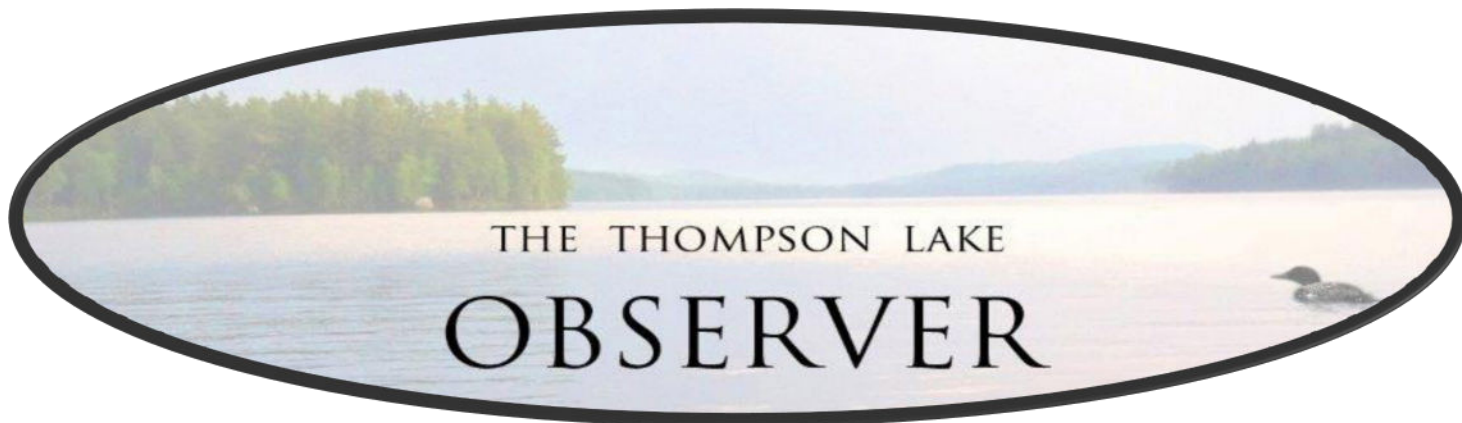




Summer 2026

Issue No. 209



Reducing Run Off! Culvert and Armored Ditch Funded by TLEA 319 Grant

2026 TLEA Annual Meeting

The Thompson Lake Environmental Association 2026 Annual Meeting will be held at the Oxford Recreational Hall, King St., on Saturday, August 1, from 9:00-11:00 AM. Jordan Kimball of the Maine DEP will give a talk about shoreline stabilization using the OUR SHORE nature-based design approach. Jordan will give basic guidance on how to assess shoreline stability, sources of erosion and how to address these with the least intervention necessary using natural, biodegradable or living materials. TLEA Directors will be there to give updates on our programs and the health of the lake. We will also hold our annual election of board Directors and Officers.

Mark this date on your calendar to hear about the association, environmental issues involving the lake, and once again meet up with your neighbors and friends. TLEA relies on member engagement to achieve our goal of protecting the lake for generations to come. It's a team effort! As usual, there will be an assortment of baked goods and treats. Of course, we will raffle off some gift cards to local restaurants and TLEA merch. Should be fun and educational. ***Don't miss it!***

2025 Water Quality Report for Thompson Lake

Limnologist Scott Williams of Lake and Watershed Associates coordinated our baseline water quality monitoring of Thompson Lake from May through September in 2025. Scott's analysis included Secchi disc readings that measure the water clarity, as well as measurements of the nutrient phosphorous and the algal pigment chlorophyll-a. These primary "trophic indicators" are used to measure the concentration of planktonic algae, the tiny plants that are at the base of the lake food chain/web. As algal density increases in a lake, the water becomes less clear and dissolved oxygen may decline over time.

Scott measures the dissolved oxygen of the lake and takes temperature readings throughout the water column. These are critical factors in the health of fisheries. Low dissolved oxygen levels deep in the lake can also cause the release of phosphorous, which is the major contributor to algae growth. Measurements of the color of the water are added to assess the amount of humic runoff from organic material in the watershed.

