



Greater Wall Lake Association

Fall 2020 Newsletter

FROM THE PRESIDENTS DESK

By Christy Tigchelaar, President

As my final term as your first female GWLA President comes to an end I wish to thank all of you for your support and friendship over these past several years. Together we have accomplished many goals. Our annual meeting attendance climbed from 12 to 15 residents to over 120 residents. We have spread our wings having annual meetings at Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, our Delton Moose Lodge, and our VFW Post #422 showing how important our community pride is. We have shown we put our money where our mouth is with the establishment of our Preservation Fund. We have amended our By-Laws and become a 501c3 organization. We have navigated into the 21st century in order to better communicate with our lake families and created our web-site, our accounting system, and our facebook page. We have built wonderful relationships with our neighboring lake residents exchanging newsletters and attending each other's annual meetings allowing us to share valuable information with one another. We have been written about in other lake publications as a result of our accomplishments and received numerous notes and letters of appreciation for a job well done. We have been leaders in our determination, against all odds, in the fight against those who have tried to harm our lake or our wetlands. We have added family events to continue our mission through education to keep our lake safe for our future generations. Even during this unprecedented time we continue meeting masked up and practice social distancing in order to discuss issues affecting our beautiful Wall Lake.

This year I know from experience money has been an issue but most of you have continued to pay your GWLA dues which we thank you so much for. Additionally thanks to those who, not only paid their dues and donated to the fish fund, but also contributed to our Preservation Fund. You have no idea how important this fund is. I too sincerely appreciate the board members and committee chairs. They spend their time and energy to research the information necessary for us to be able to make important decisions that are needed and to continue our GWLA events. ...To them I say thank you for your time and to your continued energy and enthusiasm. Our newsletters keep us connected and we appreciate our writers for the information they bring to us to share with our lake family. Our Unsung Hero's...residents who continue to give and give to help others...thank you!

We are blessed to have unlimited resources of information and guidance all around us. I have learned so much from the organization that I am a member of: Pierce Cedar Creek Institute, Southwest Land Conservancy, Beechwood Point Association, Crooked Lake Association, Michigan Lakes and Streams Association, and the Four-Township Water Resources Council to name a few! The Riparian Magazine also is a valuable resource of information.

Regrets, I have a few....Not too few to mention...I wish we had 100% of our residents supporting the mission of the GWLA by paying their dues. I wish everyone would make sure no invasive species entered our lake. I wish our wildlife was completely respected and we wouldn't have reports that they were being run over on the lake or residents weren't following boating safety rules and that residents weren't having property line issues and dock wars.

I would like you to know I have taken this president's job very seriously and with true conviction. There isn't a day that goes by that I am not involved with GWLA business in some manner and I want to sincerely thank you for this special opportunity of being your first female President in the 60 years we have been an association.

I, too, am excited about our Watershed Program that is in full swing with Pierce Cedar Creek Institute. How fortunate we are to be working with Corey Lucas, Stewardship Manager. View https://youtu.be/UI1838R_vnU to listen to our Planning Project Stakeholders Meeting. Corey writes (Reminder-July 18, 2020), "The project will help protect and enhance the water quality within the Cedar Creek watershed...We will be working with our local community to address potential sources of pollution as well as protect the high-quality

PRESIDENT ADDRESS Con't

natural areas found within the watershed." Also I am excited and appreciate our grant that we have received thanks to Sarah Nelson, Executive Director of the Barry Conservation District for the natural shoreline grant opportunity. I appreciate the forward thinking of our board member, Jeff Keller for the installation of our first professional done natural shoreline. When you get a chance, research the benefits of these shorelines and you too will want to get involved.

The interruption to our normal routines in 2020 have been disappointing for all of us, however to all of you, our lake guardians, our lake family members, you play an important role in shaping our future and keeping our beautiful lake healthy. I too will continue to be an advocate for our beautiful lake and for all of you.

"You cannot do kindness too soon, you never know how soon it will be too late." Ralph Waldo Emerson

Communications Update

As you may know, we are doing more of our communications by email, Facebook or our website.

