

Mascoma Lake Association

SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

President's Message: Let's Be Lake Smart

by Martha Jane Rich

It can be discouraging to love a lake. In a challenging summer like the one we had last year—with frequent rain, serious flooding, and repeated week-long cyanobacteria advisories—it's tempting to lose heart. It feels worse when we recognize that our extreme weather is driven by accelerating climate change, with more disruption ahead. In the face of global patterns we cannot control, what's a lake lover to do?



Tricia and Bob Barr stand by the LakeSmart Award sign at their shoreline, which they've protected with lake-friendly buffer plantings.

As the MLA begins its second century, our answer to that question is to build resilience, with as many tools and as many people as possible. There are actions we can take now to reduce the impact of extreme weather on our lake.

Some actions are large in scope, duration, and expense, such as the watershed management plan proposed last year. This process, initiated by MLA water quality team leader Jim Martel, is now a joint project with the towns of Enfield and Lebanon, eligible for \$100,000 in state grant funding. Planning and implementation will take at least three years, as local officials, volunteers, and environmental engineers work to identify sources of harmful impacts and recommend solutions. This thorough analysis will be our best hope for long-range improvements.

Meanwhile, there are lake-friendly actions that visitors and property owners can take now. We should do all we can to keep excess nutrients out of the lake, as these feed potentially toxic cyanobacteria blooms—

especially when there is a high volume of stormwater runoff. Some are simple, common-sense steps: pick up dog waste, don't throw lawn clippings and leaves into the water, avoid using fertilizers and household cleaning products that contain algae-feeding phosphorous.

Other actions involve improving shoreline landscaping. Check paved areas on your property to determine if they're providing a direct route for soil and sand to reach nearby water. There are many ways to reduce erosion and stormwater runoff, from installing a dripline trench around a structure, creating rain gardens to absorb runoff, reducing lawn size and maintenance, adding more plants to a shoreline buffer, or covering bare areas of soil with erosion-control mulch.

All of these actions—and many more—are explained in the excellent materials available from NH LAKES, the statewide consortium of lake associations like ours. The program is called LakeSmart, and is described as “a free, non-regulatory, and voluntary education and recognition program. The goal is to encourage property owners to maintain their homes and property in ways that protect lake water quality, wildlife habitat, and property values.” nhlakes.org/lakesmart

The MLA hopes to share more information about LakeSmart resources as the summer goes on. We hope many of you will join this effort to build resilience in a changing world and a healthy future for Mascoma Lake.

CALENDAR

ICE OUT
March 17

SUMMER KICK-OFF PARTY
Saturday, June 22 • 11:30 am–2:00 pm
(rain date Sunday, June 23)
Lakeside Park

BOAT PARADE
Saturday, July 6 • 3pm
Rain date Sunday, July 7
Meet at Rail Trail rope swing prior to start

LOON CENSUS
Saturday, July 20 • 8–9 am
*Yearly Statewide Loon Count
to be organized by the
Loon Preservation Committee.
To volunteer you need a boat, census form,
a pen, ability to identify loons, a watch and
a pair of binoculars. terri.m.lynch@gmail.com*

ANNUAL MEETING
Saturday, July 27 • 9 am
Enfield Community Building

LAKE CLEANUP
Saturday, August 17
Check website for updates:
www.mascomalakeassociation.org



CELEBRATE SUMMER WITH US IN JUNE!

The MLA will host the third annual Summer Kickoff Party this year on Saturday, June 22, from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm at Mascoma Lakeside Park. We're hoping for a beautiful day and we feel it's due; the first year was cold and the second was wet, so we think it's our turn for warm sunshine! Whatever the weather, we know we can have a wonderful time as we celebrate the start of the season on our lake.

We'll provide pulled pork, hamburgers, veggie burgers, iced tea and lemonade, along with delicious ice cream from our friends at the Baited Hook. We invite MLA members to contribute potluck side dishes; there's been an impressive spread in past years.

There'll be information on all our programs, games, and MLA merch. This event is open to the community, so please bring your friends and neighbors!



LOONS by Terri Lynch

Spring is here at last. The wail call of a loon last night was a sure sign. Hopefully this spring and summer will be less rainy than last year. 2023 was the third worst year for loon breeding success attributed largely to the weather. I was very hopeful when the Lebanon pair chose to nest on the floating loon raft last June. Unfortunately, the night that the egg hatched also brought out a predator. A loud commotion was heard in the wee hours and the next morning the pair were swimming alone. No other loon pairs nested here on Mascoma. Hopefully we will have better luck this year as our lake can easily support two nests.

Next week Bud and I will position the nesting rafts. The Loon Preservation Committee will supply us with a new cover and some nesting materials to make the raft look even more welcoming. Please keep away from these rafts, one across from the Lebanon boat launch and one by the islands. Using binoculars is the best way to observe. Loons are very protective of their nests but if approached too closely they will abandon the nest or chick and leave it vulnerable to predation. Give them space.

