

1. The 9 Merganser broods captured and relocated by SICON contained a total of 79 ducklings (equating to about 9 ducklings for each female). How did Northpoint's killing of only 8 pregnant female Mergansers eliminate 200 Mergansers as you claimed in your September Editorial in the Houghton Lake Resorter?

First I would like to correct an error on the part of the questioner, the term pregnant female merganser is incorrect. The term pregnant means having an embryo or fetus within the body, the correct term is a reproductive/ovulating merganser as the egg is external of the female during its incubation and development..

a. Could you please explain your math?

The removal of eight (8) ovulating/reproductive female Common mergansers females (8 females X 9 ducklings per female = 72 ducklings) and 17 other mergansers, some of which could have become reproductive later in the breeding season is $80 + 17(+) = 97(+)$ individuals. In addition Northpoint's harassment efforts removed numerous birds from potential nesting, loafing, and resting on Higgins Lake. Counts ranged from 0 birds to 89 birds per day with an average of 18.32 ducks per day scared off the lake during the 45 day harassment period. This equals an estimated 824.4 mergansers harassed off the lake or legally taken. So the lethal take which was 25 plus the estimated brood from reproductive females taken from the lake was 72 plus the estimated harassment birds which was 824.5 equals 921.5 common mergansers affected. The 8 reproductive females were reported in SICON's necropsy data. Estimated ducklings came from SICON data of 9 duckling's average per brood. The daily merganser records came from Northpoint's data of an average of reported ducks per day over the 45 day period. These numbers are derived from recorded data taken from the 2015 lethal harvest, harassment, and SICON's translocation programs.

b. And how do you know that all 8 female mergansers you shot would have stayed on Higgins and that they weren't just flying through?

Harassment efforts began on April 8, 2015. First lethal harvest began on April 30. Daily Common merganser counts indicated a drop in numbers and Northpoint believed that the migration was over and birds remaining were resident birds that intended to stay on Higgins Lake. Also, the females were carrying eggs and listed as breeding by SICON on their necropsy data sheet. Therefore I take this information from SICON in their necropsy data sheet as breeding and they were on the lake. If the females were carrying eggs or reproducing they would have found a nest beforehand and that would have had to be on Higgins Lake. It is very doubtful that a female in the process of laying eggs would be transient or leave its nest to "visit" Higgins Lake.

2. Why have you consistently opposed a combined and jointly funded SI effort including both SICON and Northpoint, with SICON leading with its proven effective trap and relocation and nest sealing program followed by Northpoint's harassment and killing program after SICON is done in July?

I am not the ones opposed to a joint effort, I firmly believe in a comprehensive management plan that includes spring harassment and lethal take that greatly reduces the merganser population on the lake and its loafing, resting, and breeding potential. Followed by trapping of the few remaining ducklings that are produced on the lake. Also as stated in a scientific paper from Hope College (Harvey Blankespoor's name is not on it) miracidia survive at 4 degrees C and can infect snails at that temp. I think this is another really compelling reason for early season harassment.

Higgins Lake Swimmers Itch group and Higgins Lake Property Owners Association are sponsoring the SICON duckling trapping component of the program. The Higgins Lake Foundation funded the Gerrish/Northpoint harassment and lethal take component of the program.

I do not believe the nest sealing component of this program to be a valid or cost effective action period. There is no scientific data which supports this theory to date. This will be supported in following questions

