

The THOMPSON LAKE

# OBSERVER

Summer 2012

Issue No. 167



*Lake Day inspired sixth-grader Emily Corbett to construct this marvelous T-shirt, now displayed in the TLEA office.*

TLEA  
ANNUAL MEETING  
August 4  
Oxford Recreation Hall  
9 a.m.

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Greetings from Thompson Lake! Summer crashed in in early June, bringing some 10 inches of rain that resulted in flooding throughout the area. Needless to say, Thompson Lake's water level rose drastically, causing mayhem to docks and loosely secured water craft. Mother Nature sure knows how to dish it out !

This summer TLEA will be starting a Neighbor to Neighbor Membership Campaign with the goal of reaching 600 members. Please welcome your neighbors as they come calling.

Our YCC program is in full swing and has just completed its 200th project. TLEA is very proud of this program. Signing on with the YCC is a great deal for the property owner facing erosion control problems. This is only one of several important programs that your membership helps sponsor.

Summer office hours are Saturdays only, 10-1, at 163 Pleasant St., Oxford. Stop in and pick up some informative brochures about living on the lake or in a watershed and check out the merchandise for sale. All proceeds help fund our continuing programs. We have a good supply of our new Thompson Lake woven throws destined to become a family heirloom.

As you settle in for the summer months on the lake and all the good times with family and friends in and out of the water, we hope you remember that TLEA helps make these good times possible by keeping the lake healthy. Please do your part by becoming a member today. Our great thanks to all of those long-time time members as well as those who have recently joined. And don't forget our annual meeting on August 4 when all good members get together.

We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable 2012 season on the lake!

Kathy Cain, Co-President

## **LOST & FOUND DEPT.**

Found in the southwestern part of the lake following the early June rains: a green kayak. If you've lost one, contact the TLEA office at 539-4535.

## **YCC HITS MILESTONE AS HEAT SETS NEW RECORD**

The day of June 20 was a memorable one for TLEA's Youth Conservation Corps. Only two days into their summer's work, the crew reached a milestone as it completed the YCC 200th erosion control project, a benchmark that was 11 years in the making. For coordinator and crew chief Justin St. John and his crew, shown in the photo below, June 20 also turned out to be one of the hottest of the summer, its 95 degrees breaking heat records all over the state. Asked how it felt to reach the 200-project milestone, Justin ignored the heatwave and simply said, "It feels fantastic!"

As most TLEA members know by now, the mission of the YCC is to protect water quality through erosion control. Over the years their projects have ranged from small jobs completed in two hours to extensive ones requiring two weeks to finish. These projects include stabilizing the shoreline, installing rubber razor bars and box culverts, re-establishing vegetated buffer strips, and improving the safety and stability of pathways to the lake.

When asked about his future goals, Justin replied, "Now that we've completed 200 projects, we want to complete at least 200 more." He stated that, with TLEA still covering a portion of the labor charge for the YCC, there is no more cost effective way to get erosion control jobs done. If you have such a problem on your property, the YCC urges you to contact them by calling the TLEA office at 539-4535 or emailing [thompsonlakeycc@gmail.com](mailto:thompsonlakeycc@gmail.com) to schedule a free consultation.



*YCC 2012 - Left to right: Moriah Lee, Jesse Newcomb, Justin St. John and Brandon Campbell. (Photo Justin St. John)*

## **JUNE RAINS BRING ORANGE CONES**

By the morning of June 4, it was still raining, and everywhere you looked you could see orange cones littering the roadsides – and in some places the road middles as well. The storm that arrived on June 2 brought the area some 8.5 inches of rain, depending on who was measuring, and it came down straight, fast, and hard. By the time the sun finally emerged, many of the state roads, town roads, and camp roads surrounding Thompson Lake were undercut and eroded.

Bob Tracy, who lives just off Cobb Hill Road in Otisfield, intrepidly drove up that road to survey the damage. He found lots of orange cones and, on some steep grades, barely room to steer his vehicle around the chasms that had opened up. During the last two years, this two-mile gravel road was the site where a significant amount of TLEA's 319 grant money was spent.

Jeff Stern, director of the 319 project, wasted little time in surveying conditions. His initial response was distress over the large amount of the road material which washed down the steep slope into Thompson. But, in an email, Jeff wrote this: "I was heartened, however, that the grant-related erosion control work, especially the ditching and backslope protection that we did held up quite well." He went on to note that some of the worst areas of washout on the road itself occurred where berms had built up on the sides of the road, thus preventing storm water runoff from reaching the grant-improved ditches.

