

Summer 2019

Issue No. 188



*In this issue: Memories of people and things from Thompson Lake*

(Photo by Karis Pressler, quote from John Lennon.)

# ***DON'T FORGET: TLEA Annual Meeting, August 3***

## **Annual Meeting**

The Thompson Lake Environmental Association 2018 Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, August 3 from 9:00- 11:00. This will be at the Oxford Recreational Center at the intersection of Rt. 121 and King Street, Oxford. This is your chance to hear about the environmental issues affecting the lake and what TLEA is doing about them. It is also a chance to have your voice heard if you have a question or concern about the lake. We will have elections for board members, a 50/50 raffle and plenty of baked goods and refreshments.

***This year our guest speaker will be Scott Bernardy, member of the Oxford Dam Committee, who will discuss the history and present status of the Oxford dam.***

We will also have election of TLEA board members and officers. The following names have been placed in nomination for re-election to the board (terms to 2021): Kathy Cain, Pete Laverdiere, Jade Doyle, Sharon Rice, Dr. Sarah Rice, Peter Siebert and Rosemary Nicklaus. Bill Booth and Susan O'Byrne are new nominees for the board. Our proposed officers are: **Co-Presidents-** Kathy Cain and Marcia Matuska, **Treasurer-** Jade Doyle, **Secretary-** Susan O'Byrne

This meeting is always informative and a great way to meet some of your fellow lake residents. As usual, there will be plenty of baked goods and beverages. We look forward to seeing you there.

## **Program Reports**

### **Courtesy Boat Inspections**

Marcia Matuska reports that boat inspections continue this year at 4 ramps- the Marina in Casco and Pismo Beach, Robinson's Marina and the Landing in Oxford. The town of Oxford has graciously agreed to have the park attendants inspect boats at Pismo. As a result of this we are able to have our inspectors at Robinson's Marina. This will give us a chance to see how many boats are actually launching there. We have 3 great new inspectors, they are thorough and reliable. Thank you, Erik, Nathaniel and Michael. If you see them at a ramp, please pass on our thanks for their efforts. Remember boaters, it is imperative to drain and check your own boat every time you launch or exit!

# Water Quality

Ron Armontrout and John Powers have been taking Secchi disc readings in the lake to assess our water quality, which correlates directly to quality. Their last reading was on July 20 and the disc could be seen at 8.78 meters. This compares to reading of 9.5m last year at this time. There has been a lot of pine pollen this year and a heavy spring run-off. Overall Thompson Lake still has some of the clearest water in the state. Let's keep it that way.

## Milfoil Removal Update

(Submitted by crew chief Alex Bernardy)

The 2019 milfoil season is well underway and we are excited to share our progress so far.

We began our season by relocating all of the benthic barriers in Pine Point to an adjacent milfoil colony in this cove. These barriers now cover almost 2 acres of healthy invasive plants. These barriers will stay until mid-August when we will rotate them to cover other infested areas.