Scott provides a scientific analysis of this data and identifies important trends in our water quality indicators. The full report is on our website at: thompsonlake.org. It's well worth reading in full, but here is a segment of the report:

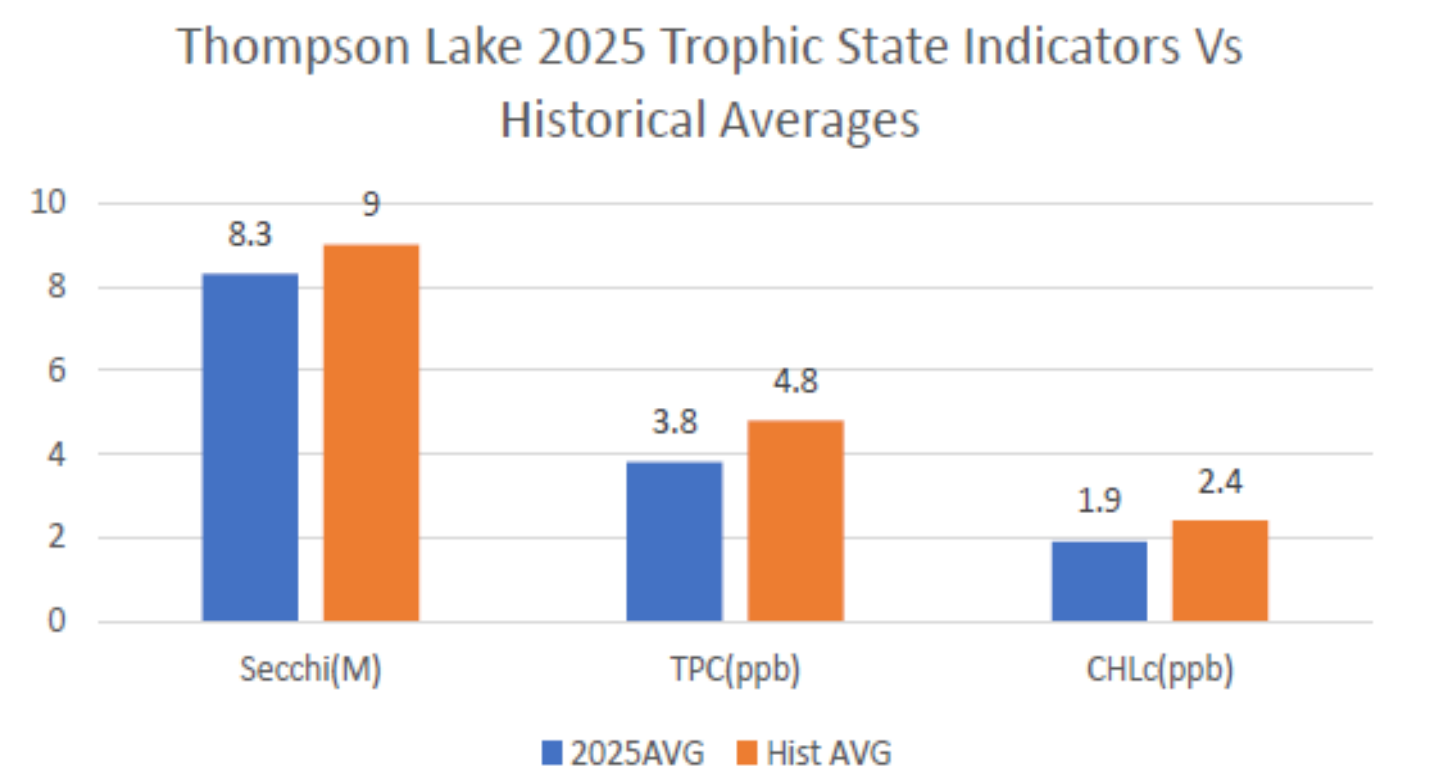
Overall, Thompson Lake was only slightly less clear than the historical average for the lake in 2025, based on Secchi disk readings taken from May through October. Epilimnetic core samples for total phosphorus, which is the primary factor influencing algae abundance in most lakes, and chlorophyll-a, which is a direct measurement of the density of planktonic algae in the lake were very slightly lower than the historical averages for Thompson...

