



Higgins Lake
Foundation

NEWS

the state of the lake

(Pictured) A *Nitella* bed in the North Basin.

By Dr. Mark Luttenton

In my 2023 HLF Newsletter report I added an addendum that highlighted a new dimension to the Higgins Lake story. While conducting surveys southwest of Treasure Island during fall 2023, I found that the macroalgae *Nitella* was covering a relatively large area that extended from about the 45-foot depth contour to about the 70-foot depth contour. At the time, I had estimated that the algae extended for several hundred yards along an East-West axis and grew between 1.5 to 2 feet thick.

During summer 2024, I was able to map the extent of the algal growth and estimate that the algae bed covers approximately 19 acres. This is about equal to the area that was occupied by Eurasian watermilfoil prior to control efforts using the DASH boat. I am aware of several other *Nitella* beds around the North Basin but have not been able to map them at this point, but I know that one bed is fairly extensive. In addition, there are at least two sites with *Nitella* in the South Basin.

It appears that *Nitella* has been able to take

advantage of several factors, some that just recently developed. First, this organism occupies locations that tend to have fairly rich organic sediments. From previous sediment analyses, we know that organic sediments in Higgins Lake are relatively high in phosphorus. Second, I find quagga mussels attached to the *Nitella*. Because quagga mussels filter organic material from the water column and excrete it as small pellets that drop to the bottom, quagga mussels provide a continuous source of nutrients for the *Nitella*. Third, the quagga mussels not only provide nutrients but they also increase water clarity. Since I found quagga mussels in Higgins Lake, water clarity has improved substantially, allowing for more light to penetrate deeper into the lake. Because *Nitella* is photosynthetic, it can capitalize on the additional sunlight.

So, you may be thinking this is an interesting tidbit, but these algal beds don't interfere with boating, we can't see them, so what is the point? I think the important point is that this is another indication that Higgins Lake is changing fairly quickly. For example, increasing water clarity allows for

(continued on page 3)

vicki's view

Dear Friends,

As I take stock of Higgins Lake ups and downs of the past year, I thank you, loyal supporters of the Higgins Lake Foundation, for your donations to our ongoing work. Each and every donation is considered a vote of confidence in the decisions made by our board. I will always remember a zip lock bag that a few youngsters handed me with \$4.75 in it – funds earned in a lemonade stand to donate to HLF. In 2024 HLF was the fortunate recipient of generosity in varying amounts, all are truly appreciated. Of all special family times together, possessions that we cherish, experiences we have, we share a common background, a home base of our souls – Higgins Lake. Thank you for helping to keep it special.

We've had a busy and successful summer: Dr. Mark Luttenton, Biologist from Grand Valley State University, continued his research on Higgins Lake; we washed more boats; removed more aquatic invasive species with the Diver Assisted Suction Boat (DASH); cut back on fertilizer with our ongoing "Skip the Fertilizer" campaign; hosted educational seminars for adults and 4th grade students; donated grant funds to the Sheriff Marine Patrol and Gahagan Nature Preserve; added more greenbelts and funded

other productive lake projects; continued participation in the state-wide Cooperative Lake Monitoring Program (CLMP); helped fund the USGS lake level gauge for the ongoing continuity of data, and increased awareness of aquatic invasive species (AIS) prevention with a grant funded by Clean Boats-Clean Waters.

A day-long strategic planning session was held on November 04 to review, refresh, and refine HLF goals and timelines. We thank new board member Nancy Lamb for planning and facilitating the day. Nancy brings a wealth of experience from her previous position with Dow International Foundation. HLF welcomed three new board members and a new administrative assistant in 2024.

In my dreams I would be sending more good news on the state of the sewer, the dam Special Assessment District, septic inspections and ordinances. Regardless of opinions on what good news on those subjects means, they are all paused at this point. Both Lyon and Gerrish Township have new board members with many decisions on many topics to make. We look forward to working with both boards on projects and practices for the betterment of Higgins Lake. A sewer remains a top priority.