Please help us keep you updated on important information and activities by sending us your current email address. Please make sure you have listed our email address as your safe sender to ensure you receive our communications. If you have not been receiving updates or know someone who hasn't, please provide us your email. You can send it to: greaterwalllakeassoc@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATES for 2021

GWLA Annual Garage Sale.....Saturday June 5, 2021

Annual Meeting.....Saturday June 26, 2021

4th of July Boat Parade.... July 4th 2021

Kayak the Wall.....Saturday July 31, 2021

Light Up the WallSaturday August 28, 2021

Dates subject to change

Greater Wall Lake Association

2020 Board Members

Christy Tigchelaar, President

Jeff Keller, Vice President

Melody Lutz, Secretary

Martha Edger, Treasurer

Dan Erb

Connie Vaughn

Olivier Martinon

Andy Bohr

Tim Harsevoort

Dale Grimes

Steve Larson

Larissa Shaw

If you wish to contact the GWLA Board please go to the website www.mywalllake.com and hit the Contact button or send an email to greaterwalllakeassoc@gmail.com

Contribution Form for supporting GWLA in their effort to preserve Wall Lake

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

Gift Amount: \$

Thank you for supporting the preservation of Wall Lake!

Mail to: Barry Community Foundation
GWLA Preservation Fund
231 Broadway
Hastings, MI 49058

or Greater Wall Lake Association
PO Box 56
Delton, MI 49046

Treasurers Report

By Martha Edger

As your GWLA treasurer, I would like to thank all of the 157 members who paid their 2020 dues. You may be wondering what your dues are actually used for...

VARIOUS LAKE ACTIVITIES

Kayak the Wall

Fourth of July Parade

Light up the Wall

LEGAL COUNSEL

Preserving lake quality

501(c) (3)

POSTAGE, PRINTING, PO BOX

INSURANCE

Limited liability for GWLA members

WEBSITE FEES

QUICKBOOK SUBSCRIPTION

PROFESSIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Michigan Waterfront Alliance

MSLA membership

BI-ANNUAL FISH PLANTING OF WALLEYE

Again, thank you for your support in 2020. Watch your mail/email in January for the 2021 membership dues invoices.

Unsung Hero of Wall Lake

What does it take to build community among the neighborhood and surrounding area?

Apparently, a slab of cement and a commitment to friendship and generosity.

That's exactly what Mark and Renae Feldpausch have created on the corner of Harrington and Eddy at their lovely home on Wall Lake.

Mark can be seen on any given morning cleaning off their pickle ball court and setting up the net for the first game of many, as young and old gather to start their day with a healthy game of pickle ball.

Golf carts and automobiles line the street to start their day with a little cardio activity and pleasant conversation!

Mark and Renae even hosted a tournament (with the help of the wonderful Stanley's) at the end of August to boost audience participation and healthy competition.

Renae, to continue with her hostess with the mostess award, has also brought in quality, and I mean quality, Yoga and Pilates instructors to enhance the overall health and fitness of her community. Renae even teaches one of these classes to ensure the neighborhood of three workouts per week! And all this activity and community bonding comes at no cost to any community member!

Just goes to show what truly can be accomplished through generosity and heart. So, if you're looking for some friendly activity that gets your body moving look no further than the Feldpausch compound on Wall Lake.

I'd rather be playing pickle ball,

Jo Haas Guernsey Lake

If you have questions or concerns about Wall Lake you may contact the Greater Wall Lake Association by:

Mail: PO Box 56 Delton, MI 49046

Email: greaterwalllakeassoc@gmail.com

Website: www.mywalllake.com

Or follow the Greater Wall Lake Association Facebook page.



For more photos of our Wall Lake Family, don't forget to follow our Greater Wall Lake Associations Facebook Page for our website at www.mywalllake.com.

Thank you Erica Lutz and Jeff Bours for sharing your talent as the official photographers for our GWLA sponsored events

***The Greater Wall Lake
Association wishes you a happy
and safe holiday season.***

GWLA SPONSORED EVENTS

Wall Lake Gives Us Some Relief!

By Dan Erb

In this crazy year of Coronavirus, many of our residents were able to enjoy our glorious lake this summer and participate in the GWLA sponsored activities. After spending many months inside, it was nice to be able to get out on and in the lake.



