

Questions for Frank Homola Supervisor of Gerrish Township/Swimmers Itch Task Force

1. The 9 Merganser broods captured and relocated by SICON contained a total of 79 ducklings (equating to about 9 ducklings for each female). How did Northpoint's killing of only 8 pregnant female Mergansers eliminate 200 Mergansers as you claimed in your September Editorial in the Houghton Lake Resorter?
 - a. Could you please explain your math?
 - b. And how do you know that all 8 female mergansers you shot would have stayed on Higgins and that they weren't just flying through?
2. Why have you consistently opposed a combined and jointly funded SI effort including both SICON and Northpoint, with SICON leading with its proven effective trap and relocation and nest sealing program followed by Northpoint's harassment and killing program after SICON is done in July?
3. Wouldn't the above described combined program offer the greatest opportunity to reduce SI on Higgins Lake?
4. Isn't it counterproductive having two overlapping programs operating at the same time leaving the lake unprotected from July 31 to hunting season in October?
 - a. Wouldn't it be better to work together by having two complimentary programs running from early spring through fall hunting season? In other words, wouldn't it make more sense to have merganser removal coverage throughout the whole summer instead of just half the summer?
5. How is the killing of 23 Mergansers by Northpoint "permanent", "effective" or even "temporary" when the experience from this past summer showed that
 - a. 24 adult Mergansers were counted on the lake the day after Northpoint fisheries stopped their shooting,
 - b. And, 9 broods that included 79 ducklings were removed from Higgins Lake and relocated when those ducklings would have spent the summer with an infection rate scientifically proven to be ten times higher than the adult mergansers Northpoint shot,
 - c. And, that not one nest was removed by Northpoint which means that all the natural nesting sites are still available this next year for use by Merganser females,
 - d. And, the Northpoint Fisheries shooting program conducted before rather than after their program prevented SICON from "permanently" sealing their nests,
 - e. And, that thousands if not tens of thousands of Mergansers (which normally live over 12 years) still continue to call Michigan home,
 - f. How does killing 23 mergansers even begin to start to eliminate more Mergansers from coming to Higgins since the mergansers you shot were simply replaced by other mergansers?
6. Doesn't your so called "low cost" program using Northpoint Fisheries end up costing the Higgins Lake community far more because we will not be able to shift to a low cost maintenance program after the 3 year SICON program because all the unsealed Merganser nests will still be available for use?
7. Wouldn't the community get behind and financially support one unified program much more as opposed to having two programs that are confusing to the average person?
8. You deny that Northpoint shot and turned over two Red Breasted Mergansers to SICON and even stated that SICON lied about that, however in the brochure you produced you describe a Red Breasted Merganser as a Common Merganser. If you can't even tell the difference between a Red Breasted

Merganser and a Common Merganser from a photograph which there was plenty of time to review; how can you tell the difference between them in the wild and on the fly? And, since it was pointed out to you in your brochure where you described a Red Breasted Mergansers as a Common Merganser, will you now apologize to the folks from SICON for accusing them of planting the Red Breasted Mergansers?

9. Where did the idea of erecting Merganser nest boxes come from, who thought it up and what is the reasoning behind them?
10. Won't your Merganser nest boxes continue to attract Mergansers and encourage them to return to Higgins Lake at a higher rate?
11. Isn't SICON's trap and removal program where Merganser ducklings imprint on other lakes with most not returning to Higgins Lake, and their nest sealing program that eliminates the ability for Mergansers to produce broods on Higgins Lake the only proven "effective" and "permanent" actions that will lead us to a low cost maintenance program in 3 years?
12. How will killing 25 Mergansers and chasing Mergansers around Higgins Lake which they are biologically driven to breed, and setting up Merganser hotels to attract more Mergansers to breed going to solve Higgins Lake's SI problem?
13. If the Gerrish/Homola program was the only program this past summer on Higgins Lake which left 24 adult Mergansers and 79 ducklings that would have spent the summer on the lake along with the continued availability of all the Merganser natural nests around the lake, with an additional 20 Merganser hotels you set up encourage Mergansers to return next spring; how would you consider your program "permanent" and "effective" and how would you feel about swimming in Higgins Lake next summer?
14. How do you justify a program that is intended to eliminate Mergansers from Higgins Lake that has erected Merganser nesting sites to attract them?
15. If your child is allergic to bees would you set up bee hives around your cottage so you could attract, capture and kill all the bees?
16. Aren't you concerned about creating and encouraging a "kill all the ducks" vigilante mentality that primarily focuses on killing pregnant female Mergansers on Higgins Lake?
 - a. And, how is that consistent with the purposes of the various Associations and Foundations in the Higgins Lake community when there is a far more humane, effective and permanent solution offered by SICON?
 - b. And, is the lower cost that you claim is the driving force behind your decisions justified?
 - c. And, shouldn't "killing" be done after the SICON program has been completed and all available efforts have been made to conduct a humane, effective and sustainable effort?
 - d. And, isn't that consistent with the purposes of those that are supporting you financially?
17. Why did you join, and then quit the HLSIO board in January of this year, after it had shared with you all of the details of its comprehensive science-based program using a team of professionals with experience in SI research and control, to first propose a harassment and killing contract with Berg Animal Control that cost more than \$100k and that you knew conflicted with the HLSIO program and

then, when that wasn't approved by the SI Task Force, have Gerrish Township on its own hire Northpoint Fisheries to conduct a conflicting program with no SI research or control experience? Was it only a matter of the lower cost?

18. Your program only removed 23 Mergansers and SICON removed 79 ducklings which produce 10 times the amount of the parasite that causes Swimmers Itch which is a scientific fact. That means that those 79 ducklings are equivalent to 790 adult Mergansers. In other words, your 23 Merganser kills, most of which were determined to have little or no parasite actually equate to only 2.3 ducklings. How can you consider your program to be successful at all especially when you consider the fact that you interfered with the SICON program to such an extent that a complaint was filed against you?
19. Isn't the Swimmers Itch Tack Force, which you created as a cooperative effort a waste of time and energy for both Townships to participate in since you have decided to go it alone and not cooperate with anyone?
20. I noticed in the proposal that the folks from Northpoint didn't mention anything about cooperating with the HLSIO and SICON. The folks from the HLSIO mentioned that they want Northpoint to work with them by starting their program from the end of July until hunting season starts which would provide coverage for the entire summer. The Northpoint proposal looks like they want SICON to leave Higgins entirely. Isn't that what you really want? Please explain.

I believe all the property owners in Gerrish and in Lyon Township deserve an answer to each and every one of these questions. I request that you answer them in writing which to be fair will give you some time for thoughtful consideration. I will also supply these questions to you in a Word format for you to make is easier if you like. Feel free to respond to some of the questions now if you would like but I would like your responses in writing so there are no misunderstandings on where you stand.

Finally, one last question, for the record, will you answer these questions? I believe the citizens of Gerrish deserve an answer to each and every one of them. I will publish your answers and I will also let everyone know if you decide not to answer them.

Eric Ostergren
6016 Foxboro Court
Midland, MI 48640
989-859-8791
eostergren@chartermi.net