

May 2026 HOHL Committee Reports

Communication Committee

The Communications Committee (CC) continues to make steady progress in strengthening outreach and engagement efforts.

- **Email Campaigns**

Our email list is growing slowly. There was no *Ripple Effect* published in May. We are working on June Ripple Effect to be the “Higgins Lake Watershed Information Map” previously known as the ‘septic map.’ It will be reviewed by the Septic committee and IT before being released. The May *Committee Reflections* covering May’s meetings was published. The CC is requesting approval for an email service at a cost of approximately \$20/month. This would streamline the maintenance and growth of the list. It would also allow us to create a more engaging email, rather than having to open a new document.

- **Social Media & Website**

Instagram account has been approved and is being set up. There is considerable interest in creating informational video to be distributed.

The CC would also like approval of \$250 to push our facebook/Instagram posts. Monitoring will occur during this time to evaluate performance. It is predicted we will have a significant increase in views. We are working on a series of proactive and consistent posts to be used.

The website analytics is still being set up.

- **Community Outreach**

We are currently scheduled to present at 6 associations annual meeting. Two associations decided they just wanted information to hand out and did not want a HOHL representative there. We were turned down by four different associations. Reason for not wanting HOHL there ranged from they don’t allow nonmembers to attend their meetings to not having time on the agenda.

We will be selling HOHL T-shirts from the website for all that are interested. They are heather gray with the logo on the front and the tag line on the. We will be ordering extras to have available at events and meetings.

Summer outreach is still in planning stages and will be on August 8th. The township hall is already rented, so it will take place at the Gerrish Marina. All subcommittee chairs have been contacted to start planning their display.

More yard signs are now available.

- **Collaboration & Research**

The committee continues to collaborate with the Higgins Lake Watershed Information Map effort.

Committee Development

The committee met on May 13 and will meet again on June 2 and June 11.

Funding Committee

The Health of Higgins Lake (HOHL) Funding Committee met to discuss fundraising strategies and grant opportunities. The pending EGLE grant decision is expected in summer 2026.

Another update was that the donate button and PayPal functionality are now available on the website. The committee discussed adding information about tax deductibility of donations.

The committee has identified several potential grant opportunities but needs defined needs and projects from subcommittees in order to pursue these.

It is in the process of creating an overall fundraising plan to guide its efforts. Some approaches discussed for individual donors included geofencing, donation jars/QR codes at events, and raising awareness of HOHL as an option for donating required minimum distributions (RMDs) from retirement accounts.

IT Committee

- **Nextcloud operations:** Continued monitoring and maintenance of the Nextcloud collaboration environment supporting committee file sharing, access control, and ongoing project coordination.
- **Septic information map support:** Continued primary IT support for the Higgins Lake Watershed Information Map, including parcel density views, septic and well context, shoreline/high-slope areas, and presentation layers needed for Steering Committee and township discussion.
- **Map defensibility and data quality:** Continued refinement of the map and supporting data so density and scoring views remain explainable and defensible, including parcel filtering, state park and commercial parcel handling, sensitive data limits, and known data-quality concerns.
- **LiDAR, terrain, and watershed context:** Continued work on terrain, LiDAR, and watershed-boundary information to better show land surface, relative elevation, and likely water-flow context without overcomplicating the first public-facing map materials.
- **Database and scoring development:** Continued maturing the SQL-based data system and septic scoring workflow. Near-term focus remains stabilizing the scoring method before expanding to additional lake comparisons or broader public features.
- **IT storage and space planning:** Reviewed concern that GIS layers, terrain outputs, map exports, database backups, and future public/shareable snapshots can grow quickly. Nextcloud Snap external storage should be planned before large map payloads are added to shared folders.
- **Website and outreach support:** Continued coordination around the HOHL web presence and future public outreach uses of the mapping work, while keeping public-facing materials subject to Communications review before release.
- **Routine IT support:** Continued normal IT support, system maintenance, and project coordination across HOHL technology efforts while keeping map, database, storage, and collaboration work aligned with committee needs.

Road Ends/Fertilizer Committee

We inspected 81 road ends in Lyon and Gerrish Townships. Also, looking at 2 state parks. DNR launch site and 3 county drain outlets. Also, one road end in Beaver Creek was included.

We inspected all of the 319 Grant Locations to see how they were holding up. We noted some needed maintenance at a few of these.

We have multiple photos of each location, 87 in total. Basically, one downstream and one upstream minimally.

We recorded our findings on the standard data location sheets, first used in the 1993 report.

We noted that there were six locations in Gerrish and 13 in Lyon that need work to control and/or reduce the amount of sediment potentially entering the lake.

We have met with the RCRC Manager to develop a plan for remedying the issues, first in Gerrish Township. They of course have budget constraints following a harsh winter, spring ice storm and flooding.

We will focus on completing an "interim" report for the Steering Committee. Just on the Gerrish road ends for now.

Tim will send out the pages from the 2010 report needing editing. Each committee member will be responsible for a few pages that will become part of the interim report.

Tim will request from the Steering committee that the Fertilizer portion of our duty be spun off. We believe that we need additional resources to complete this work.

