

# The Gravel Laker

Volume XXXV Number 2

gravellake.org

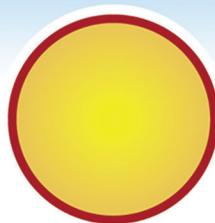
Fall/Winter, 2025



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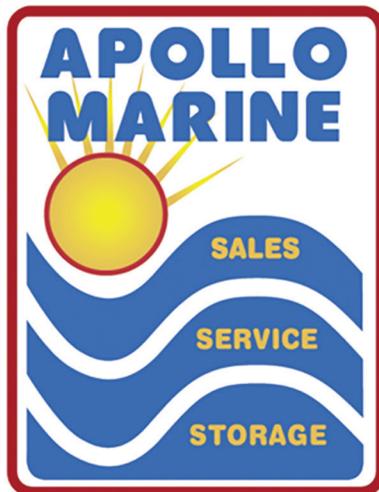
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Photo by Jen Micheli



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## President's Corner



Photo by Melissa DeSimone

What a fantastic summer! We were so very pleased to spend the most consecutive weeks on Gravel Lake since I was a kid. It was awesome to live, work, and play day-in and day-out at the lake. I got to spend extra time in our natural shoreline this summer. I was particularly interested in bolstering our swamp rose mallow and taking care of our new swamp white oak and burr oak trees. I also got a chance to take a more careful look around the lake at what you all are doing and it was wonderful. More natural shorelines and buffer zones are going in around the lake to help filter runoff and provide important shoreline and pollinator habitat, as well as create an effective goose deterrent (you need to go deep and wide and get your neighbors involved for the best effect though).

Something else I noticed in my walks around the lake is what some of you are doing behind your homes across the lake: more buffer zones. Winkler Beach seems to have the largest concentration on Gravel Lake with the Kotals and Garrisons leaving large areas very natural and the Pattersons having a long rain garden that stretches across their entire backlot. Water runoff certainly goes on both sides of the road. Most backlots have nowhere for that water to go and filter for a bit. What these families are doing helps water quality as that water could otherwise have run unfiltered to the lake. While many of us may not have the space or aspiration for such, even small efforts matter. I've seen so many more partial shorelines and small buffer zones going in around the lake, and every little bit helps.



Photos by Craig DeSimone

## President's Corner

In support of the efforts above, we have also been successful with several distributions of native plants to homeowners. Interest has been high. Our native plant giveaway was a success at our annual membership meeting and picnic. Thank you to Jen Micheli for making the trip to Hidden Savana near Almena to continue our grassroots effort. Our first ever native plant drive sold out and provided groups of eight plants to 24 homeowners (at cost from Wildtype nursery in Mason). Thank you to Heidi Kussurelis for organizing the drive.



Finally, we've had great interest so far in the tree and shrub program sponsored through a grant secured by the Michigan Lakes and Streams Association and the Van Buren Conservation District. So far we've had many Gravel Lakers sign-up for trees and shrubs that, in addition to being free, will be planted for free.

In short, thank you to all the families that have a passion for this particular way to love our lake by helping water quality!

Craig DeSimone  
GLA President





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## 2026 Calendar Of Events

Date	Event
Saturday, April 18	Board of Trustees Meeting
Saturday, May 16	Board of Trustees Meeting
Saturday, June 6	Membership Meeting, Picnic, GL Social
Saturday, June 27	Garage sale
Saturday, July 4	GLA Fourth of July activities
Saturday, July 18	Board of Trustees Meeting
Saturday, August 8	Poker Run
Saturday, August 22	Membership Meeting
Saturday, September 19	Board of Trustees Meeting
Saturday, October 10	GL Fall Festival
Saturday, October 17	Board of Trustees Meeting



Photo: John Bogner

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## All About Clams



In recent months, residents of Gravel Lake have made a hopeful discovery: a few freshwater clams (more precisely, native mussels or other bivalves) returning to the lake, mostly visible in the sandy shallows. This comeback is worth celebration because freshwater clams are often underappreciated but play crucial roles in aquatic ecosystems. In Michigan alone, there are about 43 native species of freshwater mussels, many facing steep declines.

Much of that decline can be traced to the arrival of invasive zebra and quagga mussels, which spread through the Great Lakes region in the late 20th century and eventually made their way into inland lakes such as Gravel Lake. When these invasive mussels first appeared years ago, residents noticed a sharp drop in native clams soon after. The invaders multiply rapidly and attach themselves in dense clusters to any hard surface—including native mussel shells—effectively suffocating them by blocking their ability to feed and respire. Within a few seasons, the once-visible native clams had nearly vanished from Gravel Lake's shoreline.

