



2024 - 2025

ANNUAL SUMMARY

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Our Members

Meet our Board

Officers:

President – Fred Sittel
Vice President – Rick Doornbos
Treasurer – Ed Gourley
Secretary – Greg Fredericksen
Past President – Mike Bertram

Committee Chairs:

Water Quality – Rick Doornbos
Membership – Chris Herb
Education – Steve Laurenz
Publicity - Chris Herb
Lake Monitoring – Open

Executive Director:

Lois Maclean

Directors Emeriti for Life:

Tina Norris Fields, Becky Norris, Norton Bretz

Zone Directors:

Zone A: Clearwater Township:

Open 2025, Open 2026

Zone B: Milton Township:

Rick Doornbos, Greg Fredericksen

Zone C: Torch Lake Township:

Casey Wiggins , Open

Zone D: Central Lake Township:

Steve Laurenz, Brian Hayes

Zone E: Forest Home Township:

Fred Sittel, Chris Herb

Zone F: Helena Township:

Mike Haley, Gary Mayes

Zone G: Custer Township:

Gary Knapp, Sheri Greenhoe

Zone H: Kearney Township:

Gary Bart, Open

Directors at Large:

Mike Novak

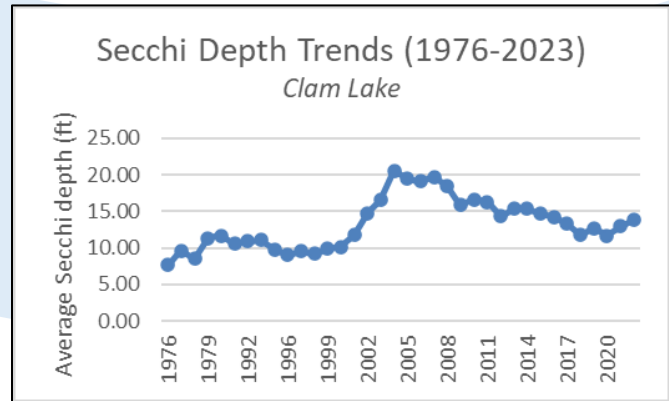
Our Mission:

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.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

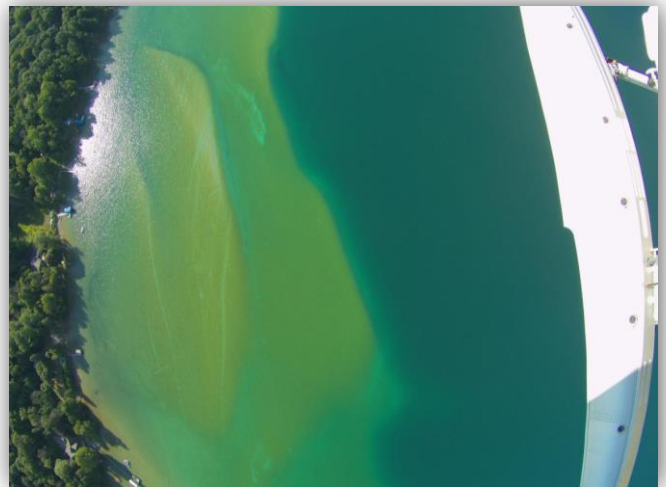
Lake Monitoring

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.



RECENT ACTIVITIES

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.



RECENT ACTIVITIES

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!



RECENT ACTIVITIES

E. coli Monitoring

We resumed routine monitoring of E.coli in the streams and tributaries entering our lakes. High levels of E.coli can indicate the presence of harmful pathogens which may lead to serious health issues. Five streams were sampled at eight locations at least once a month. Levels above State exposure guidelines were found on several occasions. Further testing revealed human sourced bacteria in Wilkinson and Eastport Creeks. TLA will be working with the Northwest Michigan Health Department on follow-up testing.



Science Education Outreach Program

The goal of SEOP is to cultivate stewardship of the environment in young people who are the next generation that will care for our lakes. The program enhances environmental literacy and provides hands-on learning opportunities. In 2025, TLA awarded \$8,000 in grants to 13 educators, supporting classroom and field-based environmental education in local schools. This year's program launched in March with outreach to principals and teachers, followed by selection, award communication, and mailing grant checks. The SEOP committee is looking at expanding the number of school districts eligible for the program next season.



Funding and Grants

The vast majority of our funding comes from the generosity of our membership, THANK YOU! **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 their support of our work to preserve and protect our waters!

