



## I KNOW YOU CARE ABOUT TORCH LAKE WHY AREN'T YOU INVOLVED?

I became a Torch Lake Protection Alliance (TLPA) member in 1994, and I joined the TLPA board seven years ago. It has always amazed and troubled me that only a third of the homeowners on Torch Lake are members of TLPA. **We have always appreciated the commitment and support of the 500+ families and the 28 businesses that are members.** The Torch Lake Protection Alliance is totally committed to protecting and preserving the lake we all love for future generations. But we cannot do this alone; we need the help and support of *every* riparian on Torch Lake. It is not right or fair that 500 families are on board while 1000 families sit on the sidelines. The lake faces many challenges from invasive species like zebra mussels and Eurasian water-milfoil. We face challenges on our sandbars and people continuing to clearcut trees along the shoreline. Excessive nutrients entering the lake via fertilizers and septic systems are also a problem. The development and proliferation of golden-brown algae in the lake is perhaps our biggest challenge to date.

It is easy to sit back and assume someone else is going to fix these problems. What can you do? Volunteer to serve on committees or help us monitor township activities. Be a lake steward by not fertilizing your lawn or reduce the number of applications. Plant a lake buffer at your shoreline; do not cut down trees unless absolutely necessary. Pump and have your septic checked. At the very least become a TLPA member and help us to recruit your neighbors and friends.

Simple things make for great outcomes for our beautiful lake. Please don't depend on someone else to make these things happen. Don't pass the buck. This is everyone's responsibility. Don't be part of the problem; be part of the solution.

This newsletter is dedicated to educating and reminding you of what TLPA has done in the past and what we are currently working on. I ask that you take the time to read this newsletter; then you can decide if it is worth \$100 a year (\$8 a month) to help us protect and preserve Torch Lake for future generations.

Thank you, Bruce Hulteen, membership chairperson

## (A CALL TO ACTION)

### THE DNR BOAT LAUNCH 1994

Torch Lake Property Owners Association (TLPOA) was formed in 1994 when the DNR decided to build a public boat launch site in a residentially zoned area. The site was ill-suited for launching boats and would have required a 300 foot long channel to be dredged to deep water and further dredging every few years. The boat launch would have also been out of compliance with some of Torch Lake Township's ordinances. The DNR claimed they were exempt from township zoning.

Neighboring property owners brought suit against the DNR, and TLPOA was formed to assist the property owners. In 1996, TLPOA obtained a court order to prevent any action on that site until plans were drawn up and required environmental permits were obtained. Later compliance by the DNR to local zoning was upheld in another case at the Michigan State Supreme Court. This led to the forming of TLPA and the mission of protecting and preserving Torch Lake. TLPOA was changed to TLPA shortly after for tax purposes. This was the first and a great example of TLPA standing up for riparian rights. I can't think of any organization that has fought for home owners on Torch Lake more then TLPA.

#### Support Our Business Members

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

## (TLPA TO THE RESCUE)

### COMBATting EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL IN TORCH LAKE

For the past three years, TLPA has joined forces with Three Lakes Association to combat Eurasian watermilfoil, or EWM for short. EWM is an invasive aquatic plant that has the ability to spread rapidly once it gains a good foothold. Left unchecked, EWM can quickly form large mats of vegetation which float on the surface of the water, choking out native plants below and creating a hazard to boat traffic. Some northern Michigan lakes spend tens of thousands of dollars each year on EWM control. Fortunately, the situation in Torch Lake is not quite that dire.



In 2020, our joint TLPA-TLA team identified seven colonies of EWM in and around the lake. A professional contractor was hired to apply a targeted chemical treatment to all seven sites. Now, three years later, it appears that the EWM in two of those sites has been completely eradicated.

EWM growth in several of the other sites has been much reduced. Two sites, near the mouth of the Clam River, were reduced to the point that hand-pulling the remaining milfoil plants was deemed the best solution. Last September, team members from Torch Lake Protection Alliance, Three Lakes Association, and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council took advantage of the lingering warm weather to spend the day identifying and hand-pulling EWM plants from the relatively shallow water. The team will check these sites again this summer to judge the effectiveness of their efforts. We will also remain vigilant and continue checking for new colonies of EWM, which can hitchhike on boats and boat trailers and be introduced anytime and anywhere as people move their boats from lake to lake.

#### TLPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Sajkowski, President	Bruce Hulteen
Dave Martin, Vice President	Randy Asmus
Bob Milliron, Secretary	Sharon Hill
Norm Neuenschwander, Treasurer	Tom Joseph
Alisa Carroll, Past President	Laura Atkinson

## (IF NOT TLPA, THEN WHO?)

### SANDBAR 2015

The sandbar at the southern end of Torch Lake has been an attraction for residents and visitors for years. Back in 2015, the activities became loud, unruly, and unsafe. Promoters from downstate and out-of-state were bringing busloads of people to the area, especially for the 4th of July weekend. This resulted in thousands of people who partied, DJ's who played loud music, and companies who sold products from barges.

TLPA brought suit and an injunction was issued that prevented promoters and/or sponsorship of large parties or events on the sandbar. This action required permits to be obtained prior to any event. We continue to monitor this situation each year.

TLPA has provided financial support to local law enforcement over the 4th of July by paying a portion of the Kalkaska County Sheriff's overtime expenses. We also provide trash receptacles and porta-jons that are placed at the Torch River boat launch.



Because of the expenses that have occurred over the years, TLPA has established a Sandbar Safety Fund to accept donations to assist in our continuing efforts to provide a family-friendly atmosphere. You are encouraged to donate online at [www.tlpa.co](http://www.tlpa.co), or by check to: TLPA, PO Box 706, Bellaire, MI 49615.

## (WHO IS WATCHING?)

### TOWNSHIP OVERSIGHT

There are six townships on Torch Lake: Central Lake, Forest Home, and Helena on the east side, Torch Lake and Milton on the west side, and Clearwater on the south end. Clearwater is in Kalkaska County and the other five are in Antrim County. Each township has different ordinances and different levels of enforcement. The one thing they all have in common is that they love your tax money. Lake owners pay much more per household than non-lake owners. The problem is that you represent a small portion of the voting block.

Many riparians on Torch Lake are part-time residents, and many may not homestead or vote. This makes it imperative that someone is paying attention to the business being conducted at the township meetings. That someone is TLPA! The recent issue of the RV park in Milton Township (see **RV park** on next page) is a good example of an issue that needed attention. When something is being considered in a township that impacts Torch Lake, the one association that will stand up and be heard is TLPA. The \$100 a year you pay to be a member is an inexpensive insurance plan for your property!

## (THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS) RV PARK

A request for a Special Use permit for an 80-site RV Park on Torch River Road near Cherry Avenue was presented to the Milton Township Planning Commission in early 2020. The request was denied, and a revised plan was resubmitted for a 70-site RV Park which was also denied. The property then went up for sale. There was a tentative buyer, but that sale fell through. The property is now up for sale again.

Local citizens have been engaged with this issue for years. Torch Elk Skegemog Alliance (TESA), TLPA and local governing bodies were all active in minimizing the disruption and degradation of the environment near the south end of Torch Lake and into Torch River. The intense and continuous involvement of local citizens in numerous meetings and public hearings was key to enabling change. As a result, numerous Milton Township ordinances have now been revised to make any future RV parks in Milton township less problematic.

At the Torch River Road site, there is still stabilization activities that are required due to both an EGLE violation and judge ordered remediation activity. The current stabilization soil and erosion permit has been extended due to some medical challenges with the owners. The site is being actively monitored by the Antrim Conservation District.

The community engagement with local groups was critical to this success story and continues to be the best course of action where there are concerns or challenges that area residents encounter.

### Welcome New Members

Todd & Kim Davis

Erick Zanner

Doug & Jennifer Nickel

Brian & Julie Hayes

Laura & David Pauwels

## (THIS COULD BE OUR ONE AND ONLY CHANCE)

### KEEP TORCH LAKE BLUE: A PROJECT UPDATE

Did you know there are roughly 336 million people living in the USA? Only about 3000 are fortunate enough to live on Torch Lake. That's only 00.000009%! So, yes, we are blessed! And I look forward to the beautiful hues of blue as the lake is influenced by the sun, clouds, and wind. However, those shades of blue have been changing over the past several years. It will take action to address these changes and to protect the lake for generations to come. Some of us can support this effort with our time, some with donations, and some by actively engaging in the monitoring and research work we've started.

Our "Keep Torch Blue" project is well underway in our first year of collecting data on the lake. This is the most comprehensive study ever attempted on Torch Lake. We have a strong team supporting the project, with the expertise and knowledge of top scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Michigan State University (MSU) implementing the plan we developed in 2022.