Jeff also felt that the 319 projects on the nearby Ohuivo Camp Road held up "mostly okay," though they would need minor touch-ups in places. Silvaqua residents reported that the 319 projects on Silvaqua, Shore, and Loop Roads weathered the deluge in good shape.



*Cobb Hill Road, Otisfield, after the June 2-3 rains. (Photo Bob Tracy)*

## BRIEFLY NOTED

**TLEA Annual Meeting, August 4**, at Oxford Recreation Center, corner of King Street and Pleasant Street, Oxford. Kent Nelson of the Maine Forest Service will be the main speaker. He will explain the Firewise/Lakesmart Program which TLEA will be participating in. Also on hand will be Otisfield Code Enforcement Officer Richard St. John, who will answer questions regarding Shoreland Zoning rules. Doors open at 9 a.m. Plenty of parking, and lots of good things to buy and eat, as well as good folks to meet.

**Grants – Grants – Grants** – We're delighted to report that the spirit of giving is alive and well in 2012, at least as far as TLEA is concerned. Grantwriter-in-chief Stan Tetenman reports that recently the following foundations have made substantial donations to the Association:

Poland Spring Bottling – A grant to help pay for water testing

Dead River Co. – Funding to help defray YCC operating costs

Davis Conservation Fund - Contributions to the YCC

Mildred Ferguson Foundation – Grant money for YCC and to defray costs associated with TLEA's educational programs, notably Lake Day and the Hey You! cruise

**Membership Campaign Successful** – Marcia Pottle, Membership Chair, reports that the recent membership drive brought in a satisfying number of new members. In June, she recorded 93 memberships, most of them probably in response to the appeal letter sent out early in the month. There are now a very respectable 421 members. If you missed out, it's not too late to send in your check (minimum of \$30) to TLEA Membership Committee, PO Box 25, Oxford, Maine 04270.

**Firewise/Lakesmart Program.** Late this summer TLEA will participate in a Firewise/Lakesmart Program designed by the Maine Forest Rangers to help protect lake-side property. During that period, state fire specialists will randomly select properties in Oxford for an assessment and talk with owners. They will assess only the exterior of buildings. If you are a TLEA member from Oxford and prefer not to participate in this program, please

let Kathy Cain know by email to [kathryncain@myfairpoint.net](mailto:kathryncain@myfairpoint.net). At the August 4 Annual Meeting we'll hear more about this program from Kent Nelson, Fire Prevention Specialist of the Maine Forest Service.

The **Otisfield Combined Lakes Association** will hold its annual meeting on Wednesday, August 8, at the Otisfield Community Hall at 4 p.m. Maggie Shannon, Executive Director of COLA, will speak on "Quality Living along the Lakes." Please try to attend. It's a good chance to share lake experiences, problems, and success stories with each other and with Maggie. The meeting, open to the public, has been scheduled so that summer lake residents will be able to attend.

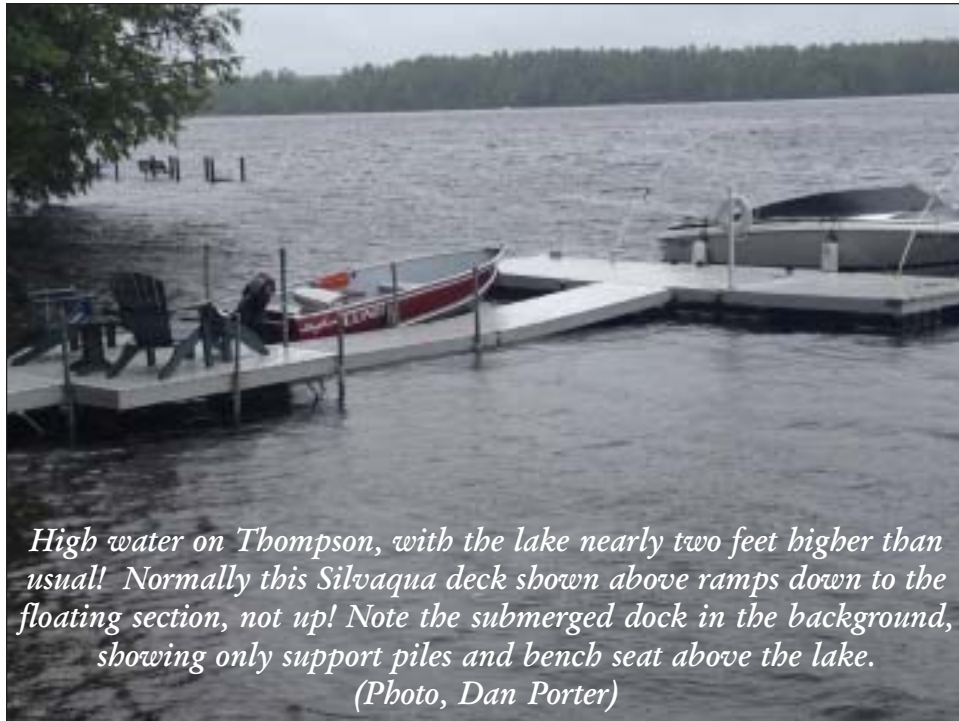
### **MILFOIL STRATEGY: CHANGE AND ADAPT**

