

TLA Quarterly

JANUARY 2007

President's Letter

We have just concluded another productive and rewarding year for the Three Lakes Association. I'm sure that our many accomplishments and the great work of our membership zone directors explain our membership is the highest in years.

Our water quality model program is now complete for Torch, Clam and Bellaire lakes plus associated rivers and streams. We will be presenting the results for Bellaire and Clam to Township officials and other interested parties January 24th at Camp Hayo-Went-Ha. The volunteer hours put in by our members and friends, along with the grant monies, made this huge task a reality. Our relationship with the high schools in the area is solid because of our very successful intern program. As always, the students were all very complimentary about what they learned and how it will serve them in the future. They have become stewards of this beautiful area we live in and they will bring others along with them.

Next year we will be working with Grass River Natural Area, property owners and others to identify ways to ensure safety and preserve the shoreline and water quality along the Grass River.

The proposed expansion at DeWitt Marina has caused some concern among our Clam Lake friends. TLA plans to follow this closely and I refer you to the Q&A interview with Doug Davis, DeWitt's owner, in this newsletter.

Some of our waterfowl are confused! Two weeks ago we had three feet of snow in about five days and ice was starting to form on the lakes. Now we are having a heat wave and the snow and ice are gone. I'm sure that will change.

Have a very happy and healthy New Year!

Regards,

Bob Bagley

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The Mission of the Three Lakes Association is to provide leadership to preserve, protect, and improve the environmental quality of the chain of lakes watershed for all generations.



THREE LAKES ASSOCIATION

Founded 1966

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- Norton Bretz, Treasurer
- Dorothy Clore, Secretary
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- Ray Ludwa, Water Safety
- George Bushnell, Public Relations
- Alan Hickman, Membership
- Norton Bretz, Financial Stability

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the Three Lakes Association

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Three Lakes Association
P.O. Box 689
Bellaire, MI 49615

DeWitt's Marina Expansion

Doug Davis, DeWitt's Marina owner, and Warren Corteggiano, General Manager, called TLA and Torch Lake Protection Alliance (TLPA) a year ago to review some land-based upgrade plans. (See the details in the interview with Doug and Warren below). TLA and TLPA both gave approvals for the project as presented. Recently, DeWitt Marine applied for a DEQ permit to add 58 seasonal docks to serve the anticipated increase in their "in-and-out" boat customers generated by their marina upgrade. Slip expansion was not mentioned to TLA until the November 2006 permit application was filed with the DEQ. The proposed dock expansion involves 58 seasonal floating docks extending out into Clam Lake. (See photo of dock plan below)

The TLA Board of Directors agreed that in lieu of our water quality modeling efforts and strategy we approach this development like any other. We agreed to concentrate on reducing phosphorus loading while encouraging environmentally responsible development. To further demonstrate their environmental stewardship DeWitt's has applied for the "Clean Marina" recognition from the DEQ. Basically this involves the marina owners signing a pledge to work in partnership with the Michigan Clean Marina program to cooperatively identify opportunities for both practical and innovative practices that lead to reductions and elimination of pollution not just for the facility but also in any adjacent waterways. There are only 6-7 marinas in the state with this designation according to the DEQ website. TLA offered to assist the project by monitoring any anticipated or unanticipated phosphorus loadings. DeWitt's Marine is a riparian property owner and has attempted to follow all the state and local rules and regulations. TLA has chosen to stay positive and to encourage dialog between all those concerned to reach consensus. We continue to evaluate all new information and will oppose any illegal or environmentally damaging activities.



TLA Board of Directors Rationale for DeWitt's Strategy

A number of Clam Lake residents have expressed dissatisfaction with the TLA approach in the DeWitt's expansion matter. Here is a brief synopsis of the thought behind the TLA position. The TLA Board and Executive Director have a lot of experience in water quality matters and have become widely respected for our approach to our organizational mission. One major example of this was the \$300,000, including \$150,000 in grants by the DEQ, spent to build a predictive model for water quality on all 3 of our major lakes. A total of \$180,000 and over 1000 hours were spent on the Clam Lake and Lake Bellaire water quality modeling project this past summer.