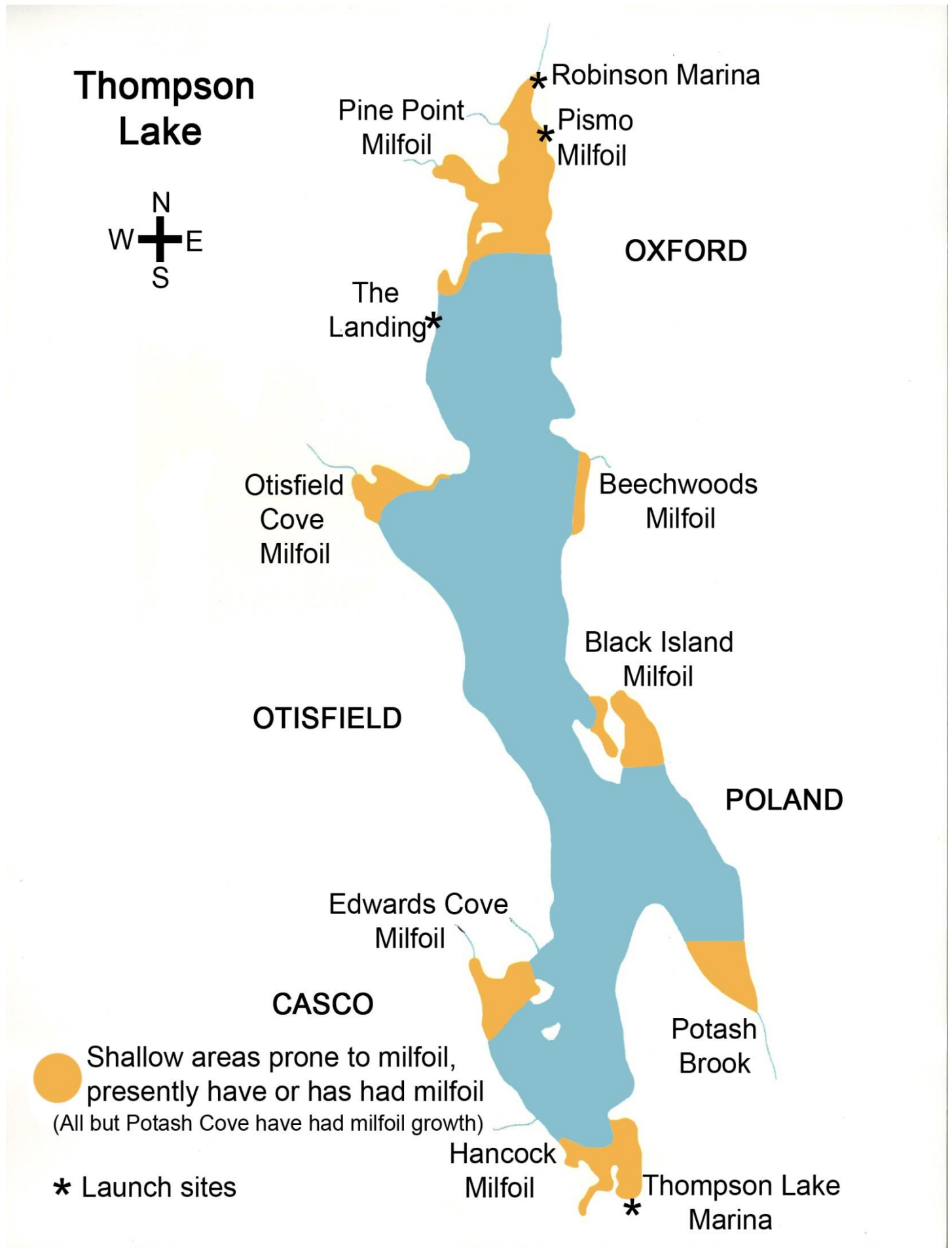
Pine Point will continue to be our main focus for the season. In one month's time we have used the suction harvester, otherwise known as the Hippobottomus, to remove roughly 12,000 pounds of milfoil in Pine Point. At this point roughly 50-60% of the cove's milfoil population has been removed. We are maintaining any regrowth patterns that occur.

We have also been monitoring other coves, (Edwards, Hancock, and Otisfield Cove) where milfoil once thrived, and we are happy to announce that these coves continue to remain at low to native levels.

We have also been suction harvesting in the very northern area of the lake in front of Pismo Beach, near the dam. The first milfoil colonies were discovered in these areas only a few years ago. Since then we have effectively eliminated or controlled the larger colonies which provided the greatest threat to the lake.

