

Lake Lansing Special Assessment District 2012 Annual Report

Prepared for:

Charter Township of Meridian and Lake Lansing Special Assessment District Advisory Committee

Prepared by:

Progressive AE 1811 4 Mile Road, NE Grand Rapids, MI 49525-2442 616/361-2664

February 2013

Project No: 53260102

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Executive Summary

The Lake Lansing Special Assessment District (SAD) was formed in 1998 to improve conditions in Lake Lansing. In 2007, public hearings were held and Meridian Township approved continuing the project for a ten-year period. The project includes an update of the lake and watershed management plan, water quality sampling, nuisance aquatic plant control, watershed improvements, educational programs, and grant applications. The project is overseen by the Lake Lansing SAD Advisory Committee, whose members include representatives of residents within the SAD, Meridian Township, Ingham County Parks, and the Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office. A summary of project activities is as follows:

Water Quality Sampling: In 2012, samples were collected from Lake Lansing and from tributary streams in spring and late summer. Lake Lansing is borderline between mesotrophic (moderately productive) and eutrophic (nutrient-enriched and productive). During the 2012 sampling period, phosphorus levels were generally low with a few exceptions. Water clarity was good in spring and poor in late summer. Algae growth was low in spring and late summer. Tributary streams carry only a small volume of water into Lake Lansing, but nutrients in the streams likely stimulate localized aquatic plant growth.

Nuisance Aquatic Plant Control: On May 23, 120 acres of Eurasian milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) treatment were treated with the systemic herbicide 2,4-D and five acres were treated with triclopyr. One hundred six acres of curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*) were treated with diquat dibromide on June 14. Ninety-five acres of Lake Lansing were harvested in June to control primarily Elodea (*Elodea canadensis*). A second 65-acre harvest was conducted in late August to control nuisance growth of primarily wild celery (*Vallisneria americana*). During a late summer survey, 18 species of aquatic plants were found, including the non-native plant starry stonewort. Starry stonewort has been a severe nuisance invasive plant in several Michigan inland lakes, therefore it will be important to monitor and control the spread of starry stonewort in the future.

Watershed Improvements: A bioswale was designed to replace the storm drain that empties into Lake Lansing at the south end of Lake Lansing Park South (Figure 1). A permit application is being prepared for submittal to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Pending MDEQ approval, construction is planned for spring of 2013. In addition, the Advisory Committee supported the Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative and Ingham County Parks in their ongoing efforts to control the invasive non-native wetland plant Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) in the Lake Lansing watershed. The Advisory Committee is also continuing to work with Meridian Township and Clinton County to reduce runoff from Perry Road through installation of coir logs.

Meetings: The Advisory Committee meets monthly to oversee activities for the Lake Lansing improvement project.

Figure 1. Location of proposed bioswale storm drain improvement.

Introduction

Lake Lansing is located in Meridian Township, Ingham County, Michigan (Figure 2). The lake is 456 acres in surface area with a maximum of depth of 35 feet and a mean (average) depth of 8.7 feet. In 1998, Meridian Township established a special assessment district (SAD) under provisions of Public Act 188 of 1954 for the purposes of studying water quality, planning and implementing aquatic plant control, and developing a watershed management plan for Lake Lansing. In March of 2002, a management plan was prepared for Lake Lansing and its watershed. Public hearings were held in the summers of 2002 and 2007 to continue the management program for Lake Lansing. Ongoing management is overseen by the Lake Lansing Special Assessment District Advisory Committee (hereinafter, the Advisory Committee) with assistance from the Advisory Committee's professional consultant. The Advisory Committee includes representatives from each of the tiers in the special assessment district, Lake Lansing Property Owners Association, Meridian Township Engineering Department, Ingham County Parks Department, and Ingham County Drain Commissioner's Office. This report includes information on 2012 Lake Lansing management activities.

Figure 2. Lake Lansing location map. Source: United States Geological Survey.

