



Portage, Base & Whitewood Owners Association

Serving the Lakes Community since 1940

Fall 2019 Newsletter

PBWOA BOARD

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Website: PBWOA.org
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scientist, applicator, and the DEQ (now EGLE) Lauren has not withered from the challenges. The program seems to be on a much better footing. That said, the PBWOA understands there is much more to be done, and Lauren agrees.

This November a meeting with all the participants (PBWOA included) will assemble to go over the 2019 treatment season, the financial status of the program, as well as what needs to be done to get an early jump on 2020. At this meeting the PBWOA will present our data which includes comments we have heard from you. If you have concerns from this past summer, ***please voice them now***. If you have pictures to support your concerns, provide those as well to:

mail@pbwoa.org

A big thanks to the PBWOA board for all the innovative ideas and efforts to help make our precious lake system a special gem in the State.

Letter from the Vice President

Dave Wilutis

As we welcome the fall season and start planning our preparations for the winter months, recapping the many activities of this past year is our annual responsibility to you. First, it is imperative to mention that certain fall activities contribute heavily in a negative way to our lakes. As you read the important article on the following page by Craig Kivi, please remember: NO burning of leaves, as well as NO fertilizing, will give our lakes the jump start we need for 2020 against weeds and algae.

2019 witnessed many changes in the lake management program. This year marked the third year in the 5-year SAD program. In the spring, Washtenaw County terminated the lake scientist overseeing our program. They interviewed several companies and selected Progressive AE out of Grand Rapids to perform the oversight duties required to treat the complex lake system we have. In addition, Washtenaw County Water Resources hired Lauren Koloski as the new project manager to oversee our project as well as others.

Based on the first two years of problems the program went through, this was a challenging job Lauren hired into. Working very closely with the PBWOA, the lake



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80th Anniversary News

Jay Hale

The PBWOA was incorporated June 19, 1940 as the Big & Little Portage Lake Association. Over the years the name has changed to reflect our growing membership on other lakes within the chain – Baseline, Tamarack and Whitewood. June 2020 will be our 80th year of serving the lakes community and we're hoping to celebrate this milestone with you. The Board of Directors has always been and continues to be volunteer unpaid local riparian residents concerned about our lakes community. We remain active with the continuing support of lake property owners.

Protecting your lake - Five Best Lakefront Practices explained

Craig Kivi

Article 4 – Don’t burn yard waste or throw it in the lake.

Protecting the health of our lakes allows us to continue to wade, swim, fish, boat, along with other recreational activities and ensure this enjoyment for our children and grandchildren. As we protect our lake, we protect our home values since there is significant precedent that degradation of lake health reduces lake property values. While there are efforts underway to remediate algae and weed problems, these 5 best practices focus on *prevention*.

As a review, those 5 best practices were: 1. Dispose of car/house poisons properly; 2. Don’t use fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides; 3. Pick up Pet Waste (which is fertilizer) immediately; 4. Don’t burn yard waste (which is fertilizer) or throw it in the lake; 5. Create tall grass and flower strip as a natural filter and buffer zone to the lake.

In this article, due to the time of year, we will go a little out of turn and will discuss Best Practice 4 and other important items pertinent to this time of year.

During fall many burn yard waste and leaves near the shore; some even rake or blow leaves into the lake, essentially depositing fertilizer into the lake. As referred to earlier, burning leaves and yard waste near the shore releases phosphorus in smoke and leaf particles which settle on the water fertilizing the weeds. Worse, some even rake lawn refuse and leaves into the water, which is like throwing fertilizer directly into the lake. Shoreline trees drop leaves into the lake and have for millions of years, but that’s a natural occurrence. Our concentrated and magnified addition to this is not natural, and it does make a difference. Instead of burning consider removing it from your lakefront lawn and transporting to a place they can naturally decay or bag to be picked up by a service. Some have opted for a mulching mower to shred the leaves and return them to the soil.

With that in mind we should also mention another fall tradition, that of lawn fertilizing. It should be clear to everyone from previous articles, to stop all fertilization of any kind. There is no “lake safe” fertilizer as promoted by the fertilizer industry and fertilizing services. Additionally, “phosphorus free” fertilizers still contain nitrogen, generally a destructive nutrient to lakes.

Although phosphorus often gets the blame for algae and weed growth in lakes, many scientists agree that nitrogen is a major component to “nutrient overload” as well. This causes algae blooms and enhances vegetation growth. This is not new information. In fact, Dr. Wally Fusilier, our former lake scientist who tested our lakes for nitrogen for many years’ states in his 1996-2004 Water Quality Studies on Portage Lake, who tested our lakes for nitrogen said this: “...no fertilizers containing either nitrogen or phosphorus should be used on or near-lake areas.” How much better would our lake quality be now if we had followed his well-researched scientific advice then. This time of year, it’s been fashionable to use a “Step 4” fall/winterizing fertilizing treatment. These treatments will undoubtedly contain nitrogen, so don’t use them, as our fall rains will wash some of it right into the lake.

