DNR had acquired the old Pit Stop property and some adjoining parcels at the corner of SW Torch Lake Dr. and Cherry Avenue. The plan is to construct a double boat launch with 12-15 parking spaces.

If you have driven by this location, you are aware that little has been done. Several small structures have been removed, but the large building on the property remains to be demolished. Per the DNR, quotes are out to contract the demolition.

The DNR stated they would share plans for the site with TLPA, but we have been told they are not available yet. It appears doubtful there will be a new launch this boating season. If we hear anything more, we will let you know.

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Mission of TLPA

To preserve the beauty of Torch Lake and its watershed and to protect its environment for the enjoyment of all



TLPA.CO

We have a NEW look! But we're still the same great Torch Lake Protection Alliance.

After years of frustration with the "old" website, your TLPA Board knew that it was time for some great positive change in how we communicate, tell our story, and present ourselves online. We spent months in research, development, tests, trial runs and happily have a wonderful new website! If you have not yet checked it out, please do!

You are reading our web address correctly; it is **TLPA.CO** (not "com"). We have found this to be so much easier for everyone to remember, so much easier for everyone to type, and so much easier for people to tell their friends about. Plus, our new logo is cleaner and bolder.

Our new site offers the ability to make instant changes, to renew or modify your membership, to donate, and to get the word out to our membership via a great email presence. TLPA worked with the industry leader in Michigan for non-profits, Well Design of Grand Rapids, who helped us at every step of the way in creating the new site. Our content is much improved and the pictures are fantastic. Everyone on the TLPA Board hopes that you will check out our new site: **TLPA.CO**

If you are ever running into problems with the site or have questions, contact board member Dave Martin at: davehwhmartin@gmail.com, who will help you out.

A New Feature on the Website

Sharing Your Stories

We have a new feature on the TLPA website called Stories that we are eager to populate with your incredible stories about Torch Lake! If you have a story or memory you would like to share - why you love the lake and the area, the role it's played in your and your family's life, how you discovered Torch - we'd love to read it.

Please send your story to TorchLakeAlisa@gmail.com along with a photo or two (pictures with you in it are strongly encouraged), we'll review it (and maybe make some minor edits) and get it posted. You can find the Stories section on the TLPA website here: <https://tlpa.co/stories/>. Thanks in advance for sharing.

Get Native Plants in the Ground to Protect the Lake and the Environment

With temperatures warming, Michiganders, it's time to get those native plants in the ground.

The importance of native plants should not be overlooked, says Jeanine Rubert of Pine Hill Nursery with locations in Traverse City and Kewadin and a TLPA business member.

"Think about native plants for more than just their appearance, but how they help our environment," she says. "When you're looking for native plants, you want to think of the nectar source for insects and if it produces berries that could feed birds. It's the cycle of life, and it's better for all creatures."

Terry Bertrand, owner of Barker Creek Nursery in Williamsburg, which is a TLPA business member, concurs that native plants are essential to every garden, including to help prevent water run-off from seeping into streams, rivers, and lakes.

"Native plants benefit filtration and have a deeper root system to help soil stabilization," he says.

"They're also less disease prone and less vulnerable to (Michigan's) severe weather changes because they know how to adapt to the local climate."



A couple local plant ideas from Rubert and Bertrand to help get you started (all of which you can find at their respective nurseries): Coneflowers, Coreopsis, Baptisia False Indigo, Hydrangea Arborescens, Oak Leaf Hydrangeas, and native ferns for shady areas. Both recommend Butterfly Milkweed to help increase Monarch populations and, according to Bertrand, this prolific plant is great for sloping hillsides, particularly along the shoreline, because they help hold back the bank.

Finally, says Rubert, use compost or organic fertilizer to feed plants if necessary. It creates healthier soil and is better for the environment.

"Get over the fact that your garden has to be perfect," she says. "Have a garden that your kids and grandkids can be safe in."

Visit the Business Members section of www.TLPA.co for more on Pine Hill Nursery and Barker Creek Nursery.

Membership Renewal

You should have received your notices to renew your membership for 2022. If you have already renewed, we thank you. If not, we ask that you do so as soon as possible. Our membership year runs from January to the end of December. Dues remain at \$100 as they have since our beginning. We feel this is an inexpensive insurance policy to help protect your investment on Torch Lake. We have always been your best option to help protect your riparian rights.

This year we have an aggressive plan to bring together some of the foremost experts on algae in our lakes. We are hoping they can determine the cause of Golden-Brown Algae in Torch Lake. This is shaping up to be one of the biggest projects in TLPA history. We will need the support of everyone on the lake if we hope to be successful.

Support Our Business Members

A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort
Alden State Bank
Barker Creek Nursery & Landscaping
Birch Street Dental
BlueFin Residential Services (BlueFin Custom Painting)
Chemical Control Co.
The Chief Golf Course/BluePelican
Creative Characters Printing
Don Fedrigo Re/Max of Elk Rapids
Draper Construction, Inc.
Echo Quality Grinding
Elk Rapids Marina
Elk Rapids Electric
Fitzpatrick Insurance Agency
Grace of Alden
Kidd & Leavy Real Estate
Lake Living Services, Inc.
Mapleridge Construction
Mico's Torch Riviera
Nicolas Halek Realtor-Coldwell Banker Schmidt Realtors
North Country Power Generators
Northshore Dock
Pine Hill Nursery
Short's Brewing Company
TCarea.com Realty
Top Notch Heating, Cooling, and Geothermal
Urban Diversions
Village Market Food Centers

Of course, we will continue to monitor township activities that impact our lake. The proposed RV park on the south end of the lake is a good example. We will stay involved in the Sandbar and will support police overtime during the 4th of July. Controlling and eliminating invasive species such as Eurasian Watermilfoil is also a high priority.

You can renew online at TLPA.co or mail your \$100 check to TLPA, PO Box 706, Bellaire MI, 49615. We encourage you to help us recruit your friends and neighbors to become TLPA members. There truly is strength in numbers. If you have any questions, please contact Bruce Hulteen at bmhulteen@gmail.com or (616) 560-3952.

Welcome New Members

Thomas & Kathleen Volle
Jacquelynn & Michael Wakeland
William Hayden
Michael & Jennifer Schoenberger

Memorials

For Robert McLean
Safari Circuits LLC
Virginia Griffis
For Terry Malone
Virginia Griffis
For Kim Snyder
Macomb Gerlach Agency

Keep Torch Lake Blue. Don't Fertilize

It is time to put your "Keep Torch Lake Blue Don't Fertilize" signs back out in your yards.

We know the importance of keeping excess nutrients out of Torch Lake. We now have the OK to post signs in Torch Lake Township. If

you are interested in displaying a sign on your property or need a new sign, please contact Bruce Hulteen at bmhulteen@gmail.com or (616) 560-3952. Remember to place all signs where they can be seen and 10 feet from the edge of the road.



TLPA 2022 Events

JUNE 11, 2022 – GREET, EDUCATE, MEET (GEM)

- **LOCATION:** A-GA-MING EVENT FACILITY located at 627 A-Ga-Ming Dr. Take US 31 to McLachlan Rd. and turn east then left onto A-Ga-Ming Drive
- **TIME:** 9:30 - Finish
- **OUR SPECIAL GUESTS:** Refer to article “Torch Lake – A Lake in Crisis” in this newsletter for overview of guest speakers.

AUGUST 2, 2022 – TASTE OF TORCH (TOT)

- Details to follow in upcoming TLPA Summer Newsletter and TLPA website.

