

GERRISH TOWNSHIP BOARD
SPECIAL MEETING
December 21, 2015

Special meeting called to order at 7:00pm. Present: Supervisor Homola, Clerk Patchin, Treasurer Tulgetske, Trustee Lippert. Absent: Trustee Link. Also present: Moderator Brian Hill, Representatives from Northpoint Fisheries Management, Representatives from SiCon, and 90 plus citizens.

SiCon information presentation: Not giving formal presentation at this time will save all Q & A till after the presentation by Northpoint Fisheries.

Northpoint Fisheries presentation touched on harassment and what that included, nesting boxes, snail levels, planned schedule for 2016, and the misconception about the programs being conflicting.

Public Comments: Opened at 7:37pm.
Questions read by Moderator Brian Hill:

#1: - Question For SiCon-

What Scientific written proof does SiCon have stating that Mergansers will increase by using nesting boxes? If you can't find the eggs in the woodlands how can you oil eggs? At what lake was the approach tested and when?

A: Little work has been done on common mergansers. Nest boxes very successful for wood ducks. No evidence to improve or reduce with using nest boxes. Previously have experience on Glen Lake.

#2: - Question For SiCon-

My scientific research shows the migration cannot be altered, the cost of a program does not determine the success of that program. Where is SiCon's written scientific proof that it can?

A: We never claimed it changes the migration, would like to see said scientific research.

#3: - Question For SiCon

Where is the written documentation that SiCon's more expensive procedures on mergansers have been reducing swimmers itch and what lake did this happen on and when?

A: Publication in 1991 in Michigan Academician, 4 years to get their infection rate, snail infection rate which isn't a perfect metric, new tools coming out with Oakland university, reduced from 2.1% to (one tenth of a percent) on Glen Lake.

#4: - Question For SiCon-

What new research did you do on Higgins Lake this summer? By new I mean research that doesn't duplicate that which was already done by Harvey Blankenspoor when he was working with Glen Lake.

A: Harvey and Ron started working on Glen Lake in 1983, and I'm Ron. We've successfully showed it, don't see the need to show it a second time. It's a waste of money.

#5: - Question For SiCon-

How many types of birds did you test for the parasites?

A: This summer or overall? We have tested dozens of species over the last 20 years. This summer on Higgins we assessed 4 birds, Canadian geese, Common Mergansers, Red Breasted Mergansers and Mallards, only found infection in the Common Merganser. In 1979 Ron published first paper and had tested over 800 birds, representing 50 some species.

#6: -Question For SiCon-

How many types of snails did you test for the parasites?

A: (assuming meaning on Higgins Lake specifically) We found 5 different species and eliminated 3 because they have never been documented to ever carry the infection. Leaving 2 species which were both found to be infected. The majority was in one kind of those species.

#7: -Question For SiCon-

How many types of mammals did you test for the parasites?

A: We didn't test any, worldwide there 100 species that cause swimmers itch that can be infected, 70 of them birds, 30 in mammals, but we don't have that snail on our lake so it would have been wasted time, effort and money to test the mammals here.

#8: - Question For SiCon-

Did you discover any new parasites that cause swimmer's Itch?

A: Not this summer we didn't.

#9: -Question For SiCon-

Did you completely remove all snails from any area of the lake? If so where?

A: It's impossible to remove snails from a given area. About 12,000 snails were removed from South State Park in about a 3 and a half hour time span in the buoys furthest east of South state Park. We believe to have gotten about 95% of them out of that area and are currently awaiting results from Oakland University to find out what kind of cercariae counts were visible. In one area of 100ft x 100ft we removed every snail during that period of 3 weeks and sampled water. Testing to see if individuals could remove snails in their area and would it result in the decline of swimmers itch, currently still awaiting results from Oakland University.

#10: - Question For SiCon-

Can you explain what may have changed in our ecosystem to make the Swimmer's Itch so much worse in recent years?

A: Not the only lake effected, we have a website that shows many lakes infected in northern Michigan. We have hypothesis as scientists, global climate change, it may or may not have an effect. We are primarily concerned with control of Swimmers Itch.

#11: -For SiCon-

How did you mark the ducks and ducklings who were relocated to ensure they don't return to Higgins Lake next spring?

A: US Fish and Wildlife/Geological Study band on the females, in the past we tagged the young ones with a fish fin tag, but didn't have the permission to do that nor seek that permission this time. We did put a colored band on the other leg of the females as well, different colors used for different areas.

#12: - Question For SiCon-

How many of you are actually here at Higgins Lake full time in the spring when the ducks are looking to relocate their nests? Does this timing conflict with your full time teaching responsibilities?

A: You have to trust us that we are putting all of our effort into controlling Swimmers Itch on Higgins Lake. We had 5 people working in the spring, 1 person full time/2 part time from ice out till May 22, 2 people full time from May 22 till mid-June, we had 5 people full time for 2 weeks during high traffic time, 3 people pretty much full time after that. Unproductive second part to the question.

#13: - Question For SiCon-

What happens when the 3 years are up? Will we be able to continue getting relocation permits, or will we then be on our own as Glen Lake was? Are you still working with them?

