

Q&A Concerning ALGLB meetings

The following contains questions and answers concerning Austin Lake Governmental Lake Board Meetings scheduled for 3-27-17 and 4-17-17. These Q&A's were sent via Email from austinlakeriparians@gmail.com. If you wish to be on this Email list, please see "Contact Information" on the home page of our website (AustinLakePortage.com) to register.

Sent 3-22-17

Hello Riparians,

Since sending out the email notification about the upcoming ALGLB meetings, the Austin Lake Riparians Board has received comments and questions from a number of lake residents. Please see below. The Board's responses are shown, also below, in red. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to send an email to austinlakeriparians@gmail.com. All questions and comments are appreciated.

Received: Tue, Mar 21, 2017 at 11:18 AM - Why isn't this being put on a ballot, to be voted on by all the people that live on the lake? **Thank you for your question. This option was considered by the Board but was deemed to be impractical simply because the issue before the ALGLB – "Whether or not to continue the aeration project and, if to continue, with what, if any, modifications?" can't be answered with a Yes or No vote.**

There is also the question of, "How best to apportion the cost of the project?". There are too many options for apportionment to consider to realistically put this question to a vote.

Received: Tue, Mar 21, 2017 at 7:56 AM - Get our power back out of City hands, property tax went up 36 thousand that's bullxxxx. **Ouch – but a different issue.**

Received: Mon, Mar 20, 2017 at 8:01 PM - Please provide us with a comparison of the costs of continuing aeration and the cost to Austin Lake property owners of doing what West Lake riparians do to control weeds and the health of West Lake.

I also think this should Not go to Portage City Council April 17.

You should wait until other alternatives and costs can be researched and delivered to the Austin Lake riparians at the ALR annual meeting. Aeration may not be the most cost effective way to control weeds.

Many AL riparians are not back from Florida or elsewhere.

Is there some urgent reason to push this through before all riparians can be consulted?

I would appreciate a response to my concerns.

Thank you for your comments and questions. Aeration may or may not be the most cost effective way to control weeds in the south basin but it appears to be

effective in doing so. In addition, aeration does promote the growth of native plant species and is effective in reducing muck and levels of sediment ammonia and sediment nitrogen. Finally, aeration does not involve introducing chemical herbicides into the lake (which is the method being employed in West Lake). Taking these benefits into consideration, although it would be impossible to measure, aeration is likely a better “bang for our bucks” method of ensuring the health of Austin Lake than the use of chemical herbicides.

As the five-year contract with Lake Savers has come to an end the ALGLB must decide whether or not to continue the aeration project. This decision must be made soon so the project can either begin another full year or so Lake Savers can remove their equipment and employ it elsewhere.

The Austin Lake Riparian Board urges all riparians to contact their neighbors either at their homes or where they may be vacationing and ask them to provide their contact information at our website so they may be included in future email announcements and notifications. Additionally, we urge all riparians to provide comment and/or opinion to the ALGLB either in person at the upcoming meetings or via email or letter.

Please note that residents are welcome to volunteer and donate their time and talent to serve on the Austin Lake Board of Directors, board members are elected during the annual board meeting in June.

Sincerely,

Austin Lake Riparians Board

Sent 3-23-17

Below are additional comments/questions from riparians along with the board responses (in red) –

Thank you.

Received Tuesday, Mar 20, 2017: I don't think that is right to schedule an afternoon meeting to gather input from owners on a subject that could cause more financial hardships, when most people have to work at that time.

Why was that not taken onto consideration and an evening meeting scheduled for this one too, I almost get the feeling you don't want people's input. Please re consider and schedule this an evening meeting also. “The ALGLB set the meeting dates and times so we can't say why today's meeting was scheduled during working hours. That said, the ALGLB members are donating their valuable time for these meetings and it is our feeling they want to hear from as many of us as possible”.

