



WINTER 2024

## A Gift From the Heart

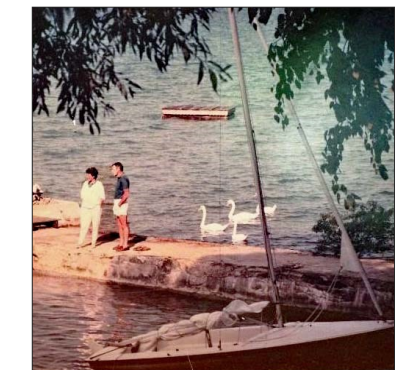
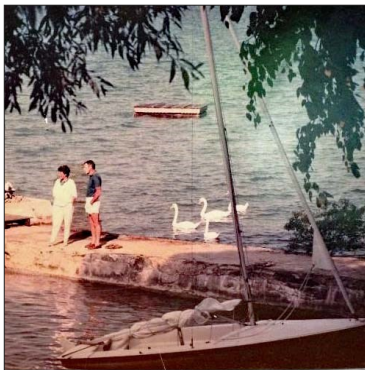
By Bruce Hulteen, TLPA membership chair

This is a story that is like many I have heard about Torch Lake. It is a story about the Nichols family and their love and dedication to the lake. Sue and Roy Nichols built a home on the east side of Torch Lake in 1981. Their three daughters began coming to the lake in their teens and have continued to do so with husbands and families. The Nichols chose Torch Lake over other lakes in Michigan because of its beautiful water. For over 44 years they drove (14 hours) or flew from Alabama to enjoy their northern Michigan retreat. Four generations have enjoyed the beautiful waters of Torch Lake. Sue Nichols passed away this fall and was preceded in death by Roy in 2021. Sue and Roy loved Torch Lake so much that upon their passing, they left the Torch Lake Protection Alliance a substantial monetary gift. I had the chance to interview Rebecca Boone, the oldest of the three daughters. The following are excerpts of that conversation.

Torch Lake is the family's gathering place, it is the heart of their family, and her parents loved it there. Her parents believed strongly in giving back and leaving a legacy for organizations to build and grow. They believed everyone has a responsibly to do their part to protect Torch Lake for future generations. They felt this lake was a gift from God and no one has the right to take advantage or exploit the lake, i.e., like uses of the sandbar.

Rebecca, like many of us, is very concerned about the changes she has seen in the lake. The growth of Golden-Brown Algae on the bottom of the lake is troubling. We discussed TLPA's project with USGS to find a cause for the change, and she was glad we were doing something to find a solution. She is glad there's an organization tackling the many issues impacting the shoreline and quality of Torch Lake.

The Nichols family exemplifies the spirit of Torch Lake riparians, demonstrating a conscientious commitment to the lake and its shoreline, along with a dedication to preserving its quality and beauty for all to cherish.



profoundly generous planned gift.

### ***Have you considered Torch Lake Protection Alliance in your estate planning?***

With this wonderful gift from the Nichols, we thought it pertinent to inform our membership about the various planned giving options available to support the future of Torch Lake and its watershed. These options encompass gifts that can be made either now or upon your passing, providing potential tax-saving benefits. Planned gifts can be realized by designating the Torch Lake Protection Alliance or one of its funds, such as the TLPA Endowment Fund, as a beneficiary in your will, insurance policy, trust arrangement, and/or retirement plan. We strongly recommend consulting with a professional to formulate and review your personal estate planning documents.

If you have any questions or wish to inform us of your intention to include TLPA in your estate plan, **please contact Board President Dan Sajkowski at (815) 412-5616**. Your thoughtful consideration of planned giving will contribute significantly to the lasting preservation of Torch Lake and its watershed. Thank you!

**TLPA—Protecting Torch Lake for 30 Years**

# TLPA Stays in Communication with the DNR Concerning the Boat Launch at Torch River

## *DNR Offers to Attend a Future TLPA/TESA Board Meeting*

As many of you know, there is a new DNR boat launch being built to replace the existing boat launch on Torch Lake at the entrance to Torch River. It will be constructed and operated by the DNR. EGLE approved the permit application in 2023, despite significant push back from the community.

With the help of state representative John Roth, representatives of TLPA and TESA (Torch Elk Skegemog Alliance) met with a large number of staff from the DNR and EGLE via Zoom in January. We vocalized the critical need for EGLE and the DNR to listen closely to comments from our members on this project and future projects. We spoke of the importance of providing us feedback, especially explaining the reasoning for rejecting our recommendations. There was a candid exchange of views and the DNR offered to attend a future TLPA/TESA board meeting.

