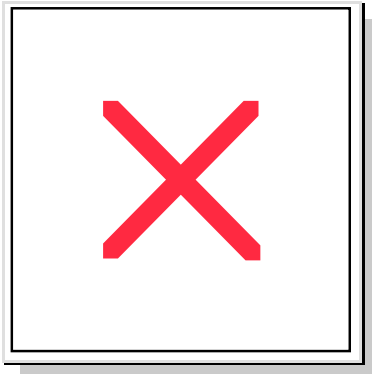


December 2008 ***** Dues Renewal Envelope Enclosed *****



President's Message

Imagine, if you are employed full-time (as I am), what your life would be like if your family income was the same now as it was in 1993. Would you be able to save for your children's education? Would you be able to own property on Elk or Skegemong lakes? Would you be able to save for your retirement or have any extra money available for emergencies?

Guess what—ESLA has not had an increase in membership dues since approximately 1993. No other non-profit organization of comparable size or complexity has had dues levels as low for as long as ESLA.

ESLA provides many services to our members and community. Consider how the many activities described in this Newsletter, such as scholarships, public meetings, water monitoring, review and response to proposed legislation, etc., are actually accomplished. There are only

two sources for accomplishing these outcomes—volunteer time and expenditure of ESLA funds. Both volunteer time and money are limited resources. For example, printing and distributing this Newsletter costs about \$1500 and there are at least four Newsletters sent to members and riparians each year. Maintaining and updating our website requires professional assistance and reimbursement for those services. Scholarships for support of talented local youth and teachers require direct expenditures of ESLA funds. Hiring lobbyists to monitor proposed State legislation, such as the recent road end proposals of HB 4463 and HB4464, is expensive but necessary. There are many other costs and expenses.

What about volunteer time?. In reality, there are about 10 ESLA officers and directors that contribute the vast majority of all ESLA volunteer time. As the demands of managing large lake associations have become increasingly complex, these volunteers are stretched to the limit of their capacity. In response, the ESLA Board has been considering the possibility of hiring a part-time administrative assistant to help keep ESLA a viable and proactive organization. The Torch Lake Protection Alliance (TLPA), the Three Lakes Association (Torch, Clam and Bellaire lakes), the Walloon Lake Association, the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, and the Grand Traverse Watershed

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Center all have paid staff and/or paid officers.

It should be no surprise that the ESLA Board has decided that it is time for a small increase in dues. The Board has also decided to make the membership year consistent with the calendar year, so memberships will now be for the period from Jan. 1 – Dec. 31. The enclosed dues envelope reflects this change, with the minimum level of membership being increased from \$15 to \$25. Last year, the average ESLA dues member contribution was \$31. This makes the 58% of ESLA members that contributed at higher than the minimum level important, especially those 66 members that contributed at the admiral (\$100) level. If you contributed at the minimum level last year, please consider giving at the captain (\$50), commodore (\$75), admiral (\$100) or a higher level this year. The average member contribution for comparable area lake associations and conservation organizations is over \$100. Increasing the ESLA average to at least \$50 would be very beneficial for the future of ESLA.

I understand that not everyone has the time or opportunity to volunteer to help accomplish the many ongoing ESLA activities. However, each of you has the opportunity right now to support ESLA goals and activities and to contribute to the continued protection of our beautiful lakes, streams, and watershed. Be assured, your membership and contributions at any level to ESLA are greatly appreciated. Remember that ESLA is a 501C organization, so your membership dues are tax deductible.

Dean W. Ginther
President, ESLA

Summer Water Quality Intern Program

Have you ever wondered what is on the bottom of Elk or Torch lakes? Is anything alive down in the deeper bottom areas of these lakes? This summer, under the guidance of Thom Yokum, ESLA sponsored three high school water quality interns who were involved in taking bottom samples at a variety of locations on Elk, Torch, and Bellaire lakes. These three students (Maggie Petersen, Andrew Mach, and Cameron Schaefer), who are attending Elk Rapids High School, were three of seven interns that learned about the scientific aspects of monitoring and measuring water quality. The result of their work is available on the ESLA website in a report entitled “Glacial Relicts of the Elk River Chain-of-Lakes, Antrim, Kalkaska, and Grand Traverse Counties, Michigan”. To find this report, go to <http://www.elk-skegemog.org/> and click the ESLA concerns tab; it is the third document listed there. Each of these three interns will be receiving a \$400 ESLA scholarship intended to further their education. This is one example of the support for our area youth and communities that you make possible by being a member of ESLA. ESLA wishes to thank Thom Yokum for his continued leadership in providing this learning and mentoring experience for these talented local high school students. Thom notes that if you will have a pontoon boat on Elk or Skegemog Lake next summer, please consider volunteering a few hours next summer to support the activities of the 2008 interns. Contact Thom Yokum at kstyocum@aol.com to see how you might help.

