

Crockery Lake Association Meeting
April 26, 2023
Chester Township Hall

1. Call Meeting to Order 7:00 pm

2. Roll Call

Present: Betsy Ludwick, President; Pat Wolters, Vice President; Susan McClure, Secretary; Greg Slater, Treasurer; Bob Blauwkamp, Past President; Paula Humphrey, Carl Elliott, Mollie Gaggin, John Degeneres.

Twenty people in attendance.

3. Approval of Agenda

Greg Slater moved to approve the Agenda, Carl Elliott seconded. Passed.

4. Introduction of Dr. Jennifer Jones of Restorative Lake Science.

Betsy Ludwick introduced Dr. Jones as the author of "Crockery Lake Basin and Tributary Water Quality Evaluation with Future Improvement Recommendations" (Feasibility Study). Dr. Jones explained that she used a holistic approach in her analysis of how to reduce nutrients entering Crockery Lake. One source of nutrients is drains. Rerouting drains is not realistic due to the very high cost of dredging. She described two ways that nutrient laden water entering the lake through drains can be arrested. One is using switchgrass as a filter. The other is biochar. One advantage of biochar is that there are more surfaces to gather the incoming phosphorus and nitrogen. EGLE has permitted its use. It has been used successfully at Silver Lake. Another source of nutrients is leaking septic tanks and drain fields. Each owner is responsible for monitoring their septic tank and the drain field. Others who can smell the poorly functioning septic tank and field can anonymously report the smell to the Ottawa County Health Department. Plumes coming from the septic tanks and/or drain fields can enter the groundwater, affecting the water from the wells. Alum and Phoslock treatments are not sustainable because the nutrients keep flowing into the lake.

Crockery Lake will still need weed treatments. The DNR recommends one-third of the lake to have native plants growing in the lake.

A Lake Improvement Board can deal with systemic problems and will have more access to available grant money and expertise.

Dr. Jones said that biochar is fitted into a "sock" retro-fitted for the drain/inlet. Paula Humphrey passed around the picture of a biochar sleeve in the Feasibility Study. The biochar sock will not catch all the water in the event of a heavy rainfall. Whether the filter is switchgrass or biochar, EGLE requires its removal during the winter months. When people pointed out faults with timetable (i.e. winter manuring of fields, early Spring runoff), Dr. Jones said permits are issued case by case and the concerns should be brought up with EGLE. A contract for using biochar would be for five years, allowing time to see trends. Also, five years is the expected life span of the biochar filter. Dr. Jones said nutrients should decline after the first year. The data gathered at Silver Lake showed positive changes in the first year. However, problems that have developed over decades are not reversed quickly. She suggested measurable goals be set, like using Secchi Disk measurements.

If there are no improvements within five years, other methods should be considered. Because of the ways nutrients enter the lake, i.e. farmed fields, septic tank leaks, geese, road salt, manicured shorelines, pollution control has to have an educational

component. Dr. Jones said it takes three to four months to get a permit. Also, before any filter could be placed in a drain, an easement would have to be granted.

If Crockery Lake riparians do nothing but weed control, there will be less oxygen, fewer fish, fewer plants and less plant diversity, and the blue-green algae will thrive. Algae, one of the oldest plants, can adapt to changing conditions and grow stronger. No fauna eats algae. Copper sulfate, used to control algae, is becoming less effective. A possible alternative to copper sulfate is peroxide but it can only be applied when there is no wind or agitation.

What can the Crockery Lake riparians do?

Dr. Jones talked about a Lake Improvement Board. A petition specifying scope of the Board's activities, the cost of the project, the time the Board would exist, and the member composition would have to be signed by 66% of the owners of the 105 lakefront parcels. All signatures would need to be verified by the township. Lake Improvement Board members would include Drain Commissioner Joe Bush, Ottawa County Commissioner Allison Meidema, a person from the Crockery Lake Association Board and two people appointed by the township preferably riparians. Two public meetings/hearings must take place before a Lake Improvement Board is formed. The Lake Improvement Board can be dissolved by 2/3s of the 105 parcel owners signing a petition to disband.

