



## Lake Board Status: Your Voice Needs to Be Heard

*The future of Lake Leelanau is in now entirely in your hands. Your voice is absolutely essential if you agree with the board's view that an independent lake board is needed to control aquatic invasive species and prevent them from gaining an upper hand in Lake Leelanau. Several Commissioners appear unwilling to support a lake board to protect Lake Leelanau, but they offer no alternatives. These same Commissioners are unwilling to allocate County funds to tackle the problem. If the proposal to form a lake board fails, your Association will be out of resources and options to address this problem. Left unaddressed, EWM will grow exponentially and become a vastly greater expense for riparians to address in the future.*

*We urge you to voice your support again as the County Commissioners consider this matter in their meetings on July 13 and July 20. Please send a one or two sentence email to Chet Janik, County Administrator, at [cjanik@leelanau.gov](mailto:cjanik@leelanau.gov) to express your views.*

*Please click [here](#) to see the text of the resolution the County Commissioners will consider. A list of questions members of the community have raised about the need for a lake board is [here](#), along with answers to these questions. Below is an update on the status of the resolution as well as an update on the Association's comprehensive program this summer to control Eurasian watermilfoil—the weed scientists identify as the most invasive aquatic weed in North America. To see dramatic video footage of a large untreated EWM bed in south Lake Leelanau, click [here](#).*

## **The Status of the Lake Board Resolution**

The County Commissioners were planning to vote on a resolution establishing a lake preservation board at their meeting on May 18. The day before the Commissioners met, the County Administrator received a letter from an attorney representing one lakeside homeowner (not a member of the Association) threatening to sue the County if the resolution were passed. In a letter the County received from the attorney representing the homeowner, the attorney wrote that he felt that several provisions in the resolution were inconsistent with the provisions of the State of Michigan's statute enabling communities to establish lake boards. The Commissioners elected to postpone a vote on the resolution until the County's attorney could evaluate the merits of the challenge.

Subsequently, the Chair of the County Commission, Will Bunek, the County Administrator, Chet Janik and the County's counsel, Tim Perrone, met with representatives of the Association and the Association's counsel on this matter, Mark Teicher, to consider the concerns raised by the concerned homeowner's attorney. The parties worked together to revise the text of the proposed resolution to ensure that it would conform to the provisions of the State's statute. The revised resolution will be on the agendas of the Commissioners' meetings on July 13 and July 20. Four of the seven Commissioners must support the resolution for it to pass.

**We recognize that the proposed lake board is not a perfect solution. But after nearly two years of study and a massive undertaking to control Eurasian watermilfoil, the Association is not aware of a better alternative. As John Popa, who serves on both the County Road Commission and the Association's board observes: "No one disputes the need or the competence of the Road Commission. We should think of a lake board in the same way: a group of competent citizens appointed by the County and townships to manage and protect the County's largest lake—an asset which is absolutely critical to our quality of life and to our local economy. In my mind, it's a no brainer."**

## **Status of Invasive Species Prevention, Monitoring and Eradication Program in Lake Leelanau**

### **Prevention**

The Lake Association is committed to helping prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species to Lake Leelanau. This challenge is heightened because Lake Leelanau has 11 public boat launch sites and several privately owned launch site, none of which currently has a boat cleaning station. Led by Association board member Nancy Popa, an Association task force conducted a study of these sites to determine which boat launch sites are the most frequently used. The task force concluded that the DNR boat launch site in Bingham Township should be a top priority for a boat cleaning station.

Earlier this year, the Association engaged an outside consulting firm to help determine the feasibility, suitability and potential cost of adding a boat cleaning station at the Bingham launch site. We are pleased to report that, after considering multiple options, the first boat cleaning unit on Lake Leelanau will be installed at the Bingham launch site this summer. The total cost purchasing, installing and maintaining the unit—approximately \$40,000—will be underwritten by the Association and Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians.

During the summer, Association volunteers will be present at the site to explain to boaters how the boat cleaning station works and why their compliance with State regulations requiring boat cleaning is critical to the prevention of the spread of aquatic invasive species.

### **Monitoring**

To make sure we have identified all sites infested with Eurasian watermilfoil as well as to check for other invasive aquatic species, the Association has engaged an experienced outside consulting firm, Restorative Lake Sciences (RLS). RLS advises a number of lake boards and lake associations through Michigan on the control and eradication of aquatic invasive species. Using scanning sonar technology, RLS mapped all known EWM sites in Lake Leelanau in 2020 and will check these sites again this year to help us gauge our progress. In addition, we use both underwater and aerial drones to survey EWM sites. And finally, our divers, including those working for the Association and those working with the contractor engaged by the Association and the Grand Traverse Band, provide first-hand assessments of the effectiveness of our control strategies based on their personal observations.

### **Control**

Under the leadership of Brian Price, the Association's Lake Biologist, and Dan Mays, the Inland Policy Biologist of the Grand Traverse Band, the Association's volunteers and the Band's employees, along with our contractors, are continuing to wage a comprehensive campaign to control EWM this summer. Last summer's work involved using lake bottom blankets to smother and kill larger sites infested with EWM as well as using trained divers to pull the weed by hand in other locations. These same strategies, which have been found to be particularly effective at other lakes in Michigan and in other states, are being deployed in Lake Leelanau again this summer. Because chemicals kill beneficial weeds and often have other unintended consequences, they are generally used only when EWM infestations get out of control. Even then, chemicals will not eradicate EWM, but merely help control its spread.

The control measures used last year appear to have been effective. Our visual inspection of the sites indicates the lake bottom blankets were especially effective. In all, we estimate that we treated approximately 3.5 to 4 acres of an estimated 10 total infested acres in the lake. According to Brian Price, "A couple of sites treated last year showed no visible EWM; most had small and sparse infestations. One large site along the east side of south Lake Leelanau opposite Hohnke Road had considerable EWM visible in 2019, with seemingly sparser infestations last year (and therefore went untreated) is now back with dense infestations that line the bank for a distance of about 550 yards." Click [here](#) to see dramatic drone footage of this site.

In early June, for the first time, Brian and LLLA board member Jim Wysor, identified patches of EWM north of the Narrows in north Lake Leelanau. Divers Annalise Povolo and Kaitlin Walters (need to confirm spelling) have since removed those plants and conducted a thorough search of the area.