Statistical analysis of three decades of data for the three trophic state indicators shows a decline in water clarity in Thompson Lake during the past decade. However, the decline is small, and historical data for the past several decades show a distinct cyclical nature in the water clarity of the lake. Both phosphorus and chlorophyll data during the three-decade period are quite variable, and no distinct trend is evident.

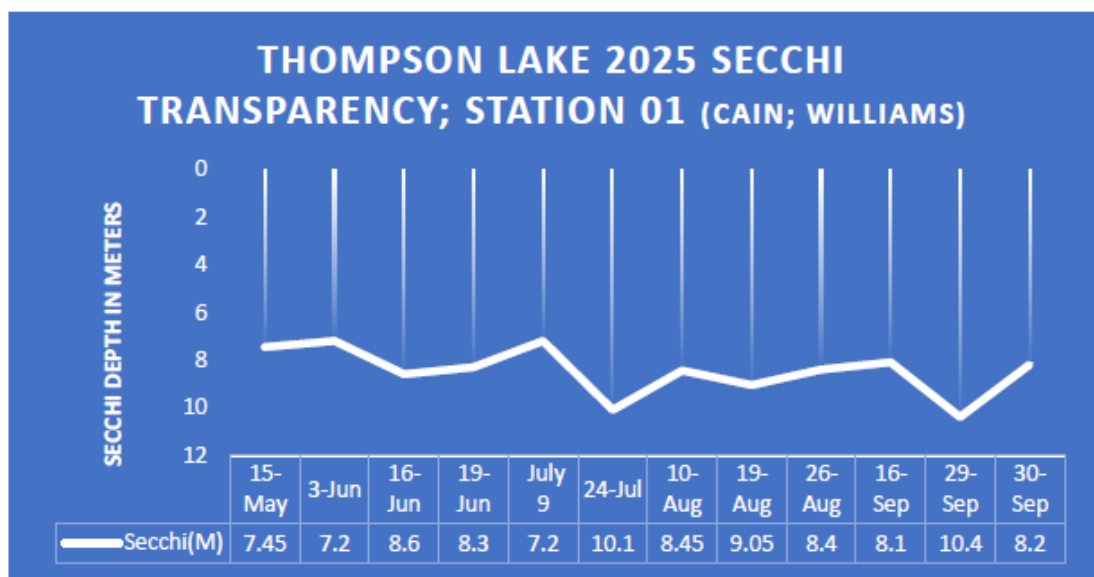
Water temperature and dissolved oxygen (DO) profiles taken from May through September showed typical moderate to strong thermal stratification throughout the period. Dissolved oxygen loss in the deepest stratified layer was relatively minimal and was consistent with conditions documented in past years. Some oxygen loss occurs even in the clearest and nonproductive lakes during the summer stratification period. It is likely that Thompson remained stratified through the month of October, and possibly well into November, given the relatively warm air temperatures during the period. Oxygen loss in the deepest stratified area would have continued to take place until the lake mixed in late fall. But given the rate at which oxygen loss occurred during the previous months, it is unlikely that oxygen would drop to the point where it would pose a threat to Thompson Lake's valuable cold-water fishery. Furthermore, oxygen levels would likely have remained well above the critical "anoxia" level that can act as a trigger to release phosphorus from the bottom sediments. At some point in the future, temperature and dissolved oxygen profiles should be taken later in the fall to verify these assumptions.

Climate warming has the potential to exacerbate virtually all known threats to Maine's lakes. Shorter periods of ice cover, record high summer water temperatures a longer growing season for algae and other lake plants, and an increase in severe weather, ranging from soil-eroding storm events, to extended periods of drought may adversely affect lake ecosystems....despite this, Thompson Lake continues to be one of Maine's "clearest and cleanest" lakes... but is vulnerable due to moderate shoreline development, as well as development in its large watershed