People expressed worry about costs.

Betsy Ludwick suggested several ways to alleviate costs: filters in two inlets one year and filters in the other two inlets the next year spreads out the cost but remediation would take longer. Dr. Jones said that a contractor works out of Muskegon and we could ask for references. By addressing all four inlets the first year would cost more than the first year but then the cost goes down significantly the second year and remediation would happen twice as fast.

Drain Commissioner Joe Bush said that scope of the dredging project was far more costly than using filters to remove nutrients. And that was assessed to all of the appropriate people in the watershed. While a Lake Improvement Board could have access to more grant money because it would be collecting data, the 105 lakefront parcel owners would be the base of funding as a Special Assessment District because it is the parcel owners who would benefit from a healthy lake. The County Park would pay 5% of the mediation. A Lake Improvement Board could also have access to grant writers.

There was confusion about whether costs would be assigned to lake front parcels only or to lake front parcels and on those parcels owned across the road.

There was voiced concern about losing control of Crockery Lake if a Lake Improvement Board were formed.

Joe Bush noted Lloyd's Bayou has had a Lake Improvement Board for fifteen years. Joe Bush invited us to attend its next meeting on May 1 at 4 pm at the Barber School. Spring Lake also has a Lake Improvement Board. Betsy has talked to residents at Hess and Kimble/Pickerel Lakes who approved of their Lake Improvement Boards.

Linda Lane posed some questions:

1. *Do you know what steps would be necessary to implement a lake wide drainfield testing? That would have to go through the planning commission and become an ordinance.-Dr. Jones reminded us that there is canine testing but permission from the property owners is needed to have the dogs come on property. It costs between*

\$5,000 to \$6,000 for canine testing.

2. One of the drains runs through Grose Park. Has anyone talked to the Park Commission regarding them installing a vegetation buffer zone on both sides of the drain to stop the severe erosion? Yes, the OCPD will be fixing the erosion problem this summer per Joe Bush.

3. The study suggests reducing the algae in the water table first, then possibly doing some Phoslock treatments. Could some limited use of Phoslock also be done at the same time to help with water clarity? Have you looked at that possibility? Jennifer Jones said that any treatment to the lake without doing something to the inlets would be wasted. To use Phoslock would cost about \$50,000 to \$80,000 more. Phoslock would be a band aid.

4. Are there any costs to residents if a lake board is created--costs to reimburse members for attendance, etc? Lake Improvement Board members are volunteers. There is no direct reimbursement.

5. Do you know of any other small lakes in Michigan that have created a lake board? Have they been successful in decreasing phosphorus in their lakes?

Lloyd's Bayou, Spring Lake, Hess Lake, Kimble/Pickerel Lake have Lake Improvement Boards. There are many LIB's in Michigan reporting decrease in harmful nutrients and improvement in lake quality.

6. Is there any way to increase the number of residences included in the second special assessment? Why do the lake residents have to pay the whole bill?

Lake residents pay for cleaning up the lake because they will benefit from a clean lake, as will the animals and plants living in the lake. The lake residents' drinking water is also affected by how clean the lake is. Farmers are protected by law: Michigan law is that farmers have the right to farm. Farming includes maintaining fertility in the fields. Plus, riparians could compare their share of maintaining a healthy lake with what they would spend on maintaining a pool. Pat Wolters noted that when she heard in 2022 that Crockery Lake was now classified as a hyper-eutrophic lake she "swallowed her tongue." Lake residents may be "cleaning up someone else's mess," but the mess still needs to be cleaned up and lake residents are the beneficiaries.

Dr. Jones encouraged us to contact Michigan state representatives. Betsy Ludwick said she talked to Rep. Luke Meerman who said he is willing to help with EGLE.

Carl Elliott suggested each parcel owner treat the frontage with EGLE approved biodigesters at approximately \$260 a pail that would treat 1 acre. He objected to losing control by a Lake Improvement Board, to the inflated costs that Dr. Jones projected for the filters, and to the 15% contingency fee paid for testing and the price of doing business.

