

Our Mission

To learn, study and monitor the condition of Portage Lake and take steps to keep it healthy and viable.

Friends of Portage Lake

www.portagelakefriends.org

Portage Lake Report



Potluck & Public Meeting April 26

It's Official: Time to Become a Member

You're invited to become one of the first members of the newly formed "Friends of Portage Lake, Inc." Annual memberships and other news about our association will be available at our public meeting on Thursday, April 26, at the clubhouse at Klines Resort.

To become a member, the bylaws require you either own or rent property having frontage or recorded access to Portage Lake. Both lake-front lots and parcels in Snug Harbor, Klines Resort, and Nancy Lane are included.

A soup potluck kicks things off at 6 pm. This is a great chance to visit and get better acquainted with your lake neighbors! A selection of soups will be prepared. Bring a dish to pass

(something to go with soup, like salad, cornbread, veggies, or dessert) and your own table service (don't forget a soup bowl). The meeting follows at 7pm.



Like dandelions in your lawn, our lake invaders are ready to grow. Will you help us stop them?

If you can only come for the meeting, that's OK too. We'll have coffee on, and maybe some left over dessert for any who miss the potluck.

On the agenda is updates on our progress to date and a preview of plans for the year ahead. Of course, this is also an opportunity

for each of you to ask questions, share concerns, and look at ways you can get involved.

Hope to see you there!

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Board Members

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Portage River Cleanup

Saturday May 12

Clean up from Portage Lake to Parkville Rd.
Meet 10 am at public access.

Volunteers Needed!

Contact St. Joe. Cty Conservation District
269-467-6336

www.stjoecountyed.com



Septic Tanks:

The Hidden Polluter in Our Backyards

by Elayna Grody

"Out of site, out of mind" is an accurate description of how many perceive our septic systems. We maintain nice lawns, shovel snow, and take care of the majority of our household upkeep on a regular basis. But we don't often think about our septic systems unless there is a problem. It just quietly sits below ground taking care of our "stuff", while we go about our daily lives. But this very system, could be causing problems to our lake and more.

According to the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, "Studies have shown that some pollutants often reach surface

water from septic systems located within 300 feet of the shoreline. They are carried to the lake by the ground water beneath the septic system." Since many of our systems occur much closer than 300 feet, this is something to be aware of.

Your septic tank and leachfield (or drainfield) are your underground sewage collection system. When you do your laundry, dishes, flush or take a shower, all that wastewater goes into your septic tank. Here, tiny natural bacteria process the solids that sink to the bottom. The liquid waste then flows into your leachfield, the spot under your lawn where the soil absorbs it. Bacteria in the soil and the soil particles finalize the cleaning process as it soaks into the ground.

Unfortunately, if we do not keep our septic tanks maintained or take necessary steps, the system can fail. A failing system sends the wastewater into the local ground water and can reach not only the lake, but also our drinking water wells for our houses. (ICK!) Here

are some dos and don'ts to help ensure your system works properly and will not negatively affect our lake or your drinking water:

Know It: You must know the location of your septic tank and leachfield to maintain it and detect problems.

Pump It: To function properly, all septic tanks should be pumped out by a licensed professional every 3 - 4 years depending on the size of your tank.

Save It: Too much water used at one time will send the solids out of your septic tank into your leachfield causing it

to clog and malfunction. Spread out the times when you do loads of laundry, dishes, bathe, wash your car, etc.

Direct It: Direct sump pump, roof and driveway drains away from your leachfield. This extra water reduces the ability of your leachfield to perform properly.

Protect It: Do not drive over your leachfield because this can compact the soil and crush underground pipes.

Avoid It: Sparingly use kitchen and bathroom cleaners, drain cleaners or caustic chemicals. These kill the beneficial bacteria that treat your waste.

Don't Use It: Avoid additives such as cleaners, sugar or yeast. As these increase the activity of the bacteria, they can actually prohibit the separations of the solids from your wastewater which increases the amount of solids going into your leachfield and clogging it.

Don't Trash It: Do not pour oil, grease, paint, solvents, pesticides or



To paraphrase Professor Harold Hill:

We got Trouble.

**Right here in River Country.
Trouble with a capital "T" and
that rhymes with "P" and that
stands for "Phosphorus"!**

Okay, so maybe that is not as lyrical as "The Music Man," but you get the point. Phosphorus is a chemical that accelerates plant growth. Normal lake levels of phosphorus range from 9 - 15 micrograms per liter. Portage Lake is at 24.

Here are the phosphorus levels of lakes around us:

Portage Lake: 24

Barton Lake: 11 - 17

Indian Lake: 17

Gourdneck Lake: 13

Fishers Lake: 7

other hazardous chemicals down your drains. Do not flush medicines, paper towels, hair, cat litter, cigarette butts, any type of feminine products, etc. Eliminate or greatly reduce the use of food grinders or disposals.

Plant It: To protect the lake, install beautiful native flowers, shrubs and trees along the shoreline to intercept and absorb pollution coming from your septic system.

Test It: Even properly working septic systems can contaminate drinking water if the septic system and the well are located too close to each other. Have your well water tested periodically, especially if the odor, taste or color is noticeable. Well water testing kits can be picked up at the St. Joseph County Health Department in Three Rivers. For information, see www.bhsj.org/eh or call (269) 273-2161.

