

A partnership as deep as Mullett Lake

By Jen DeMoss, *Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council*
Communications Director

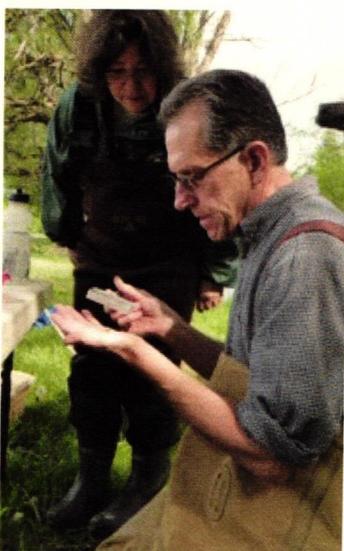
At Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, partnerships are what we're all about. Mullett Lake Area Preservation Society began in 1985, and the Watershed Council has been involved with the society since its inception. We were there to aid in the formation of by-laws and the formation of a board of directors. MAPS has a long tradition of involvement with the Watershed Council's Board of Directors, with Tony Naylor and Herm Boatin as champions of both organizations. We're proud to have watched MAPS flourish over the years. In the words of Watershed Council Associate Director Jen Buchanan, "It's a true partnership."

What have we accomplished so far in this partnership, and where are we today? This article shares a brief snapshot of a collaboration that has spanned decades. And, to be transparent, it's a call to action. We appreciate each and every person who has been involved with MAPS, and we want you as part of the Watershed Council community.

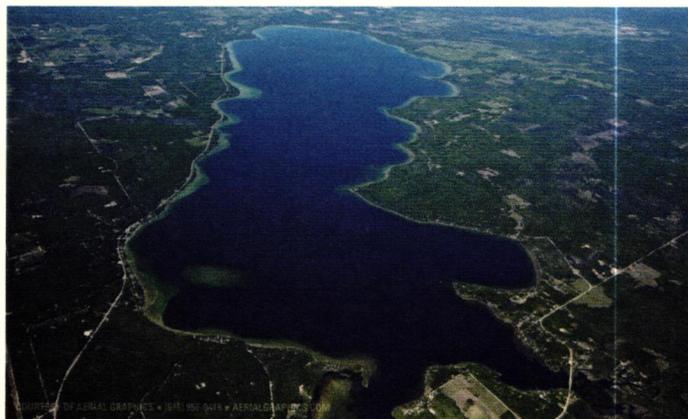


There are details at the end of this article on how to become a member of our organization.

Mullett Lake is an absolute gem—a deep, high-quality lake that's part of the storied Inland Waterway. How do we know the lake has high water quality? Because MAPS members and the Watershed Council keep an eye on it. Watershed Council staff measure dissolved oxygen, pH, nitrogen, phosphorus, and other markers of lake health every three years as part



of our Comprehensive Water Quality Monitoring Program. Meanwhile, there are two volunteer lake monitors, one of whom has monitored Mullett Lake for 19 years (thanks, Kevin!) and over a dozen volunteer stream monitors with a combined 100 years of volunteering. Volunteers collect data every year, and extend our collective impact. These measurements help us both monitor the health of Mullett Lake in the moment and maintain our long-term data set to identify trends in water



quality. In addition to established monitoring programs, hard-working staff have performed aquatic plant surveys and shoreline surveys, along with tributary monitoring, to identify potential threats and areas of improvement.

"Mullett Lake has so much to offer: boating, fishing, swimming, its position in the inland waterway," said Caroline Keson, monitoring programs coordinator. "Its upstream area and upper watershed are natural, with lots of beneficial vegetation and wildlife. The Watershed Council works hard to protect the lake through extensive monitoring."

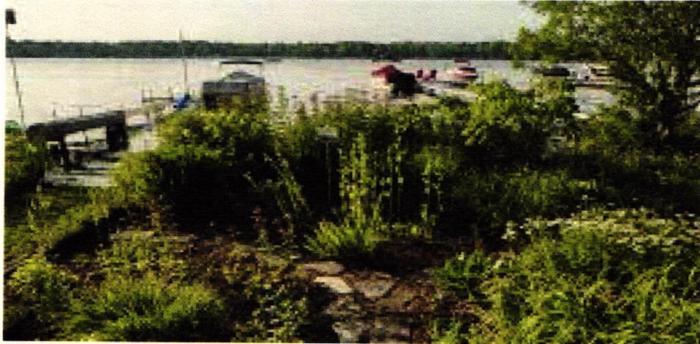
What does all of that data add up to? Luckily for the community, it's leading to a brand-new watershed management plan (WMP), headed by Watershed Management Coordinator Lauren Dey. Mullett Lake already had a protection plan in place beginning in 2002 that noted issues with erosion and pollution from sediments, nutrients, and chemicals. According to Dey, this new plan brings together multiple partners to protect the watershed, such as MAPS, the Watershed Council, local governments, Huron Pines, and friends groups.