The recent sightings of new clams suggest that the lake's ecosystem may be stabilizing or that small remnant populations survived hidden in deeper or less-disturbed areas. Freshwater mussels are sensitive indicators of water quality; their return could signal improved conditions, such as clearer water, balanced nutrient levels, or recovery of host fish populations necessary for their reproduction. Because native mussel larvae must attach briefly to fish gills before maturing, a healthy fish community is essential for their life cycle to continue.



It may be hard to spot these returning bivalves, because they live buried—partially or fully—within the lake's substrate, especially in areas of sand, gravel, or mixed coarse substrate. They filter the water, consuming tiny particles of algae, bacteria, and detritus, thereby helping to clarify water and cycling nutrients. Their life cycles are often delicate: many native mussels are "unionids," which produce larvae (glochidia) that must attach to the gills or fins of a host fish before settling back into the substrate as juveniles. Because of this dependence, the presence of suitable host fish—and good connectivity of habitat—is essential for clam survival and recruitment.

If the returning clams manage to reproduce (via their fish hosts), their numbers might gradually expand and strengthen the lake's water-filtering capacity. In time, these small and hidden organisms could help bolster ecosystem resilience for Gravel Lake—quiet but vital sentinels of water health.

Tricia Brucks



Photo: Brandon Enright



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## 2025 Events Thank You

The Gravel Lake Association would like to thank our amazing volunteers who spend their time planning and coordinating fun events for the Gravel Lake community. Additionally, we want to thank all of the volunteers who helped the following people make these events fantastic!



### Kids Games

Jen Micheli, Kyle and Lynndie Krueger, Mark and Kathy Drew, Lois Gorbacz, Katie Gorbacz, Tricia Brucks, Mary Beth Fewell, and Steve Paramski

### Fun Run

Sue Forcash, Tamara Webster, Jen Micheli, Perri Gordon, Steve Paramski, and Melissa DeSimone

### Paddle Boat Regatta

Melissa DeSimone, Perri Gordon, Sue Forcash, and Jen Micheli

### Garage Sale Day

Linda Vitkauskas

### Fall Festival

Phil and Mary Rinaldi, Paul and Vicki Carlos, and Tom Zwartz

### Apparel Sales

Alyssa Pinkos, Susan Eberly, Suzanne Reed, and Vicki Carlos

If you'd like to get involved in GLA events, email Jen Micheli at [jmicheli7@hotmail.com](mailto:jmicheli7@hotmail.com).





Photo: Joseph Britvich

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## WANTED: Your Gravel Lake Stories!



Stories are trickling in... You can help the Gravel Lake History Committee create a comprehensive history of our community by finding pictures and gathering stories about your family's experiences at Gravel Lake.



Spend a few minutes with your family and friends reminiscing about what brought you to Gravel Lake. The stories we've received so far have been great and informative. But the History Committee needs more stories and pictures about your adventures at the lake. Fish caught, ski accomplishments, even the weddings and proposals that have happened on Gravel Lake can be shared. Do you have kids that made it across the lake swimming? Did someone fall into the lake in a comical way? What about that big whopper of a fish your child caught? Maybe there's something notable about your house. You might not think your story is exciting, but our community has had many fun things happen. Please share them with us! Tell us what brought you here and how your family has enjoyed the lake.



Send your stories and pictures to: [skurtyak@gmail.com](mailto:skurtyak@gmail.com) and [vpcarlos@comcast.net](mailto:vpcarlos@comcast.net).





Photo: Mary Walter Rinaldi



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Harry & Vicki	Lalone	Dugan's *
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Photo: Barbara Ann



Photo: Carlie DeSimone

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Craig & LaShel	MencI	Gebhard	*
Brent	Molnar	Gebhard	*
Doug Dale Denny & Judy	Murphy	Gebhard	*
Phil & Mary	Rinaldi	Gebhard	*
Therese & Dan	Schuld	Gebhard	*
Gretchen	Smith	Gebhard	
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Jen & Michael	Micheli	Huff's Landing	
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Nick & Sara	Felus	Idle Ease	
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Photo: Jim Vennergrund



