



TLPA NEWS

Torch Lake Protection Alliance
Quarterly Newsletter

FALL 2025

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TLPA Mission

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

Connect with us!

<https://tlpa.co/>



President's Message – Quagga Mussels

Torch Lake has quagga mussels. Quagga are dime sized. They live for 3 or more years. They are at the bottom of Torch at depths between 30-200' but predominantly 60-100'. Originating in eastern Europe, they invaded the Great Lakes more than 20 years ago. They were likely carried into the US by sea-going vessels. They grow by consuming plankton and filtering tremendous volumes of water thereby removing the base of the food chain. Consequently, they impact the delicate ecology of the lake. The recent documentary "All Too Clear" is worth watching to learn more.

It is not clear when the quagga numbers escalated in Torch Lake since routine monitoring for them was not in place. Some estimate their growth may have



taken off within the last 5 years. The DNR has long had educational materials advising those moving between lakes to wash their boats. However, there are no boat washes at launches anywhere on the chain and very few at lakes elsewhere in Michigan. The capital and operating expenses are high. There is no state/federal funding for them.

TLPA is actively conducting surveys of quagga along 6

equal transects from the north to the south of Torch. The method involves underwater cameras (sometimes a small submarine drone) to photograph and then count live mussels. The density varies but, in some places, it is up to 3,000/m². We want to quantify their presence, distribution and growth rates. In turn this allows us to determine their impact on nutrients entering the lake and on plankton (the base of the food chain with fish at the top) within it.

Why do this? We've been following research on quagga in Lake Michigan for several years. We've long engaged the experts in this area in our annual Adaptive Management Meetings which are part of our Keep Torch Lake Blue project. Quagga directionally make the lake clearer but biologically far less active by sequestering nutrients to the bottom of the lake. The potential changes are extensive.

Continued next page

President's message continued

We are also working to understand the possible connection between benthic algae and quagga. It seems unlikely that quagga caused the brown benthic algae that has been taken off over the last 15 years on Torch Lake because they may have proliferated after the growth of that alga was well underway. But it is an open question.

What is more puzzling is that this year, we appear to be seeing less brown benthic algae than in the past. This is remarkable. It is easy to associate this with the observed increase in quagga or the colder winter or some other coincidence. But we want to push for cause-and-effect relationships which are more valuable because they are not just explanatory but offer the chance to be predictive. Are we headed toward a clearer but more lifeless lake? Will there be more but different benthic algae as seen in Lake Michigan?

What can you do? Support the Keep Torch Lake Blue effort by donating to tlpa.co. We need your help as we work to understand the lake and develop mitigation strategies. If you are moving your boat or fishing gear between lakes, be sure to wash it. Ask others to do the same. This will slow growth and even prevent the influx of other invasives. Regrettably, there is no known practical means to change the trajectory of quagga once they invade. But we are following developments in this area since a breakthrough would have a tremendous, possibly restorative, impact on the Great Lakes and now Torch Lake.

For additional information – click on the link below:

<https://upnorthlive.com/news/local/torch-lake-faces-ecological-challenges-from-invasive-quagga-mussels>

Keep Torch Lake Blue Campaign

TLPA wishes to thank everyone for the critical role our Torch Lake community played in enabling the most successful fundraising campaign to support Torch Lake in history. We have raised one million dollars and fully funded three years of unprecedented research on and in Torch Lake.

TLPA board member, Wayne Lancaster, is leading the work on the quagga mussels that were found in Torch. His estimate is that there are over 40 BILLION of them in Torch (yes, billion with a “b”). How do they impact our

beloved Torch? What is their impact on Golden Brown Benthic Algae? We have learned so much, while we are uncovering additional unknowns.

Your contribution has made all this research possible. To complete the final report and analytical models, we need just \$100,000 by year's end. We have already received a \$5,000 challenge pledge from the Dole Family Foundation seeking matches to their donation of \$5,000.

TLPA asks you to join in helping us reach the \$100,000 in funds needed before December 31, 2025. Your contribution can be made online through our TLPA website, www.tlpa.co

Want to send a check? That is wonderful!! Please make your check payable to: Torch Lake Protection Alliance and label it for the Keep Torch Lake Blue Campaign.