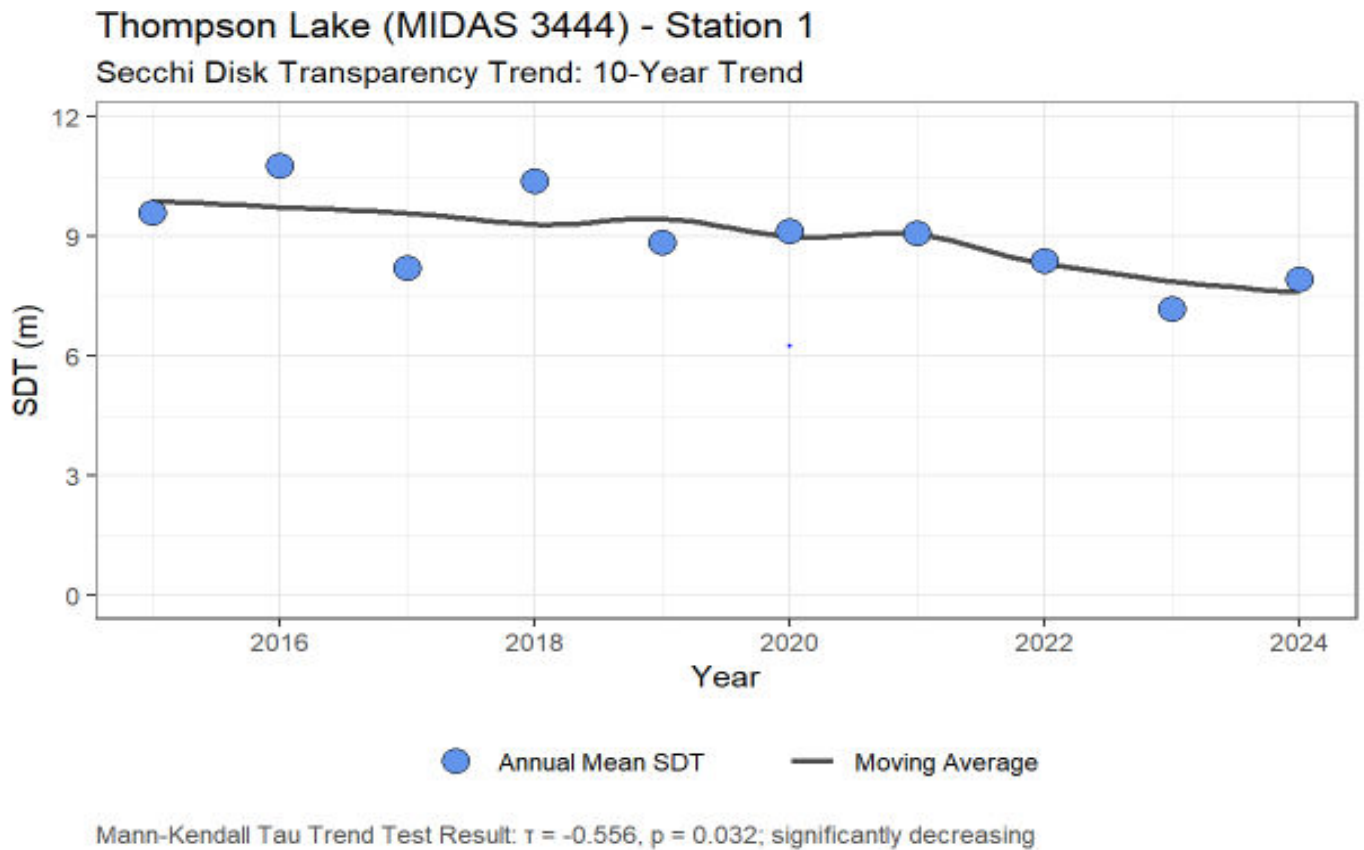
The graphic below illustrates the 2025 average values for the three trophic state indicators, compared to the historical values for Thompson Lake:



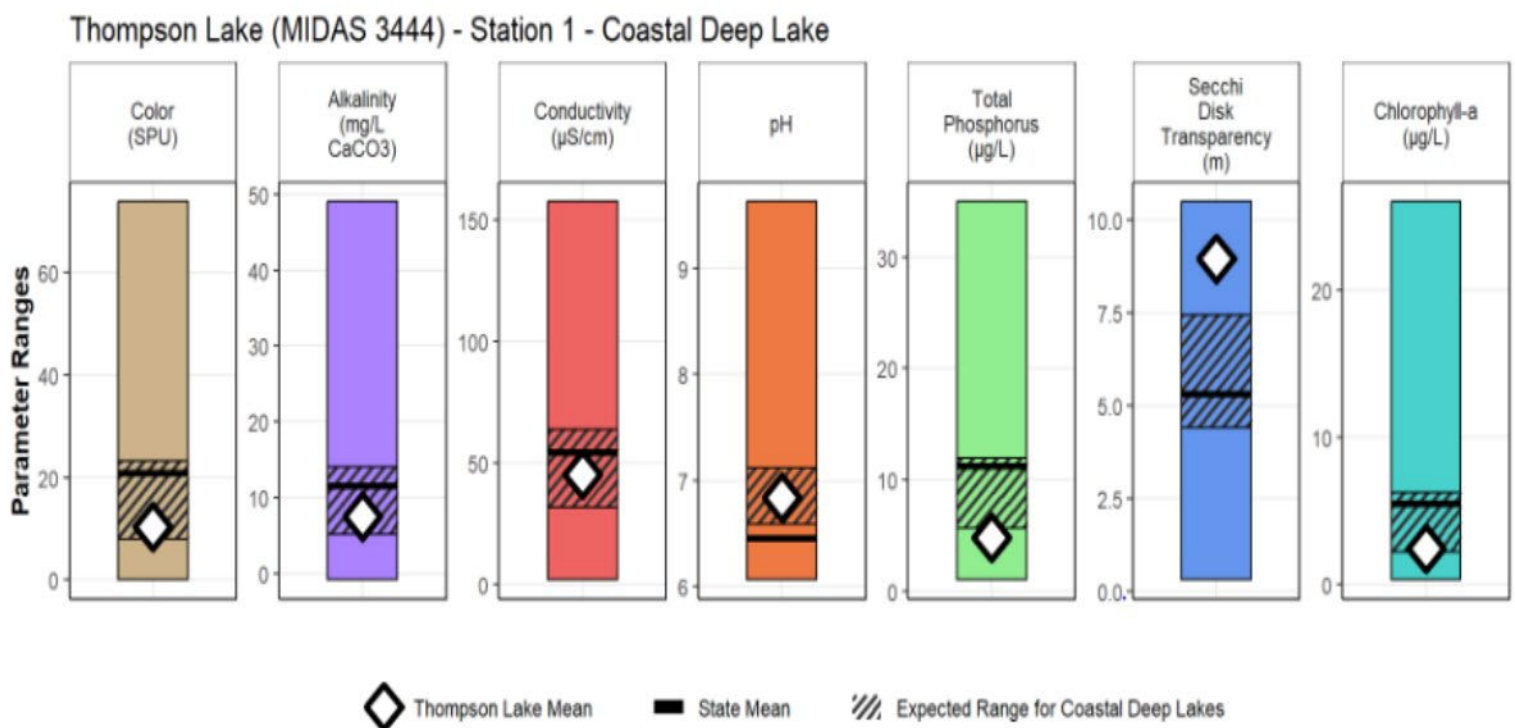
Secchi disc readings in 2025 were done by Scott and Paul Cain. Significant variability within 5 months is common.



However, the second chart (below) illustrates data for the ten-year period from 2014 through 2024. This trend certainly bears watching-



To show how Thompson Lake compares to other lakes in Maine, Scott developed this graphic:



Plot Legend: Solid color bars = parameter ranges for most Maine lakes; horizontal thick black line: mean value for all Maine Lakes; Striped pattern = expected range for **Coastal Deep Lakes**; white diamonds: mean values for Thompson Lake.

In Scott's own words-- *The outstanding work undertaken by TLEA to raise public awareness of threats to the lake, and to work with landowners and towns to identify and resolve threats is the most powerful and effective strategy for ensuring the long-term health of Thompson Lake.*

319 Grant Program for Non-Point Source Pollution

Our 319 Grant program is looking forward to a productive summer of funding erosion control projects. These projects are of 3 categories: Candidate Site projects, which are typically done by road associations to improve drainage on roads and reduce runoff into the lake. This often involves establishing culverts, adequate ditches, check dams and reservoir pools. The result is an improved road and less pollution. Medium sized projects that landowners might perform with a private contractor, such as shoreline stabilization, box trenches, infiltration steps and large buffer plantings can be funded through Residential Matching Grants (RMG). Smaller projects that would use hand labor can be performed by our Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), which is supported by the grant.