Dr. Jones said that the biodigesters do not work in water with low oxygen levels and they are not sustainable. Expenses involved with the filters include paying up front for the contract to maintain them. EGLE requires testing and data, the filters are made to fit the drains. The process needs to work well in conditions of low oxygen, and the testing needs to be done by experts.

For the Lake Improvement Board Joe Bush would draft the petition and then the CLA has to approve the petition.

Betsy reminded people they need to read the Feasibility Study, which is on the CLA website (Keep Scrolling!) She wants consensus if the CLA is going to support a Lake Improvement Board. Betsy thanked Dr. Jones of Restorative Lake Science for speaking and said we are looking forward to hearing from her at the Annual Meeting on May 17, 2023.

5. Call to Audience

Karen Elliott read a prepared statement:

Great article in newsletter about loons and eagles. Thank you Linda.

Fishermen want more and larger fish.

Boaters want big boats and the room to use them.

Swimmers want clean water to swim in.

Environmentalists want healthy water.

Homeowners want less erosion.

Farmers just want to make a living while feeding us.

We need to find a balance.

Things causing the Problems we face: Geese, Septics, Boats, Farm Run Off, Raking or leaf blowing into the lake, Fertilizer (Some neighbors are still using this despite the ordinance), Seawalls, People who want a pristine lake but don't want to do anything to make it so.

As our Newsletter says over and over:

Quote from July 2022 - "If the Crockery Lake Association cannot get the proper funding to support the lake's health, then the fate of the lake will remain in the township's hands. The board gives a voice to all members of the lake association. The lake board does their best to listen and implement your ideas and concerns. As lake residents, we have a responsibility to treat the lake with respect and try to minimize the damage caused by OUR use of the lake. If we don't take this responsibility seriously no one will."

"Lake Improvement Board would consist of (per Feasibility study" - Page 60):

- 1. The Ottawa County Drain Commissioner (Joe Bush)*
- 2. An Ottawa County Commissioner (Allison Miedema)*
- 3. A Crockery Lake riparian representative (must live on the lake)*
- 4. Two representatives of Chester Township (do not need to be on the lake but this is preferred, appointed by the Chester Township Board)"*

"The Commissioners term is as long as they are holding elective office. The riparian representative is a four year term. The two township representatives are appointed and retained by the Crockery (?) Township Board."So every time someone moves or fails to get elected to their position, a new representative will take over and they would have to be brought up to speed on what is going on, wasting more time and resources. So given the fact that this Lake Board would be very costly and yet do nothing substantial to address our lake itself for a period of three to six years, is this a good use of our money just to get someone else to do our work? Both Chester Township and us riparians have already been over charged for drain projects. Let us learn from those mistakes. If we want to clean up the township watershed, which may be a great idea, let us

form a conservation district. Our lake is mostly for pleasure; but the inlet, the outlet, ponds and groundwater are all being polluted and will eventually make our well water unfit to drink. Leave the government intervention for something of substance and the whole township could pay for it. Let us concentrate our efforts on what could work today for the lake, not six years down the road but yet this summer.

Betsy thanked Linda Lane and Karen Elliott for their participation.

6. President's Report

a. A letter from Brian Gunderman, DNR, Michigan Fisheries Division. Gunderman said there would be no fish planted in Crockery Lake until the lake is cleaned up and there is more parking for fishermen at the "boat launch."

b. Dan Wickham, owner of Sludgehammer, a bio-organic plus oxygen septic tank option, is willing to speak at a Crockery Lake Association Meeting.

c. Enbiorganics is not operating in Michigan because EGLE wanted its formula for using bacteria to eat bacteria. Enbiorganics said no.

7. Secretary's Report

Amendments: Betsy Ludwick amended the minutes to read at #5...Ben Jordan..."applied for a grant on behalf of Crockery lake for shoreline improvement with native plants. Those who apply and qualify must be willing to participate 50% in funds and/or work. This grant money will be available in the summer of 2024." She also added "And [the Feasibility Study is] compulsory for forming a Lake Improvement Board." A third amendment specifies that Gary Meerman "prefers that the other two [members] from the township are lake residents." Greg Slater said that he wanted "the" changed to "a." The amendment now reads, "If septic systems are a main problem...." Greg Slater moved the amended minutes to be accepted; Bob Blauwkamp seconded. Passed.