\$2,600 grant

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Office Hours Tues/Wed/Thurs 9am-3pm



A \$2,600 grant was presented to John Ogren, Director HLPOA, for the seventh year of the Student Water Test program. This project is financially supported by the Higgins Lake Foundation, The Roscommon County Community Foundation, the Roscommon Rotary Club, the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association, Raven Laboratory and Roscommon High Graduate, John Ogren.

We're pleased the Roscommon High School science students are learning about the ecology of Higgins Lake.

2024 study



Nitella accumulated on an anchor retrieved from 45 feet. The anchor had been deployed in the North Basin of Higgins Lake with very light wind conditions.

(continued from page 1)

(increased algal growth at deeper sites. And, perhaps more importantly, it is another bit of data that supports the idea that Higgins Lake supports more biomass (biological material) than in the past, including aquatic plants, zebra/quagga mussels, and now macroalgae.

This brings me back to a point I have made in the past, if zebra/quagga mussels had not been



A photomicrograph of the macroalga *Nitella* showing the general structure. The greenish-white nodules are reproductive structures.

introduced into Higgins Lake, then much of the biomass that is growing on the bottom of the lake would be in the water column in the form of floating organisms such as phytoplankton and zooplankton. In that scenario, there would be more chlorophyll present in the water column, water clarity would not be as good, and there would be higher phosphorus concentrations in the water.

aquatic invasive species seminar



As part of our 2024 Clean Boats-Clean Waters Grant, the Higgins Lake Foundation hosted a presentation on June 03 at the R.A. MacMullan Center. Presenter, Kevin Walters, aquatic biologist with Environmental Great Lakes Energy (EGLE), shared the steps recommended to help stop the spread of invasive species.



clean boats-clean waters grant

The Higgins Lake Foundation was awarded a \$1,195 Clean Boats Clean Waters grant this year. The grant helped fund additional signage, educational hand-out material and attendants stationed at the South State Park on Saturday and Sunday mornings from 9:30am to 12:30pm during the boating year.

HLF boat wash attendants, Tyler Kane and Megan Houserman, distributed educational material, offered a free boat wash, and completed a daily log sheet on each boat entering.

The Higgins Lake Foundation and the Higgins Lake Property Owners coordinated a program that incorporated the data from the log sheets collected by the attendants with additional data collected by the HLPOA on weeds on boats and trailers when leaving the lake.

The South State Park is the busiest entry point for Higgins Lake boaters and most boaters are local. All boaters, local and transient, are encouraged to use the boat wash (unless their boat has been out of the water for seven days) and clean all weeds when leaving to prevent invasive spread from lake to lake.

We are happy to report that the data collected by the HLF attendants and the HLPOA indicates that more boaters are arriving at the launch site without weeds and the majority with weeds are washing their boats and trailers or accepting a boat wash by the attendants.

We hope to continue this tracking program with the HLPOA again in 2025 and expand the hours of the HLF boat wash attendants. Boat washing remains the best-known method to reduce the spread of aquatic invasive species.



Rick Meeks gives the OK that it's weed free!

Higgins Lake Foundation employees Tyler Kane and Megan Houserman were stationed at the South State Park Boat Wash on weekend mornings this summer distributing educational information on aquatic invasive species and washing boats.





Logan Graff, North State Park Manager; Vicki Springstead, HLF Chair; and Josh Pellow, Roscommon District Supervisor, Michigan DNR Parks & Rec.

On October 31, the HLF presented a \$2,303 grant to the DNR for ongoing maintenance of the boat wash on the north side of Higgins Lake. The Higgins Lake Foundation originally funded the \$60,000 boat wash. The Roscommon County Community Foundation awarded \$20,000 in grant funds toward the project. The wash station, built on state land in 2009, was the first boat wash equipment available on Higgins Lake. It remains open and free to users throughout the boating season.

marine patrol donation



A \$16,644.88 grant check from the Higgins Lake Foundation was presented to the Sheriff Marine Patrol to partially cover the purchase of a boat as well as additional Patrol coverage on Higgins Lake.