The 2012 season for managing invasive plants is well underway. This spring TLEA saw that the sharp rise in air and water temperatures also meant the prolific growth of its main target, Variable Leaf Milfoil. Nevertheless, after visiting all the coves where the anti-milfoil crew worked last year, Environmental Chair Scott Bernardy found "fantastic results," with very little regrowth. For the next two years he predicts that only mop-operations will be needed in Edwards, Otisfield, and Serenity Coves.

The situation was not as good near Hancock Beach, where there was some significant regrowth. Bernardy said, "This regrowth has us changing our approach to using tarps as 90 percent of our management tool, followed by hand pulling the straggler plants found around the periphery. By using tarps as our main weapon we should be showing significant results by next season."

Pine Point continues to be the biggest challenge. There observers found that infestation had actually expanded this spring. The most difficult areas are the shallow, muddy areas which provide the most ideal situation for milfoil fragments to take root and propagate. Here again TLEA's change in technique is to rely more on tarps instead of hand pulling, and to use more weighted anchors to anchor the tarps more firmly. We ask the landowners to please be careful as they go in and out of their docks to keep the prop of their boats as high as possible. We thank everyone for their patience. We are confident that these weighted tarps will bring a much higher level of success in the future.





*High water on Thompson, with the lake nearly two feet higher than usual! Normally this Silvaqua deck shown above ramps down to the floating section, not up! Note the submerged dock in the background, showing only support piles and bench seat above the lake.  
(Photo, Dan Porter)*

## **TLEA'S WATER LEVEL COMMITTEE HARD AT WORK**

The committee set up this spring by TLEA is still working hard to establish a new set of water level guidelines to assist the Town of Oxford, which presently owns the dam at Oxford village.

Chaired by Scott Bernardy, the committee is especially wrestling with determining just how low the water level should be in the winter months in order to minimize soil erosion and to protect such structures as stone walls and rip-rap. Back in the 1990s, officials at Robinson Manufacturing, who then owned the dam, also set guidelines for winter water levels. Scott anticipates that the two figures will be close.

In studying the problem, TLEA has sought the advice and expertise of several agencies: the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, Maine Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, U.S. Geologic Survey, and National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association. The group has also sought out the experience of dam managers of nearby lakes. The committee's highest priorities are to protect the fisheries and shoreline and water intake lines.

Stay tuned. This important report should be out and made public well before it's needed next winter.

## LAKE DAY 2012 CHALLENGES STUDENTS

On May 30 Agassiz Village was a busy place swarming with colorfully T-shirted sixth-graders ready for the challenge of a full day's worth of environmental education. During this TLEA-sponsored day, some 240 students planted marigolds, cukes, and corn, measured water clarity by spotting Secchi disks submerged in metal drums, tried their hands at fly casting, diagnosed erosion problems, and, in short, learned more than they ever expected to while spending the day at a bucolic, lake-side location far from desks and school corridors. As usual, a host of volunteers from many schools and groups helped organizer Sandy Roderick as the children, organized by T-shirt colors, moved smoothly through a series of learning stations.

But first, five days earlier, there was Oxford Day, in which all the participating students from various schools gathered at Oxford Elementary for a "getting to know ya" session in which they also produced the multi-colored shirts.

