



TLPA NEWS

Torch Lake Protection Alliance
Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2026

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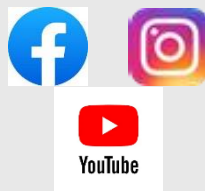
Norm Neuenschwander
Lee Scott

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/>



Message from the President

Protecting Torch Lake requires TLPA to be active on different fronts. The Board's recent efforts illustrate our multi-dimensional approach.

Advocacy: TLPA is engaged in opposition to a boat rental business run in an R-1 zone in Clearwater Township. We see this as a threat to the entire lake because it can spread elsewhere. Similarly, we have called attention to a set of large homes in an R-1 zone in Milton Township that are being rented out at scale and the threat of dropping zoning in Banks Township to enable a gravel mine. In each case we have encouraged civic engagement.

Science: Our three-year study with the USGS is winding down with a report and recommendations to come this summer. It was the largest project by all measures ever conducted to understand Torch Lake.

Communication: Last year we brought supervisors together from the townships on Torch Lake to our GEM meeting to share best practices. This winter we hosted a Zoom call with the townships and contractors working on Torch Lake. These were both firsts.



Conservation: We have been working with Torch Conservation Center and ESLA to protect the islands in Torch River and their habitat by engaging with law enforcement, riparians and posting signs.

TLPA is the largest organization dedicated to Torch Lake. The lake needs a large organization to match its size and challenges. It is critical you encourage those you know to join and even volunteer. Torch is a delicate and beautiful lake. It needs your help. Everyone has choices to make.



Monday, April 13, 2026. (Courtesy | Patrick Boyd, Paddles & Pedals)

Local Dams & Flooding

Everyone is aware of our severe water conditions throughout the region and that the Bellaire Dam and Ellsworth culvert issues were at serious risk. Repairs were made on the earthen berm of the Bellaire Dam. Many residents saw water levels higher than have ever been recorded. Extensive damage to homes and property resulted. It is important property owners report structural damage via the self-reporting application below:

https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/6e1d8996f0704b9fab5395eecd63a65e?portalUrl=https%3A%2F%2Femhsd.maps.arcgis.com&fbclid=IwY2xjawRfNxhleHRuA2FlbQlXMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZBAyMjlwMzIxNzg4MjAwODkyAAEemJc06P3NXueraAriwttb47KWOM9j90_9PxijkR1rnAXoMP5uEQV2JQCylwM_aem_tG-zgRLy26MrLWVX1o3UOg

At this time there has been Local and State Declarations of Emergency, but a federal ruling is dependent on property damage, including residential, commercial and public infrastructure. It is understood many residents may just be returning to their property. Please take the time to assist both Antrim and Kalkaska Counties with an accurate accounting of the damage.

Leslie Meyers, Antrim County Drain Commissioner, reported several good things happened through this difficult time including wonderful support from the fire departments, Antrim County Emergency Response Team (CERT), MI Urban Search and Rescue and dozens of volunteers. The Drain Commissioner was also able to educate 7 classrooms of students from Bellaire Middle/High School about dam safety, emergency planning and the importance of the Elk River Chain of Lakes to our region.

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



@torchlakeprotectionalliance



<https://tlpa.co/>

Memorials

Katie Roth in memory of *Paul Adam Roth* (to the KTLB Fund)

Ann & Norm Neuenschwander in memory of *Gerald Luther* (to the KTLB Fund)

Welcome New Members

Katherine McKeon

Richard Murrell

Wendy & Charles Metzger

Harbor Flooring

Midlake Builders

Legislative Updates

Pending State Legislation Affecting Torch Lake

SB 771- Septic regulation

- Sponsored by Sen. Sam Singh (District 28). This legislation would create state-wide septic regulations and a framework for enforcement. It was introduced January 28, 2026, and currently awaits a hearing in the Michigan State Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture.

SB 812- Regulation on operation of wake boats in inland lakes

- Sponsored by Sen. Rosemary Bayer (District 13). This legislation would regulate the operation of Wake Boats on inland lakes, including buffer zones from shore and minimum lake depth of operation. It was introduced February 26, 2026, and awaits a hearing In the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture.

Both bills can have significant impact on our mission to protect the health and beauty of Torch Lake, its watershed and surrounding environment for generations to come. We urge your support by writing our State Senator John Damoose, as well as Senator Sam Singh, who has championed septic regulation. Please see contact information for them below, as well as for members of the Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee. They can all be contacted by email on a drop-down, fill in form on their senate websites.