Our first event was the **Fourth of July Boat Parade** led by Steve Larson. There were 23 participants this year and the winner of the Dom Court Trophy was the

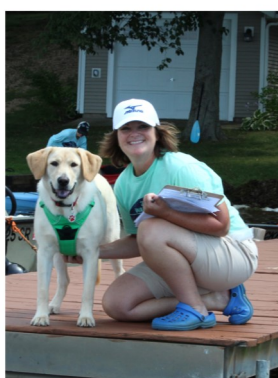
Kroes and Zelnock Family with their creative, patriotic, Ice Cream boat. The People's Choice Award was won this year by the **Carter Family** with Uncle Sam riding in the front.



Our last event of the summer was the annual **"Light Up the Wall"** event. Santa felt we might need a little Christmas cheer here at Wall Lake a little early so he and Mrs. Claus decided to bring Rudolph and a few of the other reindeer to lead our parade. Several boats participated and followed Santa on his cruise. The shoreline and houses were also beautifully lit up for the occasion.

Special Thanks goes out to **Olivier Martinon** for transporting the amazing photographer, **Jeff Bours** to take pictures for the GWLA social media pages. The People's Choice Award was won by Santa and the reindeer and the Schoessel Family and their dancing stick men!

Our Board would like to thank all of the participants this year. We look forward to next summer and hopefully have some new activities for our lake residents to enjoy! See you when it's warmer. For us full timers, I'll gladly watch you fish on the ice from my warm living room!



We couldn't have asked for any better weather for this year's annual **"Kayak The Wall Poker Run"** event. It was expertly coordinated again by Katie Dolfman and we had a record number of participants. I believe the final count was over 117! It was amazing to see all of the families participating together. It was a great opportunity to get to meet some of our new Wall Lake residents. **Melissa Groetsema** was the winner with a Full House! Thank you to all that helped with the event and to all of you for participating. Also, a big thank you to **Ken's Sport Shop** and **Wausau Homes** for supplying door prizes for our participants.



Aquatic Invasive Species

By Andy Tomaszewski

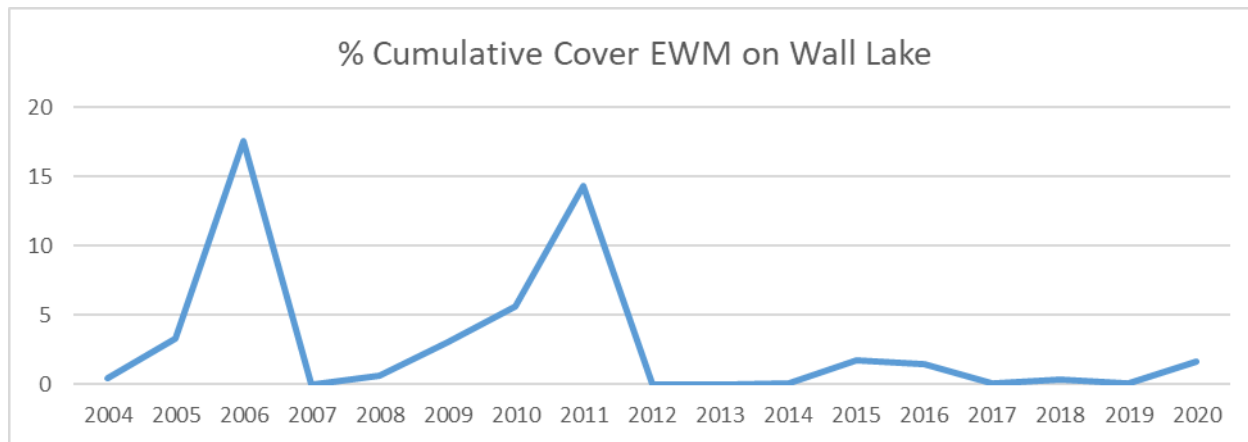
PLM Lake & Land Management Corp.

Wall Lake Management Update 2020.

The 2020 season was a very successful year in regards to exotic plant management on Wall Lake. In fact, the past nine years of management has gone extremely well. A whole lake Sonar treatment was conducted in 2012 and since that time, our main target species (Eurasian watermilfoil) has been kept in check. Spot treatments using selective tools (either low dose contact herbicides or systemic products) have been sufficient to maintain control and we have not had any significant expansion. The 2019 season consisted of spot treatments where needed.