This program funded 3 major road and path improvements last year at William's Way in Otisfield, Beechwoods Road in Oxford and Agassiz Village in Poland. The grant contributed over \$23,000 towards these projects. RMG's up to \$750 were used by landowners and multiple YCC projects were funded throughout the watershed.

The Grant is administered by the Maine DEP and is part of our 10-year Watershed Protection Plan. The funds are distributed in 2-year cycles. We still have funds remaining for RMG projects and our YCC in 2026, and applications for future Candidate Site projects could be considered in the spring of 2027. ***If any landowners, private groups, or road associations are interested in taking advantage of this program to improve your property and reduce runoff, contact 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 any questions or more information about the 319 Grant Program, contact Paul Cain at: tleawatershed2023@gmail.com.

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

Milfoil Removal Update

Jade Doyle, our new director of Invasive Species Mitigation, reports that Alex and his milfoil crew are hard at work. The first order of business was tackling the new infestation at the mouth of Greeley Brook in Oxford by constructing and laying down 10 large 60' by 40' benthic barriers. This area of growth has been fragmenting and migrating to the lake. This area was surveyed by the crew last summer and the Maine DEP was brought in to inspect the area. They felt that this infestation was causing migration of plant fragments into Pine Point and threatening the entire lake. They recommended expanding our efforts to include this area, which we have, but at a considerable cost.

The crew is also hand pulling plants at Greeley Brook, Pine Point and Briggs Island, removing approximately 40 bags of milfoil a day. Alex and the crew will continue to survey the entire lake for signs of regrowth and hand pull milfoil from all the major coves of the lake.

We obtained a grant for this work from the Maine DEP, but despite our increased demands, it was at the same level granted in previous years. As usual, we rely on membership dues and donations to fund this very important program.

Chinese Mystery Snail Detected in Thompson Lake

The Chinese Mystery Snail (CMS) is an invasive species that has spread throughout the country. The snail is native to southeast Asia and originally was used as an ornamental addition to aquariums and in live food markets in the San Francisco area. It was recently detected at the Heath and at Otisfield Cove. We assume it will be found in the other coves of the lake. Unfortunately, this invasive snail has been found in many Maine lakes. A photo of this snail is on p.11.

The snail lives primarily in bottom sediments in shallow waters, in 10 meters (30 ft) or less water. The snail multiplies rapidly, with up to 100 offspring per litter. There are reports of the snails covering beach areas of lakes, making it difficult for walking and causing a foul stench with die-offs. It will not tolerate water temperatures higher than 25 degrees C (about 70-75 Fahrenheit).

The Square Pond Improvement Association in Shapleigh, Maine seems to have the most experience in dealing with CMS. They control the population of this snail by using divers, both paid and volunteer, to collect the snails and dispose of them. If these snails are found in your area of Thompson Lake, you should collect them and dispose of them away from any water source. The recommended mode of disposal is to either crush them or, in the kinder and gentler way, immerse them in a 5% ethanol solution (non-lite beer works) until they are immobile and then in a 70% ethanol solution. This is recommended by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Most importantly, these snails will adhere to aquatic plants (macrophytes) which infest boat hulls, where they can survive for long periods of time despite exposure to air. This is how they are transported to other bodies of water. ***The best way to prevent transportation of the invasive species is to Clean, Drain and Dry all watercraft entering or leaving the lake.*** Canoes and kayaks should be sponged off when they are taken out of coves. We can reduce the prevalence of this snail through active removal, collecting and proper disposal

. Courtesy Boat Inspections

Speaking of *clean, drain and dry*, our Courtesy Boat Inspection (CBI) program director Michael Sly reports that our inspectors are at the 4 public boat launches on weekends and holidays. The inspectors will perform voluntary inspection of watercraft and trailers and provide information to boaters on the threat of invasive species. This is a paid position, and we are still looking for staff. If you or anyone is interested in providing this important service to the lake, contact Michael at: sly.tleatreasurer@gmail.com.

Youth Conservation Corps

Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) Director Doug Wight reports that the crew has a busy schedule of projects for this summer. The YCC crew is supervised by Josh Wright, a Maine DEP certified landscaper. The crew consists of an experienced crew leader and 2 full-time members. The YCC can build Best Management Practices-- such as drip lines, razor bars, box trenches, diversion steps, and lay down erosion control mulch or plant vegetative buffers. If the project qualifies for 319 Grant funding the landowner only pays for materials.

