



Summer 2020

Issue No. 191



Two loons swim into a lake.....

(Photo by Susan O'Byrne.)

DON'T FORGET: TLEA Virtual Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting

Because of concerns regarding COVID-19 and large, indoor gatherings the Thompson Lake Environmental Association 2020 Annual Meeting will be conducted by email. The TLEA Board will send out ballot for nominees for board membership and officers to the membership in mid-July. We would appreciate your responses and votes by July 31. The Board will meet on August 1 to review the elections and our annual reports from our programs. We will then send to the membership an email version of the meeting. Our annual meeting is an important time to catch up on 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. Questions or comments regarding our programs and mission should be included in the email responses from the membership in July.

So far, 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

Program Reports

Milfoil Removal Update

(Submitted by crew chief Alex Bernardy)

Alex Bernardy and his milfoil removal crew have been on the job since shortly after Memorial Day, 2020. Alex reports that they initially had to deal with a significant amount of grow back of milfoil at the causeway area at Pine Point. After 4-5 days of hand pulling and suctioning, this area now has minimal growth, equivalent to the end of 2019.

The crew was also busy placing benthic barriers, or tarps, on colonies of plants. Approximately 25% of the tarps at Pine Point were rotated to cover remaining colonies in this area. The remaining 75% of tarps will be left in place to prevent grow back. Two large tarps and 25 smaller tarps were placed over plants at the Briggs Island area in this cove. The crew will also be hand pulling plants from this

area that are not covered. Alex estimates that there is now 1.5 acres of dense colonies in this Pine Point area which they will continue to remove.

The crew also has been patrolling the remaining coves of the lake for invasive species of plants. Edwards Cove and Otisfield Cove both had 10-12 plants of milfoil which were removed by divers. Hancock Cove had a sizable patch and the crew pulled out a full bag of plants. The crew will be looking to the Pismo beach and Oxford dam area later this summer for plant removal.

As of June 25, the crew has removed 22,110 pounds of milfoil from the lake.

Capital Campaign for Milfoil Removal

Kathy Cain reports that the Capital Campaign, which started in 2017, is now finished. This was a huge success and TLEA wishes to extend our thanks to all the property owners, businesses, towns, and visitors who donated to this effort. Invasive species, such as milfoil, will always be a threat to the lake but we are in good shape as far as our present plant removal efforts and we plan to continue to survey the entire lake and mitigate this threat.

In 2017 we recognized that to control milfoil growth we had to tackle the large area of milfoil growth at Pine Point, where there was considerable boat traffic and a risk of fragmentation and spread of the plants. Thanks to all who donated to these efforts and the hard work of the milfoil removal crew, by the end of 2020 the 10 acres of infestation will be reduce to a minimal amount. This was a formidable challenge, but we did it! Milfoil infestation is now a fraction of what it was 3 years ago.

Courtesy Boat Inspections

Marcia Matuska reports that TLEA is staffing inspectors at the boat ramps of The Marina in Casco, the Landing and Pismo Beach, both in Oxford. We have 3 returning inspectors and a new inductee. They have been busy; with the recent hot and sunny weather, as well as maybe some more local leisure time with Covid-19, there has been a lot of boat traffic in and out of the lake. Boaters have been cooperative. The inspectors are following the guidelines issued by the DEP, with social distancing and wearing masks whenever they are within 6 feet of others.

The inspectors are checking not only for invasive plant species but also invasive animals such as zebra and quagga mussels, Asian clam and water fleas. The Maine DEP has started to focus on these types of threats, as well as plants. An invasive mollusk was detected by a CBI inspector on some Eurasian milfoil that was attached

to a boat at Cobbosseecontee Lake 2 years ago. These types of invasive species can quickly spread throughout a body water, they are a serious problem in lakes such as Lake Champlain in Vermont. The animals can hitchhike on plants, or linger in bilge water, engines, ballast tanks, live wells, and bait containers. Be aware.

When you enter or exit a body of water with watercraft make sure you: CLEAN, DRAIN and DRY your vessel. This is the best way to avoid further infestations of invasive species.

Youth Conservation Corp

Marcia also reports that the YCC is not active this year, primarily because of Covid-19 and the need to safely distance. We hope to re-start this program next year and we are working with the University of Southern Maine to set up an internship. This program is important in protecting the lake, it is also a great way for our local youth to learn about conservation and the rewards of focused physical work. Once we are back in operation, it will be important to have a schedule of jobs to perform. If you are thinking of having an erosion control project done; such as rubber razor bars, box culverts or maintenance of pre-existing projects, please let Marcia know at mmtlea@gmail.com. Erosion control is the most important factor in decreasing non-point source pollution, which is the biggest threat to water quality of the lake.

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 readings were on June 28 and July 1. The disc could be seen at 9.88 and 10.28 meters, respectively. The better number in July is, no doubt, secondary to the relative drought during that time. This time last year this the reading was 9.5m. Through our efforts in controlling erosion Thompson Lake has some of the clearest water in the state, despite its “flush” rate of approximately 3 years. Let’s keep it that way.

