



# QUARTERLY

THREE LAKES ASSOCIATION

SERVING LAKE BELLAIRE, CLAM LAKE AND TORCH LAKE IN NORTHWEST MICHIGAN

SUMMER 2025

## The Maury Creek Story

Shanty Creek Resort began as a private membership venture conceived by local businessman Roy Deskin on more than a thousand acres of hilly forested land overlooking Lake Bellaire. After his passing in 1969, the resort was sold to outside developers and construction of Trappers Lodge began. Soon after, Chet Matlby's Beach Club which had frontage on Lake Bellaire was acquired and access was extended to all resort home and condominium owners. In 1983, construction of the Legend Golf Course caused significant soil erosion impacting Lake Bellaire and Grass River. Antrim County soil erosion agent, Warren Studley, with support from TLA and quit a few Lake Bellaire property owners worked desperately for years to correct this problem. A decade earlier with County support and a Resource Conservation grant, Warren had teamed with TLA to start the Grass River Wildlife Project which ultimately became the Grass River Natural Area. This time they were successful at getting the Resort to draft a master drainage plan but implementation was spotty until the resort was purchased by Club Corporation of America which provided funds for several soil erosion projects.

One of those projects was to dig a small sand trap pond just East of M88 on Maury Creek which originates at the second hole of the golf course. The creek flows through heavily wooded parcels dropping more than a hundred feet in elevation to a field adjacent to M88 before passing through culverts under the highway and then under

Fisherman's Paradise Road and drains into Lake Bellaire between the Beach Club and a riparian parcel to the South. The pond is intended to provide time for heavier sediments such as sand to settle from the water and requires periodic dredging to remain effective. It is unclear how many times the pond has been dredged but the last time was in 2019 when around 300 cubic yards of sand were removed by permit. Sand trap pond maintenance is performed at the discretion of the resort which pays for the work to be done.

During TLA's July public education event held at the Beach Club, turbid water flowing from Maury Creek was fouling the shoreline and extended more than a hundred yards to the northeast. Alluvial deposits of sand were noticeable where the creek enters Lake Bellaire but on that day the turbidity plume was milky and appeared to be composed of fine clay. The lake bottom sediments near the shoreline in

this area are increasingly being dominated by this fine clay material which resists settling and resuspends easily in waves and currents.

The following month during TLA's annual meeting this same area of shoreline was experiencing the largest green algae bloom that any attendees had ever witnessed in our local lakes. Microscopic evaluation determined it to be a native filamentous macro-algae, and although being very unsightly, it was a non-toxic variety. At the time the algae samples were collected a moderate on-shore breeze was causing noticeable resuspension of the fine clay sediments up and down the shoreline and more than 75 feet out into the lake on either side of the creek mouth. No turbidity or green algae were noticeably present to the south at the public boat ramp or along the frontage of several riparian properties a short distance to the north, even though the wind, waves and water depths were similar at those locations. At the time, a father and son who were



July 2025, fine clay remains suspended in the Maury Creek sand trap pond.

*Continued on page 2*

### *Sneak peek*

RECENT ACTIVITIES  
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Please direct comments or questions to:  
P.O. Box 689  
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[3lakes.info@gmail.com](mailto:3lakes.info@gmail.com)  
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**Executive Director**  
Lois MacLean

Maury Creek - Continued from page 1

deploying kayaks were asked if they had ever seen anything like this before at the Beach Club. They said they were from Ohio and this was their first visit to Michigan. Although not a direct health threat, the local economic impact of unsightly green globs of algae along beaches and swimming areas is likely to be significant.

After TLA reported the sediment pollution in July, the Antrim County soil erosion office documented conditions along the entire length of Maury Creek. They found what appeared to be a specific location near the golf course where the creek went from clear to turbid and contacted EGLE's permit division for assistance. The County was told they could not force the property owner to take any action unless there was an active permit or application involving earthwork but agreed the resort property could benefit from additional soil erosion control. In 2013 and 2014, the Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay and Antrim Conservation District conducted regional stormwater runoff assessments which included Maury Creek. They found existing stormwater retention basins near the headwaters of the creek were not functioning properly, some drainage tiles from the golf course going directly to the creek, overflow from basins going directly to creek via piping, exposed clay soils with significant amount of clay runoff and the potential for heavy clay input to Maury Creek. They made specific recommendations for added retention basins and changes to the existing golf course drain tiles to prevent the worst outcomes.