PLM Awarded 2012 Lake Treatment Contract; Membership Drive Begins April 26

by Mark Parks

Dear Friends of Portage Lake:

It's exciting to think that spring is here and summer weather has visited us already! Hopefully winter will not return as we enjoy this beautiful season.

I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on what we are doing as a committee and to invite you to our spring public meeting. We've been working on the invasive weed control program for 2012 and have been planning fund raising activities to raise the necessary funds. Please see our treasurer's report in this newsletter for where our funding currently stands. We continue to conduct our lake monitoring program to determine the quality of our water and where it is trending so that problems can be remedied if possible. We have also developed a membership structure for residents who would like to formally become members.

Our committee has decided to use a new lake management company this year to treat the invasive weeds in our lake. Professional Lake Management (PLM) was selected



as the successful bidder and will survey the lake and handle our treatment needs. Because of this change, we must again obtain signatures from all riparian owners in the areas where treatment will occur. Please be prepared to sign the permission form if you are approached by a board member.

Our membership drive kicks off on April 26th. Membership is just \$25 per year and gives you a voice in our decisions and selection of board members. In order to vote in the fall elections, we need your membership by July. Forms will be available at the spring meeting and by mail afterwards.

By keeping the membership fee low, we hope to encourage everyone to become a member. However, the membership fees alone are not enough to meet expenses. We still need and welcome additional contributions as you are able.

Please feel free to discuss our activities and plans with your committee representative. And mark your calendars for Thursday, April 26th for our meeting, with a potluck supper starting at 6:00 p.m. followed by our meeting at 7:00 p.m. We'd love to see you there.

Did you know?

Michigan Law Now Restricts Phosphorus Use on Lawns

Phosphorus is the nutrient that most often stimulates excessive growth of aquatic plants, leading to a variety of problems known collectively as eutrophication. Elevated phosphorus levels are causing premature aging of many Michigan lakes.

Michigan now joins Illinois, Minnesota, New York and Wisconsin in restricting the use of phosphate based turf lawn fertilizers. The passage of the legislation is considered a major milestone in the protection of Michigan's freshwater resources.

Want to learn more?

Attend the **Michigan Lake and Stream Associations Annual Conference**, April 27-28 at Boyne Mountain.

Registration forms are online at www.mymlsa.org

Cost is just \$75 for 2 days of informative speakers, activities & special events!

Reserve now for reduced rates at Boyne Mountain.



Save These Dates!

Soup Potluck/Meeting April 26
 Portage River Cleanup May 12
 Doubletime Triathlon June 2
 3rd Annual Boat Parade July 4
 Friends Pancake Breakfast 8-11 am Sat, August 4
 "Clean your closets" Community Yard Sale Day Sept. 8

Snug Harbor to be Treated for Cabomba

By Greg Dedes

Friends of Portage Lake has made the financial commitment to treat Snug Harbor this spring to fight the Cabomba that has all but taken over this area of the lake, pushing out the native plants and affecting it's recreational use. We have also secured permission from the riparian owners fronting the cove. The final step is for Professional Lake Management (PLM) to receive the required permits. Once the permits are in place we will provide notice of the dates for the anticipated treatment.

Cabomba can easily be recognized by it's resemblance to a green bushy raccoon tail. This invasive plant has all but taken over the cove.

The plant was mapped by Aquatic Enhancement and Survey in 2009 and recommended for treatment. Given our budget we were not able to contract for an application in the 2011 season. Based on current account levels and this year's fund raising goals we are excited to announce Friends of Portage Lake is prepared to treat in 2012.

The estimated cost to treat the cove is \$1,875 as outlined in the

2012 proposal from PLM. The goal of the first treatment will be to "test the potential efficacy of treatment for this plant on Portage Lake and also provide practical control within the cove. This site was selected because it contains relatively dense Cabomba growth that is likely to interfere with docking and movements of watercraft. The cove is also relatively isolated from the open lake and will provide relatively good containment for the applied chemicals".



Cabomba Caroliniana specimen

If the results are positive within the cove, then the Friends of Portage Lake may consider expanding its use to the other growth areas within the open waters of the lake.

We are excited about this treatment

opportunity and hope it will provide a visible improvement within the treated area to showcase the efforts of the group and use of the donated monies that have made this possible. We ask for continued support from those who have donated in the past and a second chance for those who have not. This work would not be possible without support from the volunteers and donors who have provided so much.

2011 Treasurer's Report

Income:

Donations	\$4,310
Triathlon	\$1,072
Raffles	\$ 511
Pancake Breakfast	\$ 523
Yard Sale	<u>\$ 399</u>
Total.....	\$6,815

Expenses:

Weed Treatment	\$5,917
DNR Permit	\$ 332
Legal/Other	<u>\$ 1,159</u>
Total.....	\$7,408

Net loss 2011..... \$ 593

2012 Projected Expenses

Weed Treatment	\$6,875
Permits, dues, fees	<u>\$ 500</u>
Total Needed	\$7,375

We expect to raise approx. \$2,400 from our fundraisers. This leaves nearly **\$5,000 that is needed from memberships and contributions. Please help!**

I'm a Friend of Portage Lake!



- Contribution: \$ _____
- Volunteer for Doubletime Triathlon
- Other: _____

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____@_____

*Clip and return to:
Friends of Portage Lake,
c/o Kathleen Kauffman,
56112 Angevine Road,
Mendon MI 49072*