Pictured are Vicki Springstead, HLF Chair, Dan Decker, HLF Treasurer, Kim Leighton, previous boat owner, Ron Bradley, Marine Patrol Lead and Ed

Stern, Roscommon Sheriff. Kim Leighton said her husband, now deceased, would be proud to have his boat in good use by the Sheriff Marine Patrol.

Higgins Lake Foundation Board members and donors put recreational safety high on our priority list for Higgins Lake.

awareness day 2024



There were approximately 150 attendees at the 35th Annual Higgins Lake Foundation Fund Raiser on August 03 at the R.A. MacMullan Center. The event raised \$28,000 after costs to fund HLF programs that benefit Higgins Lake.

The “Awareness” part of the annual Higgins Lake Foundation Awareness Day was an update from Dr. Mark Luttenton, Professor of Biology at Grand Valley State University, on the state of Higgins Lake. Dr. Luttenton emphasized the impact that zebra and quagga mussels have had on Higgins Lake in the last 30 to 40 years.

Scotty McNamara had the crowd on the edge of their seats with amazing auction items like a gold coin valued at \$2,400, a boat ride on the historic launch, Rainbow, dinners at Fred’s, The Cut River Grille and the Silver Dollar Bar & Grill, a booze

wagon, a Marc Jacobs purse, the ever popular septic pump out and other popular items.

Thank you to all of this year’s sponsors, local businesses, and supporters who generously donated items to the live and silent auctions.

The annual event includes an open bar, happy hour food catered by Fred’s, silent and live auctions, and a chance to win part of the \$10,000 raffle prize money. Congratulations to all winners! If you didn’t win this year – 2025 may be your lucky year! To those who made an unexpected donation of their winnings back to the Foundation – we thank you for your generosity.

Remember to save the date, Saturday, August 02, 2025, 4pm-6:30pm, for the 36th Awareness Day at the R.A. MacMullan Center on Higgins Lake. Join in the fun, meet some new friends and catch up with old friends.

As always, your support is much appreciated!

- Marty Barta - \$3,000
- Dick Marshall - \$2,000
- Mike Ritter - \$1,000
- Michele Walsh - \$500
- Mary Dwyer - \$500
- Robert Perry - \$500
- Betsy Fitzsimmons - \$500
- Teresa Korn - \$500
- Steve Sendek - \$500
- Sue Morley - \$250
- Kate Eubanks - \$250
- Carol Hernden - \$250
- Peggy Peterson - \$250

cash prize winners



Jane Hoey - WINNER!



Michelle Walsh - WINNER!



Mary Dwyer - WINNER!



Betsy Fitzsimmons picks up her daughter’s prize

celebrating 35 years



Pat Springstead and Nancy Perry



Top right: Ramona Decker and Marty Barta

Bottom right: Sue Morley and Vicki Springstead



Thank you, Sue and Tina!

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Bill Baker and
Dr. Luttenton

HLF's new faces



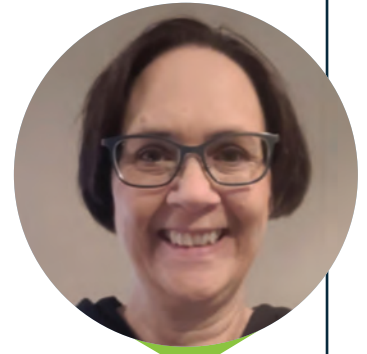
Brad Baerlocher



Nancy Lamb



John Barta



Denise Becker

We are pleased to announce that John Barta, Brad Baerlocher and Nancy Lamb have joined the Higgins Lake Foundation Board of Trustees; each are year-round residents and bring a multitude of skills to the board. Denise Becker, Administrative Assistant, is a welcome addition to the office and is an active member of the community.



