



WATERSHED NEWS

Letter from the President

Once again, another year has passed much too quickly. I do not know how it happened, but the new year is upon us.

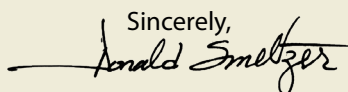
This has been an exciting year for the watershed with the work beginning in earnest to produce a 319 compliant watershed management plan (see the article later in the newsletter for complete details). The grant obtained from the DEQ has allowed us to do much more testing than we could do on our own and this testing will continue until the early fall of 2016.

In an effort to get input from the community about their concerns, the consulting firm writing the management plan has developed a questionnaire about our watershed. They would like as many people as possible to fill one out. Those people who attended the annual meeting last June were given the opportunity to fill one out, but it is not too late for the rest of us. A copy of the questionnaire can be filled out online at the Benzie Conservation District web-site at benziecd.org and just click on the Herring Lakes Watershed Survey heading. If you would like a hard copy, just contact Bill Henning at 231-352-8146 and he can get you a copy. Remember, the more input received from these questionnaires, the better the final management plan will be.

Along with the SAW grant testing being done this year, a survey of the lake for invasive plants was also done. News on this front was good and less than good. See article inside for details.

There is good news to report on our membership front. The membership is up slightly from last year with several new people joining, but we still need everyone to talk to friends, neighbors, and anyone you know who makes use of our wonderful resource and ask them to join our association.

Here is hoping the coming year is a prosperous and happy one for you. I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual meeting.

Sincerely,

Don Smeltzer

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UHLA Officers:

President: Don Smeltzer • **Vice President:** Dave Long

Treasurer: Bill Henning • **Secretary:** Ann Henning



Herring Lakes Watershed Awarded a DEQ Grant to Develop a Watershed Management Plan

Herring Lakes Watershed includes Upper Herring Lake, Lower Herring Lake, portions of the Lake Michigan shoreline as well as all streams, creeks and wetlands in the area that eventually feed the Herring Lakes and Lake Michigan

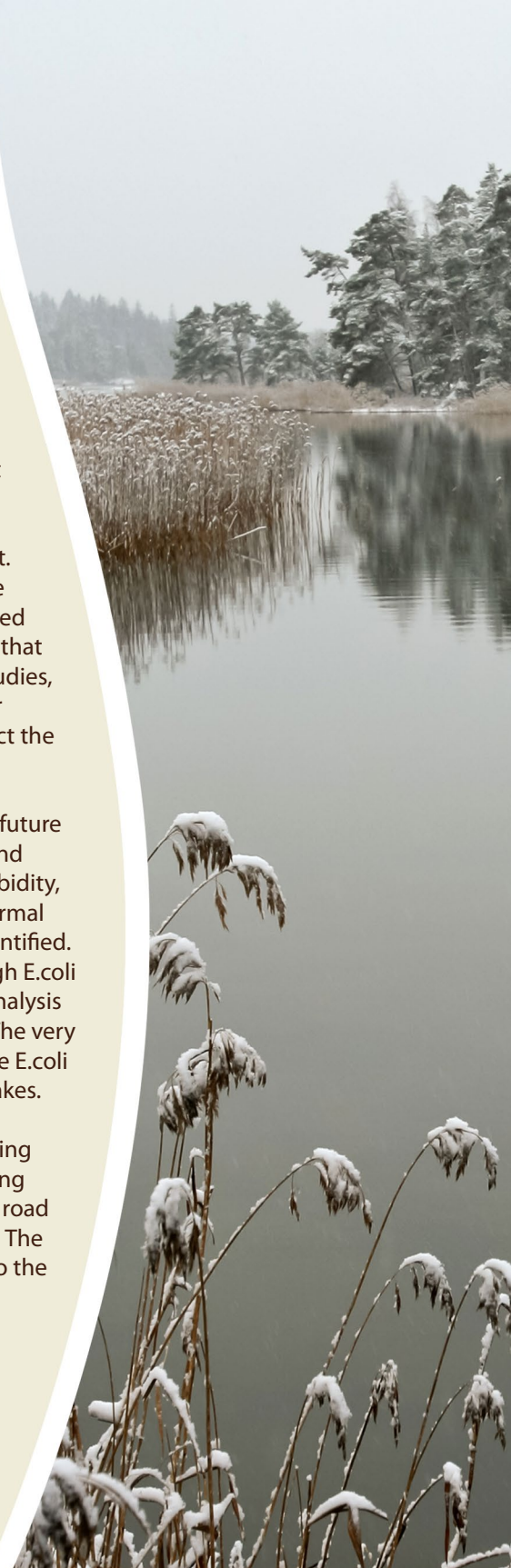
The Herring Lakes Watershed was awarded a \$100,000 SAW Grant (Stormwater, Asset Management, and Wastewater) by MDEQ to update the Watershed Management Plan to be EPA, section 319 compliant. This is the number one priority for the environmental goals in the new Blaine Township Master Plan. This is a real win for the township. We are working with many stakeholders; Lake Associations, local governments, landowners, MSU Extension, GTRLC and businesses to insure the Watershed Management Plan include input from all stakeholders.