Received Wed, Mar 22, 2017 at 6:27 PM: The cost of living on this lake continues to increase and I understand that the board needs to decide whether to continue or dis

continue the aeration project, as per the contract. Clearly the project hasn't had the reduction in muck in the south basin as expected, although it appears there may have been some immeasurable improvements in lake quality as a side benefit of the project. The proposal to continue means that the costs will be spread equally across all plots / properties, what is the proposed new cost to continue to aerate? **We believe the cost per riparian per year is estimated to be about \$250+/- . We hope to hear more on this at the upcoming ALGLB meetings.**

Given we have five years of experience and mixed data / results can or will the company give the board realistic measures going forward? **The consultant will continue to measure results as consistently and as accurately as possible and will provide analysis of measurements and data collected on a yearly basis. It is our hope we will see a continuation of the current trend toward muck reduction and that data collected during upcoming years will allow the consultant to predict future results. At this time it is unlikely, due to partially inconsistent past results, the consultant can offer a prediction of near future results.**

Received Wed, Mar 22, 2017 at 5:59 PM: We just bought our house on the East side of the lake. We support whatever we need to do to keep the lake clean and sandy bottoms. However, we need to be sure we are doing it in the absolute most cost effective manner. **Agreed.**

Last, I'd talk to Pfizer. This is their lake too. They may be willing to donate to the cause in the spirit of giving back to the community. **Good thought however Pfizer is not a riparian on the Lake. Pfizer only has an easement to discharge water into the Lake. That said, we will discuss making a request of Pfizer to participate in funding the aeration project at our next board meeting.**

We could also raise ramp fees for the public to use the lake. **Another good thought but unfortunately we have no control over the public boat launch. The ramp and use fees are controlled by the MDEQ.**

Good luck. Happy to help wherever I can. **Thank you.**

PS, my property tax bill went up significantly too. It's because My house is a second home and I get a nice 0.18 kicker from the city. Im guessing the person whose taxes are 36k is in the boat...no pun intended.

Wed, Mar 22, 2017 at 7:25 PM: Has the decision already been made? In the past the ALR board always did their homework, and investigated several alternatives. Have the ALR board done this? if so, please share your work. **No decision has been made. The ALGLB will be discussing the aeration results of the last five years and taking public comment at their next two scheduled meetings – before making any decisions.**

Are you planning on moving aerators so the entire lake will have the benefit of what you are proposing everyone pay for? **We are not aware of any plan to move aerators. We believe the entire lake is benefiting from the south basin aeration project.**

We would appreciate a response.

Received Wed, Mar 22, 2017 at 7:52 PM: I do not wish to use the methods from West Lake. There has been significant health risks there & I prefer a more natural way - if anything. The current method works for me. Thank you for your time and efforts ALGLB! **Thank you for your comments. We share your desire to avoid the use of chemical herbicides.**

Received Wed, Mar 22, 2017 at 10:35 PM: I strongly support continuing the aeration project. The studies support continuing and my own observations are consistent with the positive effects. Appreciate the work and leadership the lake board has provided on this matter. **Thank you for your comments.**

Reminder! First meeting today March 23rd from 1-3 pm at Portage City Hall conference room 2 - Meeting Purpose: Receive and ask preliminary questions for an Austin Lake Riparian Association Board recommendation to continue/alter an aeration/bioaugmentation assessment district

Thank you!

Austin Lake Riparians Board

Sent 3-28-17

Received: Thu, Mar 23, 2017 at 11:32 AM - Thank you for involving everyone in the discussion process. I believe that the impact on lake weeds has been very noticeable. I realize this was not the intent of the program 5 years ago, but has been a benefit that probably has had significant impact on lake quality and, thus, home values. I also believe that if we stop now we run the risk of losing that benefit which we have received unless we go to the West Lake solution, of which I am not in favor. It is unfortunate that due to the many variables, the impact to silt is difficult to measure, but do believe that we should continue the aeration and will have 5 years' worth of data with which to compare in the future. It is encouraging, based on the Q&A, that fees for the south side of the lake may be lower than before. Regardless, as long as no increase of fees is planned, I think the benefits to aeration have been borne out and hope the program continues. Thank You. **Thank you for your comments.**

