



MICHIGAN WATERFRONT ALLIANCE

NEWSLETTER

Summer 2025

MichiganWaterfrontAlliance.com

MWA Mission Statement “This corporation is formed to protect, preserve and promote the wise use of inland waters – lakes, streams, rivers, creeks and the waters and bottomlands of the State of Michigan.

Remembering Dick Brown, By Bob Frye

MWA President Emeritus Dick Brown passed away this past February. I first remember meeting Dick Brown when he was president of the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association. At the time I was president of the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association, and we were in the throes of a huge legal battle regarding overnight mooring at public road ends on Higgins Lake. I asked Dick and the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association for help because the outcome of these legal battles would set a precedent for all the Michigan inland lakes. Because of Dick's leadership the result was the formation of the Michigan Waterfront Alliance. He believed so much in the Alliance that he became president and for many years led the Alliance and handled much of the Alliance's business.

Dick loved Lake Fenton. He had a sign in his front yard (I think it said) , "Mayor of Lake Fenton". Dick loved Michigan's inland lakes and gave a lot of time, talent and treasure protecting and preserving them. He was a remarkable man.

Donation Option on Watercraft Registrations

Due to the ever-increasing ecological threat and economic disruption that Aquatic Invasive Species are having on our Michigan inland waterways, the Michigan Waterfront Alliance and Lake Awareness Day Partners propose the following:

1. Fund Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Prevention and Control on Michigan's inland waterways with a Donation Option on Watercraft Registrations. No specific donation amount would be suggested.
2. The MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) would create an AIS Prevention and Control Fund Advisory Committee modeled after the office that is responsible for dispersing funds generated by the “Protecting Our Waters” specialty license plate program. This AIS Prevention and Control Fund Advisory Committee would be responsible for making decisions regarding the allocation and dispersal of funds generated by the watercraft registration donation option program.
3. We must ensure the existence of language, within the proposed legislation, that will serve to ensure that the revenue generated by the Watercraft Registration Donation Option program is "protected" and therefore “restricted” for use only to fund Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Control program related functions and activities.
- 4 The Donor Option program shall be primarily dedicated to providing grants to local units of government, inland lake, river, and stream associations and other non-governmental organizations for the sole purpose of **Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Control.**
5. "Lake, river or stream association" shall be defined according to the following criteria:

Any State of Michigan inland lake, river or stream organization.

6. The Board of directors of the Michigan Waterfront Alliance asks all members and their neighbors and friends to let their representatives and senators know how valuable our Inland Lakes are and how important it is that we take care of them through this program.

Legislative Update By MWA lobbyist Madeline Fata from Karoub Associates

While summer is typically a quiet time for legislative activity in Lansing, the Michigan Legislature is currently at a near standstill. July 1 is traditionally the symbolic deadline for both the House and Senate to pass the state budget. However, this year, the chambers are struggling to reach a consensus, and budget negotiations remain ongoing. As long as the Republican-led House and Democratic-led Senate remain at odds, policy bills are seeing little movement. In fact, only six bills have reached the Governor's desk for signature so far this year — the lowest number in 20 years.

Heading into the 2025 session, there were expectations of legislation on key issues such as a statewide septic code, aggregate mining, and short-term rentals. However, there appears to be little appetite in the Legislature to take on these more controversial topics at this time.

Marketable Record Title Act

Board members and attorneys, Bill Carey and Dane Carey, addressed critical amendments to the MRTA (Marketable Record Title Act) at a recent board meeting of MWA. The amendments to MRTA, in part, address whether deed restrictions may become unenforceable if the restrictions are not rerecorded at least every 40 years. At this time, the amendments have been adopted into law and the deadline for rerecording has been established. A discussion was held about the legal aspects of preserving important building and use restrictions. Many landowners are unaware of the need to meet the mandate of the amended MRTA. The deadline for rerecording is September 29, 2025. There are additional actions under consideration at the state legislative level to further amend the MRTA. However, it appears unlikely that the legislature will take any action during the current legislative session. Anyone intending to file a Notice of Claim under the MRTA should take action now so as to not miss the deadline. Many lake associations and lakefront subdivisions may especially be impacted by MRTA changes. Deed or use restrictions can offer valuable protection against overuse of riparian waters, short-term renting, and oversized homes being constructed on small lots.

Michigan Waterways Commission

In June of 2025 Bob Frye, President of the MWA, addressed the Michigan Waterways Commission regarding Waterways support for legislation to enable a larger portion of the watercraft registration and gas tax revenue be allocated to the inland lakes. Currently The Waterways Commission is restricted to just improving launch sites and dredging for inland lakes with the revenue that comes from watercraft registration and gas tax.