First and foremost every decision we make is based on the likely impact on water quality. Based on the aforementioned work this past year, and our extensive history of data, we have a very complete picture of Clam Lake and the environmental problems on the lake. DeWitt Marina is not a major problem on the lake from either a hydrocarbon, or nutrient-loading basis. Their plans for adding dockage and other land-based activities are unlikely to contribute to significant water quality problems in these areas. However, we have in place the baseline data to judge their performance and are committed to work aggressively to remedy any problems that might occur. Of course we assume they will continue to be good stewards and aid in these efforts.

Second, we have analyzed the legal and regulatory requirements for this type of commercial operation and its proposed expansion. We have received professional help in this regard. Based on precedents set by the DEQ and DNR, we believe they will not see this expansion as a problem to a great degree. The DNR has stated, and demonstrated repeatedly, their goal of increasing boating on lakes. While we agree they often go too far in this approach we do not think they will see the DeWitt's project as a problem. We know there are examples of reasons why people might conclude otherwise. However, the DNR assumes boating law and rules will be obeyed and that is the basis for their decision-making, not what might happen if someone ignores the rules or laws. Similarly the DEQ requirements are to examine 'prudent and reasonable alternatives' to the proposal. There might be some hope that the number of docks and congestion is too high at the NW end of the lake and they could well require a reduction there. However, it will be the opinion of the neighbors and others directly affected by the additional dockage that will have the most impact in this argument.

This is because the decisions are always most relevant, if things end up in court, when people with 'standing' are involved in the dispute. Neighbors, and riparian owners are the key here. Lake Associations, per se, are not recognized as being key spokespersons unless they represent the vast majority of the property owners. Three Lakes has never had a majority of owners on Clam in our membership and, as such would not be a good spokesperson choice. Some of us have made a number of calls on behalf of homeowners urging them to get involved and to comment to the DEQ. The first result of these efforts was the

scheduling of a DEQ sponsored public hearing on December 18, 2006. The DEQ decision on the permit application will be rendered late in January.

Finally, decisions are based on the overall impact on the achievement of TLA's mission and goals. We have been very effective in the past few years in building a reputation as a balanced organization working for the benefit of all who use and value the lakes. A clear example of how effective this has been has been the support by all townships with jurisdiction on our three lakes supporting, both by resolution and financially, our water quality, predictive, modeling work the past two years. While we may not always agree with how some things are done by local governmental and State bodies, we can achieve far more in partnership with them, than we can as always being perceived as adversaries.

In this case the choices were not easy. They were made especially difficult because the communications from DeWitt's about the floating docks were late and incomplete. No one at TLA knew of these new docks until the first week in November. Add to this the fact that riparian owners on Clam have been frustrated by a number of 'quality of life' issues over the past few years. These include more boats, louder boats, more weeds, zebra mussels and erosion. It is very possible the DeWitt expansion could exacerbate some of these problems. This must be weighed against having a viable business that creates jobs, opens up boating enjoyment to more people who might not be lucky enough to live on lakes. As an organization TLA has no data available that could allow us to conclude with certainty, which outcome is most likely.

So, in the final analysis we decided that it would be better for the neighbors, Dewitt's and the appropriate regulatory bodies to make the decision on the expansion permit. We did not think we had any concrete data or information that would be helpful to the final outcome. In the final analysis, is our goal to do what is right for the entire lake. We will make any information we have available to both sides on this issue. Some of our board members are also working with DeWitt's to document their plans fully and we will share this, in writing, as soon as it is completed. (See TLA interview with Doug Davis below)

Finally, we encourage you, and everyone else involved in this, to realize that no matter what decision is made we must all live and work here together in the future. It is in everyone's best interest to make sure a dialogue continues between everyone concerned with Clam Lake. Hopefully we can work together on whatever problems that need addressing. From our perspective a collaborative effort between riparians, Dewitt's, TLA, law enforcement, and the boating public will result in the best outcome.

We realize that some members might resign from TLA as a result of our approach. Ultimately we will need more members on Clam Lake, and the other lakes to increase the chances of all of us succeeding in preserving these jewels!

The TLA Executive Committee

TLA Interview with Doug Davis, DeWitt's Marine Owner

Norton Bretz and Dean Branson conducted the following interview of DeWitt's owner Doug Davis and General Manager, Warren Corteggiano, to provide our members with the current status of the DeWitt's project.

Q: Can you outline your expansion plans for DeWitt's?

