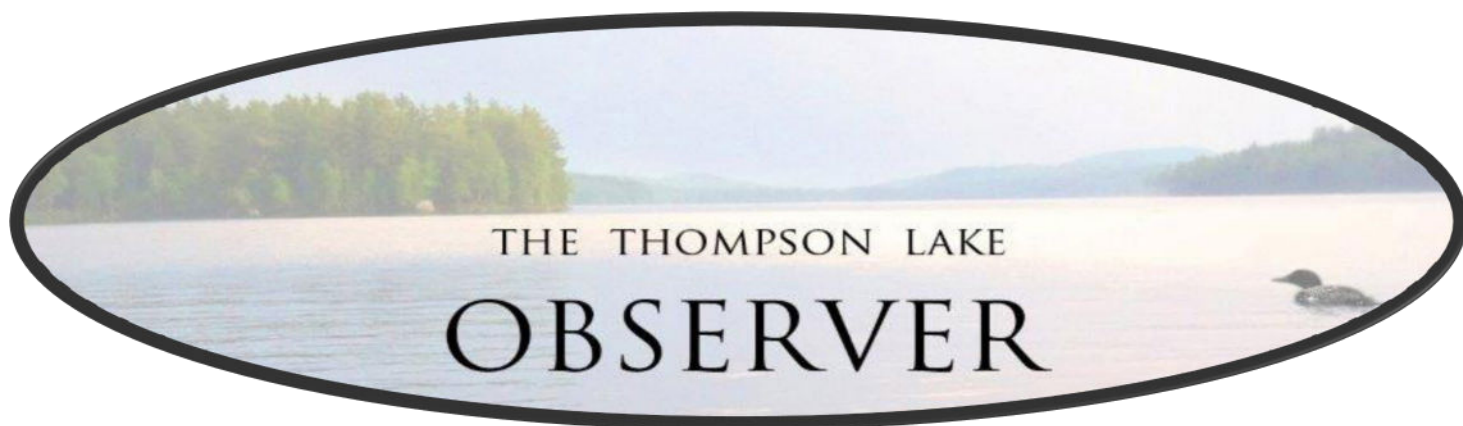




Fall 2026

Issue No. 210



End of 2026 Season Program Reports Inside

LakeSmart 2026

Program Directors Doug Wight and Kathy Cain report that the LakeSmart team had a successful 2026 season. By the end of the summer, they had evaluated a total of 10 properties and were planning on the 11th as the leaves were falling. Of the 10 properties completed, 9 were in the first-time evaluation category of which 2 earned a LakeSmart award. One property was a re-evaluation and by creating some erosion control measures, qualified for the award.

Doug and Kathy note that the LakeSmart team is delighted to be invited to lakeside properties for evaluations where they can provide guidance in addressing erosion problems. They are pleasantly surprised at the warm reception they receive regarding their suggestions. It's such a pleasure to see Thompson Lake from so many different angles around the lake and help landowners make an impact on stewardship of our precious resource.

TLEA is proud of the accomplishments of this program and thankful for the work the team has put in. According to Maine Lakes, the sponsor of this program, we are a top performer statewide, we have completed the most evaluations of any program over a consecutive four-year period. For more information about this statewide effort see: <https://www.lakes.me/lakesmart-map>

TLEA hopes to increase the number of evaluations in the coming years. Thompson Lake property owners are encouraged to reach out to us for any concerns about erosion and to request a free, non-regulatory evaluation of their property. The recommended measures to reduce erosion require some time and resources, but often these can be provided by our YCC and 319 Grant program. Recipients of the LakeSmart Award can take pride and satisfaction in helping to protect the lake. *If you would like a LakeSmart evaluation done on a property in 2027, contact our Administrator, Sarah Ferry, at office.tlea@gmail.com.*

319 Grant Program

Our 2-year cycle for grants from the federal 319 Grant started in 2025 and some erosion control projects will extend into 2027. So far, 4 Candidate Site (larger) projects have been completed. In 2025 we help fund road improvement projects at Beechwoods Road and at William's Way/Loop Road in Otisfield. We also help fund erosion control measures to improve the walking path at Agassiz Village. This

past year we assisted the Wacipi Pines road association in obtaining funding for their major road improvement project, a photo of part of this project is on the back page. Overall, we were able to bring in over \$33,000 in federal funding for these projects. We are presently planning a fifth Candidate Site project for 2027.