A: That depends, we have a plan in mind that comprehensive that's not just on Higgins Lake that involves Oakland University and an international Institution. If allowed to do our program without harassment, without nesting boxes, we can reduce cost in 3rd year to \$90,000, and \$60,000 for 4th year for maintenance. However if you decide as a group to continue with harassment in the spring, we can't find the nests it will cost more for our services, its more ducks in the water. It's our reputation, it will cost the same cost as it will be this upcoming summer. It's trust, you have to trust us. Had you not had our program over the summer and only Northpoint (not effect program) you would still have 9 broods, 87 birds, several injured, you would have swimmers itch all throughout next summer. You can't get rid of those birds, the secret is to get the broods off the lake. We have relocated since 1983/84, we didn't get a permit to do that by thinking it would just be ok. We had to go and relocate and do surveys of relocated birds. Permits are given by the DNR they wouldn't allow us to put them in Grand Traverse Bay due to botulism, we are doing all of our moving with the permission from the experts at the DNR. No time for 3rd part of question.

#14: - Question For SiCon-

What percentage of your contact is duck relocating, and what percentage is research?

A: #1 concern is control. Control 1st, research is to help better control in the future. The research part 23 years ago was about Copper Sulfate, because of research we have done, we discovered it was the mergansers. That's the research part.

#15: - Question For SiCon-

This past summer you were unable to capture a group of 10-12 year old female mergansers that I twice reported to you with identifying pictures. They spent the summer on the north shore, will you be able to capture them next summer?

A: We responded to almost every hot line tip we got, including those thought to be Common Mergansers that were not. I don't believe those spoke of were Common Mergansers.

#16: - Question For SiCon-

I have had excellent results protecting myself and my young grandsons by applying No Ad sunscreen before they go in the water, and then showering them with Fels-Naptha soap when they get out. Have you done any research on any other more cost effective means such as this to prevent infection?

A: If people knew the biology there is about 20% of people that won't get swimmers itch, its autoimmune response, what works for one person might not work for the next. Parasite infection throughout the world, millions of dollars are being spent to find a cure, let's leave that huge expense to them.

#17: - Question For SiCon-

Mr. Reimink, Is it not true that you hold the Federal Wildfowl Banding permit and are an experienced bird bander? Especially since SiCon is operating under a Federal Scientific Collectors permit, why wouldn't also banding ducklings prior to relocation permit collection of valuable scientific data in an attempt to validate the statement in the July 2nd, Houghton Lake Resorter article: "Once relocated, the young mergansers will imprint on their new environment and will not return to Higgins Lake, Blankensport said".

A: Our professional opinion, I'm not claiming that's going to happen. You have to have permits, we can get permission to toe clip them. We didn't feel it was important enough with the distance they were being relocated.

#18: - Question For SiCon-

Mr. Blankenspoor, do you have absolute proof that each and every one of the wounded mergansers that you reported to have "taken" were wounded by someone working under the Gerrish permit?

A: Correction- Dr. Blankenspoor, No we never claimed they were. It's been our experience that every lake we worked we never ever have that many wounded ducks that early in the summer.

#19: - Question For SiCon-

Was the 2 hour time limit officially revised subsequently to the March 2nd authorization letter, if so, what justification was used to extend the authorized capture period, or were any or all of the duck relocations conducted in violation of the two hour limit?

A: We planned to take the ducks to Lake Michigan, DNR instructed us to take them to Lake Huron, which is by definition about an hour and 30 minute drive. Told by the DNR, specifically asked the DNR, they said yes being over the time limit will be ok.

#20: - Question For SiCon-

Part 1.) Considering the demonstrated difficulty and necessary time commitment of observing nesting flight patterns, detecting nesting sites in tall trees, accessing those nests safely, and sealing Mergansers nests, and also considering no late breeding season nests, and also considering no late breeding season nests were found and sealed long after harassments ended, why does SiCon consider this to be the key methodology for eliminating SI from Higgins Lake?

Part 2.) Also, considering the difficulties enumerated in my statement to employing such strategy, can you provide us with an approximate average financial cost of detecting and sealing one merganser nest utilizing time and cost naturalists, boat operation expenses, certified tree climbers, etc?

A: Part 1.) We aren't going to no comment any questions, what's the alternative?

Part 2.) I'm not going to answer that question because it comes down to trust. You need to trust us with the experience we've showed you, if you don't then please tell us.

#21: -Question For Both SiCon and Northpoint-

Nobody wishes to see rampant use of Copper Sulfate throughout our lake to solve this problem, but shouldn't we be giving equal focus on strategies to eliminate or control the snails? Shouldn't a 'science-based' approach to eliminating the SI cycle have a strategy focusing on this key participant? What are your thoughts and potential strategies regarding attacking SI by either eliminating 'hot spots' with current legal chemicals or by utilizing experimental (perceived safer) chemicals or mechanical means of eliminating snails? What about a means to detect and quantify the level of cercariae in a swimming area such as the State Parks to where a red-yellow-green flag system could indicate the threat level for potential swimmers?

A: Northpoint: Part of our program utilized mechanical destruction by killing snails so there won't be a second generation this summer, chemicals are not an option, and mechanical is the only methodology that's available. Our long term plan is based on nutrient management to the lake, you have to change the environment.

SiCon: The science tells you have a billion snails 1-2% are infected, there are about 200 birds on your lake that are 90% effected. Going after the snails is like going after drug dealers in every town, more effective to go after the distributors.