State Sen. John Damoose (District 37)

State Sen. Sam Singh (District 28)

Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture:

COMMITTEE MEMBERS · Sue Shink (D), Chair · John Cherry (D), Majority Vice Chair · Sam Singh (D) · Dayna Polehanki (D) · Kevin Daley (R), Minority Vice Chair · Roger Victory (R) · Michele Hoitenga (R)

You are urged to contact your representatives; the following verbiage can be used as a template.

HR771

I am writing to express my support for HR771, implementing state-wide septic regulation. Michigan, the Great Lake State, is the only state in the nation without any regulation of residential septic systems. Failure rates of these systems have been estimated at 30+%, resulting in millions of gallons of untreated waste reaching our groundwater, lakes, and ultimately our drinking water. I urge you to vote yes in committee to bring this important legislation to the full senate. We must take action to protect our lakes, streams, and drinking water before it is too late. Thank you for your support.

HR812

I am writing you concerning HR812, which would help protect our lakes from erosion and habitat destruction caused by wake boats. While I understand the need to balance recreation with these environmental concerns, HR812 contains common-sense guidelines which will protect our lakes for future generations to enjoy. Please vote to bring this bill before the full Senate. Thank you.

Township Reports

Multi-Township/Landscape Contractor Call

TLPA hosted a Zoom call on March 27, 2026, with the townships on Torch Lake and many landscapers and tree contractors. The purpose of the call was to improve communication and collaboration between the townships and the contractors. The status of the three-year TLPA/USGS study was discussed on the call. It was emphasized that nutrient overloading is one key issue causing the changes in Torch Lake. Trees and lakeshore buffers are the best defense for keeping nutrient overloading under control. It was encouraging to have so many contractors and townships willing to participate on the call.

Clearwater Township

Clearwater Township continues to debate whether they are going to allow a marina to operate in a R-1 zoned area, a right not allowed in R-1 zoned areas. TLPA is on record, asking the township to enforce their ordinance. The planning committee is also looking at language for a boat/dock/hoist ordinance.

Milton Township

Milton Township held a contractor education session regarding the new shoreline protection ordinance. There was general buy-in from the audience and understanding of why we need to protect our waterways. The township is also pursuing a compliance person for short-term rentals.

Torch Lake Township

The prior "Peterson's 31North Restaurant" property is currently under consideration for a makeover by the current owner (Full details are available on the Township website)
<https://files.constantcontact.com/9ec588eb801/89ed592d-c51e-4869-90d0-8d1e5c7de6c9.pdf>

"The applicant has submitted a site plan review application for a multi-use property that will include a restaurant, hotel, and dwellings above commercial (live/work) units. This property currently contains a commercial building that has not been used commercially for many years. The applicant is proposing to use the existing building as a restaurant and hotel and add new live/work units."

The potential for lake concerns include:

1. The proposed 3 story "Live/work" building on Parcel A does not meet the current minimum 100 feet frontage on the lake. (Would require a variance, if approved)
2. The substantial hardscape increase on that size property could present a runoff concern for the lake.
3. The details for the proposed dock do not appear to meet the state guidelines for placement in the approximate center of the lakefront, and "use" (commercial or residential) of the dock was not defined.

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
Birch Street Dental
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
Elk Rapids Marina
Elk Rapids Electric
Ethanology Distillation
Fitzpatrick Insurance Agency
Great Lakes Cottage Watch
Great Northern Benefits LLC
Harbor Flooring
Hell Fire Detroit Hot Sauce
Jay Merchant Builders Inc
Kidd & Levy Real Estate
Landscape Logic
Lake Living Services, Inc.
Luhr's Landing
Mapleridge Construction
Midlake Builders
North Country Power Generation
Northshore Dock
Painting by Dan
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.

Upcoming Events

Saturday June 13 – Annual Greet, Educate and Meet (GEM) Meeting

Torch Lake Township Hall, 2355 Us Highway 31 N.,
Kewadin 10:00 am-12:00 noon

We will have coffee, fruit and donuts available 30 minutes prior to the meeting (a good opportunity to chat with TLPA board members). Our first speaker will be Gary Osterfeld who will educate us on Oak Wilt disease. Leslie Meyers will be the second speaker, and she will update us on two dams, one in Bellaire and the other in Elk Rapids, that impact Torch Lake. Both dams are scheduled for work and the residents on Torch Lake will be part of the assessment. With the flooding issues and high water marks this spring, this should be a very relevant subject.

July 28 – Annual Meeting, A-Ga-Ming Golf Course

August 31 – State of the Lake, Keep Torch Lake Blue (KTLB) Report

2026 Household Hazardous Waste Days

Saturday, June 13th --Elk Rapids DPW

Station **Saturday, July 25** – Bellaire High

School parking lot **Saturday, September 26** –

Antrim County Road Commission, Mancelona

All HHW events run 8 am to 12 pm.