The 319 Grant program also partially funds our Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program and Residential Matching Grants (RMG). The YCC can provide free labor to complete qualified erosion control projects that reduce runoff into the lake. Landowners who are planning to improve their property with erosion control measures on their own or with a provide contractor have been able to receive up to \$750 of funds by using our RMG's. Two of these projects were completed in 2026.

If a road association or group, a town, or a motivated landowner would like to take advantage of the 319 Program, contact either or Administrator Sarah Ferry at office.tlea@gmail.com or Paul Cain at tleawatershed2023@gmail.com.

Non-Point Source pollution from erosion within the watershed is the largest threat to Thompson Lake. These grants can help you make a difference *and* improve your property. Applications for Candidate Site projects will be due in May of 2027.

Funding for this project, in part, was provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The funding is administered by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection in partnership with EPA. EPA does not endorse any commercial products or services mentioned

Youth Conservation Corps

During the summer of 2026, TLEA's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) continued its important work protecting water quality and addressing erosion throughout the Thompson Lake watershed. The YCC program runs for approximately 8 weeks, starting in late June and wrapping up mid-August. This season 10 property owners from all four surrounding towns reached out to TLEA for assistance from our YCC with erosion problems on their properties. Through hands-on conservation work, the YCC helped stabilize shoreland areas, reduce stormwater runoff, and protect the long-term health and beauty of Thompson Lake.

The 2026 crew included three new youth crew members and a returning crew member who stepped into the role of crew leader. Together with Project Coordinator Josh Wright, the team worked with property owners to identify erosion concerns and implement solutions. TLEA Board Members Jim Skinner and Doug

Wight provided oversight and support, helping coordinate projects and work with landowners throughout the whole year.

The YCC's accomplishments this summer included:

- 10 erosion control projects completed across four towns
- 14 site visits conducted to evaluate erosion concerns and plan projects
- 1,132 hours worked by YCC crew members and the project coordinator
- 315+ volunteer hours contributed by TLEA Board Members
- 39 yards of erosion control mulch spread
- 24 feet of rubber razor bar installed
- 3.5 cubic yards of riprap installed
- 123 native plants installed within the Thompson Lake shoreland zone

Through a federal Section 319 grant, TLEA has been able to cover a portion of YCC program costs over the past two years, helping offset labor expenses for participating landowners. Do you have erosion concerns on your property? TLEA encourages property owners to reach out for a YCC site evaluation. To learn more or discuss potential erosion control projects, contact TLEA YCC Director Doug Wight at or call (207) 539-4535.

Milfoil Removal

Director Jade Doyle reports the milfoil crew had a very busy and successful season in 2026. Last year, we recognized that a new infestation of milfoil at the mouth of Greeley Brook was causing migration of this invasive plant into the lake. This past summer, Alex Bernardy and his crew installed nearly 24,000 square feet of benthic barriers (tarps) at the mouth of the brook to smother the new growth. They then began the process of hand pulling milfoil and surveying the rest of the lake for signs of new or re-growth.

The good news is that they found less re-growth than expected at Pine Point. There had been a resurgence of milfoil here the previous year. Alex also noted that native plants had become established in this area, which is critical in preventing re-growth of milfoil.

There were new milfoil plants found at the north side of Briggs Island, which the crew removed with suction harvesting. This consisted of 10-15 small colonies of milfoil growing around tree stumps in the deeper water of this area. Milfoil colonies were identified and removed between Robinson's Marina and Pismo Beach. The coves of Hancock, Edwards, Pismo and Otisfield were surveyed and approximately 6 plants were removed respectively.

Courtesy Boat Inspection

Director Michael Sly reports that the CBI program completed the inspection program on Sunday September 6. Inspections began on Memorial Day weekend and then each weekend from 2pm to 6pm on Fridays and 10am to 6pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The inspections required paid employee time of approximately 800 hours. According to inspection information reported to the Maine DEP, CBI employees inspected over 900 motorized boats and 230 non-motorized boats. Three plants were found on inspected boats/trailers, but none were found to be invasive. Inspectors reminded boaters to check their boats and trailers to ensure they are not transporting any plants into or out of Thompson Lake, and to drain their bilge prior to leaving the boat ramp when removing their boat. In order to help educate boaters, signs were posted with information on invasive plants, including the invasive Chinese Mystery Snails that have now been found in the lake.,

Thompson Lake Fishing Report

James Pellerin of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife reports that the 2026 fishing season on Thompson was productive, judging by reports from anglers. The health of the salmon fishery was considered good when sample fish were netted and measured this previous fall. The biggest issue remains the Oxford dam center gate fish screen which was damaged in 2025 and had to be removed. This causes some loss of salmon and other fish, especially around spawning season (fall). James has consulted with the town of Oxford on how to replace the screen, ideally with increased capacity and the ability to self-clean debris.

