

Fall 2014

Issue No. 174



*Fall Colors on the Western Shore of Thompson Lake*

## **Welcome to the New Observer**

The Thompson Lake Environmental Association publishes the Observer three times a year to inform the membership on our activities to protect the natural beauty, water quality and biological diversity of the Thompson Lake. We will attempt to provide information about environmental issues that affect the quality of this lake and all the lakes in Maine. You will have a chance to get to know some of our directors and services that our association offers. Lastly, we hope to entertain you with some photos and writings about some of the scenery and interesting things that happen around the lake. If you have any suggestions on how we can do a better job in producing this newsletter, please let me know at [paulcain@myfairpoint.net](mailto:paulcain@myfairpoint.net).

## **Report of the Annual Meeting 2014**

The 2014 TLEA Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, August 2 at the Station House Community Center in Oxford. We were lucky to have good weather and the turnout was robust. Our guest speakers were Scott Williams, State Aquatic Biologist and Heather True, representative for the Cumberland County Soil and Water 319 Grant. The business portion of the meeting included a President's message, a Treasurer's report, committee reports and the election of new directors.

Marcia Matuska presented an overview of the mission of TLEA and the progress we have made in this regard. Thompson Lake is one of the cleanest lakes in Maine but is threatened by soil erosion from development and invasive aquatic species, especially milfoil. Our success in preserving the quality of the lake depends in large part on the efforts of our association, as well as the surrounding landowners and all who use the lake for recreation.

Treasurer's Report was given by Jade Doyle. Jade reported that TLEA has reached a "break even" point as far as finances. Expenses have been relatively stable but revenue from membership dues is down. It is important that members spread the word about our association and the work it does so we can increase our membership. Reach out to new property owners on the lake and road associations to join up and help keep the lake a valuable resource.

Board members gave progress reports on the following programs: Water Quality, Youth Conservation Corp, Courtesy Boat Inspections, Lake Day, the LakeSmart Firewise program and merchandise sales. Updated reports on these projects are detailed later in this Observer.

Ron Armontrout, Paul Cain, Dan Pontbriand and Tim Worden were voted in as new board members for TLEA. Jean Hankins and Bob Tracy stepped down from the board and were recognized for their many years of service.

Heather True gave a progress report on some the soil erosion prevention projects in the towns of Poland and Casco. These projects are funded by the 319 Grant of the Clean Water Act and were identified by the Watershed Survey that was performed previously by volunteers from TLEA.

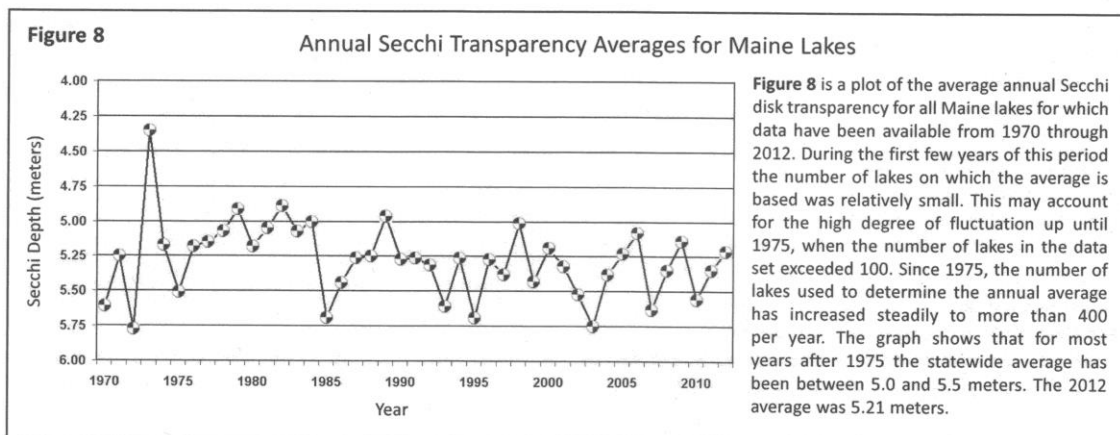
Scott Williams presented a video on the damage to water quality that invasive aquatic species can cause and how to reduce this threat. He also spoke on the detrimental effects of climate change, with earlier ice outs and warmer waters that can lead to increased algae growth.

