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**Fwd: President's End of Season Message**

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**Mark Sussman** <markrsussman@gmail.com>  
Bcc: Mark Sussman <markrsussman@gmail.com>

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**Friends and Neighbors,**

It's that time of year again! The leaves are changing, and we're beginning to draw down the lake so residents can work on their shorelines. Fall at Hitchcock Lake is truly beautiful, with vibrant colors reflected across the water. Like many of you, I'm tying down kayaks, covering chairs, and putting things away for the winter.

It's also time for my end-of-summer report on the condition of our lake, what HLIA is doing to protect it, and how we can all help strengthen our community.

**1. Community Support**

First, thank you to everyone who paid their HLIA dues and contributed time, energy, and resources to our lake community. I'm pleased to report that we matched last year's dues revenue, our best year ever! More residents joined the Century Club by contributing an additional \$50, and others donated to the **Renew the Lake Fund**, which provides additional resources for the environmental work needed to protect our lake.

I especially want to thank the volunteers who went door-to-door to remind neighbors to pay their dues. Collectively, they spent more than 40 hours on this effort. That's an extraordinary contribution and a reminder that HLIA depends on neighbors helping neighbors protect our shared resource—our common front yard.

**I have one important request for next year: PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES THROUGH OUR WEBSITE!** Visit <https://hitchcocklake.com/membership> to pay dues, boat fees, or make a donation. Our Zeffy payment platform is secure and makes it easy to pay by credit card *without* transaction fees to HLIA. You can also arrange automatic annual membership renewals, saving our volunteers the time and effort of following up with residents who may have forgotten to pay.

**2. Protecting Our Lake: The Environmental Challenge**

Lakes are complex ecosystems, and changes in one part of the system can affect the entire lake. One of our biggest challenges is phosphorus, a nutrient that fuels the growth of algae and cyanobacteria (also called blue-green algae). Excess phosphorus can contribute to excessive growth and harmful cyanobacteria blooms like the one we experienced in the south lake this summer.

**Where does the phosphorus come from?**

Dissolved phosphate in lake water feeds plants and algae. Phosphorus enters the lake through runoff from nearby properties and roads, including stormwater that carries fertilizer and other nutrients. It also accumulates in lake-bottom sediments as plants and other organic matter decompose and aquatic animals release waste. Over time, this phosphorus can be released back into the water, where it becomes available to feed plants and algae. This process, known as *internal phosphorus loading*, can make the problem particularly difficult to address. Wind and boat activity that disturb bottom sediments contribute to the release of phosphorus into the water.

Weather can make matters worse. This summer, we went from drought conditions in June to extraordinary rainfall in July and August, when approximately 15 inches of rain fell during several major storms. These intense downpours

increased runoff into the lake, potentially carrying additional nutrients with it. Although algae and cyanobacteria are naturally present in lakes, the unusual rainfall may have contributed to the cyanobacteria bloom in the south basin at the end of August. We are continuing to evaluate the factors affecting our lake's water quality.

### What is HLIA doing about it?

Since last year, I have been working with our limnologist, Dr. George Knoecklein, and with the Pond & Lake Connection and its treatment supplier, SePRO Scientific, to better understand the phosphorus problem and evaluate possible solutions.

Last fall, SePRO collected sediment samples to assess the phosphorus stored in the lake bottom. This year, Dr. Knoecklein has been conducting regular water-quality testing to measure phosphorus levels and evaluate other important characteristics of the lake. Together, these studies will help us better understand the problem and determine which treatments, if any, are likely to be effective.

Unfortunately, there are no simple or inexpensive solutions. Some treatments make the dissolved phosphorus in lake water less available to plants and algae. Others target the internal loading of phosphorus stored in the sediments, while additional approaches may help reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the lake through stormwater runoff.

### What treatments are we considering, and what might they cost?

We are currently evaluating two treatment alternatives:

- **Treating phosphorus in the water:** This approach makes dissolved phosphate less available to plants and algae. Preliminary cost estimates range from **\$6,000 to \$7,000 per treatment for each side of the lake.**
- **Treating phosphorus in the sediments:** This approach is designed to make phosphorus stored in the lake bottom less available for release into the water. The preliminary cost estimate is **more than \$100,000 for each side of the lake.** The work could be spread over several years to reduce the impact on our annual budget. In theory, this treatment could help control phosphorus levels in the water for five years or longer, although the actual results would depend on conditions in the lake.

The cost difference between these alternatives is substantial. Water treatment is less expensive initially, while sediment treatment is a much larger investment intended to address a source of phosphorus that can continue to affect water quality over time. We need to understand the likely benefits, limitations, and costs of each approach before making a decision.

Given the potential costs and uncertainty about the results, my view is that we should initially focus on the south lake, where the cyanobacteria bloom occurred. Water from the south lake flows into the north lake, so addressing the problem in the south may also benefit the north. Starting with the south lake would allow us to evaluate the effectiveness of a treatment before deciding whether to invest in treating the entire lake.

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. The aerial photograph below, taken by a local pilot, shows the striking difference in water clarity between the two sides of the lake during August.



### How can we pay for this work?

As we evaluate treatment options, we must also consider what we can afford. The potential costs are significant, and any substantial environmental treatment could place additional demands on HLIA's resources.

That's why I'm asking everyone who lives on or enjoys Hitchcock Lake to support HLIA by paying annual dues and considering a regular contribution to the **Renew the Lake Fund.**

I have personally established a monthly recurring donation through the Zeffy payment platform on our website, and I encourage others to consider doing the same. Even modest monthly contributions, combined across our community, can make a meaningful difference in our ability to protect the lake. **To pay your dues or contribute to the Renew the Lake Fund, visit:** <https://hitchcocklake.com/membership>

### **3. Get to Know Your Neighbors**

Protecting our lake is important, but so is building the community that makes Hitchcock Lake such a special place to live. HLIA sponsors a variety of activities throughout the year, including a beach sing-along, firepit party, trivia night, homemade pizza party, dock-to-dine gathering, kayak clubs, boat tie-ups, and a holiday party. If you haven't participated in one of these events, I encourage you to give it a try. You'll meet some terrific people and feel even more connected to our Hitchcock Lake community.

Thank you for everything you do to make our community special and help keep Hitchcock Lake healthy. I'm always happy to talk with residents about the lake, our environmental challenges, or HLIA's activities. Please feel free to reach me at [markrsussman@gmail.com](mailto:markrsussman@gmail.com) or **860-573-9151**.

Enjoy the beautiful fall season and thank you for being part of our lake community!

**Mark R. Sussman**

President, Hitchcock Lake Improvement Association