While some recommendations related to the shoreline have been adopted, there are many aspects of the proposed launch that remain problematic. Invasive species continue to be a huge problem for our lakes; the lack of a boat wash at this site is a major concern. We hope we can create a constructive dialogue as we move forward.

# Quiet Area Established on West Side of Torch on Property Originally Intended for a Kayak Park

## *TLPA Helped Organize Opposition to Location of Kayak Park*

There has been a positive development concerning the property on N. West Torch Lake Dr. (between Campbell and Indian Roads) that was originally designated to become a kayak park. The property owners near the site were concerned about excess noise, development and lack of parking. The property is in a residentially zoned area and is not suitable for such a project.

After numerous meetings and input from Milton Township residents, it has been decided to leave 200 feet of lake frontage undeveloped. The remaining 100 feet will stay residential. The Grand Traverse Land Conservancy (GTLC) will purchase the entire 300 feet and put these restrictions on the property. This is win for the surrounding property owners.

This is another example of TLPA staying on top of township business and helping to organize opposition. GTLC is to be commended for listening to riparian input and making the right decision in the use of the property. Laura Atkinson, a TLPA board member, was instrumental in keeping us updated on developments and helping to organize responses.

### TLPA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Sajkowski, President	Tom Joseph
Dave Martin, Vice President	Randy Asmus
Bruce Hulteen, Secretary	Sharon Hill
Mark Jasonowicz, Treasurer	Laura F. Atkinson
Rick Knopf	Steve Kelley

### ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

Norm Neuenschwander	Bob Milliron
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### *Mission of TLPA*

*To preserve and protect the health and beauty of Torch Lake, its watershed and surrounding environment for generations to come*

# KEEP TORCH LAKE BLUE CAMPAIGN

## Year-1 Data Collection Completed

Dear Members,

The Board of Directors extends its sincere gratitude to each of you for your unwavering commitment to Torch Lake's long-term ecological health. Your engagement, insightful questions, and overwhelming generosity have played a pivotal role in the success of the Keep Torch Lake Blue (KTLB) Campaign.

As we navigate through the Quiet Phase of the campaign, many of you have generously supported us at the Lead Donor (\$10k +) level. Your contributions have propelled us toward our fundraising goals, and we are excited to announce that we plan to launch the Public Phase in 2024. During this phase, we will invite all community members to contribute at any level, ensuring the continued success of this crucial initiative. In a significant milestone, the KTLB Project Team (comprising USGS, TLPA, TCC) is pleased to report a successful first year of water-quality data collection on Torch Lake. Over the past two months, we have achieved the following milestones:

- Signed our 2024 Joint Funding Agreement with the United States Geological Survey (USGS).
- Renewed our partnership with Antrim County, acting as our fiduciary, securing a substantial 25% cost-share from USGS to support the project.
- Commenced laboratory analysis of hundreds of samples, aiming to identify trends and better understand water chemistry variations throughout the year. This data will be compared with Dr. Jan Stevenson's (MSU) GBA characterization data, looking for any correlation of water chemistry and GBA formation.
- Initiated lab analysis of zooplankton and phytoplankton samples, laying the foundation for studying yearly variations.
- Scheduled our next "Adaptive Management Meeting" on May 3, 2024. This forum will provide an opportunity to share project outcomes with regional, state, and national experts, seeking their valuable input for the next two years of data collection.

As members of TLPA, your voice is influential, and we want to assure you that it is being heard. The successful data collection in Year-1, made possible by your support, lays the groundwork for two more years of impactful research. Moreover, your collective voice has served as a catalyst in engaging township commissioners and state legislators, bringing regulatory agencies into meaningful conversations that would have otherwise been challenging. Your commitment has heightened the urgency of protecting Torch Lake and the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed, as we strive to enhance monitoring and understand the underlying causes of the observed changes on our beloved lake.

Once again, we express our deepest gratitude for your ongoing support. Together, we are making a lasting impact on the preservation of Torch Lake's pristine environment. We invite you to contact our **Campaign Committee Chair, Dave Martin, @ (231) 883-6812** or our **Campaign Manager, Haley Breniser, @ (231) 342-7451** if you are eager to support the KTLB Campaign at the Lead Donor Level (\$10k +). We simply cannot do this without you.

With gratitude,

KTLB Campaign Committee and BOD

# Helena Township Master Plan Approved

The Helena Township Planning Commission (HTPC) met on January 4 and approved a new master plan.

Revising the current master plan has been the primary focus of the planning commission for the last few months. The general public was invited to provide input as part of the public comment periods, and the public was encouraged to send e-mails to the commission regarding points of concern.