The meeting was a great opportunity for members to get to know their neighbors at the lake and to learn about some important environmental issues. As usual, many baked goods were presented along with the information, making this a satisfying meeting on many levels. Make sure to join us at the **next Annual Meeting on August 1, 2015**. Mark your calendars!

## Committee Reports:

### Water Quality Report 2014

Here is good news for all who enjoy Thompson Lake. Ron Armontrout of the Water Quality Committee reports that the Secchi dish reading on September 19 was 11.25 meters (36.9 feet). The readings were consistently greater than 9 meters throughout the summer. This shows that as far as water clarity Thompson Lake remains in the top tier of the lakes in Maine. The Secchi Disc reading is a simple method to determine water clarity. The approximately 10 inch disk is submerged and the observer notes at what depth the disk goes out of sight. Clarity correlates with quality, so this is a reliable way to assess the environmental status of a body of water. As a way of comparison, here are Secchi Disc readings averages from the latest of the Maine Lakes Report of 2012. The average reading for the lakes in Maine was 5.21 meters (17 feet).



According to the report, in 2012 Jordan Pond in Acadia National Park recorded the deepest Secchi disc reading of 15.16 meters and only 20 lakes in all of Maine had a reading of greater than 9 meters, nearly all were much farther north than we are. For more information on water quality of the lakes in Maine log on to <http://www.lakesofmaine.org/data/texts/3444.p>

Despite these impressive numbers, Thompson Lake has been categorized by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as “Most at Risk for Development”. This was based on the high sensitivity of the watershed for increases in phosphorous levels and the rate of land development. We must remain vigilant in preserving the quality of our lake.

This summer Ron took over as water quality coordinator for Bob Tracy, who has performed this function for the last 10 years.

### **Milfoil Abatement**

Scott Bernardy reports that the 2014 Milfoil Removal Project had both successes and challenges this past year. Serenity Cove is free of milfoil for the second year in a row. Edwards Cove and Otisfield Cove now have minimal levels of infestation, thanks to the hard work of the milfoil removal crew. There was a resurgence of milfoil growth in Hancock Cove which required a doubling of efforts from the crew. This involved the use of tarps, diver assisted suction harvesting (DASH), and even hand pulling. Scott reports that the fruits of these labors will be assessed when the crew resumes its efforts in June.

As any Courtesy Boat Inspector can tell you, boat ramps are common sources of invasive plant transportation and infestation. The milfoil crew surveyed all the public boat ramps on the lake this past year, including the ramp at the Robinson Mill Marina. They are happy to report there was only a small level of infestation at the Oxford ramps (Pismo Beach and the Robinson Mill Marina) and none at the Landing in Otisfield and the Thompson Lake Marina.

Our biggest challenge regarding milfoil in the lake remains Pine Point. There are 10 acres of infestation in this area and it is the primary generator of milfoil fragments that spread to other areas. Presently this infestation is kept “at bay” with the use of tarps but Scott notes that it would take 4 years and approximately \$200,000 to significantly reduce milfoil in this area with these methods.

One option to reduce this threat is the use of herbicides. The Association fully realizes this is controversial and has potential risks. We have asked for information from the Maine Department of Environmental Protection regarding this option and the requirements involved. Pine Point is the only area considered for this option and so far there is no initiative other than to gather information.

The Milfoil Project at Thompson Lake is considered a model program by other lake associations. In order to do their work they need our support. Please consider making a contribution to the Milfoil Project when you are paying your dues.

