

Stony Lake Improvement Board

The summer of 2012 was the second year in the five-year management plan presented by the Stony Lake Improvement Board in September 2010.

In the summer of 2011, a small area of Eurasian watermilfoil, an exotic aquatic plant that can become invasive, was treated in the southeast corner of the lake with herbicide, and a mechanical harvester removed plant material from the entire lake (details of this process can be found in last year's Newsletter, also available on the website).

The contractor was unable to complete the specified harvesting to the satisfaction of some residents, and the contract was again put out for bids.

In the summer of 2012, no herbicide was applied in the lake, as surveys by Progressive AE, which has been contracted to direct the plan, showed very little evidence of invasive species (according to the goals of the Board, only invasive species can be targeted for treatment). From July 23-August 6 a new contractor operated three harvesting machines to cut about 60 acres of vegetation, removing 67 machine loads from the lake and transporting it to a local orchard for composting.

On August 22 the Lake Improvement Board held a meeting at Benona Township hall, attended by about 40 lake residents. Enthusiastic appreciation was expressed to Stony Acres neighbors for allowing the machines to operate out of their access point. Most residents in attendance were happy with the process. Concerns were raised by a few that the amount of vegetation removed might be harmful to water quality, and that Chara, a plant that clings to the bottom and helps hold down sediment, among other beneficial effects, was scraped too closely, especially in marshy areas of the lake. Tony Groves, Water Resources Practice Leader in Progressive AE's Civil Engineering Group, assured these residents that he would monitor the harvesters closely in summer 2013 to insure best practices. The Board plans to contract with the same harvester.

Mr. Groves' company is continuing to monitor water quality in Stony Lake and has assembled previous data recorded by volunteers over the years as part of the assessment. This information and a discussion of the lake and its tributaries, as well as responsible shoreline management, will be compiled into a Stony Lake guide which will be made available to all property owners this summer.

The Lake Improvement Board was organized in 2009 by a vote of the Benona and Claybanks Township Boards. Members of the Board include representatives from each township, a Stony Lake resident, a representative from the Oceana County Commission, and from the Oceana County Drain Commission. The Board was formed under provisions of Michigan's Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act.

The Board contracted Progressive AE of Grand Rapids to complete a lake improvement feasibility study and to advise the Board in developing a management plan.

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. The five-year management plan includes selective aquatic plant herbicide treatments, mechanical harvesting, water quality monitoring, and production of a lake and watershed management guidebook. A copy of this report can be found at the Stony Lake Property Owners website, www.stonylakepropertyowners.com.

The lake resident representative on the Stony Lake Improvement Board is Dave Zoller, dzoller@hotmail.com.