In 2019, a new exotic was found on Wall Lake. This species is called Cabomba and is quite common in the Cloverdale/Delton area. It was discovered in the channel in the northeast part of the lake near the outlet. We treated it aggressively last year and kept a close eye for any re-growth in 2020. Fortunately, we did not find any in 2020, and hopefully have eliminated/eradicated it from Wall Lake. The one herbicide able to control it is not technically systemic (root killing) but we may have gotten that result nonetheless. We will continue to monitor that area closely in the upcoming seasons.

Below is a graph showing the trends in Eurasian watermilfoil since the beginning of the program. The spike in 2006 and 2011 indicate expansions in milfoil and the sharp declines are the result of Sonar A.S. treatments. Since the last Sonar treatment in 2012, we have been able to maintain milfoil at a very low level.



From a budget standpoint, things have gone well for the past five years. In 2019, we ended up ~\$5,000.00 under budget and ended up nearly \$65,000.00 under budget over the past five years. Much of this surplus is the result of not requiring a Sonar treatment during this period.

Water quality was again monitored in 2020. Sampling was conducted on April 28 and August 30 as well as E. coli sampling on July 21, 2020. During the April 28 sampling event, the lake was well oxygenated from top to bottom. Both total phosphorus (TP) and total nitrogen (TN) were low. TP was 10 ug/L while TN was 328 ug/L. The August 31 sampling event showed that the lake was stratified thermally and in regards to dissolved oxygen. It is normal for all lakes with sufficient depth to have low dissolved oxygen below the thermocline (depth at which warm surface water and cold deeper water don't mix). On August 31, this was ~4.5 meters down. TP and TN samples were collected but we are waiting for results from the lab. This data will be included in the year end water quality report coming out in the next few weeks. E. coli readings taken in July were all low and well within the safe range.

For 2020, we anticipate starting the season with minimal milfoil. We will evaluate the lake several times during the year and address any problems as needed. We will again sample water quality and monitor the overall plant community. It is recommended that lake residents do not bring their boats to other lakes in the area. Many lakes in the Delton area have exotic plants/algae that Wall Lake does not. These species are Cabomba and Starry stonewort. These species are expensive to treat and often require more aggressive treatments. At this point prevention is the best strategy.

SPECIAL FEATURE

Natural Shoreline Demonstration Project

By Sarah Nelson
Barry Conservation District

The Barry Conservation District is pleased to announce a new lake monitoring and natural shoreline demonstration project in partnership with the Greater Wall Lake Association. In May of this year, the Midwest Glacial Lakes Partnership awarded a grant to Barry CD to assess habitat availability for cool- and cold-water fishes and provide lake conservation education and outreach around Big Cedar, Little Cedar, and Wall Lakes.

Cool- and Cold-water Fish Habitat Assessment

The habitat assessment portion of the project will focus on dissolved oxygen and temperature (collectively known as “oxythermal habitat”) throughout the year. The main species of interest on the Cedar Lakes is inland lakes Cisco, whereas on Wall Lake it is Walleye.



The DNR and Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy are prioritizing the protection of high-quality cool- and cold-water habitats against warming water temperatures, eutrophication, and other threats. Often, these lakes support populations of Cisco, which are a threatened species in Michigan and a priority in the state’s Wildlife Action Plan. Cisco occupy lakes with some of the highest water quality in the state and their decline can indicate water quality degradation, and negative effects of climate change. Furthermore, Cisco support recreational fishing themselves in addition to serving as forage for trophy Northern Pike, Walleye, and other apex predatory fishes.

This assessment work complements work being done by PCCI to assess the coldwater fishery and lake health in the Cedar Creek watershed. The Barry Conservation District has also recently received funding for best management practice implementation in the larger Thornapple River Watershed and this project will help to better inform what practices may be needed and where.

Outreach and Education

Barry CD is also excited for the chance to get to know you all! We included funding to conduct outreach and education in your area, to encourage landowners to implement lakeshore best management practices for protection of high-quality lake systems. We would like to include a series of educational chats and informal workshops around the lake. If you are interested in hosting one of these events next summer please let us know. Or, if you have feedback on what kind of events would work for you or what you would like to learn about, we would love to hear that as well!