3. Wouldn't the above described combined program offer the greatest opportunity to reduce SI on Higgins Lake?

No. I feel the best comprehensive program to reduce swimmers itch on Higgins Lake is to conduct a spring harassment/lethal harvest to reduce resting and loafing time of infected common mergansers and to reduce the breeding population and subsequent brood production of Common mergansers on Higgins Lake. The final action is to remove what few broods are actually produced on the lake by trapping. Searching out and sealing a few nesting holes, if it is possible, will have no impact on swimmers itch in the lake and I believe this is not a valid/cost effective management option. This is a timeline and dates of Blankespoor's comments about swimmers itch harassment policy, can you explain why in 2014 SICON and its staff did a flip-flop on their previous statements? [1995 Fall HLF News](#) - During his [Dr. Blankespoor's] visits to Higgins Lake in 1995, a training session for local volunteer harassment patrols was held.... Their effective use of shotguns to fire scare shells reduced the total hatch to only one identified brood of birds, which was removed.... [1995 Winter Waterlines](#) - ...Should financing be available, Dr. Blankespoor will train volunteer duck harassment patrols to capture, inoculate and remove common merganser broods on Higgins Lake this spring. We appreciate the good work of our volunteers in bird identification and on scare patrols last year. Volunteer boat patrols and shore volunteer observers are needed [this spring2001-05-31](#) (Resorter) Shotgun fire on Higgins designed to frighten itch-spreading ducks As in past years, volunteers are attempting to stem the spread of swimmer's itch in Higgins Lake by harassing merganser ducks, primary carriers of the parasite that causes the disease. Higgins Lake Advisory Committee spokesman Edward B. "Ned" Wickes said the public should not be alarmed by shotgun fire on the lake, as the volunteer team, which has a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit, attempts to frighten the mergansers away. [2009 Reducing Merganser Broods on Great Pond \[Maine\] to Manage Swimmer's Itch](#) USDA: Harassment remains a potential solution to reduce adult non-breeding bird's (sic) use of the lake. [856] References cited in this Paper: [856] Reducing Merganser Broods on Great Pond (Maine) to Manage Swimmer's Itch.

<http://belgradelakesassociation.org/Portals/0/PDFs/Resources%20Water%20Quality/Great%20Pnd%20Report%20final.pdf> Recent Publications [2014-10-20 Interim Progress Report on SI Effort](#) - Vondale - (Pre-HLSIO): 6) Targeting Fly In Ducks; While less defined and much harder to do at the present time,

various removal, hunting and harassment methods have been used and are being developed to deal with the problem of fly in ducks. It will be a key element of the program. [942] 2014-11 HLSIO Swimmer's Itch Program: C) Harassment of Mergansers: Higgins Lake began a program this spring [2014] to keep mergansers off the lake... Other lakes have used harassment tactics for many years and we will learn from those lakes to make our program even more effective. From 1995-2014 you were for the use of harassment that is a 19 year trend then you FLIP_FLOP:2015-03-18 Eric e-mail: SI - It's Time to Act 1. As we all know, harassment programs have not worked and will not work and killing a few ducks this year will not work. 2015-04-09 Resorter - Letter to the editor - Eric: Let Leadership 'Know how you Feel': Gerrish has obtained permits to kill 25 mergansers, locate nests and harass mergansers from April 1 to May 22. That is it. The rest of the summer they won't be able to do anything else. Their program isn't based on science, just wishful thinking. NOTE: Of the seven Actions proposed by Northpoint, only Action 1 was funded for 2015. The proposal reads as follows: Action 1. Goal (1) Reduce the common merganser population and assess other resident waterfowl on Higgins Lake Goal: Reduce the resident population of common mergansers COMMENT: There is no mention of 'locating nests' in Action 1 Goal 2015-04-11 Eric e-mail: SI Update-The Problem with Two SI Programs: 1. The Gerrish/Northpoint program is a "kill and harass" program and will only operate until May 22, and is limited to killing 25 mergansers.... Furthermore, harassment hasn't worked at all the last 3 years (it has only been implemented for 2)....The harassment program has been a failure the last 3 years 2(it has only been implemented for 2). To make matters worse, the Northpoint program will be harassing mergansers from Gerrish to Lyon while Lyon won't be participating in harassment. The downside is that harassing during the April 1 through May 22, period will make it more difficult for the SICON group to capture and relocate mergansers as SICON has permits to remove and relocate 150 mergansers per year, amongst many other activities SI reduction efforts throughout most of the summer including the inoculation of an unlimited number of mergansers (if there are no broods to relocate we have done our job. We are not in the business of supporting more untried theories). The harassment program has been a failure the last 3 years (it has only been implemented for 2) and killing 25 mergansers will do little. 2015-04-16 Eric E-mail - Does Tom Kizer really want to reduce SI or does he want something else? Of course Gerrish and Mr. Homola want to try to address the SI issue. The problem is that they have tried to the last three years with no results (it has only been implemented for 2). It's time for them to turn this over to professionals and they didn't. They turned it over to amateurs. (Over 35 years as a fisheries biologist and a wildlife biologist in conjunction of cormorant control for the entire state of Michigan is not considered armature when it is not research that is needed but animal control tactics) The only difference between what Gerrish has done the past 3 years (it has only been implemented for 2) and the new program is that they can now shoot 25 mergansers before May 22nd and none thereafter. Unfortunately, there are between 350 and 400 mergansers on Higgins. Harassment hasn't worked and it won't work now. It's a loser. 2015-04-30 Resorter - Both SI Plans Presented to ACT NOW: He [Curt] added that harassment tactics have "not been proven" to work. (Isn't this counterproductive? The only difference is that SICON is not doing the harassment so it is deemed a failure)