Please send to: **TLPA, P.O. Box 706, Bellaire, MI 49615**

Thank you so much. Together, we have done so much

for our lake, and we are all eager to hear the final report next summer. Thank you for your part in making this all happen.



Membership Alert

It's hard to believe another summer on Torch Lake has ended. So, it is time to renew your Torch Lake Protection Alliance (TLPA) membership for 2026. Our family membership dues are \$125 a year and our business membership dues are \$250. TLPA continues to work on protecting and preserving Torch Lake for future generations. In 2026, we will publish the findings of our USGS study. Combating invasive species and monitoring township business are high priorities. TLPA is the one organization that is willing to fight for your riparian rights. We really appreciate and need your support. Please renew your membership right away. We spend an inordinate amount of time working on membership renewals.

Please take advantage of our automatic renewal feature. You can also help by recruiting your friends and neighbors to become TLPA members. We have demonstrated many times that there is strength in numbers. You will be receiving a renewal request in November by mail and an email follow-up.

If you have any questions, contact Bruce Hulteen at bmhulteen@gmail.com or 616-560-3952.

Welcome New Members

Dave Knight
David Halsey
Kevin Karner
Allan Dobzyniak
Chris Sloane
Ellyn Davidson
Vijay Chitnis
Julie Ruma
Craig & Elizabeth Smith
Laura Wilcox
Chris & Lezlie Himes
Shawn & Christine Spillane
James Nestor
Doug & Janet Hoch
Christopher Green & Steve Pougnet
Martie Conner
Michael Welch
Kristen Foley
Scott Schubert

Township News

TLPA attempts to have a representative at all township meetings and will occasionally provide updates on key issues to its members.

Clearwater Township Clearwater Township is set to present a Short-Term Rental proposal at their October meeting. The proposal will address licensing and penalties for violation of the ordinance. For more details go to the Clearwater Township website <http://www.clearwatertwp.com>

Helena Township Helena Township updated its language of Chapter 5, Section 5.02.01 to diminish the capacity of private waterfront (and adjacent) property owners to merge in a way to increase the prospect of boat funneling. You can read more at <http://www.helenatownship.com>

Milton Township Milton Township is rewriting their Short-Term Rental ordinance. There has been a lot of pressure to have the township eliminate short term rentals in the township. The township is leaning toward adding new language that would give them more tools to enforce the ordinance. The planning board wants to give the ordinance one more year in hopes they can police unlawful leasers.

Socialize with TLPA!

There are more ways than ever to connect with TLPA, our activities, events and our mission! You can find us on the web: on Facebook, Instagram and on YouTube! We invite you to engage with other members, board members and our business members.



@torchlakeprotectionalliance



@tlpa1



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<https://tlpa.co/>

Support TLPA Business Members

365 Outdoor
A-Ga-Ming
Alden Lumber and Hardware
Alden Mill House
Alden State Bank
Avery Excavating
Barker Creek Nursery & Landscaping
Blackmore Landscaping Services
Bruce's Earthworks
Bruce's Excavation
Chemical Control Co.
The Chief Golf Course/BluePelican
Clearwater Carpentry & Custom Homes
Creative Characters Printing
DLH Builders
Don Fedrigo Re/Max of Elk Rapids
Drogt Excavating
Echo Quality Grinding
Elk Rapids Marina
Elk Rapids Electric
Ethanology Distillation
Fitzpatrick Insurance Agency
Great Lakes Cottage Watch
Great Northern Benefits LLC
Hell Fire Detroit Hot Sauce
Jay Merchant Builders Inc
Kidd & Levy Real Estate
Landscape Logic
Lake Living Services, Inc.
Luhr's Landing
Mapleridge Construction
North Country Power Generation
Northshore Dock
Schmidt Realtors
The Pear Tree
Pine Hill Nursery
Providence Farms
Restoration Services of Michigan
Serve Electric
Service Lynk
Steve Jessmore Photography
SunLife Marine Torch River
TBA Credit Union
Top Notch Heating, Cooling, and
Geothermal
Village Market Food Centers

TLPA welcomes all businesses to join! Visit <https://tlpa.co/> for information.