## Youth Conservation Corp

The YCC had another busy summer with projects to prevent soil erosion throughout our watershed. The crew completed 15 soil erosion projects for landowners around the lake. The distribution of these projects is noted below:

Town	Jobs Completed
Casco	2
Otisfield	4
Oxford	5
Poland	4

The YCC is now in its 14<sup>th</sup> year of operation. It was created with the help of a 319(H) Grant from the Federal Clean Water Act, designated to develop methods to reduce soil erosion in the watershed. These funds ran out in 2004 and now the project relies on grants from the surrounding towns, private foundations and contributions from individuals. The YCC provides the design and muscle for property improvement and erosion control; the landowner pays for the materials, a reduced rate for labor and must agree to maintain the project for 5 years. By hard physical labor these young people take our environmental goals and make it happen.

Here is an example of what the Youth Conservation Corp can do:

**Problem:** Resident's shore was undercutting from exposure to ice and waves, allowing soil erosion and the run off of phosphorus:



**Solution:** The YCC hand placed rip-rap to armor the shoreline and prevent further erosion.

## **319 Grant**

Marcia Matuska reports that Phase IV of the Thompson Lake Watershed Protection Project progressed well this past summer. This project is funded by a 319 Grant administered by the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD). With the aid these funds the YCC worked on 6 soil erosion sites in Poland and Casco. Poland's Public Works Director Tom Learned and Heather True of the CCSWCD met with TLEA this past summer to review plans for work to be done on Johnson Hill Road. The majority of the work planned for the roads in Poland and Casco will take place in 2015.

Part of the 319 Grant involves reviewing previous sites funded by these implementation grants. Phoebe Hardesty, who was involved in the previous 319 Grants graciously volunteered to help locate and inspect these sites. Her help has been invaluable. All but 3 of the previous sites were evaluated and Marcia is pleased to report that the majority of the sites, while not perfectly maintained, are still functioning well.

## **Courtesy Boat Inspection**

The CBI crew inspected boats at the public boat ramps on 15 weekends and 3 holidays, ending on Labor Day. They performed 1082 inspections, recording registration numbers, Maine Milfoil stickers, time of inspection and location of boat ramp. They checked for presence of invasive plants on the trailers, boats and motors. Any plants found were bagged for study and disposal. Most importantly, the inspectors explained to boat owners how to inspect for invasive plants, so they can do this in their own at launch and retrieval. This year the CBI inspectors found 9 plants on boats leaving the lake, 5 of which were variable milfoil. This helped prevent the further infestation of these plants to other bodies of water.

It is likely that variable milfoil was introduced in Thompson Lake years ago by a transport on a boat from an infected lake. There are many other species of invasive plants that could be introduced to the lake by way of the boat ramp. The CBI inspectors provide an invaluable service. If you see them working at a boat ramp next summer with their yellow T-shirts, take a moment to tell them how much their work is appreciated.

## Grants and Contributions

TLEA has received grant support from various foundations and organizations to protect the quality of the lake. This past year we received funds from **Poland Spring Bottling** to assist us in the cost of our water testing. **Modern Woodman Insurance** provided us with a generous grant to replace the motor on our milfoil extracting “Hippobotamus” boat. The **Stephen and Tabitha King Foundation**, the **Leonard C. and Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation** and the **Dead River Company** provided funding for the YCC, Milfoil Abatement, courtesy boat inspections and water testing. We are grateful for this support and remain committed to putting these funds to good use.

We also received a couple of matching grants from employers of association members who made donations. Check with your employers to see if they will provide a match if you are considering a contribution to TLEA. It is a great way to get employers involved in the community.

## Membership

Despite the progress we have made in preserving the resource of Thompson Lake, Rosemary Nicklaus of the Membership Committee reports that only about 370 of the 1000 or so households around the lake have paid their 2014 membership dues to the Thompson Lake Environmental Association (TLEA). Membership support has declined each of the last two years. This trend is alarming. Without adequate funding from membership current and future TLEA environmental and educational projects are at risk.