Please make sure you are not using any lead fishing tackle. While the size that has been linked to loon deaths, 1 oz. or less, has been banned for over a decade, yet loons are still dying from ingestion of these. There is a buyback program available if you want to turn your lead tackle in for a coupon you can use to purchase alternative tackle. I will also happily take your lead tackle of any size and dispose of them safely. Do not put lead in the landfill. For more information go to loon.org/loons-and-lead

I will work directly with the Loon Preservation Committee and the field biologist assigned to our area to monitor the loons this summer. Please contact me if you observe any loon in distress. Our field biologist can also be contacted but he/she is covering several lakes in the Sunapee area, and I may be closer.

My number is 802-558-0082; for the Loon Preservation Committee call 603-476-LOON (5666).



EYES ON THE SKY FOR EAGLES

by Kathie Hillard

The pair of eagles at Mascoma Lake have nested on the islands for many years and produced many chicks. What a pleasure to wait and watch each summer as the young chicks grow strong, learn to fly, fish and be independent. The adults are completely devoted and so patient.

Last year they were incredibly busy with triplets to feed and watch out for.

This year the adult eagles were sitting on the nest in March. Early in April we had two snowstorms. I returned from a trip and was shocked to see the nest missing. It apparently fell, probably from the weight of the snow. The eagles have since been seen together, in their favorite trees, I have no doubt that they will build a new nest to call home, and I have enormous hope that they will build on Mascoma Lake. Keep your eyes on the sky and treetops to look for our perseverant eagle friends.



VOLUNTEERS WANTED Loon Census 2024 Saturday, July 20

About 12 boats are needed to cover our 1,158 acre lake for the statewide Loon Census. I will divide the lake into sections and assign volunteers to cover one area. Boats and volunteers need to be at their assigned area for a full area watching for loons with binoculars and keeping a report of findings. I will collect the individual reports and send our findings to the LPC who will collect data all across NH. This is a rain or shine event, we will only cancel if there is thunder or lightening. It is usually a wonderful time to enjoy a summer morning on the lake. Contact me if you are interested: terri.m.lynch@gmail.com



WATER QUALITY by *Jim Martel*

One of the benefits of belonging to the New Hampshire Lakes Association (NHLakes.org) is their constant attention to what is happening legislatively in Concord. I recently received an email from Andrea LaMoreaux, President & Policy Advocate at NH Lakes, about the legislature's attempt to pass legislation that would restrict the use of wake boats in shallow areas near the shoreline. Some regulation is needed because this type of boating activity creates large waves that erode beaches and shorelines and resuspend bottom sediments. It's fun for the wakeboard riders, but it's bad for the lake.

Senate Bill 431 would alleviate this problem by requiring wakeboarders to remain 200 feet offshore. This sounds good, but it's not enough. Most scientific studies recommend that a buffer significantly more than 200 feet from the shoreline is necessary. This year, Maine passed a 300-foot setback for wake surfing and a minimum operating depth of 15 feet. Vermont approved a wake sports zone rule—a waterbody must have an area of at least 50 contiguous acres of water that is at least 500 feet from shore on all sides and at least 20 feet deep.

Andrea suggested that we express opposition to the 200-foot setback, asking lawmakers for a 300-foot setback and an average lake depth of 10 feet. A 300-foot setback provides twice as much distance as the existing regulation, so more powerful wakes to dissipate before reaching the shoreline. Most boat captains should have a good idea of what 300 feet from shore looks like as it's the length of a football field. Adding that a lake must have an average depth of at least 10 feet helps protect a handful of especially vulnerable lakes that are relatively large in terms of surface area but exceptionally shallow and prone to bottom disturbance from wakes.

This makes sense to me, and I hope the amendment passes. [As this newsletter goes to press, we can report that the amendment did pass. The bill will go to the NH House for a floor vote in late May.]

MILFOIL CONTROL: CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

by *David Kelman and Martha Rich*

Last September, we declared the end of a milfoil harvest season that never started. Our total haul for 2023 was zero (0) plants. We did search whenever possible; we were able to see bassweed plants, but no milfoil was visible. We did have one report later in the fall, after the SS Milfoil pontoon boat had been retired for the season. This location is the first place we'll check this spring!

That unusual season was a result of exceptionally rainy weather that kept silt and tannin flowing into the lake; this reduced visibility for both searching and harvesting. We don't know what we'll face this summer, but we'll continue to operate on the assumption that we have not eradicated milfoil from our lake and never will. The MLA must maintain a vibrant and proactive program to counter this highly invasive aquatic weed.

As we begin our 14th year as coordinators of the milfoil control program, we are looking to pass the torch. We are not going away, and we are not stepping down immediately, but we recognize it's time to get organized for a smooth transition in this successful program. Since we announced

this intention at the MLA Annual Meeting last July, we've made progress. A number of people have stepped forward to join the teams that will sustain the work of managing milfoil control, and we will continue to recruit.