In the fall/early winter when water levels go down is also a time some homeowners build or restore seawalls. A flood of new information is available as to how destructive solid seawalls are to the health of our lakes. Just recently the MDEQ (renamed EGLE) declared the “hardening of shorelines” as the **number one** threat to inland lakes. Seawalls cause a 23% reduction in aquatic organism diversity and a 45% reduction of overall aquatic organisms as compared to natural shorelines (reference available), cutting the normal amount of life in front of these seawalls by almost half! These are staggering findings.

Solid seawalls reduce plankton in lakes, critical to the food chain in that lake. They also reduce the lake’s ability to process algae and other contaminants. Basically, the lake’s food chain struggles to eat and the lake struggles to eliminate wastes. It’s easy to see how the increase in the numbers of solid seawalls is a deadly threat to our lake’s health and to enjoyment by future generations. No one wants to see our children or grandchildren stuck with a dying – or dead lake.

A durable natural shoreline of “rocks against dirt” does a fine job preventing erosion, yet allows water to seep through to soils and plant life, allowing exchange of food and wastes, thus sustaining the lake. Therefore, it’s the only responsible alternative. This concept is not recognized by many seawall contractors. The PBWOA can recommend resources to help with the installation of a healthy seawall.

Education Committee Reports...

Jan Arps-Prundeanu

Check out the newly painted reminder to CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY and DISPOSE on the Portage Boat Access Site. The new boating law became effective March 21 and the DNR is stepping up its awareness campaign. The law is intended to strengthen protection for Michigan waterways against the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species and fish diseases. These steps should also be utilized at private launch sites, so please pass this information on to whoever brings their boats on (and off) our chain of lakes. We already have plants, such as Eurasian Watermilfoil, Flowering Rush, Wild Celery, Starry Stonewort and Curly Leaf Pondweed which are being treated. We don't want to pass them on to other lakes and we certainly don't want any new invasive plants added to this list. There is an alert that European Frog-bit has been cited in several sites in Michigan, including Wayne, Macomb, Monroe and St. Clair counties.

The Education committee is currently working with Lauren Koloski, Washtenaw County project manager, to assure that our members (and all riparians) understand how the policies and processes of the Lake Improvement plan work. We are also seeking out more information from the Huron River Watershed Council on the issue of the Snuffbox Mussel, which is considered threatened and endangered and has precluded the use of some herbicides.

If you would like to learn more about Flowering Rush, a restricted plant that has been treated on Base Line and Whitewood Lake, Patrick Scanlon (coordinator for Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area) has offered to provide us with an on-site in-service on the plant and how to reduce its propagation. We have several areas near the river and on our lakeshores where digging may be possible. If you would like to join this in-service, please let Jan Arps-Prundeanu know via email: janarps60@gmail.com.



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EDITORS NOTE: The “Education Committee” was formulated a couple of years ago to focus on what we (as an organization) and you (as Riparian owners) can do to ensure the health and beauty of our waters. This committee has provided countless insights as to identifying problems, but even better has identified easy ways for us to contribute proactively to address these problems affecting the health of our lakes. We have offered opportunities for all PBWOA members for education through out-reach programs and have provided funding to encourage this endeavor. Please join us in **SHARING OUR WISDOM WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO JOIN PBWOA.**



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Washtenaw County Important Links

Lauren Koloski, Washtenaw County Public Works Division and our “go to” person for the Chain of Lakes Improvement Project has developed an email group for more direct updates regarding lake issues. If you would like to receive these email updates, please send her your email address: koloskil@washtenaw.org. Lauren also notes that Washtenaw County has an amazing resource for proper disposal of Household Hazardous Waste. They would love to take your car/house poisons off your hands and keep them out of the water systems! Visit <https://www.washtenaw.org/287/Home-Toxics-Paint-Oil-Pesticides-more> for advice.



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Lake Water Quality Testing

Jon Waitz

Once again, our Portage, Base, Whitewood Owner's Association has been involved with lake water quality testing and has collected data going back as far as 1975. The board of directors funds the cost for testing on Little Portage, Portage, Baseline, Tamarack and Whitewood lakes from membership dues. The actual water sampling is done by PBWOA volunteers on the various lakes. This year we had a team of 6 volunteers doing testing for Secchi Disk (to determine water clarity by measuring depth of light penetration) and spring and summer total phosphorus. The data is used to help determine changes to our chain of lakes over a broad period of time.

All data collected is uploaded into The Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program (CLMP). This is a significant partnership effort between the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Michigan Lake Stewardship Associations, Inc. (MLSA), the Great Lakes Commission, Michigan State University, the Huron River Watershed Council and our PBWOA. CLMP is a key program in the Michigan Clean Water



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Corps, a statewide volunteer water quality monitoring network. We are collectively able to gather, analyze and record important data on Michigan lakes with this partnership, that otherwise would not be available.

As the Michigan Legislature wraps up the 2020 state budget, it should be noted that although they appear to be approving a continuation of the Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program with an appropriation of \$150,000, this falls short of what the Department (EGLE) senior leadership has indicated is needed to make much needed upgrades and improvements to the MI Corps programs and support systems.

Your voice can make a difference in these state level decisions, so please get to know your state representative and senator and let them know that it matters to you that our volunteer monitoring program efforts are supported and continue. Thank you.

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