Consider what a long term resident of the lake recently wrote when she sent in a large membership contribution to support milfoil abatement: “My family and I have spent 71 summers at Thompson since 1943, first at Ohuivo until 1955, and since on Lunt Point where all my family spends their summers. We love it!!! “. The lake is a source of many such fond memories for families, residents, campers and visitors.

If you are reading this newsletter you have some interest in the quality of the lake. With a membership you can help make sure this quality is preserved. Membership dues are \$35 for a single and \$50 for a family. A small price to pay to keep this lake special! If you are already a member, please make sure your membership contribution is up to date. If you are a loyal member, spread the word and get your neighbors to join up.

To join TLEA visit our web site at [www.tompsonlake.org](http://www.tompsonlake.org) and click on the “Become a Member” link or contact a board member for an application.

## Lake Resident Gets a Visit from a Furry Friend



Kathy Cain of Oxford looked out to her patio one morning this past September and was surprised to see this antlered visitor. He was just passing through and in no hurry. Maybe he was lost, but being a bull he would not ask for directions.

## Education

Peggy Dorf led the way once again in educating our young people on environmental issues. Approximately 80 sixth graders from Oxford and Hebron schools attended Lake Day this past summer at Agassiz Village to learn about watersheds and invasive plants. The “Hey You Cruise”, where mock examples of polluting activities are acted out, kept the kids entertained and taught them important lessons on how to protect a lake. Both these projects are good examples of how we prepare our young people to become stewards of the environment.



## **LakeSmart Firewise Project (How safe is your property from fire?)**

Starting in 2012, representatives of the Maine Forestry Service (MFS), the Oxford Fire Department and TLEA volunteers Kathy Cain and K.C. Putnam performed structural and vegetative assessments of random areas in the Oxford watershed. Assessments were then done in 2014 at areas in Otisfield, Casco and Poland. 52 structural and 15 vegetative sites were evaluated. These evaluations were then analyzed by the Maine Forest Service and they submitted a Synopsis report this past summer. Overall, the MFS stated the structures assessed had an average score that falls into the “moderate risk” category for wildfire. It was noted that lack of defensible space, inadequate roads and signage, and inconsistent water supply are of the highest concerns for these areas. “Defensible space” describes the area around homes and structures that can either accelerate or deter the spread of wildfire. Home owners can improve their properties defensible space by measures such as removing wood debris, leaves, needles and wood piles from within 30 feet of their structures and thinning trees. Wildfire can cause not only extensive property damage but can also lead to severe soil erosion. For more details on this report and how to make property safer from wildfire, see the full report on the TLEA website at [www.thompsonlake.org](http://www.thompsonlake.org)

### ***Briefly Noted***

**Loon Count 2014:** The state wide Loon count took place on July 19. TLEA volunteers took to the water that morning and spotted 13 adult loons and 2 chicks. This representative sample indicates the population is healthy.

**Dam report:** Pete Laverdiere and Hal Ferguson reported at the Annual Meeting that the dam is functioning well at the old Robinson Mill but requires regular maintenance and will need structural improvements in the future. The dam relies on tax revenue from the towns that border the lake, Oxford, Poland, Casco and Otisfield. The winter draw down will take place after the Columbus weekend to prepare for spring rains and ice out. Preventing high water fluctuations is critical in preventing soil erosion.

**Ban on Lead Sinkers:** The state of Maine has banned the use of lead sinkers of 1 oz. or less in its waters. The sale of lead sinkers of ½ oz. or less has been illegal since 2002, allowing for merchandisers and the fishing crowd to develop alternative materials. Lead poisoning from ingested sinkers had become the leading cause of adult loon death in Maine.

**Clynk Program:** Support TLEA by enjoying your favorite beverage and returning your empty containers to participating Hannaford supermarkets. Bring the containers in the green “Clynk” bags that can be picked up at the TLEA office (May through November) or at 37 Black Island Road (year round). The TLEA label on the bag needs to be scanned and then drop the bottles down the chute. All redemption \$’s will go to TLEA.