Before



After

supreme view

The Supreme View Association took advantage of the Higgins Lake Foundation greenbelt cost share grant to improve their shoreline with low spreading shrubs and rip-rap (small rocks) to prevent erosion and nutrient loading into the lake. Details of the grant can be found at <http://www.higginslake-foundation.org>.



After

DDA paint grant



A \$2,000 Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Façade Grant helped fund the cost of painting the HLF office on Terrace Drive this summer. The DDA partners with downtown business property owners to enhance the downtown area. The paint work was done by Tony Colvin of TC Painting.

HLF Chair Vicki Springstead said, "This improvement, along with the removal of a large shrub on the M18 side of the building, really helped to put HLF on the map in Roscommon." THANK YOU, DDA!



lake saver day 2024

Fifty-five fourth grade students of Roscommon Elementary School learned about erosion, Higgins Lake history, water cycles, aquatic invasive species, boat wash and boat cleaning stations, boating and swimming safety tips, and how to use a compass. It wasn't quite warm enough for the students to take off their shoes and sample the water in Higgins Lake, but they had a great outdoor learning experience and enjoyed a delicious hot dog lunch on the beach.

Many thanks to the presenters and volunteers who made the day a success:

The R.A. MacMullan Conference Center; fourth grade teachers, Shannon House, Rhonda Hutek; school staff members, Sam Goodall and Heather Sargent; volunteer presenters Kevin Rose and Ed Marek from the Roscommon County Sheriff Marine Patrol; Sergeant John Wybraniec from the Gerrish Township Police; Kalsa Parker Browning, Extension Educator Gahagan Nature Preserve; Julie Crick, MSU Extension; Lindsay Dalke and Sean Little,

Camp Grayling; Logan Graff, DNR North State Park Manager; Don Correll and Rick Meeks, Compass Course leaders, and volunteer helpers, ChiChi Flewelling and Nancy Perry.



Donations and Memorial Gifts From Our Generous Supporters

With gratitude, we thank the Roscommon County Community Foundation for extending the HLF grants from the Morley Foundation Fund, the Endowment for Higgins Lake, Robert R. Thalner Fund, and the John Morley Family Endowment for Higgins Lake.

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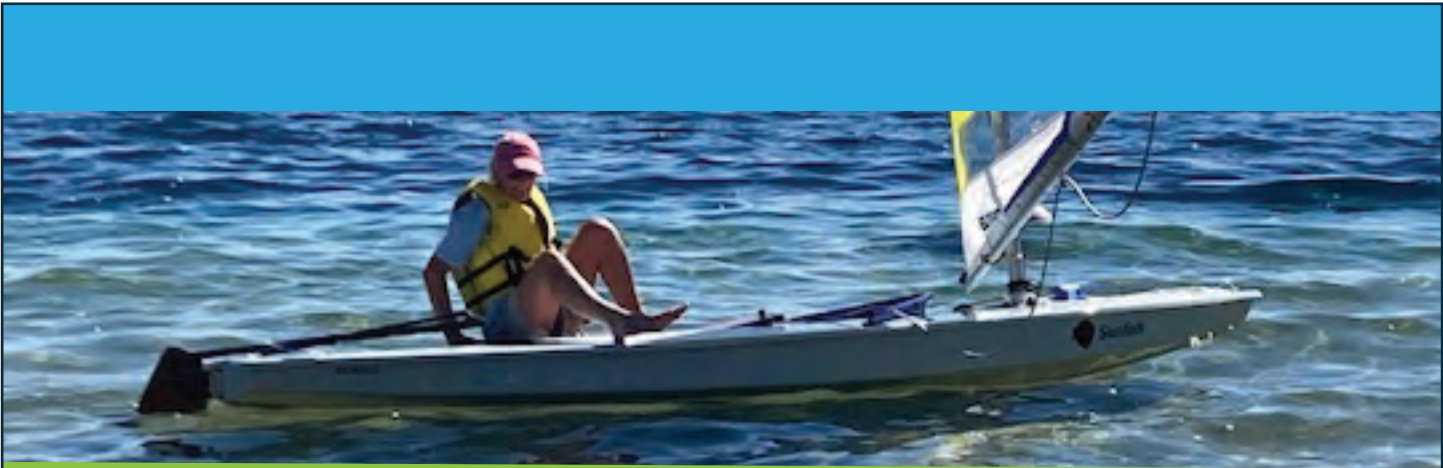
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A special thank you goes to all our donors; please let us know about any corrections.

