

Spring 2025

Issue No. 205



Winter Loosens Its Grip on Thompson Lake (Photo by Kathy Cain)

President's Message

(From Ron Armontrout)

As I write this, it is a blustery, cold morning. The lake is still frozen, but the snow is rapidly melting, and the muddy roads are once again causing problems for vehicles and dogs alike. I saw many ice fishermen and snow mobiles on the lake this winter. My neighbors pulled several beautiful lake trout from the frozen lake and grilled them on site. What a feast!

It is time to think about spring and summer 2025. Erosion around the lake is our primary concern. We are moving ahead with our 319 Grant funding of erosion control projects around the lake. Landowners and road associations can benefit from our YCC services, Residential Matching Grants and major Non-Point Source (NPS) projects in the future. Our LakeSmart team has completed the most evaluations of any LakeSmart program in the state over the past 4 years. We have assisted over 100 TLEA families with their runoff issues and have 14 signed up for evaluations this summer. We cannot take our water quality for granted, the Maine DEP has listed Thompson Lake as “threatened”, every drop of rain that runs into the lake carries contaminants such as phosphorus and nitrogen that can degrade water quality. These programs, funded primarily by members, will be crucial in the years to come if we are to preserve the natural beauty of the lake.

Our milfoil crew has signed on for another season of mitigation. Since 2008, TLEA has spent about \$1,193,000 on this project, and we’ve removed 1,158,000 pounds of milfoil. Our Courtesy Boat Inspection monitors will be at boat launches checking for invasive species. We’ll also be placing “No Wake” buoys near the shoreline at 2 locations to remind boaters of the harm wakes can cause.

On a more somber note, TLEA is sad to announce the passing of Board Director Peter Siebert. We will never forget Peter’s commitment and his many years of tireless effort to protect the environment of Thompson Lake. We extend our sympathy to his wife, TLEA Board Secretary Candace Nelson and his family. Here is a link where you can learn more about Peter and his extraordinary life:

<https://obits.concordfuneral.com/peter-siebert>.

As you can see, TLEA is hard at work protecting the resource of Thompson Lake. We thank you for the support you have given over the years. If you are reading this and are not a TLEA member, please sign up. Membership info is on our website: thompsonlake.org. We are also looking for new board members to bring new energy and ideas to our association. Enjoy your summer. See you around the lake!

Annual Meeting 2024

The Thompson Lake Environmental Association Annual meeting will be held at the Oxford Recreational Hall, King St., on Saturday, August 3, from 9:00-11:00 AM. We will have progress reports on our programs, elections for board directors, and we plan to have speaker on an environmental topic. We will also have a vote on proposed bylaws revisions. Mark this date on your calendar! As usual, there will be an assortment of baked goods and treats. What a great way to celebrate the lake and learn how we can protect it. See you there!

2024 Thompson Lake Water Quality Report

(From Limnologist Scott Williams, Lake & Watershed Associates)

