

The THOMPSON LAKE

# OBSERVER

Spring 2014

Issue No. 172



*A small red fox surveying his domain, Spring 2014.  
(Photo Kathy Cain)*

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

This has been a cold, snowy winter, and the lake has been frozen solid since Christmas, great for ice fishing and snowshoeing. Those who guessed that the ice would go out in June may win the contest! But we are assuming that the ice will soon melt, summer will arrive, and boating and fishing will replace snowshoeing. Our lake provides a great variety of opportunities for enjoying nature.

It is TLEA's mission to protect this beautiful lake so that future generations can enjoy it in every season. To that end, we are pleased to announce that the Maine DEP has awarded TLEA another 319 grant which addresses problems noted in our 2009 watershed survey of Casco and Poland. We expect to correct or mitigate at least 14 priority erosion sites and thereby prevent over 96 tons of soil from eroding into the lake.

This grant will include a new component. During the grant's two-year period, a committee of five TLEA board members will review sites from our five previous 319 grants to find out how well the improvements have been maintained and to recommend further work if required. This step will also involve creating a data base of all sites corrected in the previous grants.

TLEA's contribution to this 319 grant is \$10,000. Please consider sending in a little (or a lot!) to help us accomplish this important work. It is only with such constant monitoring and maintaining that we will keep our beautiful lake clean and clear for generations to come.

Marcia Matuska, Co-President

## **TLEA'S ANNUAL MEETING TO BE HELD AUGUST 2**

Don't say we didn't give you fair warning of the Annual Meeting as required by TLEA's by-laws. It will be held on Saturday, August 2, at 9 a.m. at the Oxford Recreation Hall, the green building situated at the corner of King Street and State Route 121.

While plans for the program are still indefinite, one of the most important parts of the meeting is to elect new officers and directors. The directors who will be seeking to be elected for the first time include Ron Armontrout, Tim Worden and Paul Cain.

Continuing as directors are Karen Brown, Kathy Cain, Tony Caggiano, Pete Laverdiere, Dan Porter, Tom Ray, Joy Lowe, Jade Doyle, Rosemary Nicklaus, and Sharon Rice.



*Snowbiking on Thompson. Sue Ellis produced this nifty image of two anonymous winter enthusiasts.*

### **MAINE'S MILFOIL REMOVAL BILL FAILS, BUT . . .**

This spring Maine legislators considered LD 1626, also called “ the Milfoil Removal Bill,” which would have raised the amount of the milfoil sticker fee and provided more funding for controlling invasive plants in waterbodies throughout the state. The bill, presented by Representative Mike McClellan of Raymond, received strong support from Maine Lakes Society and many other environmentally concerned groups throughout the state, including TLEA. Director Scott Bernardy stated that “In the past the percentage of money from the boat stickers that actually goes towards the mitigation process is quite small. On top of that more lakes are now requesting funding, so our annual grant is receiving less funds.”

Eventually the legislature rejected the bill. Fortunately, that was not the end of the story. In short, Maine’s lawmakers managed to substantially increase state milfoil funding simply by transferring money from the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) to the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). According to George A. Smith, former director of Sportsman’s Alliance, the new arrangement shifts a larger percentage of sticker fee money from the IFW to the DEP. The reduction in the IFW’s share was made up from surplus funds. Peter Lowell, Director of Bridgton’s Lake Environmental Association, was ecstatic about the new arrangement, and noted that it will triple the amount of money available for eradication efforts.

## **SCOTT WILLIAMS REPORTS ON HEALTH OF LAKE**

[Editor's note: This is an abbreviated version of the full report, which is on file at the TLEA Office and is available to the public on request.]

Scott Williams' report on the water quality of Thompson Lake in 2013 was based on his tests of the lake water from near Hayes Point in Oxford during the months of May through September 2013. It is also based on historical data and on Bob Tracy's Secchi disk readings measuring water clarity for the whole season.

Overall, Thompson Lake was less clear than the historical average for the lake in 2013. During the course of the monitoring season, the distance that one could see down into the water from the lake surface varied from a relatively high (good) reading of 10.7 meters taken by Bob Tracy on May 15, to a low reading taken only a short time later that month following several days of heavy rain and runoff. The average for the May through September period was 8.0 meters, which although significantly clearer than the overall average for Maine lakes, was well below the historical 9.0 meter average for Thompson.