The October 19 meeting attracted approximately 100 citizens, likely in response to social media posts by TLPA and other organizations calling attention to the HTPC's proposal to institute two zoning ordinance changes: (1) removal of requirement of 25 foot buffer at lake shores, and (2) allowance of RVs and other non-permanent dwelling units within township properties zoned R-1. The meeting began with a statement from the commission that the two proposed changes were off the table because the proposal to create these two ordinances was not presented in accordance with the legal requirements (see minutes of the HTPC meeting on the Helena township website.)

The commission clarified that the Master Plan needed to be updated and approved before any ordinance changes were to be considered, and, that any proposed changes must be in compliance with the approved Master Plan. During the open times for public input, points were raised about rental businesses being run on properties zoned R-1, the desirability for new septic ordinance/regulations, and the desirability of maintaining a rural and natural character among other items.

The November 2 and December 7 meetings continued with a review of the 2016 Master Plan, taking note of suggested changes by the commission and the public. The final revised plan was submitted for public review and subsequent approval by the commission at the January 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. In general, the consensus was that the bulk of provisions of the 2016 Master Plan were inherently sound, and the meeting concluded with a reminder that any subsequent proposed zoning changes must be consistent with provisions of the new Master Plan.

Due to expressed public interest, the commission elected to conduct Zoom meetings to inform and capture public comments. The January 4<sup>th</sup> meeting attracted 29 Zoom call-ins and many in-person attendees.

The approved Master Plan must be reviewed by Antrim County and approved by the Helena Township Board. Then, proposed zoning ordinances, including changes to existing ordinances, can be received, reviewed and voted upon. Issues that will likely be up for review in 2024 include:

- Processes for Enforcement of Zoning Ordinances
- Funneling
- Short Term Rentals
- Greenbelt Protection
- RVs and Campers
- Septic Systems
- Public commercial use of lands zoned agricultural
- Alternative energy sources
- Shoreline buffering

As we move into 2024, it is important for TLPA members and other interested citizens to become involved in the zoning process that will be emerging. HTPC meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at 5 pm at the Helena Community Center. And participation by Zoom will continue. For further information, see the Helena Township website.

## Welcome New Members

**Elizabeth & Tom Troeger**

**Craig Hupp**

**William & Carol Schomer**

**David & Mary (Polly) Conlin**

**Christine & Mark Kaufman**

**Rebecca & William Boone**

# Four New Members Join the TLPA Board of Directors

## RICHARD KNOPF



Richard joined the TLPA board in 2023. Richard's background is in natural resources. Richard spent 8 years in the U.S. Forest Service. He then joined the faculty of Arizona State University. Richard and his

wife Janet have been Torch Lake owners since the mid-70's.

## MARK JASONOWICZ



Mark joined the TLPA board in 2023. He is the current Treasurer. Mark's educational and work background is in accounting. He worked for the State of Michigan for 35 years and taught accounting at Grand Rapids Community College. He and his wife Marilyn have been Torch Lake owners since 2008.

## STEVE KELLEY



Steve is our newest board member, joining the TLPA board at the end of 2023. Steve's background is in sales and marketing. He worked for Ford Moto Company for

22 years. He is now the OEM Channel Director for Real Truck. Steve and his wife Wendy have been Torch Lake owners since 2017.

## LAURA ATKINSON



Laura joined the TLPA board in 2023. Laura has degrees in Para-Law and Design. Laura has worked with law firms and owns her own interior design business. Laura and her husband Dave have been Torch Lake owners since 1987.

## Membership Renewal

If you have renewed your membership for 2024, we thank you. If you have not, we ask that you do so as soon as possible. This is a busy time for TLPA. We have many issues that we are working on that impact Torch Lake. We need all Torch Lake supporters to help us. TLPA is the one organization that has always led the fight to protect and preserve our lake.

Being a TLPA member is one way you can help; recruiting your neighbors and friends to become members is another way. You can renew online at [Tlpa.co](http://Tlpa.co) or mail your \$125 check to TLPA, PO Box 706 Bellaire MI 49615. If you have any questions, contact Bruce Hulteen at [bmhulteen@gmail.com](mailto:bmhulteen@gmail.com). We thank you for your support.

# Torch Lake Protection Alliance

## Member Survey

### Help Us Get to Know You Better!

Dear Members, the TLPA board and staff are making a concerted effort to get to know you better, because you're awesome! Over the next 12 months, we will release a series of short surveys with the intention of better understanding: 1) your personal connection to Torch Lake, 2) your experience as a TLPA member, 3) your individual priorities concerning the lake, and 4) your commitment to TLPA's future. Thank you for taking the time to answer these 13 questions below. It should only take about 5 minutes.

Click [HERE](#) to proceed to the Member Survey.

