Portage, Base & Whitewood Owners Association

Serving the Lakes Community Since 1940

FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER

A Message from your President

Mark Teicher

I have hope. Our Chain of Lakes, the Huron River and our streams have problems: invasive plants (starry stonewort, Eurasian watermilfoil, phragmites, purple loosestrife, etc.); invasive creatures (rusty crayfish, red swamp crayfish, Asian clam, quagga muscle, zebra mussel, etc.); algae blooms, PFAS and other chemicals; loss of wetlands and marshes; loss of natural shorelines; loss of habitats for our native fish, plants and other animals. Very recently a large tract of acreage on Little Portage Lake was sold to build homes as a conservancy failed to make a deal. However, I have hope.

I thank my nephew Sam Teicher for my hope. Sam is 34 years old and a few years ago he and a college friend formed a company to restore dying coral reefs – Coral Vita (www.coralvita.com). Although our Chain does not have any dying coral reefs, it seems another body of water – the ocean – is having its own problems, problems even bigger than ours. And Sam and Coral Vita are tackling them. They are successfully restoring coral reefs to the point that Coral Vita just won the Earthshot Prize (one million pounds from Prince William and international acclaim and support).

If Sam, who I remember in diapers (not that I changed any) can take on the ocean's dying reefs, then I have hope the PBWOA, supported by our members and partners, can continue our efforts to manage and combat our problems. In providing this unified approach to tackling "our problems" we can certainly have hope in taking on the dreaded starry stonewort and our other Chain of Lakes issues.

PBWOA 2021 Photo Contest

IT'S OFFICIAL!
The winners of PBWOA's photo contest are:

First Place: Redbuds on Baseline Lake
Photographer: Heidi Metzger

Second Place: Bald Eagle with Fish
Photographer: Michelle Gervais

Third Place: Fog on the Huron
Photographer: Jack White

First place won a $100 gift certificate to the Portage Yacht Club. Second place was $75 and Third won a $50 gift certificate to Portage Yacht Club.

There were so many wonderful photos including whimsical shots of people enjoying the lake, beauty shots of the lakes and river, and some stunning shots of wild creatures enjoying their habitat that the Board also awarded Honorable Mentions to two more photos: Honorable Mention Vivid Rainbow – Photographer: Michelle Gervais, and Honorable Mention Vertical Tree Abstract – Photographer: Jack White.

A total of 102 photos were submitted by 21 photographers. Thank you all! The photos illustrate how lucky we all are to be able to enjoy the Portage Chain of Lakes. The winning photos are posted on the PBWOA website at http://www.pbwoa.org/2021-photo-contestwinners/. They will also be published in the Sun Times. That said, all photos were wonderful! Thank you all for submitting... looking forward for a repeat next year!

The PBWOA Board of Directors:

Mark Teicher, President	Portage Lake
Jon Waitz, Vice President	Baseline Lake
Dave Wilutis, Vice President	Baseline Lake
Jane Ollila, Secretary	Tamarack Lake
Jim Jensen	Whitewood Lake
Jan Arps-Prundeanu	Baseline Lake
Dave Moody	Portage Lake
Lis Knibbe	Portage Lake
Art Stauch	Portage Lake
Bob Nester	Little Portage Lake

PBWOA

734-471-3141
mail@PBWOA.org
http://pbowa.org

Please note that we have a new "address" as our Post Office Box number has changed to:

PO Box 955
Pinckney, MI 48169

We are hopeful that 2022 will return to "normal" and we are anticipating again offering the Boater's Safety Class with Washtenaw County Marine Patrol; our Annual Meeting in May; and our favorite, the Pizza Party in August.

Shoreline Stewardship
Don't Feed the Algae

Lis Knibbe (based on Texas A&M Earthkind materials)

It's that time of year again. As much as we admire the brilliant colors of fall, we dread the fallen leaves. Blowing, raking, bagging and burning – oh my – my back hurts at the thought. There are lake friendly best practices that can be significantly less work while improving the condition of your lawn, landscape and gardening and NOT feeding next year's algae in our lakes and river.

In forests, pastures and other natural settings, tree leaves and other organic wastes form a natural carpet over the soil surface which conserves moisture, modifies temperatures and prevents soil erosion and crusting. In time bacteria, fungi and other natural occurring organisms decompose or compost the leaves and other organic material, supplying the existing plants with a natural, slow-release form of nutrients.

BEST PRACTICES FOR MANAGING LEAVES

Leaves are truly a valuable natural resource! They contain 50 to 80 percent of the nutrients a plant extracts from the soil and air during the season. Therefore, leaves must be managed to avoid feeding the algae in our lakes and river. There are four basic ways in which leaves can be managed and used in the landscape.

Leaf Management – Mowing

Leaves can be mowed, simply leaving the shredded leaves in place on the lawn. This technique is most effective when a mulching mower is used. In fact, during times of light leaf drop or if there are only a few small trees in your landscape, this technique is probably the most efficient and easiest way to manage leaf accumulation.