Natural Shorelines

We are also very excited to be working with the GWLA to install a natural shoreline demonstration site on Wall Lake. We are currently looking for a site for the natural shoreline as well- please contact Christy if you are interested.

What are natural shorelines and why are they important? Did you know that at least 50% of Michigan lakes are shown to have poor nearshore habitat? Healthy shoreline habitat includes native trees, shrubs, and smaller plants like forbs and grasses to provide habitat and protect shorelines from eroding. However, it is more common along populated lakes to see a row of manicured lawns and seawalls along the shore. Seawalls are generally hard structures such as concrete or steel that are used to stop erosion, but they lack natural vegetation. Some issues with seawalls include expedited erosion, barriers to wildlife, and habitat loss due to scouring of the lake bottom. A healthier alternative to turfgrass and seawalls is natural shorelines.

The native vegetation of natural shorelines provides many benefits such as absorbing and filtering runoff and holding soil in place to prevent erosion. Reducing erosion and runoff obviously protects the environment and water quality, but it also protects your shoreline and your property value. Keeping things natural along our shorelines, helps protect the water quality in our lakes. Vegetated shorelines will help protect and enhance water quality by slowing and filtering runoff. This can result in lower turbidity (less sediment), less frequent algae blooms, and fewer issues with E. coli at your favorite swimming spots. Natural shorelines provide critical habitat for many of Michigan’s native species. Over 200 species of amphibians, reptiles, fish, birds, and mammals as well as countless native plants depend on shoreline habitat along inland lakes.

Natural Shorelines Con't

Barry Conservation District

Natural shorelines can also help with geese that love to congregate on manicured lawns and tend to leave behind a big mess for the homeowner. Manicured lawns provide wonderful grazing grounds for geese and are inviting places to nest and raise young because there are no places for predators to hide. While natural shorelines with taller native plants may not completely stop geese from accessing your yard, they will tend to choose the easier path and congregate on lawns without natural shorelines.

Shorelines consist of four different zones and it is important to choose the right plants for each zone. A natural shoreline planting typically includes work in more than one of these zones. The first zone is below the water level. These plants will be rooted and growing within the lake. For this zone choose native plants deemed "floating," "aquatic," or "emergent," depending on if they grow in the water or above the surface. The second zone is between the water level and the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM). These plants like to have wet roots, but they don't like to grow in water year-round. They can generally handle seasonal flooding and will be able to stand up to some waves and ice. Zone three is above the OHWM. These plants can handle limited flooding but need to have very moist soils to thrive. This area occurs a little further up the shore from the lake edge. Fourth is the upland zone. Plants in this area like mesic soils, which are drier than moist soils. Although not on the shoreline, native plants in the upland are important as a first line of defense against erosion and runoff headed for the lake. Upland habitat is also very beneficial for a wide array of wildlife.

When choosing plants for a natural shoreline, go native! Native plants are not only better for wildlife, they tend to have better root structures to anchor the shoreline soil and they will be more adapted to handling the conditions along shorelines such as fluctuating water levels. Be sure to research plants before you buy them. Many harmful aquatic and shoreline plants are still available for purchase. Please do not plant known invasive species- yellow floating heart, water lettuce, frogbit, phragmites, water hyacinth, and others. When in doubt, native plants are the safest and most beneficial choice.

In some cases, it may not be feasible to rip out a seawall and jump right into native plants. This is especially true with the waves caused by boats on many inland lakes. That's where a cross between harder yet more natural structures come in. This is called bioengineering. Two of the more common methods of bioengineering on natural shorelines are rock riprap and plant fiber rolls or bundles called coir logs. These materials are generally placed along the shoreline and coincide with native plantings to give the shoreline an added level of protection.

About Barry CD

Our roots may be in the soil, but we have grown to be much more over the years!

Formed in 1944, the Barry County Soil Conservation District helped farmers address their most pressing conservation issues following one of farming's toughest times - the Dust Bowl. The District's collaboration with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) empowered local farmers to implement soil conservation practices through cost-share programs, working to reverse a century's worth of unsustainable farming practices.

