



Protecting Torch Lake for 25 Years

Winter 2020

Your Membership Dollars Matter

During 2019, TLPA continued its work using your membership dollars to protect Torch Lake. Because of your support, we were able to contribute to overtime pay for law enforcement working to control July 4th activities on the sandbar. As in past years, we also funded port-a-johns and trash dumpsters..

We also launched an educational campaign to promote responsible shoreline management. We did a post-card mailing to all TLPA members regarding the harm caused by nutrients entering the lake and ways to reduce it. Members were encouraged to complete a survey (See page 2.) Our GEM event in June featured a speaker who discussed appropriate native plants for a shoreline buffer to deter erosion and filter harmful nutrients. In our fall newsletter, we had a story about the Elk River Chain of Lakes shoreline survey of all parcels on Torch lake, a survey completed by investigators looking for evidence of nutrient pollution as exhibited by Cladophora or other green algae, of erosion, and of the existence of any greenbelt, all factors critical to the quality of the lakes. Readers were urged to find the results for their property through a website.

In 2020, educating our members will be a major emphasis. We will have articles in the newsletter such as the one about fertilizers on page 3 of this issue. Both GEM 1 and GEM 2 will be on educational topics showing how small changes in your landscape can make a big difference in the health of the lake.

As in past years, in 2019 we continued to monitor township activities as they relate to Torch Lake and reported in our newsletter on various issues such as the possible point of sale change affecting Clearwater Township and the proposed short-term rental policy revision in Milton Township. This is another way that TLPA helps to protect your property value.

We kicked off a new campaign this year called Pass the Torch. Many of us started vacationing on Torch Lake by visiting our parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents. It is that legacy that we are hoping to promote through our Pass the Torch program. We are encouraging you to get your children and grandchildren involved by giving them a membership in TLPA. It has always been our goal to protect and preserve Torch Lake for future generations. The Pass the Torch program means our children and grandchildren will be involved in this important task.

You should have received your notice to renew your membership for 2020. Our membership year runs from January through December. You can renew online at www.torchlakeprotectionalliance.org or use the return envelope provided to mail your check. We encourage you to help us recruit your friends and neighbors to become TLPA members. We have many issues facing us in our effort to keep Torch Lake one of the most beautiful lakes in the world. United we will be successful. When you renew, you will receive a TLPA sticker decal with your acknowledgment letter to use on your boat or car. AND, by renewing early, you save us time and money! If you have any questions please contact Barb Carton, cartonjandb@torchlake.com (231-377-4325), or Bruce Hulteen, bmhulteen@gmail.com (616-560-3952).

TLPA Board Welcomes Rick Welsh

Rick Welsh is new to the TLPA Board, but not new to the area. His dad's side, the Rex family, homesteaded in the 1800's, and had a farm on Traverse Bay where the current Hacienda restaurant is located. His great uncle painted the theater ceiling in Elk Rapids back in the late 40's, allegedly to pay off his bar bill. His mother's side bought property a mile



up from the Torch River bridge in the early 1920's. Rick remembers being dropped off at the cottage and/or the farm from Memorial Day until Labor Day every summer. The large number

of cousins filled several rows of pews at the un-air-conditioned Sacred Heart Church on Sundays.

Rick is an environmental chemist and a board certified toxicologist. He is a partner in an environmental consulting firm in Brighton which handles contaminated land consulting and ecological/wetlands work. He grew up spending summers on a crystal clear Torch Lake back when he and his cousins might be the only ones enjoying the sandbar. Compared to today, Rick says, "What a change!" We welcome Rick to the board.

TLPA Board of Directors

Randy Asmus	Dave Martin
Barb Carton, Vice President	Bruce Hulteen
Bob Milliron, Secretary	Gary Petty
Norm Neuenschwander, Treasurer	Tom Joseph
Loral Werner	Dave Nussdorfer
Rick Welsh	
Brad Gerlach, Executive Liaison	

Become a Shoreland Steward and Perhaps Win Gold

Congratulations! You've survived the holidays! Now that your house-guests are gone and you've returned the gifts you've received, you're probably wondering: "What am I going to do for the rest of the winter?" You've already checked your emails five times today, and maybe there's no snow to shovel because you're in Florida. So why not try something fun and rewarding, i.e., complete a 30-minute survey about your lakefront property by going to mishorelandstewards.org. The topics covered include native-plant barriers, storm water run-off, and the use of fertilizer and insecticides.

Once you have completed the survey, you will be notified about the results and your property will be assigned a level of gold, silver, bronze or starter (property needing substantial improvement) and you will receive a certificate indicating your property level and recognition that you are a Shoreland Steward.

You will also receive a report based on your input with suggested improvements to qualify for gold if you haven't already.