4. Isn't it counterproductive having two overlapping programs operating at the same time leaving the lake unprotected from July 31 to hunting season in October?

I don't feel the two current programs are counterproductive or overlapping. I feel they are operating separately and congruently and have the greatest chance of success. As stated earlier a comprehensive program includes keeping all infected individuals off the lake which starts at ice out. SICON has identified through necropsy results that adults and sub adults are infected and actions remove these birds from the lake need to be initiated before brood production occurs. If additional birds are identified after translocation is completed, additional effort can address this but at this time, there is no proof that these additional birds are of a concern.

a. Wouldn't it be better to work together by having two complimentary programs running from early spring through fall hunting season? In other words, wouldn't it make more sense to have merganser removal coverage throughout the whole summer instead of just half the summer?

The current programs are complimentary as they are operating separately and congruently. As stated earlier a comprehensive program includes keeping all infected individuals off the lake which starts at ice out. SICON has identified through necropsy results adults and sub adults are infected and a program needs to be initiated before brood production. Currently the only thing that is not being conducted is the fall harassment and we have not been able to document that Common mergansers are present. If a problem is identified in the latter part of summer a plan can be constructed to deal with it.

5. How is the killing of 23 Mergansers by Northpoint "permanent", "effective" or even "temporary" when the experience from this past summer showed that

a. 24 adult Mergansers were counted on the lake the day after Northpoint fisheries stopped their shooting.

Correction, there were 25 common mergansers lethally taken from Higgins lake. Unfortunately opponents to the Gerrish/Northpoint harassment efforts are unfairly using Northpoint's cooperation with Lyon Township in an adversarial way. In the spirit of cooperation Northpoint agreed to not conduct any harassment or lethal take in Lyon Townships jurisdiction as requested by Lyon Township/SICON. This single action by Gerrish/Northpoint compromised the effectiveness of the harassment effort by providing a significant area of refuge for common mergansers to loaf, and reproduce on Higgins Lake which continues the parasitic cycle. It is very unprofessional and unfortunate that those who requested this significant compromise to Gerrish/Northpoint harassment effort now tout this effort as failed because 24 mergansers were counted on the lake the day after harassment completion and that eight broods were reproduced.

As stated by Northpoint, harassment and duckling trapping are both only a temporary/band aid solution to a larger problem. Future efforts needs to look at addressing the problems associated with nutrient overload and why the snail population is increasing. Relocating 88 ducklings will not change the problem nor will harassment. It is commonly known about the swimmers itch parasitic cycle, but little if anything conclusive has ever been factually or scientifically recorded as a solution to the swimmers itch parasite. Current action only have the potential to reduce but not eradicated SI. I believe the long term solution to SI rests in addressing the lake water quality. I believe the lake suffers harm from increased

loads of nutrients, including phosphorus and nitrogen, from septic systems, lawn fertilizers, and runoff from roads. Lake water quality improvements will lead to the long term solution.

b. And, 9 broods that included 79 ducklings were removed from Higgins Lake and relocated when those ducklings would have spent the summer with an infection rate scientifically proven to be ten times higher than the adult mergansers Northpoint shot.

Higgins Lake SI cycle did not begin with ducklings, but with adult ducks bringing the parasite into the lake. I feel the claim of 10 times the infection rate is an exaggeration of the actual situation. Statistics can be used to manipulate any story. Scientific fact must be reproducible or corroborated with a control group and have all aspects of the theory taken into account. Duckling size is also a factor as ducklings may produce a more concentrated parasitic egg feces but the amount of feces a duckling produces compared to a juvenile or adult duck is much less. Throwing around the words "scientifically proven" may not mean it is a fact unless it has weathered the scientific community's thorough examination and acceptance of said hypothesis.

c. And, that not one nest was removed by Northpoint which means that all the natural nesting sites are still available this next year for use by Merganser females,

Northpoint does not believe that nesting cavities are limiting the reproductive potential of Common mergansers on Higgins Lake. Although plugging nest holes sounds like a good method of removing nesting ducks, common sense says this is very impractical. I estimate there are over 20,000 acres of forested nesting habitat within a mile of the shores of Higgins Lake. A conservative estimate of one nest cavity per 40 acres produces 500 potential nest cavities around Higgins Lake. As this forested landscape continues to mature additional nest cavities will be formed each and every year into the future. The thought of plugging 8, 10, or 50 cavities per year at best is miniscule and will have no effect on the brood production.

d. And, the Northpoint Fisheries shooting program conducted before rather than after their Program prevented SICON from "permanently" sealing their nests,

Again as stated above I feel the only potential for reducing the breeding production on Higgins Lake includes harassment, lethal take, and the removal of ducklings. Sealing cavities is not an effective control measure.

e. And, that thousands if not tens of thousands of Mergansers (which normally live over 12 years) Still continue to call Michigan home.

This appears to be a statement not a question.

f. How does killing 23 mergansers even begin to start to eliminate more Mergansers from coming to Higgins since the mergansers you shot were simply replaced by other mergansers?

The lethal component is also important to support the harassment effort which eliminates or reduces migrant or resident common mergansers from loafing, resting, and breeding on the lake. Other harassment activities that were conducted on other lakes in subsequent years have shown diminished numbers of birds after the initiation of harassment/lethal take. I expect the same results for Higgins Lake if the entire lake is addressed and sanctuaries for loafing and breeding birds are not allowed to exist. To restate, if I do not leave sanctuaries will this work.

6. Doesn't your so called "low cost" program using Northpoint Fisheries end up costing the Higgins Lake community far more because we will not be able to shift to a low cost maintenance program after the 3 year SICON program because all the unsealed Merganser nests will still be available for use?

I do not agree that Northpoint's program is low cost, rather it is cost effective. As it stands now, Northpoint's program can be considered a maintenance program. Again I feel sealing of merganser nesting sites in tree cavities is ineffective in controlling the population on Higgins Lake. For example using this year's information only 9 broods were produced on the lake according to SICON data. If they were successful at finding 100% of the nest cavities it would only account for 9 nesting cavities being "plugged" when there are 100's of potential nesting cavities available. Add in the fact that in future years many new cavities are formed. Common sense dictates this management action of sealing nest cavities will have no impact on the merganser population on Higgins Lake.

7. Wouldn't the community get behind and financially support one unified program much more as opposed to having two programs that are confusing to the average person?

First I don't feel the two programs are conflicting or confusing to the average person. Gerrish/ Northpoint's program is to harass and legally take mergansers from ice out until May 22. This action reduces the time that loafing, resting, and breeding mergansers are on the lake defecating parasites eggs which contribute to swimmers itch. If this action is conducted over the entire lake the breeding population will also be greatly reduced as will the potential for common merganser broods to be on the lake. The duckling trapping component comes into play to remove the few remaining broods after the harassment effort. The Gerrish/ Northpoint plan also includes long term goals of improving the water quality to reduce the swimmers itch potential.

8. You deny that Northpoint shot and turned over two Red Breasted Mergansers to SICON and even stated that SICON lied about that, however in the brochure you produced you describe a Red Breasted Merganser as a Common Merganser. If you can't even tell the difference between a Red Breasted Merganser and a Common Merganser from a photograph which there was plenty of time to review; how can you tell the difference between them in the wild and on the fly? And, since it was pointed out to you in your brochure where you described a Red Breasted Mergansers as a Common Merganser, will you now apologize to the folks from SICON for accusing them of planting the Red Breasted Mergansers?

No, no one accused the "folks from SICON" of planting the Red Breasted Mergansers. Northpoint unequivocally states that red breasted mergansers were not part of the take, they did not shoot any Red

Breasted Mergansers period. Complaints were filed by Curtis Blankespoor to Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources Law division, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. MDNR law division conducted an investigation and determined that no legal actions were validated or warranted. As for the brochure, it was not created by me, but by the Higgins Lake Environmental and Economic Coalition and reviewed by MDNR wildlife staff.