Our vision for this transition will extend the positive results we have already noted over the years. We have distributed various tasks in an organized way while keeping a clear eye on the big picture while developing a strategy. Going forward, that overview will be the charge to a newly formed Coordinating Committee: we will be joined by Bud Lynch, Rachel Moonen, and Dan Pontbriand in shared leadership. We will also have teams for managing the boat, producing and supervising markers, handling harvest documentation and reporting, and training new divers and crews. Some of these team members are old hands with Mascoma Lake Milfoil Control, while others are new volunteers ready to take on important roles. We are grateful to all of them. They will provide the energy and expertise to keep our program strong.

Here are all the ways you can help with milfoil control:

- If you see an orange-yellow foam-noodle milfoil marker, please leave it where it is and avoid motorized boating near the marker.
- If you see the red-and-white "diver down" flag, slow down and steer clear. It means there are people under the water!
- Do not attempt to remove milfoil yourself. It must be harvested by trained personnel. Improper removal will contribute to its spread. (It is illegal in New Hampshire to dig up aquatic plants of any kind without a permit. Removing native plants such as bass weed can create more inviting conditions for invasive milfoil to grow and even increase cyanobacteria risk.)
- If you think you see Eurasian milfoil, let us know and we will follow up on suspected sightings. You don't have to be an aquatic plant expert, just an alert citizen!
- If you are a SCUBA diver, we welcome new certified divers. With the state-approved training, it takes one day to learn the techniques of proper milfoil harvesting.
- If you're a swimmer, you could join our "synchronized swims." You need to be able to swim with a mask and snorkel for up to two hours (with breaks when you'll tread water for a few minutes). You'll need a wetsuit for flotation and staying warm.
- If you live on the lake and would like to monitor the water near your property on a regular basis, you can join the "neighborhood weed watch." Your commitment as a watcher would be to cruise your area from the shoreline to a depth of 12-14 feet when the lake is still and the sun is not directly overhead (usually early morning or late afternoon). We ask that you report at least once by July 15 and a second time by the middle of August. We particularly need weed watchers on the 4A side from the Baited Hook to the head of the lake.

**Questions or interest in volunteering?
Contact: David Kelman & Martha Rich:
ssmilfoil@comcast.net 802-233-9964**



Mascoma Lake Association
P.O. Box 9, Enfield, NH 03748
www.mascomalakeassociation.org

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DUES KEEP US AFLOAT!

by Sandy Haynes

To the 150+ members who have already paid your annual dues, we thank you so much! It helps us to get an early start on membership dues each year so that we have a good feel for our financial standing as we head into the summer. For those who have not yet paid the annual dues, please consider doing so. Your support helps in so many ways to ensure that we can continue to protect and monitor the health of our beautiful lake.

Did you know that we have over 900 Facebook followers and only about 20% of them are members? If you are one of the many folks who follow us on social media or receive our email communications, and you or your family have not yet decided to become members, we hope that you will consider joining the MLA this year. Please reach out to membership.mla@gmail.com or use the QR code provided at right to get started. Thank you!



BOARD MEMBERS

Martha Rich, President
Bud Lynch, Secretary
Robert Barr, Treasurer
Peter Dixon
Sandy Haynes
Marcy Innes
Caroline Lovejoy
Mark Manikian
Mary Murray
Kim Potter

2024 MASCOMA SAILING CLUB LOG *by Sally Sharp*

Another Mascoma Lake Ice Out for the record books—March 17! No doubt Dartmouth College sailors would have been out practicing on March 18 if it weren't for the massive construction project underway at their site (which unfortunately means no summer club there this year). But Mascoma Sailing Club will be up and running at the Lakeside Park from May through October, and we welcome local residents to join us in some of our planned activities.

- We open our official season on Memorial Day, May 27, with an Open House and potluck BBQ (from noon on). Anyone interested in learning more about the club and our programs is encouraged to drop by.
- In July MSC will offer two separate weeks of Youth Sailing lessons; sign-up is through the Enfield Recreation Department.
- Wednesday evenings in July and August we will host a series of Community Sailing evenings which offer an opportunity for individuals and families to try sailing by going out on our Club boats with MSC skippers. Details will be posted weekly on the Enfield Listserv.
- Thursday evenings in July our very popular Women Can Sail program will return; it's an opportunity for women interested in sailing to take the helm under the guidance of an experienced woman sailor.
- Two regattas are planned, both open to all sailboats on the lake: the midsummer Griesbach Regatta, and the Labor Day regatta. There may be some informal evening or weekend racing as well.
- You can find more details on any of these programs plus some contact information on the MSC website, or on our Facebook page. Here's to a great summer on the water!

RENOVATIONS AT LAKESIDE PARK IN MAY AND JUNE

The Mascoma Lakeside Park Committee began some essential renovations on April 30, starting with reconstructing the parking lot. Landscaping and trail work will follow, but the MLA will be able to hold Summer Kickoff Party on June 22 as scheduled.