



The Bulletin

Newsletter of The Prairie Club
Summer 2024



116th Annual Meeting of Members Recap

by Hope Little, Annual Meeting Chair

On June 8, 2024, the Prairie Club held its Annual Meeting at Camp Hazelhurst. The day started with a meet and greet where new and old members got together for coffee and light refreshments.

At noon, the meeting began with Club President Mike Maloney giving opening remarks. This was followed by Mark Sever, Treasurer, giving a brief report on the Club's finances. The Prairie Club is in an extremely good financial position.

Hope Little read the names of the Club members who died in 2023.

As the attendees received a handout with all of the committee reports, no reports were presented in person.

Lastly, the annual door prize raffle took place. Two gift certificates for a free night with a paid night during January, February, and March and six Prairie Club ball caps were given out.

Next, there was lunch under the pavilion.

The event ended with Cathy Maloney giving an interesting and educational talk and PowerPoint presentation on wildflowers.

On Sunday a number of Prairie Club members and friends kayaked on the Galien River.

We thank the numerous people who participated and pitched in to help set up and clean up.

A special thanks to the following:

Terry Riban	Cathy Maloney
Val Cavin	Mark Sever
Barb Hertel	Mike Maloney
Barb Burton Halfpenny	Rob Burton
Tracy Gehlmann	Larry Bergman

Couldn't make it to the Annual Meeting?

Visit the Annual Meeting page under Events on the website www.ThePrairieClub.org

Here you will find all the committee reports contained in this year's packet.

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No Waterfront Director! And E. coli? What Now?

by Randy Lutter, Beach Chair

The lack of a Hazelhurst waterfront director for the first time in memory poses new challenges for the Club and Camp Hazelhurst. The challenges extend from procedures to safely use the Hazelhurst beach in 2024, to recruiting a waterfront director for 2025, to the consideration of new approaches to beach safety. This note to Club members and Hazelhurst siteholders addresses these topics in turn. It then summarizes E. coli news and ongoing efforts to monitor E. coli in the lake and the creek and to conduct microbial source testing of the E. coli.



I. Hazelhurst Beach Procedures in 2024

These procedures are based on the principle of safety first, and are subject to change without prior notice. Hazelhurst beach equipment, which is typically stored and deployed by the waterfront director, will be located as follows during the 2024 summer season:

- The emergency phone with a direct line to 911 is on its post on the dunes near mile marker 12.8.
- A rescue ring & rope are hanging at the end of beach path.
- The rescue surfboard with handy grab loops is next to the storage closet on the beach.
- The AED is available by the beach restrooms and the First Aid kit is locked in the adjacent storage closet.
- Buoys to separate swimming from boating are behind the storage closet on the beach ready to be deployed by boaters whenever more than two boaters are on the water and conditions permit.
- No beach flags will fly to distinguish among swimming conditions—essentially the same practice as during the off-season.
- A water bucket and shovel are next to the fire ring.

Hazelhurst beach rules give the (now missing) Waterfront Director “full authority” on the beach, swimming and boating areas. Since we lack a waterfront director, as beach chair I will assume this authority when I am on the beach, which will be at least once on the majority of nice beach days this summer, and sometimes on other days. I ask Club Officers, Board members and Club members to help enforce rules at other times. I ask all Hazelhursters to be extra vigilant regarding their own safety and the safety of other Hazelhursters.

I seek volunteers to help promote water safety. Many Hazelhursters are committed good Samaritans, acting selflessly to help others in need. Good Samaritans willing to enter the water to help others without putting themselves at undue risk are especially welcome this year. I also would like Hazelhursters to volunteer to join the Hazelhurst Beachwatch, first established last year. Beachwatch members get an hour of training in emergency response procedures (and a free whistle!!), and agree to help in an emergency if one occurs while they are on the beach and they are able to help safely. Beachwatch is open to all, even Hazelhursters who do not know how to swim. Beachwatch training will be on Sunday July 7 at 1 pm and other times.