TIME EXPIRED for more comment.

#22 -Statement Only:

At the end of October we wrote to all the board members in support of the decisions that the Gerrish Township board has made in regards to Swimmers Itch. Since we are unable to attend the meeting Monday night, we would again like to say that we continue to support those decisions. It's been said that Gerrish Township needs to have a membership vote for this, but I'm fairly certain that the HLPOA has the funding to support them. We feel that Gerrish Township should continue to pursue the reasonably priced duck removal company. We live in Alameda Beach and we are in favor of continuing to strive for a solution to this problem with the most cost effective means, which would be Northpoint. Thank you for your efforts. Sincerely, Sheryl Isenstein & Bill Isenstein

#23 -Statement Only:

I fully support Mr. Homola and this board working with Northpoint. You can collect data forever, but at the end of the day, the mergansers ducks must go. I also would not reveal the duck box locations. This would only help vandals locate and destroy the boxes.

#24 -Statement Only:

R. Rourke

I would like to thank our board members for their effort to find a solution to the SI problem. I have watched you all subjected to verbal abuse, criticism and just plain rude and mean spirited attacks. It is uncalled for. Thank you for your professionalism.

#25 -Statement Only:

R. Rourke

If the HLPOA & HLSIO really want a compromise or a working relationship between Northpoint and SiCon maybe they should consider being professional in settings like this vs angry and rude.

#26 Provide the card for the record but not reading, not productive.

#27 -Question -Not specific to who-
Why is DNR (Keith Creagh) not directly involved?
No answer

#28 -Question -Gerrish Board-
Gerrish said the harassment and shooting program was very successful because they harassed and scared hundreds of Mergansers off Higgins, even though 9 broods were left after Northpoint finished which SiCon removed. That seems like a large number. Isn't possible that most of the Mergansers that were harassed were just passing through anyway as Higgins on their southernmost nesting range as the Audubon Society states?
A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#29 -Question -Gerrish Board-
Homola has made several comments disparaging Lyon Township for not allowing Northpoint to harass and kill Mergansers in Lyon and says that is the reason the Gerrish program hasn't been successful. Yet, after the Northpoint program was done SiCon removed 9 total broods from Higgins. 7 broods were in Gerrish and 2 were in Lyon. Granted, Lyon only has about 40 % of the shoreline on Higgins but doesn't that prove that the shooting and harassing was really a failure? It appears that there were more Mergansers left in Gerrish where they were shot at and harassed. How do those numbers justify a successful program?
A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#30 -Question -Northpoint-
In the Northpoint Fisheries Completion Report for its work on Higgins in 2015 it lists 44 years of waterfowl experience for Dr. Mark Luttenton, however on the Grand Valley State University web page bio it doesn't mention anything about waterfowl experience, no publications, nothing. Can you explain this and what experience does Dr. Luttenton have with Mergansers or any waterfowl experience?
A: My experience is strictly recreational, hunting ducks for the last 44 years in Michigan.

#31 -Question -Northpoint and Gerrish Board-
Who supplied the video of the SI parasite on the Gerrish website? –wait for answer- Why would you show a video of a parasite that you represent as the SI parasite on your website when it is not the one that causes Swimmer's Itch?
A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.
Northpoint: I did, I never claimed it to be Swimmer's Itch, and it's just an example of cercariae, so people would have an idea of what they look like in general.

#32 -Question -Gerrish Board-
Mr. Homola said that he felt that the claim of infection rate of 10 times the parasite level in Merganser duckling droppings is an exaggeration. Have you or Northpoint ever checked the Mergansers for the parasite levels at any time this year?
A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.
Northpoint: Part of our compromise to not go into Lyon Township, we, per federal permit, handed over all ducks over to SiCon, we requested the lower guts to test and yet to date haven't received anything but 4 vials with 4 samples, that's all we have to look at for infection rates.

#33 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Are you still currently seeking to expand your permits to include capturing and relocating Merganser? [if they aren't shouldn't Northpoint lower their pricing since they won't have to do all that work.] [If they are – Didn't the Action Plan proposed by Northpoint Action Plan proposed by Northpoint say that they wouldn't move ahead with capturing and relocating mergansers if SiCon was going to?]

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#34 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Homola has stated many times that they want to cooperate with SiCon, however there is no mention of SiCon regarding their Swimmer's Itch control program on Gerrish's website, no link to SiCon's website, no mention of SiCon's Swimmer's Itch educational program that was held every Monday evening this past summer, no coordination on reporting SI cases and not one official from Gerrish attending SiCon's educational program that was held all summer long. Gerrish never mentioned that funding was also needed for the HSLIO program on their website. Is that what you would consider cooperation?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#35 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Why do you feel nest sealing isn't worthwhile and where did you get the information that backs up your claim?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#36 -Question -Gerrish Board-

What do you base your claim that you feel that you do not believe nesting cavities are limiting to the reproductive potential of Common Mergansers on Higgins Lake and do you have any knowledge of population ecology and how many Mergansers the Higgins Lake area can actually support?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#37 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Do you have any evidence that the Common Mergansers will choose an artificial nest box over a natural nest site?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#38 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Do you have any evidence to support what you said about thousands of nesting sites being available around Higgins and there is one site is on every 40 acres and how many natural nest sites have you located this past year? Aren't you just guessing and have not science to support your statements at all?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#39 Question -Gerrish Board-