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The Future of the Elk Rapids Dam

Most people think of the Elk Rapids Dam as being the building that produces power and regulates water flow from the Chain of Lakes into the Grand Traverse Bay. However, according to Antrim County Drain Commissioner Mark Stone, the dam actually consists of both the building and the earthen structure extending several hundred yards on either side of the building. When you drive by the dam building, you are actually driving on the dam itself.

The Elk Rapids Dam has played a key role in the village from its earliest days. It powered the town's first saw mill and generated electricity for the community. Its construction allowed boat navigation through the Torch River and allowed the shipping of timber and agricultural products out of the county. The current structure dates to the 1920s, when it was constructed as a four-turbine hydroelectric facility. It generated electric power until the 1950s, when it was decommissioned, and Consumers Power Co. turned ownership over to the county in the 1960s. A national energy crisis in the early 1980s prompted county officials to reinstall two turbines to again start generating electricity. Traverse City Light and Power took over dam operation and maintenance, and bought the power it produced for the next 20-plus years.

More recently, Light and Power decided to phase out its involvement in local dam operations, including the Boardman, Sabin and Brown Bridge dams south of Traverse City. Antrim officials wanted to keep the dam functioning, in part because of its electricity generation, but also because it maintains the court-

ordered level of Elk Lake. The dam is licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) through 2013.

This summer, the county turned over operation of the dam to Elk Rapids Hydroelectric Power, a family owned company operated by Bill Stockhausen and his son, Stock. Under the agreement, Stockhausen's company will pay the county \$195,000 to retire an existing bond on the structure and take ownership of the electrical generating equipment. The county will continue to own the land and the major fixed assets. Stockhausen said the electricity generated will be sold to Consumers.

Beginning in 2013, if the dam's federal license is renewed, the county will receive 10 percent of gross receipts of power sales. The agreement also includes provisions for the county to buy power from the dam at a discount rate for facilities like the courthouse, jail and airport.

However, renewal of the FERC license is not automatic and it is anticipated that there may be resistance to approving the ER dam license. In anticipation of the application for renewal, the ESLA Board of Directors met with Mark Stone and the Stockhausens on November 13 to discuss preparation for the license renewal process. One outcome of this meeting will be the submission of an ESLA sponsored letter to the Antrim County Commissioners supporting the appointment of an Antrim County Citizen's Planning Commission for renewal of the FERC license for the ER dam.

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When to Lower the Water Level?

By legal mandate, water level in Elk Lake (measured at the Elk Rapids Dam) is to be lowered November 1st every year by 6 tenths of a foot (about 7 inches). This requirement is based on the assumption that lakeshore erosion and damage will be reduced if the water levels are lower during the winter months. Actually, this Court mandated legal requirement does not specify when the lowering should begin or when it should end; only that the process should be ongoing by November 1st of each year. Typically, if there are no significant rain events, it takes about two weeks to lower the level of Elk Lake by 6 tenths of a foot. So, it is legally permissible to start lowering the lake level as late as November 1st or to start several weeks earlier.

Bill and Stock Stockhausen (the ER dam operators) have indicated they would like input from riparians regarding the best time to begin lowering the water level. So here is the question: when do you prefer that the lowering of Elk Lake begin (assuming it will take two weeks to complete)?

Please respond by sending your choice of either 4, 3, 2, 1, 0, or 6 (see below) to Dean Ginther at dean.ginther@gmail.com. In the subject line of your email indicate “ESLA Choice #”, where # represents your choice. If you have comments or questions, please include those in the body of the email. If a large enough sample of riparians respond, this information can be an important determinant of when the Elk Lake water level will be lowered next year and thereafter.