Hazelhursters seeking swimming lessons should post their interest in lessons in the Hazelhurst Highlights and on the bulletin boards, and offer a wage rate.

Procedures to use Club boats are posted on the Club website on a page called Hazelhurst Boat Program. For kayaks and paddleboards you need to pass a swim test, sign a waiver, be at least 12 years old, wear a life jacket, and use the equipment in daylight when there are no regular breakers on the sandbar. I will need to meet you for your first outing to review safety measures and I need to be

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notified each day you use a Club kayak or paddleboard. Paddles are under the boats, and personal flotation devices are in the storage closet.

For sailboats, the procedures are similar to the paddle craft except that in addition, you must message me that you have watched the videos on the boat program website, and arrange a time to meet when wind conditions seem likely to be favorable. I will generally be available Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons and sometimes by appointment at other times. I will give an initial sailing lesson of approximately 2 to 2.5 hours covering rigging, derigging, sailing, anticipating weather changes, etc. Our goal is to authorize club members who can demonstrate sufficient proficiency rig, launch and sail club boats independently without supervision.

To share information about boating and lake conditions, Hazelhursters interested in boating should download a free app called Teamreach, and join the group called Hazelhurst Sailors, with Group Code HHLMSail. Teamreach allows text messages to the entire group or to individuals as well as the sharing of photos and meeting times.

Regular beach responsibilities still apply—read the rules if you have not done so lately. Remember: no glass, no smoking, and no alcohol on the beach. No swimming in the boating area (especially if sailboats and / or buoys are out). Put your cottage number, or season pass holder identification, name & phone number on your boats. Unidentified / abandoned boats may be removed at the end of the season. Don't leave beach fires burning or smoldering. In general, no dumb stuff: don't leave trash or litter, throw sand upwind of other people, level the dunes, etc.

II. Recruiting a Waterfront Director for 2025

Our recruiting experience this year poses a puzzle. What part of our vacancy announcement made the position seem so unattractive that no prospective applicant applied?

Our vacancy announcement was widely seen. A Google ad that ran from April 11 to June 5 generated 22,640 views by individuals that Google algorithms identified as potentially interested. These views of the ad resulted in 1083 clicks and views of the Club vacancy announcement at a cost of \$672, but it unfortunately generated no inquiries or applications. We also posted our vacancy announcement on *Indeed*, a job posting service, where we again got no inquiries or applications.

We vigorously searched for candidates. We paid *Indeed* \$120 to access 30 resumes of people with lifeguarding experience and / or certifications who had not contacted us. We told these 30 potential candidates they seem like promising applicants for the job we had open, and requested interviews. We got four replies, and managed to schedule and complete one interview. This lone candidate seemed promising and said she would later share information about when she could renew her certification (which had lapsed). But she never called to say she had in fact registered to get recertified, despite multiple text messages from me asking for this information and an email message that we had increased the wage rate.

I sent two dozen emails on two separate occasions to swim coaches / instructors / athletic directors / counselors in high schools and colleges from K'zoo, to South Bend, Niles, Buchanan & New Buffalo. I shared news of the vacancy with a half dozen Harbert neighbors who live outside Hazelhurst. I asked the police chief of Lincoln Township and the waitstaff at Greenbush Brewery in Sawyer for any leads that they might have. I unsuccessfully offered employment to lifeguards working on the public beach at St. Joe, in case they wanted additional income. These efforts bore no fruit. One candidate from the Prairie Club expressed interest but then withdrew the candidacy for reasons unrelated to pay or working conditions.

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The compensation we offered has been competitive. The wage we initially offered in February, \$15.40 per hour, matched inflation since last year, and was supplemented by a new \$400 end-of-season bonus (amounting to \$1/hour) for "good"--not perfect--attendance through the summer. As spring progressed, we raised it to \$16.10, plus the bonus, and then to \$20 per hour plus the bonus.