Photo: Karen Rimes Vaikus

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Ed & Tina	Smith	Idle Ease *
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Tom & Karen	Fernandez	Lewis *
Bill	Fernandez	Lewis
Richard	Forward	Lewis
Rose & Rick Lord/	Goepfrich	Lewis
Josie & Tom		
Wayne & Marilyn	Greenwood	Lewis
Ken & Marysue	Hochsprung	Lewis *
Ed & Diane	Jandacek	Lewis *
Wayne & Chris	Roussel	Lewis *
Lois	Anderson	Sandy
Karen	Anderson	Sandy
Jered & Jaime	Baker	Sandy
Brian	Bergman	Sandy *
Susan & Julie	Betteridge	Sandy *
Susan	Bjork	Sandy *
James & Sharon	Braglia	Sandy *
Terry & Judy	Brockner	Sandy
David & Mary	Brown	Sandy
Mike & Joanne	Clifford	Sandy *
Mark & MaryBeth	Custer	Sandy
Kevin & Kris	Donegan	Sandy *
Kathy & Mark	Drew	Sandy *
Sheila	Edwards	Sandy
Chris & Amy	Fewell	Sandy
Susan & Scott	Forcash	Sandy *
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Photo: Sue Blafka



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Holly & Todd	James	Sandy
Fran	Jones	Sandy *
Mike & Tracy	Jurusik	Sandy *
Patricia	Kenny	Sandy *
Keith & Michelle	Lalone	Sandy
Cathy	Lawrence	Sandy *
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Dasher & Maria	Lowe	Sandy *
Mark & Tina	Mahany	Sandy *
Michael & Melissa	McCallister	Sandy *
Steven & Rebecca	Mills	Sandy *
Hunter/Jen Freeman	Motter	Sandy *
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John	Orr	Sandy *
Rich & Jane	Phelan	Sandy
Jessica & John	Placzek	Sandy *
Walt & Pam	Rearick	Sandy *
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Lauren & David	Roman	Sandy
Linda	Schlueter	Sandy
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*		
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Judy Weis & John	Caskey	Willow
Rich & Kelly	Chipp	Willow
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Tom & Darla	Kelliher	Willow
Mike	Mascarello	Willow *
Richard & May Britt	Moore	Willow
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Photo: Sue Blafka



Photo: Sarah Spiller Murphy

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Jill & Stephan	Bergenham	Winkler
David & Sue	Bibbee	Winkler *
Dave	Brown	Winkler
John & Mari Jo	Calacci	Winkler
Jane	Cerney	Winkler *
Danny & Annette	Dorkin	Winkler *
John & Patti	Faustino	Winkler *
Marge	Gillund	Winkler
Katie, Dennis & Lois	Gorbacz	Winkler
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Randy & Sherri	Hess	Winkler *
Ken & Laurie	Johnson	Winkler
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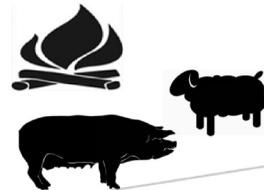
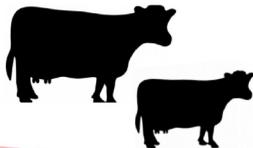
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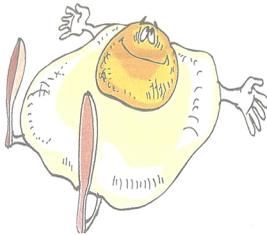
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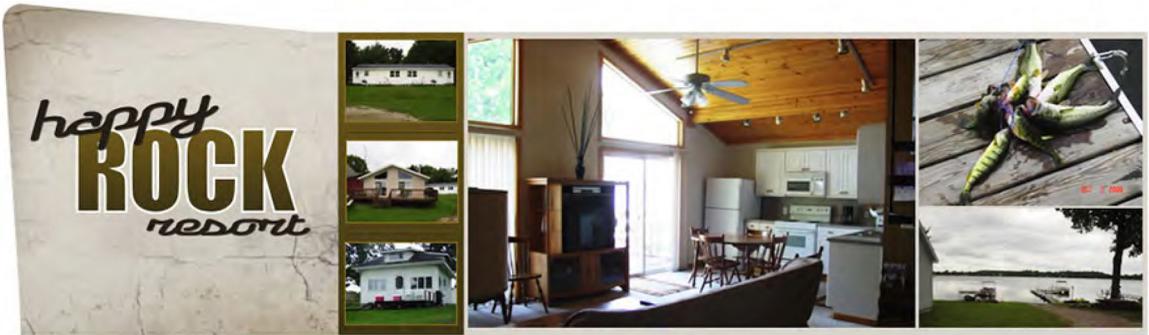
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<https://www.unitedchristianservices-evbc.com/>



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Terrill's Market is a 108 year-old meat market and grocery store; Blake, the fifth generation owner and head meat cutter, keeps tradition alive by hand cutting, trimming, grinding, stuffing, seasoning, and marinating everything we sell in our meat case - all USDA Choice and ABOVE.