9. Where did the idea of erecting Merganser nest boxes come from, who thought it up and what is the reasoning behind them?

The idea of the Merganser nest boxes and the plans came from the Cornell University Department of Ornithology and were to be used as easy egg collection devices. Gerrish harassment permit allows for the destruction of 25 common merganser nests. The plan was to deploy up to 25 nest boxes/ egg collection devices. If the harassment effort is conducted over the entire lake it is highly unlikely that any of these nest boxes or any other nesting sites will be used.

10' won't your Merganser nest boxes continue to attract Mergansers and encourage them to return to Higgins Lake at a higher rate?

No, because the nest boxes will be managed in conjunction with the harassment effort. If any hens do utilize the boxes these nests will be destroyed. There is no risk of any ducklings being produced from these nest boxes/egg collecting devices.

11. Isn't SICON's trap and removal program where Merganser ducklings imprint on other lakes with most not returning to Higgins Lake, and their nest sealing program that eliminates the ability for Mergansers to produce broods on Higgins Lake the only proven "effective" and "permanent" actions that will lead us to a low cost maintenance program in 3 years?

I do not agree with this statement as there is no scientific evidence or study to show when or where the imprinting occurs. And to my knowledge, SICON has not banded or studied translocated Common merganser ducklings to add to this knowledge base of how many of the ducks return. I do not know if imprinting begins after several weeks or on the day of hatching. I don't believe there is enough science to support the claim that imprinting begins on the translocation lake. With regard to three years down the road I believe our action plan is currently in a cost effective maintenance program and the only long term action will be to plan and implement nutrient loading reductions for Higgins Lake. Evaluation of management action success is the only component I have not been able to implement and it is a needed component to a comprehensive action plan.

12. How will killing 25 Mergansers and chasing Mergansers around Higgins Lake which they are biologically driven to breed, and setting up Merganser hotels to attract more Mergansers to breed going to solve Higgins Lake's SI problem?

Harassment and limited lethal take as well as destruction of merganser nests are all part of a comprehensive Swimmers itch action plan. All life stages of the common merganser have the potential

to contribute to the swimmers itch problem in Higgins Lake. Harassment supported with limited lethal harvest and supported with the collection and destruction of eggs will reduce or nearly eliminate the brood production on Higgins Lake. All of these actions will reduce the presence of and time spent on Higgins Lakes by migrant adults sub adults and juveniles on Higgins Lake for the entirety of the season. These combined efforts have the greatest potential to reduce the incidence of swimmers itch on Higgins Lake. The long term solution lies with reduction of nutrient load.

13. If the Gerrish/Homola program was the only program this past summer on Higgins Lake which left 23 adult Mergansers and 79 ducklings that would have spent the summer on the lake along with the continued availability of all the Merganser natural nests around the lake, with an additional 20 >Merganser hotels you set up encourage Mergansers to return next spring; how would you consider your program "permanent" and "effective" and how would you feel about swimming in Higgins Lake next summer?

If the Gerrish /Northpoint program was the only program on Higgins Lake, harassment and lethal harvest would have occurred over the entire lake, reducing the time transient adult/sub adult common merganser spent on the lake which reduces the defecation of SI eggs into the lake and reducing breeding activities/brood production down to about 3 or 4 broods. In addition Gerrish would seek amendment to their USFWS harassment permit to include duckling trapping and removal. This would allow Gerrish to select a contractor to remove remaining brood production. I have never considered this program permanent yet I have considered it effective. As stated it would reduce the occurrence of swimmers itch in Higgins Lake next summer. The only permanent action is to decrease the nutrient load to the lake environment reducing the snail population.

14, How do you justify a program that is intended to eliminate Mergansers from Higgins Lake that has erected Merganser nesting sites to attract them?

There are currently hundreds of nest sites surrounding Higgins Lake. Adding another 20-25 will not attract any more common mergansers to the lake. Again these boxes will not have any effect on the increase of birds wanting to nest on the lake. If common mergansers do decide to utilize these nest boxes the eggs and nests will be destroyed

15. If your child 'is allergic to bees would you set up bee hives around your cottage so you could attract, capture and kill all the bees?