Over the years our work has evolved along with our name. "Barry County Soil Conservation District" was shortened to "Barry Conservation District" in the late 1990s to reflect that the District now works on a greater diversity of conservation issues; a change which can be seen in our programs today.



We still work with NRCS on sustainable farm practices for soil and water quality, but we also have partnerships with a variety of other agencies and non-profit groups to provide resource conservation assistance to non-farm landowners.

Some additional areas we work in now include forest, grassland, and wetland management; species of greatest need conservation; invasive species mitigation; and outdoor recreation promotion.

Become a Wall Lake Guardian

Take the "Pledge to Protect"

If you live, work or play within the **Cedar Creek** Watershed, your support is needed to protect and preserve this beautiful area now and for future generations. By taking the Guardian pledge, you agree to adopt the following best practices to guide decisions you make that involve your property and the property you use.

Please check one or more items in at least three of the six categories below to become a Guardian.

I (we) hereby pledge to...

On Land

- ☐ Use only eco-friendly soaps and detergents
- ☐ Use only hazardous waste collection sites to dispose of harmful items
- ☐ Use only eco-friendly pesticides
- ☐ Properly store any fertilizers, pesticides and fuels on my property

Invasive Species Prevention

- ☐ Use boat wash (or my own power wash) on recreational vehicles before use
- ☐ Dispose of bait, plants, aquatic animals and fish from aquariums and ponds in the garbage, never in the lake

Littering & Recycle

- ☐ Become a Trash Terminator
- ☐ Encourage recycling at home helping to reduce pollution and create jobs

Watercraft and Recreation

- ☐ Avoid use of soaps and shampoos in the lake or river
- ☐ Inspect boats for fuel/oil leaks

In Yard (Property Owners Only)

- ☐ Preserve wetlands on your property
- ☐ Construct driveways, patios and paths of pervious materials
- ☐ Keep storm drains free of anything except runoff
- ☐ Plant a native tree on my property or lakeshore

On Shore (Riparians Only)

- ☐ Contact the Wall Lake Association for advice when considering alterations near my shoreline
- ☐ Refrain from feeding waterfowl to protect the water from harmful E-coli bacteria
- ☐ Rake and remove leaves and grass clippings to keep them out of the water
- ☐ Start a greenbelt on my shoreline or maintain existing one
- ☐ Stop mowing my lawn 7 feet from the water's edge to start a greenbelt
- ☐ Use lake water for irrigation vs. well water irrigation



WALL LAKE
GUARDIAN
Protecting our
Watershed together

I (we) hereby pledge to protect the Cedar Creek watershed and implement all the checked items above.

Name(s) _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

____ Property Address same as Mailing Address

Property Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Signature _____

Date _____

____ Please keep my pledge anonymous

Thank you for becoming a Wall Lake Guardian

Drop off your Wall Lake Guardian "Pledge to Protect" form and pick up your Wall Lake Guardian logo'd bag from Katie & Christy's mid-Lakes. Together we can protect our beautiful Wall Lake!

www.mywalllake.com
greaterwalllakeassoc@gmail.com

'The invasive species are coming! The invasive species are coming! "

By Amy Seymour

Imagine Paul Revere shouting that warning while riding his horse through Michigan towns. It's likely that few people would panic, but Michiganders do need to be on the alert.

Michigan is blessed with more than 153 native species of fish in our lakes, rivers, ponds and streams. Nonnative species, however, are invading our waterways and have the potential to eliminate native species, disrupt food chains and harm prized fisheries.

Biologists recognize "bait bucket introductions" as one of the most common means of spreading nonnative species. Bait bucket introductions occur when anglers dump live bait into a body of water from which that bait did not originate.

Stopping bait-bucket-introductions relies heavily on public education, both about what nonnative invasive species are and how to identify them, as well as the rules and regulations surrounding live bait usage. Anglers shouldn't dump their leftover bait, including their bait bucket water into Michigan waters at the end of a fishing trip. Disposal of bait bucket water is intended to stop the spread of fish diseases. Alternatives to dumping include taking your bait home to use on a future fishing trip, offering it to another angler to use, dumping it on land far away from any waterway or placing it in a sealed container in the trash.