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**GRAVEL LAKE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM:**

**January 2026 – December 2026**

Fill out and mail to: **Gravel Lake Association, P.O. Box 531, Lawton, MI 49065**

**You can also pay dues online at [gravellake.org](http://gravellake.org)**

Please print clearly.

Member name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Beach: \_\_\_\_\_ Lake Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Gravel Lake address: \_\_\_\_\_ Lawton, MI 49065

Home mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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*Please print clearly. Mail check or money order payable to Gravel Lake Association*

Membership dues for **2026** **\$50.00**

I would like to receive 4 free issues of the Riparian magazine for **2027**.

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**WHERE DO MY DUES GO?**

- Water quality testing & research
- Membership dues for Michigan Lakes & Streams Association
- 4th of July activities
- *The Gravel Laker* and other printed information
- [www.gravellake.org](http://www.gravellake.org)
- Treasurer's bonding
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**WHY SHOULD I BECOME A MEMBER?**

- Support the aforementioned activities/services
- Voice your opinion
- Strengthen our community
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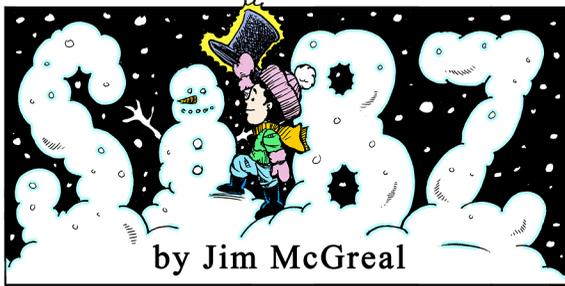
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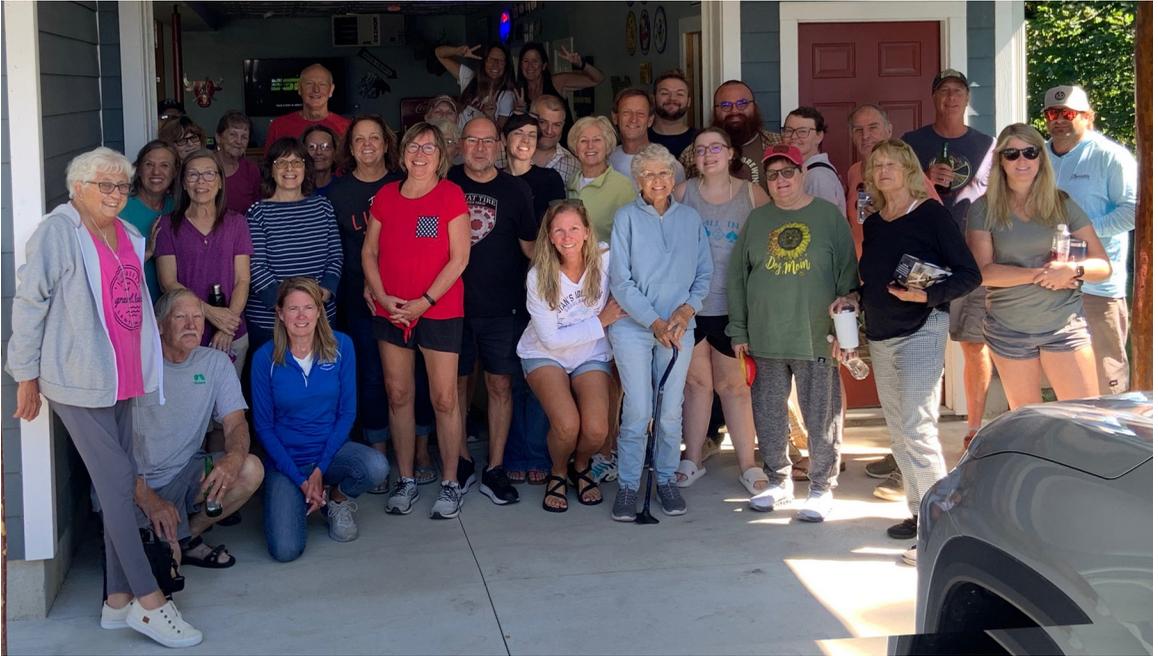


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