This program is also working with our **Build Better Buffers** horticulturist, Corey Kotfila, from McLaughlin Gardens. Corey can visit your property, take soil samples and develop and develop a native planting plan. This includes an optional visit by our YCC Director, or staff, to educate landowners on planting practices that conform to accepted DEP regulations. The planting can be done by the landowners, our YCC, or a Maine DEP certified landscaper of your choice.

If you are interested in reducing erosion on your property, contact Doug at tlea.yccdirector@gmail.com.

LakeSmart

Directors Kathy Cain and Doug Wight will be leading our LakeSmart program this summer. *Many thanks to Ron Armontrout, who started this program at TLEA and built it into one of the most accomplished in the state.* The LakeSmart team can assess properties on the lake for erosion control and recommend Best Management Practices to mitigate runoff. This program is non-regulatory and free! It is one of the best ways to reduce pollution of the lake. If you are interested in having an assessment done, contact our Administrator, Sarah Ferry, at: office.tlea@gmail.com.

Briefly Noted

Annual Loon Count: Will be held on Saturday, July 19 from 7:00- 8:00 AM. If you can volunteer, please contact Peggy Dorf at PeggyDorf@ymail.com.

Boat Wakes: TLEA has once again placed “No Wake” buoys along the eastern shore near the Pismo Beach area and at the Thompson Lake Marina area. State laws require that boats operate so that there is no wake when they are within 200 feet of shore, for “wake boats” the limit is 300 feet.

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 interested, contact Paul Cain at tleawatershed2023@gmail.com.

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.

From Mill Legacy to Lake Stewardship: A New Chapter for the Robinson Mill

Submitted by Doug Wight, TLEA Board member

History of the Robinson Mill

Like many New England textile mills, the Robinson Mill property in Oxford, Maine was constructed in the mid-19th century and stands as a powerful reminder of our industrial past. Modified and expanded over time, the mill grew into a major woolen manufacturing center. The mill employed hundreds of workers, many of whom were migrants from Quebec, Scotland and Ireland.

For more than a century, the mill stood as a symbol of local industry and economic vitality. Powered by the waters flowing from Thompson Lake through the Robinson dam, the mill played a central role in shaping the community—providing jobs, supporting families, and contributing to the region’s identity.

The water wheels and looms have long been silent, and much of the ancient structure is now being demolished to make way for a much-needed affordable housing project. However, the outflow of Thompson Lake still flows through what has become the Oxford dam, and that connection to the lake is what makes the site so important today.

A Legacy Tied to the Lake

In the 19th century, a dam was constructed at the outlet of Thompson Lake to support mill operations, raising water levels and altering the natural shoreline. While this enabled decades of industrial productivity, it also marked the beginning of a long relationship between the human built environment and the lake’s delicate ecosystem.

After more than a century of operation, the mill closed in 2004, marking the end of its industrial life. What followed was a long period of abandonment. The property fell into disrepair, ultimately leading the town to foreclose in 2009 due to unpaid taxes. During these years, the site became more than an eyesore—it represented a growing environmental concern. Deteriorating structures and remnants of industrial infrastructure raised the risk of runoff and contamination. The proximity to one of Maine’s most pristine lakes heightened the urgency. Thompson Lake is highly sensitive to ecological disturbance, particularly nutrient loading and shoreline erosion—issues that can quickly degrade water clarity and aquatic life.

Thompson Lake's water quality is not accidental—it is the result of decades of vigilance, science-based management, and community engagement. Projects like this underscore the importance of continuing that work.

By prioritizing environmental safeguards alongside economic renewal, Oxford has an opportunity to transform a long-neglected site into a model of responsible waterfront redevelopment.

Looking Ahead

The story of Robinson Mill is still being written. Its next chapter offers the promise of renewal—not just for the property itself, but for the lake and community it has always depended on.

With careful planning, strong oversight, and continued partnership, this transformation can honor the past while protecting the future—ensuring that Thompson Lake remains clear, healthy, and vibrant for generations to come.



Chinese Mystery Snail

Visit our website at:
www.thompsonlake.org

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