

Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization

June 3, 2015 Up Date

> SICON is actively engaged in the Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Program to significantly reduce the incidence of Swimmer's Itch on Higgins Lake. SICON has been preparing for the program since January obtaining necessary state and federal permits, planning the Comprehensive Program, attending numerous planning meetings and preparing equipment. They have been on the lake since April 15 collecting and analyzing thousands of snails and performing necropsies on Mergansers.

> Beginning now and continuing through July 27, the formal Comprehensive Program will include collecting and analyzing additional thousands of snails and trapping and relocating Common Mergansers and their broods. The SICON team of 4 biologists and a research assistant has over 80 years of experience working on SI. As part of our program, the SICON team will meet regularly with the Higgins Lake Community to discuss the progress of their work and answer questions about SI. In particular, you can see and hold the two species of snails they have identified that act as hosts for the parasite released by the Common Merganser that is responsible for the SI cases on Higgins Lake. We can speed up the reduction of SI on the lake by manually removing these two snail species from our swimming areas. While other birds are infected with SI-causing parasites, SICON has not located snail species on Higgins Lake that can act as hosts for those parasites. So we continue to believe we have identified the right target, the Common Merganser, for our Comprehensive Program on Higgins Lake.

> Starting June 15 and continuing until July 27, the SICON team will hold an "Open House" every Monday night from 6-8 pm at the Dragon Fly House (104 Webster Blvd. NE Corner of Webster Blvd. and West Pine Drive) to answer any SI-related questions. The public is encouraged to stop by and see first-hand what the SICON team is doing. The SICON team will also be available on 2 Saturday mornings (June 20 and July 11) at the Lyon Twp. Hall from 9-11am. Please plan to attend one of these important educational opportunities.

We have been meeting with various lake associations at Higgins Lake and would welcome an opportunity to address your association/camp to further explain our three year Comprehensive Program to significantly reduce SI. A meeting can be arranged by calling Ken Dennings, Vice President of Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization (HLSIO) at 989 821 6711.

Cases of Swimmer's Itch and Common Merganser sightings should be reported on www.swimmer'sitch.org/HigginsLake

We have now raised approximately \$137,000 toward our objective of \$225,000 so we are more than half way there for this year. If you have already contributed, we thank you for your donation. If you have not yet contributed, please donate asap. Donation forms will be available at each of these meetings. Remember, your donation is fully tax deductible.

The HLSIO Board

Bob Schneider, Dale McDonald, Bill Carey, Ed Nellist, Ken Dennings, Jim Vondale, Neal Cooley