It has been forty years since the resort's master drainage plan was drafted and more than a decade since the Watershed Center and ACD recommendations were made to



**August 2025, filamentous green algae and resuspension of bottom sediments along the Lake Bellaire shoreline adjacent to the mouth of Maury Creek.**

prevent heavy clay soils from entering Maury Creek. Government organizations often find themselves limited when addressing ongoing water quality concerns that do not involve permit issuance or violation of laws or ordinances. The irony is that everybody including the owners of property experiencing soil erosion wants to keep sediment pollution out of our lakes. It is time for community volunteers, local NGOs and county and state governments to partner with Maury Creek property owners and find a way to eliminate this ongoing pollution of Lake Bellaire in a way which works for everyone.

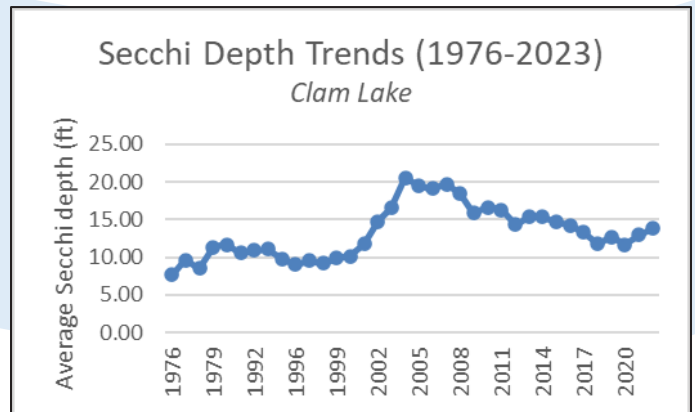
## *THANK YOU for your support!*

Over the years the Dole Family Foundation has generously granted funds for our water quality and education efforts. For 2025, we appreciate being granted funds to do more in-depth e.coli testing as we continue to monitor the streams that feed our fragile lakes. This funding helps to off-set the costly additional laboratory fees of source tracking. Watch for more test result information in an upcoming newsletter, on our website and on social media.

# RECENT ACTIVITIES

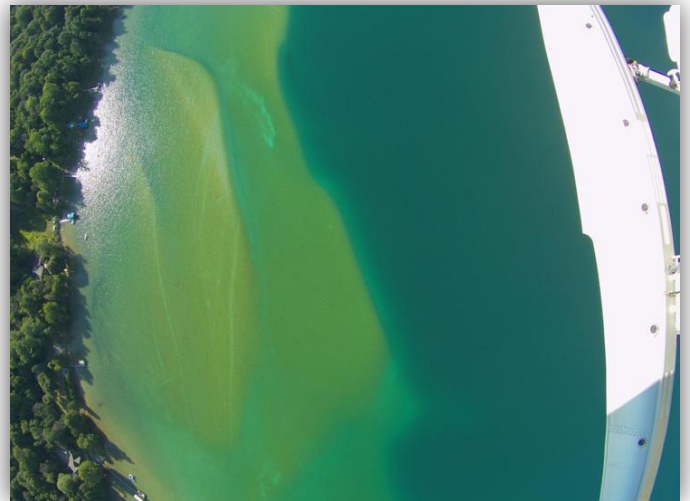
## Lake Monitoring

TLA has been monitoring water quality in Bellaire, Clam, and Torch Lakes for over twenty years to determine long term trends and detect early warning signals. Monitoring consists of water clarity measurements and Chlorophyll-a samples every two weeks. Mid-lake phosphorous samples are taken in the Spring and Fall to keep an eye on nutrient levels. Our data is sent to the Watershed Council which publishes an annual report of trophic status and water quality trends.



## Aerial GBA Monitoring

TLA board member Art Hoadley made this year's first bi-annual survey flight of the Torch Lake and Lake Bellaire shorelines in early May. He has been keeping an eye on GBA in our lakes for over twelve years averaging more than 1000 pictures per flight. They help us understand both multi-year and seasonal growth trends and are used in TLA's research work on the causes of GBA.



## GBA Research

TLA's work with Dr. Jan Stevenson continues in an effort to determine why Golden Brown Algae is changing the appearance of lake bottoms in Northern Michigan. Samples from last year's in-lake experiments are being analyzed by Florida International University and preliminary findings were shared on Facebook and in our Quarterly Newsletter. Dr. Stevenson is currently focusing on the chemistry within GBA mats and factors that influence mat formation such as low surface water phosphorus concentration, the reaction of certain species of algae in low nutrient environments to excrete excess carbon in the form of mucilages, and calcium precipitation within the mats which makes them resistant to disturbance from current and waves.







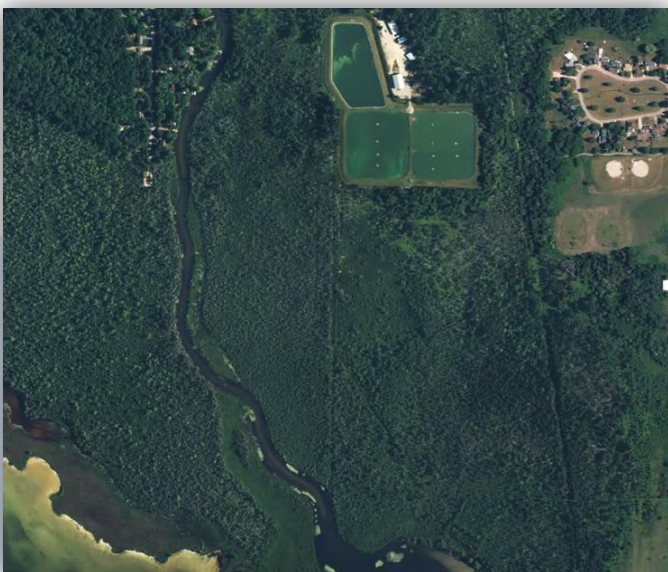
## Summer Intern Program

In 2025, TLA Interns are conducting an aquatic plant survey on Clam Lake, emphasizing the presence of native and invasive species, including Eurasian Water Milfoil. The Intern program engages local high school students in a structured field research project, meeting weekly from June through August. They learn species identification, specimen collection, and scientific documentation under the guidance of an experienced program leader, TLA volunteers and boat captains. The Intern program includes education, training and sample collection with emphasis on communication, collaboration, and hands-on science for the protection and preservation of aquatic environments.



## Eurasian Water Milfoil

The TLA/TLPA Invasive Plant Team continues to monitor in and around Torch Lake for Eurasian Water Milfoil and other invasive plant species. We have expanded our monitoring activity to utilize new underwater camera capabilities and are now monitoring fifteen locations favorable for EWM infestation. Control efforts have expanded to include both selective chemical treatment and hand-pulling by scuba divers.



## WWTP Follow-up

TLA is keeping an eye on operational changes being made at the Bellaire Waste Water Treatment Plant. Water samples have been collected from the adjacent Lower Intermediate River to provide baseline data and assure nutrient loading has not increased. We are also monitoring water quality in Grass Creek this summer for potential adverse environmental impact from sewage sludge disposal on local agricultural fields.



## Community Education

This year TLA engaged the community through a two-part program. In the Spring, a webinar on boater safety attracted strong participation and was later made available online. Our annual public event in July, held at the Shanty Creek Beach Club pavilion, attracted seventy attendees and brought members of the public together in a relaxing atmosphere to hear about issues affecting our lakes and the environment. This year's speakers talked about the importance of volunteer water quality monitoring efforts, the threat posed by invasive species and invasive species eradication programs, and research into the causes of discoloration of lake bottoms by Golden Brown Algae. Attendees enjoyed a selection of beverages and snacks on the shoreline of beautiful Lake Bellaire. The event started with a silent auction which raised over \$2k for the SEOP program. Thank you to everyone who donated items and to those who participated in the silent auction!



## Annual Meeting

On August 7, TLA members gathered for our annual meeting. Great conversation, food and fun was had by all. We covered the business of approving financials, board actions and meeting minutes. Antrim County Drain Commissioner and Dam Operator, Leslie Meyers, presented on the importance of addressing the dams and culverts in the Elk River Chain of Lakes as major maintenance projects before they become a major emergency.



# Our members and donors make the important work of TLA possible. Thank you for your commitment to water protection!

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Antrim Women's Alliance donated in support of our internship program.  
 The Gerrit Lee Wierda Memorial Fund helps to fund our internship program.  
 The Dole Family Foundation helps to fund our water quality studies.  
 We sincerely appreciate the funding of our work to educate and preserve and protect our waters!

The mission of the Association is to provide leadership to preserve, protect, and improve the environmental quality of the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed for all generations with emphasis on Lake Bellaire, Clam Lake, Torch Lake and their tributaries.

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