The SAW grant is administered by Tad Peacock, Director of the Benzie Conservation District. Chris Grobbel of Grobbel Environmental is the principle investigator for the study. We have had monthly meetings to review progress and insure the work elements of the grant needed to meet the 319 requirements are being included. Having a Watershed Management Plan that meet EPA, section 319, it will open the door to grant money for additional water quality studies, repairs of road crossings, control of invasive species, and improvement of boat launches or shoreline development. It also allows the Townships to develop shoreline zoning to protect the watershed.

The goal of the Watershed Management Plan is to preserve and protect the watershed for future generations. Starting in April, monthly water quality sampling of 8 locations in the lakes and streams were measured for water quality. Phosphates, ortho phosphate, Nitrogen, pH, turbidity, dissolved oxygen and E.coli were measured. Most of the parameters have been within normal levels. There are only a couple of locations where high phosphorus or high E.coli were identified. The high phosphorus has been primarily from groundwater coming into the lakes. The high E.coli were in stream locations. Identifying the source of the E.coli was one of our goals. DNA analysis were run on the E.coli to determine if they were from human, bovine or wildlife sources. The very good news is we found no human E.coli, minimal E.coli from bovine and the majority of the E.coli is from wildlife, either from the swamp or from wildlife along Herring Creek between the lakes.

In addition to the water quality sampling we have completed shoreline surveys documenting each property around both lakes. An aquatic plant survey was completed for Upper Herring Lake. During the winter we have suspended water quality sampling but will be doing the road crossing survey and inventory. The water quality sampling will begin again in April 2016. The plan is to continue until September with a goal of completing the plan and submitting it to the DEQ late fall 2016.

As a part of the Watershed Management Plan we are doing a survey to better understand how the watershed is used and what concerns users have for the watershed. If you have not taken the survey, please follow this link and complete the survey; <http://benziecd.org/herring-lakes-watershed-survey/>. It can be taken online or downloaded and mailed to the Benzie Conservation district.



Save **THE DATE** | JUNE 11 | 2016 |

The annual meeting will be held on June 11th at 10:00 at the Blaine Christian Church. We hope to see you there.

Exotic plant watch

Once again this summer, Upper Herring Lake was surveyed to look for invasive plants in the lake. To accomplish the survey a rake is dragged across the bottom of the lake at various points. The plants that are captured by this raking are then brought to the surface and identified. No invasive plant species were found during this survey, which is great news. During the survey, we were looking closely for European milfoil, which can overtake a lake and has been found in Lower Herring Lake. While we have a lot of milfoil, it was all the native northern milfoil. No European milfoil was found.

Unfortunately, while taking the December water samples on the lake, the sampling team saw a small stand of phragmites just south of the DNR boat launch. The seed heads from this stand have been cut off and burned and the stand will be treated in the spring when it is actively growing again. This treatment will be performed by the Benzie Conservation District. They will also see to getting the proper permits. Phragmites is a very invasive species but can be treated very effectively. Lower Herring Lake has had some large stands and has successfully treated it over the past several years. It is imperative that we monitor the lake for this invasive in order to take swift action if and when it is found. The old saying of a stitch in time save nine is extremely relevant when dealing with phragmites. If you see any of this tall grass with the large seed heads in or around the lake, please notify Bill Henning or Dave Long.