For anglers that do not collect their own bait, bait should be purchased from reputable commercial bait dealers. Commercial bait harvesters and retailers are regulated by the State of Michigan to insure they do not have bait that is compromised by nonnative invasive species or infected with fish diseases. Information about licensed bait retailers across the state is available on the Michigan DNR's website, www.dnr.state.mi.us/retailbait/.

Upon speaking with a local bait shop owner, here is where the bait they sell comes from.

Nightcrawlers – Canada

Red worms – Europe

Wax worms - Indiana

Crickets – Indiana

Wigglers – Trapped in the muds of Michigan & Indiana

Leaches – Minnesota/Dakota's

Pikes larva – farmed raised in Michigan

Mousy larva – farmed raised in upstate New York

Summer minnows – all certified and disease free

Fatheads – Minnesota/Dakota's/Wisconsin

Golden shiners – farm raised in Arkansas

Winter minnows – all certified and disease free

Emerald shiners – Pulled out of the Great Lakes in the fall. Sent to MSU for certification and 28 days of testing for VHS (Viral hemorrhagic septicemia)

Golden shiners – farm raised in Arkansas

Rosey reds – species of Fathead – Minnesota/Dakota's/Wisconsin

Suckers – Wisconsin

The best argument for not dumping the contents of your bait bucket or your bait bucket water into our waters in the State of Michigan is that the species you are introducing might cause great and irreversible harm to our aquatic resources.

For more information on the prevention of spreading aquatic invasive species please visit

<https://stopaquatichitchhikers.org/prevention/>

Dispose of bait in the trash

Bait and non-native plants and animals hitchhiking in bait can harm our lakes and rivers.

**PROTECT OUR
WATERS...**



Sea Grant
Great Lakes Network

For more ways to
protect our waters, visit
www.ProtectYourWaters.net

Developed by Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant, Illinois Natural History Survey,
Illinois Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. IISG-05-17

Protecting a Barry County Jewel:

The Leonard Farm Protected Forever

By: Hilary Hunt, Land Protection Specialist

This spring, the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) completed its 103rd conservation easement—the George and Doris Leonard Shadeland Conservation Easement. With 3,500 feet of frontage on Wall and Mud/Jones Lakes the Leonard Conservation Easement perfectly expresses everything that makes Barry County a one-of-a-kind-jewel. SWMLC has worked with George (Bud) and Doris Leonard since the mid-1990s toward the goal of protecting their beautiful family farm. Although both Bud and Doris passed on before the final paperwork was completed, their legacy lives on in these 116 splendid acres of gently rolling farmland, thousands of feet of lake frontage, acres and acres of shimmering wetlands, peaceful forests full of ancient trees, and the crown jewel of the property—a rare tamarack bog.

By placing this conservation easement on their property, the Leonard's have ensured that their land will stay natural and scenic forever—the productive farm fields will never be paved over, and the forests will always shelter diverse flora and fauna just as they have these past hundred years. A conservation easement is a voluntary commitment landowners can enter into to keep their land undeveloped and natural for future generations. Conservation easements are attached to the deed and remain with the property in perpetuity. SWMLC makes the commitment to visit the property every year and ensure the terms of the conservation easement are followed. In this case, after the Leonard's conservation easement was completed, the property was sold to a new buyer who will keep the land natural consistent with the terms of the easement, and who looks forward to many years of adventure on the property.

SWMLC Conservation Projects Manager, Emily Wilke emphasized, “The Leonard Conservation Easement is a perfect example of everything that makes Barry County such an incredible place to conserve land. Property owners like the Leonard's have a deep, abiding love for these special places, and you can feel the echoes of that legacy even after they are gone. I am honored to have been a part of their conservation legacy.”

Over the last 28 years, SWMLC has worked with hundreds of landowners throughout Southwest Michigan to protect their land, and has now conserved more than 17,000 acres! Much of this land was protected through privately owned conservation easements, like the Leonard property. If you have any questions about SWMLC or conservation easements check out our website www.swmlc.org, and like us on Facebook for up to date information and events. Please consider making a donation to help SWMLC continue to work with people just like you to improve habitat, protect water quality, support biodiversity, connect people with nature, and help families conserve the land they love.