If you did not receive a newsletter or there is a mistake in your name or address, please call the HLF office or email us at info@higginslake-foundation.org.



making a difference

By Libby Starks

“Higgins Lake for me is a long-term romance! Over the last 60 years the Lake calls me back every summer no matter where I live or travel. It is a calling deep in my soul. From my grandparents, Steve and Effie Starks, to my parents, Hugh and Eileen Starks, spoiling the kids at the cottage at Sunset Park....it was an easy carefree life....learning to sail a Sunfish, waterski, etc. Additionally, boating is forever in my blood, and I still sail a new Sunfish at Flag Point as often as I can.

Mom and Dad were very active in the Higgins Lake Foundation, ever since its origin. They were a big part of the annual Awareness Day’s too.

I wish to carry on my parents’ legacy/memorial with a significant contribution this year to the Higgins Lake Foundation Endowment Fund. The infusion of my gift should "jump start" most of the upcoming projects and plans of the Fund and insure the perpetuity of it for future generations. I am sure there are many of us "oldtimers" who also love the Lake as much as I do.

I am grateful for the many wonderful memories the Lake has given me and await new experiences ahead as we keep our Lake clean and healthy!”



Valerie Smith received a recognition award at the HLF Awareness Day on August 03. Valerie has gone above and beyond to assist with the Diver Assisted Suction Harvester Boat (DASH) operation by providing dock space for the boats since the operation started in 2011. Valerie also helped the DASH crew save some time by adding a tow trolley on her property to transport heavy equipment up and down her hill.

The DASH Boat crew continues to remove, reduce and control the invasive species of Eurasian water milfoil and starry stonewort in Higgins Lake throughout the summer.

Thank you, Val, for your major contributions toward the removal of aquatic invasive species in Higgins Lake.