DNR Fish Survey

The DNR did a fish survey on the lake this past June. Both netting and electroshocking were done. While the complete results are not yet published, we do have the count from the netting operation:

Netting survey, June 8-12, 2015

Black crappie- 39 from 6-13"

Bluegill- 22 from 1-10"

Brown trout- 3 from 13-15"

Bowfin (dogfish)- 13 from 21-28"

Brown Bullhead- 26 from 10-13"

Common carp- 1 @ 28"

White sucker- 23 from 9-22"

Largemouth bass- 39 from 7-18"

Longnose gar- 46 from 24-35"

Northern pike- 13 from 13-26" (also saw a 40" pike that an angler showed us)

Pumpkinseed- 9 from 4-9"

Rock bass- 172 from 1-12"

Shorthead redhorse- 1 @ 22"

Smallmouth bass- 15 from 13-18"

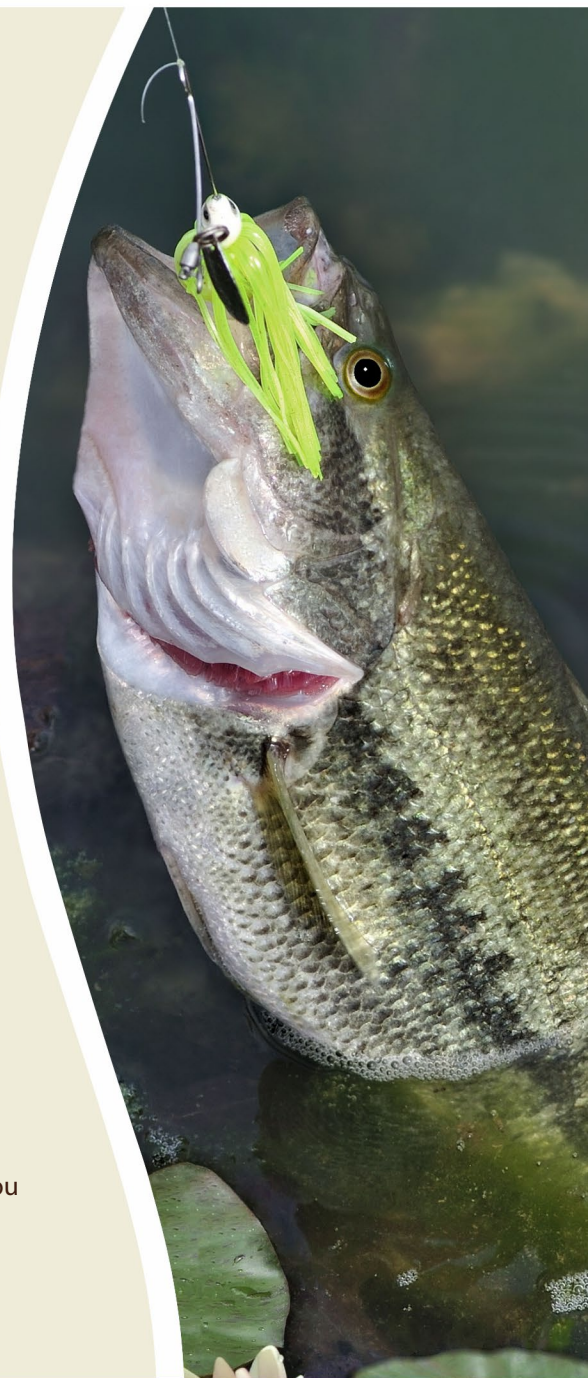
Walleye- 39 from 7-23"

Yellow perch- 55 from 2-10"

Yellow bullhead- 7 from 6- 12"

Other species included bluntnose minnow, golden shiner, Iowa darter, Johnny darter, sand shiner

One very interesting note concerning the walleye catch is they saw fish from several different year hatchings, including what they determined to be 2014 hatch. Because they last stocked fingerlings in 2012, this means there is some natural reproduction occurring in the lake. This should indicate good walleye fishing in the future. They also stocked the lake this summer with 19108 walleye fingerlings. So for you fisherman, if you don't have any luck, it can't be said there are no fish left in the lake.





Welcome, winter.
Your late dawns and chilled
breath make me lazy,
but I love you nonetheless.
~Terri Guillemots

