



TLPA NEWS

Torch Lake Protection Alliance
Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 2026

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Norm Neuenschwander
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Bruce Hulteen

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/>



YouTube

President's Message

There is an urge by some to bring commercial development to Torch Lake. The business reasons are clear. There is a market for a desirable lake that people want to visit. Why not jump in? Others have already. There are marinas that serve the lake, restaurants and boat rentals right on the lake. Self-interest says, go for it! What's the downside?

In addition to the obvious business risk, the other big risk is that Torch Lake is a commons. The lake is commonly held among thousands of lake front and watershed residents and even more who visit the lake. There is a well-known paradigm called "the tragedy of the commons" wherein many people acting in their individual interest destroy the very motivation for their actions – namely the commons. It explains why shared resources are so often overused and degraded.

Specific to lakes – unbridled development and commercialization ages them quicker than their natural path. How does that happen? Such activities add more nutrients to the lake (and invasives). Nutrients (phosphorus, nitrogen and more) promote more algae growth. The lake progressively changes its colors and the texture and appearance of the bottom changes too.

It is a slow metamorphosis. And that's the other danger. At all points one can rationalize the changes because we've grown used to the small changes preceding. The scuttlebutt slowly evolves to "that's not the way it used to be."

Already, there are large build outs of rentals in R-1 zones around the lake, boat rentals in the same and resistance to reasonable protective measures. Proper protective measures are made more difficult by the existence of major differences in ordinances and approaches taken by the 6 townships and 2 counties on Torch Lake. Under these circumstances, the commons can only be protected if we ALL do our part.

If Torch Lake were not a shared resource, this might be acceptable. But that is far from the reality of what Torch Lake is. Throughout this newsletter and underpinning TLPA's actions is the view that bringing people and organizations together is the way to prevent another tragedy of the commons.

TLPA Annual Meeting 2026

On Tuesday, July 28, the Torch Lake Protection Alliance annual meeting was held at the A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort. The weather was perfect and the view was spectacular as always. TLPA president Dan Sajkowski called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. We had 130 members and guests in attendance.

The business portion of the meeting included establishment of a quorum, board introductions, last year's minutes approval, treasurer's report, board nominations and director votes. A recap of the Keep Torch Lake Blue project was given by Tom Joseph. The sheriffs from Kalkaska and Antrim Counties reviewed the 4th of July results on the sand bar and updated everyone on the river islands.

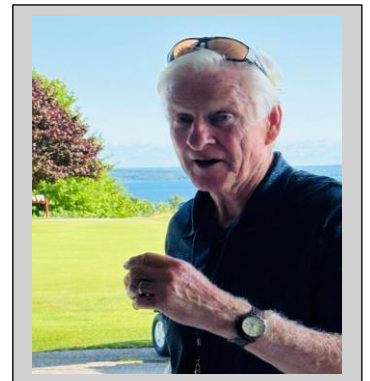
The big news at the meeting was that TLPA and the Torch Conservation Center (TCC) agreed to explore a closer partnership and possibly even a merger. TCC and TLPA each made a \$5,000 donation to the Grand Traverse Land Conservancy and Camp Hayo-Went- Ha project. TLPA's donation was funded by Board member contributions. Board member Bruce Hulteen was honored for nine years of service. A question-and-answer period wrapped up the business part of the meeting. Drinks and dinner were served at 6:15 p.m.



130 Attendees at Annual Meeting



\$10,000 Check is Presented for Hayo-Went-Ha



Bruce Hulteen-9 years TLPA

TLPA Donates \$5000 to Kalkaska Sheriff

The Torch Lake Protection Alliance donated \$5,000 to the Kalkaska Sheriff's office to aid in the staffing of marine patrols at the sandbar during the 4th of July holiday. This marks the 11th consecutive year TLPA has made this contribution. The additional staffing during heavy use of the sandbar is intended to improve safety while the sandbar is heavily used. TLPA's mission is the preservation of Torch Lake now and for future generations.



A check for the sandbar patrol is presented to Sheriff David Wagner by TLPA Directors.

Keep Torch Lake Blue (KTLB)

Now as we are in the second half of 2026, work on KTLB project is at a high level of activity. We are conducting some limited water quality monitoring of the lake and tributaries. This is to maintain some consistent data as we transition to long-term monitoring.

We held our annual Adaptive Management Meeting on June 5 at the Torch Lake Township Hall with 50 attendees from local and regional associations. The meeting delivered a strong "state of the lake" message from USGS. The presentation was a summary of the final report which we expect to be published by the end of the year or early next year. Our USGS leaders, Dr. Dale Robertson and Dr. Sherry Martin, are working to complete the analysis of the data and the models for the lake and groundwater. Extensive effort is on-going to incorporate as much historical data as possible. Historical data helps to extend timeline of trends to better define what has changed. Knowing what has changed is important to explain impacts to the lake like the onset of GBA. Also, the USGS models will facilitate evaluating the impact of changes in the future. The report will highlight some good news as well as some areas of concern.

The KTLB Project team is working in parallel with USGS as the report takes shape to formulate the long-term monitoring plan and the recommendations for protecting the lake. The recommendations will be shared with the county and township officials as well as the riparian landowners.

KTLB DONORS: SAVE THE DATE!

Monday, August 31st at 7 PM at A-Ga-Ming Golf Club.

The Keep Torch Lake Blue Donor Recognition Event and Report, and you are invited.

All Keep Torch Lake Blue Campaign donors, and their invited guest, are cordially invited to the KTLB Donor Recognition evening. Further Details will follow, but please put this important evening on your calendar. This event is only open to the wonderful people who donated to the Keep Torch Lake Blue Campaign. We know you will want to attend to hear the USGS Report on the Keep Torch Lake Blue Research that has been completed, and is continuing to be conducted.