match grant 2024

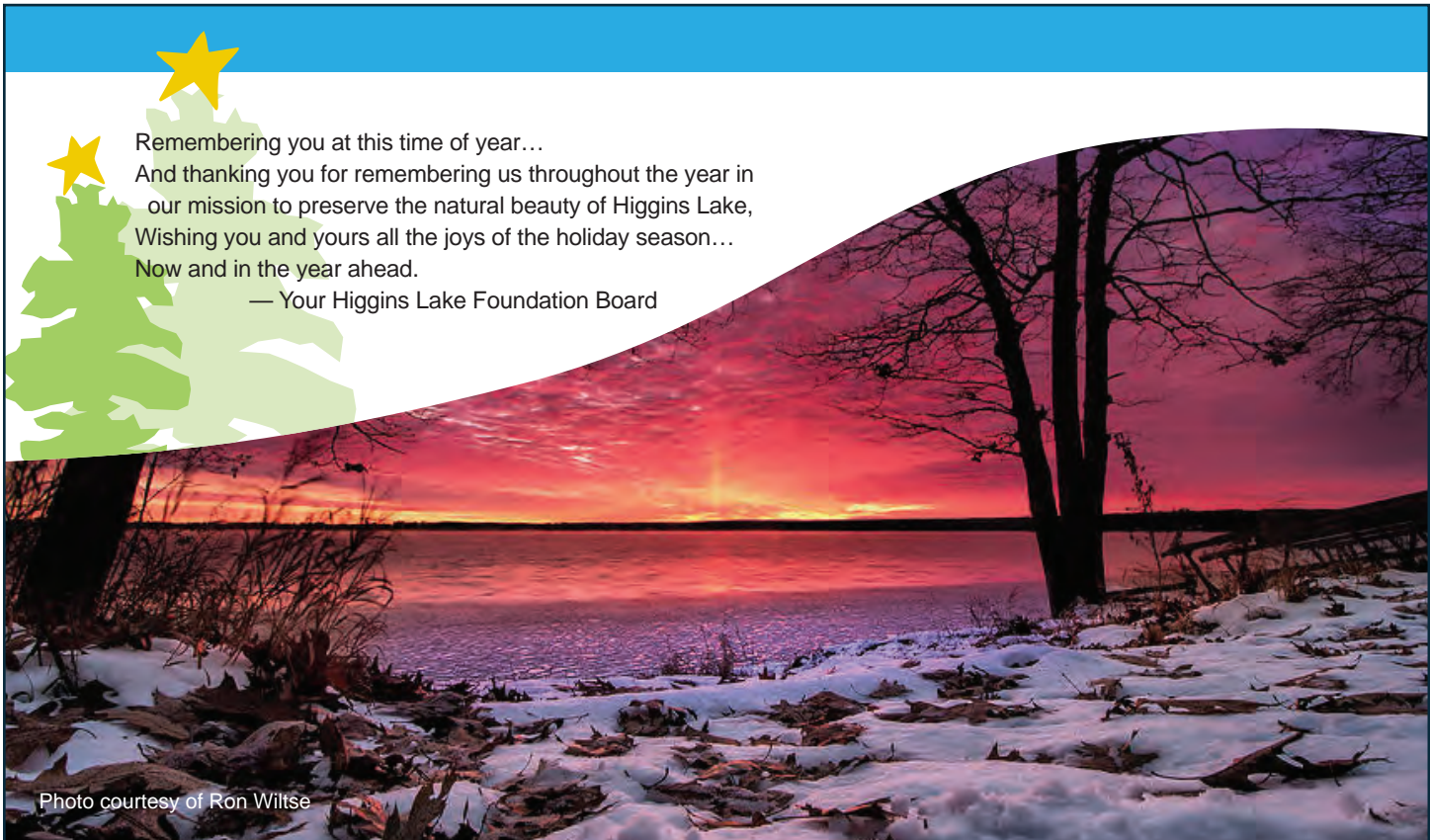
Nancy Albosta Perry put out another call to Higgins Lake lovers to double donation dollars to the Higgins Lake Foundation between Oct 21, 2024 to December 31, 2024. Nancy sent out the first match call of \$20,000 in 2020 and again in 2022, and you answered it by reaching and exceeding the goal!

This year’s match goal of \$30,000 is up \$10,000 from 2022, thanks to a \$10,000 donation from Teresa Bertl Korn. Teresa accepted Nancy’s invitation to “jump on the bus” by helping to fund the match goal. Every donation will be matched up to a maximum of \$500 per donation (\$100 = \$200; \$200 = \$400; \$500 = \$1,000).

With a dedicated commitment to the preservation of Higgins Lake, Nancy and Teresa chose to support HLF projects with this fund.

We’re on our way to another over-the-top success!

If the midnight bell has not yet rung on December 31, there is still time to join in! Go to www.higginslake-foundation.org and click on the Donate button – “Match Grant” or call the office at 989-275-9183.

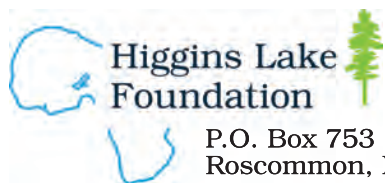


Remembering you at this time of year...
And thanking you for remembering us throughout the year in
our mission to preserve the natural beauty of Higgins Lake,
Wishing you and yours all the joys of the holiday season...
Now and in the year ahead.

— Your Higgins Lake Foundation Board

Photo courtesy of Ron Wiltse

For more news on HLF and ongoing programs, please look at the HLF website:
www.higginslake-foundation.org. Also find us on Facebook — Higgins Lake Foundation.



Higgins Lake
Foundation

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