Water Quality Sampling

Lake Water Quality

Lake water quality is determined by a unique combination of processes that occur both within and outside of the lake. In order to make sound management decisions, it is necessary to have an understanding of the current physical, chemical, and biological condition of the lake, and the potential impact of drainage from the surrounding watershed.

Lakes are commonly classified as oligotrophic, mesotrophic, or eutrophic (Figure 3). Oligotrophic lakes are generally deep and clear with little aquatic plant growth. These lakes maintain sufficient dissolved oxygen in the cool, deep bottom waters during late summer to support cold water fish such as trout and whitefish. By contrast, eutrophic lakes are generally shallow, turbid, and support abundant aquatic plant growth. In deep eutrophic lakes, the cool bottom waters usually contain little or no dissolved oxygen. Therefore, these lakes can only support warm water fish such as bass and pike. Lakes that fall between these two extremes are called mesotrophic lakes.

Under natural conditions, most lakes will ultimately evolve to a eutrophic state as they gradually fill with sediment and organic Mesotrophic matter transported to the lake from the surrounding watershed. As the lake becomes shallower, the process accelerates. When aquatic plants become abundant, the lake slowly begins to fill in as sediment and decaying plant matter accumulate on the lake bottom. Eventually, terrestrial plants become established and the lake is transformed to a marshland. The aging process in lakes is called "eutrophication" and may take anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand years, generally depending

Figure 3. Lake classification.

on the size of the lake and its watershed. The natural lake aging process can be greatly accelerated if excessive amounts of sediment and nutrients (which stimulate aquatic plant growth) enter the lake from the surrounding watershed. Because these added inputs are usually associated with human activity, this accelerated lake aging process is often referred to as "cultural eutrophication." The problem of cultural eutrophication can be managed by identifying sources of sediment and nutrient loading (i.e., inputs) to the lake and developing strategies to halt or slow the inputs. Thus, in developing a management plan, it is necessary to determine the limnological (i.e., the physical, chemical, and biological) condition of the lake and the physical characteristics of the watershed as well. Key parameters used to evaluate the limnological condition of a lake include temperature, dissolved oxygen, total phosphorus, pH and alkalinity, chlorophyll-*a*, fecal coliform bacteria, and Secchi transparency.

TEMPERATURE

Temperature is important in determining the type of organisms which may live in a lake. For example, trout prefer temperatures below 68°F. Temperature also determines how water mixes in a lake. As the ice cover breaks up on a lake in the spring, the water temperature becomes uniform from the surface to the bottom. This period is referred to as "spring turnover" because water mixes throughout the entire water column. As the surface waters warm, they are underlain by a colder, more dense strata of water. This process is called thermal stratification (Figure 4). Once thermal stratification occurs, there is little mixing of the warm surface waters with the cooler bottom waters. The transition layer that separates these layers is referred to as the "thermocline." The thermocline is characterized as the zone where temperature drops rapidly with depth. As fall approaches, the warm surface waters begin to cool and become more dense. Eventually, the surface temperature drops to a point that allows the lake to undergo complete mixing. This period is referred to as "fall turnover." As the season progresses and ice begins to form on the lake, the lake may stratify again. However, during winter stratification, the surface waters (at or near 32°F) are underlain by slightly warmer water (about 39°F). This is sometimes referred to as "inverse stratification" and occurs because water is most dense at a temperature of about 39°F. As the lake ice melts in the spring, these stratification cycles are repeated.

DISSOLVED OXYGEN

An important factor influencing lake water quality is the quantity of **dissolved oxygen** in the water column. The major inputs of dissolved oxygen to lakes are the atmosphere and photosynthetic activity by aquatic plants. An oxygen level of about 5 mg/L (milligrams per liter, or parts per million) is required to support warm water fish. In lakes deep enough to exhibit thermal stratification, oxygen levels are often reduced or depleted below the thermocline once the lake has stratified. This is because the oxygen has been consumed, in large part, by bacteria that use oxygen as they decompose organic matter (plant and animal remains) at the bottom of the lake. Bottom-water oxygen depletion is a common occurrence in eutrophic and some mesotrophic lakes. Thus, eutrophic and most mesotrophic lakes cannot support cold water fish because the cool, deep water (that the fish require to live) does not contain sufficient oxygen.