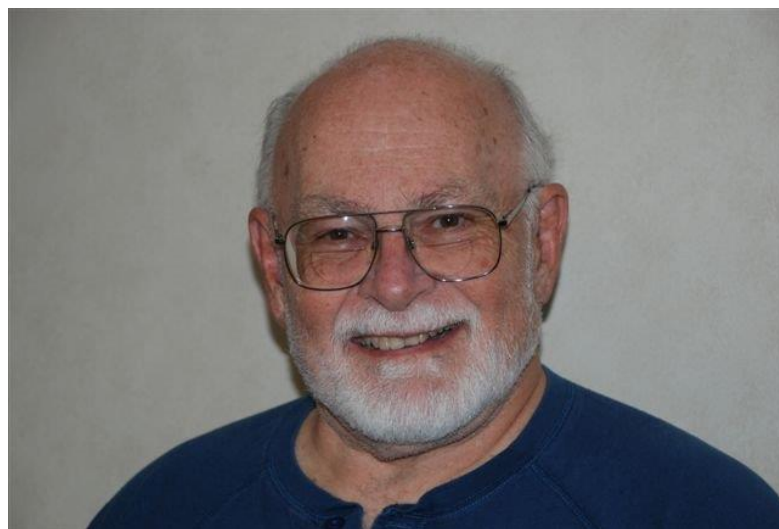
## **Meet Your Directors:**

Our first of two profiles is Linda Gonya. Linda has lived on Loon Point Lane in Poland since 1989. Her first exposure to the lake was as a young girl attending Camp Wayaka. Linda graduated from the Central Maine Medical Center School of nursing and worked at the local hospital. She and her husband Ben raised 3 sons and now enjoy 9 grandchildren.. Linda first served as a director for TLEA in 1989 and now is pleased to be a director again, hoping to maintain the integrity of the lake.she learned to love as a child. Linda enjoys gardening, traveling, sewing and visiting friends. She also loves the privacy and the quiet she experiences on beautiful Thompson.

**Linda Gonya**



**Pete Laverdiere**



Pete Laverdiere lives at Black Island Cove with his wife Beverly. They have lived on the lake for 20 years and enjoy the variety of areas on the lake. Pete was born in Lewiston and then moved to Skowhegan where he attended high school. He then went on to Boston College, the University of Maryland and American College. He is now retired from being an Insurance and Financial Planner for Prudential Financial. He and his wife Beverly have been married over 50 years and raised 3 boys and a girl. Pete became a director in 2004. He has been very active in various committees, including 319 grants, membership and the dam committee. Handy Pete is always ready to fill in for the odd job for TLEA. He also serves as a selectman for the town of Oxford. In his spare time Pete enjoys reading, politics and playing with his 8 grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren.

## Dining for Donors at Applebee's

Join us on **Wednesday, November 5** at Applebee's restaurant on Rt. 26, Oxford. TLEA will be sponsoring a get together at the restaurant to support our environmental projects. You can meet some of your neighbors, have a great meal and help the lake. To join us, contact a board member for a Applebee's coupon or download the coupon from the TLEA web site and print it out; gather some friends (or come alone) and dine at Applebee's from 4:00 to 9:00 PM. 15% of your food tab will be donated to TLEA. Many of our board directors will be there to meet you and talk about our organization. Mostly we will just have fun. Be there!

## Thompson Lake Apparel is Available

Looking for an attractive T-shirt or hat that lets people know you are proud of the lake? TLEA has apparel that is attractive and reasonably priced. The best thing is that the profits from these sales go into improving the lake. You can see what we have and make a purchase by logging on to the TLEA web site or by contacting Kathy Cain at [kathryncain@myfairpoint.net](mailto:kathryncain@myfairpoint.net) or at tel. # 207 539-9122.



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

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# OBSERVER

Published three times annually by the  
Thompson Lake Environmental Association  
(207) 539-4535

Editor: Paul Cain

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Organization

U.S. Postage  
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OXFORD, ME 04270  
Permit #71