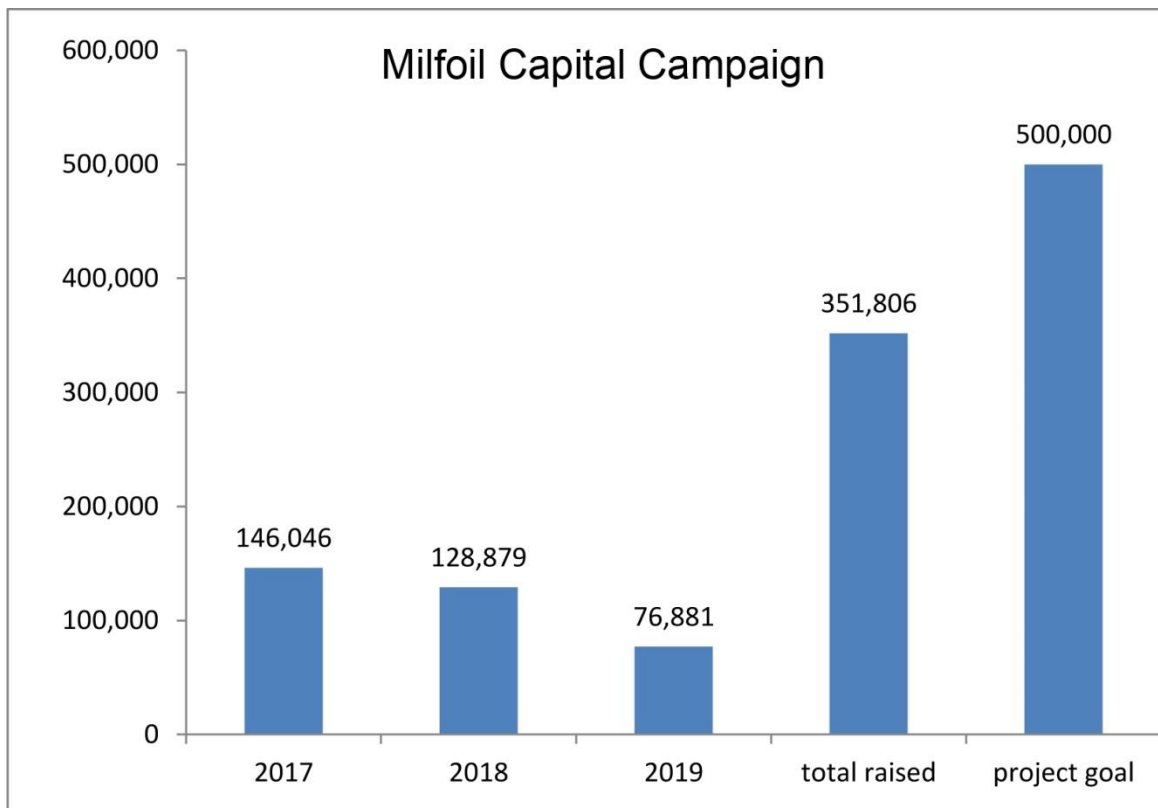
***Editor's note:*** Prior to the 1970's there were no invasive plants in Thompson Lake. A small colony of variable leaf milfoil that was transported to the area Alex is referring to was introduced, most likely, by a watercraft in the 1980's. This subsequently spread to nine locations in the lake with colonies ranging from a few hundred square feet to 10 acres. ***Our efforts have eliminated over 90% of the milfoil colonies outside of Pine Point, but these areas will inevitably be re-infested if we do not drastically reduce the growth of milfoil in Pine Point.***

400 of the 4,400 acres that make up Thompson Lake are susceptible to the migration and growth of milfoil. These areas are outlined on this chart



## Capital Campaign for Milfoil Removal

The remarkable work done by Alex and his crew does not come cheaply. The Capital Campaign to fund this project to reduce milfoil in the Pine Point area and mitigate the spread of invasive species throughout the lake was launched in the late summer of 2017. We are happy to say that thanks to the environmental awareness and generosity of many individuals and businesses, we are off to a good start, but we still have a ways to go in our 4 year campaign. Let's do this! ***We still need your support.*** Contributions can be sent to TLEA, PO Box 25, Oxford, ME 04270. Thank you to all who have donated or have pledged money to this cause. ***If you have an outstanding pledge for a donation, please send it in ASAP.***



## Oxford Dam

Renovations are being planned by the town of Oxford for the dam at the outlet of the lake. TLEA and area residents have been in attendance at the recent Oxford Selectman meetings to discuss the plan to repair the dam.