Leaf Management – Mulching

Leaves can be used as a mulch in flower beds and around shrubs and trees. As an option to raking, a lawn mower with a bagging attachment provides a fast and easy way to shred and collect the leaves. Leaves that have been mowed or run through some other type of shredder will decompose faster and are much more likely to remain in place than unshredded leaves. Apply a 3-to-6-inch layer of shredded leaves around the base of trees and shrubs. In annual and perennial flower beds, a 2-to-3-inch mulch of shredded leaves is ideal. Mulches are especially beneficial when used around newly established landscape plants, greatly increasing the likelihood of their survival.

Leaf Management – Soil Improvement

Leaves may be collected and worked directly into garden and flower bed soils. A 6-to-8-inch layer of leaves tilled into a heavy, clay soil will improve aeration and drainage. The same amount tilled into a light, sandy soil, will improve water and nutrient holding capacity.

Leaf Management – Composting

If you have the space for a compost pile, you can create compost that can be used to enrich the soil by adding a natural source of nutrients, loosen heavy soils, help sandy soils retain moisture and nutrients, add to potting soils for container grown plants, and mulch around landscape plants.

We all can help improve next year's water quality by using SHORELINE STEWARDSHIP to deal with some or all of this year's leaves. Every little bit helps.

Learn about inland lakes online from MSU Extension

Registration for the award-winning Michigan State University Extension Introduction to Lakes Online course is now open! This six-week online course runs January 25- March 16, 2022 and is designed for anyone interested in inland lakes, including lakefront property owners, recreational users, and managers. Course topics include lake ecology, watershed management, shoreline protection, aquatic plants, Michigan water law, and community engagement. Each topic is explored through pre-recorded video lectures, interactive activities, and discussion forums. In addition, there are three live Ask-an-Expert webinars featuring experts from Michigan State University, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy.

Registration is open now through January 21, 2022. The cost of the course is $115 per person. Register by January 3, 2022 for an early bird price of $95 per person. SEVERAL PBWOA MEMBERS HAVE TAKEN THIS COURSE AND FOUND IT VERY BENEFICIAL. ANY PBWOA MEMBER WILL BE REIMBURSED THE COST OF TUITION UPON SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF THE COURSE.

Portage Lake Natural Shoreline Restoration Project Update

by Craig Kivi

As a bit of a recap, there's a huge conservation project taking place on Portage Lake. It is 2,700' of natural shoreline with an adjacent 10 acres of wetlands which all serve to filter and clean Portage Lake of toxins and excessive nutrients from fertilizer. This property provides wildlife and fish habitat and also contains within it a football field size section of a carbon sequestering floating mat of vegetation called a "bog" or "fen". However, these natural shorelines, wetlands and bog are threatened; experiencing exponential degradation by the increase of both numbers and size of watercraft on our inland lakes. There's a rapid destruction of our natural shorelines due to boat wake erosion which causes shoreline vegetation to die, shoreline trees to fall and huge chunks of water-filtering shoreline being torn away to float in the lake with cattails attached. Many of these chunks of shoreline were seen on Portage in the last several years and one on Strawberry Lake the size of a pontoon boat! Things have definitely changed much faster than anyone anticipated. We are all caught off guard.

While education and watercraft regulation efforts will address this at a slow intermittent pace, we took an opportunity to redirect our energy and efforts to make significant and effective progress by purchasing this huge tract of natural shoreline property, restricting access to it, and initiating a shoreline restoration and stabilization project. We will achieve stabilization through "soft" or "natural" armoring, placing much needed natural erosion barriers and wildlife habitat such as logs, rooted stumps, and tree tops securely along this shoreline. The benefits of this project are not temporal, but rather, have a legacy view and are anticipated to impact many generations for hundreds of years. In addition, a knowledge-sharing database will be created to multiply benefits even more. Knowledge gained from this project will be available to universities, conservation groups and others nationwide as Portage Lake is not unique in this current situation.

Let there be no doubt who's behind this. The top conservation experts in the state own this project and are taking the lead while the property owner stands aside giving them 100% freedom to do as they please. These experts are doing the permitting, are working together and have been on-site over 20 hours so far - on land, in waders and wetsuits with masks and snorkels, using sophisticated equipment doing research, taking baseline data and planning. Among them are scientists, technicians and officials from Michigan State University, Michigan Natural Shoreline Partnership, Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy, Michigan Department of Natural Resources. Other conservation groups such as Ducks Unlimited are very interested, involved and supportive as well. It has been said this will be the largest inland lake restoration and stabilization project in Michigan history, and these scientists, educators, officials along with many local businesses and residents are very excited to be part of it.

So where are we at this point? The complex project permit was submitted to the state, and its approval is imminent. A project team meeting was held on October 27th and we continue to move forward with the gathering of funding, resources, volunteers, and many other parallel efforts.