Really???? Bee hives are not in our proposal and I do not know of any person who is allergic to common mergansers. We are not proposing to set up bee hives around Higgins lake and our actions will greatly reduce the merganser population on Higgins Lake and cost effectively reduce the occurrence of swimmers itch on Higgins Lake. Perhaps a better analogy is if one set a nesting box next to a cabin and harassed it with pyrotechnics etc. and the ducks wouldn't use it the following year.

16. Aren't you concerned about creating and encouraging a "kill all the ducks" vigilante mentality that primarily focuses on killing pregnant female Mergansers on Higgins Lake?

Again mergansers do not have live birth, they are not considered pregnant but reproducing or ovulating. Vigilante mentalities are formed by people who are frustrated when they see little or no relief in the future. Gerrish/Northpoint is conducting a cost effective program to minimize the potential for swimmers itch on Higgins Lake through harassment and lethal take of common mergansers under a permit issued by MDNR and USFWS. Dr. Harvey Blankespoor painted the bull's eye on the merganser as

the target species when he identified them as the definitive host of the swimmers itch parasite. Based on that Northpoint/Gerrish is certainly not the responsible party.

a. And, how is that consistent with the purposes of the various Associations and Foundations in the Higgins Lake community when there is a far more humane, effective and permanent

solution offered by SICON?

Along with many wildlife professionals I do not believe translocation of common merganser ducklings is a humane, effective, and permanent solution to swimmers itch. There are numerous literature and correspondences over the outcome of these translocated ducklings. Translocation stress, Interspecies conflict, starvation, predation, and disease reek inhumane havoc on these translocated ducklings. I feel it is very inappropriate to use the term humane with translocation. Studies have shown mortality rates are extremely high in many cases death is delayed or prolonged for these unfortunate translocated ducklings.

a.And, is the lower cost that you claim is the driving force behind your decisions justified?

The Northpoint program is far from low cost but it is cost effective, our justification for considering this program is its cost effectiveness.

c. And, shouldn't "killing" be done after the SICON program has been completed and all available efforts have been made to conduct a humane, effective and sustainable effort?

I feel this question has been answered adequately above, but I will add that if a fall program is needed in addition to the spring harassment and duckling trapping, I will consider this as an addition if needed and justified.

d.And, isn't that consistent with the purposes of those that are supporting you financially?

If given all the information of both programs and the tested reliability of each program as well as the proven scientific results I believe that the informed resident would rather go with the Northpoint proposal. The Higgins Lake foundation received our application, it was reviewed and accepted therefore validating our plan of action.

17. Why did you join, and then quit the HLSIO board in January of this year, after it had shared with you all of the details of its comprehensive science-based program using a team of professionals with experience in SI research and control, to first propose a harassment and killing contract with Berg Animal Control that cost more than \$5000 and that you knew conflicted with the HLSIO program and then, when that wasn't approved by the SI Task Force, have Gerrish Township on its own hire Northpoint Fisheries to conduct a conflicting program with no SI research or control experience? Was it only a matter of the lower cost?

This question is designed to make my arrangements look clandestine. They are not and were not. These accusations are just a bullying tactic to force everyone to back down to your wishes. Northpoint has more wildlife control experience than you give it credit. Mr. Sendek worked for more than 35yrs as a

biologist for the state of Michigan networking with law enforcement wildlife and environmental professionals. You state he has no experience with Common Mergansers when he was a coordinator for the cormorant control program for the state of Michigan, not just a local lake. The cormorant is another diving bird quite similar to the merganser. He also has considerable experience in dealing with nuisance animal populations throughout the area. With that he has the ability and the network to acquire staff with specializations in whatever field is needed. While SICON can boast its experience in research it does not compare to the experience of a field biologist. The solution to the swimmers itch problem is greater than whom or what business discovered the parasite and its life cycle. The issue at hand relates to wildlife management and biological strategies that are well beyond research and data collection. If it were as simple as discovering the parasite and its life cycle swimmers itch would have been cured 12 years ago. Now is the time to bring in nuisance animal control specialists and environmental remediation strategies that get to the root of the problem. The Northpoint professionals have diverse experiences in handling unique situations which gives them a broader perspective to devise and implement strategies and action plans to manage and control swimmer itch.