In 2013 both phosphorus and chlorophyll concentrations were about average. Late summer oxygen levels in the deepest area of the lake have been relatively low during the past few years, possibly due to shorter duration of the period of ice cover, warmer water temperatures, and a resulting lengthening of the period of thermal stratification. The September 2013 oxygen concentration at the deepest area of the monitoring station was among the lowest on record for the lake. Thompson Lake very likely remains stratified well into October, and possibly November, depending on annual weather patterns. It is assumed that oxygen levels in the deepest areas of the lake continue to decline beyond the end of the monitoring period in September until the lake mixes.

Thompson Lake continues to exhibit water quality that is significantly above the average for Maine lakes. The number and complexity of threats to Maine lakes are likely to continue to grow as climate change may exacerbate the effects of everything from watershed development to the breadth of invasive species infestation. The role that TLEA has played so effectively in protecting Thompson Lake for the past several decades has never been more critical.

## SNOW PACK CAUSE CONCERNS

TLEA Directors Pete Laverdiere and Scott Bernardy, both members of the regional dam committee concerned with maintenance issues of the Oxford dam and the water level of the lake, have expressed some of their concerns this spring because of the heavy snow pack. A new “cow-catcher” device for the center gate, costing \$15 to \$20 thousand, has not yet been approved; the Town of Oxford would potentially fund that device.

As of late March, in sharp contrast to the situation in the past few years, the snowpack in the watershed is actually increasing. On March 21 it measured approximately two feet. Scott points out that 3 to 4 inches of icy snow are the equivalent of 1 inch of rain. Without figuring in any rain at all, the melting snowpack potentially will account for a 12 inch rise in lake level. Scott is worried about the ability of the center gate of the dam to handle such a large rise this spring.



*Lick-it, Stick it party to mail out membership letters, January 2014.  
L-R are Rosemary Nicklaus, Linda Gonya, Jade Doyle, Jean Hankins,  
Pete Laverdiere, Bob Tracy (partly hidden), Sue Ellis, Kathy Cain.*

## MILFOIL SUMMIT 2014

Did you realize that only 1% of Maine lakes are known to harbor invasive plant infestations? That compares to an estimated 60% of the lakes in Connecticut and the 34% in Massachusetts. These figures were announced at the 2014 Milfoil Summit on February 28, held at the Lewiston-Auburn campus of USM. They were part of an impressive video produced by MVLMP's Roberta Hill and videographer Stephen Underwood. This video also documented the 2013 survey of the complete shoreline of Moosehead Lake, in which volunteers searched for invasive plant infestations. Happily, none were found!

As usual the summit was ably organized and chaired by Peter Lowell, Executive Director of Lakes Environmental Association (LEA), in cooperation with Maine DEP and IF&W. In his opening remarks, Peter summarized the incredible amount of work going on in the region's waterbodies to reduce the impact of invasive plants. He noted, for example, that TLEA, despite years of effort and substantial investment, has had mixed success to date whereas the Pleasant Pond-Parker Pond Association has been able to almost eliminate their threat. He also noted that whereas Hogan Pond has 40-45 acres of milfoil growth, the nearby Shagg and Bryant Ponds have had very good results in eliminating invasives.

The day's keynote speaker was state representative Michael McClellan, a resident of Raymond and the sponsor of LD 1626, an act to provide additional funding for invasive plant mitigation, partly by increasing the boat sticker fee by \$5. Rep. McClellan stated, "We need to keep educating the public" about the problems of invasive plants.

U.S. Senator Susan Collins had prepared a video for the summit. She expressed her appreciation for the work of the many volunteers and professionals striving to deal with the invasive plant issue, recalling that she was the original sponsor in Congress of the Maine Milfoil Initiative in 2009-10 which provided \$500,000, shared among 7 lake groups (TLEA being one) in order to combat milfoil. She declared she is presently working with other legislators on new laws to expand similar efforts nationally.