Then on June 12 came the much-anticipated Hey You, Cruise postponed a week because the dock had been under water as a result of the heavy rains early in the month. The Agassiz Village students were all aboard the Songo River Queen for this popular cruise, run by Lakes Environmental Education, in which the students on the boat are challenged to spot bad environmental practices perpetrated by volunteers acting as bad guys on the shore. (In the past, the students have also identified a few unwitting violators who, embarrassingly, were not just acting the part!)

Nor was that quite all. Sandy Roderick stated that she was "especially thrilled with two of my students who made special projects after these events." One was Graham Hutchins of Otisfield, who produced a neat watershed model he made of his own volition. Another was Emily Corbett, also from Otisfield, who designed the T-shirt promoting buffer strips that is shown on the cover of this Observer. In Sandy's own words, "These student designed projects and the enthusiasm shown warm my heart and tell me that we are doing the right thing."





*Justin David lowering Secchi disk at AgassizVillage,  
Lake Day 2012*

### **SOME IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS FOR SUMMER**

Emergencies - 911

TLEA – 539-4535 or [www.thompsonlake.org](http://www.thompsonlake.org)

YCC – 539-4535 or [thompsonlakeycc@gmail.com](mailto:thompsonlakeycc@gmail.com)  
(Justin St. John, Coordinator)

Maine Center for Invasive Aquatic Plants – 783-7733

Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife – 287-8000

Code Enforcement Officers

Poland – 998-4604

Casco – 627-4515

Otisfield - 539-2360

Oxford – 539-8526

Maine Warden Service, Gray Office – 743-5789

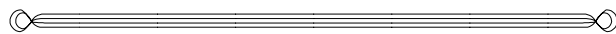
## OXFORD DAM COMMITTEE OVERSEES IMPROVEMENTS

Although the Town of Oxford owns the dam at the end of Thompson Lake, a steering committee of representatives from the towns on the lake actually does much of the essential work of inspecting the structure and recommending needed improvements. One of these committee members is Pete Laverdiere, of Oxford, a TLEA board member who has forwarded the Dam Committee's latest report for summary here. From this report it is clear that Oxford is progressing well in their goals to make the dam safer, more efficient, and easier to operate.

One of the major projects undertaken this year was the removal of the trash rakes. Brackett Mechanical, the contractor for this \$4,000 project, first dismantled the supporting pillars by lowering them flat onto the bottom of the lake. Another big project was undertaken by Dyer Camp and Cottage Service which installed new tuff booms to replace the sinking log booms. The new tuff booms have a 25-year life expectancy.

A major dam-related expense for the Town of Oxford was opening a road bed along the north side of the dam which permitted the crane to operate during the removal of the trash rake.

Anticipated projects are the permanent closure of another underwater gate situated before the dam on the old mill wall. Also under consideration is electrification of the dam gates for more effective water control requiring less man power.



We are merely guardians of our plot of earth and, by extension,

guardians of all the creatures who live in and around it.

With guardianship comes responsibility,

the genesis of stewardship.

May Sarton

## MORE ABOUT LOONS



On May 16, TLEA director Peggy Dorf emailed everybody she could think of with the exciting news that she'd just spotted 22 loons all together at one time. The sighting took place in Otisfield Cove. Peggy wrote, "This is the most I have ever seen at one time. For the past few years our report has been a total of 13 on the entire lake on Loon Count Day."

Peggy also reported that, with the temperature up around 90, she had her first swim of the year on May 26. "Not too cold," she reported. "After the initial shock it was quite pleasant."

Mercury levels cause loon population to drop. On a more scientific note, as reported by the Associated Press in the June 29 Sun Journal, a 10-year study of Adirondack loons has shown that mercury contamination may lead to population declines. Researchers found that birds with elevated mercury levels produce fewer chicks than those with low levels.

This report includes field research conducted from 1996 to 2007 by the Biodiversity Research Institute, headquartered in Gorham, Maine, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. Loons on acidic lakes had higher mercury levels and lower reproduction rates than loons breeding on non-acid lakes like Thompson.

Loons with high mercury levels lack the energy to incubate their eggs properly and to take care of their young. As a result, a loon with a high level of mercury produces 40 percent fewer young, according to this research.

Visit our website at:  
[www.thompsonlake.org](http://www.thompsonlake.org)

Thompson Lake Environmental Association  
P. O. Box 25  
Oxford, ME 04270

**OBSERVER**

Published quarterly by the  
Thompson Lake Environmental Association  
(207) 539-4535  
Editor: Jean Hankins

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Oxford, ME 04270  
Permit # 71

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**