

# MiCorps 2025 Volunteer Lake and Stream Monitoring Conference

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Big Bass and Little Bass Lakes

Lake County, Irons MI

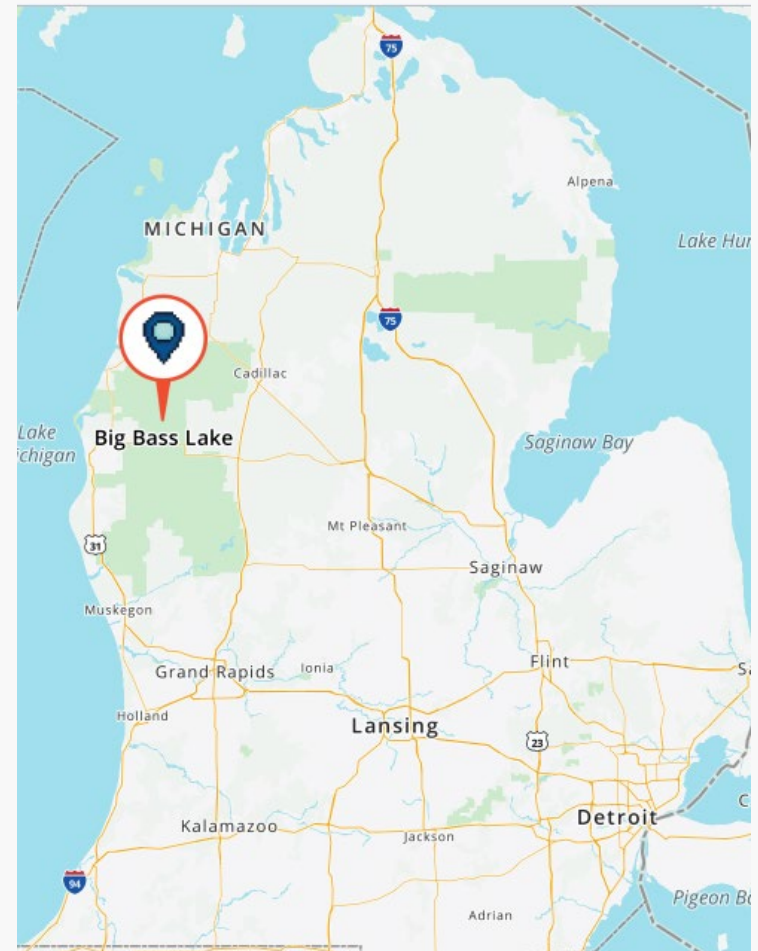
Bass  
Lakes  
Area  
Environmental  
Partnership

*A 501(c)3 nonprofit organization*



# How It Began

- Full time lake residents 2017
- First Big Bass/Little Bass Lake Association meeting 2018
  - Discussion about something called milfoil
  - Very unhappy with herbicide company
  - Volunteers for “milfoil committee”
- What is milfoil? The journey began...



# Our Story

- 2018: Learnings/discoveries from “milfoil committee”
  - “Milfoil” was EWM, an aquatic invasive species
  - Big Bass Lake milfoil treatment since 2009
  - Application of > 45 tons herbicide and ~\$400,000 cost to riparians (\$\$ collected through Special Assessment District: SAD)
- Big Bass Lake joined CLMP in 2019, Little Bass Lake in 2021, to get a handle on water quality/aquatic veg
  - Lots of samples collected and data generated
  - Especially exotic aquatic plant watch
    - Milfoil in most surrounding lakes
    - Starry stonewort, zebra mussels
    - Costly control