Received: Thu, Mar 23, 2017 at 11:12 AM - Dear Austin Lake, In the discussions about sediment depths, has anyone considered the effect for the 4.2 magnitude earthquake in early May 2015? It shook my house and my hill down to the shore was slightly re-shaped. This quake probably liquefied the sediment and allowed it to flow into the south bay. **Interesting point. Thank you for bringing this up. There has been some discussion on this but unfortunately there is no way to measure what impact, if any, the earthquake may have had on muck levels in the south basin. Still, food for thought.**

Received: Thu, Mar 23, 2017 at 4:46 PM - To ALR Board: We feel the best course of action is to survey the all the property lake owners to see whether the majority support continuation of the aeration in the south basin with all costs being divided equally. **Thank you for your comment. We don't believe this is feasible at this time.**

Received: Thu, Mar 23, 2017 at 5:21 PM - Austin Lake Riparians, We have lived in the south basin of Austin Lake for over 25 years. I have to say the lake quality has never been better and we attribute it to the aeration project! We see less muck, no smells and clearer water quality!! A big value to our property for a very small cost. Since the south basin residents financially support this initiative, I'm confused on why residents that don't live in the south basin have a voice (they have kicked and screamed on any small investment to improve the lake quality and ignore the big positive to their property values). If they can't afford \$20 bucks a month to improve our lake, maybe they should move or stay in Florida! We support the aeration project and the ALGLB hard

work. Thank you for your comments. The riparians living outside of the south basin have provided financial support for the aeration project in the amount of \$80/year/riparian each of the five years the project has been underway. Our recommendation to the ALGLB is to apportion the cost of the project equally among all riparians on the lake. For these reasons and because all riparians have an interest in the health of the lake, they should and do have a say.

Sent 3/31/17

Below are additional comments and questions from riparians along with responses in red. Due to vacations, responses to comments and questions received during the week of April 3rd will be sent out during the week of April 10th.

In addition, please be aware - There will be a 7pm, May 10th ALGLB meeting in Portage Council Chambers. The purpose is to decide, based on the results of the April 17th Public Hearing, what the ALGLB proposal will be for scope and assessment of the Austin Lake Project going forward.

Received: Fri, Mar 24, 2017 at 1:04 PM - Let me go on record: The Aeration Project in Austin Lake's south cove has not improved my property values one bit. You can confirm this by asking realtors who have handled properties on Austin Lake outside the south cove. If you are trying to claim an improvement in my property value, which it appears that you are, please show me your proof. On the other hand, aeration appears to have improved the recreational use of the south cove, as a side benefit of its original muck reduction purpose. I am happy for those of you that live on the south cove and use it for recreational purposes and I'm happy for those of you on the cove that have enjoyed olfactory benefits. But when push comes to shove, however, the benefit to me is minimal at best and has had no effect on my property value one way or the other. I would be more inclined to support continuing the aeration project, if you could show any measurable benefit to those living outside the south cove. The Austin Lake Riparian Board, at one time, represented all the lake property owners; now apparently mostly just cove property owners who stand to benefit financially from your GLB recommendation. The whole Riparian Board recommendation appears to have been deliberately withheld to the last minute so those outside the cove couldn't research the issue, or wouldn't be aware of it in time, to respond. You can be sure that I will continue to do what I can to see how other property owners feel and will research statements made at the GLB hearing on the 23rd. that I believe to be wrong. Please add my e-mail address to your Austin Lake list. Thank you for your comments. The Board's recommendation letter was completed on March 5th, was sent to the ALGLB on March 6th. When the dates of the ALGLB meetings were made known to us on March 18th, the letter and meeting dates were posted to the Austinlakeriparians.com website on March

19th and were emailed to lake residents on March 20th. We look forward to your comments at the hearing. We'll add your e-mail address to the Austin Lake list.