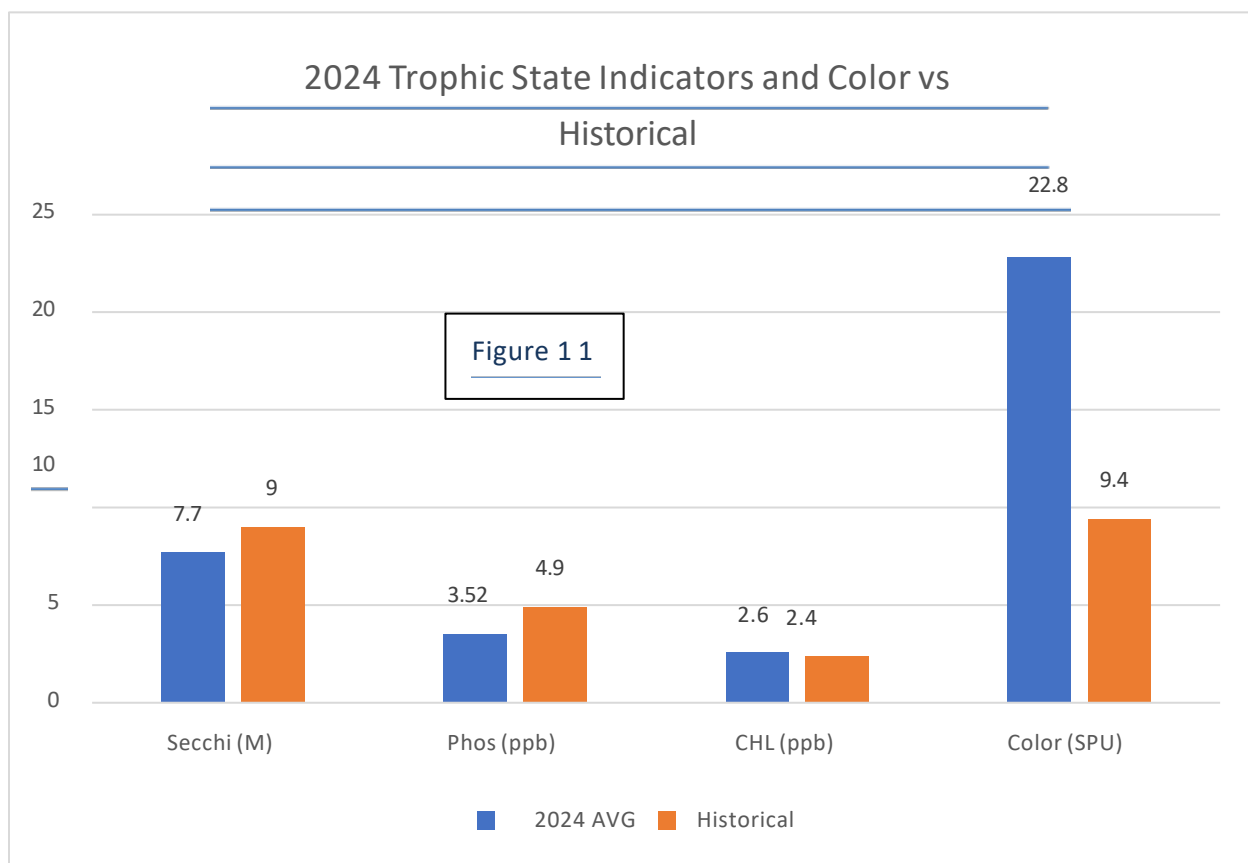
Thompson Lake water quality was monitored from May through September 2024 by LWRMA staff and TLEA Certified Volunteer Lake Monitor, Paul Cain. This report summarizes and analyzes the findings of the data gathered during the period.

The weather during the 2024 lake monitoring season (typically May through September) was in sharp contrast to the very wet conditions in 2023, during which precipitation was frequent, and often heavy throughout the period. Because 2021 and 2022 were very dry years, the runoff from 2023 storms carried substantial soil and decomposed organic matter to lakes throughout Maine, resulting in historically high color levels, reduced water clarity and other unusual conditions. Weather during the early to mid-summer period in 2024 was warmer than average, becoming extremely warm (mid to high 90's F) by the middle of July. As a result, lake surface temperatures in Maine were unusually high, raising concerns over potential negative effects, including greater algae growth and impacts to lake biota. However, following the July heat wave, ambient air temperatures dropped sharply, and remained normal to slightly below normal for the remainder of the summer and the

month of September. The period was also unusually dry. The combination of cooler weather and less precipitation and stormwater runoff from lake watersheds significantly reduced potential water quality impact concerns, and many lakes, including Thompson, became progressively clearer during the summer and early fall.

