PLATTE LAKE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 272
HONOR, MI 49640-0272
May 2, 2003

Dear PLIA Member:

We hope this letter finds all healthy and looking forward to another wonderful year at Platte Lake!

Our spring newsletter is a little later than usual as your Officers and Board have been actively engaged in a multitude of issues and wanted to get as much updated status out to you as possible. My thanks to all those who have participated in the many meetings, phone conferences, etc. to keep our goal of lake restoration moving forward. Please set aside a few minutes and let us bring you up to date about what has happened since the Annual meeting.

HOW IS PLATTE LAKE DOING?

This past winter was closer to what one would characterize as a "normal Michigan winter" with a significant amount of snow and cold weather. The initial ice cover on the lake was crystal clear and resembled plate glass. Many individuals reported the ability to clearly see the bottom, plants and fish as a once in 50 year experience. The ice formation and initial lack of snow made for some spectacular viewing in early January.

The ice is now gone and hopefully 2003 will turn out to be as good as 2002 or even better from a water clarity standpoint. The zebra mussels are expected to be even more prolific this year than last. This will help water clarity. I must add that we had a once abundant native clam population that has all but disappeared and now the zebra mussels appear to have filled the void in the clam population that lasted for over twenty years. Please see attached Platte Lake Secchi depth readings 1980 through 2002.

River flow for most of 2002 was above average and lake levels were noticeably higher. Year to date, flow into the lake has been below average. The decline began in early January when the actual flow dipped below the 13 year average and in late April we are down about 20% from the average i.e. 110 cu ft/sec versus 137 cu ft/sec average flow. Pray for rain if higher lake levels are desired.

Average volume weighted in-lake phosphorus concentration prior to ice off was 5.96 (ug/l) micro-gram per liter. This number is significantly below the 8.0 ug/l phosphorus standard and also where we feel the lake should be at his time of the year in terms of phosphorus concentration. This is a good sign!

STATUS OF THE MARCH 10, 2000 SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

The implementation of the March 10, 2000 Settlement Agreement with the DNR continues to progress smoothly and has been the focus of a large share of our effort over the past year. We continue to have bi-weekly phone conferences and/or face to face meetings with the Gary Whelan, DNR, Dr. Raymond Canale, Implementation coordinator and myself, Wilfred Swiecki, PLIA. In addition, we have also had bi-weekly laboratory meetings and/or phone conferences with the Central Michigan University (CMU) laboratory personnel, Virginia Estabrook and Dr. Scott McNaught, Gary Whelan, DNR, Dr. Raymond Canale and Wilfred Swiecki, PLIA. These meetings enhance communication and understanding, serve as a forum for problem solving and track open issues whether with the Settlement Agreement, Laboratory Sample analysis, data analysis and or water sample collection and processing. Each meeting has a formal Agenda, published minutes and related Action Items with assigned responsibility.

These meetings are in addition to daily e-mails and electronic data transfer amongst all parties involved. To give you some insight into the level of involvement, we process between 30 and 40 electronic communications per week. My thanks to all involved for maintaining the pace on behalf of Platte Lake!

The terms of the Settlement agreement are such that the DNR will continue to fund 100% of the Hatchery related water sampling and 98% of the lake and river sampling until such time as they have demonstrated compliance with the 175 lb per year phosphorus discharge standard for five continuous years after the completion of the Hatchery renovation project and operational process changes related to the new facility. This funding level is expected to continue until approximately the 2010 or 2011 time frame.

WHAT HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN THE PAST YEAR?

- **Hatchery Compliance:** The hatchery was in compliance with the details of the Settlement Agreement in 2002 (Fall salmon run, Anti-biotic reporting, total yearly phosphorus discharge, etc.) except for the three month 75 lb P cumulative discharge limit for August – 29.94 lb P, September – 21.03 lb P and October – 29.69 lb P for a total of 80.65 lb P for the three month period. This level violated the 75 lb P standard by 5.65 lb P. Rounded down per the agreement, this was a 5 lb P violation and at $500/lb P amounted to a $2500.00 fine. This was added to the $4000.00 in fines the DNR paid last year for a total of $6500.00 in the watershed improvement account to be used for mutually agreed upon watershed improvement projects per the Settlement Agreement.

- **Hatchery Renovation Status:** The $6.5 million hatchery renovation is underway and nearly on schedule. It is estimated that the actual construction phase will be completed in December 2003 and no later than the first quarter 2004 barring anything unforeseen. We have been receiving daily updates along with minutes of construction project meetings, etc. Gary Whelan is pleased with the progress to date.