18. Your program only removed 25 mergansers and Sicon removed 79 ducklings which produce 10 times the amount of the parasite that causes Swimmers Itch which is a scientific fact. That means that those 79 ducklings are equivalent to 790 adult Mergansers. In other words, your 23 Merganser kills, most of which were determined to have little or no parasite actually equate to only 2.3 ducklings. How can you consider your program to be successful at all especially when you consider the fact that you interfered with the SICON program to such an extent that a complaint was filed against you?

It is unfortunate there are those out there who want to use statistics inappropriately to justify unsubstantiated opinions and unsubstantiated science. Once again it comes down to statistics, how you can use them to justify any claim, and common sense. NFM's removal of eight (8) reproductive hens (88 potential common mergansers) by lethal harvest was just as effective as Sicon's removal of 88 ducks by brood trapping. Furthermore, NFM relocated 17 adult/sub-adults, chased off reproductive hens and other non-reproductive Common mergansers through its harassment efforts. Therefore, efforts by both NFM and Sicon removed a minimum of 202 individual common mergansers from Higgins Lake. Sicon removed 88 individuals, Northpoint removed at least if not more than 88 individuals. We are aware complaints have been filed by SICON and HLPOA requesting that the Gerrish USFWS miscellaneous permit for harassment be revoked. Nothing has come of these complaints as it is another attempt of SICON and its supporters to discredit Northpoint, Gerrish, and myself. Monopolies can be a very dangerous thing, if this request were granted, SICON would hold a monopoly giving them the power to demand any fees or to guarantee they are the only ones to provide the service. I feel it is more appropriate for the local units of government to maintain control over the permits as it gives them the option to select the most appropriate contractors at a fair and reasonable cost.

19. Isn't the Swimmers Itch Tack Force, which you created as a cooperative effort a waste of time and energy for both Townships to participate in since you have decided to go it alone and not cooperate with anyone?

Most definitely not! To the contrary I am cooperating by filling a void in the swimmers itch action plan that is not being addressed by the SICON plan. A comprehensive plan includes lethal harvest,

harassment, duckling relocation, and a long term plan to reduce nutrient loads. The only group who is not cooperating is SICON who has proven its inability to work with Northpoint by registering complaints, trying to get rid of permits, and giving out slanderous and unsubstantiated misinformation. True cooperation is groups working together to come up with the best solution possible not get rid of the competition. I have never made any attempt to get rid of SICON, I have tried to work in conjunction with while compromising the success of our plans only to have that used against us as proof that our program is unsuccessful. My only and continued goal is to have the most thorough and comprehensive and complete action plan and welcome anyone who would like to help out with it. I am here for the township as I have always been and I won't be run off by misinformation and lies by omission. My integrity stands for its self. I have worked in a position for the public as a police officer and elected official. In all of the years of service I have never had one complaint of misappropriation of funds or of bullying. I have and always will stand for the citizens of this township, all of the citizens. I have been duly elected to protect the interests of Gerrish Township and will continue to do so as long as I am allowed. I will never go it alone as you put it because the public comes first, period.

20. I noticed in the proposal that the folks from Northpoint didn't mention anything about cooperating with the HLSIO and SICON. The folks from the HLSIO mentioned that they want Northpoint to work with them by starting their program from the end of July until hunting season starts which would provide coverage for the entire summer. The Northpoint proposal looks like they want SICON to leave Higgins entirely. Isn't that what you really want? please explain.

I guess the same could be said about SICON and their lack of or inability to work with Northpoint. Perhaps Northpoint doesn't mention it in their text but their actions have spoken more for their desire to cooperate as they have complied with every request that was made with the exception of abandoning their spring work and leaving the lake unprotected from ice-out till late July when the majority of infected common mergansers are present. The comment "The Northpoint proposal looks like they want SICON to leave Higgins entirely. Isn't that what you really want?" is totally unjustified, unsupported, and irresponsible. To the contrary it is obvious SICON and HLPOA and its supporters do want Northpoint off the lake as stated in their request to the US fish and Wildlife service. I do not find this at all in the spirit of cooperation. Mr. Sendek, Dr. Mark Luttentan and Northpoint staff have remained neutral during the multitude of mudslinging and slanderous statements. I consider the Northpoint staff to be people of the highest reputation and professionalism.