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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Torch Research Work on Algae

For more than 15 years, Torch Lake, along with other lakes in northern Michigan, has been plagued with algae covering the lake bottom in the shallows. These algae are composed of a mixture of phytoplanktons, one of which are diatoms. Diatoms are microscopic organisms that are made up of a silicate shell. For reasons not understood, diatoms growing in the shallows produce an extracellular matrix, or slime. It is thought that the slime is the base layer for development of the golden-brown algal mats seen in the shallows. To shed some light on the development of these algal mats, Dr. Wayne Lancaster, emeritus professor at Wayne State University School of Medicine, and Paige Scarla, Torch Conservation Center summer intern, are documenting diatoms in the mats.

The study involves suspending ceramic tiles, for algae to collect, near the bottom of the lake with samples taken at time intervals. In as little as 124 hours diatoms can be seen in the samples, and after 30 days the tiles are covered with a 1/8-inch layer of dark gray slime like material full of diatoms. Description of the diatoms in the slime, over time, may provide basic information on how these algal mats develop. This research will likely not provide direct information on how to rid the lake of the slime, but paraphrasing Sun Tzu, author of The Art of War, "know your enemy"... the knowledge needed to defeat your foe.



Researchers investigating algae



Dr. Lancaster and Paige Scarla

Welcome New Family and Business Members

Carolyn Nowfel

Nicole Mendez

Phil & Kelly Dembowski

Denis & Brenda Raue

Bradley Vey

Erin Quinn & Mike Minton

Aubertin Tree Service

YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps

Taylor Tree Health Care

Xquisite View

Township Updates

HELENA— On September 10th, The Planning Commission is considering regulations for future Data Centers.

CLEARWATER- On July 13, the Zoning Board of Appeals voted unanimously to affirm that a pontoon boat rental business cannot operate in an R-1 zone. The meeting was well attended.

FOREST HOME- The Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, a regional non-profit land trust, is working with YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps to establish a conservation easement. This will prevent future development of much of this pristine property. Dockside motorsports has expanded its operations significantly over the past several years. EGLE has not opposed this development. We continue to monitor.

MILTON – A special board meeting to address the pending litigation with Spirit Homes regarding the Township Short Term Rental policy will be Thursday, August 13, 2026 @ 9:00 am at the Township Office Building.

TORCH LAKE- A proposed development of what is commonly known as the Peterson property would reopen as a smaller restaurant and boutique hotel. There are plans for future development down to and including the lakeshore. A coalition of 19 nearby property owners have filed a detailed formal complaint to the Zoning Commission regarding the plans. We are currently awaiting the Township's next step.

BANKS- While having no shoreline on Torch, the Chain of Lakes watershed begins here. There is an ongoing dispute over a proposed gravel mine that could have negative implications for the entire Chain of Lakes. TLPA continues to monitor.

Lake Related Michigan Legislative Updates

"In a democracy, the highest office is the office of citizen." Justice Felix Frankfurter

PROGRESS ON SEPTIC SYSTEM REGULATION:

Michigan's full omnibus budget bill HB4706 has been enacted into law. It contains a \$7 million one-time appropriation for EGLE to begin compiling a septic system database in Michigan. While not providing any specific recommendations, it nonetheless provides a start for gathering data which would be helpful in forming future regulations.

SB 771 and HB 6066- These bills specify the above regulations and continue to work their way through the legislative process.

SB 812 -This bill provides for common sense wake boating regulations and remains in committee in the Senate.

HB 5308- This bill would create a special Watercraft Registration sticker that would specifically help fund invasive species research in Michigan lakes. It passed the House and is currently before the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture.

Please write our State Senator John Damoose and Representative John Roth or your local representative in support of these initiatives. Also, when writing Representative Roth, please thank him for co-sponsoring this proposed legislation.

Support our Business Partners

A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort
Alden – Bellaire Lumber and Hardware
Alden Mill House
Alden State Bank
Aubertin Tree Service
Avery Excavation
Barker Creek Nursery & Landscaping
Birch Street Dental
Blackmore Landscaping
Bruce's Earthworks
Bruce's Excavation & Landscaping
Chemical Control Co.
The Chief Golf Course/Blue Pelican
Creative Characters Printing
DLH Builders
Don Fedrigon Re/Max of Elk Rapids
Drogt Excavation
Elk Rapids Marina
Elk Rapids Electric
Ethanology Distillations
Fitzpatrick Insurance Agency
Great Lakes Cottage Watch
Great Northern Benefits, LLC
Harbor Flooring – Elk Rapids
Jay Merchant Builders
Kidd & Leavy Real Estate
Landscape Logic
Luhr's Landing
Mapleridge Construction
Midlake Builders
North Country Power Generation
Northshore Dock & Marine
Painting by Don
The Pear Tree
Pine Hill Nursery
Providence Organic Farm
Restoration Services of Michigan
Serve Electric
Steve Jessmore Photography
Sun Lifes Marina (Torch River)
365 Outdoor Inc.
Taylor Tree Health Care
TBA Credit Union
Top Notch Heating, Cooling, and Geothermal
Urban Diversions
Village Market Food Centers
Xquisite View
YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps

TLPA welcomes all businesses to join!

Visit <https://tlpa.co/> for information.

Business Partner Focus

Taylor Tree Health Care

Taylor Tree Health Care is dedicated to preserving and protecting trees through science-based diagnosis and treatment. We specialize in Oak Wilt management, tree health evaluations, insect and disease control, and advanced trunk injection therapies. Our team works alongside Ph.D. researchers, university scientists and industry professionals. Our philosophy is to preserve healthy trees through early detection and effective treatment.