Some More History of the Oxford Dam

Submitted by TLEA Member Scott Bernardy

The origin of the dam at the outlet of Thompson Lake dates to 1840, when the firm Gillett and Bridges built a 3-story brick mill to manufacture Cassimere, a lightweight woolen cloth and Satinet, a finely woven cotton fabric. That building stands today at the northeast side of the dam. In 1849, the Oxford Woolen Mill was created with 8 corporate partners and by 1850 it was producing over 156,000 yards of woolen cloth. In 1855, a well-traveled Joseph Robinson from Hunslett, England came to Oxford to help run the woolen mill. Joseph Robinson was innovative in his ability to produce a unique color of blue in wool that wouldn't fade, commonly referred to as "Oxford Blue". This was very well received by customers and by 1862 the mill produced 13,000 yards a week and employed 170 people. Soon after

Joseph Robinson arrived in Oxford, he strongly advocated replacing the small 3-foot wooden dam with a larger one that would provide more power, even in the dry summer months. In 1863, Joseph Robinson took full ownership of the mill.

In order to build a larger dam several agreements were required. The first was buying the rights from the other 2 smaller mills on Thompson Lake, the Ferris Tannery and the Gristmill for \$4,000. In addition, \$1,500 was paid to the towns of Oxford, Otisfield, and Casco to replace flooded roads and bridges. Finally, 63 farmers around the lake whose property was going to be flooded were paid \$5,200. So, in 1863, in the middle of the Civil War, a dam of granite stone was built, the precursor to the one that is in place today. This dam raised the water level approximately ten feet, thus providing ample water for the mill to operate all year long.

In 2003 Robinson Mill, which at its peak employed 360 people, shut down due to cheaper foreign textiles. In 2009, the Town of Oxford foreclosed on the property due to unpaid taxes and took over the dam and the mill property. The dam has been managed by the Town of Oxford ever since.

This 163-year-old dam is 76 feet long, with a combination of granite block and concrete sections. The granite masonry section is 40 feet long and is the older section of the dam. The dam has three sluices; at the eastern, central and western sections. In 2020 the town of Oxford performed a major renovation of the eastern sluice with placement of a motorized gate, and a new motor was placed at the existing gate of the central sluice. The western sluice is controlled with stacked stop logs.

High water events, such as water topping the dam, are of high concern, since this is how 80% of dams fail. A 100-year flood event for Thompson Lake is estimated to bring 9,926 GPS (gallons per second) of outflow. In 2018 the MPB engineering firm estimated the outflow capacity of the dam at 9,000 GPS.

Maintaining ideal water levels of the lake is important in reducing erosion, maintaining the fisheries, but also in allowing for recreation and preserving property values. In 2012, the Oxford Town Manager asked TLEA to review the historic water levels of the lake and make recommendations to the town. A handful of TLEA directors researched historic water levels of the lake and gathered information on the operation of local, similar dams. The goal was to find a balance between minimizing shoreline erosion, preserving the lakes ecosystems, and providing navigable waters for shallow waterfront properties for the typical boating

season. These recommendations were presented at an Oxford Town Hall meeting that same year and the overwhelming majority approved the recommendations.

In addition, a study of the dam and water levels was done by James Pellerin of the Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife in 2021 in which further recommendations for the operation of the dam were presented to the town.

Due to limited space in the TLEA Observer, we will dive into some of the recent repairs done on the dam as well as the present condition of the dam in the Spring 2027 edition of the Observer.

For more information on the dam log on to the TLEA website at: thompsonlake.org.

Briefly Noted

Game Warden Visits: TLEA funded 7 weekend visits by Maine game wardens to monitor recreational activities and provide guidance in safety and erosion control. This is in addition to the routine patrols the wardens provide for the lake. Special attention was paid to boaters maintaining headway speed within 200 feet of shore.



New road ditch and regrading at Wacipi Pines funded by 319 Grant Program

Visit our website at:
www.thompsonlake.org

Thompson Lake Environmental Association
P.O. Box 25
Oxford, ME 04270

ELECTRONIC SERVICE REQUESTED

OBSERVER

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

Editor: Paul Cain

Non-Profit
Organization

U.S. Postage
PAID

AUBURN, ME 04210
Permit #71