



FoCL

Friends of Clam Lake

Spring 2022

www.friendsofclamlake.org

President's Message

By Paul Sak

As I compose this "president's message" for our 2022 Spring Newsletter, my mind returns to the founding of the Friends of Clam Lake (FoCL) 16 years ago. At that time, our organization was **the only** group that stood up for Clam Lake. That commitment was etched into our Mission and Goals then, and it continues today, with vigilance, activities, and a continued **sole focus** on Clam Lake. Our thanks to all the members who continue to support the Friends of Clam Lake, your organization!

Our new membership chair, Megan Raphael, has a brief message of welcome. As in past years, a membership application is included in this mailing. Please update the information if needed, especially your email address, and return it to the address shown. In 2022, we plan to send out quarterly email newsletters in addition to this Spring Newsletter. Our annual dues remain at \$35.00 per household.

We welcome three new board members: Tom Marsh, John Williams and Robin Hawley-Crumrine. As the daughter of one of our founding officers, Pam Hawley, Robin is our first "next-generation" board member. Since FoCL board meetings and most of our collaborative meetings with other organizations are conducted in "hybrid" mode (in-person and virtual), are any of your kids or grandkids interested in joining the board? Let us know!

Fred Sittel, our past-president, and current secretary, not only is our loon platform expert (check out his loon update), but he has also been very involved with the Antrim County Lake-Level Committee for the Chain-of-Lakes. Their work with the County, its Drain Commissioner (Mark Stone), and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) has been on-going for the last 2+ years. A summary of the USACE studies and models is provided from a report Mark Stone gave to the County Board of Commissioners. There is a public meeting

scheduled for July 12 at the Central Lake High School auditorium to review the USACE study and models. We will reconfirm exact times in our next email newsletter.

Many of you experienced the extreme rainfall event last August 10-11 when over 7.5 inches of rain fell (measured at the east end of Clam Lake), raising the Clam Lake level 9 inches. This storm also caused the collapse of the Alden Highway culvert at Finch Creek, resulting in sediment and debris washing into the Grass River and then into Clam Lake. Clam Lake was muddy brown for 72+ hours as that sediment settled and eventually went down the Chain. A photo taken August 13 by the captain of our FoCL Air Force, Art Hoadley, shows the results of that extreme event. This is one reason that FoCL is working with other lake organizations to develop an updated Riparian Handbook. It will include suggestions on stormwater runoffs and soil erosion around the lakeshore, as well as other useful information for lake lot owners.



Finally, we have a guest columnist who I happen to know, Lori Sak. She's written about her "Top Five Fun Activities on Clam Lake." If you have some of your own special activities or comments, send an email to friendsofclamlake@charter.net.

Special Message from FoCL's Membership Chair

"Memories made at the Lake last forever." Unknown

Spring has finally sprung in Northern Michigan, and that means summer is not far off. If you're like me, thoughts of fun at Clam Lake have helped you get through the cold and gray of winter. Soon you will be at the lake, creating lifelong memories with family and friends.

As FOCL Board Members, we welcome you back. We are continuing yet another year of helping keep Clam Lake clean and healthy, so that you can enjoy it every day you're here. We look forward to seeing you again this summer!

Warmly,
Megan Raphael

Looniness Out in the Water

By Fred Sittel

Loons on Clam Lake have had a good friend and helping hand since 2008. That was the year member Bob Schaefer built a four-foot square artificial nesting island (ANI) and FoCL purchased two buoys to remind boaters to keep their distance. Loons cannot walk on or take off from land and prefer small outcroppings away from shoreline predators to lay eggs. Since fluctuating water levels can make these ephemeral outcroppings less reliable nesting sites from one year to the next, a floating ANI that's always in the same location is all-the-rage in loon circles. FoCL volunteers have placed the ANI and buoys near the entrance of Grass River at the East end of Clam Lake starting every April since 2008. FoCL also files a yearly report with the Michigan Loon Preservation Association detailing the first date loons appeared on the lake, the number of chicks hatched, and the number of chicks fledged, meaning they survived and were able to fly away in September to spend winter somewhere in unfrozen waters.



Since 2008 the only years the Clam Lake ANI was not occupied by a pair of birds incubating eggs between mid-May and mid-June, resulting in at least one chick being hatched, was 2014 and 2015. In total, the Clam Lake ANI has resulted in the birth of 17 chicks, of which 10 were observed to have fledged. In 2013 and again in 2017, two chicks successfully fledged. In the other years, about half the time, one chick fledged and half the time, no chicks survived through to September. Loons do not produce as many offspring as other waterfowl and their young sometimes take four or five years to begin nesting successfully. However, they make up for that by living up to 20 or more years, often with the same individuals pairing up each season.

This year, the ANI and buoys were again placed in Clam Lake near the Grass River. About ninety minutes after the ANI was towed into position, a pair of loons was observed circling the prospective nesting site. Possibly because of our success helping loons nest over the years, this season there appear to be two territorial loon pairings vying to establish territory at the East end of Clam Lake. This is resulting in a lot of **looniness out on the water**. While their territorial battles might seem like the birds are just playing, long duration chases between individuals using webbed feet to push themselves on their bellies at high speed across the surface of the lake can end with an exhausted bird being killed by its pursuer. Let's hope this year's birds get the territorial issues sorted out soon because the date for egg laying and start of around thirty days of incubation is rapidly approaching. Look for an update on how the Clam Lake loons did this year at our annual meeting in August!

Chain-of-Lakes Hydrology Study

(Excerpts from Mark Stone's update to the Board of Commissioners)

What we refer to as the Hydrology Study, will actually consist of several components. The package we will receive from USACE will be comprised of two separate, but related computer models. The first model simulates the *hydrology* of the ERCOL watershed (or entire drainage area), that is, how much rainfall collects on the land, where it goes, and in what volume. The second model simulates the *hydraulics* of the ERCOL lakes and connecting rivers, that is, once the water flows off the land, how fast the water moves through the lakes and at what elevations.