We discussed the need for communication with the Science Sub-committee of developing a water testing protocol at the road ends during a heavy rain event. We have requested a meeting with any testing experts who are willing to volunteer.

We are approximately 80-90% complete with the summary report on all road ends of the Gerrish portion.

Science Committee

The Science Subcommittee met on May 20. All of subcommittees are working on their research and reports. Here is the status of each of them:

- **Watershed/Ground Water Contamination:** This subcommittee merged with the Septic Committee. The questions the Science Committee created are being addressed by the Septic Committee.
- **Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS):** They are working on a final draft to bring to the Science Committee (and ultimately to the Steering Committee) soon. They have collected and reported about the types of AIS and are working on recommendations to prevent AIS entering the lake.
- **Changing Fisheries:** There is a fairly recent report of the DNR Fisheries which will serve as the basis for their report. Subcommittee members have mentioned that their focus has been on other subcommittees and frankly this hasn't been a priority but will be addressed.
- **Deep Water Quality:** This subcommittee is looking at cutting edge theories regarding trophic status which measure lake quality. The standard system determined trophic status by water clarity and nutrient levels. However, with the introduction of Zebra and Quagga Mussels, some lake scientists suggest this system no longer adequately measures the true health of a lake. Their findings will be interesting.
- **Recreational Activities:** This subcommittee is still collecting data and is considering utilizing geofencing to help determining where visitors are coming from.
- **Near Shore Water Quality:** The drafting of language to present to the Science Committee has been difficult in this subcommittee. Thus far, most of the work has been done of the question of E.coli in the lake. They're working through how to move forward with their disagreements. There is still much data to review regarding the other questions before them.
- **Non-nutrient Contamination:** This committee took a while to get going, but they are meeting now. We expect a report to be ready for the Science Committee to review after a couple more subcommittee meetings.

The next meeting of the Science Committee is scheduled for June 17 at 1:30 in the Gerrish Township Hall. In addition to updates from the subcommittees, we will address:

- How to move forward when committee members have disagreement
- How we make recommendations for new studies we believe would be helpful in understand the ecology of Higgins Lake.
- Attempt to establish some timelines for the Science Committee's work.

Septic Committee

The Septic Committee met May 12, and May 26. While we have been maintaining a meeting schedule of approx. every two weeks, we have now adopted a more structured schedule of the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. We have also arranged for redline Media to attend the meetings and manage our zoom participation.

As announced last month, the Groundwater and Wells committee was integrated with the Septic committee. This integration seems to be working well and individuals from both committees are now working together as planned.

Septic Ordinance Draft Submitted –The septic ordinance, previously submitted to the Steering Committee, and forwarded to the Gerrish Board has now been sent to the GT Planning Commission. I attended the PC meeting on May 28 to review the ordinance with them and answer questions. The PC Chair has prepared his version of the ordinance and presented it as well. Members are to compare the two and make suggestions.

Water well test -Last month I reported that I sent a FOIA request to the CMDHD for any information they may have on water well testing results. I received the results as follows:

- There are 273 tests in the list.
- The list included data on 181 locations
- 91 retest identified
- Sixteen of the tests are prior to 2000
- 35 do not record a nitrate level or listed as not detected
- Nitrate levels from – zero to 23.0
- 18 sites had Nitrate levels over 10ppm

In many cases, this data is missing, incomplete or old.

The bottom line is that there are only about 100 test locations that are within the last three years and can be used as current information

Be Well Wise – The HLF is starting a new water well testing program for residents of Gerrish and Lyon township. We are not directly involved with this testing program but certainly support the effort. It is important that people get their water tested regularly and this program is a good way to get that started.

Database – Work continues on the database development for the Health of Higgins Septic Committee. While the scoring system we developed remains a key tool to evaluate each property, we are developing a simpler means to first identify properties that need to update their inventory. Properties will comply at a level from one to four.

- Level one Property identified in database – Demographics complete
- Level two Property has a current Health Department septic inspection on record
- Level three - Property has water well information on file with Health Department
- Level four - Property has a water test on file at the Health Department

The actual method to score a property is yet to be finalized but may be as follows. Each level represents a 25% completion rating. Nearly all properties have appropriate demographics (level one) data so they will start with a score of 25. Likewise, if they have an approved septic, their score would increase by 25% and so on.

This will be the initial focus of the ordinance in an effort to get all properties inspected.

Map – Once again - work on a map to display the condition of individual properties continues. The first map that will be published will show the density of locations around the lake as well as parcels that we have no information on record. We are still waiting on the final data for Lyon township and will update all maps to show density and compliance with Health Department records as soon as it is available.

New Map - We are also looking into the possibility of creating an engineering quality map of a specific lakeshore subdivision that can be used to demonstrate the actual location of wells, septic's, dwellings, sheds, and other improvements. This map will use recent LIDAR flight data, terrestrial survey information, as well as property lines and descriptions of record to accurately display features of the entire subject area. Soils information will be added in three-dimensional layers, allowing us to see where the groundwater flows. Individual wells can be mapped and shown which layer they are drawing their water. Testing that is performed within or near the demonstration area can also be mapped and test results displayed

This is intended to be an educational tool to assist in educating the public about actual conditions affecting the residents and the lake.