

In August of 2009, a proposal for a Lake Improvement Board for Stony Lake was passed by Benona and Claybanks Township Trustees. Members of the Board include representatives from each township, a Stony Lake resident, a representative from the Oceana County Commission, and the Deputy Oceana County Drain Commissioner. The Board was formed under provisions of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act.

The Board met in September 2009 and agreed to contract Progressive AE of Grand Rapids to complete a lake improvement feasibility study and to advise the Board.

During the summer of 2010, water quality studies and a survey of aquatic vegetation were undertaken. Water quality data collected by volunteers as part of Michigan's Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program dating from 2004 also were available.

On September 4, 2010, a special public meeting of the Board was held at Camp Ao Wa Kiya. Tony Groves, Water Resources Practice Leader in Progressive AE's Civil Engineering Group, presented a report detailing the characteristics of Stony Lake, the findings of studies, and the Lake Board's proposal for a five-year management plan including selective aquatic plant control herbicide treatments, mechanical harvesting, water quality monitoring, and production of a lake and watershed management guidebook. An estimate of assessments for properties that border the lake and back lots with deeded or dedicated access to the lake also was presented. A copy of this report can be accessed at the Stony Lake Property Owners website, www.stonylakepropertyowners.com.

In October, 2010, the Lake Board competitively bid the herbicide treatment and mechanical harvesting work. The herbicide treatment contract was awarded to PLM Lake and Land Management (PLM) and the harvesting contract was awarded to West Michigan Aquatic Weed Removal. Plant control activities are being coordinated under the direction of biologists from Progressive AE.

In mid-June, 2011, four acres of Eurasian watermilfoil were treated. The treatment was done prior to harvest to prevent the fragmentation and spread of milfoil plants. In mid-July, the mechanical harvester operator attempted to cut a path from the deeper water plant line to each property-owner's dock, clearing a path for boaters and swimmers out to the deeper water. The harvester spent nearly two weeks on the lake, methodically cutting swaths of plant matter, gathering it on board and conveying it to the public launch site, where trucks carried it away to be composted. In total, about 40 acres of vegetation were cut and 73 machine loads of plants were removed from the lake. Some adjustments are planned for the harvesting operation next year to better optimize results.

The Property Owners Association representative on the Stony Lake Improvement Board is Dave Zoller, dzoller@hotmail.com.