

WIXOM LAKE ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

June 12, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 10 AM.

Board members present were: Larry Woodard-President, Mark Mudge-Treasurer, Susi Najmowicz-Secretary and Directors Bob Beltz, Bill Faust, Doug Hill, Gary Oliver, Len Pytlak, Dave Rothman and Don Zakett. Rick McGibbon-Vice President and Director Dirk Meister were absent. There were 40 members in attendance.

Everyone rose for the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Due to scheduling problems, the meeting is being held outdoors at the Billings Twp. Community Park at 4404 Lake Shore Dr. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the agenda as presented.

The minutes from the May 8, 2021 meeting were reviewed. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the minutes as presented.

Susi reported we currently have 388 memberships, 567 members and 48 members without an email address. Laura indicated she would appreciate help updating email addresses. Mark or Susi will notify Laura when we receive new email addresses from members.

Mark presented the Treasurer's Report. We had a balance of \$69,457.09 on April 30th. In May we received \$2,833.07 income from dues, donations and interest. We had \$3,223.26 in expenses, leaving a balance of \$69,066.90 on May 31st. So far this year, our income has totaled \$24,670.67 and our expenses have been \$6,828.16. He and Laura have been working on the problems with the button on the website, but think they have the problem solved and will be getting better information. A motion was made, seconded and approved to accept the Treasurer's Report.

Larry reported the WLIB met this week with the new members and held elections. They decided to hold a public meeting to change the weed treatment program to allow treating the weeds now growing on the lake bottom. They will be sending out notice of the meeting. Don distributed photos of a spraying technique that may be used to treat the vegetation now growing in the exposed lake bottom.

Dave announced he is now serving as the Vice-President of the FLTF and as the WLA Representative on the FLTF. He then began the FLTF update.

Focus on Wixom Lake

FERC

All four FERC licenses have been terminated as of May 27, 2021. All four dams are under State dam safety regulation. FERC has no regulatory authority over the dams or lakes.

FERC is remaining engaged with FLTF to provide technical assistance on flood recovery and dam restoration. We value this assistance.

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Funding

Michigan US Senators and Representatives have written a letter to EPA and FERC and asked them to support Four Lakes Task Force work.

“Support” can mean money, technical advice and other assistance with environmental recovery.

Exciting news! Michigan House introduced a bill to fund a Dam Safety program in the state with \$500 million to improve high hazard dams.

Bill directs \$225 million of that money to restoring the Four Dams and Lakes.

FLTF is monitoring this bill as it moves through the Michigan House and Senate. Waiting to see if, when and what bill goes to the Governor’s desk and whether she signs it.

Flood Recovery

Shoreline stabilization

Mostly a Wixom/Sanford Lake issue.

Shoreline stabilization to prevent future erosion damage to structures started October, 2020.

NRCS funding with grants under Emergency Watershed Protection grant program.

Over 3 miles of shoreline on Wixom and Sanford lakes threatened, >40% has now been protected.

Work continues on both lakes, new projects beginning soon, target to have all work done by Spring 2022 runoff.

Dam Stabilization

This is an issue at all four dams.

Stabilization means preventing the dam condition from getting worse or failing in a runoff event.

NRCS funding with grants under Emergency Watershed Protection grant program.

Secord and Smallwood stabilization is complete.

Edenville stabilization on Tobacco side nearing completion.

Edenville on Tittabawassee side and Sanford Dam stabilization work will start summer of 2021.

*Edenville- Tobacco-concrete spillways partially demolished

**Demolition work was designed to complement spillway improvement plans

*Edenville- Tittabawassee- design ready

**Demolish spillways and part of the powerhouse down to concrete slab foundation

+Return Tittabawassee to its original riverbed

++Part of the overall environmental restoration plan

+Close the breach in the dam

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- +Work designed to complement rebuilding of the spillways and embankment
- +Current river channel below breach will be restored with grading and seeding

Debris removal

Mostly a Wixom/Sanford Lake issue.

Remove debris that could “mobilize” in a future flood or “impairs” the waterway.

NRCS funding with grants under Emergency Watershed Protection grant program.