As we noted in our previous Observer, the dam is in serious disrepair. A recent inspection assessed the overall condition of the dam to be "fair to poor". The center gate is not fully functional, and the hydraulic capacity of the remaining west and east sluices are not considered sufficient to safely pass a "small storm event". If the center gate is fully restored the hydraulic capacity of the dam could handle a "10 year flood" but this is much less than the 100 year flood spillway design required. To compound this, the east sluice is presently out of service because its stoplog



boards are bowing and near the failure point. If the east sluice were to fail it is estimated that the lake level could drop by one foot in 6-7 days.

The town of Oxford has hired the engineering firm of MBP Consulting to survey and make recommendations for the repair of the dam. Presently, they have recommended short term and long term remedial measures. The town of Oxford has proposed to begin this project by installing a concrete overlay on the upstream side of the East sluice and to replacing the gate with an automatically operating sliding gate. The price tag for this is approximately \$270,000, and this is just one of the recommendations. Scott Bernardy will be presenting a review of the history of the dam and its future challenges at the Annual Meeting. There is much to discuss here and this will affect all 4 towns that border the lake. Don't miss it!

The role of TLEA in this project will be to provide advice as to how to maintain optimal water levels for the protection of the lake water quality, recreation and fisheries. A well-functioning and maintained dam is essential for the quality of the lake, as well as preserving the tax base for all 4 towns. Our liminologist (water quality expert), Scott Williams, states that erratic, fluctuating water levels will result in instability of the lake ecosystem, especially within the shallow areas of the lake. There is certainly the potential for water quality to be degraded as a result. What impact would a dam failure have on the recreational quality and property values of the lake? Here is a photo of Potash Cove from 1984 when the water level of the lake had dropped precipitously:



Photo by Karen Brown

We look forward to input from all 4 towns regarding this issue and the development of a sustainable repair and maintenance program for the dam, with the necessary funding.

## Memories of Thompson Lake

What has Thompson Lake meant for you and your family over the years? This section of the Observer is dedicated to memories people have of the lake. Some of these memories include beloved family members who have recently passed on. The lake meant so much to them that their families created memorial funds to support the work of TLEA.

*This is from Jim Skinner. His wife, Kat Riseman, passed away this past winter. Jim and Kat had a yearning for lakeside living and were taken with the Thompson as they explored various Maine lakes:*

Thompson Lake showed itself as a wild, almost ocean-like body of water. When we drove down an intriguing dirt road in Oxford, Maine, we were stunned! We smiled to each other as we turned left at its bottom section, and anticipated with contained glee as we saw the Lake through the trees. When we saw the cottage on Hay's Point, our quest revealed the treasure.

So, in the early summer of 2014, we had found a place to refurbish and to enjoy in our retirement, with our mature children and their growing families; our grand kids! We labored on repairs and collected the necessary furniture, updated the operating systems, and gradually were able to enjoy gatherings and surprise visits from many family members and good friends.

These five years on Thompson Lake have been the best years of our lives, full of adventure, hard work, good companionship, and fun. Playing in the Lake, visiting and cooking meals, all the time bathed in the beauty of the Lake and its windy shore.

We joined the Thompson Lake Environmental Association, recognizing that the lake was a living and changeable environment and it needed loving attention from supporters. So we pitched in with volunteer work to support this lake community. We became involved in erosion and vegetation control. We learned about the danger of the milfoil infestation. And we eventually learned of the problem of the Old Robinson Mill Dam. It was deteriorating, and in dire need of careful, thoughtful, and dedicated attention and; rehabilitation.

All these needs and others required funds and fund-raising efforts to support the conservation efforts of the volunteers who have banded together to monitor and maintain the purity and security of our amazing Thompson Lake.

It is with proud love for Thompson Lake that the Riseman-Skinner family and friends pledge of at least \$1000 to TLEA to use in its efforts to keep Thompson Lake beautiful and healthy for all to enjoy.

This initial amount memorializes the passing of Kathleen Lucy Riseman this past winter. It is hoped that all families with their own well-loved memories of Thompson Lake could all join us in remembering the importance of love for family, and for Thompson Lake.

Please give to TLEA, as you can. Continue your annual memberships. Obtain multiple family memberships, so that the love and support can continue, generation after generation.