The two models work together. When we want to simulate, say, a 3" rain, which falls over a period of 24-hours, the operator inputs that data into the hydrology model. The results from the hydrology model then feed into the hydraulic model. The hydraulic model will then calculate how high the lake levels will be, and how long it will take the water levels to recede.

Each model will be accompanied by a separate written report. Each report explains in detail how the computer model was created. These reports are highly technical in nature as they explain each choice that the modeler made as she created the algorithms and set the parameters of every part of the calculations. They are invaluable to the engineers that use the model, so they can ascertain exactly how the model was put together and how to customize it for future use.

So, we will get a written Hydrology Report, and a separate written Hydraulic Report. The public interest will be focused on the Hydraulic Report, because that report will contain the results of all the analysis on our Chain of Lakes that the USACE did after they completed the computer model.

The Hydraulic Report will contain the results of the 100-year storm analysis, along with the results of three scenarios: the impact of the Ellsworth culverts on lake levels upstream, dredging the Intermediate River between Intermediate Lake and the Bellaire Dam, and dredging the Torch River.

Keep in mind that the reports were written by engineers for engineers. They will need to be explained to the general public.

Friends of Clam Lake

P. O. Box 173, Alden MI 49612

Officers

President: Paul Sak
VP: Bob Hockenberger
Secretary: Fred Sittel
Treasurer: Art Hoadley

FoCL is a member driven organization dedicated to the protection of Clam Lake and its environment for all to enjoy.

Directors at Large

Megan Raphael Bill Hershey
Tom Marsh John Williams
Robin Hawley Crumrine

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Top Five Fun Activities on Clam Lake

By Lori Sak

1. Nature: There is nothing like a warm day, the sun on your face, and the wind in your hair as you boat down Clam Lake. We like to spend the day enjoying Clam's beauty and its lovely shoreline of homes and landscapes. Sometimes we will see an eagle fly overhead, an otter swimming by, or a mink running along the shoreline. When we visit the loons at the mouth of Clam, we stay a couple hundred feet from them and the loon platform, using binoculars to observe their activity. That way we don't disturb them as they build their nests, care for their chicks, and teach them to fish. We never feed the wildlife like ducks and swans, because it isn't good for the balance of nature. On other days Clam Lake can be a throughfare as we travel to Grass River or Torch Lake. A tranquil journey down the Grass River or a ride on the beautiful pristine turquoise-colored waters of Torch are some of my favorite adventures.



2. Boating: We have so many different types of boats on Clam Lake it can be mind boggling: Canoes, Kayaks, Pontoons, Classic Wooden boats, Fishing boats, Bowriders, Cabin Cruisers, Personal Watercrafts, Offshore boats, and Wake boats. I've had rides in a few of these watercrafts, and I enjoy watching them motor down Clam Lake. I appreciate the boats that follow the Michigan Boating laws by staying 100 feet from any structure like swim platforms or docks while under full power. It's fun to watch children laugh as they tube and water ski down Clam Lake. I also enjoy watching young people learn how to wake board behind the new slow-moving wake boats. I'm so happy to see the skilled wake boarders move to Torch Lake once they have learned how to wake board. There they have plenty of room to do tricks. Clam Lake is a narrow lake and the wakes from these boats are destroying our shorelines. I appreciate the Wake boats that just use Clam Lake as a learning lake.

3. Water Activities: There are so many fun things to do in Clam Lake. I love to kayak; I tried getting on an SUP (Stand-Up Paddle) board once; let's just say it wasn't pretty. I'm going to stick to kayaking. When I paddle down Clam Lake, I avoid the middle of the lake and stay closer to the shoreline, unless I'm crossing to the other side. Boats are moving very fast on Clam, and sometimes they don't see me until they are almost behind my kayak, giving me only a few seconds to move to safety. I know I have the right of way, and the law says they need to stay 100 feet away from my boat, but I don't want a close call. Paddling near the shoreline also gives me an opportunity to visit with my neighbors and enjoy nature. Finally, Clam Lake is a great place to swim. The water is so clean and warm to swim and play water sports.

4. Fishing: Another favorite activity of my family is to spend the morning fishing. NO, I cannot tell you my favorite fishing spots other than they are somewhere on Clam Lake and the Grass River. When we are fishing, we try to stay out of the way of boat traffic and the huge waves that rock us if a boater comes within 100 feet of our boat, which is illegal. We mostly catch and release, but occasionally we will keep fish for dinner. We are careful to release small fish, so that they can mature and breed new fish. This is so important for the fish population of Clam Lake.

5. Star Gazing: We absolutely love star gazing. We have seen the Aurora Borealis several times from our dock. The local news channel does a great job of announcing when they might appear. Sometimes it's in the middle of the night, like at 3:00 AM. Yes, we've been known to set the alarm, go out on our dock, and lay on our reclining chairs to see them. The multitude of constellations are fun to pick out. We can't identify all the constellations, on occasion in the past we made up names for them. However, thanks to modern technology there are apps available to identify everything in the sky, so no more imaginary constellations. Satellites are easy to spot as they move across the sky. It's so great to see the elimination of some bright spotlights or flood lights on the lake. People are turning their bright outside lights out after 11:00 PM or moving to low voltage lighting, LED lighting, and solar lighting. That is really helping to reduce light pollution. We hope to see you under the night skies.

I Love Clam Lake!!!



Reminder to Mark Your Calendar

Friends of Clam Lake

2022 Annual Meeting

Saturday, August 13, 2022

Details will be sent via email in July