Debris inventory on Wixom and Sanford Lake bottoms winter 2020-21

*Thousands of trees, much “milled wood”, ~100 boat lifts, 90,000 cubic yards of sediment, misc. junk

*Private individuals or groups have removed some of the debris- THANK YOU!

Lake bottom has dried in many places.

Work will start at upper end of Wixom Lake.

This past week a team of Spicer, Fisher and NRCS engineers began identifying sites for equipment access to remove significant debris deposits. Access will be a difficult part of this project.

Environmental Recovery

Mussel studies- required due to endangered species

Fish Population study by Michigan DNR

Sea Lampreys can swim up the Tittabawassee River past Sanford Dam to Smallwood and Beaverton dams to spawn. International treaty required a solution. USFWS, MDNR and Great Lakes Fish Commission are engaged.

Fish habitat was destroyed. Work with USFWS and MDNR to plan habitat restoration.

FLTF does NOT intend to develop terrestrial habitat on the dry lake bottoms.

Trees growing on lake bottoms

Mostly a Wixom/Sanford lake issue. Most cost-effective approach is aerial herbicide spraying. Applicators being interviewed. Work to begin late summer.

Goal is to prevent the cottonwoods, poplars and willows from growing large enough to become a real problem when the lakes are refilled.

Will be coordinated with other lake bottom activities to avoid human exposure.

Lake and Dam Restoration

FLTF published a report on lake restoration plans May 2021.

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Available to read on FLTF website. 2 page cover letter, 11 page summary, 91 page report plus supporting documents.

Michigan Legislature bill(s) could provide FLTF with substantial funding, but probably not enough to cover both environmental recovery and dam restoration. Still working on more funding.

Still have access to funding through USDA, may need far less than we requested.

FLTF looking for ways to accelerate dam restoration schedule if we get State money.

Permitted Bottom Land activities

FLTF is updating the advice and rules on activities in the bottom land- watch the website for new guidance and access to documents and forms.

Top priority is the safety of people who enter the lake bottom lands. Avoiding environmental damage is another priority.

Working on your own seawall or area near the seawall is OK. Planting grass, wildflowers and shrubs to stop erosion near your seawall is OK. Helping a neighbor do jobs like this is also OK.

People who want to work on the main lake bottom, debris removal, personal property recovery, tree control, etc., should ask permission from FLTF and sign a Hold Harmless agreement. FLTF will provide a letter giving permission for bottom lake work. This is to protect FLTF and Counties from liability complaints and the bottom land workers from trespassing complaints. People doing the work are responsible for getting any required permits.

Example of OK activities:

- *Planting grass, wildflowers and shrubs to stabilize the lake bottom against erosion.
- *Debris pickup and removal- a vehicle required for these activities is OK.
- *Killing weeds and trees growing on the lake bottom
- *Boating in the river is permitted, but there is no guarantee the river will be easy or safe to boat.

Recreational vehicle traffic on lake bottoms is not permitted- no ATV's , no dirt bikes, no FWD trucks- no joy-riding period. Violating this rule will be considered trespassing and trespassers will be prosecuted.

FLTF sees evidence in many places of vehicle traffic on the lake bottom lands and has asked MDNR and County Sheriffs for help in stopping this behavior. This behavior damages the lake bottoms, promotes erosion and endangers the vehicle operator.

There are reports of inconsiderate people running their vehicles over areas where FLTF has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars repairing erosion damage. Anyone caught doing this will be prosecuted for trespassing and billed for cost of repairs to areas they damaged. FLTF welcomes report of such behavior, with photos, registration numbers, etc. so we can have the offenders prosecuted. Don't let thoughtless people damage the work done to protect homes on the shorelines!