Homola stated that there are currently hundreds of nest sites surrounding Higgins Lake. What do you base that on and where are all these natural nest sites located if you know they exist? Aren't you just guessing about nesting sites?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#40 Question -Gerrish Board-

If you won't disclose where the nest sites are because you haven't written down the sites anywhere, are you the only one who knows where they are and next year when you are replaced as Supervisor, will you tell the new Supervisor where they are?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#41 -Question -Northpoint-

What data do you have to support your claim that the snail population is growing and the nutrient level is what is causing it to grow and is the nutrient level the reason we now have more Mergansers? Part 2.)Does the increased nutrient level attract Mergansers? Part 3.)What was your baseline to make that determination? Part 4.)Did you do a snail count this year?

Part 1.) Michigan State University Study has shown that phosphate concentrations near shore are very high. The nutrients support increased algal growth and the snails feed on the algae. Chlorophyll concentrations correlate with the MSU nutrient data, and snail densities correlate with chlorophyll concentrations. Higher chlorophyll higher snail populations.

Part 2.) Not that I know of.

Part 3.) Only concerned of number of snails in relation to concentration to algae in relationship of nutrients, strong correlation in reducing them.

Part 4.) Yes

#42 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Three part question; you have stated that the long term solution for Swimmer's Itch is reducing the nutrient load on Higgins which you feel will reduce the snail population. While everyone feels that we need to reduce the nutrient levels that exists on Higgins, what evidence do you have that it is the snails that are causing the increased in SI when the Mergansers population has gone up dramatically in the past few years. Secondly, how many years will it take to reduce the nutrient loading on Higgins, and what is the baseline for this claim about snails? Finally, how can you see more snails with all the zebra mussels out there and isn't your claim about nutrient loading being the cause of Swimmer's Itch just theory with no basis in fact?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#43 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Everyone's seen a dramatic increase of Mergansers on Higgins the past few years and everyone knows that they are the definitive host. Isn't the reason you now want to blame SWI problem on nutrient loading, without any proof whatsoever is because your shoot and harass program isn't working?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#44 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Homola stated that, "Along with many wildlife professionals I do not believe that the translocation of Common Merganser ducklings is a humane, effective, and permanent solution to Swimmer's Itch." Can you provide the evidence of this and the names and credentials of the "many" wildlife professionals you cite or where you got that information?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#45 -Question -Gerrish Board-

Homola claims that Northpoint "...has complied with every request that was made with the exception of abandoning their spring work..." What about the request from SiCon to supply GPS documentation for all shooting and harassing AND for the location for the nest boxes? Why didn't you supply that information and will you supply the locations for the nest boxes now?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#46 -Question -Gerrish Board-

You claimed that SiCon made "slanderous and unsubstantiated misinformation about Northpoint. Can you explain?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#47 -Question -Gerrish Board-

If the majority of the public wanted Gerrish to discontinued its springtime shooting and harassing and have it started after SiCon finishes, would you be opposed to changing your program to do what the public wants?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#48 -Question -Gerrish Board-

If Northpoint and SiCon cant come to an agreement on how they can work together, will you recommend mediation so the issue can be resolved?

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

#49 -Question -SiCon-

Did Gerrish and Northpoint cooperate and provide you with location information where the nest boxes were and where they shot and harassed Mergansers and would that have helped measure the effectiveness of both your programs?

A: We didn't receive that information, it would have helped us get a better scientific understanding of what is going on with the Mergansers on Higgins Lake.

#50 -Question -SiCon-

Mr. Homola stated that the nest finding and sealing part of SiCon's program is not worthwhile. Is that true and if it isn't why not?

A: We believe, we don't know the answer, but we think from our experience that it's the nesting sites that limited the population size of Mergansers on any given lake, they are very particular about their nesting sites, find those cover them remove them it will reduce the population.

#51 -Question -SiCon-

Glen Lake has had the most extensive harassment program anywhere and yet their Merganser population has gone from 1 to 3 broods last summer and they still believe the Merganser population will continue to increase despite the harassment, and they are on record as opposing shooting as a long term solution. Why do you think their Merganser population continues to grow, despite their harassment efforts?

A: The harassment the 1st year possibly effect, the birds are very smart. Haven't found harassment to be effective, they have gotten in agreement with us, that should we be available we are going to work with them.

#52 –Question –SiCon-

Mr. Homola stated that little if nothing conclusive has ever been factually or scientifically recorded as a solution to Swimmer's Itch, however I understand that Harvey Blankenspoor and Ron Reimink published in a peer-review journal, showing significant gains in reducing Swimmer's Itch on Glen Lake in the past with their trap and relocate methods. Can you elaborate about Mr. Homola's claim?

A: Not really, it's false.

#53 –Question –SiCon-

Homola has stated and I quote "numerous literature and correspondences over the outcome of translocated ducklings and that the mortality rate is extremely high and in many cases death is delayed or prolonged for the unfortunate translocated ducklings." Based on your many years of experience, is that true?

A: Absolutely not, for Common Mergansers.

#54 –Question –SiCon-

Mr. Homola has stated that there is no scientific evidence or study to show that moving duckling broods to other areas is proven to work. Why do you feel it will?