If you have loved ones you wish to remember in memoriam, give in their names to the Thompson Lake Environmental Association Memorial Fund.

Best wishes to all this summer and in the future; from me, our extended family and friends. And from Kat, now in Spirit.

***This is from Linda Smith. Linda and her husband, Jack, came to the lake late in life when they were looking for a retirement home. Jack passed away this past winter.***

Jack and I visited friends on Thompson Lake in Casco in 2005. While driving around we followed a sign offering a house for sale by owner. It turned out to be this log cabin on Black Island. Jack barely looked at the house but he certainly noticed the lake – because he bought the property that day! We joined TLEA right away. A few years later Jack added a master bedroom suite and we became permanent residents. Our bedroom includes a large picture window looking out over the lake – one I look through often. I keep the bedroom door open so I can also enjoy the view from the living room. When the sun is shining the lake sparkles, as if diamonds were dancing outside. In autumn the colors across the lake are magnificent,

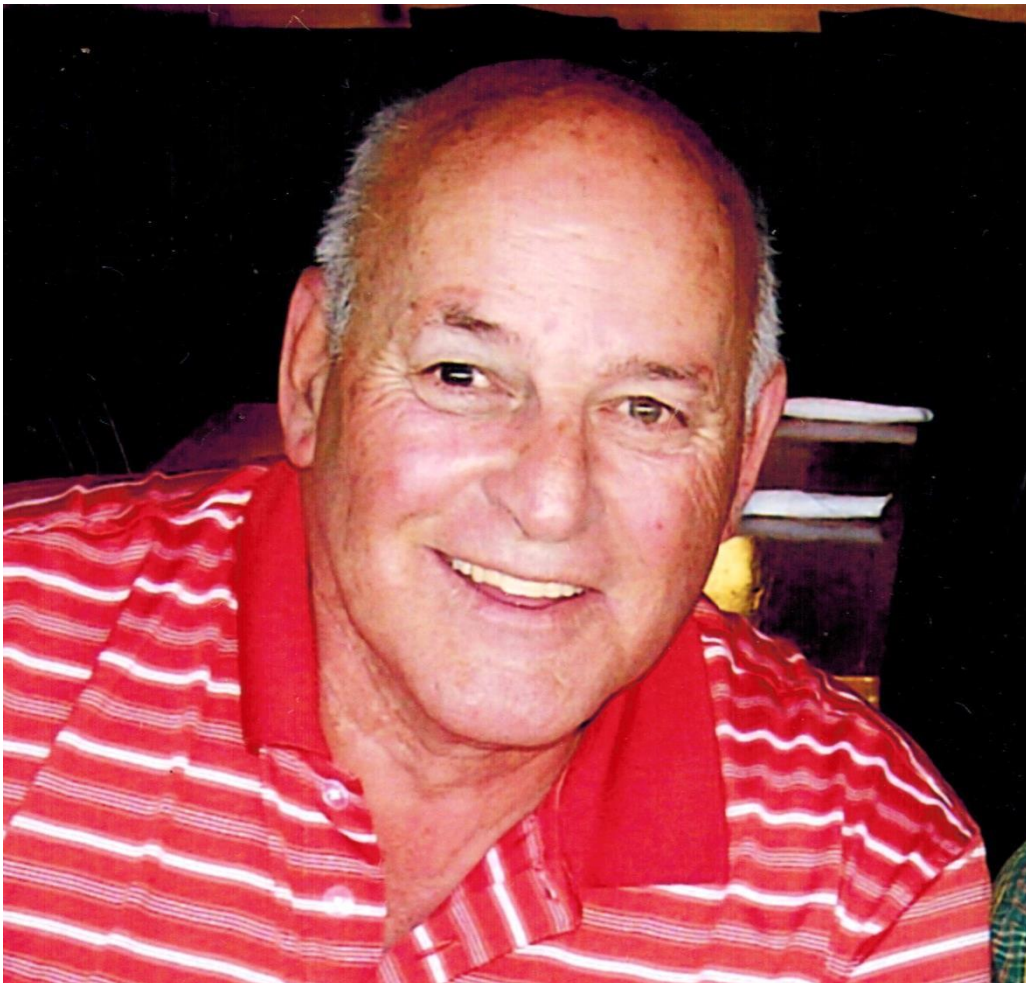
To celebrate Jack's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday we had a large family gathering – his daughters, his sons, his brother, grandchildren and great-grandchildren all attended. Boat rides, swimming, water-skiing, stories around the campfire, s'mores – it was a superb day. It's not surprising that Jack loved to invite friends to visit. It gave him a chance to rhapsodize about Maine and Thompson Lake's clarity and beauty. When it came time to designate a charity for Jack's friends to remember him by, TLEA was the perfect choice.