Take a look at our major objectives:

1. Establish a consistent monitoring program for Torch Lake that will be able to describe changes in the water quality, both in the open water and nearshore areas of the lake, within the year and including between years.
2. Establish a consistent monitoring program to quantify the water and nutrient inputs to Torch Lake, allowing us to describe the changes in nutrient loading to the lake from upstream lakes and rivers, its tributaries, groundwater, and direct atmospheric deposition.
3. Use the updated water quality in the lake and its nutrient inputs to explore how the lake should respond to changes in nutrient loading, and describe the areas nutrients are originating from (locations in the watershed, surface water compared to groundwater, compared to atmospheric deposition).
4. Closely coordinate the USGS activities (monitoring of the water quality of the lake, the loading of nutrients from the watershed, and the modeling of surface water quality) with the Golden Brown Algae (GBA) studies by MSU.
5. Continue to use an Adaptive Management approach to further discuss, coordinate, and evolve monitoring and scientific studies on Torch Lake, working toward a "Long Term Monitoring" plan.
6. Generate mathematical models to define the impact of nutrient loading, climate change, and possibly GBA growth characteristics. Modeling evaluations are being discussed by the USGS with support from University of California-Davis (Dr. Geoffrey Schladow) and the University of Western Australia (Dr. Matthew Hipsey).

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Yes, our objectives are comprehensive. We are driven to approach the lake as a complex system, rather than research one factor in isolation. To this end, we have:

1. Collected water samples from 18 locations around the lake which have been taken every month since April, and will continue through October. These sites include 12 near-shore sites strategically selected to get the best representation of the lake, 2 on open water, and one each at Clam River inlet and Torch River outlet. Following the good rain we had on June 25, samples were taken again at Clam and Torch Rivers to evaluate the effects of heavy rainfall.

Stream Gauges have been installed at Clam River and Torch River to monitor and record actual gauge height and water flows continuously.

Most water samples are being analyzed by Great Lakes Environmental Center (GLEC), with some additional analysis being completed at Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. Zoo plankton and phytoplankton samples are being collected for analysis by PhycoTech.



2. Groundwater modeling will be completed this year and the model will be run and used to select locations for approximately 12 monitoring well locations to be sampled in 2024 and 2025.

3. An atmospheric deposition station will be secured this year and a site selected for installation in 2024 to record atmospheric deposition.

4. The near-shore sites were selected in cooperation with TLA and Dr. Jan Stevenson of MSU to ensure a coordinated effort to have water chemistry information at the same locations where GBA samples are collected for characterization analysis. This cross referencing of data will be a major input into the Long-term Monitoring Plan, an essential output of the Adaptive Management process.

5. An effort to formulate the lake system model has begun, based on best-in-class global system models available. Possible models are being investigated for application in Torch Lake conditions.

You may have heard of some of this work and perhaps you have seen the gauges located on the river bridges, but most of the work is done behind the scenes. We're well on our way to the first of a three-year plan, and are confident we will have a more complete understanding of Torch Lake after we've collected and analyzed the data.

All of this would not be possible without the support of Antrim County, which has acted as our fiduciary. With their support, we qualified for a cost-sharing worth over \$80,000 in 2023 alone. We are also grateful for the support and help from Torch Conservation Center (TCC), and the input from Three Lakes Association (TLA).

## Upcoming TLPA Event

*August 1—TLPA Annual Meeting at A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort*

## WHAT IS IN THE FUTURE FOR TORCH LAKE AND TLPA?

It would be great to wake up one day and say there is no longer a need for TLPA. The problems on Torch Lake have gone away or been solved. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to work that way.

- Invasive species will continue to impact our lake. *Can we get the DNR to put in boat washes at the boat ramps?*
- Excessive nutrients entering the lake. *Can we encourage the townships to adapt stricter septic ordinances? Can we get the state of Michigan to enact septic system laws? Are sewers around Torch Lake in our future?*
- Clear cutting and the destruction of natural lake buffers. *Can we get the townships to enforce their ordinances?*
- Condo projects or marinas. *What impact would they have on Torch Lake?*

It is hard to predict what the future has in store for Torch Lake. The one thing we can count on is TLPA with the support of its members will continue the fight to protect and preserve the lake we all love.

We hope this newsletter presented a compelling case for why you should be a TLPA member. The articles in the newsletter only highlight just a few of the issues we have been involved with in our 30 year history. We are your eyes and ears with the townships. We are your advocate for riparian rights. We are aggressively searching for the answer to Golden Brown Algae.

**You can become a member online. Login to [TLPA.co](http://TLPA.co) and follow the directions to join. You can also mail a \$100 check to TLPA, PO Box 706, Bellaire, MI 49615. Please include your email address, phone number, mailing and lake address. If you have any questions contact Bruce Hulteen at [bmhulteen@gmail.com](mailto:bmhulteen@gmail.com) or 616-560-3952.**

### *Mission of TLPA*

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