A: There is scientific study, it does work.

#55-Question –SiCon-

Mr. Homola said that the infection rates of Mergansers and snails in the early spring when the water is cold is a good time to shoot Mergansers because the infection rates are high during that time and that's why early spring is a good time to start his program. According to the autopsies you performed on the Mergansers that were killed, most of them did not have the SI infection or were lightly infected. What does that tell you about Mergansers and snails that were on Higgins in the early spring?

A: I respect Homola's work as Supervisor in the Township, we don't agree with his scientific claims. We disagree. He's not an expert.

#56 –Question –SiCon-

Since the shooting and harassing program is done in the spring during the times when Mergansers are moving through Higgins, how do we know that the ones that were shot by Northpoint were going to remain on Higgins especially when you consider so few that were shown actually had the parasite?

A: You can't tell with a dead bird where it would have nested, we believe after autopsies 5 had fully developed ovaries and would have nested on Higgins Lake, 3 had partially developed ovaries and we believe would have nested on Higgins or nearby, the remainder did not have reproductively developed ovaries or were male we don't believe they would have nested on Higgins Lake. Of the 23.

#57 –Question – SiCon-

Based on your many years of working with Mergansers why you don't feel nest boxes will work and is attracting more Mergansers to Higgins a good idea?

A: I think that's what you guys need to decide, 2 programs working together in the spring is not compatible. The program of harassing and shooting after, that's compatible. A natural bird is going to choose a natural cavity every day. We will do it but at a large cost.

#58 –Question – SiCon-

A lot has been said about the artificial nesting sites. What is your scientific opinion regarding Mergansers abandoning their natural sites and moving into the artificial sites and if they do move, will additional Mergansers move into the natural nesting sites they abandoned? In other words, don't more nesting sites mean more Mergansers on Higgins?

A: Already answered that.

#59 –Question –SiCon-

In a recent letter to the editor, Mr. Tom Kizer said that Cornell University had a lot of recommendations for artificial nesting sites to attract Mergansers so their eggs could be oiled, however he failed to explain that at the same time Mergansers were mating and looking for nesting sites they would be harassing and shooting Mergansers. How do these two activities reconcile with each other?

A: Neither one, we are going to be here next year, the next boxes need to go. We need those nest boxes taken down, otherwise the expense goes up. We have committed to work with you guys.

#60 –Question –SiCon-

You have a lot of experience with Mergansers and their nesting habits. How many natural nesting sites do you think are currently being used near Higgins and do females return to the same nest each year and what would happen if their nest wasn't available to use in the spring when they returned?

A: Yes, that was one of our biggest disappointments. They will return to the same nest, if they are covered they obviously can't use that same nest site, our hypothesis is that they will move on. Who knows what they are going to do.

#61 –Question –SiCon-

Mr. Homola stated on numerous occasions that making natural nesting sites unusable is not effective. How do you feel about this?

A: I would like to know why, on what basis is he making that on.

#62 –Question –SiCon-

I understand that you captured 9 total broods after Northpoint finished their program. I also understand that 7 of those broods were found in Gerrish and only 2 were found in Lyon Township. Since all the harassing and shooting was done in Gerrish, does that say anything about the shooting and harassing Northpoint did?

A: What you need to know, we trapped the broods the day or the day after they came on the lake. People would say maybe they traveled, being they were so small that they came out of Gerrish trees. You have to use some evidence and this is the evidence we collected.

#63 –Question –SiCon-

Mr. Homola has stated on many occasion that since he was not able to harass and shoot Mergansers in Lyon Township, that was the reason 9 broods were left on Higgins, however as you have reported 7 of the 9 broods you captured were located in Gerrish Township. How does that reconcile?

A: The same question as previously asked.

#64 –Question –SiCon-

Can you explain why Merganser ducklings are the biggest producers of the Swimmer's Itch parasite on Higgins and why it is more important to remove ducklings and why it is more effective removing ducklings as opposed to killing or removing adult Mergansers?

A: Giving you our best scientific explanation, the parasite will elicit an immune response on its host. The duckling's immune response is not as strong as an adult immune system, they are down and their exterior is a lot softer giving the sites for the cercariae to penetrate. Could be competition in the digestive system as they get older. Ducklings produce 10 times the amount of eggs in their feces. That we have proof on.

#65 –Question –SiCon-

Frank Homola constantly says that they can't shoot ducks in the summer because the lake is too busy. I can understand that argument on July 4th weekend or other busy weekends but not during the week when traffic is slow on Higgins. How did you shoot the wounded ducks and other Mergansers that were left on Higgins this summer after Northpoint finished their program does Mr. Homola's argument hold water? Were you just more careful, better hunters or what?

A: It's much easier to shoot a wounded bird, we went early in the morning.

Public Comments and Questions:

Steve Luebke: Addressed to anyone who can answer, Science related: In regards to the cycles in regards to the Mergansers and snails; are the snails infected every year, or do they continue to produce on their own and do they need to be illuminated?

Northpoint: The snails have ultimately shown all the new infections, show those that haven't previously been infected. Snails released cercariae died after the release.

SiCon: Snails have a life expectancy of 16 months. The species that cause swimmer's itch, when the parasite dies the snail dies.