Doug: We want to call our facility "Torch Key" and make it into a family oriented gathering place. The "Torch Key" concept involves a change in our business focus as well as actually expanding our business. We need to expand our boat slip facilities because there are simply more requests for slips than we presently have. So, we have a plan to remodel our facility over a period of five to seven years starting with the addition of a floating dock with 58 slip spaces in front of our facility. These slips will be used for our "In and Out" customers, our pontoon rentals, fuel customers, and other temporary visitors.

However, this is only the beginning of our plans to update and remodel our current facility. We want to replace the roofs of our offices, shop area, and one side of our slips with decks. We expect to add bimini covers to this area to make it attractive for gatherings. Many of our customers have also asked about a bar/restaurant, but at this time we have no plans to operate such a business. We are considering leasing space for pizza, coffee, subs, or ice cream. In fact we may open a trailer as a temporary facility first and upgrade as time permits. Because our business process requires us to work with oil and solvents we want to move our boat maintenance facility off the shoreline to minimize the impact of this work on the water.

Since we want to make this into a family and community centered business, we are going to make a community room and bathhouse near the slips for gatherings both by our own patrons and by community groups. Of course, these facilities will require bathrooms that we expect to upgrade from our current use of Port-A-Johns. Similarly, we have hired a consultant to advise us on how to upgrade our septic system. We are considering using the type of system that treats phosphorus, a type that the Antrim County Health Department advocates for future

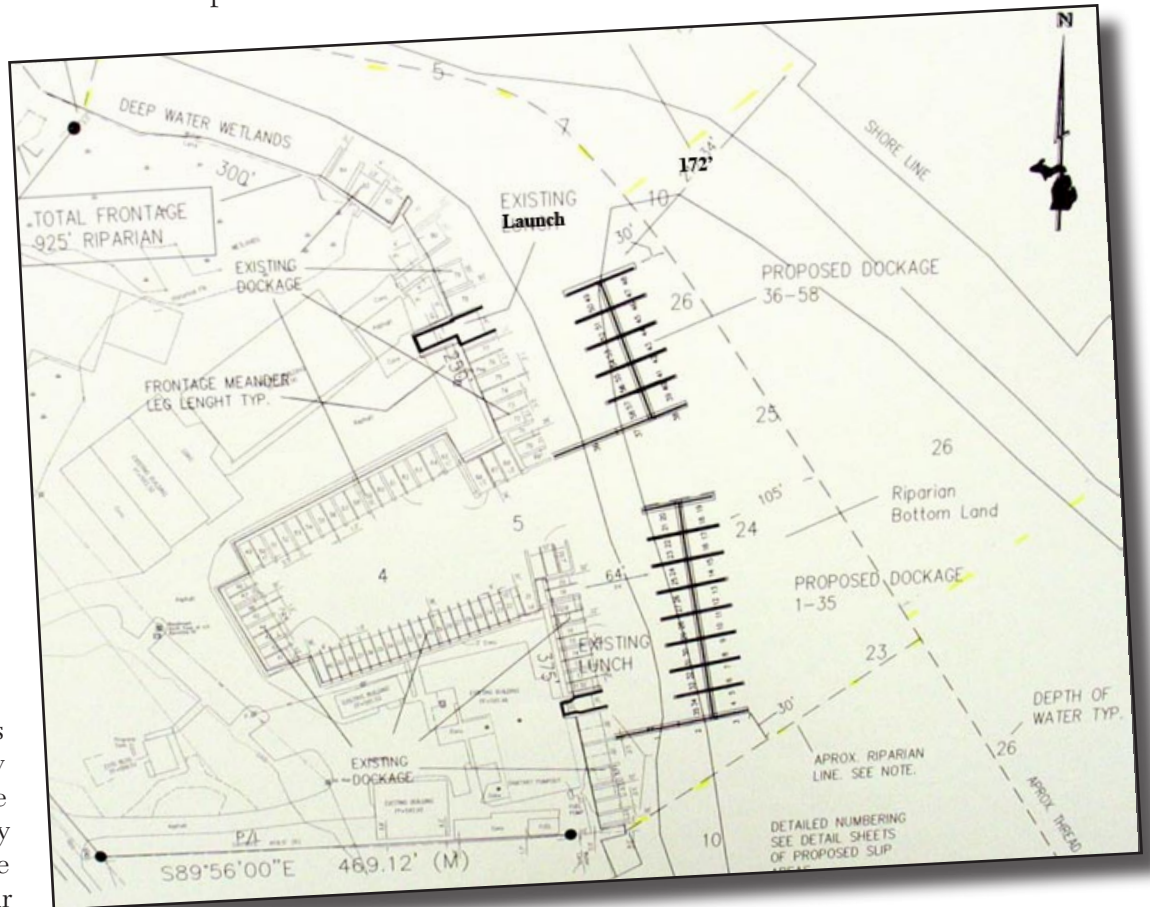
residential septic systems. Cost is a factor but we want to make our facility into a model marina.