The proposed legislation would add to **324.78110 Waterways account; use.**

Sec. 78110: **(xviii) For the purpose of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention and Control on inland lakes and streams.** The Waterways Ways Commission has yet to support such legislation. **Notes and Attendance 2025 Lake**

Awareness Day

The Lake Awareness Day Partners had a very successful Lake Awareness Day on May 21, 2025. Not only did we have Michigan Representatives and Senators join us for lunch, we also had a number of esteemed state government officials including Sydney Hart, the Legislative Liaison from EGLE; Amy Lounds, acting Assistant Director of the Water Resources Division at EGLE; Jerrod Sanders the Director of the Water Resources Division at EGLE and Sarah Le Sage, the State Assistant Administrator Water Resources Division at EGLE. The attendance of these officials was very helpful by showing support for the LAD Partners goal, to help fund aquatic invasive species prevention and



control via a donation option on Michigan watercraft registrations. Ronin Hackworth, Legislative Aid Constituent Services for Representative Ken Borton, attended and was given the latest language for the AIS Donation Legislation worked on with the help of Sarah Lesage.

Beside the signage for the event that included 5 Lake Awareness Day posters, all 24 inches by 36 inches, Jason Broekstra, from the Michigan Aquatic Managers Association, parked an Aquatic work boat outside the venue and put on display a number of water quality testing instruments and gear alongside the posters. Scott Brown, Vice President of the Michigan Waterfront Alliance put together a beautiful 4 color handout publicizing the 2025 LAD theme "Michigan's Inland Lakes: Economic Engines".

Lake Awareness Day Partners in Attendance:

Casey Thompson, Midwest Aquatic Plant Management Society; Megan Tinsley, Water Policy Director Michigan Environmental Council; Emily Smith, Land and Water Conservation Policy Manager Michigan Environmental Council; Reese Dillard, Water Quality Specialist Michigan Environmental Council; Jason Broekstra, Michigan Aquatic Managers Association; Abbie Hawley, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council; Marcella Domka, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council; Matt Kurta, Lobbyist Karoub Associates; Madeline Fata, Lobbyist Karoub Associates; William Brown, MWA Vice President; Robert Frye, MWA President, Jennifer Jermalowicz Jones, MWA Board member; Charlene Cornell, MWA Board Member and Nancy Beckwith, MWA Secretary.

Additional Attendees:

Theresa Baker, Director of Communications and Legislative affairs and Legislative affairs Scofes & Associates; Danny Armstrong, Outreach Coordinator for the NotMySpecies program for the State of Michigan; Leah Skyler Dotson, legislative Policy Director for Representative Jimmie Wilson Junior; Corey Morris, Constituent Services Director for Representative Jimmie Wilson Junior; Mai Xlong, State Representative for the 13th District; Tom Knuse, State Representative for the 100th District; Joe Fox, State representative for the Michigan 101st House District; Adam Beckwith, Senior policy advisor for the Michigan Senate Democrats; Winnie Brinks, Majority Leader of the Michigan Senate representing the 29th Senate district; Nathan Kissling, Legislative Aid for Policy Service of Representative Alicia St Germain; Ann Marie Nicholson, Legislative Director for Senator Sue Shink; Jeffrey Hillman, Chief of Staff of Senator Sue Shink and Roger Victory, Senator 31st District.

2025 Mackinac Policy Conference Signage and Dinner at the Woods sponsored by MWA Lobbyist Karoub Associates

On May 29 the 2024 LAD "Next Steps" sign was replaced with the 2025 LAD sign: Michigan's Inland Lakes:



Economic Engines. Once the installation was finished several people started reading the whole display. John Hulett remarked that the Grand Hotel Organization is very happy to have this display about Michigan's inland lakes on the Grand property.

At the Karoub Associates sponsored Dinner for Senators, Representatives and Clients of Karoub at the Woods restaurant, MWA President Bob Frye made the case about the importance of Michigan's inland lakes to a number of Senators, Representatives and other clients of Karoub Associates. These Included John Roth, Representative of the 104th district and his legislative Aide/ Policy Services Director Mindy Fernandes, Matthew Bierlein, Representative of the 97 District and Gregory Alexander, representing the 98th District. While dining, Representative Ken Borton reaffirmed his support for sponsoring legislation creating the donation option, on Michigan waterfront craft registration, to help fund aquatic invasive species prevention and control.



Where Does Michigan Stand on a Statewide Septic Code?

In spite of decades of proposed legislation, Michigan remains the only state in the nation without a statewide standard for how on-site wastewater disposal systems are inspected or maintained. Consequently, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) estimates that 330,000 systems across the state are malfunctioning or failing- releasing nearly 31 million gallons of raw sewage into surrounding communities and waterways each *day*.

On-site wastewater disposal systems collect all types of waste: pharmaceuticals, pathogens, bacteria, heavy metals and more. *E.coli*, a common bacteria found in human waste, is responsible for the closure of many beaches and lakeshores each year. The seepage of raw sewage into the environment negatively impacts Michigan's inland waterways, economy, the environment, public health and more.