Received: Tue, Mar 28, 2017 at 5:57 PM - I have a hard time believing that a financial decision about something that has not achieved its purpose as described, five years ago, is being pushed through for the immeasurable purpose of reducing weeds! No success has been measured nor seen to the tune of \$5,000,000! I love the Emperor's new clothes! **Although the project has not produced the level of muck reduction hoped for it has shown a reduction of muck in four of the five years it has been in operation. This, along with the unexpected benefits such as decreased weeds, increased native plants and reduced ammonia are the reasons we have recommended the ALGLB consider continuing the project. We assume you meant to say \$500,000 rather than \$5 million.**

Received: Tue, Mar 28, 2017 at 10:09 AM - The only question I have is: Are we confident that ALL aerators are "running" as expected? Just seems that when I've trolled the South Basin, I never noticed the entire system running. Do we have some sections that run very seldom? How do we monitor? Thanks. **A representative from Lake Savers will be attending the April 17th public hearing and this is a good question for them to answer. We have heard that when notified of a problem with aerators in the past, Lake Savers has been quick to respond and resolve.**

Received: Wed, Mar 29, 2017 at 9:04 AM

1. It was stated at the meeting that the entire lake had benefited from the aeration project, although samples were only taken in the bay area. It further states that currently it is believed that there is much sediment and matter diffusing out into the larger portion of the lake. Without a control sample taken at the same time as the original samples in the bay, how is a comparison being made and this statement validated? **We believe what is good for the south basin is good for the entire lake. What is the source of the statement about "sediment and matter diffusing out into the larger portion of the lake?"**

2. A main positive impact cited was the increase in property value for lake properties. Has this increase been compared to the property values of other area lakes, and is this increase greater than on other area lakes? Is this data available and summarized? **This statement is based on the logic that improved lake health improves lake property values.**

3. How has the time of year and lake level affected the various tested levels of nitrogen and other elements that have been measured? Taking samples this spring with the abundance of rain would certainly dilute these levels due to the concentration/amount of water in the lake? **This question would best be answered by the representative from Restorative Lake Sciences who will be attending the April 17th public hearing.**

4. The clarity of the water has been cited as a result of this project, however, the presence of populations by zebra and quagga mussels, an invasive species brought into the lake from boats not being adequately cleaned will also affect the clarity of the water. Since zebra/quagga mussels consume particles in the water, they then deposit feces on lake floor. Non-food particles mix with mucus and are added to this layer known as pseudofeces. This causes increased clarity of the surface, however, the increased sunlight allows for more lower level plant growth, that will eventually die and increase the presence of 'muck'. **Another topic for Restorative Lake Sciences to comment on.**

5. At this meeting, significant concerns were raised about the increased underwater plants but it was noted that this is a different problem altogether. Could it be that we are addressing the problem by moving the sediment around and bypassing a significant interrelated cause? **Another topic for Restorative Lake Sciences to comment on.**

Thank you for listening to my concerns.

Received: Wed, Mar 29, 2017 at 2:45 PM - I thought if you decided to continue this project, it would be in the whole lake, not just the south basin. If I have to bear an even amount of the cost, what about the muck in front of my house? **We believe results from additional years of aeration and testing in the south basin are needed before considering a recommendation or request to expand the project beyond the south basin.**

Sent 4/13/17

Below are comments and questions from riparians received since April 1st. Our responses are in red.

In addition, please be aware the April 17th ALGLB meeting has been moved to 7pm, May 10th at Portage City Hall in Portage Council Chambers. The purpose is to review the completed 5-year aeration/bioaugmentation project results, estimate the cost and determine the practicability of continuing the project. The board shall determine the practicability of the project within 10 days after the hearing unless it is determined at the hearing that more information is needed before

the determination can be made. Immediately upon receipt of the additional information the board shall make its determination.

Received April 1, 2017: We have been on your email list from the start, and appreciate your efforts to communicate these issues - including the in-process Q and A, which has been very useful and enlightening. Recognizing that you have the unenviable task of trying to create a consensus plan for moving forward, we have a few more questions/comments.