In his concluding remarks, Lowell observed that this was the best attended of all the summits to date. TLEA was represented by four of its directors: Kathy Cain, Bob Tracy, Ron Armontrout, and Rosemary Nicklaus.



## BRIEFLY NOTED

**Loon Count.** The annual Audubon Society Loon Count is scheduled for 7 to 8 a.m. on July 19. Peggy Dorf is hoping for many volunteers. To be assigned a sector of the lake to patrol on that day, email her at [peggydorf@ymail.com](mailto:peggydorf@ymail.com), or call her at 539-2973. She'll get you a copy of the map in plenty of time.

**Ice Out Contest.** As Marcia Matuska has suggested in her President's Message, this year we may have to wait until June to declare a winner. Remember the spring two years ago when the ice went out on March 23, and the lake and watershed were soon full of fishing boats and folks putting out their docks and lawn chairs? Right now, even matching last year's more normal ice out date of April 15 seems impossible.

**Ice Cream Festival on August 15, Agassiz Village.** Come try our frozen delights and watch a movie too! Plans are still incomplete at this time, but better mark the date down on your calendar. Details will follow in the summer issue of the *Observer*.

**LakeSmart and Firewise Program.** TLEA will again participate in this program, sponsored by the Maine Forest Service to help protect lakeside property owners from the threat of fire. Last year fire prevention experts visited several Thompson Lake residences where they pointed out tips to improve homeowners' safety. Visits will be made only to those volunteering, and there will be no charge. One useful piece of advice last year was to keep firewood and compost piles at least 30 feet from buildings and fuel tanks.



*Winter 2013-14 was a boom time for the roof-shoveling entrepreneurs. Bob Tracy preserved this January moment near his Otisfield Cove home.*

## **A Day at the Lake**

**by Sally Bettencourt**

The sun dances off the lake  
Making some parts sparkle  
Like stars twinkling at night.

There's not a sound to be heard  
Except the softest lapping  
Of the water against the rocks.

Later dark clouds roll in with a rumble.  
Sheets of rain, wind and lightning follow.  
Whitecaps surge and dash against the shore.

Just as quickly as it started,  
The storm comes to an end.  
The sun shines again even before  
the rain stops – a rainbow to behold.  
A blessing for all.

A loon is spotted on the far side of the cove.  
Only his head and neck can be seen.  
He surveys his world and ours – all's well!  
So he dives and is gone 'til another day.





## **TLEA GETS NEW EROSION CONTROL GRANT FOR CASCO AND POLAND SITES**

During the winter TLEA received the welcome news that the Maine Department of Environmental Protection has awarded us a new two-year grant under Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act. We believe it is the fourth time we have received a 319 grant to conduct nonpoint source pollution work; previous 319 grants were for the years 1994, 2001, and 2010-11. The grant proposal was written by Heather True of the Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD). She will also administer the project over the next two years. The formal title of the grant is Thompson Lake NPS Watershed Protection Project, Phase IV—Casco and Poland.

The grant proposal emphasized that although Thompson Lake has good water clarity and high dissolved oxygen ratings, “there are signs that [Thompson’s] water quality could be declining.” It also noted that in 2012, dissolved oxygen levels in the deepest area of the lake were 6.1 parts per million, the lowest ever recorded. The lake’s slow flushing rate of once every three years also makes it sensitive to small increases in phosphorus, which in turn lead to algae growth and can be harmful to fish habitat.

In the two years of this project, staff of CCSWCD will install best management practices at 14 priority water quality impact sites, all in the towns of Casco and Poland. These sites were previously identified in a watershed survey of those towns conducted by TLEA. The Casco and Poland sites will include 3 private beach access sites, 6 town road sites, 3 private road sites, 1 residential shoreline site, and 1 driveway.

TLEA’s Youth Conservation Corps will be involved in implementing conservation practices at 16 town road and residential sites within the towns of Casco and Poland during four weeks of work over the two-year grant period.

As part of the grant, this summer a survey will be conducted to document all previously installed best management practices. The survey will identify where more maintenance is needed, and what that maintenance would involve. Results of the survey will be mailed to property owners.