I masquerade as an applicant for a lifeguarding job on *Indeed*, and thus have followed closely the employment opportunities in southwest MI and beyond. The compensation we have offered has been consistently better than all private pools, with the exception of a couple suburban country clubs. It also has greatly exceeded compensation at public beaches, with the sole exception of the very top of the wage scale for experienced Great Lakes lifeguards offered at the Indiana Dunes National Park. When we first posted a wage of \$20 per hour (plus the bonus!) I knew of no vacancy announcement in Michigan with wages of \$20 per hour for certified lifeguards. With hindsight the wages we offered were clearly inadequate, but they were consistently very competitive relative to compensation for advertised lifeguarding positions.

This experience indicates we need to try new approaches next year. Steps to improve our recruiting efforts include the following:

- Survey Prairie Club members, especially those with connections to Hazelhurst and family members with ages well suited to beach work, to ask why they have been reluctant to apply for the waterfront director position and then work to improve any deficiencies in the position identified by the survey.
- Ask the Board to consider changing the title of the position back to lifeguard. Modern job market processes rely entirely on computer algorithms—the one at *Indeed* sent me 2-3 notices weekly about opportunities to work as the lifeguard that I had told *Indeed* I wanted to become. But *Indeed* never sent me news of the job opening at Hazelhurst, apparently because the position title was not "Lifeguard", even though Natalie and I tried repeatedly to trick the algorithm into doing so without changing the title of the position from Waterfront Director. It is also possible that our target audience associates lifeguard with surf, sand and summer, and thinks that waterfront director means clipboards, paperwork and administration.
- Consider additional steps to make the position more attractive, such as paying for lifeguarding certification, changing the schedule to provide mandatory off-beach rest breaks, providing customized flexibility in the hours per day or days per week, and offering subsidized lodging in the Farmhouse or even free lodging with willing siteholders.
- Ask the Board to authorize a much higher initial wage rate, such as \$21 / hour plus the good attendance bonus, along with pre-approved rapid increases if we get no applications by pre-specified dates.

III. Consideration of New Approaches to Beach Safety

The absence of applications for waterfront director is not a complete surprise, given the very few inquiries that I received in 2022 and 2023, and the very late dates that I received them. We therefore need to anticipate ways of strengthening safety on the Hazelhurst beach without having a paid professional dedicated to water safety.

One option would be for the Club to reimburse the costs of getting certified as a lifeguard, including first aid, CPR and AED, for Hazelhursters who presents receipts. A sum of \$250 would cover such certification in several programs in the region according to a quick internet search. Having, say, eight certified lifeguards among the regular Hazelhurst beachgoers would greatly increase the emergency response resources likely to be on the beach in an emergency. A waterfront director would be more

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likely to have trained volunteers to assist in an emergency—indeed emergency response procedures at beaches with lifeguards typically involve several trained individuals. Even if no waterfront director or lifeguard is present, e.g., during a typical summer evening, greater training among Hazelhursters would mean that someone acting as a good Samaritan would more likely be trained, and thus able to help a distressed swimmer safely and effectively. The cost to the club of getting eight Hazelhursters to become certified as lifeguards, say \$2000, seems modest relative to the annual cost of hiring a certified lifeguard as waterfront director. Even a continuing financial incentive, such as a \$100 discount to annual membership fees to members who keep their certification current, might merit serious consideration.

A closely related option would be to compensate Hazelhursters for the costs of undergoing specialized training in rescues in Lake Michigan surf, which is quite different than the pools where most lifeguarding training programs are held. Such specialized training is offered by the Great Lakes Surf Rescue Project. See <https://glsrp.org/classes/>. In 2023, I attended a GLSRP class with the newly hired waterfront director and found it useful and informative.