If the new proposal will be to assess all riparians equally, does that mean that the "southenders" will have lower bills going forward, or is the total funding going up? **The "southenders" will pay less than they have over the past five years. Please see the preliminary budget posted at www.austinlakeportage.com.**

As "eastenders," We have to say that we have not seen any change to our lake bottom, except for possibly MORE debris (not muck, but organic particles on the sand). Is there any evidence to support or refute the contention that the last five years have seen a greater distribution of organic materials around the lake? We plan to ask this at the April 17 meeting, as we have heard it claimed that collection of organics at the south end of the lake began when construction stopped the sloughing into the neighboring swamp, and that the aeration seems to be bringing a lot of organic matter into suspension. We have heard a lot of theories about this lake (including that it has remained basically the same through periods of action and inaction), so it would be good if the evidence from the last five years could be used to justify or debunk them with science. **These are good questions for discussion. Please do present them at the public hearing scheduled for 7:00pm on May 10th at Portage City Hall in Council Chambers.**

One more thing - we were told that the recent pumping station work on Zylman Road would NOT be impacting Austin Lake, but the water level in the swamps on both sides of the road have changed dramatically during the construction - can anything be evaluated to determine if this has had any effect on our lake quality? **Not known. You would need to pose this question to the City of Portage engineering department as this project is unrelated to the work of the ALGLB aeration project.**

Received Sun 4/2/2017: Is there still a meeting scheduled for April 17th and if there is, specifically where, what time and what is to be discussed and acted upon? I assume, and would appreciate your confirmation, that the May 10th meeting is the only ALGLB meeting scheduled and that the May 10th meeting is simply a postponement of the April 17th meeting; done to accommodate the Drain commissioner's schedule. **The public hearing has been moved back from April 17th to 7:00 pm on May 10th at Portage City Hall in Council Chambers.**

Received April 5, 2017: Out of curiosity, has the lake board ever considered dredging to make a huge difference up front and then aeration to maintain? Have they ever looked at the cost to dredge and if so, what was it? **Yes. Dredging has been looked into within the last few decades. We haven't, for purposes of this response, researched details concerning past dredging cost estimates but recall the cost and liability were prohibitive. The sediment would need to be spread over an inland area to dry out. This area and areas exposed to runoff during the drying period could become contaminated and the riparians could be held responsible for cleanup. In addition, this material would likely need to be capped or transported to a waste facility. Paying for this would be very expensive.**

Received April 6, 2017: I have read your recommendations as well as many others comments and questions concerning the aeration project.

#1 recommendation to continue aeration for reduction of muck.

The project stated that after 3 years of aeration this would be judged as a FAILURE if there was less than 24 inches of muck reduction, SUCCESS if there was more than 30 inches of reduction and between 24-30 inch reduction as borderline. Despite the reduction of less than 24 inches at three years it was decided to continue for another 2 years. Now after 5 years by your original definition it is still a failure but you have recommended a continuation. You have theorized that the excess rainfall and intense or massive storms caused muck to shift from the rest of the lake. (Although I do not remember 2015 as being the year of massive storms.) You have recommended Control sites outside of the south basin to gauge effectiveness. This concern was raised by Larry Pio at the Riparian board meeting on 5-12-2014 and nothing was done at that time. We have just spent \$500,000 + over a 5 year period for something that did not work and you are recommending to spend another \$500,000+ (\$1,155+ per property owner) over the next 5 years because you feel it will probably work.

#2 recommendation to continue aeration because of eradication of Eurasian Watermilfoil and the prevention or prolong the need to use chemical herbicides.

There is no proof that aeration or decrease of ammonia is the cause of this eradication. In researching how to control Asian Watermilfoil the websites of 6 States and Ontario, Canada only mention using herbicides, mechanical removal or possibly using grass carp and Milfoil weevil for control. Only the Clean Flo website (our aeration company) recommends using aeration and Bio augmentation as a means to reduce watermilfoil. We do not have any other control sites around the lake to see if this is happening just in the South Basin or possibly through out the whole lake or any objective evidence to support this theory.

In closing the old adage comes to mind "Don't p__ on my leg and tell me it's raining"

All good topics for discussion. Your comments, as well as all other comments received, have been forwarded to the members of the ALGLB. Please bring your comments and questions to the May 10th meeting.