This grant will bring \$87,938 in federal funds to Thompson Lake. TLEA has committed to spend \$10,000, with an additional contribution in in-kind service. It is anticipated that the overall project will reduce sediment washing into the lake by about 78 tons each year.

## TOWN OF OTISFIELD FUNDS STUDY OF COBB HILL ROAD'S PROBLEMS

Selectmen of the town of Otisfield have committed the town to taking a hard look at the long-standing problems on Cobb Hill Road, which for years has washed out during heavy rains. TLEA has a special interest in this 1.6 mile road which runs on a ridge high above Thompson Lake's west shore. Historically erosion from this road has contributed hugely to phosphorus-loading of the lake. In addition to several driveways, three private camp roads run from Cobb Hill down to the lake: Martin's Way, Jillson Camp Road, and Ohuivo Camp Road.

Residents and the Otisfield Conservation Committee had voiced their concerns about road's recurring problems. Two of TLEA's past 319 Clean Water grants have included remedial projects to address specific sites on Cobb Hill. These resulted in significant improvements. In addition, recently the town highway department installed some new culverts, which have also helped. But it was felt a more comprehensive look was needed. Therefore, in March the selectmen signed a contract with engineer Ross Cudlitz to review, evaluate, and model the design of a new Cobb Hill Road erosion project. Several years ago Cudlitz designed the substantial restructure of Shore Road and Parkway after heavy spring storms destroyed portions of those roads.

According to Leslie Dixon, writing in the March 13 issue of the *Advertiser Democrat*, "Officials said work for the first two phases [of this new project] is intended to support and confirm hypotheses that multiple culverts, more ditching, more plunge pools, properly sized riprap and private and public water diversions will be the solution to what is considered a large-scale erosion problem."

Thus far the town has committed itself only to planning, analysis, and computer modeling but has not committed funds for any remedial work.



## **TLEA CONTINUES SUCCESSFUL SUMMER PROGRAMS**

### **Lake Day on Wednesday, May 28, at Agassiz Village in Poland**

Over the past year a number of TLEA members and volunteers expressed their regret that Lake Day didn't happen, for the first time in many years. Organized by Oxford teacher Sandy Roderick, who is also a former TLEA director, this full day of outdoor environmental activities for area schoolchildren has been a stellar educational program every year since 2000. Last year, for a number of good reasons, it was cancelled. But on May 28 it will happen again, this year with the strong support by the Oxford County Soil and Water Conservation District, TLEA, and a host of volunteers. The format will be much the same as in previous years and will include the Hey You! Cruise as a separate but connected event. If you would like to help or even just come and learn how to keep hundreds of children happy as they learn, you can email Sandy at [sandra\\_roderick@sad17.k12](mailto:sandra_roderick@sad17.k12).

### **Milfoil Eradication, summer-long program**

Rob McVety will again head up this summer's milfoil removal crew, which will continue to wage aggressive war against the Pine Point infestation, with monitoring of other shallow coves in the lake where tarp placement has been used for the last few years to curtail new growth. Scott Bernardy, who oversees this program, warns that TLEA's aging pontoon boat, the Hippo, may require some repairs. See related article on page 3 concerning state funding for invasive plant control.

### **Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), summer-long program**

As of this writing, TLEA is interviewing candidates to replace Justin St. John, our very able coordinator-crew chief for the last three years. The four-member crew will continue to assist property owners around the lake and watershed in solving their erosion control problems. It's not too soon to get on the YCC's list. Please call the TLEA Office at 539-4535 to schedule a visit from the Coordinator. The crew works four days a week for most of the summer. Poland's Tom Ray is chair of the YCC Oversight Committee.

### **Courtesy Boat Inspectors (CBI), summer-long program**

Look for Courtesy Boat inspectors at the three boat ramps on our lake this summer. They work weekends, Memorial Day through Labor Day, engaging boaters in a discussion about how easy it is to transport invasive water plants between water bodies. CBIs will check boats and gear for plants, record where the boat was last launched, and check for display of state-issued milfoil stickers. The CBIs' main role is to educate. Any plants found on boats or trailers are removed and identified as invasive or native and then reported to the Maine DEP. Dan Porter is the TLEA director who organizes this program.

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

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