### Dates to Put on Your Calendar

**GEM - June 8**

**TLPA Annual Meeting - August 13**

For this Year's GEM's meeting to be held at Torch Lake Township Hall, we hope to have our State Representative John Roth and our State Senator John Damoose as our featured speakers. (We currently have commitments from both.) This will be an excellent opportunity for TLPA to express our concerns and priorities for Torch Lake. The TLPA annual meeting will be held at A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort.

### Support Our Business Members

A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort  
Alden Lumber and Hardware  
Alden State Bank  
Barker Creek Nursery & Landscaping  
Bay North Realty  
Birch Street Dental  
Chemical Control Co.  
The Chief Golf Course/BluePelican  
Creative Characters Printing  
Don Fedrigon Re/Max of Elk Rapids  
Echo Quality Grinding  
Elk Rapids Marina  
Elk Rapids Electric  
Fitzpatrick Insurance Agency  
Great Lakes Cottage Watch  
Hell Fire Detroit Hot Sauce  
Kidd & Leavy Real Estate

Lake Living Services, Inc.  
Mapleridge Construction  
Nicolas Halek Realtor-Coldwell Banker Schmidt Realtors  
North Country Power Generators  
Northshore Dock  
Parshall Tree & Turf Care Pine Hill Nursery  
Serve Electric  
Short's Brewing Company  
TBA Credit Union  
TCarea.com Realty  
Top Notch Heating, Cooling, and Geothermal  
Urban Diversions  
Village Market Food Centers  
Wanigan Corporation



January 27, 2024

To: EGLE WRD - Submission No. HPV-P931-6KCC3

Re: Public Hearing Notice - Cedar Shores Permit Application - 05-7656 S East Torch Lake Dr-Helena Twp

The Board of Directors of Torch Lake Protection Alliance (TLPA), representing 550 members (individuals/families) and 30 businesses, has reviewed the application, and previously submitted public comments to the proposed permit to create a Marina at Cedar Shores. We stand by our earlier submission that the size and scope of the proposed Marina would be unprecedented and as well precedent setting, thereby allowing other riparian owners and developers to leverage this marina to become the next wave of shoreline with a high density of watercraft, changing scenery of the lake, intrusion to neighbors and further detriment to the health of Torch Lake. This cannot be the way a resource as precious as Torch Lake should be managed.

- An undesirable aspect of the precedent that would be set by this expansion is that the ownership of the dwellings at Cedar Shores (condominium) is creating a set-up for funneling. Approving the permit would enable funneling here, at other locations on Torch Lake and elsewhere on the chain of lakes. This is something for which the Michigan courts have denied repeatedly in the past.
- As expressed in our earlier comments and by others, we believe there are issues with the use of the proposed Marina for commercial purposes. Cedar Shores already rents out its dwellings as indicated by its Deed and observed practice. To add to that, creating a marina is a clear violation of the R-1 zoning requirement because it enables the commercial use of slips for waterfront access.
- We note the overwhelming number of responses arguing against the approval of the permit that were submitted for this proposal last August.
- We completely empathize with the distress of nearby landowners who will have to view this monstrosity while losing their ability to peacefully use their property. The marina infringes on their rights as waterfront owners (because of the added noise, and importantly, impacting safety due to the increased density of those swimming, including children, and moving watercraft).
- We believe that approving this marina approach will impact the value of immediate and nearby properties (thereby causing financial harm).
- We find it regrettable that Helena Township does not appear to have regulations that address the number of boat/jet ski spaces allowed at waterfronts. This is in contrast to other Townships on Torch Lake. For example, Milton Township's ordinance (117.320) as applied to the Cedar Shores lake frontage of 260' would allow 7 spaces where 1 space is counted as 1 boat slip or 1/2 of a jet ski slip. To expand from 4 to 9 boat slips plus 10 jet ski's would count as 14 spaces. That is twice what Milton Township would allow on the same water frontage. Similarly, Torch Lake Township (2.13 Section C) limits registered watercraft to 3 per 100' of frontage. As applied to Cedar Shores it would only allow 8 registered watercraft.

The Mission of ELGE includes the statement "...to protect Michigan's environment and public health". ELGE's Values are to be "...accountable and responsive to all Michigan residents" and to adopt "...a strategic approach that accounts for the impact of today's actions on further generations". These are admirable.

In this context, the owners of Cedars Shores and the renters of their cottages have alternative ways to access the water with their watercraft via the many public access sites on Torch Lake. Additional slips at the proposed density along the shoreline are not needed. It serves commercial interests. The proposal adversely impacts the lake and most certainly those who have residences close to it. It opens the door for the proliferation of high-density marinas around the lake in the future.

The TLPA board adamantly opposes the Cedar Shores Marina and requests EGLE to deny this permit application.

Respectfully submitted – TLPA Board of Directors