



2023 YEAR IN REVIEW OUR MEMBERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

As we enter 2024, we take a moment to update the progress to restore Secord. In the past 14 months or so we have seen the dam receive the required permits to rebuild, receive the funding via the State grant to start construction, the pull ahead sheet piling project is complete, the new gates ordered, and concrete is being poured for the auxiliary spillway.

In addition, once the auxiliary spillway is complete, EGLE approved a permit to utilize coffer dams to expedite work on the primary spillway and gates. As communicated, this may cause a modest 1-foot rise in the water level at the dam. More on this as we move into the Spring.

While there were start up challenges with the auxiliary spillway due to dewatering issues, the mild early winter weather has not caused the ground to freeze. As of the end of December concrete continues to be poured. The auxiliary spillway is nearing completion. This is good news.

Current FLTF published timelines indicate Secord will be completed by the Fall of 2025. They are working hard on both schedules and costs. We will share more as it becomes available. Ultimately EGLE will determine when the legal lake level can return once all the required construction is complete.

As we reflect just 3 years, in late 2020 and into early 2021 the return of the lakes was in question. There was no significant funding for construction and the county did not acquire the dams until December 2020. There was an option to remove the dams at the cost of about \$125 Million. Many of us may recall the predictions by those in the real estate business that property values would collapse should the dams be removed. Who would buy a lake home on a lake with no water? The good news, the doom of 50% reduction in property values did not occur. In fact, just the opposite, real estate values around Secord have increased since 2020 as new buyers are confident in the future. This is good news for property owners and future generations.

In terms of highlights for 2023, here is a partial list of action items Members of our Association have done to help restore the lakes:

COMMUNICATIONS - One of our goals is to provide relevant information to our Members and the lake community. We recognize this situation is complex and information changes. To date we have conducted 25 town hall style information meetings, and this is our 67th written publication. In addition, we conducted a mail drop with the US Post Office to deliver a newsletter to our lake community around Labor Day this past year. All are focused on the restoration of Secord and what this means to property owners. We appreciate the feedback and questions received. We hope this continues. You can view these materials at:

<https://www.secordlakeassociation.org/resources-1>

FUNDING – Our Association is proud of our leadership in the RestoreTheLakes campaign that helped the FLTF secure the \$200 Million grant from the state of Michigan. We also helped secure a Federal Grant for \$750,000 for dam safety equipment at Secord and Smallwood dams. **WE CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO SUPPORT THE FLTF TO SEEK ADDITIONAL GRANTS. Members of our Association continue to meet with state and federal elected officials seeking additional funding and support. This is an ongoing initiative.**

RETAKE OUR LAKE – This is a detailed plan developed by our Association, reviewed and approved by the FLTF and EGLE, to help prepare Secord to return to the legal lake level. The plan coordinates with property owners, the townships, and local experts to address complex issues. As the representatives from EGLE shared with us last year, “No one has ever done what you are doing to retake your lake.” Click [HERE](#) to read the plan.

To date, in partnership with Secord Township, large public areas of the lake have had nuisance trees removed. These areas include the shoreline out over 50’ along West River Drive in the main lake area; West Branch Bay; an area near the dam along Lake Shore Drive and the 3 public sand bar gathering areas. In addition, thanks to the Associations fundraising efforts, the lake area around the DNR Park Road boat launch had the nuisance trees removed.

To be clear, these are ongoing efforts. People have asked “why not wait to cut?” The answer is nuisance trees grow at a fast rate - - - upward to 8 feet or more a year with the girth increasing as well. Getting to them often when they are small requires less labor, hence less cost to address. Waiting has unintended consequences we strategically choose to avoid.

A special shout out of THANKS to our Retake Our Lake Captains around Secord. The coordinated efforts of these individual volunteers is appreciated and valued.

We also want to thank the individual property owners that continue to manage the lakebed in front of their properties. We applaud the examples of “Neighbor Helping Neighbor” to rid and manage nuisance trees. We look forward to continued participation in the New Year.

FUNDRAISING – In 2023, thanks to the contributions of our Members, the friends to Secord Lake and our SPONSORS, we raised over \$22,000 toward lake improvement projects. This past July we allocated \$17,000 toward programs to improve Secord. In addition to a \$5,000 donation to the FLTF, we allocated funds to create a program to help Members seeking EGLE permits for lake improvements; funding to reimburse expenses for Association clean up events and money to utilize the US Post Office to reach more Secord property owners. We look forward to doing more in 2024!

COMMUNICATIONS - - You may be thinking, “why are they listing this again?”

As mentioned, the path to restore Secord along with all 4 lakes is complicated with many moving parts and things do change. Our goal is to do our best to keep you informed.

With the construction assessment coming with the winter tax bill Dec 2025 (to be paid in 2026), communication is especially important. We continue to provide information that we believe is relevant. We encourage you to read the material and listen to the webinars to learn more. We understand this will take more time than reading a “one liner” or someone’s opinion on Facebook . . . but we as property owners need

to understand what this means to us individually. There is no “one size fits all,” each family along the lakes will look at the situation differently.

Below are two links to updates provided in December.

NEWS YOU CAN USE – December FLTF Meeting Recaps - - This summarizes two FLTF meetings to explain the construction assessment; the formal approval process; the appeals process and how property owners can view the benefits factors and assessment estimate for their individual property. Click [HERE](#) for a link to the entire Dec 6th FLTF webinar where they explain in detail the Operations and Capital assessments.

Frequently Asked Questions from December FLTF Meeting Recap - - We address these questions:

- What components make up the Benefits Factor and do all properties derive the same benefit from the lake?
- What is the latest with Boyce Hydro?
- Why should I as a property owner pay anything for the dam?
- What happened to every lake pays for their own restoration costs?
- Why are all 4 lakes combined for the special assessment district? Is Secord paying for the others?
- Since these are public lakes, should everyone pay to rebuild, not just property owners?

View full publication [HERE](#).

We encourage you to watch for additional updates from the Association and the FLTF. It is safe to assume most, if not all, do not like an assessment. The reality is without the assessment Secord and the other lakes would not return.

There is and will be more information available - - - we encourage you to visit the FLTF website and sign up for updates as we move forward. www.fourlakestaskforce.org You will find and can watch/listen to the entire Dec 6th informational webinar.

The Secord Lake Association will continue to provide updates to include frequently asked questions. Should you have questions, we welcome them SecordLakeAssociation@gmail.com

You can sign up for automatic email updates to you at our website (address below). You do not need to be a member to receive updates.

You can expect continued updates from the Secord Lake Association. These updates will include town hall meetings. Our team is working through these details now. **There is a plan in full motion to restore Secord dam in 2025.** The Secord Lake Association is focused on what is required to prepare Secord to return. Keep an eye out for updates, there is more to come.

Become a Member - - the Secord Lake Association is made up of volunteers focused on restoring Secord to create a lake community for generations to come. A family membership is only \$25 a year or 5 years for \$100. Visit us at www.secordlakeassociation.org to learn more.

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