# Our Story (cont.)

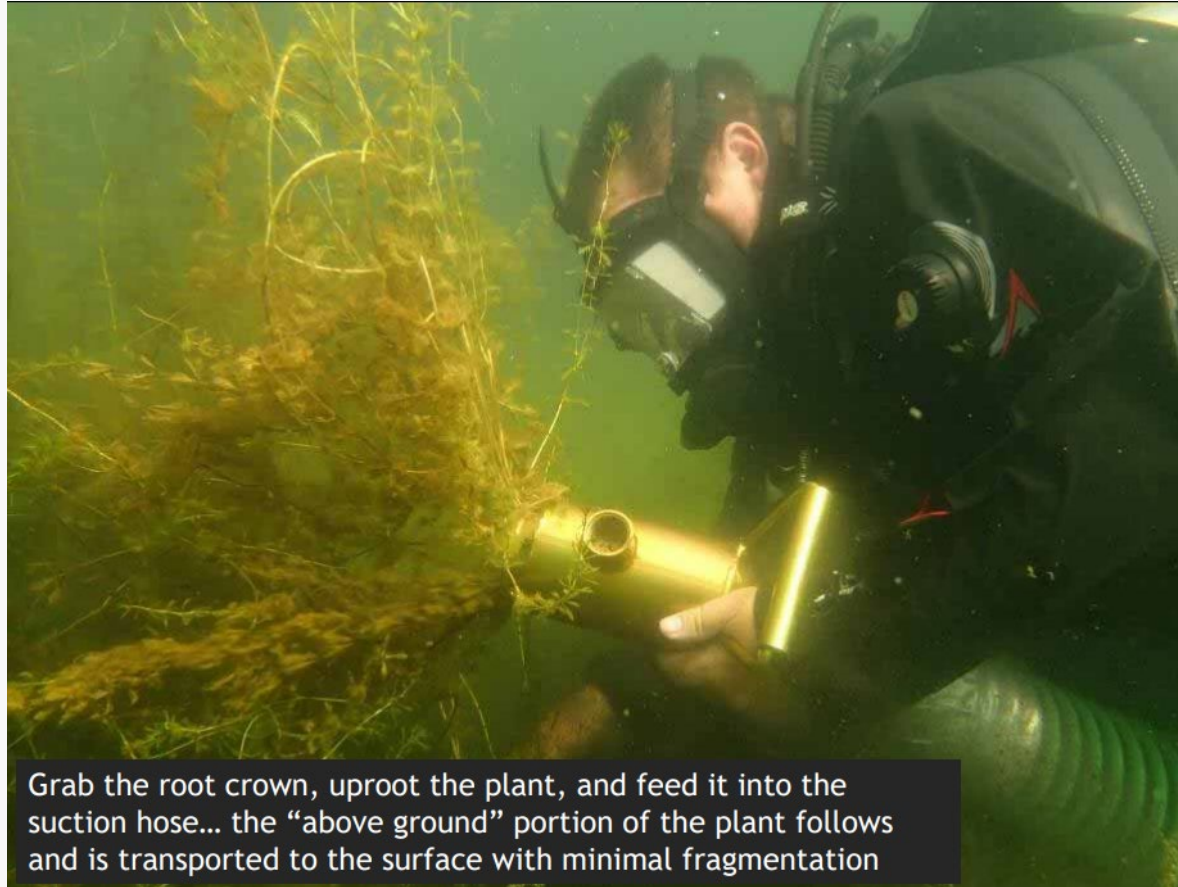
- In 2019, BBL 13 distinct milfoil samples sent to Dr Ryan Thum for genotyping
  - All samples were hybrid milfoil
    - (2025, LBL milfoil same hybrid strain as found in BBL)
  - Hybrid milfoils more resistant to commonly used herbicides
- In 2020, founded 501(c)3 non-profit: Bass Lakes Area Environmental Partnership
  - Explore non-chemical ways to control EWM
    - Benthic mats, weevils, mechanical harvesting, DASH
  - Eligible for grants, tax-deductible donations
- Diver Assisted Suction Harvest (DASH)
  - Partnership with US Forest Service/US Department of Agriculture
  - Pilot study 2020 and 2021

# Diver-Assisted Suction Harvesting

- Control of submerged aquatic invasive plants - EWM
- ID and hand pull intact plants
- Immediately fed into a suction hose and transported to surface



# How to DASH



Grab the root crown, uproot the plant, and feed it into the suction hose... the “above ground” portion of the plant follows and is transported to the surface with minimal fragmentation

- DASH is weeding your lake bottom
- Divers pull the milfoil up by the roots, feed into suction hose, takes the plant material to the boat, bags plants, water returns to lake
- Most fragments are sucked up; any that float to the surface are skimmed with a net



# DASH Pilot Study: 2020/2021



- Hired DASH company
  - 2 days DASH 2020
  - 8 days DASH 2021
- We followed the results of the pilot study 2022-2023
  - DASH is highly efficacious, but has limited durability
  - Additional DASH required for milfoil control
- One summer of DASH costs ~2X cost of DASH boat
- Let's buy a DASH boat!



For those not familiar with milfoil, here are a couple of photos.