Membership

TLEA Board member Bill Booth reports that the association set a record in 2019 with 500 active members. As of this time, 406 members have renewed for 2020 and we hope for a new record at the end of the year. ***We encourage anyone who has not yet renewed to do this by the end of August.*** Why wait? If you are a non-renewed member, put the Observer down and renew. Yes, you. It will only take a minute or two, membership forms are available by email at mmtlea@gmail.com, or you can call (207) 539-4535. We need your support.

17 new members joined TLEA in 2020, but there are still approximately 500 shorefront owners who are not members. We need your help to continue our programs for water quality, invasive plant mitigation, erosion control and education. Please sign up if you are not a member; if you already are, tell your neighbors why and encourage them to sign up. Let us keep Thompson Lake clean and safe for generations to come.

Fund Raising

Board member and Fund Campaign Stan Tetenman reports that TLEA was the grateful recipient of a \$1,000 extra donation from the Ferguson Foundation, a grant institution that has supported our efforts for years. This check was accompanied by this note:

"The enclosed check is a Covid-19 "helping grant" from the Leonard C. and Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation. These extraordinary times call for reaching out to help our grantees during the disruption and uncertainty created by the Covid-19 virus. Your important work makes a difference in people's lives. We hope this grant will provide a bit of financial assistance to help you continue your work through these unprecedented times and stay the course till better days emerge".

Many thanks to the Ferguson Foundation and the efforts of Stan and Sarah Rice, who head our fund-raising committee.

Oxford Dam

On June 4, the Oxford Board of Selectman voted to proceed with repairs to the east gate of the dam. The original price tag for this was estimated at \$621,350, but this was pared down to a limit of \$521,150 by reducing the scope of the repairs. The size of the coffer dam was reduced and the installation of the fish screen at the center gate was pushed back. Construction is due to begin in late July.

Unfortunately, this decision was made without consultation with the towns of Casco, Poland or Otisfield, who have a vested interest in maintaining the dam, protecting shoreline property and the economic resource of the lake. These towns have requested a breakdown of all the needed repairs to the dam, but so far this has not been provided. Understandably, these towns are reluctant to contribute money to the dam project without some decision sharing capacity and long-term plan for maintenance and repair. Similarly, TLEA was not involved in this decision.

Some progress in this regard is possible; the town of Oxford will be holding a meeting of the Thompson Lake Advisory Committee meeting on July 16 at the Oxford municipal building at 2:00 PM. Despite reports, there has been no recent

prior meeting of this group outside the purview of the town of Oxford. This meeting will be an opportunity for representatives of the towns of Poland, Casco, Otisfield and Oxford to discuss the future of the dam and the planned renovations.

TLEA feels the fish screen is an important component to the dam and we will continue to work with the town of Oxford to have this installed in the future. We have assisted the town in applying for a grant from the Maine Heritage Fund for this.

TLEA will continue to work with the town of Oxford in an advisory capacity regarding the maintenance and future renovation of the dam. We would like to engage all the towns surrounding the lake on this issue. The maintenance of the dam and the control of water levels on the lake affects everyone that visits the lake or has property on it. It also protects an essential economic driver and the tax base for the surrounding communities. We are looking for a way all the involved towns to be involved in the decisions regarding the dam.

The following is TLEA's position on the Oxford dam:

To properly protect the lake and its environment, TLEA asks that the dam's owner, the Town of Oxford, address the many repairs identified in the June 2018 MBP Consulting Study with a detailed long-range plan; complete with budgets and due dates for each repair, and to weigh the cost of all repairs against the estimated cost of replacing the dam. TLEA believes that if Oxford wants the other towns to contribute towards the dam's repairs and maintenance costs then the Thompson Lake Dam Committee should have two representatives from each town. The committee should be enabled to make the decisions regarding which repairs are to be done and when; and should monitor that routine maintenance is being done properly and on a timely basis by the Town of Oxford. Lastly, TLEA supports all TLEA members encouraging their respective towns' officials from Casco, Otisfield and Poland to partner with the Town of Oxford so that the concerns of all lake property owners are heard and addressed, and that the Town of Oxford establish a forum where the voices and opinions from all four towns and its lake property owners are heard and reflected in all actions taken on the dam.

Briefly Noted

Annual Loon Count: will be held on Saturday, July 18 from 7:00- 8:00 AM. The Loon Count is organized by the Audubon Society and it takes samples of various lake in Maine to estimate the population of loons, to monitor the efforts to protect this iconic and beautiful bird. Peggy Dorf coordinates this count for Thompson

Lake every year. Hats off to her for her efforts. If you would like to be a loon spotter on July 18, contact Peggy at peggydorf@ymail.com. It is a good way to start your day.

Clynk Program: Do not 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.

Donation of Stocks- TLEA has opened an account that will allow us to accept securities as donations. You can support our programs and receive the tax benefits.

Membership gifts- Surprise your family or friends with a membership gift to TLEA. They will receive all 3 issues of the Observer for a year. Contact us at mmtlea@gmail.com.



(Milfoil removal crew at work. Photo by Alex Bernardy)

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

Editor: Paul Cain

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