With all our roof and pavement we have, we also will to add filtration gardens that serve as runoff basins. We have plans to make attractive areas with rocks and plants and have been in discussions with Heidi Lang, the Antrim County Soil and Erosion expert. In fact, we are in the process of applying for an MDEQ "Clean Marina" designation. Informal discussions with state officials have reassured us that we already meet or exceed all of the requirements.

Q: Many of the objections voiced by residents to your new business plan center around the dock expansion. Could you explain that more?

Doug: We feel that the 58-slip dock expansion will be the limit of our plans for the foreseeable future. An outline of this dock area is shown in the accompanying figure.

We considered several types of dockage and decided on the



floating arrangement for economic, practical, and environmental reasons. First, they are relatively inexpensive compared to permanent docks, cause less disturbance to the lake bottom, and because they will be removed seasonally, they avoid problems with ice. Our plans are to simply disconnect them from their mooring system and

Continued on next page

tow them into our slip space. We considered adding docks to the north but prefer not to interfere with the lily pads and natural area there. This would also involve some dredging or other disturbance that we felt would take away from the natural feel of our area here.

We have carefully measured the space we are asking for and have marked it with buoys to show everyone our plans. At the north end our docks will extend 134 feet from the shoreline leaving 172 feet free for boat traffic. At present we have boats waiting in the channel for spaces or gas here on busy days, and we feel that this will reduce, not increase congestion.

In August of 2006 we made a decision to limit our logistical marine services to boats of 26 feet or less. This decision was based on “over the road” requirements and the water depth of our ramps. Some of our long-term customers have boats larger than this, and we will continue to serve them. This is especially true for Clam Lake and Grass River, but even in Torch Lake the boat accesses make launching larger boats difficult anyway.

We will have minimal 110v GFI service on these docks. This means service for battery chargers and vacuum cleaners, but not much else. These stations will be disconnected when the docks are towed to their winter storage area.

Q: Other residents are concerned about noisy late night parties and drinking on your slips. What are your thoughts about this?

Doug: We do not want noisy late night parties any more than anyone else. In fact, our own customers are the first to complain. In general our customers are quiet and have families of their own here. They do not bother anyone now. We simply won't tolerate this kind of nonsense. Our employees regularly warn boats about exceeding our “No Wake” rules and take a hard line against boats with boom boxes. The dive shop even cleans the bottom of the river with divers once a year. In fact, the owners and employees of Butch's Marina and Dockside have the same attitude as we do. We do a fair share the policing of boats in this area because we are here all the time.

The culture of “Torch Key” will support peaceful enjoyment of our customer's families and their investment in quality time on the lake. Security systems will be put into place to prevent any violation of this culture. We need this in part for our own protection, but it will also help us police our facility for inappropriate behavior.

Let me repeat what I said before. Our riparian neighbors largely support this marina, and we want to make it into a place where families like to stop. Our boat business is moving away from sales and toward service. Because of gas prices and the general downturn in Michigan's economy, our boat traffic is down compared to the past. If we want to stay in business we will have to adapt to the needs of our customers. They seem to prefer pontoon boats and we do too. This type of boat has fewer issues with speed and wake and they are oriented toward our own conservative approach to boating. You may have noticed that we don't sell jet skis either. We want to make Torch Key into a place where boaters like to stop.

Q: What do you say to the people who simply don't want your facility to grow at all?

Doug: We have chosen to be the marina business because

it's our life and because we think we can make it successful. This is a motivation for every businessperson. We have had several offers by condominium developers to sell our property, and these offers are attractive. However, we have been in this business for many years and feel that we are doing a service to the community. Not only do boaters need storage and service facilities, but also Antrim County needs jobs.

We will be expanding our full time employees from 14 to about 30 over the next five to seven years, mainly in customer service, and we have extra help in the summer over and above this. We spend a significant amount of money upgrading our maintenance facilities and training our staff. We provide skilled jobs with benefits for many county residents. They are committed to us and we need to be able to have a viable business to keep them on. We feel that this is a community issue and hope to work with the community to make it work for everyone.