In 2025 there is renewed interest in pursuing a statewide septic code. Senator Singh has reconvened the work group and is updating the drafts from where they left off in 2024. While the bill has not been formally introduced yet, it is expected to be introduced soon and a great deal of advocacy is needed to advance this measure across the finish line. Additionally, proponents are advocating for a \$12 million funding allocation for EGLE to develop a database of septic systems to advance knowledge and help local health departments locate potentially failing systems. County health departments regulate where septic systems can be installed, but the regulations end there for much of the state. Only 11 of Michigan's 83 counties have gone beyond existing state regulations and enacted programs designed to detect failed septic systems and force repairs.

The Need for a Stronger Collaboration Between EGLE and lake Specialists by Dr. Jennifer Jermalowicz-Jones, CLP, CLM & MWA Board Member

The need for successful outcomes of aquatic management projects has never been higher than in recent years due to ever increasing development pressures, environmental stressors, and a scarcity of cost-effective solutions that can be permitted by current state statutes. Most industries such as the pharmaceutical, automotive, and retail industries have a plethora of options for those with specific needs. The lake management industry has always been limited, especially due to EPA registrations among other licensing and product development requirements. Michigan, with all of its tens of thousands of developed lakes has a critical need for increased management options to preserve water quality and waterfront property values. Most lake improvement projects require a permit from EGLE and some also require a joint permit from EGLE and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Such permits can be costly to acquire and may take several months to review prior to issuance or denial. Currently, many cost-effective and environmentally favorable projects are denied permits for many different reasons. Thus, there is a need for aquatic managers to have a significantly stronger alliance or partnership with EGLE in the future. There is an urgent need for enhanced communication, collaboration, and the creation of mutually beneficial solutions to allow for the aforementioned process to occur. Recently, the MWA board of Directors authorized creation of a special

committee which includes lake management experts, concerned and educated riparians, and a representative from EGLE. This committee will meet to further expand on the items proposed below and significantly improve communication between all parties for the betterment of lake improvement throughout Michigan. The following action items are thus proposed:

Enhanced communication: 1. Ease of access for sharing information 2. Mutual sharing of expertise 3. Sharing of case studies/successes for other states/scientific peer reviews

Enhanced collaboration: 1. Adoption of a team approach instead of “us vs. them” 2. Leveraging expertise from both parties for successful outcomes 3. Establishment of protocol for respectful collaboration of all projects

Possible solutions: 1. Regularly scheduled round table meetings 2. Annual EGLE/lake specialist conference 3. Formation of technical committee for all projects 4. Recommendations from both parties to higher level of office for accountability

MWA will provide regular updates on the progress of this process as it advances and will continue to seek input from riparians across the state to assist EGLE with possible directions and future needs for lake improvements.

BE A CHAMPION By Ed Highfield MWA Treasurer

Are you a champion on your lake, river or stream? Are you doing anything about the onslaught of Aquatic Invasive Species, the Marketable Title Act, Short Term Rentals, Wake Boats, a statewide Septic Code, or Gravel mines operating close to inland lakes? All these issues affect our lakes, rivers, and streams and are issues that our congress is dealing with. If you are a member of the Michigan Waterfront Alliance (MWA) you are doing something about these issues. The Michigan Waterfront Alliance is working everyday trying to convince Michigan Senators and Representatives to protect our waterways when it comes to these issues. However, we can only do so much with our limited funds. Our membership is very loyal, and you mean so much to us, but compared to the number of lake, river and streams property owners in the state of Michigan only a small fraction are members of the Michigan Waterfront Alliance. It is sad to say that people are not willing to join an organization that is working to protect one of their greatest assets (their lake, river and stream property). For this reason, the Michigan Waterfront Alliance has set up a way for property owners to become a lake champion for their lake, river or stream. You can become a lake champion by donating to the “MY HEALTHY LAKE CHAMPION” Fund. We have set up three levels of Lake Champions: 1. Gold Lake Champion \$1,000 2. Silver Lake Champion \$500 3. Bronze Lake Champion \$250

As you or your lake association consider becoming a Lake Champion, remember that the Michigan Waterfront Alliance is made up of volunteers who are working to protect the lakes rivers, and stream in Michigan. Please join the following 2025 Lake Champions and support the MWA. Silver Champions: Black Lake Association, John Ogren, Island Lower Long Forest Lake POA, Carol Ward, Bob and Lynne Frye and the Beck Living Trust. Bronze champions: Jim & Rhonda Fackert, Nancy Beckwith, Julia Townsend-Dunn and Robert Rinde.

The MWA Board of Directors sincerely thanks all Individual, Lake Association and Lake Champions for their support!

We hope to see you at the Annual membership meeting on September 22 at 10 am At Karoub Associates – Governors Room, 12 W Allegan St, Lansing MI 48933

Sincerely,

MWA Board of Directors

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