



Fall 2023

Issue No. 201



Fall reflections- Photo by Susan O'Byrne

Ron Armontrout Takes the Helm of TLEA

At our last Annual Meeting Ron Armontrout was elected as President of our association, taking over for Kathy Cain. Ron has been a board member for TLEA since 2014 and recently has been the driving force behind our LakeSmart program. Ron and his wife, Vickie reside on Lunt's Point Lane on property that they bought in 1999.

Ron grew up in Northeastern Ohio and received his master's degree at the University of New Hampshire. He taught Middle School and High School mathematics for 43 years. During many of those years he also worked as a math educational consultant for many public schools and for Texas Instruments. He retired from teaching in 2013 but continues to work with Texas Instruments. Ron also mentors and coaches middle and high school math teachers in inner city Philadelphia as well as Texas, as part of his work with the Texas Instruments program "Math Forward" and the federally funded program "Gear UP". His hobbies are boating, gardening, and x-country skiing but his passion is playing with his three grandchildren.

When asked what his immediate goals are, Ron stated "I would like to take our association that has been so well stewarded by Kathy and Marcia to see where else we can go. LakeSmart is certainly part of that, but a big piece of LakeSmart is education. We work with property owners to help develop plans for mediation of runoff. I see our watershed survey, LakeSmart, our expanded YCC program, and our new collaboration with McLaughlin Gardens as the centerpiece of TLEA's educational outreach."

Ron has a proven record as an educator, protector of the natural resource of Thompson Lake and a family man. TLEA looks forward to his leadership.

YCC

Jim Skinner, Program Director for the TLEA Youth Conservation Corps reports that 2023 season wound down in late August, and results surpassed their previous year. There was a fifty percent increase in completed projects and a doubling of revenues. Project Coordinator Chris Stoenner and his crew built more complicated erosion control walkways to the water, increased their planting services and initiated many drip-line installations under roof eaves. These projects are now reducing erosion and reducing phosphorous accumulation in the lake.

YCC is already looking forward to more projects in 2024, with a possible expansion of the crew. If you know anyone who might be interested in working as YCC crew member next year, contact Jim Skinner at FJAMESSKINNER4@GMAIL.COM . Crew members are typically high school or college aged, they work a 4 day week for an 8 week season. Part of the experience is to learn environmental principles and basic construction/landscaping skills. The YCC will also start a new collaborative project with McLaughlin Gardens in 2024. See more about this later in this Observer.

LakeSmart

Ron Armontrout, our director of the LakeSmart program reports that in 2023 the team performed 23 waterfront property evaluations and awarded 7 LakeSmart awards. LakeSmart is a free, non-regulatory, and voluntary program to assist landowners in reducing erosion. Participating homeowners receive individualized suggestions on reducing run off and maintaining the value of their property. LakeSmart often coordinates with our YCC program to offer homeowners an economical way to complete erosion control projects. Many thanks to the 2023 LakeSmart assessment team: Ron, Kathy Cain, Hobart Hardej, Candace Nelson, Ken Mendelson, Jade Doyle, Betsy Peterson and Kate Ryan. Property owners interested in LakeSmart should contact Ron Armontrout at director.tlea@gmail.com.

TLEA is happy to announce an exciting collaboration for 2024. See below!

Build Better and More Beautiful Buffers

TLEA plans to work with McLaughlin Gardens of South Paris, Maine to offer Thompson Lake landowners advice and resources to improve the erosion buffers at their property. This organization is a well-respected gardening center with experienced horticulturists. TLEA members who have completed a LakeSmart evaluation can request an analysis of their buffer zone from their horticulturist, interactive analysis to include:

- Collection of soil samples
- Surveying existing plants for variety and condition
- Identify areas that require build up and barriers
- Create a diagram of recommended locations and type of plantings

- Provide the homeowner with a list plant resources
- One year membership to McLaughlin Gardens (10% discount on plant purchases)

The above services will be provided by McLaughlin Gardens for a price of \$185. The landowner will have a well-designed plan to develop plantings, and if necessary, rain gardens or mulch areas. This is a great deal and will help property owners create buffers that are not only efficient, but beautiful.

In addition, TLEA will provide a free, optional visit from our Youth Conservation Corps to offer advice on how to complete these plantings and erosion control projects during the next planting season. The plantings can be done by the landowner, or through the YCC or private landscaper.

This program should combine the services of our LakeSmart team, the YCC and McLaughlin Gardens in a synergistic way to enhance the buffer zone of the lake. If you are interested, contact Jim Skinner, YCC Director, (email in YCC article) or Ron Armontrout at director.tlea@gmail.com.

Report on Milfoil Removal 2023

Milfoil Crew chief Alex Bernardy reports that the milfoil crew had a successful summer removing milfoil and surveying the lake for signs of infestations.: We had a week or more of pulling and a week of surveying. The removal was done by suction harvesting or hand pulling. Alex and his crew removed 172.5 bags of milfoil from Pine Point, 2 from Pismo Beach area and the Oxford dam, 1 from Otisfield Cove, 2 from Edwards Cove, and 2.5 from Hancock Cove.