Q: Many of lake residents are away for the winter, and feel out-of-the loop, with respect to these developments. Others feel that DeWitt's plans are a complete surprise. What can you do to communicate or interact with them better?

Warren: First of all, we sent out a letter to almost three thousand riparian landowners announcing our “Open House” this spring. In the letter the comment “to stop by and learn about “Torch Key” appeared in the last paragraph.

We have had drawings of our plans in our offices for most of the last year and have tried to be as open as possible. We hosted a gathering here at DeWitts Dec. 2, where we had a good discussion with a room full of guests. We will be putting our plans on our website in the next month, and we expect that this interview and newspaper articles will help make our plans more accessible.

A group of Clam Lake residents is being formed to oppose some of our expansion plans, but we would prefer to speak with people face to face and find out if there is some common ground for all of us. We would welcome any discussion forum that could be arranged between DeWitts and any group of merit. Perhaps Three Lakes Association could host such a meeting. In fact, with speakerphone technology even our snowbirds could participate.

Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Hearing

The DEQ held a public hearing on Dewitt's application for a permit to install 58 floating docks, December 18, at the Helena Township Community Center. The DEQ received input from those in attendance and will render a decision by January 18, 2007. The TLA Board evaluated all current information concerning the proposal and chose to neither support nor oppose the project. We have defined our role as a facilitator for all parties involved in arriving at a consensus. A new organization called the Friends of Clam Lake presented a vigorous rationale for not allowing this expansion. The DEQ decision will be posted on our website, www.3lakes.com

Executive Director's CORNER

October 12, 2006 marked the completion of my fourth year as Executive Director of Three Lakes Association. Serving TLA has been a pleasure and an honor for me. I am grateful for the many wonderful people I've met, the challenging job-related experiences I've had, and the many opportunities for personal growth during these last four years. I'm extremely proud to be associated with a dynamic organization that has always been eager and willing to take on massive water quality projects while also developing critical new ties to the broader community.

I share the pride in four years of spectacular accomplishments with all those who have worked so hard to achieve our goals. Three Lakes Association now has a firm foundation and a clear vision with which to continue providing leadership to protect our watershed for all generations. I have confidence that TLA will continue to be a great and growing organization.

I've been exploring new ways to contribute to the broader community and to possibly undertake some entrepreneurial opportunities that will provide new challenges for me. As a result of these deliberations I have come to a single conclusion. I need more time for the things I want to explore.

With mixed feelings, I will officially retire from my position as Executive Director of TLA effective March 31, 2007. The Board of Directors has approved Norton Bretz as my replacement and I'm confident that he will lead TLA to new frontiers while continuing to fulfill the TLA mission.

Thank you all for your help and support.

Sincerely,

Tim Hannert

Goals for 2007:

Stan Moore, MSU Extension Director, facilitated a goals-setting session for the TLA Board of Directors, at the January board meeting. The following goals have been selected for this year:

- Communicate TLA's accomplishments effectively to build broader support of our mission.
- Develop collaborative relationships with other groups to effectively complete water quality projects and to resolve environmental issues.
- Expand the Predictive Water Quality Model database, and encourage the use of phosphorous-loading criteria as an integral part of governmental regulations.
- Develop more effective educational outreach efforts to support our mission.
- Achieve a membership total of 550.

New Membership Categories for 2006:

- **Basic (\$50)** supports newsletters and administrative costs.
- **Donor (\$100)** supports the above and ensures the continuation of basic water quality monitoring.
- **Steward (\$500)** supports the above plus the high school summer intern program.
- **Benefactor (\$1,000)** supports the above and predictive water quality modeling efforts.
- **Life (\$2,000)** accomplishes all of the above while assuring future financial stability by growing our endowment, the Three Lakes Watershed Conservation Fund, administered by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation.

Please use the form below to renew your Three Lakes Membership.

Membership Counts!

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May we include your name in our newsletter donor list?
Yes No

Three Lakes Association is a 501(c)(3) corporation. Your dues and other contributions are tax deductible. Gifts, memorials, and bequests can also be made to the Three Lakes watershed Conservation Foundation administered by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation. Michigan residents receive a 50% state tax credit for contributions to this fund. Call for further information.