New technology can perform some tasks much better than a trained and certified lifeguard. A lightweight remote-controlled electric boat that is already [deployed](#) on some Lake Michigan beaches north of us can very quickly deliver flotation that is easy to grasp. These boats can hit 23 mph and have a range of 5 miles at full speed. They come with a one year warranty and cost only \$12,800, less than two years wages for the certified lifeguard we were unable to hire. They weigh 26 pounds, about the same as a standup paddleboard, but are only 5 feet long. They are self-righting, surf-capable, and purportedly very easy for beginners to operate. See <https://www.emilyrobot.com/> for more information. These boats are not designed to tow swimmers to the beach, however, and they cannot give swimming lessons. (They are also completely inept at tasks like sweeping the boardwalk.) An Australian aerial drone offers similar capabilities, including others that we may not value, such as the ability to spot sharks. See <https://rippercorp.com/divisions/little-ripper-lifesaver/>.

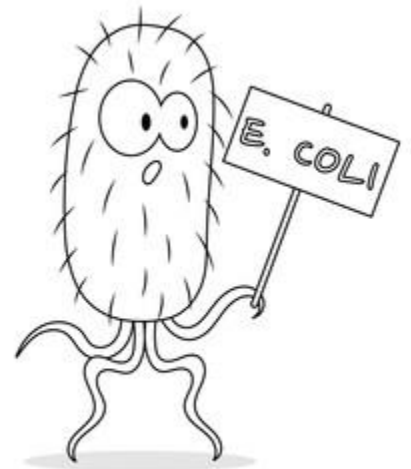
I describe these technologies less as an advocate for them than as a strong supporter of thoughtful dialogue about a broader set of ways to promote beach safety at Hazelhurst.

Please contact me at rwlutter@gmail.com if you have other ideas about how to promote safety on the Hazelhurst beach, or wish to offer help.

IV. E. coli and Fecal Matter

E. coli in water that I collected near shore at the north end of our beach on Sunday June 23 at 4:15 pm was tested to be 730 cfu / 100 ml of E. coli at Great Lakes Scientific in Stevensville. That much E. coli, a marker for fecal matter from warm-blooded creatures, is more than double the highest [permissible](#) Michigan daily concentration for full body contact (aka "swimming"), which is 300 cfu/ 100 ml.

Excessive E. coli in the Lake, while disappointing, is not a complete surprise. As noted in the Highlights last August, testing on samples that I collected nearshore on August 6th, 2023, by the north property line and about 50 feet to the south of the beach path had 980 and 690 cfu/100 ml respectively. Test results from the Hazelhurst sandbar on August 6 were well below levels of concern for swimming, however. Sampling on the sand bar on August 9 tested even lower, in single digits. Testing of



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samples from August 9, 2023 into early September supported swimming everywhere on the Hazelhurst beach. It now appears that excessive E. coli levels occasionally occur at our beach, especially after heavy rains when shore currents are from the north, i.e., the creek mouth in Birchwood.

While we lack good data to identify accurately the precise conditions associated with excessive E. coli at our beach we can nonetheless make some practical suggestions to reduce the risks associated with exposure to water contaminated with fecal matter.

- Swim less following heavy rains when the wind and waves are from the north (the direction of the mouth of the creek in Birchwood), and swim more on sunny days when the water is clear.
- Swim less near shore and swim more near the sandbar.
- Avoid swallowing lake water while swimming, especially in questionable conditions.
- Consider using earplugs.

The frustrating delays between sample collection and sharing of lab results with other Hazelhursters mean that testing should be conducted with clear goals in mind. One goal is to collect additional E. coli test results, along with data on Lake and weather conditions, to try to better characterize the conditions when E. coli levels are likely to be high.

A second goal is to conduct microbial source testing of a water sample high in E. coli to determine the source of E. coli, especially whether or not it is human. The Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University, based in Muskegon, has offered to conduct such testing at reasonable cost. Its methods, however, require testing of water known to have E. coli above 300 cfu / 100 ml and the proper storage of such water while the E. coli testing is performed. Thus getting microbial source testing of water from the creek or our beach requires both timely acquisition of relevant water samples and coordination between two labs.

Microbial source test results could be a constructive and important step if they indicate that excessive E. coli levels have human origins. Such evidence might be helpful in persuading local and state government officials to fund further, more systematic water quality monitoring and ultimately to pursue source remediation efforts.