Thompson Lake continued to be less clear in 2024 than its historical average. However, both phosphorus and chlorophyll averages for the year were close to historical. The reduced clarity may have been the result of residual humic compounds/natural color in the lake from the historic high color associated with near constant precipitation during the monitoring period in 2023. High concentrations of color in lake water can reduce water clarity, as determined by Secchi disk readings. Thompson Lake’s relatively slow natural flushing rate is such that complete flushing takes multiple years. Color levels documented in 2024, while considerably lower than in 2023, remained above the historical average for the lake.

Figure 1 illustrates the 2024 averages for the three critical “trophic state” indicators, as well as color, compared to historical averages for each.



During recent years, a number of lakes throughout Maine that have previously been considered to be stable, and have had average to above average water quality, have experienced measurable negative changes, characterized by declining water clarity, caused by a proliferation of cyanobacteria/blue green algae. The combination of the hydrologic sensitivity to phosphorus in individual lakes, watershed development pressures, and weather extremes, in some cases has triggered the internal release of phosphorus from lake bottom sediments, which can result in accelerated algal growth. Thompson Lake is, at present, not considered to be at high risk for this phenomenon, but the combined threats of climate warming and continued development of the watershed could stress the ecological stability of the lake. Once a lake exceeds its natural assimilative capacity, restoration may be difficult, uncertain, and very costly.

Given the rapid manner in which such changes can take place at this point in time, continued vigilance in monitoring and protecting Thompson Lake and its watershed will be essential to maintaining the exceptional clarity and overall health of the lake system. The aggressive prevention of, and documentation and resolution of existing disturbances in the watershed is critically important. Ensuring that new residential development, agriculture and timber harvesting incorporate “best water quality protection practices”, as well as revisiting and evaluating the effectiveness of existing water quality protective measures (properly sized culverts, runoff diversion practices and vegetated buffers) will be necessary, as the potential for erosive intensity of stormwater runoff associated with extreme precipitation increases.

For the full Water Quality Report, visit our website: www.thompsonlake.org.

319 Grant Program for Erosion Control

The TLEA Watershed Protection Plan was accepted by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection in early 2024. This allowed us to submit applications for funding through the 319 Federal Grant program, which is part of the Clean Water Act. These grant funds will be used to support large scale erosion projects by towns or road associations, smaller projects by individual landowners, our YCC, as well as educational/outreach programs and workshops for road associations.

The larger scale projects for 2025 include road improvements in the Beechwoods area (5 sites), ditch and culvert work at the Loop Road and William's Way area of Otisfield, and the rebuilding of a walking trail at the Agassiz Village summer camp. The grant should provide over \$20,000 of matching funds for these projects.

Individual landowners can apply now for residential matching grants (RMG's) for projects to address low and medium erosion impact sites. Landowners will pay expenses initially, but can receive up to \$750 as a 50% match from the grant. For those who are interested in applying for residential matching grants, requests can be submitted to Emma Lorusso at the Androscoggin Valley SWCD at projectdirector@androscogginswcd.org. Each request should include the landowner's name and address, as well as the sector/site# and description of the erosion issue, which can be found in the 2023 Watershed Survey Report at our website: thompsonlake.org, under the heading of "Watershed". For questions or more information, contact Paul Cain at: tleawatershed2023@gmail.com.

For as long as the grant money is available, landowners who agree to address erosion control sites through our YCC program at sites that qualify will only have to pay for materials. See the Youth Conservation Corps article later in this issue for more information.

Gravel Road Maintenance Workshop

As part of the 319 Grant Program, we will be offering a 3-hour Gravel Road Maintenance workshop on *June 27, 2025*. This will be coordinated by the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District. Participants will learn how to evaluate a gravel road for maintenance needs, create a road maintenance plan, advantages of various road materials and how to implement gravel road Best Management Practices. The class includes both classroom instruction and a site-walk of a local gravel road to provide a real-life scenario for discussion of potential improvements. This is intended for road associations, town officials, contractors, gravel driveway owners, watershed organizations, or any individual interested in learning the recommended practices for gravel road maintenance derived from the Maine DEP Camp Roads Maintenance Manual. The registration fee of \$50 will be covered if you own property in the Thompson Lake watershed. This course

qualifies for 4 Continuing Education Hours (CEH) for individuals certified in Erosion Control Practices by Maine DEP. If you are interested in attending this workshop, contact Emma Lorusso at: projectdirector@androscogginswcd.org.