Think about it! You complete the survey and you receive a rating of "Gold." Now you are entitled to strut around like a peacock when neighbors drop by and to display a Shoreland Steward congratulatory certificate bordered in gold (or in silver or in bronze depending on how you scored.) When you sign-in, be sure to indicate you are a member of TLPA. Thanks!



Township News

Milton: Adopted an ordinance effective 2021 regarding vacation rentals: "Vacation Rentals shall not be rented for more than six (6) weeks during a calendar year AND not more than two (2) weeks during a four (4) week period unless leased to one renter for a consecutive three (3) or four (4) week period."

Forest Home: Concern regarding short term rentals has escalated recently. Therefore, the Forest Home Township Planning Commission is planning to conduct a survey of all property owners in 2020 on short term rentals. Sunset Torch Condominiums has already enacted a rental policy.

A Green Lawn Without Fertilizers? It is Possible

At last summer's Taste of Torch event, several members asked about safe fertilizers to use on lawns around Torch Lake. With the plethora of fertilizers marketed as "lake safe" or "all natural," there must be at least a few that will not impact the lake. There was mention of the green lawn care companies and their various products. Unfortunately, ANY fertilizer used will negatively impact the lake and further contribute to the Golden Brown Algae and other growth we have seen explode in the past few years.

Why does fertilizer exacerbate algal growth in Torch Lake? Fertilizers contain either phosphorus or nitrogen (or sometimes both). Those nutrients make their way to Torch directly from your lawn into the lake or down through the soils, into the water table and out into the lake. Because Torch has very low levels of these nutrients, phosphorus especially, it takes little input to greatly increase the nutrients available for algal growth.

So you want to have a green lawn, what can you do? Take the following steps and you will have the lawn you want while protecting the blue waters of Torch.

Steps for a green lawn while protecting the blue waters of Torch

- 1) Plant (or maintain) a buffer zone of native plants between your grass and the lake. The buffer zone will help to filter contaminants flowing from your home to the lake. Even if you stop using fertilizer (and we strongly hope you do), runoff like motor oil from your driveway or pet waste will still make their way to Torch;**
- 2) Have your soil tested; understand what, if any, nutrients your lawn may be lacking. Most soils in Michigan have adequate phosphorus without amending often;**
- 3) Use only compost to fertilize (or "topdress") your lawn. Apply ¼ to ½ inch of compost, which can be done multiple times each season. Best to avoid periods of high heat or heavy rains so your lawn does not become overstressed. Compost actually improves the soil, rather than just targeting the grass, and encourages healthy microorganisms which leads to better lawns without costly fertilizer. Consider mowing your leaves in the fall with a mulching mower and leaving them in place on your lawn;**
- 4) Mow and leave the grass clippings in the lawn to serve as both a natural nutrient source and moisture retainer;**
- 5) Keep your grass greater than 3" in height to protect its health.**

We are glad to visit your property and make landscaping and lawn recommendations that will protect the lake. Please call Brad Gerlach at 231-668-2939 or e-mail him at begerlach@yahoo.com to make an appointment.

Update: TLPA's Sandbar Injunction

This coming July 4, 2020, will mark the fifth anniversary since TLPA obtained an injunction to stop several companies and individuals from promoting parties on the Torch Lake sandbar over the July 4th holiday. It may be a good time to refresh everyone's memory on just what the injunction determined.

In the case of TLPA v Beatbox Beverages, two judgments were made. One was a default judgment against the two event organizers, Brooks Ehlert (a.k.a. "DJ Fade") and Lansingparty.com. There was a separate consent judgment against the corporate sponsor of the event, Beatbox Beverages. The consent judgment was issued against Beatbox because they were the only defendant to appear in court and answer the complaint. The two event organizers failed to appear, so the judge granted TLPA a default judgment.

What exactly do these judgments mean? Relative to the default judgment, no part of the judgment expires. Per



the court's order, the defaulted defendants cannot use any of a TLPA member's

bottomlands without the property owner's permission, nor can they hold future events on the sandbar without the proper permits under township laws, the Inland Lakes and Streams Act, and the Marine Safety Act. They must have proper crowd control with noise, trash, sanitation, safety and security measures that protect Torch Lake water quality. The judgment does not prevent future events if the above requirements are met, as this would violate the constitutionally recognized right to free speech and the right to gather. From what we can determine, it is highly doubtful these two entities will be back.

The consent judgment is different from the default judgment in that, since Beatbox Beverage appeared in court, TLPA's counsel had to negotiate with their counsel. Their restraint on free speech argument resulted in Beatbox being restrained for only five years from sponsoring or

promoting any events. Thereafter, Beatbox could do so only if all the permits and licenses were to be in place, which is highly unlikely to occur. Beatbox is also required to give prior notice to TLPA of any Torch Lake events they will be involved with.