# We Have a DASH Boat!

September 21, 2024 was its maiden voyage & milfoil harvest





# Milfoil Removal



50 lb onion bags were used to capture the milfoil for disposal

Milfoil excellent for composting!

# DASH Goals

- Short-term:
  - Part of BBL AIS management plan
  - Reduce need for herbicides
  - Control milfoil in LBL
- Long-term:
  - SAD to include funding for DASH in BBL & LBL
  - Hire dive team, work all summer
  - Eliminate herbicides
  - Expand to other lakes in area

# We Do Lots of Fun & Educational Stuff!

- Communication!: Develop an electronic distribution list, website and Facebook page
- Annual meetings
  - CLMP demonstrations, share CLMP data, tell riparians what the data mean
  - Food, raffles, silent auctions
  - Guest speakers:
    - Jerry Kass, Mason-Lake Conservation District, natural shorelines
    - Erick Elgin, MSU Extension, aquatic plants & hand-pulling EWM
    - Craig Kivi, Natural Shorelines Forever, wood habitat (fish sticks)
    - Emily Fredricks, North Country CISMA, AmeriCorp NH DASH experience
- Sharing info from MiCorps, EGLE, UpNorth Live, North Country CISMA, Conservation Districts, IPR, All Things Wild Rescue&Rehabilitation, Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
  - Topics: fish, types of ice, aquatic mammal footprints in snow, native and invasive plants, Clean Drain Dry, rewilding your lawn, pesticides kill pollinators and birds, most popular: turtles and swimmers itch!
- AIS Blitz
- Mobile Boat Wash
- Atta-Boy cards

# AIS Blitz

- Held at BBL boat launch every summer
- Volunteers partner with state and local agencies to deliver consistent messaging about preventing the introduction & spread of AIS from movement of watercraft and equipment between water bodies
- Info and great swag!





# Mobile Boat Wash



**STOP AQUATIC  
HITCHHIKERS!™**

Be A Good Steward.  
Clean. Drain. Dry.

[StopAquaticHitchhikers.org](http://StopAquaticHitchhikers.org)

Stop the Transport of Invasive Species:

- **CLEAN** boots, gear, boat, trailer & vehicle of plants, fish, animals & mud.
- **DRAIN** bilge, ballast, wells & buckets before you leave the area.
- **DRY** equipment before launching watercraft into another body of water.

# Atta-Boy Cards



**Thank you for keeping our lake natural and beautiful!**

- ☐ Natural shoreline (at least some)
- ☐ No seawall or rip rap (can a turtle climb it?)
- ☐ Unmowed vegetation belt at shoreline
- ☐ Minimal beach encouraged
- ☐ Vegetation in the water near shoreline
- ☐ Downed trees/logs in the water

# Riparian Connection

- Hardest part of all
- Apathy
  - I can drive my boat without getting stuck in milfoil
  - Herbicides have been working so far
  - Why fix what ain't broke
  - I come here to relax and get away from problems
  - Fishing not as good as it used to be, but still fish in the lakes
- Fertilized lawns down to lake front (or seawall)
- Sandy beaches and bottoms created
- Oscillating blowers to keep muck away
- But there is hope...!
  - Find something fun & interesting
  - Started "What the heck is this?"
    - People send in pictures & questions
    - Jo Latimore & Erick Elgin provide the answers

# What the Heck is This?

- Fresh water sponges!
- Texture similar to sea cucumber with tiny exterior bristles
- Native to MI
- Related to marine sponges
- Look green because algae grow within them





# What the Heck is This?



- Chinese mystery snails!
- Females give birth to fully developed snails that suddenly and “mysteriously” appear
- May be hidden in mud & debris; can attach to anchors, ropes, fishing, hunting gear
- No way to control them at this time
- Host to multiple parasites, but no correlation between Chinese mystery snails and swimmers itch

# What the Heck is This?

- Bryozoans!
- Tiny organisms that live in colonies
- Filter feeders
- Begin to form in the spring, but usually seen in late summer/fall when they reach largest size
- Harmless to humans
- Aquatic oddity indicator of good water quality



# Motivations & Inspirations

- Lots of other “What the heck is this?” examples
  - Green filamentous algae blobs, lake foam, HAB, crayfish, red milfoil, algae bloom under the ice
- Find ways to keep it light and entertaining to increase engagement
- Observations from cruises around the lakes
  - Native plantings at shoreline, unmowed areas, turtle logs, excited grandkids (future conservationists?!)

Thank you!