- **Hatchery, Lake and River Water Sampling:** The transition to having CMU perform the sample analysis and the DNR technicians perform sample collection as opposed to Great Lakes Environmental has allowed us to save enough money to allow for more samples to be collected and analyzed to support further investigation of what is happening within the lake as well as the upstream watershed and provide input for watershed modeling. This transition has not been without problems and open issues. In the process, Dr. Canale and I have become more knowledgeable about laboratory practices and phosphorus standards than we ever imagined in any previous nightmares! Bottom line, we feel at this time, the CMU lab is "solid" and the cooperation through some very trying times has been exceptional. The sample collection process and procedure still requires a little work, but we feel we are quickly resolving issues that will allow us to generate data with high confidence through the end of the decade while at the same time getting the most for the dollars spent.

  Additionally, we have been actively involved in the identification and assessment of "additional" sources of nutrient enrichment and pollution to the Platte River/Platte Lake as part of our effort to restore the lake and ensure that the 8.0 micro-gram per liter in-lake phosphorus standard is complied with.

- **Deadstream Fish Ladder:** In last year's spring newsletter, it was stated that the Deadstream fish ladder would be installed in the spring/early summer of 2002. The project was to allow northern pike to spawn in the Deadstream swamp and reestablish a once native northern pike population in Platte Lake. I am sorry to say the project has been delayed until later into 2003. Luedtke Engineering has been contracted to supply engineering modifications to the original DNR drawings and will be responsible for the installation of the structure. The DNR will be fabricating brackets, etc. for an existing DNR ladder to be installed at the Deadstream dam. All permits have been approved and the DNR and PLIA have agreed to utilize some of the watershed improvement funds to support the project. This project was No. 1 on the DNR's list of watershed improvement projects. The cost to Luedtke engineering will be $12,500.00 for their services. Donations to support the Deadstream fish Ladder project can be sent to the PLIA at the Lake Association P.O. Box.

- **Platte River Watershed Initiative:** We have been actively supporting the Benzie Conservation District's Platte River watershed initiative. Our Implementation coordinator Dr. Canale has been actively involved and working directly with Ron Harrison of the Conservation District as well as with LimnoTech of Ann Arbor. LimnoTech was commissioned to develop a BASINS phosphorus model of the watershed as part of the Watershed Planning Grant. The model is complete and was presented at a March 20, 2003 meeting at the hatchery that was attended by the PLIA, DNR, DEQ, Park Service, Conservation District, Crystal Lake Association, Long Lake Association, County Government Representatives, etc.

  The main objective now is to calibrate the model with actual data collected as part of the Lake and River sampling plan. We expect this data gathering and model calibration effort to continue for the next several years. The model and its ultimate calibration will be a tool that will be used for land use planning, permitting, etc. It will allow one to interactively look at potential phosphorus loading from different activities within the upstream watershed to determine what level of allowable phosphorus discharge can be tolerated and still attain all water quality standards including the 8 ug/l Platte Lake phosphorus standard.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS OF INTEREST/CONCERN

At the August 2002 Annual meeting, the membership voted to establish an "Endowment fund" in an effort to start investing money to build as much capital as possible. Please contact us if you would like a copy of the 2002 Annual Meeting minutes. This money will be required to continue our lake and river sampling when the DNR's $150K per year funding stops upon completion of the Settlement Agreement at the end of the decade.

To date, we have not moved forward with creation of the fund. We instead have the funds in a Federally insured account at the Dearborn Federal Credit Union. We are only earning 2.0+ percent on your money, but we have not lost a dime! We will evaluate when to commit funds as the year goes on. We appreciate any and all advice as it relates to the endowment fund and ideas on growing our capital to prepare for the end of the decade cessation of direct DNR funding of the lake and river water sampling.

Additionally Jerry Heiman is assembling a collection of historical articles, photographs, etc. of Platte Lake and the surrounding area. Please contact Jerry at 231-882-5692 if you have something to share.

SUMMARY

I want to thank all involved for their direct effort and financial support. As I have said in past newsletters, the effort at water sampling, Secchi depth collection, fall salmon run monitoring, Deadstream flow measurement, data processing and analysis, report generation, new member recruitment, administrative tasks, meeting attendance, etc. has been fantastic! A super job!

In closing, please feel free to get back with any questions, comments or concerns about any issues we did or did not cover. We don't publish a lot of newsletters as we feel time directly involved with the lake is first priority. Also, please get back with any ideas related to future funding and do not forget to send in your dues along with any contributions as we still need money in the long term. Again, please feel free to contact the Lake Association P.O. Box or call me or e-mail directly: Home: 248-553-3110; Lake: 231-325-2046; e-mail: wswiecki@twmi.rr.com

Thank You for Your Support,

Wilfred J. Swiecki
President, PLIA