

## Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership Update June 9, 2015

On March 31, 2015, the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership of 13 lakes (Higgins, Torch, Long, Leelanau, Glen, Burt, Lime, Douglas, Margrethe, Crystal, etc.) held a conference on Swimmer's Itch in Frankfort, Michigan. The meeting was attended by lake association representatives, representatives from the USDA, DNR, DEQ, a key member of Senator Boohar and Senator Stabenow's staff, John Lindley and Tyrone Sanders from Public Affairs Associates (a lobbying firm representing the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association), Dr. Curt Blankespoor and Ron Reimink from SICON, LLC and Madelyn Messner and professor Thomas Raffel from Oakland University.

The focus of the meeting was to bring together key stakeholders, including lake associations, government regulators, elected officials and academics and explore ways we could work together to address the problem of Swimmer's Itch. It was agreed that SI is a serious problem for northern Michigan lakes that affects not only the enjoyment of lake owners and users, but it negatively impacts both the local and state economy and the reputation of the state generally. While individual lakes are undertaking targeted measures to address the Swimmer's Itch problem on their lakes, a long term solution to the problem will require involvement and a coordinated approach from all the stakeholders.

On May 14<sup>th</sup> Ken Dennings, representing the Higgins Lake Swimmer's Itch Organization and the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership, along with Dr. Curtis Blankespoor and Ronald Reimink from SICON, LLC met at Senator Darwin Boohar's office in Lansing. In attendance were key members of Senator Boohar's staff, representative from DNR, DEQ, MEDC and the Department of Health & Human Services along with John Lindley from Public Affairs Associates, a lobby firm representing the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association.

The purpose of the meeting was to sensitize representatives of state government to the sever problems caused by swimmer's itch in the northern lake areas . . . not only from a health perspective, but of significant importance . . . The negative impact on our local economies. We

emphasized the need for financial assistance in implementing controls over this infectious problem facing the lake communities in northern Michigan. We stressed the fact that property owners and lake associations are contributing financially on a volunteer basis to raise as much money as possible to implement science based control measures in an effort to address the problem and that the State of Michigan should "step up to the plate" in the form of funding assistance.

The meeting was cordial, with many questions asked and answered regarding SI and the formation of the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership by concerned lake associations that are faced with the impact of this infectious parasite. Senator Booher charged the participants from the several state agencies with returning in approximately thirty days for a follow-up meeting after discussing the problem within their respective departments in terms of what assistance might possibly be made available to member lake associations in the Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership.