

PLATTE LAKE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION
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November 21, 2003

Dear PLIA Member:

Greetings from Platte Lake. It has been a very busy summer and we have information that we would like to share.

As stated at the Annual Meeting in Early August, Platte Lake was gorgeous. No sooner was that said when we began to notice a visible deterioration in lake water clarity. Secchi depth readings declined from a peak of 23 ft in Mid July to 9 ft in mid to late August. Lake phosphorus levels also increased. What happened? As part of the hatchery renovation and construction process, the Hatchery waste treatment pond was by-passed to allow revisions to the existing outlet, etc. In the process of by-passing pond, some plumbing was used that had not been used for many years. It turns out, that the pipes were full of sediment and the sediment was full of phosphorus, so much so that approximately 60 lbs P was discharge in the span of two days. The lake reacted as it always does and algae began to grow from the nutrient stimulation and as a direct result, water clarity decreased. The Event happened on July 15, 2003 and no one was aware of the magnitude and seriousness of the incident until the data was received from CMU on August 7, 2003. This was after the August 2, 2003 Annual Meeting.

Gary Whelan, Michigan DNR Fish Production Manager, has apologized for the oversight on the part of the contractor(s) and his personnel. I must state that I feel he is working hard and doing his level best to ensure an incident of this type does not happen again. I still have bi-weekly phone conferences with Gary and Dr. Ray Canale the Settlement Agreement Implementation Coordinator along with hundreds of related e-mails, etc.

Additionally as a result of the algal bloom and its eventual die off, Platte Lake began to experience severe "foaming". I say severe, as I can remember foam on the shoreline as far back as 50 years ago. It was about a foot wide and approximately three or four inches high at the maximum. The 2003 foaming was in places twenty feet wide and as much as three to four feet high! Wow! Not funny. It was also very persistent and appears to have structure i.e. takes days to dissipate unlike soap suds in a bucket.

The foam is basically caused by the decomposition of algae and then the release of what are known as surfactants. They reduce surface tension and are the same/similar to compounds that are put in soap to make it sudsy. Why the great increase in foaming? We still do not have all the answers. We know the sure fire way to reduce algae which is the source of the surfactants is to reduce the phosphorus load. That is the objective of the PLIA and the DNR and the whole idea behind the hatchery renovation project. Also, there may be some other factors such as zebra mussels that may shift the population to a species of algae that produce more surfactants. Zebra mussels do not eat all the algae. They apparently are selective in what they consume. At present Dr. Scott McNaught of CMU and Dr. Ray Canale are in the process of data analysis and related investigation as to whether or not the foam is a one time event caused by a massive spike in phosphorus due to the incident at the hatchery or is there something more subtle going on due to the changing nature of the lake due to Zebra mussels and algae population shifts. We will have more to say on that matter in the spring newsletter.

Also, I want to mention that the lake water clarity has recovered and that as of November 5, 2003 the in lake phosphorus concentration was 6.71 microgram/liter Total Phosphorus! One of the lowest levels all year!

Having said all of the above, per the Settlement Agreement, the DNR was in violation of the 3 month 75 lb P construction period cumulative phosphorus standard for the June to August and July to September time periods. The three month standard will be reduced to 55 lb P after construction. Penalties are \$500 per lb P over the limit. To date the DNR has sent checks for \$19,500.00 for 2002 and YTD 2003 phosphorus and flow violations. The money is held in escrow for watershed improvement projects that the DNR and PLIA mutually agree upon. To date \$12,800 has been spent on the Deadstream fish ladder to facilitate natural northern pike spawning in the Deadstream swamp that was shut off when the level control dam was installed in the 1960's. Proposed projects for 2004 are watershed signs at river crossings, restoration of native Platte Lake plants that existed in the 1940's, 50's and early 60's prior to hatchery expansion, woody debris projects for Platte Lake fish habitat and sand traps in the upstream Platte River. Please understand, as much as we like watershed improvement projects, we would much rather have a clean lake! We feel a pristine Platte Lake is priceless! That is our main objective and our number one priority!

In other news, Your Officers, Board and Membership at large have continued on with our direct support of the extensive Lake, River and Hatchery water sampling effort with CMU, Dr. Canale and the DNR, collection of stream flow gage and pH readings, rain fall measurement and related phosphorus determination, performed two comprehensive (92 locations monitored in both June and September) shoreline phosphorus and bacteria surveys, have collected in conjunction with the DNR all the data for the creation of a new and more accurate Platte Lake depth map, continued intensive involvement with the Benzie Conservation District and related watershed grant issues which has resulted in the completion of a new watershed phosphorus model which is being calibrated with past data and we also participated with the DNR in the 2003 fall salmon run fish counting. Additionally, a new web page is up and presently being populated with information, etc. We will have more details on all of the above in the spring newsletter.

I would like to personally thank all those involved for all their time and direct effort and I want to thank the membership at large for all their continued support!

What can you do? Send in your dues and any contributions you can afford. We are an IRS 503c3 organization and all contributions are fully tax deductible.

Also, please feel free to call me, write or e-mail with any questions, comments or concerns at any time. You are our eyes and ears and if you see, hear or read about something that raises a concern in your mind, please pass it along to ensure that I and the PLIA Board are also aware. Downstate: 248-553-3110, Lake: 231-325-2046, e-mail: wswiecki@twmi.rr.com

Thanks,

Wilfred Swiecki
President, PLIA