Protecting Your Home While You're Away

Submitted by Business Partner: Great Lakes Cottage Watch

As the seasons change and many of us head south or travel for the winter, it's time to think about how to keep our Northern Michigan homes safe and sound while we're away. Today's homes are more advanced than ever—with smart features, complex systems, and lakefront environments that can make upkeep a little tricky from afar. A little planning before you lock the door can save you a world of stress later.

Keep an Eye on Your Home's "Health"

Think of your home like a living thing; it needs a bit of care and attention, even when you're not there.

- Physical health covers the basics: the structure, the roof, plumbing, and all the things that could go wrong when nature throws a curveball (think ice dams, frozen pipes, or heavy snow).
- Maintenance means staying ahead of issues by keeping your home's systems in good working order—heating, electrical, septic, and more.
- Connectivity has become a quiet hero in modern homes. Smart thermostats, cameras, and security systems help you stay in touch with your home — and can alert you to small problems before they become big ones.

Before You Head Out, Take a Minute for These Must-Dos

A quick checklist can make all the difference:

- ☒ Finish up any repairs you've been putting off — little things can become big headaches when left unattended.
- ☒ Confirm that service providers (for snow plowing, generator maintenance, irrigation, security, mail, etc.) are scheduled and reliable.
- ☒ Turn off or winterize your water, or double-check for leaks or drips if left active.
- ☒ Clear out perishables and anything that could attract unwanted "guests" (pests love vacation homes, too!).
- ☒ Set your heat or cooling system to a safe, steady temperature across all zones.
- ☒ Unplug nonessential electronics.
- ☒ Lock every window and door — then check them once more.
- ☒ Make sure a trusted local contact knows how to reach you and can respond if something unexpected happens.

For True Peace of Mind

A home-watch service can make a real difference for your peace of mind. Scheduled property checks offer reassurance — not just that everything's okay, but that if it's not, someone's there to handle it.

If you choose a home-watch provider, look for a team that's trained, certified, insured, and experienced with detailed reporting. A good service doesn't just watch your home — they help protect your investment, your comfort, and your peace of mind all year long.

Saving Oak Trees for the Sake of Torch Lake

Submitted by TLPA Member – Gary Osterfield

Trees are of critical importance to the health of Torch Lake. Regrettably, the Torch Lake watershed stands to be compromised by the loss of its surrounding Oak trees due to Oak Wilt. The past few decades have seen the loss of Elm, Ash and Beach trees to invasive insects and diseases. Now Oak Wilt is making its entrance.

Red oaks are one of the last remaining hardwoods in the area. We are at risk of losing the red oak population surrounding Torch Lake. If contracted, the disease kills the tree within 30 days. There are three significant stands of Oak Wilt at the southwest corner of Torch Lake and more trees elsewhere. Hopefully, everyone appreciates the majestic dominant presence that red oak has in the area around the lake.



Oak Wilt is a fungus that spreads in two ways: by picnic beetles and by the roots of two trees touching underground (root graft). Root graft accounts for 90% of the deaths.

Overland spread can only occur to a wounded tree. This can be dramatically reduced by not pruning or wounding trees during the growing season.

Root graft can also be stopped by killing the host with injections before it spreads. There are also preventative measures of trenching or by preservation injections to surrounding trees.

There is no active treatment once a tree contracts the disease, but these two means of stopping Oak Wilt spread can be inexpensively achieved if done properly.

Do not trim red oak trees during the growing season and call someone rehearsed in prevention if your tree gets Oak Wilt. Although diagnosis is best by sending a sample to the state, it is easy to diagnose as the leaves drop from the top, usually late spring or early summer. The loss of leaves is complete within 30 days. Oak Wilt is not typically in an isolated area.

Spread prevention, although easily done, must be done correctly and is very time sensitive. Prevention can be done properly with education. YouTube is a good source of information. Most arborists up to speed with Oak Wilt are capable. Do your homework. Google Dave Roberts, the tree doctor from Michigan State or call Gary Osterfeld at 513-602-9163 (TLPA member) if you feel your trees, have the disease. We must all do our part to preserve Torch Lake and the watershed.

MEMORIALS

Lou Thierry by Tom Muldowney (to KTLB)

Sue Schuler by Mary K. Roth (to KTLB)

Todd Collins by Kevn Watrous (to KTLB)