Bob Wagner: Directed to SiCon and Northpoint can speak afterwards; Inquiring on meeting set up for collaboration, was any progress made?

SiCon: We met 2 Tuesdays ago, with the goal of finding a compromised program, suggested to shoot in the fall for Northpoint, asked to release a joint statement, after back and forth it was decided Northpoint wanted to go with the status quo. No compromises were given by Northpoint.

Northpoint: We have no issues with SiCon, we think their program is good and an action that's needed, capturing and relocating the ducklings. They have no scientific proof that says the nesting boxes interfere with their work. We choose not to change the status quo for shooting in the spring due to our scientific research (shown in chart on their power point).

Diane Wagner: Addressed to Northpoint: Your shooting birds, possibly dragging chains. Are you going to be studying or looking into studying, how many years, months when I can invite company back to the lake?

Northpoint: No one can answer that. It's going to take a while due to the life cycle of the snail, greatest time reduction with removing the birds.

SiCon: You have to go back to the Glen Lake study, after 3 years at Glen Lake they were extremely happy with the result. You have very sick lake, it's going to take a conscious effort. We can't guarantee that, but in the past on lakes it shows that.

Eric Ostergren: Addressing the Board; Public Meeting Acts concern of being violated. Ed Nellist is going to do a Q & A in a couple weeks why can't you.

Unknown speaker: Addressed to Eric Ostergren Inappropriate opinion of Eric trying to run for public office.

Tom Kizer: Appreciates the meeting and the way it's being ran. This is to both sides; SiCon could work with their sponsors to adjust their pricing to engage in the trapping, that would be very good and an opportunity to keep everyone going the way they are going.

SiCon: We will provide you a way to reduce your cost. (Showing slide) Comparing costs of each program.

Northpoint: We are going to provide a service for a fee, went into explanation of nesting boxes and nesting cavities and the amount able to reduce every year and the amount of new produced.

Don Banard: Address to SiCon; Skeptical of the survival of the broods, with his many years of work with the ducks with the DNR. Giving you your point for survival, you took these highly infected ducks and moved them to someone else, would you be willing to take lethal control of the ducklings.

SiCon: We moved the ducklings to Lake Huron or Lake Michigan which does not have the snails that carry Swimmer's Itch. I don't believe we would get permission, we would take Gerrish's permits to do that we would do that.

Unknown: Addressed to Northpoint; Do you have proof those snails are not found in Lake Michigan or Lake Huron?

Northpoint: Found reports of appropriate snail hosts in all the great lakes since 1906, specifically Lake Huron off of Harrisville in 1915 University of Michigan archives, in 1992 the bible of Snails, has published all the records of snail collections of snails that transmit SI and in 1938 fishery report for the state, many publications listed.

SiCon: Different species, The DNR would not permit us to pass infected ducklings onto another lake.

Karen Ostergren: What happens when the permit expires? Who holds the permit?

Northpoint: we are a contractor through Gerrish Township, they are the permit holders.

Karen: So we will be in the same spot in 2 years?

Northpoint: The permits can be renewed, if Gerrish decides to, we are contracted.

Karen: Directed to SiCon: Do you hold the permits to relocate?

SiCon: Yes

Karen: Are those State or Federal?

SiCon: Both

Karen: And when do those expire?

SiCon: They are a 3 year permit as well, and we have a record.

Ruth Mulchler: Addressed to Northpoint; Why didn't you obtain the permits for what you're doing here in Gerrish?

Northpoint: I'm a contractor, I don't feel it appropriate I hold the permit and hold a monopoly of what services I do here. If I hold the permit, I could say this is my fee and if you didn't like it I could take my permit and go to another lake and leave Gerrish high and dry, that's not right to the lake.

Ruth: Have you ever obtained a permit?

Northpoint: No, I've always been the contractor.

Ruth: I haven't heard anything about your previous work in the reduction of Swimmer's Itch can you tell us about that?

Northpoint: I have not worked with SI, if solving SI problem was finding the host, we are into a wild life management problem, that's where I come in.

Unknown: Addressed to SiCon: I've heard and read on internet you have problems with losing a permit on Glen Lake, not familiar with permitting, but once you lose a permit can you obtain a permit again? Let's say here, are people going to be stuck paying for this and you not being able to legally work on the lake?

SiCon: I have already answered this, we didn't lose a permit we were denied a permit and the DNR already apologized for that and explained that it was wrongly denied. Our permit is a different permit, it's a scientific collecting permit, it's not a special miscellaneous use permit.

Back to Brian Hill Moderator to read more questions from cards:

A) Question –Northpoint-

In yours and Gerrish Township's cooperation efforts with Lyon and SiCon did you operate in Lyon short of the N. State Park area? Do you feel in this cooperation effort the Northpoint team was not as effective as it could have been if you would have worked the whole lake?

A: Certainly, in the spirit of cooperation we gave up Lyon Township per their request. It severely compromised our program when birds flew over there we left them.

B) Question –Northpoint-

What did SiCon do to cooperate with yours and Gerrish Township's efforts last summer to reduce Swimmer's itch? If Any.

A: Nothing, everything they did was to try to get us off the lake, false reports filed against us. They did nothing to cooperate.