Milfoil Removal

Crew Chief Alex Bernardy reports that the focus of the milfoil removal team in 2025 will be the resurgence of milfoil at the Pine Point area. Last season, the team saw areas of regrowth at Pine Point and new infestations throughout the mouth of this cove. The team will make multiple passes in this area, identifying and hand pulling areas of variable leaf milfoil. If more colonies are found at Pine Point, we may once again have to resort to the use of benthic barriers to smother the plants.

In addition, the team will monitor the entire lake for signs of invasive plants and remove them as needed. This will be especially important in the northern regions of the lake where the shallow water is conducive to the growth of milfoil. Last season multiple colonies were found and removed at the Pismo Beach area.

The resurgence at Pine Point and Pismo Beach is not surprising, and with the boat traffic in these areas there is a high risk of fragmentation and infestation in the other coves of the lake. Our milfoil program relies on the support of our membership.

TLEA, Wakes and the Maine DIF&W

Large wakes from boats cause erosion along the shoreline of Thompson Lake and can lead to the falling of trees along the shore. The wakes can also wash out the eggs of nesting loons and be very disruptive to people recreating at the water's edge. Although TLEA has no regulatory authority regarding boating, we have received multiple complaints from landowners regarding boaters not following the "No Wake" restrictions from the state of Maine. According to state law, boats within 200 feet of the shore should maintain headway speed only, with no wake. In 2024 Maine passed a law that restricts the even more disruptive "wake boats" from operating in less than 15 feet of water or within 300 feet of the shoreline.

Our TLEA Board heard these requests and has acted upon them. This season we will place two new "No Wake" buoys; one just south of Robinson Marina and another north of the Thompson Lake Marina, reminding boaters of their

responsibility to keep headway speed. We are also working with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to have game wardens patrol the lake more often this summer. The wardens will remind boaters of their responsibilities when operating along the lake and provide education on safety rules and environmental laws. This comes with a cost to TLEA, but we figure this is worth it for the lake and for all who enjoy it.

LakeSmart Program

This program will continue this important work this summer under the leadership of Ron Armontrout. The volunteer evaluators of LakeSmart are trained to inspect properties to assess erosion control efforts and advise landowners on how to reduce runoff. The LakeSmart Award is given to properties according to strict standards, but all property owners are advised on what they can do to improve and meet the standards. They also will have an opportunity to have the property reassessed. This program collaborates with the Build Better Buffers program of McLaughlin Gardens of South Paris. If you are interested in having a LakeSmart evaluation, contact Ron Armontrout at director.tlea@gmail.com.

Youth Conservation Corps

Board Director Jim Skinner reports that the YCC has a busy summer planned. So far approximately 9 projects are planned that involve native planting along the shoreline, combined with Best Management Practices (BMP) such as diversion steps and erosion control mulch. There are 6 YCC projects that will install other BMP's, such as box culverts, razor bars, catchment basins, and drip-line trenches. The YCC crew of 3 performs these types of hand powered erosion control projects under the technical guidance of Jim and Project Coordinator, Chris Stoechner, a teacher from the technical division of Oxford Hills High School.

The YCC will receive funding from our 319 Grant. This will allow for reduced labor charges for landowners that have property that qualifies for these funds. To qualify, the erosion sites must be identified on our 2023 Watershed Survey *or* be inspected by YCC to see if there is erosion that drains into the lake. Additionally, a

Cost Share Agreement must be signed by the owner specifying what the owner will be contributing to the project and how it will be maintained. Typically, this will involve paying for materials and the labor is covered by the grant.