Betsy will publish the amended minutes to the website as approved.

8. Treasurer's Report

There was no financial activity between the March and April Board Meetings. The CLA owes \$3500, after the down payment, for the July 3, 2023, fireworks. There is \$1402.88 available toward the \$7000 show in 2024.

Membership dues remain at \$35. Dues money will not go toward a Lake Improvement Board petition. Nor do dues pay for the firework display.

Bob Blauwkamp moved to accept the Treasurer's Report; Mollie Gaggin seconded.
Passed.

9. Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting will be held May 17, 2023, at Chester Township Hall. Carl Elliott moved retiring Board members to be recognized from 6 until the Annual Meeting starts at 7 pm. Bob Blauwkamp seconded. Passed.

Dr. Jennifer Jones will be our guest speaker again.

After the Annual Meeting, the Board will hold a Reorganization Meeting to elect officers.

10. Committee Reports

a. Nominations

Pat Wolters has not heard from people interested in serving on the Board. She asked that other Board Members contact the people they represent. They could talk to people on their route about membership.

b. Lake Quality Committee

Professional Lake Management has done the annual Spring inlet testing and is waiting for the test results. Weed and algae treatments are scheduled for weeks of May 8, May 15 if needed, June 12 if needed, July 17 if needed, and August 1, if needed. There can be a treatment on June 26 if the algae and weeds need to be treated before July 3. There needs to be two weeks between treatments.

c. Membership

Greg Slater has received one membership since the March meeting. He urged us to join/ rejoin before the Annual Meeting Or we may join then.

d. Events

Mollie Gaggin will plan a lake garden tour on the south side of the lake.

e. Website, Newsletter, and Facebook

Susan McClure thanked Betsy Ludwick for posting the Lake Feasibility Study on the website for all to read. Carl Elliott said he couldn't find the minutes. Betsy Ludwick said the Minutes were there.

11. July 3, 2023

a. Fireworks 2023 Update, Funding and Insurance Endorsements

Betsy Ludwick thanked Carl and Karen Elliott for their work in arranging the necessary permits. Paperwork from Chester Township is complete and can now be sent to the DNR and the fireworks company.

b. Boat Parade

The permit for the boat parade for the DNR is filled out.

c. Yard Decorating Contest

Betsy complimented the Elliotts for their 2022 yard display. Whether there will be a contest in 2023 will be discussed at the Annual Meeting.

12. Round the Table

Bob Blauwkamp, nothing;

John Degeneres, nothing;

Carl Elliott asked what the audience thought about bio-organics. Lara Keena said she would like to know more about the product. Carl explained that the product was like the muck pellets he used a few years ago but were to be more effective. The material digests "stuff" in the lake, clears the water, and gets rid of sediment. It works in temperatures from 47 degrees to 130 degrees. The product digests phosphorus. Several people in the audience were aware of the muck pellets and the product Carl referenced. Pat Wolters said the product needs oxygen to work. Carl said a single bucket cost \$263 a bucket. Seven pounds covers one acre.

Mollie Gaggin, It's great to be back after the shoulder surgery;

Greg Slater wants a Lake Improvement Board fact sheet for the Annual Meeting;

Pat Wolters said when she moved here more than sixty years ago, from her house on the north side of the lake, she could see animals grazing along the lake on the south side. Then houses came and affected the lake. People didn't know how to keep a lake clean and now we do. The data we've collected over the years will help us clean up the lake;

Susan McClure said thanks to all the people who have helped us learn about the lake; Paula Humphrey, nothing.

Greg Slater moved to adjourn. 9:27 pm.

Next Meeting

May 17, 2023

Chester Township

Hall

Retirement cake

6pm

Annual Meeting

7pm