C) Dave Kopin I get it – Frank believes there won't be ducks if kill/harass. Last year 90 some were removed after kill/harass, (so, it didn't work out) why not try reverse order once... THIS YEAR.

D) Question-

Why can't NP use permits after SiCon completes their activities?

A: Northpoint: There is no permit to do a late summer harassment.

- E) Question –Both SiCon and Northpoint-
What lake in Michigan does not have Swimmer’s Itch? How did they achieve that status?
A: Northpoint: I’m not aware.
A: SiCon: French Farm Lake, this is just one of many. Different habitats.
- F) Question –
What permits does SiCon possess that NP does not? Are both groups banding birds?
A: SiCon: We have permits that they don’t, Gerrish has permits we don’t.
SiCon: We are banding.
Northpoint: We are not.
- G) Question –Both SiCon and Northpoint-
Why would we want to allow Merganser to nest this spring if we can prevent it with the hope of the young being caught at a later time with the potential of the ducks being more infected? It just seems prevention is the best plan of action. How do you each respond?
A: Northpoint: Our plan is to reduce the nesting activity through harassment and lethal take, if we wait till after July 31st nesting has already happened.
SiCon: Our focus is on long term SI control, reduce the number of nests of Common Mergansers. Different Philosophy.
- H) Question –Both SiCon and Northpoint-
Since Mergansers are game birds and any hunters is permitted to kill up to 6 per day in our section of the state during two hunting seasons in October and December, why is it better to capture and remove the ducklings and mature birds (clipping their wings) and remove them to another lake?
A: SiCon: You can’t shoot middle of summer, it’s not hunting season.
Northpoint: addressing the fall hunt part, we did go out in the fall and we found not one Merganser.
- I) Question –Both SiCon and Northpoint-
Break down the proposed contract you have for 2016:
Part 1) How much did you charge and what were you paid for the 2015 work?
A: SiCon: Duplicate question
Northpoint: Duplicate question
Part 2) Is any money owed to you for 2015 work?
A: SiCon: Repeat, don’t need to answer.
Northpoint: \$23,000.00
Part 3) When did you receive your last payment for 2015 work?
A: SiCon: In a timely maner, we are satisfied
Northpoint: May 22nd.
Part 4) What was the source/payer of each amount you received in 2015?
A: SiCon: HLSIO
Northpoint: Higgins Lake Foundation

- J) Bev Knauer; Question –Gerrish Board-
How many of you have suffered from a severe case of Swimmer’s Itch?
A) Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.
- K) Linda Brick; Question-Gerrish Board-
Part 1) My question, please, despite the cost difference, why did you board members, other than Mr. Homola, individually, support contracting a firm that has never done this work? Why is that a fiscally sound decision? What research did you do in selecting the Northpoint program or did you just follow Mr. Homola’s lead?
A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.
Part 2) Again, Is the board going to come to us residents to support an assessment?
A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.
- L) Question –Curtis & HLPOA & HLSIO-
Why have you been so hostile- uncooperative, nasty-trying to have Gerrish’s permit revoked- to Gerrish TWP when they have a good program to help reduce swimmers itch?
A: SiCon: We want to control SI on Higgins Lake, my responsibilities is to report the facts from what I collected. As a biologist, I’m concerned at shooting birds for a long term solution. I felt it an obligation to report my professional judgment.
- M) Question –
While working on Higgins Lake in the 90’s, did you use spring harassment?
A: SiCon: the idea was initially to try harassment because no one had never done that before, it was discovered that we can find the nests. When unable to get permit, instead of using copper sulfate try harassment, it can’t hurt. We feel going for the nest is a better approach. Experience is your best teacher.
Northpoint: 1995 HLS News: During Dr. Blankenspoors, visits to Higgins Lake in 1995, training sessions for local volunteer harassment patrols were held, their effective use of shotguns to fire scarce shells reduced the total hatch to only 1 identified brood of birds which was removed.
- N) Question –
Did SiCon trap broods in Gerrish or only in Lyon?
A: SiCon: 7 in Gerrish 2 in Lyon
Based on Northpoint figures how was SiCon able to trap 98?
A: Not even a question there.
- O) Question –SiCon-
You promote yourselves as the best stating 80 years of combined experience. Promoting as such one would think by now you would have all the answers. How do you address that since we all know the Swimmer’s itch cycle and the research all seems to be the same?
A: We are doing the best we can, and we think we have an effective way and we are confident we can get better.