***Doreen Doster and her family come to Thompson Lake every summer. They have fond memories of her father, William "Bill" Fortey, who instilled in them a love for the lake. Here is how Doreen describes her father and their life on the lake:***

Bill Fortey first experienced Thompson Lake as a teenager when he would spend his summers there with his family. His father sought out Thompson Lake for its abundance of salmon, as he was an avid fisherman. Bill continued to bring his own family there each and every summer from July 4th to Labor Day, before eventually retiring in Otisfield with his wife of 54 years, Patricia.

Whether it was fishing, waterskiing, or sailing; Bill could always be found on the waters of Thompson Lake. He enjoyed chess matches by the lake and family games at night in the cottage. Lifelong friendships were made with those in the cottages nearby. Bill passed down his love of Thompson Lake to his children. Now two of his children own cottages on the lake, cherishing all the memories made there and, in turn, passing down their love of the lake to his grandchildren. That's four generations! Thompson Lake will always be a special place for our family and we will continue to help in the efforts to keep it one of the cleanest and most enjoyable lakes in Maine.



William "Bill" Fortey, 1940 - 2019

***Now from Karis Pressler. You might say Karis “married well” when she met her husband, whose family had a camp (cottage?) on Thompson that they bought in the 1950’s.***

We visit Thompson Lake every summer with our two young children. My in-laws don’t call the house a camp but rather “the cottage” which suits the structure perfectly. Built in the late 1950s, the cottage hasn’t changed much in the past 60 years and still boasts textured moss green carpet, the same sturdy wooden bunk beds that came with the property when my in-laws purchased it, and original metal kitchen cabinets.

Several years ago I became curious about the lake’s history and my husband’s Abenaki heritage. My father-in-law recalled when divers discovered petroglyphs etched onto submerged boulders not far from the shoreline. So I dove deep into maps of Maine from the 1700 and 1800s to try tracing the lake’s natural shoreline when it was Thompson Pond, before the Robinson Mill dam. Then, I kayaked over submerged boulders that I suspected rested on shore, some as big as the cottage, and kept an eye open for etchings that looked more human than glacial.

But I gave up on my very amateur hunt for petroglyphs, not because I abandoned the belief that they exist somewhere in Thompson Lake, but because I realized that I don’t need physical proof of the past to show me what I already know.

I know that many generations have savored the lake’s spring-fed waters. I know that over the centuries and millennia many have stood on its shore to observe a bobbing loon before it disappears underwater, watched the sun sink into the horizon, and have savored the scent of campfires crackling at dusk. I know these things because I have been moved by this place and I never tire of my first glimpse of water while bumping down the Beechwoods’ gravel road, or that moment when I finally get to touch the lake.

I will never take any moment for granted at Thompson Lake. This lake is a sacred and enduring place that connects and inspires across generations.

***If you have a memory of Thompson Lake you would like to share, please send this on to the Observer. If you would like to create a memorial fund for the support of TLEA, or contribute to an existing fund, please contact us. Our contact information is on the last page of the Observer.***

## Briefly Noted

**Annual Loon Count:** was held Saturday, July 20, 7:00-8:00 AM. 22 adult loons were seen between 7:00- 8:00 AM. This sampling is 7 more than last year!

**Clynk Program:** Don't forget to support TLEA by donating your used bottles to our Clynk program. The Clynk bags can be picked up at the TLEA office or at 37 Black Island Rd. For more info call the TLEA office at 539-4535

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Kat Riseman and Jim Skinner

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