Choices:

- #4. Start the lowering four weeks prior to Nov. 1st.
- #3. Start the lowering three weeks prior to Nov. 1st.
- #2. Start the lowering two weeks prior to Nov. 1st.
- #1. Start the lowering one week prior to Nov. 1st.
- #0. Start the lowering on Nov. 1st.
- #9. No preference.

William Letsche--Water Quality Volunteer Extraordinaire

Since 1990, ESLA has contracted with the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to provide water quality monitoring, analysis, and reports. Much of the actual sampling is done by an ESLA volunteer who has received training to collect the samples and complete the monitoring tasks, such as using the Secchi disk to measure water clarity. For many years, William Letsche has been the ESLA volunteer who has collected water samples and made measurements on a weekly basis throughout the summer months. He will be “retiring” from that volunteer position next summer after his years of continued and dedicated service. Due to his efforts and the contributions of other volunteers, riparians and area residents continue to benefit from the information collected by these ongoing water quality monitoring activities. Thank you, Bill Letsche, for your special efforts and long term commitment to ESLA and the protection of our beautiful and unique lakes.

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Global Warming and Living Up-North

Global warming is happening and in geological time, it is occurring very quickly. My great Aunt and Uncle, May and Web Shippey, who lived on Elk Lake for sixty years until 1990, would find that the climate today is very different than what they experienced during their residence on Elk Lake. This fall has been very mild and the forecast is for a mild winter. Snowfall last winter was low. This summer we experienced several months of significantly below average rainfall and near drought conditions.

So warmer is better up north, you may be thinking. Not necessarily—for example, during the sixty years I have been spending time on Elk Lake, wild fires in this area have been very uncommon due to the relatively high humidity and consistent rainfall. Indeed, I have never known of a house that has burned down on Elk Lake due to a wild fire. More recently, conditions during the summer months have been optimum for wildfires—it may be just a matter of time until we have a significant wildfire. In addition, it is now not unusual that Elk Lake does not freeze over completely during the winter and the average summer water temperature is several degrees higher than what was typical a decade ago. These changes could have a significant effect on plant and algae growth as well as fish habitat. The local agricultural community, especially the cherry farmers, may be negatively impacted by the increasingly warmer temperatures and reduced precipitation. There are other potential changes to life up north, such as virtual

elimination of the local ski and snowmobile industry.

Global warming is an international issue and you may be thinking that there is really little effect you can have as an individual. For any one individual this may be true, but if many individuals make small changes the cumulative effect can be significant. Americans are major energy consumers and our high use of carbon based fuels significantly increases global warming.

So, here is a trick question for you. Are you a part of the problem or a part of the solution? Most likely, the answer is that you are both a part of the problem and, potentially, a part of the solution. It is an issue that needs to be addressed since waiting compounds the difficulty.

Hopefully, each of us will learn how to adjust our lifestyle to reduce our impact on global warming. Small changes can make a difference. Also, each of us, as voters and citizens should require that our elected local, state, and national officials indicate how they will address the public policy challenges of global warming. Changes in public policy, law, and regulation can make a big difference.

Local Weather Conditions

It is possible to find yesterday's weather conditions for Traverse City in the paper or on the Internet but have you ever wanted to know the current weather conditions on Elk Lake? Well now you can. Go to the ESLA website at <http://www.elk-skegemog.org/> and click on the Weather Underground logo at the bottom of the webpage. You will find current weather conditions updated

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every 10 minutes and also past weather information for any specific day.

Road End Legislation Update

On September 1st, at a public meeting sponsored by ESLA at the Milton Township Offices, Representative Kevin Elsenheimer reiterated his position against HB 4463 and 4464 (the road end bills). He stated that these bills probably will not move forward from the Senate Committee on Government Operations and Reform during the 2007 session but, with the current political situation in Lansing, nothing is for sure. ESLA continues to monitor the status of these bills and any efforts to jeopardize the public's right of access to our lakes and streams. Rapid response to any political changes may be needed, so it is particularly important that ESLA has a current email address for each member. When you send in the enclosed dues envelope, please be sure to include your email address. Next year it is expected that road end legislation supported by the same groups that proposed HB 4463 and 4464 will be presented again. If you have communicated to your State Representative or Senator regarding these bills, thank you for your participation and involvement. More than likely, it will be needed again next year.

