

## What Have We Done For You Lately?

### 2010 – 2020: The decade in review

As we begin a new decade it's appropriate to review the past. What has BLPA done for you in the last ten years? I can think of several big-ticket items. Rather than rely on my memory I opened our newsletter files. Thirty-three of them. Read 'em all.

So this began as a research paper – remember those? It didn't take me long to realize that you probably aren't interested in all the specifics; you would prefer the Cliff Notes summary version. You want to know what we did. So here it is, chronologically:

In collaboration with the Little Traverse Bay Band (LTBB), Sturgeon for Tomorrow, and the DNR we planted 8,507 fingerling sturgeon in Burt Lake and the Sturgeon River from 2010 to the present.

When the DNR was considering closing Mullett Lake to walleye fishing due to low survey numbers, we joined with MAPS to convince the authorities that there was a better way.

We hired Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (TOMWC) to survey and evaluate the entire Burt Lake shoreline. Nearly 900 properties. Some folks didn't like their evaluation, but we all got the idea and the follow-up survey several years later showed nice improvement in shoreline management and greenbelts.

BLPA helped fund the Burt Lake bike trail by matching \$51K in donations.

We sponsored a walleye survey conducted by the DNR in 2011 that jaw tagged 5000 fish. We constructed the Greendocks rain garden, conducted a tributary study, coordinated an ice trash clean up event with the Tuscarora Township Fire Department, and a sturgeon gill net survey. We began monitoring fracking operations in our watershed. 2011 is also the year that BLPA pledged a \$51K match for

Veterans Pier fundraising. What an incredible success that turned out to be!

In 2012 we "hired" the U of M Biological Station limnology students to evaluate the Plymouth Beach canal – some of our members were concerned about possible contamination. The results? "surprisingly healthy".

Here's the big thing. The REALLY BIG THING: We "discovered" Line Five. Yep, before anyone was even aware that a thirty inch pipeline that carries almost a million gallons of crude per hour lies in our backyard, we began discussions with Enbridge and ultimately pushed the issue to the forefront in Lansing. Now everybody knows about Line Five. Everybody. We're still on it. More news about that later. That was 2013.

In partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Coast Guard, Enbridge and first responders we hosted an emergency spill exercise in the Indian River. Their post mortem exposed many deficiencies that led to recommendations, many of which have been implemented.

Griswold Mountain was the talk of the town in 2014. Understanding that it wasn't topographically in our watershed but feeling obligated to do something positive we pledged \$10K toward an environmental study to end the nonsensical speculation. It turned out to be a "not in my backyard" issue that soon became history.

We planted 5000 weevils in the south end of Burt Lake in an attempt to control the spread of invasive Eurasian Watermilfoil.

BLPA also funded the feasibility study for sewers in Indian River.

In 2015, in collaboration with LTBB and the DNR we participated in another sturgeon gill net survey in Burt Lake. The results estimate about 700 adult sturgeon. Not nearly what our lake can support. Our target is 2000 adults.

We hired TOMWC to conduct a comprehensive aquatic plant survey of the entire lake. The study examined 3200 specific recorded locations and documented several areas of Eurasian Watermilfoil that were previously unknown. That was 2016.

The next year we began aerial drone mapping of Burt Lake to better understand the Eurasian Watermilfoil population. We completed the Burt Lake Watershed plan with TOMWC. We partnered with LTC to acquire the final three-acre parcel in the Seven Springs Nature Preserve which completed a 65-acre conservancy available to all. We established the *Burt Lake for the Future* endowment fund to provide for gifts that keep giving well into the future.

The *Burt Lake Sturgeon Club* was formed to preserve and protect natural spawning habitat for indigenous sturgeon. All BLPA members were enrolled in the new club.

In 2018 we continued the aerial mapping for Eurasian Watermilfoil. We completed a Sturgeon River property transaction that will be used for education. We also partnered with the U of M Biological Station to assess the Sturgeon River for sturgeon spawning habitat.

We continued aerial mapping in 2019, understanding that at least three data points (2017, 2018, 2019) are required to establish a trend. It looks like we're in good shape. More about that later. With your financial support through fundraising we helped LTC and the Melvin family secure an eight-acre parcel with 930 feet of Burt Lake frontage on the south side of the lake. This Ellinger Road preserve will now be held in conservancy for all to enjoy. Plans include a short boardwalk and a viewing / skinny dipping platform along the shoreline. It'll be constructed this year. We also paid for the Indian River sewer phase two feasibility study this past year. We support sewers for the health of the lake.

Whew! That's a lot, and that's just the big stuff. So, what have we done for you lately? There it is folks. A lot.

What's in store for 2020 and beyond? The 2000 Consent Decree, which was a 20-year agreement between the State and the Tribes regarding fishing rights and regulations is in the process of renegotiation. We're on it. What's next for Line Five? It's getting interesting, as you know. We're on it and will keep you in the loop. Our membership crossed the 800 threshold this year. We have some great new ideas about future expansion in the next decade. Our power is in our numbers. That's you, the voice of Burt Lake. Happy New Year and thank – you for your generosity and support!

Jim Burke, President