- P) Question –SiCon-
Calvin College/Curtis Blankenspoor have been issues both Federal and State permits to capture and relocate up to 350 ducks over the 3 year permit period between Higgins & Glen lakes that’s only an average of 116 per year. Specifically where is the research component in this action since you stated you did not band the ducklings?
A: 4 lake study, compare the results from the 4 lakes.
- Q) What formal research project is SiCon conducting under Calvin College’s USFWS research permit?
A: It’s not Calvin College it’s my permit.
- R) Why doesn’t SiCon LLC have any USFWS or DNR permits? They are listed under Calvin College.
A: We do have those permits.
- S) Question- SiCon-
You said the teenager Mergansers show up in late summer and are a source for Swimmer’s Itch infection. Why didn’t you kill some of these birds this past summer as you had a permit to do so? Like 25?
A: We were off the lake July 31st, they don’t fly till late August, and oh I’m sorry we tried they were so spooked from an entire summer of being harassed, we tried we got a few. We would have gotten them all had we been able to.
- T) Question – SiCon-
On what lakes have you located & sealed up nests? Do you have documentation of that?
A: Glen Lake, not on Glen Lake, we’ve located nests but never sealed them.
- U) Question –SiCon-
What lakes has SiCon ben working on in the last 5 year and how much have you charged these lakes?
A: 28 lakes, it was research so it wasn’t a charge. We are now responding to those coming to us.
- V) Question-
When the babies are transferred to Lake Huron, how many survive?
A: SiCon: 100%
- W) Question –SiCon-
Part 1) If Gerrish were to give you their permits, would you raise your price?
A: We offered to do the permit without a charge.
Part 2) and if you don’t why is Gerrish spending \$88,000 for the Northpoint program when you would do it for free?
- X) Question –SiCon-
What is the current states of Swimmer’s Itch in Glen Lake, Big Pond, Lake Mitchell and Cadillac where you have worked previously?
A: Not nearly as bad as Higgins Lake, we haven’t been there to analyze, based on our conversations we’ve had with them.

Y) Question –SiCon-

Looks like Northpoint tried to cooperate with you- they gave up harassing Lyon Township at your request. How have you cooperated with Northpoint & Gerrish Township?

A: We tried to make last year work, it wasn't our first choice, it's difficult because we have so many years' experience, and having too many cooks in the kitchen doesn't work out well. Out of common courtesy I provided Gerrish with a copy of my report, I didn't have to do that. We have a successful program and what we do is being hindered. It comes down to which cook you want.

Z) Question- SiCon-

Don't you think your time spent this past summer with HLPOA and HLSIO harassing Gerrish Townships board and Northpoint would have been better spent harassing the mergansers off the lake?

A: Not appropriate. SiCon: Let us control SI and leave the politics out of it.

AA) Question –SiCon-

How many nesting cavities do you think are within a mile of the shore of Higgins?

A: Birds prefer close to the shore.

BB) Question –SiCon-

By transporting the ducks to Lake Huron will Swimmer's Itch get worse over there? I live and Alcona Co. for 30 years, my children and I have had Swimmer's Itch from Cedar Lake and Van Eller Lake. These lakes are only 1 mile from Lake Huron.

A: No answer given.....

CC) Question – Gerrish Board-

When are you going to send out a survey and ask your bosses (taxpayers) what they want you to do? You've said in meetings that no taxpayer money has been spent but when you are working on getting funding you are on my dollar. I, as a taxpayer, want to say as to how you attack Swimmer's Itch. Listen to your bosses.

A: Board will answer at a later date as previously stated.

DD) Question –SiCon-

What Liability Insurance does Calvin College and SiCon have when working on Higgins Lake since there is no mention of Calvin College's involvement in the SiCon plan, and the permits are issued to Calvin College?

A: We have our own. They are not issued to Calvin College.

EE) Question –Curtis-

Don't you think it is fraudulent and a violation of Calvin College research (USFWS) permit to be selling a common merganser duckling transfer project by SiCon to Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch organization?

A: I'm not going to jeopardize my job to do this, so no I don't feel that.

Public Comment:

Ken Dennings: Gerrish Township Board:

I'm Ken Dennings, Vice President of the Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization. We are a non-profit organization consisting of diverse and experienced leaders in business, government and local associations within the Higgins Lake community. Formed in January of this year, our sole function is to combat Swimmer's Itch. The HLSIO represents the concerns of nearly 500 individuals, families and organizations who contributed in excess of \$240,000 this year toward implementation of a successful science-based SI control program at Higgins Lake. The HLSIO has also become a moving force in the creation of the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership. An organization consisting of other lakes in northern Michigan that also face the need to stem the health menace and negative impact on the local economies of the surrounding communities.

I'm not a scientist, I'm a facilitator. Thus, the meeting here tonight provides another opportunity to communicate HLSIO's concern with the elected officials of Gerrish Township with respect to the potential conflict in the coming year over the two SI control programs sponsored by our respective organizations.

We need resolve... and I'm here again tonight as I have been in the past several months.. seeking support from the Gerrish Township Board to alter the timing of its control program, such that the Gerrish sponsored harassment and lethal harvest of Mergansers would occur after July 31st. In simple terms the science bases SI program, sponsored by HLSIO and administered by SiCon, would be carried out from ice-out through July 31st and then Northpoint Fisheries Management could initiate Gerrish's Special Purpose –Miscellaneous permit commencing August 1st. This approach would maximize the combined efforts of both contractors to control this invasive parasite. However, I'll close my remarks by stating that if, in the final analysis, the Gerrish Board elects not to amend its permit dates as requested...or chooses to expand its' control program, or both...then I ask that you agree to HLSIO's previous recommended solution and that is to submit both Swimmer's Itch control proposals to a science-based independent panel of experts in an effort to resolve differences...and work cooperatively toward implementation for a unified approach for dealing with the critical problem of SI in the coming years.

-Meeting turned back over to Supervisor Homola: Closing comments and Thank you to both organizations.

Motion by Tulgetske, supported by Lippert: CARRIED
that the board adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 10:01 pm.

Kathleen Patchin, Clerk

Frank Homola, Supervisor

Approved