

THINGS WE LEARN ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM

Submitted by Bob Becker

Last Thursday, current Watervliet Township Treasurer and the Paw Paw Association's (PPLA) Health and Safety Chair called me and asked me to watch the *Today Show* at 9:30 AM on Channel 5 out of Chicago. All he said was one of your new PPLA board members will be on that program. So I did, and on a piece about early childhood education, **Dr. Ray Lechner**, Superintendent of the Wilmette (IL) School District was interviewed about an innovative way to teach first grade boys and girls math. No desks, no blackboards, just interactive activities which make math fun and interesting. Ray is also a member of the Paw Paw Lake Yacht Club and may be very willing to explain what his schools are doing.

Having Ray as a new member on our board bodes well for us as we progress with the issues of restoring our lake, as it will take men and women with vision, like Ray, to help us think innovatively.

Speaking about education, if you've read the Spicer Report you know that document tells us that until we stem nutrients entering the lake, both phosphorus and nitrogen, many of the tasks before us will overwhelm the good we are trying to do. The two culprits are nutrients entering from the watershed and guess what? We're the other culprit! Except for new lawns and gardens and possibly soils depleted of phosphorus there is no earthly reason to apply phosphorus to our lawns. The key is to test your soils before applying fertilizers with phosphorous (middle number on the bag) as most area soils are rich in naturally occurring phosphorous.

Once we've gotten phosphorous out of our fertilizing regimens the next step is to ask for slow release nitrogen fertilizers. These products release nitrogen into the soils as they are needed, allowing it to absorb rather than run off, as it is the run off that causes the exponential weed growth in our lakes and streams. That is what we can do...to do our part.

Other things we might do is to write our County Commission Representatives asking them to support a County wide ban on Phosphorous fertilizers in Berrien County. To date Counties to north of and surrounding us have passed such legislation. Bob Wooley and Jon Hinkleman are the representatives for Coloma and Watervliet Charter Townships. Also write our drain commissioner, Roger Zilke, to voice your support for his help in restoring our wetland drains feeding both Big and Little Paw Paw Lakes.

Most importantly however, is to cease using fertilizers with Phosphorous while using products with slow release nitrogen. As homeowners in the watershed we are helping undo the very issues that the Lake Restoration Initiative is trying to correct if we do not do so.

Follow Ray's example think creatively and help solve the problem of excess nutrients flowing into our lakes, drains and streams.

Fact: By Monday my rain gauge measured totaled 16" of rain. PLEASE IF YOU TAKE YOUR BOAT OUT PLEASE OBSERVE A NO WAKE SPEED UNTIL THE LAKE RECEEDS TO NORMAL! See our web site for further information.

Now for some fun! Take a moment to browse our web site, www.ppla.info for a gaggle of pictures from the Boat Parade. Simply click on gallery, high light parade and enjoy! While you are there browse to your hearts content and tell is what you think!