"By bringing all of these stakeholders to the table, we can be strategic in our approach to watershed protection," said Dey. To complete a comprehensive plan, the Watershed Council will perform extra tributary and stormwater surveys, along with agriculture and forestry inventories. Those extra pieces of data can potentially help uncover issues and aid in identifying priority areas.

One thing that Jen Buchanan fondly recalls is a 2013 greenbelt workshop with MAPS. It was a hands-on event where members were able to dig in the dirt for a native planting on a private property. The greenbelt was installed to prevent stormwater pollution from flowing unimpeded into Mullett Lake. MAPS continued the tradition with greenbelt demonstrations led by Darrell Schwalm.

"I'm thrilled that MAPS was inspired to continue on with the workshop," Buchanan said. "Mullett Lake folks are motivated, earnest, down-to-earth, pragmatic team players. They're great collaborators and it's a pleasure to work with them."

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There are several important concepts in this passage. First, lands, including shorelines, must be maintained “in a natural fashion” and second, shoreline property owners have an added responsibility. I am one of those fortunate people who is privileged to own shoreline property. With that privilege comes responsibility. There are some riparian owners around the lake to think of themselves as having neighbors on three sides, with the lake side being a place free from concerns about people on the other side of a boundary. In reality, we riparian owners do have a neighbor on the front side, the people of the State of Michigan. Just as we must manage our property so as not to negatively impact our neighbors to the side and back, so must we manage our property so as to avoid behaviors that negatively impact the lake.

A third important concept contained in the Hayes ordinance is the phrase “preserved in a natural fashion.” Our State of Michigan Constitution, Article 4, Section 52 declares:

“The conservation and development of the natural resources of the state are hereby declared to be of paramount public concern in the interest of the health, safety and general welfare of the people.”

Our constitution identifies both “conservation” and “development” of our natural resources as important. Not only does the law of the land accept that development will occur, but it places development on equal footing with Preventing development is not in the cards. Managing development is the task with which we are faced. Our challenge is to find a way, as did those who were here before us, to manage that development in balance with nature. In one sense, we are on that path. The lake has changed dramatically over the years. Some of you remember the lake before the invasive mussels redefined it. None of us remember how it looked in 1910, after the timber was stripped from the land. Yet, we still have fish, reptiles, birds and perhaps too many mammals. There is reason to be hopeful as we do the work.

Mr. Darnton went on to lead the attending lake association members to confront problems of shoreline protection under conditions of highly variable lake levels.

Mullett Lake properties thankfully do not experience such conditions. However as he stated “owners of waterfront lots have an added responsibility regarding the preservation and protection of these natural resources, water quality and community scenic and recreational values.”

The Mullett Lake Watershed Management Plan is not expected

to advise shoreline protection ordinances or regulation. However, the MAPS board of directors with the support of MAPS members will use the plan to continue to preserve and protect Mullett Lake, keeping it and its watershed healthy for generations to come.

Remember that MAPS continues to provide technical consulting and cost sharing support for deep rooted shoreline plantings that protect and beautify your lakefront.

CRISP - Cheboygan Region Invasive Species Partnership

By Herm Boatin, MAPS Board President

Invasive species are a continuing challenge to the ecological health of the Mullett Lake watershed. Non-native species, both plant and animal, have invaded our lands and lakes. MAPS is taking action to combat invasive species by helping to create CRISP, Cheboygan Region Invasive Species Partnership. The partnership includes representatives from many lakes in the Cheboygan region. The Black Lake Association provided leadership in forming this working group whose first outcome is a sign to be posted at boat launches on lakes in our region. The sign seen here will be posted at launches on Black Lake. The MAPS board and other lake association have agreed to use this sign as a model, displaying their respective lakes and including a map of the lake. The Mullett Lake version of this sign will be posted at State launches and possibly at marinas and other launches on the lake. The signs will alert boaters to the presence and types of local invasive species and the need to follow clean boating practices to prevent transmission of these species.

Zebra mussels, purple loosestrife, and round goby are all familiar and widespread in the Mullett Lake watershed. Other invasive species continue to appear and threaten native species. Invasive species are often harmful as they outcompete native species or make changes in the habitat. The impact of a single species has been widespread. Since the introduction of zebra mussels water clarity in Mullett Lake became greater allowing deeper penetration of sunlight and increased plant growth. Clarity of the water was caused by mussels consuming phytoplankton and zooplankton which nourished newly hatched fish.

The presence of round goby is a bad news good news story. The short version of this is that the goby has a voracious appetite and aggressively outcompetes native species while also being an increasingly favored food of small mouth bass and other game fish. Bad news, good news. The future of the goby population in Mullett Lake is uncertain.