We are fortunate that Professor Ryan Otter of Grand Valley State University's Annis Water Resources Institute has agreed to speak at the Red Barn at 6:30 on Friday July 12 about water quality monitoring and mitigation in western Michigan. I expect it will be a wonderful opportunity for Hazelhursters and some neighbors from Birchwood to learn more about practical steps to improve the quality of water resources in Harbert. I hope very much to see you there.

Finally, I request help with a variety of tasks related to monitoring and communicating water quality issues. Please contact me at rwlutter@gmail.com if you are willing to help with this work.



As you are enjoying the beauty of Hazelhurst and Spring Grove Camps this summer, keep in mind that much of the upkeep is done by volunteers. Our Camps would not be thriving without their hard work and dedication.

Both our Camps organize volunteer activities throughout the year. Most of these can be found on the events page of our website. If you are unable to attend one, contact one of our committee Chairs and ask, "How can I help?"

Donations

Thank you for the continued support of our Members. **Please remember that donations to the Prairie Club are not tax deductible.**

The conservation efforts at Spring Grove camp are sure to be plentiful this year thanks to a gracious donation by **Cathy Halfpenny**.

Spring Grove camp received several kind-hearted donations from siteholders and renters. Thank you to **Kevin Fallon, John Leane, and Jim "Mac" McCarthy**.

Generous donations to The Prairie Club were received by **Joanne Haymaker, Jim & Beth Jozefowicz, and Susan Mosley Taylor** along with their yearly dues.

New Applicants for Membership

The following candidates have applied for membership since our last Bulletin was published. If you know of any reason why an applicant should not be admitted to the Club, please write to the Membership Committee, via the Club office address: 12 E. Willow St., Unit A, Lombard, IL 60148

Deborah Drolsum

Franklin, TN 37067

Sponsors: Donald Pratt, Barry Rosen

Interviewed by: Anne Walker

James vonMeding

Chicago, IL 60630

Sponsors: Maureen Gilligan, Ruth Simmons

Interviewed by: Anne Walker

Michael Shales

Stoughton, WI 53589

Sponsors: Leslie Maloney, Michelle Hayes

Interviewed by: Anne Walker

Judith Wagner

Lombard, IL 60148

Sponsors: Terry Riban, Hope Little

Interviewed by: Barb Burton

Please remember Prairie Club members who are not a siteholder, immediate family of a siteholder, siteholder's guest, season pass holder, renting a siteholder's cottage, or renting space in a Club-owned building may only use Hazelhurst grounds once a month in June, July, and August.



**Join The Prairie Club on
hikes, kayaking, and other activities!
Be sure to follow the Prairie Club on [meetup.com](https://www.meetup.com)
Search for “Prairie Club of Chicagoland Activities Group”**



Prairie Club Officers 2024	
President	Mike Maloney
1st Vice President	Sarah Craig Pratt
2nd Vice President	Hope Little
Treasurer	Mark Sever
Recording Secretary	Wendy Lyford
Hazelhurst Camp Vice President	Barb Burton-Halfpenny
Spring Grove Camp Vice President	Erin Kiehm
Standing Committees 2024	
Audit	Kevin Oravec
Elections	Terry Riban
Finance	Charles Manthey
Historical	OPEN
Membership	Jo Burda Smith
Nominating	Dan Gapen
Activity Committees 2024	
Activities/Walkers	Terry Riban
Annual Meeting	Hope Little
Buena Vista	Linsey Crowninshield
Conservation	Terri Hebert
Family Cottage	Terri Breach, Barb White
Farm House	Deb McGrath, Barbara Wittersheim
Promotional	Barb Burton-Halfpenny
Publications	Natalie Brennan
Hazelhurst	Barb Burton-Halfpenny
Spring Grove	Erin Kiehm, Brian Reed
Spring Grove Lodge	Mickey Hanson
Website	Natalie Brennan



Return Service Requested

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