* * * * *

To join Three Lakes Association please return this form with your check to:
THREE LAKES ASSOCIATION
P.O. Box 689
Bellaire, MI 49615

Membership Report

Our membership for 2006 reached 447, up from 417 in 2005. While this was short of our goal of 500 members, we are moving in a positive direction for our future. The 2007 membership renewal and annual report was sent December 1. If you did not receive this renewal request, please use the membership form found in this newsletter to renew your support. After renewing your membership for 2007 please encourage your friends and neighbors to do the same.

Membership gives you more than just a newsletter. It provides assurance that water quality issues throughout the Chain O' Lakes watershed are in the forefront and gives you a platform to get answers to your questions and concerns. Your membership dues are what enable TLA to continue their water quality testing programs, to fund student intern programs each summer, and to bring you educational opportunities. Please join us in our mission "Provide leadership to preserve, protect, and improve the environmental quality of the Chain O' Lakes watershed for all generations". We can't do it without you!

Alan Hickman, Membership Chair



Water Quality Team visits Lansing and MSU

Dean Branson and Norton Bretz accompanied members of Elk Skegemog Lake Association (ESLA) as they presented the ESLA grant proposal draft to the DEQ in Lansing for the next phase of the watershed modeling project. TLA has been mentoring ESLA in this process with the expectation that our modeling protocol will be continued downstream to Elk and Skegemog Lakes during 2007. Gary Kholhepp, DEQ grant reviewer and project officer, gave the team positive feedback and much encouragement. He was enthusiastic to see the TLA modeling format spreading to other lake associations. Grant awards will be announced this spring. If ESLA is awarded a grant for 2007, TLA will continue to support their project by loaning equipment and expertise.

Michigan State University has recently established the "Center for Water Studies" and Professor R. Jan Stevenson, our friend and colleague, is the new director. The water quality team attended a mini-seminar on water quality issues and presented an overview of the TLA modeling project for Torch, Clam, and Bellaire lakes. The MSU professors in attendance were quite amazed at the scientific accomplishments made by TLA in the last three years. Building an ongoing relationship with water quality experts at MSU has been one of our long-term goals. Thank you Dean and Norton for your hard work and continued commitment.

Newest TLA Members

We welcome the following new members and thank them for choosing to support the Three Lakes mission to provide leadership in protecting the Chain of Lakes watershed for all generations:

Erica Ozanne and Robert Linden
6404 Crystal Beach Rd • Rapid City, MI 49676

Stuart and Liz Evans
PO Box 313 • Eastport, MI 49627

Jay Bretz
PO Box 484 • Eastport, MI 49627

Lee and Chris Georgs
390 Riverside Dr, Apt 5A • New York, NY 10025

Andrew Malasky and Steve Pearl
PO Box 903 • Boulder Creek, CA 95006

Jane Martin
PO Box 689 • Bellaire, MI 49615

Salo and Janet Suwalsky
277 Fairview Ave • Long Valley, NJ 07853

Elissa Ozanne
6404 Crystal Beach Rd • Rapid City, MI 49676

Margaret E. Hunter
PO Box 269 • Alden, MI 49612

Don and Celeste Turcotte
9635 Quailwood Trail • Centerville, OH 45458

Jot and Etoile Holzaepfel
7042 Lone Tree Point Lane • Alden, MI 49612

Tom and Pam Siegenthaler
7042 Lone Tree Point Lane
Alden, MI 49612

Roy and Josie Ellison
6003 N M-88 • Central Lake, MI 49622

John and Kathy Beeby
3614 Loverslane • Kalamazoo, MI 49201

Charles and Diane Kopec
2460 US Hwy 31 N • Kewadin, MI 49648

Corliss and Mary Anderson, JR.
7220 Wiscasset Lane • Alden, MI 49612

Paul and Patricia Roush
3487 NE Torch Lake Dr • Central Lake, MI 49622

Paul Shelby
PO Box 511 • Eastport, MI 49627

Marilyn Strader
7461 New Hampshire • Davison, MI 48423

Bob and Pam Currey
3658 SE Torch Lake Dr • Bellaire, MI 49615

Tom and Anita Nordberg
1904 SE Torch Lake Dr • Bellaire, MI 49615

Bob and Margaret Dennis
2205 Terrace Ave • Central Lake, MI 49622

Ken and Claudia Drake
6639 Crystal Beach Rd • Rapid City, MI 49676

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January 2007 issue of the TLA Quarterly

THREE LAKES
ASSOCIATION