YCC works hand in hand with our LakeSmart program and Build Better Buffers of the McLaughlin Gardens. The Build Better Buffers program will perform a site evaluation, including soil sampling, surveying existing plants and recommendations for plantings. This is usually done following a LakeSmart evaluation, which is described earlier in this issue. If you are interested in contracting the YCC crew, contact Jim Skinner at: tlea.yccdirector@gmail.com. For information on the Build Better Buffers program contact Corey Kotfila at: garden@mclaughlingarden.org

Courtesy Boat Inspection

TLEA Board member Danny Crowley reports that our Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI) will be up and running again in 2025. The team will at the local public boat launches for inspections on weekends and most holidays. So far, we have 4 inspectors lined up, but we are looking for 2 more. ***If you or any one you know are interested in applying, please email Danny Crowley at dannycrowley@sbcglobal.net***. Danny will also be at the Job Fair at Oxford Hills High School on Tuesday, April 29, 9:00 AM- 12:30 PM. Courtesy boat inspection is a part-time, paid position.

Briefly Noted:

Agassiz Village Volunteer Weekend: The Agassiz Village summer camp allows disadvantaged kids to enjoy summer on Thompson Lake. They are looking for volunteers to help prepare for the campers on the weekend of May 30- June 1. It's a fun day and many TLEA board members will be there. To learn more about Agassiz Village and sign up for this worthy cause, log on to: agassizvillage.org.

Ice Out Winners: Congratulations go out to our ice out winners Michael and Catherine Hayward, Karla Adasse, and Richard and Cathy Wright. Ice out was officially April 13.

Loon Count: Will be held on Saturday, July 19. Contact Peggy Dorf at peggydorf@ymail.com if you can help as a loon sighter.

Want to Help Preserve the Natural Beauty of Thompson Lake?: *Consider becoming a Board member of TLEA.* We are looking for motivated people that want to give back to the lake and preserve it for generations to come. If so, contact Ron Armontrout at director.tlea@gmail.com.

In Memoriam to Marcia Pottle

Long time TLEA Board member, Marcia Pottle, passed away this past winter. Marcia and her late husband Chris dedicated many years of service to TLEA. Marcia was a brilliant woman who combined her accomplishments with love for her family, friends and the environment.

Marcia was born and raised in New Orleans, La. She earned a B.S. from Tulane University and went on to attain a M.S. in organic chemistry from Johns Hopkins in 1961. In the interim, she met fellow Fulbright Scholar Chris Pottle at the University of Erlangen, Germany. As her family tells it, when she showed up at Johns Hopkins, she was told by one of her professors that as a woman, she was taking up a valuable spot in the program. Nice welcome! Marcia was undaunted, earned her degree in organic chemistry and became an integral part of a research group at Cornell University, exploring the emerging discipline of computational chemistry. She then went on to earn a second M.S. in statistics from Carnegie-Mellon University and spent the rest of her fruitful career as a systems engineer at the Cornell Theory Center. Marcia still found time to enjoy life with her husband Chris and raise three children!

Upon retirement, Marcia and Chris returned to the Pottle family home on Thompson Lake. She and Chris were very active in environmental and charitable organizations, including TLEA, McLaughlin Gardens, University of Maine Cooperative Extension, the Fare Share Food Co-op and the Freeland Holmes Memorial library in Oxford.

Marcia and Chris became board members of TLEA in 1996, Chris served as Treasurer until his passing in 2011 and Marcia took over this role until 2015. They were both energetic and creative directors, directly contributing to the development of our milfoil mitigation program and they led the way on early watershed surveys of the lake. Marcia was always cheerful, engaging and full of life. All who appreciate the natural resource of Thompson Lake owe a lot to the Pottles.



Marcia Pottle

Visit our website at:
www.thompsonlake.org

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