

May 9, 2016

The Honorable Lee Chatfield
State Representative
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Representative Chatfield,

I am writing to you today about an issue that, while focused on northern Michigan lakes, is an issue of importance to the entire state.

One of Michigan's most beautiful northern inland lakes, Higgins Lake, needs your help. Swimmer's Itch (SI) on Higgins Lake has reached epidemic levels and must be appropriately addressed. This plague to swimmers has also affected other lakes to the point where an organization called the Michigan Swimmers Itch Partnership has been created.

The full economic impact of SI on Michigan's lake communities currently is difficult to quantify. Anecdotally, we do know that SI is affecting property values, cottage sales, cottage rentals, overall tourism and local businesses on and around affected lakes. In addition, the use and enjoyment of these lakes has been significantly diminished, as many lakefront property owners and visitors have chosen to NOT swim in parasite-infected waters. The long-term reputational value of our efforts cannot be understated. If left unchecked, the incidence of SI will likely continue to increase and the costs of remediation efforts will skyrocket. In addition, the Pure Michigan brand is at risk unless decisive action is taken. When outside state tourists vacation at lakes infected with the SI-parasites, there is great likelihood that they will contract SI. Some cases, especially those involving children, can result in visits to the emergency room. Getting them to return after they or family members have been infected with SI is extremely difficult. Negative publicity by the news media and on the internet (e.g., TripAdvisor) is also increasing, bringing greater attention to the problem on Michigan lakes and adding to negative perception.

Contrary to the belief of some, Swimmer's Itch cannot be prevented by simply showering after a swim. Precautionary actions can reduce some risk; however, only a science-based, multi-faceted initiative to significantly lessen the existence of the parasite will restore our lakes to their rightful splendor.

Douglas Lake in Cheboygan County is also impacted by SI. As a resident of Douglas Lake, I am writing today to ask for your help in the initiative to greatly decrease the incidence of Swimmers Itch.

The Higgins Lake Property Owners Association (HLPOA) has joined forces with 17 other associations representing numerous Michigan lakes (e.g. Glen Lake, Crystal Lake, Lake Margarethe, etc.) to form the Michigan Swimmers Itch Partnership (MSIP). HLPOA has been working with the country's leading swimmers itch experts, SICON, LLC, (www.swimmersitch.org) on a science-based, multi-faceted approach on Higgins Lake, and MSIP is working to bring this effective solution to 3 additional lakes through a 4 lake initiative. To move forward, we need the State to recognize its vested interest in resolving this problem.

The Senate-passed version of the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) budget for Fiscal Year 2016-17 includes \$250,000 to aid in the funding of this effort. This will undoubtedly be a topic of conversation when the budget reaches the Conference Committee stage.

Please reach out to Chairman Pscholka and let him know that you are supportive of a resolution to this issue, that you support the State's stake in the battle, and support including this funding in the 2016-2017 Fiscal Year budget.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the information provided below.

Sincerely,

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email: