



# Les Cheneaux Islands Association

## Winter Newsletter

February, 2020

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### President's Message

Jim Keighley

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#### Late Winter Greetings

##### From LCI ...

It has been a mild winter – especially compared to last winter. While the western UP has been pounded with heavy snow per usual – we have been spared that. As you start planning your return to LCI for another summer, I want to share some information about the area:

**Water Levels.** As Mark covers in his report, expect water levels to be several inches higher than last year. The Township is looking hard at grant opportunities to deal with expected municipal problem areas. You probably will have dock work to do. The Corps of Engineers mean prediction for June is 6" higher than last year – that would be a new record high. <https://www.lre.usace.army.mil/Missions/Great-Lakes-Information/Great-Lakes-Water-Levels/Water-Level-Forecast/Monthly-Bulletin-of-Great-Lakes-Water-Levels/>

**Tree and yard work.** The New Year's ice storm caused major tree damage throughout the Eastern UP. Roads and power lines are restored, but as you drive down M-134 and M-129 you will see many, many trees bent, snapped or down. The worst damage was to trees on the edges of clearings, yards, and roads. Birches got hit hard – many younger birches

are still bent to the ground. Many taller fir trees had their tops snapped off. It is highly likely that you will have some clean up on your property.

#### Cormorant Management.

Our Representative in Congress continues to make (slow but real) progress towards re-establishing a management program for the Upper Lakes. That said, we shouldn't expect more to be done this year than the limited efforts approved and executed by the DNR the past two years. My guess is that, at best, the situation won't get worse. Without those limited efforts it would certainly have gotten worse.

**Cedarville Harbor.** Work is done! Our beautiful new facility will be in full operation this boating season. It will be well worth any inconvenience you may have experienced last year.

**Coffee Shop.** A covered porch on the Hodeck and Meridian sides of the building has been added. The façade of the building is being redone – it will be great looking. This will expand seating and add covered outdoor seating! The Coffee Shop is also moving their roasting operation into what was Fired Up Pizza. You will love it!

#### Ice Cream & Barber Shop.

Dan's Barber Shop and the Ice

Cream Shoppe are trading spaces. The Ice Cream Shoppe will move to the storefront on Hodeck that was the Barber Shop. A second outdoor order window will be added and indoor seating expanded. The Barber Shop has moved into the space that was the Ice Cream Shoppe. Dan is scaling back a bit – he will have one chair and likely reduced hours, but he is still thinking through details on that.

**High Speed Internet.** Sunrise Cable was bought out by Astrea out of Iron Mountain, MI. Astrea serves more than 60 communities throughout Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. They are planning to greatly expand high-speed (up to 1gpbs) internet availability in the Eastern UP. Contractors for Astrea fully mapped their EUP network (including LCI) late last fall in preparation for expanding their fiber optic cable network. If you want to read up on them or ask questions about their plans go to: <https://astreaconnect.com/who-we-are/>

Sure, the water levels will be something we will have to work together to get through, but all in all, everything points to a great summer ahead in LCI with improvements to our quality of life in many areas. [keighleyja@gmail.com](mailto:keighleyja@gmail.com)  
906-484-2369.

## Manager's Report

Mark Engle

### Weather / Water / Ice

Each winter seems to have a personality of its own. This year, old man winter is somewhat bipolar. So far we have experienced a variety of weather conditions. Early winter saw some cold and snow followed by warming periods with a little rain, freezing drizzle and some foggy days added to the mix.

A major storm front moved through the Eastern U.P. on December 29th and 30th. High winds, rain and snow turned into a freezing mess leaving behind a trail of broken trees, downed power lines and roads that couldn't be plowed due to all the debris. Fortunately, the Les Cheneaux area missed the worst of the damage; just to the north of us took the brunt of the storm. Some in the rural Pickford area were without power for as many as 6 days.

Ice conditions have not been great for safe travel. It was mid-January when a real freeze up began. Prior to that there was ice covered with slush and open water in some places. On several occasions the Lake Huron water level rose under the ice making conditions even worse. According to the Army Corps of Engineers, Lakes Michigan and Huron reached record high levels for the month of January, 2020. The previous high water mark for a January was set in 1987. The Corps has issued the following statement: "It is likely that water levels on Lakes Michigan and Huron will set new monthly mean record high levels over the next six months. This sets the stage for coastal impacts and damages in 2020 similar to, or worse than what was experienced last year."

### Chicago Tribune

In November, a Chicago Tribune writer, accompanied by a photographer, visited the Les Cheneaux area. Northern Lake Huron was their last stop after having visited locations on all the great lakes. The mission (which resulted in a feature article) was to conduct interviews and film areas being negatively impacted by rising water levels. Beside myself, Jim Keighley, Bob Smith, Twp. Supervisor, Mark Clymer and MSU Sea Grant's, Elliot Nelson, answered questions and acted as guides.