We owe a world of thanks to Portage Yacht Club for providing both the materials and staging area for materials (treetops, logs, rooted stumps). The significance of this donation cannot be overstated and solved perhaps our biggest problem which enabled the project to move forward in perhaps the most significant way of all. We are also thankful to other businesses and residents in the area who have heard of this project, understand its long-term importance to lake health and the community and have generously donated - without even being asked. This project and the knowledge generated benefits everyone on the Chain of Lakes.

A recent development is the integration of the perfect organization to assist in this project. Natural Shorelines Forever is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, charitable organization with a focus on conservation. It is serving to coordinate all resources, receive and distribute tax exempt donations and funding, and work in the background to make sure all are available to support completion.

For questions, comments, to volunteer or donate to this project contact Craig Kivi, Natural Shorelines Forever, 1248 Louise Street, Pinckney MI 48169, craigpkivi@gmail.com, (734) 478-5730.

EDITORS NOTE: Craig Kivi spotted this amazing property for sale 3 years ago and understood the importance of conserving it. After living on Portage Lake for 60+ years and watching the changes taking place he dedicated his heart and personal capital to preserve it in perpetuity for future generations to enjoy. When land conservancies turned him down, he persisted at his own expense. The PBWOA supports these extraordinary efforts and encourages anyone concerned about out wetlands and the health and integrity of our lake system to make a tax-deductible donation to this worthy project.

Update from Washtenaw County Public Works:

Huron River Chain of Lakes Improvement Project

In 2021 the Special Assessment District (SAD) treated a total of 442 acres with herbicide treatment and mechanical harvesting from Zukey to Little Portage. The current SAD started in 2017 and will be ending after all funds are spent, which is expected to be after the 2022 treatment season. The 5th and final assessment for the current project will appear on the 2021 Winter Taxes. The renewal process is expected to start in early 2022, and if approved, would go on the 2022 winter tax bill. The new SAD will include Little Portage, Big Portage, Baseline, Tamarack, Whitewood and the connectors between these lakes. The renewal process requires a resolution from all townships involved, the Washtenaw County Board of Public Works, the Boards of Commissioners, and two public hearings. All parcels will be notified of each of these public hearings by mail. Hamburg Township is looking to start PA 188 projects for Gallagher and upstream.

If you are looking for additional information specific to the Huron River Chain of Lakes SAD, please visit Washtenaw.org/HuronCOL. Washtenaw County Public Works maintains an online resources page. Here you can find information on native shorelines, plant management, State permitting and lots of other resources related to Lake Management. Please visit Washtenaw.org/LakeResources

The 2022 treatment year is anticipated to begin in May 2022 with full lake treatments starting in June 2022. If you would like project updates sent directly to your inbox, please email lakes@washtenaw.org and ask to be added to the mailing list.

Get to Know your Algal Blooms

Jan Arps-Prundeanu

Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) staff have been receiving more and more reports of cyanobacteria or blue-green algae blooms in our Michigan waters. In our own Chain of Lakes, we have had two algal blooms that were determined to contain toxins at levels that were concerning. (These are referred to as Harmful Algal Blooms, or HABs.) The causes of our Algal blooms are fairly straightforward: heat and excessive nutrients. We know that we can anticipate increased heat, BUT we may be able to address the problem of excessive nutrients if we focus on our own waterfront and watershed sources of nutrients. People can help reduce HABs by taking simple actions that decrease nutrients getting into the water, like:

- Using phosphate-free detergents
- Disposing of pet waste properly
- Appling fertilizers only when necessary and at the recommended amount
- Volunteering in local watershed protection efforts

Your PBWOA is also awaiting research results on the increased nutrients that may be stirred up by Wake Boats.

It is important to remember that blue-green algae is a natural part of lakes, rivers and ponds and not all blue-green algae produce toxins. However, it is equally important to know that certain algal blooms can produce toxins that can make humans and animals sick – especially dogs that may actually ingest the toxic water or when grooming can potentially swallow cyanotoxins collected in their fur.

It is difficult to tell by looking at an algal bloom if it is harmful. Generally, one should be alert to blooms that are blue or green and look like spilled paint or have a green sheen on the surface. They may also have small flecks, foams or globs and mats floating in it. Basic advice, when in doubt, stay out of that water area and please send a photo to Lauren at koloskil@washtenaw.org.

Lauren Koloski, (our Washtenaw County HRCOL project coordinator) has utilized "testing strips" on blue green algal blooms that were brought to her attention by concerned riparians on Portage and Baseline. Samples were then sent on to the state's testing facility for verification, which indicated that indeed, they contained toxins above acceptable levels. It is the responsibility of our respective health departments (Washtenaw and Livingston Counties) to alert us to toxic algal blooms in our waters. Lauren has placed several articles about Harmful algal blooms - including several photos on the Washtenaw HRCOL web site which can be accessed through our PBWOA.org site or directly at: www.washtenaw.org/337/HarmfulAlgae-Bloom-Information.