



LLLA President's Prepared Remarks

Annual Meeting - June 22, 2021

Good evening.

Thank you for your interest in Lake Leelanau. My name is Tom Hiatt. I am the President of the Lake Leelanau Lake Association. My wife Nora and I live on the North Lake. If we have not yet met, I encourage you to stop by at the conclusion of the meeting and shake hands.

First, I would like to thank each of the board and Association members who have volunteered their time to organize this event. They are too numerous to mention but the Association could simply not function without them. I also want to thank the generous individuals who contributed this room and the refreshments. Many thanks to Eric Zehender of Fountain Point; Dave and Jane Albert of Boathouse Vineyard and Greg Vogt and the Heekin family of Bel Lago Winery.

I also want you to ask your help in thanking the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians. As you will hear and see this evening, the Grand Traverse Band has contributed hundreds of hours of manpower and significant financial resources to help the Association in its two year battle with aquatic weeds in Lake Leelanau.

It is no exaggeration to say that we simply could not have had the success we have had without the Band. Please join in in a round of applause for Dan Mays and his colleagues at the Band, our volunteers and our kind-hearted sponsors.

I would also ask that you join me in welcoming Sheriff Mike Borkovich and Marine Sheriff Wayne Kalchik.

A key goal this evening is to tell you a little about the threat Lake Leelanau is facing from aquatic invasive species and outline what we are doing about it in both the short and long term. Brian Price, the Association's Lake Biologist and a lifelong resident of South Lake Leelanau, is the commander-in-chief of our battle against invasive species. In a few moments he will describe why invasive species, particularly Eurasian watermilfoil or EWM, are a such a worrisome threat. He will also review what we are doing to tackle it.



First, however, I would like to give you a brief overview of what the Association does and ask you to encourage your neighbors, if they are not yet members, to join us. Following Brian's presentation, I will make a brief announcement of a new initiative which will have a lasting impact on our community. We'll conclude the Annual Meeting with a brief report from our Vice President and Treasurer, Kathy Birney, and the election of officers and directors, which will be led by the chair of the Association's Governance Committee, Jeff Green.

The Association has been extremely busy during the last twelve months. We have expanded our board, held our first major public fundraising event, undertaken a comprehensive study of the Eurasian watermilfoil problem in Lake Leelanau, implemented a targeted prevention and remediation plan for Eurasian watermilfoil and, with significant financial support from our partner, the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, will install the first boat cleaning station on Lake Leelanau before the summer is over.

In addition to our principal concern—dealing with Eurasian watermilfoil—the Association and the **Leelanau Conservancy** are sharing the cost of updating the **ten year watershed protection** plan for Lake Leelanau. This plan is a highly detailed document which seeks to coordinate the activities of all governmental and private groups working in the watershed and set long-term stewardship goals for the protection of the watershed. The watershed for Lake Leelanau encompasses all of the land that drains into the lake. This area covers approximately 140 square miles (89,535 acres) and involves the jurisdictions of ten townships, three counties and three villages. The plan, which will be completed in 2022, is critical not only for long range planning purposes but also for seeking grants.

The Association is also engaged in a number of other less visible activities to monitor and maintain the health of Lake Leelanau. Our volunteers make weekly observations of water transparency and bi-weekly readings of temperature and dissolved oxygen throughout the summer. Working closely with our partners at the Leelanau Conservancy, the water samples are collected and analyzed to measure nutrient levels in both deep lake stations and tributary streams. These data provide us the ability to monitor the lake's water quality over the long term.



With the help of volunteers and former Lake Biologist Wayne Swallow, the Association also monitors and analyzes the incidences of **swimmer's itch** around the lake. Recent research suggests there are multiple bird species involved in the transmission of swimmer's itch and trapping and relocating merganser ducks will not solve this problem. Instead the Association is focusing its efforts on educating swimmers and their families on the best way to avoid contracting swimmer's itch.

By far the largest expense and most intense focus of the Lake Association is preventing, monitoring and controlling the spread of aquatic invasive species in Lake Leelanau. Working with our partners at the Grand Traverse Band, together we are spending around \$150,000 a year on this effort alone. This does not include the hundreds of hours of volunteer time spent raising money, driving boats and diving. Nor does it include the hours the employees of the Grand Traverse Band are spending working alongside us. Realistically, when one adds in the cost of prevention, which includes constructing boat cleaning stations on the busiest public ramps, and our need to eventually replace some volunteers with paid professionals, the estimated annual costs are going to be somewhere between \$250,000 to \$350,000 a year.