PHOSPHORUS

The quantity of **phosphorus** present in the water column is especially important since phosphorus is the nutrient that most often controls aquatic plant growth and the rate at which a lake ages and becomes more eutrophic. By reducing the availability of phosphorus in a lake, it is often possible to control the amount of aquatic plant growth. In general, lakes with a phosphorus concentration of 20 µg/L (micrograms per liter, or parts per billion) or greater are able to support abundant plant growth and are classified as nutrientenriched or eutrophic.

Phosphorus enters the lake water either from the surrounding watershed, or from the sediments in the lake itself, or both. The input of phosphorus from the watershed is called "external loading," and from the sediments is called "internal loading." External loading occurs when phosphorus washes into the lake from sources such as fertilizers, septic systems, and eroding land. Internal loading occurs when bottom-water oxygen is depleted, resulting in a chemical change in the water near the sediments. The chemical change causes phosphorus to be released from the sediments into the lake where it becomes available as a nutrient for aquatic plants.

CHLOROPHYLL-*a*

Chlorophyll-*a* is a pigment that imparts the green color to plants and algae. A rough estimate of the quantity of algae present in lake water can be made by measuring the amount of chlorophyll-*a* in the water column. A chlorophyll-*a* concentration greater than 6 µg/L is considered characteristic of a eutrophic condition.

SECCHI TRANSPARENCY

A **Secchi disk** is often used to estimate water clarity. The measurement is made by fastening a round, black and white, 8-inch disk to a calibrated line (Figure 5). The disk is lowered over the deepest point of the lake until it is no longer visible, and the depth is noted. The disk is then raised until it reappears. The average between these two depths is the Secchi transparency. Generally, it has been found that aquatic plants can grow at a depth of at least twice the Secchi transparency measurement. In eutrophic lakes, water clarity is often reduced by algae growth in the water column, and Secchi disk readings of 7.5 feet or less are common.

Figure 5. Secchi disk.

Ordinarily, as phosphorus inputs (both internal and external) to a lake increase, the amount of algae the lake can support will also increase. Thus, the lake will exhibit increased chlorophyll-*a* levels and decreased transparency. A summary of lake classification criteria developed by the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1 LAKE CLASSIFICATION CRITERIA

¹ μ g/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

pH and TOTAL ALKALINITY

pH is a measure of the amount of acid or base in the water. The pH scale ranges from 0 (acidic) to 14 (alkaline or basic) with neutrality at 7. The pH of most lakes generally ranges from 6 to 9 (Wetzel 1983). Alkalinity is the measure of the pH-buffering capacity of water in that it is the quantitative capacity of water to neutralize an acid.

SAMPLING METHODS

Water quality sampling was conducted in the spring and late summer of 2012 at the two deep basins within Lake Lansing (Figure 6). Temperature was measured using a YSI Model 550A probe. Samples were collected at the surface, mid-depth, and just above the lake bottom with a Kemmerer bottle to be analyzed for dissolved oxygen, pH, total alkalinity, and total phosphorus. Dissolved oxygen samples were fixed in the field and then transported to Progressive AE for analysis using the modified Winkler method (Standard Methods procedure 4500-O C). pH was measured in the field using a YSI EcoSense pH meter. Total alkalinity and total phosphorus samples were placed on ice and transported to Progressive AE and to Prein and Newhof¹, respectively, for analysis. Total alkalinity was titrated at Progressive AE using Standard Methods procedure 2320 B, and total phosphorus was analyzed at Prein and Newhof using Standard Methods procedure 4500-P E. In addition to the depth-interval samples at each deep basin, Secchi transparency was measured and composite chlorophyll-*a* samples were collected from the surface to a depth equal to twice the Secchi transparency. Chlorophyll-*a* samples were analyzed by Prein and Newhof using Standard Methods procedure 10200 H.

Tributary monitoring was conducted in spring for the most significant storm drains and inlet streams (Figure 6). Tributary stream discharge was estimated using the U.S. Geological Survey midsection method (Buchanan and Somers 1969). Stream velocity was measured with a Pygmy Gurley flow meter. Prein and Newhof analyzed samples for total phosphorus.

¹ Prein and Newhof Environmental and Soils Laboratory, 3260 Evergreen, NE, Grand Rapids, MI.

Sampling Results and Discussion

Sampling results are provided in Tables 2 through 4. A graphic summary of water quality data compiled to date is shown in Figures 7 through 9 and summary statistics are included in Table 5. Historical data for Lake Lansing is contained in Appendix A.

TABLE 2 LAKE LANSING 2012 DEEP BASIN WATER QUALITY DATA Sample Dissolved Total Total Depth Temperature Oxygen pH Alkalinity Phosphorus Date Station (feet) (°F) (mg/L)¹ **(S.U.)**² **(mg/L CaCO3)**3 **(µg/L)**⁴ 19-Mar-12 1 1 59 10.4 8.5 108 10 19-Mar-12 1 15 49 12.3 8.6 113 8 19-Mar-12 1 30 46 10.3 8.4 119 <5 19-Mar-12 2 1 57 11.6 8.6 105 <5 19-Mar-12 2 11 49 12.3 8.6 114 <5 19-Mar-12 2 22 45 11.6 8.5 105 <5 16-Aug-12 1 1 74 8.8 9.0 115 12 16-Aug-12 1 15 72 6.0 8.5 118 13 16-Aug-12 1 30 56 0.3 7.7 146 364 16-Aug-12 2 1 75 8.8 9.0 115 6 16-Aug-12 2 11 72 6.0 8.5 117 9

TABLE 3 LAKE LANSING 2012 SURFACE WATER QUALITY DATA

16-Aug-12 2 22 67 2.1 7.9 122 73

¹ $mg/L =$ milligrams per liter = parts per million.

 2 S.U. = standard units.

³ mg/L CaCO₃ = milligrams per liter as calcium carbonate.
⁴ Jug/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

 $4 \mu g/L =$ micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

TABLE 4 LAKE LANSING 2012 STORM DRAIN MONITORING DATA

2 µg/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion. 3 mg/L = milligrams per liter = parts per million.

¹ cfs = cubic feet per second.

Figure 9. Secchi transparency measurements, 1999-2012.

TABLE 5 LAKE LANSING

In March of 2012, sampling was conducted during spring turnover when water temperatures were cool and dissolved oxygen was high. During the August sampling period, Lake Lansing was stratified with the warm surface waters underlain by cool water with lower dissolved oxygen content in the deepest portions of the lake. With the exception of the deep basins in the lake, dissolved oxygen levels throughout the water column of Lake Lansing appear sufficient to sustain warm-water fish during ice-free periods.

Total phosphorus concentrations were generally moderate with elevated concentrations in the bottom of the deep basins in late summer. The elevated bottom-water phosphorus is likely due to internal release of phosphorus from the lake sediments. However, sediment phosphorus release occurs in only the very small portion of the lake and therefore it is unlikely to be a significant loading source to Lake Lansing. Chlorophyll-*a* levels indicate algae growth was low during both sampling periods in 2012, which has generally been the case since sampling began in 1999. Water clarity was good in spring and poor in late summer. Improved clarity in recent years is likely related to the presence of zebra mussels which filter lake water and consume algae, and, in doing so, increase water clarity. In general, plants can grow to a depth of about twice the Secchi transparency reading. With a median Secchi transparency of 7.8 feet, the clarity of Lake Lansing is sufficient to allow sunlight to penetrate to about 15 feet of depth, which is over 90 percent of the lake bottom, making nearly all of Lake Lansing habitable for plant growth.