The crew surveyed the coves of the lake several times throughout the summer. Most of the coves showed only minimal growth compared to 2022. As the numbers above show, Pine Point had the most recurrent growth, but this was considerably less than last year. Over 2 tons of milfoil was removed from Pine Point this past season.

This shows the importance of continuing our milfoil removal efforts. Even though overall we have removed over 500 tons of milfoil from the lake, the threat of regrowth and introduction of new invasive plant species is always present. Thanks to Alex and his crew for a job well done.

Courtesy Boat Inspection

Board member Danny Crowley took over the management of the CBI program this past summer. Danny reports the team had a busy season. They worked 155 shifts between the 4 launches accessible to the public. 1,161 inspections were performed, 7 plants were taken from boats or trailers, none of which turned out to be invasive. This is good news, but all it takes is one introduction to start a new growth of an invasive species.

Membership

Bill Booth, our Membership Director, wants everyone to know that we appreciate the 525 members who have renewed for 2023. He adds, “Your support has allowed us to continue battling milfoil in the shallow coves in each of our four towns. This support also helped us restart our Youth Conservation Corp program, and funded a survey of the entire watershed, a once-every-ten-year effort that will help us obtain federal funds to aid in erosion control projects. If you haven’t renewed, try our new website, www.thompsonlake.org - it’s easy and only takes minutes.”

New Regulations on Operating Motorboats in Maine

Two new laws were passed by the Maine State Legislature regarding the use of motor craft on Maine waters. Beginning in January 2024, a person born after 1998 may not operate a motorboat of 25 horsepower or greater for recreational boating purposes on inland or territorial waters unless that person is aged 12 and older and has completed a boater safety and education course. The Maine DIFW offers this course which can be taken online or in person.

Also....Boaters are now ***required*** to take specific measures to drain their boats prior to entering a body of water or leaving a launch site. Boaters must pull their plug to drain their ballast and drain any live wells prior to, and when leaving a body of water. This was law passed as an emergency measure to prevent the spread of invasive plant and animal species which is becoming a growing threat to local waters. Many of these invasive species are not visible by eye or have microscopic larvae and can be retained in the bilges and live wells of boats. This puts into law what has previously been recommended: ***Clean, Drain and Dry.***

Oxford Dam

TLEA Board members met with Oxford town officials this past summer to discuss the operation of the dam. We followed up on the recommendations made by the Maine DIFW, including an earlier drawdown, with a goal of 32 inches below the top of the dam by the end of the 2nd week in October. On October 27 Town Manager Adam Garland reported the drawdown was progressing and the level was 30 inches below the top of the dam. The crew was removing leaves and debris from the gates daily, sometimes twice a day.

Briefly Noted

Loon Count: Board member Peggy Dorf reports that our last count in July identified 17 adult loons. This is 4 more than recent years.

Fishing: James Pellerin from the Maine DIFW reports that by most accounts from anglers, catches of salmon are down. Adult salmon have been lost through the dam because of the need to remove fish screens during high flows.

Watershed survey: *The results of our recent watershed survey will be available soon! Look for a notice on our website and an article in the spring Observer.*

Tribute to Kathy Cain

(Submitted by Candace Nelson, TLEA Board Member)

After 15 years of dedicated service, Kathy Cain has retired as President of TLEA. Kathy's tenure was characterized by dedication, determination, and consistent commitment. From 2014 to 2022, Kathy worked with Marcia Matuska as co-Presidents, and with support from an active Board, they established TLEA as one of the strongest lake associations in the state.

Kathy and Marcia have guided TLEA through many accomplishments, the most significant may be the milfoil removal program. This effort began in 2007 when TLEA purchased the "Hippo" pontoon boat and hired a milfoil crew. From 2017-2020, Kathy and Marcia led a capital campaign that raised over \$500,000 to fight milfoil. We know that milfoil will never be completely eradicated, requiring TLEA to be ever vigilant, but it is no longer choking the shallow areas of the lake where it had proliferated. This has been a big win for the lake and all of us who love it.

I interviewed Kathy for this article, and she stated her one regret is that we couldn't expand TLEA's membership beyond its current 50% of property owners on Thompson Lake. In her mind, anyone who invests in property on the lake would naturally want to invest in the lake as well!

What does the future hold? Kathy remains on the Board and is very active in its LakeSmart program, the watershed survey, and other non-point source pollution initiatives. She believes that one way TLEA can contribute to Thompson Lake's water quality is by educating its members, towns and the wider community on erosion control.

Kathy has been an effective and inspirational leader because of who she is. For those who like numbers, during her tenure Kathy and her good friend Marcia:

- Developed agendas for 150 Board meetings
- Oversaw a capital campaign that raised a half million dollars for milfoil eradication

In addition, Kathy personally (with some help from her friends),

- Folded and stapled 16,000 copies of the Observer
- Expertly baked over 6,000 scrumptious cookies for TLEA events!

We are so grateful to Kathy and relieved that she will remain on the TLEA Board. But as our outgoing President, we clearly owe her a few thousand "Thank You's!".



Kathy Cain, Past President TLEA

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www.thompsonlake.org

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