To date, we have no indication that any of these groups are planning or promoting any sandbar events on Torch Lake.

Proactively, TLPA has a Sandbar Safety Account, which is used over the 4th to augment the costs of the Kalkaska County Sheriff's Department and supply trash receptacles and porta-jons at public access points. We feel these are important expenditures to assist in protecting the lake and keeping the sandbar a more family-friendly experience. Your donations are appreciated.

TLPA to Provide Funds for Signs for Paddle Antrim

Paddle Antrim, a non-profit organization, has developed a water trail through the Elk River Chain of Lakes. A water trail is a designated route along a river, lake, or bay designed for people using small, non-motorized craft such as kayaks, canoes, or rowboats.

From upstream of Ellsworth to Elk Rapids, trail access points have been identified, with a map showing a variety of launch sites. Signage will provide information about protecting the waters from invasive species, loon protection, plus other good stewardship practices. There are over 80 miles of trail on sixteen lakes and rivers and 81 total access sites. Paddle Antrim was recognized by the State of Michigan as one of eight state-designated water trails, the only one in northern Michigan.

TLPA has contributed funding to Paddle Antrim for signs to be placed on the seven access points on Torch Lake. It is anticipated that these will be installed this coming summer. For more information you may contact Deana Jerdee at deana@paddleantrim.com.

Mission of TLPA

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

New Nature Preserve Offers Trails for Hiking and Snowshoeing

There is a new nature preserve to explore and enjoy in Forest Home Township near Torch Lake Drive on the east side of the lake. The Malone family recently donated 95 acres of land to be known as the Torch Lake Nature Preserve. The land is adjacent to an existing property that is protected with a conservation easement.

Terry Malone, a long-time Torch Lake resident and former president of TLPA, bought the land in 2016 to make sure that it would not be developed. The preserve will safeguard water quality and protect wildlife habitat. The Malones chose to donate the property to the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy because they wanted to give people a safe and beautiful place to hike.



The property is open to the public; it has a roughly 1.5 mile trail that meanders along the top of the ridge that runs within the preserve. Plans include adding signage and additional trail loops in the near future. The trails will be ideal for summer hiking and winter snowshoeing.

A Change in Newsletter Distribution

In order to save money, TLPA will send either a hard copy or an electronic copy of the newsletter to each member. So, if you choose to receive a hard copy, you will. OR, should you give us an email address, we will send your newsletter electronically.

Torch River Bridge Boat Launch Scheduled to Expand

The Record Eagle reported on January 5 that the DNR is in the process of closing on the purchase of just over an acre of land adjacent to their boat launch near the Torch River bridge. The land fronts on both Cherry Ave. and W Torch Lake Dr. and has 124 feet of frontage on Torch Lake. It surrounds on three sides the real estate office facing Cherry Ave. DNR is paying \$1.5 million.

The additional land is expected to triple available parking and reduce congestion at this very busy launch site. Ron Olson, DNR parks and recreation chief, told the paper that the project is in the concept stage, with engineering work and site plan approval occurring next year, and construction beginning in 2021. The gas station, lodge and cabins on the site will be demolished.

According to the paper, "Olson said DNR officials wanted to build an altogether new boat launch along the west side of the lake, but zoning prevented that in the residential neighborhood. This project to enhance the existing boat launch is the alternative."

Welcome New Members

Andrew & Trish Narwold

Ryan J. Kelly

Alan & Stacey Sollenberger

Memorial Donations

Memorials for Jack Mayer

John & Barb Carton

Rebecca Norris

Virginia Mouch

Ray & Sharon Pinet

David & Marilyn Nussdorfer

Bob & Jill Spencer

Peter & Barbara Springsteen

Memorial for Tom & Virginia Pierce

Sue & Patrick Kelly

Support Our Business Members They Support TLPA

A-Ga-Ming Golf Resort

Fitzpatrick Insurance Agency

Chemical Control Co.

Mapleridge Construction

Birch Street Dental

Northshore Dock

Alden State Bank

Top Notch Heating, Cooling, and Geothermal

Waterfire Vineyards

Village Market Food Centers

Creative Characters Printing

The Chief Golf Course/The Pelican's Nest

Short's Brewing Company

BlueFin Residential Services

Coldwell Banker Realty

Kidd & Leavy Real Estate

Save the Dates

June 13 Saturday:

GEM #1 at Torch Lake
Township Hall



July 18 Saturday:

GEM #2 at the Alden
Depot



August 4 Tuesday:

TOT at Ag-A-Ming Golf
Course

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