We had to break ice, but managed to get some first hand looks at boathouse and dock damage. The Les Cheneaux Islands were well covered in the resulting Tribune story.

It should be noted that shortly after the Tribune article was written, the Chicago waterfront was hit by one of the strongest

storm surges in history. If there was an doubt about high water, Tribune readers needed only to look out a window!

### Property Inspections

LCIA property inspectors have been dealing with poor ice conditions but as of the last week in January, most LCIA members' properties have been inspected. Some island properties were without power for several weeks but reports of serious damage (due to the Dec.30/31 ice storm) have been minimal. Cloverland Electric has been on LaSalle Island checking service lines, etc. Hopefully by the time this newsletter goes out, they can safely get to all island locations. There have been no reports yet of dangerous snow/ice buildup on roofs.... That can change quickly and our inspectors are very aware!

### Fish & Game

Our whitetail deer population is nervously looking for food. There are lots of predators in the area. There are plenty of reports of carnivore sightings by trappers, loggers, and snowmobilers. Some of the sightings are not in the middle of a forest or swamp; they (coyotes, wolves, cougars) are close to populated areas.

Ice fishing is off to a slow start due to unfavorable conditions. Some perch and pike have been taken in Government, Musky and Hessel Bays. Some colder temps are on tap, just in time for the "Snowsfest" fishing contest; we are hoping for some good catches.

Double crested cormorant control is once again being discussed with sensitive areas (such as the LCI) under review for possible management plans. U.S. Congressman, Jack Bergman, has headed a cormorant management effort by introducing several U.S. House committee bills intended to prompt U.S. Fish & Wildlife to review and reinstate cormorant population controls. Cormorant predation on our local fish populations has been an issue since the mid 1980s.

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife is seeking public comments regarding cormorant management until March 19, 2020. Below is a link to more information and to make comments. We need as much input as possible to help preserve our local fishery.

<https://bergman.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=512>

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### LCIA Board of Directors Meeting Dates for 2020

Friday, May 29, 9:00 a.m.

Thursday, July 2, 9:00 a.m.

Friday, September 4, 9:00 a.m.

Community Room, Cedar Cove Assisted Living

#### Annual Meeting

Thursday, August 6, 4:00 p.m.

Commons Room, Les Cheneaux Community School

#### Annual Dinner

Thursday, August 6, 5:30 p.m.

Community Center

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## Environment Committee Report for Winter 2020

*Bob Smith, Chair*

### Water Quality:

One of the more important functions supported by LCIA is monitoring the health of our waterways. Measuring key parameters of phosphorus and plankton (free-floating algae), our Les Cheneaux waters once again are rated as excellent quality for recreational use based upon analysis of our 2019 samples by the Univ Michigan Biological Station at Douglas Lake. Even with the over five feet of increased water depth since 2012, our waters remain pristine.

### Water Level:

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue by both Jim and Mark, the Lake Huron level is expected to rise yet again in 2020.

Below are a few visuals to illustrate where we've been and where we were last summer:

#### UNPRECEDENTED RISE RATE IN LAKE HURON WATER LEVEL

LAKE HURON  
WATER LEVEL RISE  
2012 – 2019

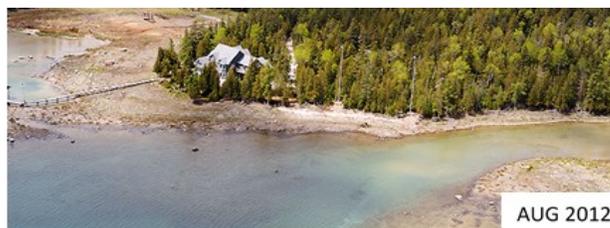
LCI WATER LEVEL  
CHANGES FROM JULY 2013  
THROUGH JULY 2019

RECORD LOW DEC 2012  
2013 – 2014 UP 14.4"  
2014 – 2015 UP 13.2"  
2015 – 2016 UP 12"  
2016 – 2017 UP 6"  
2017 – 2018 UP 2"  
2018 – 2019 UP 16"



