

To:

Tim Stein, Supervisor, Cleveland Township  
Brendan Mullane, Manager, Leelanau County Road Commission  
Scott Tucker, Superintendent, Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore  
Jim Watling, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy  
Luke Golden, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy

From:

Scott Siegel, President, Little Traverse Lake Association  
Board of Directors, Little Traverse Lake Association

The Little Traverse Lake Association (LTLA) Board commends Cleveland Township Supervisor Tim Stein, Leelanau County Road Commission (LCRC) Manager Brendan Mullane, and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (SBDNL) Superintendent Scott Tucker for committing to improving both culvert capacity and beaver dam management, and for recognizing the impact of high water levels on Little Traverse Lake (LTL) property owners.

The April 2026 precipitation sequence — 8.5 inches over one month on saturated, frost-affected ground — is consistent with a 10-year storm event profile per Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) storm frequency data. It is not a 50-year or a 100-year “historic” event. The National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) confirms that Michigan is in its wettest sustained decade on record, with extreme 2-inch precipitation events now occurring at nearly double their historical average frequency. Significant spring flooding at LTL has been documented in consecutive years. This is a pattern, not an anomaly, and the frequency of recurrence is increasing. Treating the precipitation events of March and April 2026 with the urgent proactive steps they deserve is more important than ever.

The LTLA Board recognizes that high lake water levels are influenced by multiple factors across the watershed, including precipitation and natural drainage conditions within the Shalda Creek system. However, while rainfall and broader watershed runoff are outside of local control, the Board believes the following two actions represent practical measures that can meaningfully mitigate flood impacts and improve the lake’s response during high water events. Accordingly, the LTLA Board reinforces and supports the need and urgency for both of the following two action steps:

First, we appreciate the commitment of Cleveland Township and LCRC to add additional culvert capacity under West Traverse Lake Road where LTL empties into Shalda Creek as an essential step to mitigate flood waters. Specifically, adding two additional structures on each side of the existing culvert to increase available culvert area above 594.3 feet elevation in accordance with sound engineering practices and government permitting requirements. We also appreciate the expertise of Gosling Czubak, LCRC, and EGLE in working together to find acceptable design solutions. April’s LakeMAN data observed that LTL rose 2.4 inches more than Shalda Creek during peak rainfall with no beaver dams present — directly attributable to the culvert inlet-outlet

differential under inlet control conditions. Those 2.4 inches contributed to shoreline flooding at 595.0 feet elevation and structural damage to homes at 595.5 feet. Additional culvert area to accommodate lake levels above 594.3 feet would significantly reduce this excess rise. The late summer road improvements that LCRC has scheduled for West Traverse Lake Road provides a critical near-term opportunity for additional culvert area that must not be missed, especially for those lake property owners suffering from flood conditions.

Secondly, beaver dam management in Shalda Creek is also an important strategy in mitigating high water levels. We appreciate SBDNL working to establish a beaver dam maintenance policy that would allow the removal of dams when conditions meet objective trigger points, tied to measurable hydrologic conditions. Such trigger points, as determined by a hydrologist, could include seasonal considerations, certain water levels reached, or when there is an alteration of normally observed watershed responses (e.g. such as when Shalda Creek and LTL both rise while Lime Lake is decreasing). Beaver dam presence during Fall 2025-Winter 2026 caused LTL to enter spring 2026 approximately 6 inches above its natural baseline — critically compressing the flood buffer capacity before the first significant rains fell. This “pre-loading” pattern has now repeated in consecutive years. A long-term, more proactive National Park Service policy for dam removal before the fall and spring precipitation seasons — consistent with the Gosling Czubak December 2015 recommendation — is essential. Reactive, annual negotiations with the Park Service are not a sustainable management solution. We understand that “beaver deceivers” or “levelers” may be explored to determine their effectiveness in allowing water to pass unrestricted, and suggest that the “Fish Camp” area on Shanda Creek would be a great first place to experiment with this potential option.

The LTLA Board supports these efforts and is committed to continuing ongoing data collection and monitoring in order to observe the changes in watershed response following the execution of these action steps. This will be an important follow-up effort over the next few years, and we hope to see an improvement in flood mitigation.

The LTLA Board also understands that Cleveland Township, LCRC, SBDNL and EGLE are currently not engaged in any plans to replace the existing culvert with a larger structure, such as that installed at Bohemian Road/CR 669. We understand that any such effort in the future would need to address the permitting and approval processes, obtaining a court order to establish a minimal water level (in accordance with the procedures for stabilizing inland lake levels under part 307, inland lake levels, of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, as amended), the completion of a detailed and in-depth hydraulic survey and study, and the identification of potential funding sources. The LTLA Board is focused on supporting the current efforts to enhance culvert capacity and establishing a beaver dam removal policy, followed by active monitoring of watershed responses.

We wish to express our gratitude for your leadership in addressing the concerns of property owners around Little Traverse Lake. Should there be any additional information that becomes available, please forward that information to [ltlpoa88@gmail.com](mailto:ltlpoa88@gmail.com) and Scott Siegel, LTLA President. Scott can be emailed at [scottmathewsiegel@gmail.com](mailto:scottmathewsiegel@gmail.com) or reached directly at 616-690-6975. We would also be very interested in hosting an opportunity this summer for our LTLA Members to be able to hear updates on these efforts directly from all decision makers.

Thank you,  
Little Traverse Lake Association Board

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*Sent to recipients via email from [ltlpoa88@gmail.com](mailto:ltlpoa88@gmail.com) on May 20, 2026*