Tributary samples were collected in spring of 2012, but all tributary in-flow to Lake Lansing ceased by late summer due to extended drought conditions throughout summer. During spring, phosphorus levels were high at the Barnhart site (just west of the boat launch) and moderately high at the south end and Perry Road sites. Given that the Barnhart and south end sampling sites drain wetlands, it is possible that the high values are due to an influx of organic (plant and animal) matter from the wetlands. High phosphorus also results from erosion of the gravel portions of Perry Road. It is also important to note that only a small volume of water drains to Lake Lansing from the tributary streams and drains, as indicated by the low discharge values, thus the overall load of pollutants into Lake Lansing from the inlets is low. Nevertheless, nutrients carried to the lake likely stimulate localized aquatic plant growth.

Summary statistics indicate Lake Lansing is borderline between mesotrophic (moderately productive) and eutrophic (nutrient-enriched and productive). Phosphorus levels range from moderate to high with the median phosphorus concentration at the eutrophic threshold of 20 parts per billion. Bottom-water oxygen is reduced, and water clarity is moderate but has been improving in recent years as discussed above. Rooted plant growth in Lake Lansing is locally dense and algae growth is generally moderate or low, thus it would appear that phosphorus is more readily used by rooted plants in the lake rather than algae.

¹ Summary statistics include data from sampling stations 1 and 2 only. Historically, samples were also collected from two additional stations near the shoreline, but only deep basin data is included in this analysis. 2μ g/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

Nuisance Aquatic Plant Control

The focus of the plant control program in Lake Lansing is control of exotic (i.e., non-native) plants such as Eurasian milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and curly-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*), and control of native plants that reach nuisance densities. In 2012, plant growth was surveyed on May 3, June 8, June 20, June 24, July 3, July 25, and September 19. Areas of nuisance aquatic plant growth were determined by using a global positioning system (GPS) to navigate between waypoints that correspond to waypoints on the Lake Lansing aquatic plant survey map. Once nuisance plant locations were identified, a detailed plant control map and GPS waypoints were provided to the plant control contractor. On May 23, 120 acres of Eurasian milfoil treatment were treated with the systemic herbicide 2,4-D and five acres were treated with triclopyr. One hundred six acres of curly-leaf pondweed were treated with diquat dibromide on June 14.

Ninety-five acres of Lake Lansing were harvested in June to control primarily Elodea (*Elodea canadensis*). A second 65-acre harvest was conducted in late August to control nuisance growth of primarily wild celery (*Vallisneria americana*).

On September 19, the lake was surveyed using the Department of Environmental Quality's *Procedures for Aquatic Vegetation Surveys*. Lake Lansing was segmented into 68 survey sites and the type and density of plants at each site was recorded (Table 6).

TABLE 6 LAKE LANSING AQUATIC PLANT FREQUENCY AND DENSITY SEPTEMBER 19, 2012

NUISANCE AQUATIC PLANT CONTROL

During the August survey, eighteen aquatic plant species were found. Wild celery, thin-leaf pondweed, flat-stem pondweed, and Chara were the most common plants. Of concern was the occurrence of nonnative plant starry stonewort which has become a severe nuisance plant in several Michigan lakes. Starry stonewort looks like a rooted plant but is actually an algae, similar in appearance to the native plant Chara (Figure 10). However, unlike Chara, starry stonewort can grow in mats several feet thick which can interfere with navigation, recreational use, and may interfere with fish spawning habitat. It will be important to monitor and control the spread of starry stonewort in the future.

Figure 10. Chara (left) and starry stonewort (right).

Watershed Improvements

In recent years, several storm drain modifications have been implemented to reduce watershed pollution inputs. The next storm drain chosen for improvements is a pipe that runs along the south side of Lake Lansing Road, continues across the lawn toward the south end of Lake Lansing Park South, and empties into Lake Lansing just north of the newly constructed aluminum fishing dock. In order to treat the stormwater before it drains to the lake, the pipe will be removed from within the park and replaced with a bioswale (Figure 11). A bioswale is a shallow drainage ditch that uses plants to uptake nutrients from runoff (Figure 12), and uses check dams to slow the rate of runoff. Thus, instead of nutrients and sediments draining directly to Lake Lansing, the runoff will first be filtered before it makes its way to the lake. A permit application is being submitted to MDEQ. Upon approval, construction will commence in spring of 2013.

Figure 11. Lake Lansing Park South bioswale design.

Figure 12. Bioswale plants.

WATERSHED IMPROVEMENTS

In 2012, the Advisory Committee supported the Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative and Ingham County Parks in their ongoing efforts to control the invasive non-native wetland plant Phragmites (*Phragmites australis*) in the Lake Lansing watershed. Sixty-seven sites covering 35 acres were treated with herbicides to control Phragmites. Some areas were sprayed with herbicides using a device known as the MarshMaster (Figure 13). The Mid-Michigan Stewardship Initiative has found the infestation has typically been reduced by 50-75 percent in previously treated areas.

Figure 13. Phragmites control in Lake Lansing watershed.

The Advisory Committee is also continuing to work with Meridian Township and Clinton County to reduce

runoff from Perry Road. Coir logs are a durable and biodegradable erosion prevention measure manufactured from coconut fibers (Figure 14). The township and county are working toward installation of coir logs to prevent Perry Road runoff from entering the storm system that drains to Lake Lansing. In addition, the township is investigating the feasibility of paving the township portion of Perry Road to prevent sediment runoff from the unpaved portion of the road in the township.

Figure 14. Coir logs for erosion control.

Appendix A Lake Lansing Historical Water Quality Data

¹ mg/ $L =$ milligrams per liter = parts per million.

² S.U. = standard units.

³ mg/L CaCO $_3$ = milligrams per liter as calcium carbonate.

 $4 \mu g/L =$ micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

LAKE LANSING

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TABLE A3 LAKE LANSING 1999-2011 STORM DRAIN MONITORING DATA

			Discharge	Total Phosphorus	E. coli per
Date	Number	Name	$(cfs)^1$	$(\mu g/L)^2$	100 mL ³
22-Apr-99	1	Barnhart		51	120
22-Apr-99	$\overline{2}$	Milliman			40
22-Apr-99	3	Wallace		71	280
22-Apr-99	5	South End			460
22-Apr-99	$\overline{7}$	Condos		100	60
22-Apr-99	7b	Condos Upstream			10
22-Apr-99	8	Perry Road			320
22-Apr-99	$\boldsymbol{9}$	Carlton		43	80
22-Apr-99	14	Mack Street		190	34,000
12-Apr-00	1	Barnhart	0.1		4
12-Apr-00	$\overline{2}$	Milliman	1.1		12
12-Apr-00	3	Wallace	0.03		4
12-Apr-00	8	Perry Road	$\pmb{0}$		$\sqrt{3}$
12-Apr-00	9	Carlton	$\mathbf 0$		$\overline{2}$
12-Apr-00	11	New Condos	$\mathbf 0$		19
23-Apr-00	1	Barnhart		65	
23-Apr-00	$\mathbf{2}$	Milliman		41	60
23-Apr-00	3	Wallace		23	40
23-Apr-00	5	South End		53	50
23-Apr-00	8	Perry Road		44	110
23-Apr-00	9	Carlton		16	60
23-Apr-00	11	New Condos			10
10-Apr-03	1	Barnhart	$\pmb{0}$	249	25
10-Apr-03	$\overline{2}$	Milliman	1.2	92	20
10-Apr-03	$\sqrt{3}$	Wallace	2.2	50	21
10-Apr-03	5	South End	$\pmb{0}$	77	$\boldsymbol{9}$
10-Apr-03	8	Perry Road	0.04	71	91

¹ cfs = cubic feet per second.

2 µg/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

³ mL = milliliters.

2 μ g/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

 $1 \text{ cfs} = \text{cubic feet per second.}$

 $3 \text{ mL} = \text{milliliters}.$

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TABLE A3 (continued) LAKE LANSING 1999-2011 STORM DRAIN MONITORING DATA

2 µg/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

¹ cfs = cubic feet per second.

³ mL = milliliters.

 1 cfs = cubic feet per second.

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 $3 \text{ mL} = \text{milliliters}.$

¹ cfs = cubic feet per second.

² µg/L = micrograms per liter = parts per billion.

³ mg/L = milligrams per liter.

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