It is important for everyone interested in Lake Leelanau to understand that these are **recurring annual costs**. EWM is here to stay. Every year we will need to hire qualified consultants to sonar scans, surveys with drone videos to search for new beds of EWM and look for even worse aquatic pests, including, for example, a weed called starry stonewort. Boat cleaning stations will need to be built. Individuals will need to be educated that they are required to clean their boats. We will need to replace our volunteers, who are well meaning but who can't be expected to be on duty all the time, with paid employees. Brian Price, who is working almost full-time during the summer managing contractors and volunteers, would like to find a qualified professional to work with him and eventually succeed him over the course of the next several years. Ideally, this individual will be a full-time professional, and her or his title will likely become Lake Manager.

For the past several years, a task force has been exploring ways to put in place a long term solution to protect Lake Leelanau from invasive species. You should be aware that:



1. Although we have raised about \$150,000 each year during the past two years the Assn does not have the resources to continue to raise money on this scale. We are a small group of **volunteers** with one paid contract employee—Brian.
2. The State and local government are unlikely to provide funding to address this problem. The State simply cannot afford to do much. The State’s total budget to battle aquatic invasive species in 11,000 lakes is around \$400,000 a year.
3. We endorsed the idea of a lake board because, of all the possible options, a lake board seemed to be to us the most logical since more than 100 other lake communities in Michigan have established such boards and they appear to be working effectively.

The Association is, however, completely open to other options which provide a stream of long term funding to deal with this problem.

After Brian speaks, I would like to announce a new community initiative which is underway to protect Lake Leelanau far into the future.

It’s a personal pleasure to introduce Brian Price, former Executive Director of the Leelanau Conservancy. I wager knows more about Lake Leelanau than anyone else in the County. Brian is a strong and tireless advocate for Lake Leelanau. The Association and the community are indebted to him for his strong and intelligent leadership. He has led our community’s battle against aquatic invasive species and in doing so has sought to protect Lake Leelanau for future generations.

Friends of Lake Leelanau

As I mentioned earlier, one of the Association's primary goals has been to find a long term means of protecting Lake Leelanau for future generations. As you have heard this evening, the most immediate and important threat Lake Leelanau faces is from invasive species, a threat which will require resources and vigilance for years to come.

The Association's board previously supported the formation of a lake board because we saw no other realistic path of putting in place a sustainable income stream to protect the lake from this threat in a timely manner. At our meeting this morning, the Association’s board has decided instead to embrace a new initiative—one which we feel is superior to a lake board.



Several families with intergenerational ties to the Lake Leelanau community have conceived the idea of forming a permanent foundation with an endowment of sufficient size to generate the income needed to meet the costs of preventing and controlling invasive aquatic species in Lake Leelanau for years to come.

I would like to ask you to join me in thanking these families who, in addition to making their own gifts, have committed to assuming a leadership role in raising additional funds for the foundation. The sole beneficiary of Friends of Lake Leelanau will be the Lake Leelanau Lake Association. The income the foundation generates will be used to finance the Association's continuing battle against aquatic invasive species.

The families involved and the board of the Association invite all members of the community to participate in this new initiative.

Just as the Leelanau Conservancy's endowment enables the Conservancy to protect the County's stunningly beautiful farmland and forests for future generations, Friends of Lake Leelanau will provide a stream of income to protect the beauty and clarity of the waters of Lake Leelanau for our children and grandchildren. The backers of this new initiative will seek to capitalize the Foundation with gifts of \$5,000,000 in the near future. The families supporting this initiative are also committed to pay for the costs of the Association's program to control invasive species until the Foundation is in place.

In a related development, Nancy Popa, an Association board member, Steve Martineau and I met last weekend with several individuals who have led the opposition to the formation of a lake board. We outlined the new initiative on which we would be embarking and indicated we would appreciate their support. They indicated they would enthusiastically support Friends of Lake Leelanau. We have invited these individuals to join the Association's fundraising and lake stewardship committees. We anticipate the community will now move forward together to build on this initiative to establish a legacy to protect Lake Leelanau.

This is a great day for our community and, even more importantly, a great day for our beloved Lake Leelanau.

I would now like to invite Kathy Birney, the Association's Vice President and Treasurer, to provide a report on the Association's finances.