**TOTAL RISE: 63.4" (161cm)**

LCMC AGM 2019 070719



AUG 2012



AUG 2019

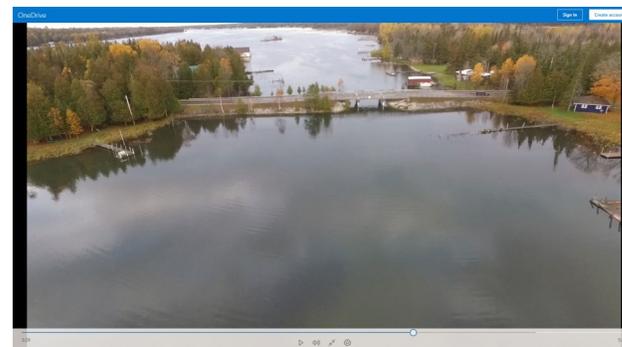
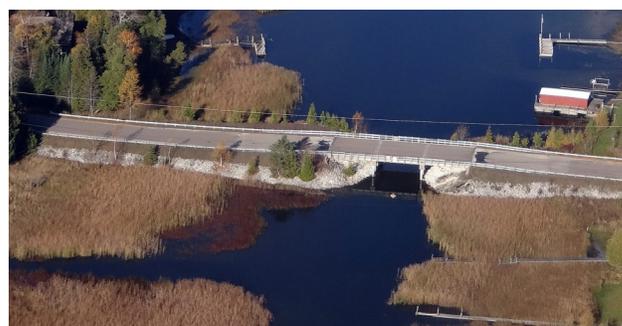
***Our landmark photo of John Bentley's boathouse showing annual changes from 2013 through 2019: an increase of over five feet (63.4 inches). Measurements are from Corps of Engineers records.***

***Two images that show a shoreline change from similar views during the summer of 2012 and from last summer.***

### Impact of high water on invasive wetland plants:

Invasive cattails have increased in local presence and density since the early 2000's. These cattails interbreed with native cattails and the hybrid offspring grow more aggressively than the parent forms. Resulting dense cattail stands crowd out other wetland plants and reduce fish habitat as well as invertebrate populations.

The upper image on here shows hybrid-invasive cattail growth closing the channel at Island-8 bridge in 2014. Growth was so dense that even runabouts were restricted in navigating easterly from the bridge. Cattail growth is generally limited to water depths less than four feet. One positive aspect of the higher lake level is that this invasive cattail patch has drown and the waterway is once again more open to recreation.



Continued on Page 4

**DNR Milestone:**

The fall of 2019 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> consecutive season that the Michigan DNR surveyed our Les Cheneaux fishery. Ours is the longest running survey the DNR has conducted and they have learned valuable fishery management lessons from their Les Cheneaux data.

From top to bottom these images show a gill net being brought aboard the *Research Vessel Tanner*, the middle image shows a wall-hanger size pike in the net and the bottom image shows fish sorting and data collection by the crew. What happens to the fish that were netted? The fish are cleaned and kept on ice, then donated to our local food pantry. You can learn about results from this survey during the DNR fishery local meeting this spring.

**Bat Update.**

In 2017 the Watershed Council began monitoring our local bat populations to determine how the once numerous “Little Brown Bats” (LBB) had survived the fungal infection that has devastated bat populations of multiple species nationwide since 2006. In addition to being highly efficient, nocturnal, flying insect traps, the LBBs are the species that caused so many of us to keep tennis racquets handy at the bedside during summers past. Although we need our night time tennis racquets less these days, after three years of monitoring, Scott Myers has found that among bat signals recorded, LBBs are still the most numerous among local bat species when he surveyed around buildings where the LBBs prefer to live. Signals are also recorded in high number for the Silver Haired Bats, which prefer living in more forested areas. Overall, Scott has detected eight of the nine bat species native to Michigan.



Thanks to those who have reported bat sightings to Scott during the past few years. With your input, added data and corresponding with university contacts, Scott hopes to learn more about the overall health of our local LBB colonies that are such an important part of our ecology.

**UPCOMING SEMINAR: Blastomycosis seminar scheduled.**

The objective of an upcoming Blastomycosis seminar is to make regional medical professionals as well as the general public more aware of the cause, symptoms and treatment of this, potentially lethal, fungal disease that is prevalent in the Great Lakes area, including the Eastern Upper Peninsula. For the uninitiated, Blastomycosis (Blasto) is caused by a soil-borne fungus that has an ability to infect dogs and, in some cases, humans.

Two seminars are planned: the first is scheduled for May 9<sup>th</sup> at the Hessel School House and will be oriented toward medical professionals but the public is welcome. The second seminar will be aimed at the general public and will be held on July 9<sup>th</sup> at the Les Cheneaux Community Center.



Fungal spore formation

Blasto infections of humans will be discussed by Carol Kauffman, MD, Professor of Internal Medicine and Chief of Infectious Diseases, Univ Michigan Med School and by Scott Schreiber, Epidemiologist for Michigan Dept of Community Health. Blasto infections of dogs will be addressed by Daniel Langlois, DVM, College of Veterinary Medicine, Michigan State Univ and by Clinton Groover, DVM, Pickford Veterinary Clinic.

For more information: Contact Kerri Smith or Paul Gingras at Hessel School House  
906-484-1333 hesselschoolhouse@gmail.com