Don said he has had some experience with tree/brush control through his involvement with the Bay City Gun Club. Mowing cuts it down but it will re-sprout when moisture is present. They are looking at

WIXOM LAKE ASSOCIATION

herbicide treatment by helicopter—about half the cost of a ground-based crew. EGLE does not want complete de-vegetation. They want some ground cover and native vegetation left. When you see crop-duster planes, you usually see a big “cloud” in an open area away from houses. The photo of the helicopter applicator shows the spray nozzles and “shower” of chemicals. The spraying would target woody brush and broadleaf weeds. They are checking into permitting requirements for Vaslan—a non-toxic, specific herbicide used to treat roadsides, pastures, etc. Once the trees are 4 years old, they will be very hard to control. They are pushing to do the spraying on Wixom in late August—the prime time to be effective. Discussions are underway regarding how close the pilot can go to the shoreline and if the spray can be turned on and off when approaching docks and boatlifts. The following information is the result of questions/discussion from the audience:

1. The spray rate is low—within EPA guidelines for spraying in water—and doesn’t poison the lake basin. They don’t know if a 2nd spraying will be needed in the future. Cottonwoods come from seeds, which float free every year. The lakebed is different this year from last year, so maybe not as many trees will sprout.
2. They don’t have a cost figure yet. They have to determine the actual amount of acreage that needs to be treated.
3. The canals will not be dealt with this year. They appear to have more cattails and reeds than cottonwoods and some still have water in them. Some are muddy, mucky and unsafe. You can look at the FLTF website for information/guidelines for dealing with cattails.
4. The WLIB treatment coverage extends north to the Hay Twp. line—Howard Road. Their money would be used within the original WLIB boundaries for treatment.
5. The EPA guidelines address issues of human inhalation, distance from shore, type of nozzles, wind conditions, etc.
6. The Army Corp of Engineers will not help with our project.
7. With the possibility of state funding being proposed, the FLTF is planning to see if the schedule could be shortened. Wixom’s dam is the last scheduled because it will cost the most. They are still working to get more money and accelerate the schedule. You can go to the FLTF website and check out their report on the project.
8. They will be approaching the Tobacco side board regarding the helio-spraying.

Of the six directors up for re-election, Bob Beltz has decided not to run for re-election. Larry has several applications from people interested in filling open positions. Larry repeated he will not be running again for the president’s position. The Executive Committee will meet immediately after this meeting.

The Membership/Social Committee needs a new chairman. A motion to appoint Dirk Meister to the chair position was made, seconded and carried.

Elections are held annually at the August General Membership Meeting.

Due to personal reasons, Dick McGibbon has resigned as Vice-President. A motion was made, seconded and carried to accept his resignation. Plans are underway to acknowledge his contributions to the WLA. A motion was made to nominate Dirk Meister to finish Dick’s term. The motion was seconded and approved.

Some concerns have been raised regarding our liability with the events we have been holding. Our original coverage was for 40-60 members—nothing for events. We have secured a new policy covering up to 600 members and events. We haven’t received the bill yet.

WIXOM LAKE ASSOCIATION

Laura gave a website update. She can now send out up to 20 emails per month. Of the 963 people who received an email, 543 were opened and only 2 were returned. People wondered why there were 2 buttons on the website. Membership payment is processed through PayPal. Donations by credit card are done through Stripe (which we began using while Mark was in the hospital). There have been problems with Stripe not providing information in a usable form in a timely manner, but Mark has been working with them to make corrections and eliminate future problems. No one knows how many people we have on Facebook.

The Membership/Social Committee has been busy holding 2 Happy Hour/Membership Drives, sponsoring a tent at the Billings Twp. Park Grand Opening, a Poker Fun Run, lawn signs and shirts and koozies sales. Coming events include: 6/15 – Clean Up/Doug Hill, 6/17 - Membership Drive @ Juicy Bones 5-8 PM, 6/27 – Euchre Tournament @ Eagles 1-4 PM, 7/18 – Ice Cream Social @ Billings Twp. Park and 9/18 – Golf Outing @ Gladwin Heights—“2nd Annual Dam Outing”. They are also looking at a much larger event at the Loon’s Stadium—a one-time performance by the “Modern Gentlemen” on the weekend after Labor Day. Members of the board expressed concern about the financial risk for an event of this size.

Recommendations will be made for the open director position at our next meeting after the applications have been reviewed.

Karen Moore, a Representative on the Gladwin County Board of Commissioners, said she’s been glad to receive all the emails messages supporting the return of the lakes and hopes people will continue voicing their support.

Doug Hill reminded everyone the first lake bottom clean-up project is coming up and everyone is welcome to come and help. He has obtained the required permission from the FLTF and will have the necessary paperwork available. They are meeting at 817 Quillette.

The meeting adjourned at 11:34 AM.