Torch River Stump Markers

Have you traveled up the Torch River to Torch Lake? This is a trip that many people take every summer. Not many years ago, it was a common occurrence that a bent propeller or other damage from a collision with underwater stumps or objects would result from attempted

navigation through the mouth of Torch River.

These days, the channel is well marked and boat damage is greatly reduced. Contrary to what some people believe, the markings are not provided by the State or local governments but rather as a service to the public by ESLA. Stan Zenas has been the ESLA volunteer that has continued the placement and maintenance of these markers for the past several years. Next spring he has asked for some assistance. If you are able to help Stan this spring with a few hours of assistance or would be interested in learning about assuming this responsibility, please contact him at: sczenas@torchlake.com.

Agreement Reached in Inland Treaty Rights Case

The Department of Natural Resources, the United States and five Michigan Indian tribes jointly announced that they have reached an agreement on tribal inland hunting, fishing, and gathering rights in the 1836 Treaty area of Michigan. The agreement resolves a long-standing dispute with respect to federal and tribal claims that the tribes retained rights under the 1836 Treaty of Washington to hunt, fish, and gather in the treaty area under tribal regulations, rather than under state law.

The area affected by the agreement is the portion of Michigan within the 1836 treaty boundary, which includes roughly the eastern half of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and a large area in the northern third of the Lower Peninsula. Tribal members may harvest natural resources under the agreement for their own subsistence use from tribal lands

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and from lands open to the public. With limited exceptions for species subject to commercial harvest under state law (such as furbearers), the agreement does not provide for commercial hunting, fishing, or gathering by tribal members. Similarly, with limited exceptions (such as larger commercial forest land holdings already open to the public), the agreement does not open private land for harvesting activities without permission of landowners.

For more detailed information, see the ESLA website (<http://www.elk-skegemog.org/index.php>) and go to the DNR's Web site at www.michigan.gov/dnr.

Elk-Skegemog Lakes Endowment Fund

Giving through the Community Foundation offers the advantage of supporting efforts to protect lakes and the community today, while helping to assure that these efforts will continue to be supported forever. A portion of the Endowment is available for current spending with the remainder invested for future growth which will provide earnings for spending forever.

In addition, donors contributing to the Elk-Skegemog Lakes Endowment Fund, or any Community Foundation Endowment, are eligible for a special Michigan Community Foundation State Tax Credit, meaning the cost to a donor to make the contribution is a small percentage of the value of the gift. Individuals are eligible for a maximum credit of \$100 (based on a \$200 gift) and couples are eligible for a maximum credit of \$200 (based on a \$400 gift). These credits are available in addition to

the credits you may already take for gifts to radio or schools.

In addition to your membership in ESLA we hope you'll consider a gift to the Elk-Skegemog Lakes Endowment this year. Checks should be written to the Elk-Skegemog Lakes Endowment and mailed directly to the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation at 250 E. Front Street, Ste. 310, Traverse City, MI 49684. The Community Foundation can also facilitate credit card and stock gifts. Call 231-935-4066 for more information.

Mitchell Creek E. Coli Levels

Mitchell Creek, which runs between Mud Lake and Grand Traverse Bay in Northern Milton Township, continues to have levels of E. Coli which are considered above the recommended State levels for safe physical contact. As a result of water quality studies conducted this summer, the MDEQ has recommended that Mitchell Creek be put on its "watch" list. In a recent meeting of the Milton Township Board, a resolution was adopted to support the continued DEQ monitoring of Mitchell Creek. In addition to MDEQ tests on Mitchell Creek in 2007, The Three Lakes Association tested 17 creeks in Antrim County this summer as part of their annual Lake Watch program. None of the creeks tested by the Three Lakes Association were found to have unsafe levels of E. Coli. While Mitchell Creek is not officially in the Elk Rapids River Watershed, it is in the interest of ESLA and all citizens of Antrim County that all the lakes and streams are safe and clean.

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ESLA Mailing Address
P.O. Box 8
Elk Rapids, MI 49629

Don't forget to return the enclosed membership envelope. Your membership allows ESLA to continue to protect our lakes and streams, provide education and scholarships, monitor water quality, anticipate events, coordinate efforts, and to inform our membership, elected officials, and local citizens. Please include your email address on the renewal envelope. Thank you for your renewed or new membership,

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